

Committee	Dated:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	30/11/2020
Subject: Downsizing (Shift Allowance) Policy Review	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Y/N
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Decision
Report author: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management	

Summary

As part of the ongoing review of our housing management policies, the Shift Allowance Policy has been revised and is now being submitted for re-approval. This is an existing policy that was first approved in 2018.

The policy title has been amended and some sections have been simplified to make them clearer. We have also included a commitment to cover up-front removal costs where tenants are unable to pay for this themselves.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Approve the revised Downsizing (Shift Allowance) Policy for use by the Housing Service

Main Report

Background

1. The City's Housing Service operates a discretionary 'shift allowance' scheme, which provides a financial incentive to tenants who are under-occupying their homes to move to a smaller property, freeing up larger homes for those who need them. The Shift Allowance Policy was first approved in February 2018 and has now been reviewed as part of the ongoing programme to update and renew housing management policies.

Current Position

2. Downsizing payments are paid to Secure tenants who move into smaller accommodation, allowing us to allocate the vacated property to a household which needs it. Tenants receive £2,000 for the first bedroom and £1,000 for each subsequent bedroom relinquished.
3. The payment is intended to act as an incentive to tenants living in accommodation which they under-occupy, as they cannot be compelled to move to smaller accommodation. The tenant is expected to cover any expenses, such as moving costs, from the payment they receive.
4. In 2019/20, a total of five payments were made, totalling £12,000 (reduced to £8,400 once arrears and other debts had been offset against the amounts due to individual tenants). This freed up several two and three-bedroom properties and allowed the tenants to move to more suitable accommodation.
5. The policy has been reviewed and the following changes made:
 - Addition of paragraph 5.1 regarding advice and assistance for tenants
 - Paragraph 5.2 on eligibility – clarification of eligibility criteria and making it clear that tenants transferring to a smaller home in another landlord's stock can apply for the payment
 - Making it clear that we will pay for removals if the tenant cannot afford to do so up front, as this may be a concern for those on limited incomes who would otherwise like to take advantage of the scheme
 - Paragraph 5.5 – a statement that we will deduct the cost of cleaning the property or removal costs
6. Additionally, several changes have been made to the formatting of the policy.
7. Once the new housing management database is launched, it will be easier to identify households who might take advantage of the downsizing scheme. In accordance with the policy, the scheme will be promoted periodically, and under-occupying households contacted about it directly as appropriate.

Conclusion

8. The Downsizing (Shift Allowance) Policy has been reviewed and is now recommended for approval with some minor changes. Officers will promote the downsizing scheme periodically to ensure that as many eligible tenants are aware of it as possible.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Draft Downsizing (Shift Allowance) Policy v.2
- Appendix 2: consultation feedback

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