



Report to: Portfolio Holder- Housing
 Decision Date: 14 September 2023
 Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lee Brazier
 Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director - Housing, Health & Wellbeing
 Lead Officer: Julie Davidson, Business Manager - Housing Services, Ext. 5542

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open report, non-key decision
Report Title	Home Release Policy – Ground Breaker
Purpose of Report	This report sets out the support and assistance available for tenants living in homes too large for their household needs or with adaptations that are no longer required.
Recommendations	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Portfolio Holder approves the commencement of this ground-breaking scheme. • The Portfolio Holder agrees to a budget of £50,000 to support this scheme, which will be funded from the Tenant Welfare Fund created in January 2023
Alternative Options Considered	<p>There is a continued increase in demand for both larger family homes and adapted accommodation within our District; by providing both financial and moving support (or a blend of both) we will be providing tenants with homes suitable for their needs.</p> <p>Failure to address this demand places additional pressure on our adaptation budget, increases numbers on our housing register and results in us being unable to meet housing need within Newark and Sherwood.</p>
Reason for Recommendation	To ensure the Council has suitable arrangements in place to support tenants wishing to downsize and/or release adapted accommodation.

Decision Taken	As per the recommendations
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1.0 Background

- 1.0 This scheme aims to help tenants downsize or release properties that are either too large for their needs or have adaptations the occupants do not need anymore.
- 1.1 This scheme has several benefits: it can improve tenant finances through reducing contributions to rent through having excess bedrooms; better use of stock if adapted or can be used for larger families and a reduction in budget needed for adaptations. The support is either cash incentive, actual support with moving and the costs of moving or a blend of both.
- 1.2 The Council's Allocations Scheme awards Band 1 priority to existing tenants occupying a home with two or more bedrooms who wish to move to a smaller home. This is called 'Changing Places' and we have currently 100 applications registered.
- 1.3 There are 728 households (including existing tenants) registered for homes of three or more bedrooms.
- 1.4 We also hold regular meetings regarding applicants requiring adapted accommodation; these numbers remain consistent. In 21/22 we had 21 households requiring specialist accommodation with 10 being existing tenants and 11 being applicants from other housing. In 22/23 we had 22 households requiring specialist accommodation with an equal split between existing tenants and applicants from other housing.
- 1.5 It is worth noting this Home Release scheme is only applicable to existing tenants however it is hoped an increase in available adapted properties may in time allow us to offer suitable housing solutions for those applicants requiring specialist accommodation.
- 1.6 The Home Release Policy is at Appendix A

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 There is a continued increase in demand for both larger family homes and adapted accommodation within our District; by providing both financial and moving support (or a blend of both) we will be ensuring tenants are living in homes suitable for their needs.
- 2.2 As detailed above the data indicates we need to consider an alternative approach to facilitate the release of larger and adapted homes.
- 2.3 Failure to address this demand places additional pressure on our adaptation budget, increases numbers on our housing register and results in us being unable to meet housing need within Newark and Sherwood.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations officers have considered the following implications; Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

3.1 Financial Implications – FIN23-24/6716

In January 2023 Cabinet agreed for a fund of £300,000 to be created, here is the excerpt from the minutes of that meeting:

e) that a fund of £300,000 be created, funded by the Newark and Sherwood Homes Transfer Reserve to fund initiatives to support tenants impacted by the increased charges including a tenant welfare fund.

For this scheme a total budget of £50,000 is requested. For this scheme a budget of £10,000 is required in 2023/24. With the remaining £40,000 to be allocated in future years as and when required. This will come from the HRA Service Improvement Reserve (formerly, the NSH Transfer Reserve).

3.2 Equalities

The policy has no direct equalities implications although there is an expectation that approaches to supporting decants are varied and will reflect the needs and requirements of tenants. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

3.3 Tenant Involvement

Feedback from the LIN chairs has been positive, and they welcome the scheme which encourages tenants to release adapted or family homes. There is a concern that the ceiling cost of £2000 may not be enough to incentivise a move but as the scheme is ground breaking we will monitor this aspect closely to identify if money is a barrier

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None