

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL: 20 JANUARY 2015

INTRODUCTORY TENANCIES UPDATE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report is to update the Panel on how the implementation of Introductory Tenancies has gone since they were introduced on 1st April 2014.
- 1.2 An Introductory Tenancy is a “probationary” tenancy which is in place for 1 year, with the possibility of a further 6-month extension for cases where Officers feel there may be further monitoring required in terms of behaviour or rent arrears.
- 1.3 Introductory Tenancies allow Officers to ensure a more robust management of the tenancy and the individual by assisting, supporting and educating new tenants in maintaining a tenancy. On successful completion of an Introductory Tenancy, the tenancy automatically becomes a fixed-term tenancy.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Introductory Tenancies were introduced to NFDC on 1st April 2014. Unlike Secure and Non Secure tenancies which are governed under The Housing Act 1985, Introductory Tenancies are governed under The Housing Act 1996 and have no security of tenure. They do however; have the right to appeal the service of a Notice of Possession.
- 2.2 Introductory Tenancies are offered to all new tenants who are housed through the Housing waiting list.
- 2.3 Introductory tenancies are designed to help in the fight against anti-social behaviour by making it easier for local authority landlords to evict tenants who persistently engage in such activity, before they achieve security of tenure. They are also used to deal with other tenancy agreement breaches such as rent arrears.

3. STATISTICS

- 3.1 Introductory Tenancies are managed by the Neighbourhood & Tenancy Management Officers (NATMO’s) and Rent & Arrears Recovery Officers (RARO’s). Both services have procedures which determine the sequencing of visits, contact and enforcement action. The procedures vary slightly for each service however they are streamlined to complement each service to ensure a fair split of the workload and good communication between services.
- 3.2 From 1st April 2014 to 31st December 2014, NFDC have offered **78** Introductory Tenancies.
- 3.3 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, NATMO’s have undertaken **54** IT (3-month) visits. RARO’s have undertaken **78** (2-weekly) visits.
- 3.4 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, there have been **0** Notices of Possession served on any tenant.
- 3.5 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, there have been **0** extensions to the tenancies required.
- 3.6 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, there have been **0** Possessions of property.

- 3.7 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, there have been **0** requests for appeals.
- 3.8 The Neighbourhood & Tenancy Management Officers have had **1** case of behavioural issues whereby early intervention and close partnership working has resolved the matter. The nuisance has now ceased and no enforcement action is required. This case involved **6** additional visits and meetings by the Officer to manage this tenancy.
- 3.9 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, the RARO's have undertaken **67** (2&4-week) visits.
- 3.10 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, there have been **0** Notices of Possession served on any tenant.
- 3.11 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, there have been **0** extensions to the tenancies required.
- 3.12 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, there have been **0** Possessions of property.
- 3.13 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, there have been **0** requests for appeals.
- 3.14 Of the 78 Introductory Tenancies, there have been **3** referrals made by Officers for Floating Support.
- 3.15 RARO's now undertake new tenant visits at week 4 rather than week 2. This is due to the fact that many new tenants had not yet fully settled in during the 2-week visit and Officers were being required to deal with maintenance issues, rather than financial matters which are the sole intention of their initial visit.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Whilst it is certainly clear that the robust management appears to be successful, RARO's have stated how it is fairly time-consuming; however they have also commented, "they all believe the IT's to be effective and a good tool." All tenants seem to be informed and understand what an IT is, so their expectation is accurate.
- 4.2 NATMO's commented that Introductory Tenancies have not proved a problem to manage and have proved, thus far, to be less onerous than initially thought. We have not yet experienced extensions or possession proceedings which invariably will be more time-consuming. Officers on the whole enjoy the visits for a variety of reasons, one being that as the Neighbourhood & Tenancy Management Assistant (NATMA) undertakes the initial sign- up, the NATMO's then feel it is beneficial to meet the tenant and have found it pleasurable to undertake a positive visit. February will see the first of the 9-month visits take place which will then initiate the process for the tenancies to change to Flexible Tenancies on the 1-year anniversary.
- 4.3 On the initial data it appears that Introductory Tenancies are proving successful and that robust management is having a positive impact.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications at this stage; however, it is expected that with the introduction of Universal Credit and more Introductory Tenancies being offered, the additional visits and workload associated with the IT process will require additional staffing to ensure the continued success of this new tenure. A business case will be prepared and submitted for consideration in due course.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no Crime and Disorder implications as a result of this report.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no environmental implications as a result of this report.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

8.1 There are no specific Equality and Diversity implications as all policy and procedures relating to Introductory Tenancies are governed under corporate requirements.

9. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

9.1 The initial statistics show that Introductory Tenancies do appear to be working well and I am pleased to see that all of them are in low levels of management. This is a positive way forward for the future by managing a reduction in nuisance & anti-social behavior and rent arrears which I greatly welcome. I look forward to the continued success of Introductory Tenancies.

10. TENANTS' COMMENTS

10.1 To follow.

11. RECOMMENDATION

11.1 That the Panel notes the content of the report.

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Background Papers

None.