



Borough of Oadby & Wigston

Services Committee

10th June 2008

Introductory Tenancies – Six Month Update Report

Report of: Director of Community Services Report Number: 5 (a)

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NON-EXEMPT

This report is likely to be considered while the meeting is open to press & public

Summary:

To provide Members with an update on the use of introductory tenancies in the Council's housing stock and highlight the effective progress made so far.

Recommendations:

- (1) To note the current the latest position, as set out in this report

Level of delegation: Committee

Wards affected: All

Comments of Statutory Officers:

Head of Paid Service: None

Proper Officer for Financial Affairs: None

Monitoring Officer: None

Appendices Attached:

Impact Assessments:

Health: No direct impact

Environment: No direct impact

Community Safety: Introductory tenancies can be used as a tool for helping to deal with anti-social behaviour should it arise in the early stages of a new tenancy

Human Rights: The existing arrangements and legislation covering Introductory Tenancies deal with any issues relating to Human Rights

Equal Opportunities: Those tenants granted an Introductory Tenancy effectively have lesser security of tenure than other tenants of the Council. Introductory Tenancies cannot be used selectively in relation to specific tenants but would need to be used for all new tenancies.

Risk Assessment: There are no specific risks relating to the use of introductory tenancies that can be identified at this stage.

Commentary:

1. Members have previously given approval for the use of introductory tenancies within the Council's housing stock. It was agreed that implementation of introductory tenancies would be monitored for the first 12 months of their use, in order to identify their impact. From the outset, the potential benefits of introductory tenancies were seen as being able to respond in a more effective way to breaches of tenancy, and in doing so, have a positive impact on anti-social behaviour (ASB) and tackling rent arrears.
2. The first introductory tenancies were used in Dec 2007, being rolled out to all new tenants from February 2008. At present, there are 22 live introductory tenancies. By the end of 2008, this number will have reached at least 100. As part of their implementation, officers have introduced a robust case management system, which includes an interview with prospective tenants before they are signed up, to clearly spell out their responsibilities as a new tenant.

3. The following table summarises the progress so far:

<i>Progress / Status</i>	<i>Number of cases</i>
Total number of Introductory tenancies, as at 19/5/08	22
Cases where the tenancy is running successfully	12
Cases where a warning letter has been served for rent arrears	8
Cases where a warning has been issued for anti-social behaviour	2

4. Given that the tenancies concerned are all relatively new, we have not yet reached a stage where any have been served with a Notice of Termination. Officers have, however, identified at least one case where they expect this to happen in the near future. A new database to record incidents of anti-social behaviour has also recently been introduced, which will allow trends and levels of ASB can be tracked in the future.
5. Introductory tenancies are already having a positive impact in the following ways :
 - Introductory tenancies require officers to work in a more pro-active than re-active way, particularly in terms of monitoring progress rather than responding to complaints when they arise.
 - New tenants are now better informed at the outset of their responsibilities.
 - New tenants recognise the limited security of tenure during the period of the introductory tenancy, and the impact that their behaviour / actions can have upon this.
 - More time is being spent by officers on monitoring tenancies at an early stage, which in turn will help prevent any initial problems from escalating.
 - Introductory tenancies are proving a useful additional tool in tackling arrears, by providing greater powers at an earlier stage, which reinforces the need for new tenants to take their rent obligations seriously. This in turn will help to reduce the build up of arrears over time. This will have contributed in some way to the reduction in rent arrears that is being seen present.
6. The benefits seen so far will continue to grow as more introductory tenancies are put in place, which in turn will contribute to one of the main priorities of the Housing Section that is to help tackle anti-social behaviour. The costs of implementing the scheme to date have been limited, mainly associated with staff time for development and implementation. On this basis, the use of introductory tenancies can be seen as a cost effective measure at this stage.

Background Papers referred to in compiling this report: