

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE - 31 OCTOBER 2011

REPORT ON: EVALUATION OF LOCAL LETTING INITIATIVE AND  
INTRODUCTION OF AMENITY HOUSING

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 475-2011

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report describes the evaluation of a Local Letting Initiative where sheltered properties which proved hard to let were targeted at applicants aged over 45. The rationale behind this was to attempt to minimise disturbance and clashes of lifestyle between existing and future residents.
- 1.2. Learning from the positive outcome of the letting initiative the Housing Department proposes to formalise this approach by introducing a new category of "Amenity Housing" to the Letting Policy.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1. Agree in principle to the introduction of Amenity Housing.
- 2.2. To instruct the Director of Housing to develop a policy for letting Amenity Housing and advertising this to applicants.
- 2.3. To note that the policy for letting Amenity Housing will be submitted to a future Housing Committee.

## 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. All actions are within the Department's approved budget.

## 4. MAIN TEXT

- 4.1. The department has experienced difficulty in letting some sheltered properties in certain letting areas within the city, with vacancies taking several offers and considerable time to let. In some cases, no sheltered applicants could be attracted at all. This problem has been particularly acute in blocks of flats where sheltered properties are on the first floor, ground floor flats were generally still in considerable demand.

- 4.2. Concerns had been raised by residents and staff of the sheltered complexes about the possibility of the flats being allocated to mainstream applicants and the possibility of lifestyle clashes if younger tenants moved in.
- 4.3. These concerns led to a proposal for a Local Letting Initiative where first floor sheltered flats that could not attract sufficient applicants who desired or qualified for sheltered housing be advertised to applicants aged 45 or over. These flats would be advertised in line with the "available now" process, with vacancies being advertised in district offices and on the council's internet site.
- 4.4. Given the low numbers of properties it was anticipated would need to be advertised, it was agreed by the Housing Department's Management Team that the initiative would run for a period of 12 months, at which time it would be evaluated.
- 4.5. From June 2010 until July 2011, 41 properties were let under the initiative. All of the properties concerned were one bedroom first floor flats with sheltered tenants living elsewhere in the block. The properties were spread over 6 letting areas:
- Douglas
  - Craigie
  - East Central
  - St. Mary's
  - Charleston
  - Happyhillock
- 4.6. The properties all achieved queues of interested applicants, from groups across the waiting list and were successfully let.
- 4.7. Of the 41 houses let under this initiative, 2 have subsequently been vacated by the tenants, but the remaining tenancies have been successfully sustained.
- 4.8. Termination rates and reasons for termination in the blocks of flats are comparable with other sheltered housing.
- 4.9. Based on the information gathered about the Local Letting Initiative, it seems there has been no significant adverse impact on the blocks or existing tenants and the tenancies created have been in the main successful.
- 4.10. Learning from the positive impacts of the Local Letting Initiative, it is recommended that we create a new housing type and category within the letting Policy, that being "Amenity Housing". Amenity housing is provided by a number of landlords including some housing associations in Dundee.
- 4.11. Amenity Housing provides independent accommodation for older people (aged 50 years or over) in a warm, comfortable and secure environment. However it may also be suitable for a person who has a medical condition or special need, where it has been recognised that amenity housing would be suitable for them.
- 4.12. The accommodation is designed to recognise the particular needs of older people or their disability and in each individual property there is normally a living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom or shower-room with heating throughout. Although the accommodation does not provide sheltered warden services it will have one or more of the following features:

- Raised sockets and switches
- Bathroom handrails
- Non slip flooring
- Will be no higher than ground or 1st floor

The following can also be provided if required:

- Community Alarm
- Communal Cleaning
- Housing Support

4.13. Prior to implementation of the new category we will need to inform applicants that this new housing type is available and inform them of the qualifying criteria so that they can if they wish apply for it.

4.14. Consultation will be implemented on the draft policy and reported to Committee.

## 5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1. This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Risk Management. There are no issues to report.

5.2. An Equality Impact Assessment has not yet been completed but will be done with the development of the detailed policy and this will be reported together with the policy for letting Amenity Housing to a future Housing Committee.

## 6. **CONSULTATIONS**

6.1. The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director of Finance and all other Chief Officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report. No concerns were expressed.

## 7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1. None

**ELAINE ZWIRLEIN**  
**DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**OCTOBER, 2011**