

# **Incentive to Move Policy**

**FINAL: December 2024**

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## Version Control

### Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2020	Tina Mustafa Joanne Mallaband	Incentive to Move – Making best use of Council owned Stock policy
2.0	5 <sup>th</sup> February 2018	Gemma Sidaway Rae Mann Sarah Finnegan	Allocations policy which includes Mutual Exchanges. Changes to accommodate the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
3.0	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2018	Gemma Sidaway Joanne Mallaband	Changes to reflect feedback from HQN Tim Brown
4.0	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2019	Gemma Sidaway	Changes to reflect Legal Advice
5.0	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Gemma Sidaway Joanne Mallaband Sarah Finnegan	Changes to incorporate Eligibility amendments, Domestic Abuse Act and guidance on improving access to social housing for armed forces
6.0	March 2024	Gemma Sidaway Sarah Finnegan Campbell Tickell Ltd (CT)	A table of changes has been provided with the cabinet report following a gap analysis by CT.
7.0	November 2024	Sarah Finnegan Lucy Cunnett Tim Brown (HQN Associate)	Tenant Consultative Group – no objections raised on policy, feedback given
8.0	December 2024	Sarah Finnegan Lucy Cunnett Tim Brown (HQN Associate)	Changes required for Social Housing Regulatory programme and Consumer standards.

### Approvals

Name	Title	Approved
Cabinet	Incentive to move policy	02.06.2010
Cabinet	Allocation Policy	24.01.2019
Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	Allocation Policy	15.10.2019

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Approved</b>
Full Council	Allocation Policy	19.11.2019
Cabinet	Allocation Policy Update	08.07.2021
Cabinet	Allocation Policy Update	March 2024
Tenant Consultative Group	Incentive to Move Policy	November 2024
Cabinet	Incentive to Move Policy	December 2024

## **Document Review Plans**

This document is subject to a scheduled three year review dependant on any legislative changes. Updates shall be made in accordance with business requirements and changes and will be with agreement with the document owner.

## **Distribution**

The document will be available on the Intranet and the website.

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## Aims of the policy

Tamworth Borough Council has a limited supply of larger family-sized accommodation and properties adapted to be wheelchair accessible. The council has therefore revised the existing incentive to move policy to free up these properties.

The aims of the policy are:

- To contribute to the effective use of our council stock by addressing under-occupation
- To improve the opportunities primarily for households requiring 4 or 5 bedroom properties
- To help households who are struggling to manage large under-occupied properties
- To make best use of wheelchair adapted properties should tenants no longer require the adaptation.
- To meet the requirements of national housing policy.

It should be noted that previously the Council took a broader approach focusing on under-occupation in general. While this is still encouraged, the revised policy is now proposed to adopt a more targeted stance on 4 or 5 bedroom properties that are under-occupied.

However, the policy will be used in other circumstances such as:

- Adapted to non-adapted properties i.e. where a household in an adapted property no longer requires the adaptation
- Households under-occupying 3 bedroom properties.

## Justification

The Council only has 88 four or five bedroom properties. Households requiring this size of property have to wait a considerable amount of time before a suitable home is advertised through 'finding a home' even if they are in the highest band. In recent years, only 1 or 2 four or five bedroom properties have become available each year.

We are also aware that some households comprising one or two people struggle to manage a large property causing potential financial hardship. Downsizing may help to address this issue.

National policy emphasizes the importance of efficient management of the existing social housing stock including council housing. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has emphasized this point in its consumer regulations that include tenancy standards. The Council will be subject to a regulatory inspection in the near future.

### **Legislation and guidance**

The Housing Act 1985 gives guidance on when a secure tenant can be asked to leave their home. A secure tenant can only be asked to leave their home if the landlord obtains an Order for Possession from the court. The Order must be based on the grounds which are set out in the 1985 Housing Act.

Schedule 2 Part 1V Housing Act 1985 gives guidance on offering suitable alternative accommodation.

The Council's Allocations Policy identifies the banding structure for applicants on the housing register and the priority given to tenants who want to move to a smaller home.

The Council's Tenancy Management Policy identifies those that are legally able to succeed to a tenancy.

