

DECISION TAKER: CLLR KELSIE LEARNEY - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

TITLE: MUTUAL EXCHANGE POLICY REVIEW

3 FEBRUARY 2020

Contact Officer: Amber Russell Tel No: 01962 848 229 Email arussell@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ALL

DECISION:

1. That the Mutual Exchange policy be amended, removing consent for all tenants to move to a property which has one bedroom more than their assessed bedroom need.
2. That consent for exchanges where the accommodation was more extensive than was reasonably required by the tenant be refused, unless exceptional circumstances apply which may include one or more of the following:
 - i. The tenant is downsizing;
 - ii. The tenant is exchanging to older persons accommodation;
 - iii. The tenant has a Council confirmed medical or welfare need for a property which is larger than their assessed bedroom need;
 - iv. There are other exceptional circumstances as determined by the Council.
3. That the Strategic Director: Services be authorised to amend the Council's Housing Mutual Exchange policy to reflect the above including arrangements for appropriate assessments and appeals.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To support changes to the Mutual Exchange policy to bring this in line with the Council's Allocations Framework.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Three options were considered during the review process:

- a) The option of retaining the ability to exchange to a property larger than a tenants assessed bedroom need was considered. However, this was rejected as the evidence set out in the paper illustrated that this would continue to result in tenants falling into arrears, putting their tenancies at risk. This option also contradicted the Allocations Framework and did not assist the priority to make best use of housing stock.
- b) The change recommended would bring the Council in line with the majority of Hampshire housing providers.
- c) As detailed in the paper, the policy complimented the Council's Allocations Framework to enable tenants to secure housing which meets their housing need. There was no ground which allowed the Council to refuse an exchange based on their financial circumstances although a thorough financial assessment was completed with each tenant and advice given regarding affordability. Examples of exceptional circumstances included, but were not limited to, family taking on caring responsibilities for other family members, someone with a disability needing the extra room for equipment, medical supplies or a carer to stay. This detail will be included in the Mutual Exchange Policy and Procedure.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE:

None

APPROVED BY:

DATE:

Kelsie Learney

3 FEBRUARY 2020

CLLR LEARNEY (CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING & ASSET MANAGEMENT)