



Agenda item:

Decant Policy

Report for:	Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	24th January 2018
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Decant Policy
Contact:	Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Author/Responsible Officer – Lindsey Walsh, Team Leader Tenant and Leasehold
Purpose of report:	1. To provide Members with an overview of the draft Decant Policy and to provide the opportunity to scrutinise and provide feedback
Recommendations	1. That members scrutinise and provide feedback.
Corporate objectives:	1. Affordable Housing
Implications:	<u>Financial</u> The review of the policy has allowed the Council to consider the financial Assistance given to tenants when a decant is necessary due to major works. The discretionary payment has been reduced from £800 per move to £400 making a 75% saving on each move the Council has to consider. In addition, those that can remain in situ whilst major works are carried out will not qualify for a compensation payment, nor will those tenants that opt to move permanently to a more suitable property. <u>Value for money</u>
'Value for money' implications	
Risk implications	There are no risk implications
Community Impact	Community Impact Assessment reviewed/carried out*

Assessment	*Delete as applicable
Health and safety Implications	There are no health and safety implications
Consultees:	Margaret Griffiths Portfolio Leader Housing Elliott Brooks Assistant Director Housing Layna Warden Group Manager Tenant and Leasehold Housing Team Leaders
Background papers:	
Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i>	A review of the Decant procedures and compensation allowance has been carried out in June 2002, February 2008 and February 2011.
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	ASB = Antisocial behaviour

Background

1. The Council last looked at their Decant Policy and Procedures in February 2011. The compensation levels at that time were benchmarked across several Social Housing Providers and it was agreed to offer £800 per move when a tenant had to move due to major works.
2. This compensation was paid for those that were moving on a temporary basis as well as those moving on a permanent basis to another property.
3. The Tenant would be offered a temporary transfer replicating the type of tenancy they had at their original tenancy. Their original tenancy was then terminated whilst major works were carried out. They were then offered their original property back by another transfer when all works had been completed.
4. As well as the compensation, the Council arranged for the removal and storage (packing if necessary) of personal items to the temporary accommodation and back to the original accommodation. This included:
 - a) Disconnect and reconnect the tenant's cooker
 - b) The Housing Landlord Service will also pay the tenant a lump sum of £800 to compensate for the following for each move (this list is not exhaustive):

- Redirection of mail
 - Removing/replacing carpets
 - Loss of earnings as a result of the decant
5. These allowances were also given to those tenants wishing to move on a permanent basis.
 6. The review of the policy and procedures has allowed the Council to reconsider the financial assistance given to tenants when a decant is necessary due to major works.
 7. The compensation (discretionary) payment has been reduced from £800 per move to £400 making a 75% saving on each move the Council has to consider. The Council will still arrange and pay for the tenant's removals and disconnect and reconnect appliances.
 8. In addition, those that can remain in situ whilst major works are carried out will not qualify for a compensation payment.
 9. Tenants that opt to move permanently to an alternative property will no longer qualify for compensation and the Council will not arrange and pay for their move. The Council will consider each case at the Housing Panel and offer suitable priority for the tenants to make a successful bid on a property instead. This will help to reduce costs but still give a good service to those tenants that have to move on a temporary basis.
 10. The new Decant Policy also provides temporary licenses at the Decant property instead of terminating the tenant's original tenancy. Tenants will keep their permanent tenancy agreement and continue to pay rent or have Housing Benefit to this home. They will be given a temporary licence to occupy the temporary home.
 11. The main advantage of not terminating the tenant's original tenancy is that any Court Orders will remain active for rent arrears and ASB issues if the tenancy remains in force. The Council have a duty to carry out repairs and we are unable to refuse these due to rent arrears, especially if the repairs required are a matter of health and safety. However, the compensation amount will be held back and paid onto the rent account of any tenant in arrears at the time of moving. Rent will still be due on their original tenancy and will be regarded as the tenant's principal home. Any direct debits for rent payments can continue as usual as will Housing Benefit payments. This reduces the inconvenience for tenants and DBC officers from notifying Housing Benefit, Council Tax and banks of new payment details.
 12. Monitoring the budget in 2018/2019 should show a reduction in costs due to the savings that the new Decant Policy provides. It should also reduce the need for ending and creating new tenancies and make it more straightforward for tenants and DBC Officers.