

08 May 2013

This record relates to Agenda Item 70

RECORD OF HOUSING COMMITTEE DECISION

SUBJECT: MINIMISING THE RISK OF EVICTIONS
CAUSED BY THE HOUSING BENEFIT
SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR SIZE
CRITERIA

AUTHOR: MO LAWLESS

THE DECISION

- 2.1 That Housing Committee note the Council resolution in relation to the Housing Benefit social rented sector size criteria attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 That Housing Committee request Area Panels consider the Notice of Motion and the proposals contained in this report so that their feedback can be considered by Housing Committee (via Housing Management Consultative Sub -Committee) during autumn 2013.
- 2.3 That Housing Committee earmark £70,000 on a one off basis from the Housing Revenue Account, to support urgent initiatives to minimise the risk of evictions.
- 2.4 That for a transitional period until 1st April 2014, where (i) all other avenues have been explored, and (ii) transfer is the only option but there are no suitable properties to transfer to, and (iii) where it is possible to clearly identify that arrears are solely due to the under-occupancy penalty; officers will use all means other than evictions and bailiffs to recover rent due.
- 2.5 Cases that meet these three criteria should not hinder a tenant from moving to another council property.
- 2.6 That the consent of the Secretary of State be sought to use that funding to support additional dedicated Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) for council tenants, supplementing the council's overall DHP fund.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

1. The impact of the Government's welfare reform changes will reduce income for tenants in receipt of benefit payments and may potentially affect their ability to pay their rent. Whilst the Government have given a higher Discretionary Housing Payment fund for 2013/14, (approximately £1 million), there is a large difference between the amount of the fund and the shortfalls in rent across the city, estimated to be between £11 and £12 million.
2. Providing additional funding from the HRA will enable the benefits service to better support more vulnerable council tenants across the city and provide a cost avoidance facility to the city council and other public agencies.

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Housing could choose not to give additional funding to the Discretionary Housing Payment fund. The welfare reform changes will inevitably lead to increased rent arrears and more officer time to collect the arrears, as well as higher collection costs.

Proper Officer:

Date: 9 May 2013

Mark Wall, Head of Democratic Services

Signed:



CALL-IN FOR SCRUTINY

Note: This decision will come into force at the expiry of 5 working days from the date of the meeting at which the decision was taken subject to:

- (i) any requirement for earlier implementation of the decision or,
- (ii) the decision being called in for review by 5 Members from two or more Groups represented on the Council.

