

HOMES PDG
13 SEPTEMBER 2016

INTRODUCTORY TENANCY POLICY

Cabinet Member Cllr Ray Stanley
Responsible Officer Claire Fry, Housing Services Manager

Reason for Report: To review the Introductory Tenancy Policy.

RECOMMENDATION(S): Cabinet approves the revised Introductory Tenancy Policy.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Council must run the Housing Service efficiently and effectively in accordance with legislative requirements and the provisions of the regulatory framework.

Financial Implications: The Council issues introductory tenancies to new tenants to ensure they are complying with the terms and conditions of the tenancy during the probationary period.

Legal Implications: In accordance with the Introductory Tenants (Review) Regulations 1997, the Council is required to review the decision to seek an order for possession of a dwelling-house let under an introductory tenancy if requested by the tenant.

The contractual obligations of tenants are contained in the tenancy agreement.

Risk Assessment: Failure to provide housing management staff with the appropriate policies could result in a less consistent and effective service.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The review of this policy reflects changes in good practice and legislative changes. It provides a framework for staff which sets out the reasons the Council issues introductory tenancies, tenants' rights and responsibilities and what action may be taken where there has been a breach of the tenancy during the probationary period.
- 1.2 The Introductory Tenancy Policy was approved at the meeting of the Decent and Affordable Homes Policy Development Group in September 2013. The policy is due to be reviewed by September 2017.
- 1.4 Tenants Together approved the draft Introductory Tenancy Policy at their meeting on 11 August 2016.
- 1.5 Cabinet is asked to consider the proposed changes and to agree the adoption of the reviewed policy.

2.0 Proposed policy changes

- 2.1 The policy has been reviewed earlier than the expected due date to take into account changes made to other working documents. Minor amendments to the existing policy have been made. However, the policy will have to be reviewed again when provisions within the Housing & Planning Act 2016 are due to be implemented. The council are currently waiting on Government guidance on this matter.
- 2.2 The policy has been updated to take into account changes made to Council procedures on ending and extending introductory tenancies. Authorisation has been given to Heads of Services, Service Managers and Managers of the Housing Service including Team Leaders to carry out reviews to either extend or terminate the tenancy where there has been a breach of the tenancy during the probationary period
- 2.3 The policy introduces a section on rights and responsibilities. This explains that introductory tenants have the same responsibilities as a secure or flexible tenant but they do not have the same rights such as mutual exchange, to carry out improvements to their home or take in lodgers.
- 2.4 The section on rights and responsibilities also explains the different ways that new tenants are informed about the terms and conditions of tenancy when signing up for a tenancy. This explains that tenants are shown a DVD about their rights and responsibilities as a tenant before signing their tenancy with us, a copy is available to view on the Council's website. Also they are given a sign up pack which includes a copy of the Tenant Handbook and the Repairs Handbook which provide guidance and useful information about their tenancy.
- 2.5 An additional clause has been added to the section relating to "Ending the tenancy". This states that a tenant can request a review of the decision to end the tenancy. The tenant will be given 5 clear days' notice of the review date.
- 2.6 As part of our Complaints Procedures we carry out a lessons learnt exercise after complaints have been investigated. A section about our service standards has been included in the policy to reflect our commitment to being open and transparent. It explains that we will ensure that our policies are well-publicised and if there are any operational matters which impact upon our ability to operate a policy, we will ensure that information about this is given to tenants and other stakeholders.

Contact for more Information: Claire Fry, Housing Services Manager (01884 234920 cfry@middevon.gov.uk)

Circulation of the Report: Councillor Ray Stanley, Management Team

List of Background Papers: A copy of such papers to be made available for public inspection and included on Website