



Report To: Housing Portfolio Holder
Lead Officer: Director of Housing

17 June 2015

Social Housing Tenancy Fraud Policy

Purpose

1. To seek the approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder on the policy to deal with reports of alleged tenancy fraud.
2. This is not a key decision

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder approves the policy set out in **Appendix A**.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The Council's housing stock is a valuable asset which provides security and stability to many adults and families. Those who commit fraud deprive people who are genuinely in need from accessing social housing. The Council is committed to tackling fraud as a priority and this policy provides a framework to achieve that aim.

Background

5. Following the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013, the Government made available grant money to support work on tenancy fraud. The Council, working in partnership with Huntingdonshire District Council, was successful in a bid for grant support.
6. The Council has used the grant to fund a Tenancy Fraud Officer on a fixed term contract for 2 years to sit within Affordable Homes. That post commenced in March 2014.
7. The first year proved to be extremely successful with over 100 cases of potential fraud being referred and following investigation of each case we were able to secure the return on seven homes to the Council. The Government places a notional figure of £18,000 as the saving to the landlord through the return on one property, giving notional savings for the Council in year one of £126,000.
8. This policy is needed to consolidate the good practice established during the first year of operation of the Tenancy Fraud Officer and to ensure that the Council has a clear framework to develop this work further.

Considerations

9. This policy sets out how the Council plans to prevent, detect and act against instances of social housing tenancy fraud.

10. The Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 has given local authorities more powers to investigate tenancy fraud through better access to data. It introduces new criminal offences of sub-letting and the ability to make claims to court for any profit made by tenants who sublet their properties.
11. The Council encourages tenants and members of the public to report suspected cases of tenancy fraud and a confidential webpage is available to assist with this. Prevention will include anti-fraud posters and raising publicity around successful prosecutions.
12. Affordable Homes also works in partnership with other service areas and external agencies to cross reference information in order to detect fraud.
13. Action is balanced and proportionate and a range of factors are considered when deciding what is the most appropriate action to take. The Council also offers support and advice where required.
14. New developments include consideration of how we can prevent fraud before a customer is given a tenancy as well as utilising specialist products that help detect fraud and support our investigations.

Options

15. The Portfolio Holder is recommended to approve the adoption of the policy as set out in **Appendix A**.
16. The Portfolio Holder may wish instead to require extra work be completed on this policy and brought back in the near future for a decision when that work is completed.

Implications

Financial

17. The provision of this service is fully costed within the HRA Business Plan and the current Affordable Homes budget approved by Council with Government grant funding secured for a second year.

Legal

18. The adoption of the policy will ensure that the Council is meeting its statutory obligations.

Staffing

19. There are no extra staffing requirements to deliver this policy.

Risk Management

20. There are no significant risks associated with this policy.

Equality and Diversity

21. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and there are no adverse impacts associated with this policy.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

22. There has been consultation with the Tenant Participation Group which has endorsed the new policy and procedures.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Improve efficiency and value for money within a viable financial strategy.

Background Papers

Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013

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