

Wrexham County Borough Council

Local Housing Lettings Policy Difficult to Manage Properties



This document outlines the local housing lettings policy that Wrexham County Borough Council will follow when letting properties that have been identified as being difficult to manage, due to specific issues such as high instances of anti social behaviour and low demand. There is scope for the policy to be extended in the future when particular areas or properties are identified as being problematic in terms of estate management. This policy forms a supplementary document to the general policy for letting Council accommodation and should be read in conjunction with it.

The Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), requires local authorities to have a written policy that determines the priorities and the procedures to be followed in letting housing. Whilst reasonable preference must be given to defined groups, section 167(2E)/[s.16(3)] enables authorities to let properties to people of a particular description where there is a clear need for the approach.

Wrexham County Borough's lettings policy for Council housing which was approved in November 2005, makes reference to the introduction of local lettings policies:- "If a local situation demands it, for example because of a particular estate management issue, a Local Lettings Policy may be introduced."

1 Justification for a Local Lettings Policy

- 1.1 Certain streets or blocks of flats have experienced management problems in the past. Such management problems can include high vacancy rates, low demand and high instances of anti social behaviour. There have been occasions when properties have been empty for long periods of time and have proved difficult to let. This in turn can lead to properties being allocated to tenants who have had little experience of sustaining a tenancy, or who may have a history of breaching the terms of their tenancy agreement.
- 1.2 When tenants have little or no experience of sustaining a tenancy, tenancies can be very short term. This can lead to properties being abandoned or tenants being evicted for rent arrears or anti social behaviour.
- 1.3 Large amounts of money can be spent on repairing fixtures and fittings that are damaged due to neglect or acts of vandalism. Further repair costs can also be incurred whilst properties are standing empty waiting for new tenants to be found. These costs can be reduced by introducing a specific lettings policy that will foster sustainable tenancies.
- 1.4 The aim of introducing a local lettings policy, with a minimum age for new tenants of 30 years, is to let the properties to applicants who will be more able to meet and be more aware of their obligations as a tenant. As a result, tenancies will be more stable and long term. Rent loss to the Department due to periods when the

properties are empty and proving difficult to let can be reduced, as can repair costs due to vandalism when properties are empty.

- 1.5 By creating a more selective policy for lettings, it is hoped that the instances of anti social behaviour will also be reduced. To be eligible for properties covered by the local lettings policy, applicants will need to supply proof of any criminal convictions or Court action taken against them or any family members. This should not only benefit the properties covered by the policy but the surrounding area as well, as a demand is generated for the area and the tenancies become more stable.

2 Who is eligible?

- 2.1 The general policy for letting Council accommodation outlines who is eligible to join the housing register. In order to achieve the aims outlined above, additional criteria must be fulfilled to join the waiting list for properties covered by this local lettings policy.

- 2.2 To be considered for this type of accommodation applicants must:-

- be 30 years of age or over.
- if they, or a member of their household are a tenant of a private landlord, housing association or another council, be able to supply a tenancy reference from their present landlord as evidence that they have kept to the terms of the tenancy agreement for the duration of the tenancy.
- if they, or a member of their household are the tenant of a private landlord, housing association or another council, supply proof that they have no outstanding rent arrears or Court costs with their current landlord.
- have no pets (with the exception of guide dogs or hearing dogs).
- have a local connection with the area (living, working or having close family ties).
- if they, or a family member are a tenant of Wrexham County Borough Council, have no current rent arrears or outstanding Court costs.
- if they, or a family member are a former tenant of Wrexham County Borough Council, have no former tenants arrears or history of breaching their former tenancy agreement.
- confirm that they, or a member of their household, have never had any civil action taken against them through the Courts.
- confirm that they , or a member of their household have no history of criminal convictions (this does not cover those convictions that are legally spent or are covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974).

- 2.3 Applicants will have to confirm that the details supplied are true and correct and no false information is supplied. If the Council grants a tenancy on the basis of information that is false, or misleading, steps will be taken to repossess the property.

- 2.4 Where the general lettings criteria are met but those specific to the properties covered by the policy are not, applicants will be registered on the Council's General Waiting List and considered for other accommodation managed by the Authority as appropriate.

3 How do people apply?

- 3.1 To be considered for this accommodation, applicants will apply for housing in the normal manner. The standard housing application form will need to be completed in full. An additional information leaflet will be issued with application forms; this explains the eligibility criteria for being allocated a property covered by the local lettings policy and gives a brief description of the accommodation. Applicants will complete the tear off slip at the back of the information leaflet and return this with their application form and any supporting documentation to show their eligibility to apply for these properties. The tear off slip will confirm that the applicant wishes to be considered for the properties in question, has read and understood the information leaflet and is eligible for housing in these properties.
- 3.2 All forms and supporting evidence must be returned to the relevant Estate Office for processing.
- 3.3 In the case of joint applicants, both parties will supply all supporting evidence.

4 How will the application be processed?

- 4.1 All applications received will be assessed in terms of their:
- eligibility to join the housing register
 - eligibility for properties covered by this policy
- 4.2 When the application has been registered an additional letter will be sent with the general acknowledgement letter that is sent to applicants.
- 4.3 The additional letter will advise the applicant whether they are eligible for an allocation under the local lettings policy or not.
- 4.4 If ineligible, the applicant will be advised of reasons why and confirmation that the application has been registered for a general allocation in the other lettings areas they have chosen.

5 How are properties let?

- 5.1 Once an applicant has been accepted onto the list, applicants will be prioritised in housing need points order, the most highly pointed application being first. Where 2 applicants have the same housing need points and the same support needs and all other factors are equal, the offer of accommodation will be made to the applicant who has been waiting the longest.
- 5.2 If there are no applicants registered for rehousing who meet the criteria laid down in this policy, applicants will be considered from the General Waiting List. Officers will try to find applicants that most closely match the requirements of this policy.

Offers of accommodation

- 5.3 All offers of accommodation will be made in writing in accordance with the general housing lettings policy, using the standard letters currently being used by Housing Services.

6 Equal Opportunities

- 6.1 The Welsh Assembly Government Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness reminds local authorities that local letting policies must not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race or disability. This policy has been impact assessed in accordance with Wrexham County Borough Council's Corporate Equality Plan and will be monitored and evaluated to assess its impact upon different sections of the community.