



EMPTY HOMES AND LETTINGS POLICY

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Homes in Sedgemoor Homes and Lettings Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. We are committed to customer involvement in our policy formation and decision making processes. This policy sets out the ways in which we will enable our customers to influence matters that significantly affect them and empower them to become more involved.
- 1.2. We are committed to equality and diversity and the prevention of discrimination. We will endeavour to promote inclusion and representation and will do all we can to prevent discrimination against individuals and groups as a result of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.
- 1.3. It is our intention that all information will be produced in plain English. However, we will endeavour, when requested, to provide information in larger print, audio format, Braille or another language.

2. Homes and Lettings Policy Statement

- 2.1. Our policy in relation to the letting of empty homes is to outline our commitment to allocate homes in a fair and transparent manner.

The Tenancy Standard of the regulatory Framework (April 2012) requires that social homes are let in a fair, transparent and efficient way, taking into account the housing needs and aspirations of customers and potential customers.

We will demonstrate how lettings make best use of available housing and contribute to the local authorities strategic housing functions which include assistance with homelessness duties.

- 2.2. This policy is intended as guidance and any actions which may contradict this policy must first be discussed with a member of the leadership team.

3. Purpose of Policy

- 3.1. The purpose of this Homes and Lettings Policy is to provide:
 - Access to affordable, good quality housing to those in housing need
 - A fair and transparent process for allocating our homes;
 - Choice for customers

- Sustainable Neighbourhoods and diverse communities

4. Policy Details

4.1 This policy details how customers can apply for a Sedgemoor District Council home and covers the key principles to be adopted when allocating empty properties.

- We will participate in Homefinder Somerset, the countywide choice based lettings scheme administered by Sedgemoor District Council and the other Somerset local authorities.
- Where a customer needs to move urgently, we will support them to do so including where we need to act outside of the established scheme. This includes those impacted by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 where affordability is a key factor to sustain their tenancy.
- Where we have difficulty in reletting we will use alternative methods of advertising to minimise loss of rental income.
- We will consider applicants for accommodation appropriate to their needs and size of their household.
- We aim to create balanced and sustainable communities. When making allocations we will have regard to a customer's ability to sustain a tenancy.
- We operate an exclusion policy which is both clear and objective. We are required to make a judgement on the facts based on available evidence which will include but is not limited to, the available factual evidence from the previous landlord, partner agencies, the police and social services. All exclusions will be for a defined period of time. All applicants have the Right of Appeal where their application has been excluded or suspended.
- As a partner in the multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), we will support partner agencies tasked with the management of registered sex offenders, violent and other types of sexual offenders, and offenders who pose a risk of harm to the public.
- We will assist where possible in the rehousing of Asylum Seekers and persons from abroad, in accordance with statutory and regulatory requirements. We will only accept referrals from the local authority or NASS (National Asylum Support Service) for asylum seekers with "limited leave to remain".

5. Processes and Procedures related to this policy

- 5.1
- Tenancy Allocation Process and Procedure
 - Allocation of Extra Care Housing Process and procedure
 - Sensitive Letting Process and Procedure

- Hard to let Process and Procedure
- Tenancy sign up Process and Procedure
- Mutual Exchange Process and Procedure

5. Monitoring and Review

5.1. The following performance information is collected and reported on in relation to ASB

Description

- Average re-let time (all voids) days including major voids
- Average time taken to let major voids
- Customer satisfaction with the lettings process
- Occupancy of homes at the end of the period (%)

5.2. Satisfaction surveys will be provided to all persons who give Notice on their tenancy. Where they are dissatisfied the Neighbourhood Manager will address expressions of dissatisfaction with the process, separately with the complainant.

5.3. We will review and consult on this policy, seeking comments from stakeholders and partners, particularly customers, as well as reviewing it against current good practice, regulatory and legal requirements.

6. Homes in Sedgemoor –Homes and Lettings Policy

6.1. This policy is drawn up with reference to: (legislation)

- Housing Acts 1985 and 1996
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Housing Act 2004
- Children Act 1989 (Section 27)
- Equality Act 2010
- Localism Act 2011
- Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013
- Care Act 2014

6.2. Reference made to the following sources and guidance: (best practice etc)

- Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/3264)
- Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England (CLG 2012)
- Somerset Housing Partnership Homelessness Strategy 2013-2016
- Somerset Strategic Housing Framework
- Homefinder Somerset Allocations Policy
- Somerset Housing Partnership CBL Procedures for Landlords
- Tenancy Standard 2012

Prepared by: Claire Tough

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Reviewed by: Lindsey Hoggard

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Customer Engagement Information Policy/Review:

- Neighbourhood Services Improvement Group

Policy Approval:

- Board
- Strategic Management Team
- Managing Director
- Date:
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