

PETS IN SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is to advise Members of the progress towards allowing tenants in sheltered accommodation to keep companion animals.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In 1999 a study was made concerning the keeping of larger pets, such as cats and dogs, by tenants in sheltered accommodation. The tenants at the time were consulted and rejected the idea of keeping pets but had no objections to scheme managers keeping pets. Accordingly, scheme managers were encouraged to keep pets and to generally allow tenants access to these animals if it was their wish. In July a report was considered by the Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee who requested a further tenant survey be undertaken.

3 TENANTS SURVEY

- 3.1 In a positive approach, all the tenants in sheltered accommodation were surveyed in August 2004 to see whether they would support the introduction of pets, such as cats and dogs, in sheltered schemes (details are appended). 353 tenants replied to the survey and only 35 were in favour of the proposal. This is a very much reduced number compared to the previous survey in 1999 when, of the 376 tenants who replied, 61 had been in favour.
- 3.2 Because of a less negative response to the earlier survey, a slightly different approach was made to tenants in Goodmans (16 flats) and Romney House (23 flats) asking for their views on the introduction of larger pets into sheltered accommodation. Only 1 tenant in Goodmans and 3 in Romney House wanted to accept larger pets. Tenant's comments indicated that they felt the buildings unsuitable and impractical for the keeping of larger animals; they also felt it was unfair on the pet to be kept in a small confined flat. The majority of tenants are also in receipt of housing benefit and feel it is an expense they cannot afford.
- 3.3 With the disposal of Hardwick House and return of the Crown Hill flats to OAP designation there are fewer tenants now living in sheltered accommodation. Consequently fewer tenants responded to this survey, than in 1999. At the same time, the number of tenants prepared to accept pets into schemes has about halved.

- 3.4 The Animal Welfare Charter was considered by Council last month when it was accepted that no decision should be made on accepting companion animals into Sheltered Housing until further consideration be given by this committee, and that this process be concluded within a six-month period. Most sheltered housing schemes have bungalows or self-contained flats as part of the complex where tenants can enjoy all the benefits of sheltered housing (communal lounge and emergency pull-cord) but live independently, if they so wish. These units would be ideal for pet owning tenants and it is proposed that prospective tenants on the Housing Register who have companion animal should attract one additional point on the allocation system when being considered for these types of unit. Alternatively, Members may wish to have pets accepted into one scheme only, on a pilot basis.
- 3.5 Members of the Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee also asked the Head of Service to investigate a pet-minding scheme organised by the Dengie Hundred Scouts. The Scouting Organisation was contacted but the District Secretary, Brian Baldry, of that organisation was unaware that such a scheme operated and had certainly not existed during his association with that body; some considerable years.
- 3.6 The Head of Service was also asked to contact Anchor Housing Association as to their policy on the acceptance of pets. This housing association allows tenants to have small pets only (not defined), suitable for the accommodation being occupied and always at the complete discretion of the managing warden. If the original pet should die, then the tenant may replace the animal with another suitable pet. The policy states that the animal must not present a hazard to other tenants in the scheme, but gives no guidance as to what will happen if it does. There are no policy guidelines as to what will happen to the pet if the owner goes into hospital. A copy of the policy has been placed in the Members Library, for reference.

4 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Committee **recommends** to the Community Services Committee:-
- (1) That the Policy remains unaltered and that tenants of communal sheltered accommodation be not allowed to keep larger pets.
 - (2) That the Policy remains unaltered and that Scheme Managers be encouraged to keep larger pets.
 - (3) That pet owning applicants on the Sheltered Housing Register attract one additional point when being considered for linked bungalows and self-contained flats as part of the sheltered housing complex

Steve Clarkson

Head of Revenue and Housing Management

Background Papers:-

Survey Letter, Anchor Housing Association “Advice for Pet Owning Tenants”

For further information please contact Ann Dutton on:-

Tel:- 01702 318063

E-Mail:-ann.dutton@rochford.gov.uk

APPENDIX

Results of survey

Sheltered Accommodation	No of residents asked	No with dementia	No of replies	Pets in sheltered units		Warden pet Yes/No
				Yes	No	
Romney House	23	0	19	4	12	No
Goodmans	16	1	16	1	15	No
Wedgewood Court	37	0	37	3	34	No
The Lavers	23	0	23	0	23	No
Frances Cottee Lodge	11	1	10	1	9	No
Britton Court	51	1	51	1	48	No
Chignal House	25	0	25	2	23	Yes
Spa Court	35	2	35	3	32	No
Rupert Jarvis Court	35	2	35	6	29	Yes
Millview	35	0	35	2	33	No
Pembroke House	31	0	31	10	21	No
Bellhouse	36	0	36	2	34	No

It is not known whether any tenant currently in sheltered housing had to re-home their pet before taking up residence.

At 1 December 2004 there were seven applicants on the Sheltered Housing Register indicating that they owned pets. Some of these applicants are on the “deferred list”. This means that at the moment they do not wish to be offered accommodation.