

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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HOUSING SERVICES TENANTS INCENTIVE REWARD SCHEME

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide information to members regarding a proposal to introduce a Medway Council Reward Scheme.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The proposal is to introduce a Council Rewards Scheme that encourages Medway Council tenants to participate with consultation initiatives and to recognise and reward those tenants who regularly pay their rent and look after their properties.
- 1.2 Any Rewards Scheme could be treated as an “invest to save” proposal from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), but will need to be agreed with the Tenants Scrutiny Panel.

2. Background

- 2.1 The committee considered a report on the Housing Revenue Account capital and revenue budget 2011/2012 at a meeting on 27 January 2011. As a conclusion to the discussion, Members requested “that a Tenant Reward Scheme for keeping property in a good state of repair is added to the HRA Business Plan for consideration by the committee at its next meeting.” This report is in response to that request.

3. Reward Schemes

- 3.1 Resident Incentive Schemes or “Rewards Schemes” have been used by a number of Social Landlords. Most schemes have been linked to:
 - the good conduct of residents such as payment of rent and keeping the property in good repair

- aimed at reducing complaints of anti-social behaviour
 - encouraging residents to join in the consultation process.
- 3.2 Examples of schemes currently in existence use criteria to determine who can qualify for the rewards schemes, and officers would propose to base a scheme criteria on the following:-
- A clear rent account for six consecutive weeks.
 - An agreement to pay off rent arrears maintained for twelve consecutive weeks.
 - No breaches of tenancy (e.g. Anti Social Behaviour).
 - Participation in customer surveys and focus group events.
- 3.3 Rewards that can be explored include discount schemes, for example a reduction in contents insurance, faster repairs service and a handyperson scheme, in addition to or instead of, any financial incentives.
- 3.4 The qualifying criteria for the incentive scheme along with the points awarded for these actions will be drawn up in consultation with the Tenants Scrutiny Panel, and brought back to Members.

4. Current Position

- 4.1 The Council currently does not reward attendance at meetings, estate inspections, bringing forward ideas to improve the locality or for conducting a tenancy in a satisfactory manner.
- 4.2 However the Council does already run a tenants incentive scheme by making payments up to £200 to tenants who leave their properties in a clean and tidy condition. The Council also operates an incentive scheme to encourage tenants to move into smaller properties, where they are under-occupying.
- 4.3 Residents who attend meetings may claim for reasonable expenses such as taxi's or car mileage.
- 4.4 Any new rewards scheme would need to supplement the initiatives that are already in place.

5 Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Too many people attending meetings and overspending the budget	The scheme maybe perceived as too generous and with more people attending meetings or events purely to obtain a reward.	Any system will be managed to ensure that residents will have to attend a number of meetings as well as keeping a clear rent account to qualify and the rewards themselves will be capped at a certain financial limit.

Too few residents qualifying for the scheme	If the scheme is too onerous then very few residents might qualify to be rewarded.	The Council has information on the number of residents who complain, attend meetings and volunteer their views. It will use this to ensure that a sufficient number of residents will qualify for recognition under the scheme.
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6. Consultation

- 6.1 The Tenants Scrutiny Panel were consulted on a potential rewards scheme at their meeting on 8 March 2011. They would like to see a rewards scheme introduced and would like incentives such as a handyperson scheme to be considered.
- 6.2 The Tenants Scrutiny Panel agreed to ask other Councils and Registered Social Landlords (RSL) who are running such a scheme to share their experiences and financial information.

7. Financial and legal implications

- 7.1 Officers will consider whether the schemes could be funded on an invest-to-save basis, and as an alternative the scheme could be funded within existing resources in the Tenant Participation Budget.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 Members are requested to note the contents of this report and request officers to draft a Tenants Rewards Scheme in consultation with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and residents.

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Background papers

None