

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub- Committee	16 January 2017
<b>Subject:</b> Mais House Decant Programme - Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Paul Jackson – Department of Community and Children's Services	

### Summary

This report provides an update for information on the decant programme currently underway at the Corporation's sheltered housing scheme at Mais House. It also seeks approval for minor variations to the Corporation's Allocations Policy with regard to the way in which refusals of offers of accommodation are treated during a decant.

The decanting of the sheltered housing scheme at Mais House began in May 2016. It was agreed that update reports be brought to every meeting of the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee. This is the fourth update report and reflects rehousing activity during November 2017. There are 62 units of accommodation at Mais House, 52 of which were occupied at the start of the decant programme. During this period three more units at Mais house were vacated. The current number of occupied units is 38. More details are set out in paragraphs 4, 5, and 6 of the main report.

Under the Corporation's Allocation Policy conditions are attached to housing applications which restrict eligibility for further consideration, in the event of refusals of accommodation. In view of the purpose of the rehousing programme at Mais House it is not considered to be in the Corporation's interest to defer the housing applications of residents who refuse an offer or to reduce their priority for rehousing. It is therefore proposed that these conditions be waived for the purposes of rehousing Mais House residents and that, where residents refuse an offer, they continue to be considered for further offers in the interests of securing a satisfactory outcome.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- note the update report;
- approve the proposal outlined in paragraphs 11 and 12.

## Main Report

### Background

1. The decanting of Mais House began in May 2016. It was agreed to bring regular progress reports on the decant programme to the Housing Management and Almshouses Sub- Committee. This is the fourth report and reflects activity during November 2016.
2. The preparatory work for the decant programme included a housing needs survey. A majority of residents expressed a preference to be rehoused within the Corporation's own social rented stock, either in sheltered or general needs accommodation. Others expressed a wish to be rehoused in areas in which the Corporation does not have any social rented housing. This will require the cooperation of other housing providers in the social rented and charitable sector if we are to meet these requirements.
3. Officers have established a reciprocal rehousing agreement with LB Lewisham to try to meet some of the demand and are seeking a similar arrangement with LB Greenwich. Officers have also held exploratory discussions with a large charitable provider of a newly-developed scheme at St Clement Heights in Sydenham. The City does not have any nomination or reciprocal agreements with this provider. However officers have written to all residents advising them about this scheme and offering assistance should they wish to register an interest in it. Officers will provide further assistance to residents should they come under consideration for rehousing at this development.

### Current Position – rehousing activity in this period and cumulative totals

4. There are 62 units at Mais house. Forty-one were occupied at the end of the last reporting period (September to October 2016). Since that time nine further offers have been made and three more properties have been vacated. A summary of the total number of vacated units and occupancy levels since the start of the programme to the end of November is shown in the table below.

Occupied units at start of programme - May 2016	Total number of vacated units at the end of Nov 2016	Occupied units at the end of Nov 2016
52	14	38

5. More vacancies are expected throughout January 2017 as offers are accepted and residents move into new accommodation. These will be reported to the next meeting of your Sub-Committee.
6. Rehousing activity has been greater than usual in recent weeks due to a higher number of vacancies than usual at the Corporation's other sheltered schemes and three newly developed properties becoming available at the Avondale estate. This level of supply is not expected to be sustained and the rate at which

properties become vacant at Mais House is expected to slow in 2017 as demand amongst residents for rehousing within Corporation property reduces.

### **Rehousing process under the decant scheme**

7. Mais House residents are being rehoused in accordance with the Corporation's allocations policy. All residents have been registered on the housing waiting list and awarded the category of management move. This gives them top priority for rehousing. Because all Mais House residents have equal priority for rehousing, their length of residence is used to determine the order in which they should receive suitable offers of accommodation. Residents who have lived there longest generally receive offers first.
8. There are two ways in which Mais house residents can receive offers of rehousing from the Corporation. Members are asked to note the following about the two methods and the proposal to waive certain conditions attached to them under the current allocation policy (see paragraph 10).
9. The first method is to receive a direct offer of suitable accommodation from our allocations team. This is the way sheltered and other specialist housing is normally allocated and offered and is the primary method by which Mais House residents are likely to be rehoused by the Corporation. The second method is for residents to make a bid for an available property using the Corporation's Choice-Based Lettings system. This is the way general needs accommodation is allocated (and some residents have indicated a willingness to consider general needs accommodation). Officers make bids on behalf of Mais House residents to secure suitable properties for residents and then arrange the viewing with them.
10. Normally there are restrictions on the number of offers that applicants can receive and refuse under each method. For applicants in the management move category, once one reasonable offer has been made their management move category is normally removed. (They remain eligible to bid under the choice-based lettings system but with reduced priority). For applicants using the choice-based lettings system, once three bids have been won and are considered "reasonable" then, if none have been accepted, their application is effectively deferred for a year.

### **Proposal**

11. In view of the purpose of the rehousing programme at Mais House (ie a decant programme for redevelopment) it is not considered to be in the Corporation's interest to defer the housing applications of residents who refuse an offer or to reduce their priority for rehousing. It is therefore proposed that these conditions be waived for the purposes of rehousing Mais House residents under the decant programme and that where residents refuse an offer they continue to be considered for further offers as outlined in paragraphs 7, 8 & 9 in the interests of securing a satisfactory outcome.
12. At present the number of refusals to date is very low and at this early stage in the programme there is no need to consider whether refused offers are reasonable

and should be enforced. Should this change, the decant policy provides for the Director of Community and Children's Services to consider the reasonableness of offers which have been refused in conjunction with action, as a last resort, to ensure vacant possession through legal action.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

13. The redevelopment of Mais House is a key objective in the Community & Children's Services Business Plan and contributes to the delivery of Strategic Priority 4 - *Supporting homes and communities: Developing strong neighbourhoods and ensuring people have a decent place to live.*

14. The development will contribute to the corporate commitment that the City will build 700 new homes on Housing Revenue Account land within the next 10 years.

### **Appendices**

None.

### **Background Papers**

None.

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