

DECISION NOTICE - CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY RELATED
Key Executive Decision taken by an OFFICER

KEY DECISION Subject: Lettings and Terminations

DECISION TAKER:

Name: Richard Protheroe

Job Title: Strategic Director

Signature:

Date:

REASON WHY THIS DECISION DID NOT APPEAR ON THE FORWARD PLAN AND THE URGENCY PROVISIONS WERE NOT FOLLOWED:

This key decision was taken as part of the Council's emergency response to the national COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the necessary speed of decision taking at this time it was not possible to comply with the Council's Constitution that includes the requirement to give 28 days' notice of the decision to be taken; publish details 5 clear days before the decision was taken; publish the decision within 2 days of it being taken; and provide the 5 day call-in period before implementation. Nor was it possible to comply with the Urgency provisions in the Constitution

DECISION TAKEN:

That the Council Team grants a rent free period to tenants and keep units VOID for prospective tenants who have accepted offers of whom are unable to move until the Government lockdown measures are lifted or an earlier date if the applicant is able to move in during the lockdown period. Such a policy decision would ensure applicants suffer no financial hardship e.g. having to pay rent on two properties etc.

Where a sole tenant passes away and the Council is unable to access and/or to clear a property during the Government lockdown period, the tenancy is to be terminated from the date the Council is notified of the death.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The Lettings Team where possible are still letting council homes to applicants and the Council is offering guidance to try and assist as many of them to move in. However, we now have 5 cases where applicants have been let

properties and 5 units remaining VOID with an offer but the applicants have been deemed unable to move into a council home due to Covid-19 as they cannot secure help with removals and/or our self-isolating.

The other area for consideration is termination of tenancies.

The Council will make all attempts to support relatives of a sole tenant who has passed away to clear the properties but there will be some properties that will not be able to be cleared and relet until the Government's lockdown measures are lifted.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED:

The other options considered were for amendments to be made for any let units to be changed back to VOID so that these units can be considered against any Void loss recorded during this period. I am however advised that this is not possible as the lettings have already taken place.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Initial modelling indicates that we would on average have 92 relets over a 12 week period and based on a worst case assumption that 95% of all lettable properties are not moved into over that period we could experience HRA rent loss of up to £76.5k and a Council Tax loss of £27.5k. These estimates are based on an average rent level of £97.54, this excludes service charges which are more complex to calculate but will need to be captured as and when properties become void.

Such a policy decision will significantly increase the period the property is void and therefore will lead to further rental and Council Tax loss. This is more difficult to model as we don't know the exact number of deaths that may occur.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Council's powers are under Housing Act 1996 (as amended)

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

To ensure that no specified groups are disadvantaged due to the measures set in place by Government.

CONSULTATIONS:

SBC internal COVID Housing response cell- concur
Strategic Leadership Team - concur
Council Leader- Sharon Taylor and Portfolio Holder- Jeannette Thomas- concur

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

I agree that this decision was reasonable in all the circumstances, was urgent

and could not reasonably be deferred

I further agree that any delay likely to be caused by the call -in process would prejudice the Council's or the public interest and that the decision should not therefore be subject to call-in.

Signed:

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date:

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION: 7 April 2020