



# East Northamptonshire Council

## Policy and Resources Committee - 15 June 2009

### East Northamptonshire Pilot Private Sector Leasing Scheme Lettings Policy.

#### Summary

The report seeks approval for the Pilot Private Sector Leasing Scheme Lettings Policy.

#### Attachment(s)

Appendix 1 - Pilot Private Sector Leasing Scheme Lettings Policy.

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 16 March 2009 approval was granted to launch a pilot Private Sector Leasing scheme (PSL) in partnership with Rockingham Forest Housing Association (minute 414 refers).
- 1.2 The scheme was approved on the condition that a Lettings Policy be brought to the Committee for Member approval, before any funding is released.
- 1.3 Officers have drafted a proposed Lettings Policy, which is attached at Appendix 1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the policy.

#### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 PSL is a model whereby a private landlord leases their property to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL); who in turn rents it to an affordable housing applicant. In simple terms the owners of empty properties provide the houses, the RSL provides the housing management service and takes care of day to day repairs and maintenance, and the Local Authority supplies the occupants.
- 2.2 The purpose of the scheme is to add another option to the range of initiatives currently available for preventing homelessness.
- 2.3 Further details on the scheme can be found in the committee report received by the Policy and Resources Committee on 16 March 2009.

#### 3.0 Lettings Policy

- 3.1 The objective of having a Lettings Policy is to provide clear guidance, predominantly to applicants, on how the scheme will operate. It covers a number of areas, including:
  - Eligibility
  - Exclusions
  - Lettings Process
  - Selection criteria
  - Monitoring
- 3.2 The policy also helps to ensure that any tenancies are successful and sustainable, both for the residents themselves and the wider community.

- 3.3 The letting of PSL properties is to be undertaken in conjunction with the Council's Housing Allocations Policy 2008 and as such the principles of this policy have been applied. (The Policy can be viewed at <http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/ppimageupload/image7470.pdf>).
- 3.4 It is recommended that the Lettings Policy be reviewed after a period of 12 months, to determine whether it is successful and if any changes are required.
- 4.0 Recommendation**
- 4.1 Members are recommended to approve the proposed Pilot Private Sector Leasing Scheme Lettings Policy.

<b>Implications:</b>	
<b>Corporate Outcomes or Other Policy/Priority/Strategy</b>	
Good Quality of Life	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good Reputation <input type="checkbox"/>
Good Value for Money	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High Quality Service Delivery <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Effective Partnership Working	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong Community Leadership <input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of our Customers and Communities <input type="checkbox"/>
Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision(s) would be outside the budget or policy framework and require full Council approval <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Financial</b>	There are no financial implications at this stage <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	There will be financial implications – see paragraph <input type="checkbox"/>
	There is provision within existing budget <input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure at a later date <input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may have potential for income generation <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Risk Management</b>	An assessment has been carried out and there are no material risks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Material risks exist and these are recorded at Risk Register Reference - inherent risk score - <input type="checkbox"/> residual risk score - <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Staff</b>	There are no additional staffing implications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Additional staff will be required – see paragraph <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Equalities and Human Rights</b>	There will be no impact on equality (race, age, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation) or human rights implications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	There will be an impact on equality (see categories above) or human rights implications – see paragraph <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Legal</b>	Power: Homelessness Act 2002
	Other considerations:
<b>Background Papers:</b> Policy and Resources Committee 16 March 2009 Private Sector Leasing Scheme Report.	
<b>Person Originating Report:</b> Cat Hartley, Housing Strategy Manager, 01832 742078 chartley@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk	
<b>Date: 14 May 2009</b>	
<b>CFO</b>	<b>MO</b>
<b>CX</b>	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 19)

## **East Northamptonshire Pilot Private Sector Leasing Scheme Lettings Policy**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This document outlines the Lettings Policy for the East Northamptonshire Private Sector Leasing scheme (PSL). The scheme is a pilot which is due to run for twelve months from July 2009.

