

Tenants Incentive Scheme

Health, Social Care and Housing Committee

11 October 2011

Purpose of report

- 1 This report updates the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee on the pilot incentive scheme to encourage tenants to downsize from homes that are too large for their household needs.
- 2 To seek approval to establish the incentive scheme as part of the rehousing process and to develop the approach with EdIndex partners.

Main report

- 3 The Council's letting policy was updated in 2007 to include a manual award of silver priority for applicants who were in tenancies with three or more bedrooms but were under-occupying the property. This under-occupation priority is only awarded where tenants indicate that they would like to move.
- 4 On 10 August 2010 Committee agreed to the development of an incentive scheme to further encourage tenants living in family sized homes that were too large for them, to move to smaller homes more suitable for their current needs.
- 5 The pilot scheme, which has been in operation since May 2011 helps tenants deal with some of the practicalities and costs of moving. There is no requirement for a tenant to move from a home that is too large for them, it is entirely voluntary. Tenants may qualify for assistance if they release a property with three or more bedrooms back into letting stock.
- 6 The eligibility criteria for assistance have been developed to allow access for as many tenants as possible. Tenants can select a range of types of assistance up to a maximum value of £1000 per move. A summary of the eligibility criteria and the assistance package offered are provided in Appendices 1 and 2.
- 7 A range of communications have been used to increase tenants awareness of the incentives scheme including the distribution of flyers/posters, articles in the weekly choice publication and on the Council and Choice websites and via the Edinburgh Housing Advice Network practice forum.
- 8 Since the implementation of the pilot in May 2011 the number of applicants who are seeking a move and have been awarded the under-occupation priority has increased by 67% from 71 to 119.
- 9 Nine tenants who were under-occupying have moved to smaller homes during the period May to August 2011. The overall value of the assistance package

for the nine completed moves was £6,920, which is well below the maximum value of £9,000.

- 10 Most tenants who have moved took up the under-occupation priority since the implementation of the pilot scheme and have secured suitable housing within a short timescale. A summary of the moves achieved to date is provided for information in Appendix 3.
- 11 To date, three of the properties returned to letting stock have been re-let. All were three bedroom properties which have subsequently been re-let to households with a silver priority due to homelessness. A further two properties are under offer: one to a homeless household and a ground floor property to a household assessed with a gold priority status due to their housing needs.
- 12 The outcomes from the pilot to date are positive but ongoing monitoring on the financial costs/benefits and the subsequent re-letting of the properties returned to stock will continue.
- 13 EdIndex partners have expressed an interest in extending the scheme to their tenants and this is being progressed through the EdIndex Management Board.

Financial Implications

- 14 The costs of the tenant incentive pilot are being met from existing budgets. £50k is allocated in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2011/12 budget for the pilot scheme.

Equalities Impact

- 15 There is likely to be a positive impact in releasing some larger homes back into the letting stock that may be accessible and therefore suitable for applicants with mobility needs.

Environmental Impact

- 16 There is no environmental impact from this report.

Recommendations

- 17 It is recommended that the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee:
 - a) Note that the pilot scheme has proven to be successful
 - b) Agree to establish the incentive scheme as part of the rehousing process and;
 - c) Agree to this approach being developed with EdIndex partners.

Mark Turley
Director of Services for Communities

Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Summary of Eligibility Criteria2. Assistance Options3. Summary of Moves to Date
Contact/tel/Email	Jennifer Hunter Services for Communities Tel: 0131 529 7532
Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	<p><u>Supports National Outcome (15)</u> - Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs</p> <p><u>Supports Edinburgh Outcome</u> - People's perceptions of the quality and responsiveness of public services in Edinburgh are improved.</p>
Background Papers	*

Appendix 1- Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility Criteria
Council tenants with a secure tenancy
Current property must have 3 or more bedrooms and the tenant/s are willing to move to a smaller property and return the larger property back into letting stock
There should be no applicable housing/tenancy related debt- a move would be considered in certain circumstances if there was an arrangement in place to pay the debt outstanding and this was being maintained
It is a requirement that the tenant/s allows access for a pre-termination inspection to be carried out on their current tenancy
Current tenancy must be in a reasonable condition
Tenant/s would not be allowed to move to a property where it would result in their household being overcrowded
Eligibility may be restricted if the tenant/s or members of the household have been involved in anti-social behaviour. (This would be where action currently being taken or the anti-social behaviour has not been resolved)
The assistance package (other than decoration) would apply to tenants moving to housing association/co-operative tenancies in Edinburgh
The assistance package for the pilot will be awarded only after an offer for a new tenancy has been accepted
'Declaration' will be signed by the tenant/s accepting the conditions of the assistance being provided and confirming that their property will be returned to the Council

Appendix 2- Assistance Options

Assistance Options	Comments	Value of Options (Tenants can select from the list of options all funded by the Council up to a maximum value of £1000 per move)
Arrange removals/packing through Council appointed contractor	Process agreed via the Council storage and removals contract	Removals- Variable depending on property size. 2x bed = £200 Packing = £50-100 Disposal unwanted goods = £250 Total = £500- £550
Disconnection/re-Connection of white goods	Re-connection is not available for gas cookers due to potential Health and Safety implications	(White goods x 2) Disconnect = £35 Reconnect = £35
Provision of white goods in new property		Fridge = £130 Cooker = £200 Washing Machine =£200
Decoration of a certain number of rooms	Schedule of costs from EBS for paint or full strip/paint for each type of room. Work would be carried out only once a tenant had accepted an offer.	Paint /Full strip and paint Lounge= £450/£860 Kitchen= £220/£420 Bathroom= £150/£300 Bedroom=£400/£765 Hall= £450/£860
Provision of B & Q decoration vouchers	Managed in accordance with the existing decoration voucher scheme for empty homes	Up to a maximum value of £250
Housing officers to be available to tenants to provide advice and assistance with various aspects of the move.	This is expected to include the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final utility accounts ▪ Council Tax ▪ Mail re-directs ▪ Special uplifts for disposal of unwanted large goods ▪ Donation of unwanted furniture 	

Appendix 3 - Summary of Moves to Date

Property Size/Type Returned	Letting Area	Under-Occupation Priority Pre/Post Incentives Pilot	Value of Assistance Package Selected (up to max £1000)	Property Type/Location Moved To
3 bedroom flat	Murrayburn	Pre	£390	multi-storey flat- Hailesland
3 bedroom flat	Leith	Pre	£450	house - Easter Drylaw
3 bedroom house	Moredun	Waiting time only	£780	Sheltered Housing Association flat - Hyvots
3 bedroom flat	Dumbiedykes	Post	£730	Housing Association flat- Inch
5 bedroom house	Bingham	Post	£860	flat- City Centre
3 bedroom flat	Magdalene	Post	£960	flat - Pennywell
3 bedroom flat	Broomhouse	Gold Priority	£780	Housing Association flat- Stenhouse
3 bedroom flat	Drylaw	Post	£980	4 in a block- Lochend
3 bedroom - 4 in a block	Drylaw	Post	£990	flat- Whitson