

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**10 DECEMBER 2009**

### **TENANTS INCENTIVE SCHEME**

Portfolio Holder:	Howard Doe, Community Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee:	Business Support
Report from:	Deborah Upton, Housing and Corporate Services
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#### **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to notify Members of the Tenants Incentive Scheme before it is considered for approval at Cabinet on 5 January 2010. This policy reflects the shortage of family accommodation and therefore provides an incentive for tenants to transfer to a more suitable home. This policy will also be used to offer alternative accommodation to those tenants who wish to give up disabled adapted property that is no longer a requirement for their needs.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 This policy is within the Council's budget and policy framework and helps support the following objectives set out in the Council's Housing Strategy.
- to maximise the supply of suitable and affordable housing and meeting housing need;
  - to enable vulnerable people to live independent lives;
  - to improve the quality and energy efficiency of housing;

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 There is a need to make more effective use of our housing stock in order to meet known demand, and in particular to reduce reliance on bed and breakfast and other unsuitable temporary accommodation for homeless families.
- 2.2 The Government's plans for reducing the number of people living in overcrowded housing conditions were published in December 2007. A key action is the establishment and funding of 38 pathfinder schemes, which started in 2008.

2.3 Medway Council was successful in obtaining £50,000 funding from the 2009 round of Tackling Overcrowding Pathfinder review. This money will be used to fund a Temporary Project Officer post to develop an action plan looking at overcrowding across Medway as a whole.

2.4 The Council's own Tenants Incentive Scheme forms one of the strands of good practice identified as part of the above overcrowding review. (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the 2008 report on the findings from some of the pilot schemes).

### **3. Advice and analysis**

3.1 Please see Appendix 2 for detail of the Tenants Incentive Scheme for Under Occupation.

3.2 Please see Appendix 3 for the Diversity Impact Assessment for the Tenants Incentive Scheme for Under Occupation policy.

3.3 The allocation of £30,000 for this scheme is sustainable and is funded from existing financial resources from within the Housing Revenue Account.

3.4 At the maximum allowance payable this would assist 12 under occupying tenants.

3.5 The scheme will be reviewed on a regular basis to determine levels of uptake and any potential backlog of applicants once the scheme is up and running.

### **4. Risk Management**

4.1

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>
Poor uptake of the scheme.	Poor uptake of the scheme would mean that the objective to rehouse overcrowded Council transfer cases would not be met.	Widely publicising the scheme and supporting applicants through the incentive scheme process to enable uptake from tenants who may need this support.

### **5. Consultation**

5.1 MeRGe, Medway Residents Group have been consulted in respect of this policy and are supportive of the scheme.

5.2 An article has been prepared for the Christmas Edition of the Council's Housing Matters magazine to obtain feedback from tenants on the scheme and to try and determine if there would be a wider uptake from under occupying tenants other than those already registered with Homechoice.

### **6. Financial and legal implications**

6.1 The £30,000 allocated to fund the Tenants Incentive Scheme will be met from existing financial resources from within the HRA Budget.

- 6.2 The CLG publication “Tackling Overcrowding in England: an Action Plan” (Dec 2007) recommends that Councils tackle under occupation by a variety of means, including the provision of cash incentives and that greater investment in this area through the Housing Revenue Account be made to free up stock for households potentially in greater need.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 That Members support this report outlining the introduction of a Tenants Incentive Scheme for Under Occupation.
- 7.2 Progress reports will be fed back to this Committee annually after the introduction of the scheme.

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### **Background papers**

Dartford Borough Council – Downsize for Cash Scheme  
Greenwich Council – Cash Incentive Scheme  
Caradon District Council – Tenants Incentive Scheme  
Twynham Housing Association – Incentive to Move Scheme