
Elderly Relatives Scheme

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members to consider a referral from Housing Management Sub-Committee regarding the type of accommodation offered to those entering sheltered housing under the Council's Elderly Relatives Scheme.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Elderly Relative Schemes was introduced in September 1979 (Min 473/79) to admit to the Housing Register persons of pensionable age who lived outside the District and who expressed a wish to move closer to their relatives who were Rochford residents.
- 2.2 In 1991 it became evident that the provision of sheltered housing and OAP designated properties outstripped demand and the Housing Manager was authorised to offer housing to single elderly people wishing to take the tenancy of bedsitter flats irrespective of the Council's residential qualification. Additionally, authorisation was given to increase the number accepted under the Elderly Relatives Scheme; previously just five a year; to ensure that bedsitter flats were not left empty for protracted periods of time. (Minute 145/91 refers)
- 2.3 Last year the Head of Service reported his concern about the large number of unoccupied bedsitter and OAP designated properties and the consequential rent loss. He was authorised to further publicise the availability of accommodation in sheltered schemes and the Housing Management Sub-Committee are part way through a review of pensioner designated flats across the District where consideration is given to releasing flats for general needs housing.

3 TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION

The type of accommodation available to those applying under the Elderly Relative Scheme or as single elderly remains as bedsitter accommodation only.

- 3.1 The Head of Service is requesting that one-bed flats in sheltered housing schemes and pensioner designated one-bed bungalows be now offered to applicants under these schemes. The reasons behind this proposal are:-
- a). There is no bedsitter accommodation in the Great Wakering, Ashingdon and Rochford areas and certain areas of Rayleigh, and applicants have expressed a desire to move to these areas to be closer to relatives.

- b). The Council now has a number of one-bed flats in sheltered housing schemes which have remained vacant for upwards of 10 weeks incurring rent loss of around £60 per week (inc. service charges)
 - c). There are a number of one-bedroom bungalows sprinkled around the District which are considered to be 'unattractive' to those few applicants on the Elderly Housing Register (a bungalow in Hardwick Close had eight refusals before an applicant very low on the Register accepted it)>
 - d). There are just 150 applicants on the Elderly Housing Register. 98 of those are on the deferred list (which means that they do not wish to be made an offer of accommodation at present). Many of the remaining applicants have expressed very specific requests for accommodation; i.e. in a certain road or, perhaps, a Finchfield Trust property.
 - e). The Council's performance indicator (BVPI 68) on void property management is one of the worst in its family group at 8.5 weeks. Despite other initiatives to reduce this level of void (and consequential rent loss) our policies currently work against us and little or no success is being achieved to reduce this level. The Best Value target for the average time to re-let is 4 weeks.
- 3.2 Currently the schemes allow for only one offer to be made to the applicant and then their application is suspended. Members may wish to consider this policy against the recently agreed Suspension Policy, which permits two "reasonable" offers to be made before suspension. A reasonable offer was defined as being suitable for the applicants need, in the areas of choice indicated and with their preferred landlord.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A reduction in rent loss through voids would add buoyancy to the Housing Revenue Account and help keep rents low.

5 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- 1) That the Elderly Relatives Scheme and Single Elderly Applicants Scheme be extended to provide either bedsitter or one-bedroom flatted accommodation in sheltered housing schemes or one-bedroom bungalows.
- 2). That the Head of Service continues to publicise the availability of accommodation in order to keep void losses to a minimum.

- 3) That the suspension policy for the Elderly Relatives Scheme and Single Elderly Scheme be brought into line with the Council's general suspension policy.
- 4). That a report on the outcome of this initiative be made to the Housing Management Sub-Committee after one year of operation. (HRHM)

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