

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

Wednesday, 15 August 2012

Decision No: (CAB 12/13 8776)

DECISION-MAKER:	OFFICER DECISION MAKING
PORTFOLIO AREA:	HOUSING AND LEISURE
SUBJECT:	VENTNOR COURT - AGE CRITERIA FOR LETTINGS
AUTHOR:	LEE SIMMONDS

THE DECISION

- (i) That the lettings criteria for Ventnor Court be lowered to a minimum of fifty five years of age for future lettings and will be subject to a local lettings plan. Consideration will be given after 12 months by the Housing Needs manager and Supported Services Manager to lowering the age further to 50 should the scheme still prove hard to let. As with all supported housing complexes there is no upper age limit.
- (ii) That the Housing Needs Manager has delegated authority to release the occasional property for someone between the age of 50 and 54 should the need arise but that this will be the exception rather than the rule. Such allocations would be looked at on a case by case basis where the applicant's needs were assessed and it was felt that supported accommodation would be the most appropriate fit.
- (iii) That all voids within Ventnor Court are released for advertisement in Homebid and are let under the current allocations and bidding process, but that the adverts ensure an appropriate description of this accommodation as being "quieter housing" and will be primarily aimed at people over 55 years of age who wish to live in a supported environment with other people of a similar age and lifestyle.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

1. Over the past few years, officers have become increasingly concerned with the difficulty in letting properties at Ventnor Court and have been exploring options about how to best ensure that the scheme remains fit for purpose and meets current housing need in the City.
2. Ventnor Court was highlighted in the Asset Strategy in 2009 as not being fit for purpose and not having long term viability as a supported housing scheme for people over the age of 60. Therefore a review was undertaken.
3. Currently there are just under 1,000 people on the housing register who require one bedroom accommodation who are aged between 50 and 59 and by releasing these properties it will widen the options for the applicants on the register.

4. Southampton City Council does not currently provide any supported housing complexes for people under the age of 60 and believes that this type of accommodation could provide younger, older people with an additional option in terms of their housing.
5. Void properties at Ventnor Court have been on hold for the last 18 months due to uncertainty about the future of the housing complex and tenants have been told that a decision will be made on what was happening.
6. The primary reason for holding void properties last year was so that officers could explore alternative works under the decent homes improvement programme, such as making the galley style kitchen into a more open plan arrangement or possibly knocking two flats through into one to create more spacious two bedroom properties.
7. The high number of voids and uncertainty about the housing complex has led to increased anxiety in some tenants, especially those who are aware of other proposals in the City.
8. The lack of a definitive answer about the future of Ventnor Court has also allowed some tenants to raise concerns amongst the wider older population especially those that attend the Supported Housing Tenants Forum.

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

That the housing complex be decommissioned and either let under General Needs Allocations or sold.

1. Officers felt that a 122 one bed flat housing complex split over two blocks would not be conducive to general needs housing as the housing management would likely become too difficult due to the nature of people who require or are eligible for small one bed properties.
2. It would be likely that a lot of the properties over time would attract those applicants who have complex needs and this was felt to be unwise.
3. Selling the property for redevelopment was also ruled out as that would limit the available Council Accommodation in the Basset area too much. The scheme is high density and so the number of homes that could be built on the site would make the scheme financially un-viable.

Transferring to a Housing Association.

4. Through the working group, there was found to be no support for tenants transferring to a Housing Association and officers felt that this would not be a positive move for older people in Southampton.

To utilise Ventnor Court as an extra care scheme.

5. This option was put forward by a tenant at Ventnor Court and the reasons behind not pursuing this were outlined in the Q&A sheet distributed to all residents at in September 2011.
6. Ventnor Court does not lend itself to extra care provision nor is the area of the City highlighted by either housing or Adult Social Care as one where a large extra care scheme is required. Furthermore, discussions between housing and adult social care have identified a more flexible model for the future delivery of extra care within the City and a move away from dedicated large extra care schemes is being actively pursued.

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

None

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None

CONFIRMED AS A TRUE RECORD

We certify that the decision this document records was made in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 and is a true and accurate record of that decision.

Date:
15 August 2012

Decision Maker:
Director, Environment and Economy

Proper Officer:
Sue Lawrence

SCRUTINY

Note: This decision will come in to force at the expiry of 5 working days from the date of publication subject to any review under the Council's Scrutiny "Call-In" provisions.

Call-In Period expires on 23 Aug 2012

Date of Call-in *(if applicable) (this suspends implementation)*

Call-in Procedure completed *(if applicable)*

Call-in heard by *(if applicable)*

Results of Call-in *(if applicable)*