

REDUCING THE AGE FOR OAP DESIGNATED BUNGALOWS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider lowering the age of admission to OAP designated bungalows from 60 to 55.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council currently owns 206 one-bedroom bungalows across the District that are currently only allocated to OAP's over 60 or the disabled.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Historically there has been opposition to reduce the age criteria, as lowering the age does mean that an application under Right To Buy might decrease the stock levels even further.
- 3.2 However some bungalows have already been sold, as under the Right to Buy legislation, it is not enough for a local authority just to state that they are 'OAP Designated'. Properties must also be suitable for the elderly taking into account their location, size, design, heating systems and other features. On appeal some of the Council's bungalows were deemed to fall outside the criteria in order to be excluded from the Right To Buy legislation. Since the introduction of these regulations the number of one-bedroom bungalows lost from the Council's stock number around five.
- 3.3 Council one-bedroom bungalows are highly desirable properties offering independent living on one floor, with gardens. Most of the mature tenants who are prepared to vacate large family accommodation state that they want a bungalow. It is through these transfers that many of our multi-bedroom vacant properties occur.
- 3.4 However the number of over 60's who are prepared to move has been slowly drying up. It is hoped that by lowering the age to 55 and by publicising this change and the Transfer Incentive Scheme with payment to 'down-size', that a few more tenants will volunteer to move to smaller accommodation. The Housing Management team estimate that there are around ten tenants who might be attracted to being re-housed in a bungalow. There is currently one couple in a two-bedroom house who would like a one-bedroom bungalow but cannot be offered one, as the wife is only 56.
- 3.5 This option is one of a number of ideas under consideration to try to release more properties for homeless families in the light of the guidelines that

Council's are unable to use Bed & Breakfast accommodation for families for more than six weeks from 1st April 2004.

- 3.6 Other strategies to meet this challenge will be the subject of later reports.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 Strategic Risk

It is probable that some of these bungalows will later be lost to the Council under the Right to Buy Scheme, thus further reducing Council stock. However, under the existing regime these tenants could have bought the house they were originally living in but have chosen not to. This risk needs to be weighed against the possible advantages of freeing up multi-bedroomed houses.

4.2 Resource Risk

A consultation exercise must be carried out with affected residents but is unlikely to create much if any opposition. The consultation exercise could be rolled up with other planned changes to tenancy conditions.

4.3 Reputation Risk

This should be seen as a positive step to try to help homeless families and those with growing children by freeing-up multi-bedroom units. However, attention is required at address the issue of an ageing population profile and this needs to be incorporated into an Elderly Persons Strategy

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A consultation exercise will be carried out, but there will be minimum additional cost as it can be incorporated as part of other consultation exercises.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The 'Right to Buy' provisions will become applicable to one-bedroom bungalows if the proposals are accepted.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

To reduce the age of admission to one-bedroom bungalows from 60 to 55.

Steve Clarkson

Head of Revenue & Housing Management

Background Papers:

none

For further information please contact Tricia Colwell on:-

Tel:- 01702 318030

E-Mail:- tricia.colwell@rochford.gov.uk