

Portfolio Holder decision record sheet

Name of decision maker: Cllr Margaret Griffiths

Portfolio: Housing

Date of Portfolio Holder decision: 16/10/18

Title of decision: Decant Policy

Part II:

Part II reason:

Decision made and reasons:

To adopt the Decant Policy.

The policy will ensure a consistent approach to moving tenants when major works are required that cannot be executed whilst the tenant is resident in the property. The Policy;

- Clarifies the approach taken by DBC housing service when it comes to decanting tenants;
- Ensures that disruption to tenants lives is kept to a minimum; and
- Ensures the delivery of a responsive and supportive service.

The policy will be kept under continual renewal and the impact of changes will be measured as well as any changes in external demand.

Reports considered: (here reference can be made to specific documents)

- Decant procedures
- Delivering for Dacorum – Corporate Plan 2015-2020
- Housing Strategy
- Housing Allocations Policy
- Housing Disposals Policy
- Tenancy Agreement

Officers/Councillors/Ward Councillors/Stakeholders consulted:

Natasha Beresford – Group Manager, Strategic Housing
Layna Warden – Group Manager, Tenants and Leaseholders
Fiona Williamson – Assistant Director, Housing
Housing Team Leader Group – HOM
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monitoring Officer comments:

No comments to add to the report.

Deputy S151 comments: The service has benchmarked the financial and none financial costs incurred by residents in being decanted to another property and have proposed the monetary

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value to meet this compensation is £400.

Implications:

Meeting housing need

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) housing service recognises that there will be occasions where we must ask tenants to move from their home on a temporary basis so that improvements or major repair work can take place. This is known as 'decanting'. A decant is always a temporary move and tenants will return to their home once works are complete.

Financial risk

We will offer assistance to tenants when it comes to moving from one property to another. The housing service will:

- Arrange for the removal and storage of personal items;
- Arrange to disconnect and re-connect the tenant's cooker;
- Help to lift and relay existing floor covering (where possible); and
- We will offer a payment of £400 to tenants who are required to decant from their existing home, this payment should be used to offset any costs to the tenants as a result of the move i.e. additional travel costs, loss of earnings, and redirection of mail etc.

Where tenants are not required to move and works can be done whilst they continue to live in the property, they will not be entitled to a payment. Any payments made to the tenant will, in the first instance, be used to cover any outstanding debt owed to the housing service prior to being paid to the tenant.

Value for money

If a tenant decides that they would rather move on a permanent basis, they are advised to apply to the housing register for a transfer. They would not qualify for any compensation as this would be dealt in the normal way when a tenant requests a transfer. The Housing Panel will consider these cases on a case by case basis for additional priority to make a successful bid on an alternative property. This will help to reduce costs and will be better value for money for the Council.

In addition, reducing the amount of compensation from £800 per move to £400 per move will not compromise any additional expenses that the tenant will have as the Council pay and arrange for their move anyway.

Options considered and reasons for rejection:

The option of not accepting the policy is not considered an option as the Council needs to;

- Clarify the approach taken by DBC housing service when it comes to decanting tenants;
- Ensures that disruption to tenants lives is kept to a minimum;
- Ensures the delivery of a responsive and supportive service

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Portfolio Holder's signature:

Date:

Details of any interests declared and any dispensations given by the Standards Committee:

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Date decision record sheet received from portfolio holder: 27/09/18

Date decision published: 16/10/18

Decision no: PH/022/18

Date of expiry of call-in period: 23/10/18

Date any call-in received or decision implemented:

1.0 Background

The Decant Policy

The Council has not had a Decant Policy and has relied on Decant Procedures to move tenants when major works are required. Over the years, the procedures have been reviewed and different approaches by various staff made the procedures complicated and hard to follow. It was decided to review the way we administer decant moves and to look at the compensation we pay to the tenants.

Decants affect several sections of the Housing Department and it was essential that all sections were involved in the shaping of the new Decant Policy.

The old Decant Procedures allowed tenants to move either permanently or on a temporary basis and tenants benefited from compensation of £800 per move (for those moving temporary this would mean £1,600) and all expenses paid for the removal services. The tenant's original tenancy was terminated and they were given a similar tenancy at a temporary property where rent was due. However, this compromised any County Court Orders that the tenants may have had for rent arrears and collecting the rent then became difficult. Ordinarily, rent arrears would have had to be repaid before a move could take place but the health and safety of the tenant living in a property where major repairs were required sometimes took priority.

The Decant Policy was developed taking into consideration permanent transfers, when tenants did not want to move back to the property being repaired, and the temporary moves to enable major works to be carried out.

Although a permanent transfer may appear that tenants were 'jumping the list' for a move, it was regarded as beneficial as the Council still has to meet its repairing obligation and this will be achieved with no additional expense for moving the tenants.

In addition, some tenants were subject to County Court Orders and moving a tenant to alternative accommodation would compromise the Order if the property we are repairing is terminated. After Counsel Advice, it has been confirmed that we can move tenants on a temporary license and their original tenancy remains their principal home and the tenant continues to pay rent for this property.

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The Council would not be losing rent revenue in these instances as this prevents the Council from having a long term void property where rent could not be charged anyway.