### **2.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 2.1 The letting of PSL properties will be undertaken as part of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy and as such the principles of this policy have been applied (see Housing Allocations Policy 2008 at <http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/ppimageupload/image7470.pdf>).
- 2.2 The purpose of the PSL scheme is to add another option to the range of initiatives currently available for preventing homelessness.
- 2.3 The pilot scheme has been designed to address the need for three bedroom family accommodation in Thrapston and Higham Ferrers.
- 2.4 The pilot scheme will aim to bring into management six units of family accommodation within the first 12 months; for a period of five years.
- 2.5 The scheme will be operated in partnership with Rockingham Forest Housing.

### **3.0 Eligibility Criteria**

- 3.1 Any person on the Housing Register, or eligible to be accepted onto the Housing Register, can express an interest in the PSL scheme.
- 3.2 Applicants will be considered for the scheme where:
- PSL is an appropriate housing solution, as the scheme only provides accommodation for a limited period of time.
  - The household composition of the applicant is appropriate for the PSL property. For example for a three bedroom house applicants would need to have 2 or more children.
  - Applicants satisfy an affordability assessment. Rents for this scheme are higher than social rents but are set within the Local Housing Allowance. It is important for both the applicant and the financial viability of the scheme that the tenant can afford to pay the rent.

## **4.0 Exclusions**

4.1 In line with Housing Allocations Policy (paragraphs 31, 32 and 33) applicants may be excluded from consideration for the scheme where there is evidence of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of a PSL property.

4.2 The grounds on which a possession order under Section 84 of the Housing Act 1985 (Part 1 Schedule 2) could be granted are deemed to be reasons for exclusion:

- Rent arrears
- Breach of tenancy agreement
- Nuisance or annoyance to neighbours
- Conviction for using a property for immoral or illegal purposes
- Damage or neglect
- Domestic violence
- Supplying false evidence on their application.

4.3 This list is not exhaustive but highlights the type of situations in which the Council may consider refusing an applicant access to the scheme..

4.4 The Council may also refuse to nominate an applicant for the scheme if the applicant has a history of violence or abusive behaviour against particular individuals which may affect other residents in East Northamptonshire.

4.5 The Council reserves the right to exclude applicants from the scheme if we are not happy with the information that has been provided when registering an interest in the scheme.

## **5.0 Lettings Process**

5.1 As soon as a suitable property has been identified by RFHA and ENC, the Housing Options Team - Nene Valley Homechoice (NVHC) - will be notified.

5.2 NVHC will advertise the property as part of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) highlighting the differences from the standard properties i.e.

- Tenancy type will be an Assured Shorthold Tenancy
- Accommodation is for a fixed period of time.

5.3 Interested applicants will be invited to bid / express an interest to NVHC. NVHC may also offer PSL to applicants for whom they feel the scheme would be suitable, at the time of discussing their housing options with them.

## **6.0 Selection of Nominees**

- 6.1 All interested applicants will be considered, but priority will be given to applicants who are threatened with homelessness.
- 6.2 It is anticipated that potential PSL clients may include:
- A private sector tenant who is served notice by their landlord and must vacate the property.
  - Home-owners who need to sell their property as a consequence of a relationship breakdown.
  - Home-owners with mortgage arrears, who are not eligible for mortgage rescue.
- 6.3 Full details will be recorded of each applicant's circumstances to track who the scheme is assisting and to establish if there is a specific group of clients whose circumstances are best suited to PSL.

## **7.0 Tenancy Support**

- 7.1 Tenancy support will be provided by RFHA if required. The appropriate level of support will be determined in line with their Tailored Services Assessment.

## **8.0 Monitoring**

- 8.1 As part of the pilot, regular reports will be produced to assess the:
- Affordability of the scheme
  - Client groups assisted
  - Lettings process
- 8.2 Procedures will be modified if it becomes apparent that the objectives of the scheme are not being fulfilled.

## **9.0 Review**

A full review of the pilot project, including this lettings policy, will be undertaken after twelve months.