

Health, Wellbeing & Vulnerable People Executive Advisory Panel 29th October 2021

Report Title	Council Housing Policy Update
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Lead Member	Portfolio Holder for Housing & Communities, Councillor Andy Mercer

List of Appendices

- Appendix A – Tenancy Policy**
- Appendix B – Tenancy Agreement**
- Appendix C – Aids and Adaptations Policy**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek feedback from the Executive Advisory Panel for two harmonised policies and a new Tenancy Agreement to be approved for adoption by North Northamptonshire Council.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek feedback from the Executive Advisory Panel on the two key harmonised council housing policies and a new North Northamptonshire Council Tenancy Agreement prior to consideration at the meeting of the Executive to be held 18 November 2021.
- 2.2 The current status quo is that Corby and Kettering housing teams have their own separate Tenancy Policies, Tenancy Agreements and Aids & Adaptations Policies.
- 2.3 The adoption of these key documents will assist in enabling consistency between the two teams and within North Northamptonshire Council.
- 2.4 A North Northamptonshire Tenancy Policy is required by the Localism Act 2011 and sets out our tenancy offer to successful applicants and council tenants.
- 2.5 Our main tenancy offer is to grant introductory one year tenancies to new applicants. Where tenancy conditions are met, we will then award secure

tenancies. We provide more intensive management to assist successful introductory tenancies. This approach helps meet our aim to manage sustainable housing neighbourhoods.

- 2.6 We propose two main exceptions to this. The first is where a tenant has not managed to stick to the terms of the introductory tenancy. Instead of taking possession proceedings to evict them, unless the breaches are so severe that we would normally apply for possession, we would rather offer them a 2 year fixed term tenancy to allow us further time to work with them to sustain their tenancy.
- 2.7 The latter is in order to protect our adapted properties where we have specialist accommodation, or where we have spent a significant amount of money in adapting a property. In order to safeguard this stock and ensure that it is utilised to meet ongoing need with finite resources, we propose having a 5 year fixed term tenancy.
- 2.8 Where a 5-year fixed term tenancy is in its final year we will conduct a review with the tenant. Should there have been no changes we will grant a further term. Where circumstances or needs have changed we will look at options to assist the tenant to a more suitable property.
- 2.9 The use of fixed term tenancies will be usual practice for applicants and tenants in Kettering, whilst it will be a change for Corby and we provide more details in the issues and choices section below.
- 2.10 As a landlord North Northamptonshire Council needs to offer its tenants one harmonised Tenancy Agreement. Our proposed Tenancy Agreement is fairly standard and does not change our offer of service to our tenants.
- 2.11 The main advantages of adopting these policies are that tenants will get a fair and consistent approach when applying to become Council Tenants and where applying for aids and adaptations.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Executive Advisory Panel consider the content of the two harmonised policies and new Tenancy Agreement as set out in the Appendices and provide feedback and advice as considered appropriate to the Executive.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 North Northants has council housing stock in the Kettering and Corby areas. As at 1st April 2021
 - Kettering 3625 homes of which 401 are sheltered
 - Corby 4615 homes of which 536 are sheltered
- 4.2 Prior to the formation of North Northamptonshire Council, Kettering and Corby have their own different documents, policies and procedures.

- 4.2 These all require harmonisation and currently present some risks to the authority.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 Our 2 teams in Corby and Kettering currently manage our Council Housing functions in different ways. This presents obvious risks to the organisation. Furthermore, it presents issues of inconsistency for our customers.
- 5.2 We have a work plan to harmonise all of our policies and procedures.
- 5.3 Our approach is to remodel our existing procedures, taking the best from both, in line with best practice and legislation.
- 5.4 Leaving the current status quo is not really an option due to the risks that it creates around management of our tenancies, properties and people.
- 5.5 Utilising Fixed Term Tenancies in the two situations detailed will represent a change to our approach for NNC tenants in Corby.
- 5.6 The approach will be consistent with current working practices in the Kettering area.
- 5.7 We have positive examples whereby being able to grant 2 year fixed term tenancies at the end of unsuccessful introductory tenancies has led to successful secure tenancies, rather than evictions.
- 5.8 For adapted properties, once there is no longer a need for this type of property, we are able within law to commence possession proceedings. However, our preference is to be up front in acknowledging that we have a very limited supply of adapted properties, and finite resources to adapt enough properties to meet demand.
- 5.9 Our proposal will enable us to make sure that homes that have been significantly adapted, or are wheelchair accessible, are made available for re-letting when they are no longer required by the tenant.
- 5.10 We do not anticipate our proposal to lead to negative housing situations in the Corby area, moreover we believe that the introduction of fixed term tenancies, in the exceptional circumstances mentioned, will support our approach to providing sustainable tenancies.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 We are currently resourcing our work through the two HRA budgets. There will need to be some planned activity to change all of our Tenancy Agreements, but we plan to do this from existing budget and resources.

6.2 Legal

- 6.2.1 The proposals will help to offset some legal risk.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 There are risks in managing North Northamptonshire Council Housing in the current way.

6.3.2 Having one Tenancy Policy and a harmonised Tenancy Agreement is fundamental in moving towards a consistent approach for our tenants.

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 We have consulted with our current tenant groups in the Corby and Kettering areas.

6.4.2 The feedback from these groups were positive in supporting us to propose the approval of our approach and these documents.

6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

6.5.1 This has not been reviewed by the Scrutiny Commission, therefore no comments or recommendations have been received.

6.6 Climate Impact

6.6.1 There are no impacts upon climate.

6.7 Community Impact

6.7.1 Providing one consistent service to our communities will be a positive for the residents of North Northants Council.

6.7.2 Creating a consistent approach to our tenancy offer will help to maintain sustainable neighbourhoods.

6.7.3 Having the same tenancy agreements will make it simpler when tenants want to exchange with another North Northamptonshire tenant.

7. Background Papers

7.1 In preparing this report and our key documents, the previous policies of the former district and boroughs were reviewed and taken into consideration for the proposals.