### **Eligibility**

The Incentive to Move Policy (ITM) is available to council tenants who meet the following criteria:

- hold a Secure Tenancy Agreement
- occupy a general needs family property or occupy wheelchair accessible accommodation
- agree to transfer to smaller social housing accommodation that meets their needs and/or a non-adapted property, and provide vacant possession of their present home
- tenants who relinquish family-sized accommodation completely and move to the private sector, proof of tenancy agreement or proof of purchase will be required before any payments are released.
- have a clear rent account or have an agreement in place to clear arrears and Housing Income Management agrees that a move can take place. Housing Income Management will be consulted to confirm that they agree for the tenant to move especially when tenants are in rent arrears but are not subject to a possession order.

### **Ineligibility**

Tenants will not be eligible for the ITM if they:

- are subject to a possession order
- have been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession for anti-social behaviour
- have been served with a Demotion Notice
- hold an Introductory Tenancy or a Non-Secure Tenancy
- have failed to provide the required documentation for their Housing Register Application
- are not the tenant of the property being released
- the tenant is a successor, (following the previous tenant's death) who is under-occupying the property and is a family member, this excludes partners or spouses

### Policy principles

This policy is at the landlord's discretion and subject to budgetary provision.

Communicating and promoting the policy is important as national research shows that it is either misunderstood or potential customers are not aware of it.

### Financial incentive

The incentive element enables a payment to be made towards facilitating a move. For the Incentive Policy, an incentive payment will be paid at the following rates to those who qualify:

- A maximum of £2,000 per move is available if they are giving up a 4 or 5 bedroom property.
- A maximum of £1,000 per move is available if they are giving up a 3 or 2 bedroom property.

Payments under the housing legislation are discretionary – 'local authorities *may* make payments'.

Support up to the value of £500 is available to be used for removal expenses in addition to the payments per move.

Tamworth Borough Council reserves the right to reduce the payments above if there are any of the following housing-related debts:

- If the under-occupied property is not in a satisfactory condition, the cost of remedial work will reduce the financial incentive sum available

- If the customer wishing to downsize has debts owed to the Council, arrangements to clear this debt must be agreed and could include use of the financial incentive
- If a customer that has used the financial incentive wishes to move within the next three years, a pro-rata sum will be recovered (unless exceptional circumstances exist such as moving into residential care or hospice accommodation).

### Priority banding

For households that are under-occupying:

- Band 1: Awarded to customers who are deemed to be under occupying by two or more bedrooms according to the Council's bedroom

For households that no longer require an adapted property:

- Band 1: Awarded to customers who no longer require the use of an adapted property
- Band 1: Best use of stock will be awarded to applicants who have been accepted onto the incentive to move policy.

Banding will only apply to those who are permanently occupying a property as their main and principal home and have a social housing tenancy.

### Support for customers considering downsizing

National research shows that ITM is more successful with fewer applications being abandoned where there is support to help customers throughout the process.

Customers, therefore, have access to:

- Option of pre-application discussions with officers over the advantages and disadvantages of using the policy
- Help with completing an application form – an incomplete application form (including supplementary information) will result in delays and / or the rejection of the application
- Progress during the process especially the availability of suitable accommodation through the allocations and lettings process – customers can be contacted each week about bidding and any help and support that they need.

### Policy limitations

The policy does not guarantee that a suitable property will become available.



Customers that have had their application to use ITM approved still need to bid for properties through the Council's 'finding a home'.

The supply of suitable properties for customers wishing to downsize is also a challenge. There are, for instance, a shortage of bungalows owned by the Council and those that become available are in high demand.

The types of accommodation that are more likely to become available are sheltered accommodation, extra care policys, and one / two- bedroom flats.

### **Appeals procedure**

Appeals in respect of how the policy has been applied, eligibility for the payment and the award amount will be reviewed under Tamworth Borough Council's complaints procedure [Comments, Compliments & Complaints | Tamworth Borough Council](#)

### **Service standards**

The balance of any payment due will be paid within 6 weeks of tenancy start.

### **Policy performance**

Annual monitoring of the performance of ITM will take place.

The policy will be reviewed upon a relevant change of legislation, or in response to a change of relevant Tamworth Borough Council Policy, in particular the Allocations Policy.

This will include an assessment of the KPI of 'achieving at least 15 successful moves per year'.

A copy of the policy will be available on the Council's website

### **Communicating the policy to customers**

Tamworth Borough Council recognises that the support available through the incentive to move policy should be communicated to tenants.

A leaflet providing details of the policy will be available to customers on the Council's website.

There is an active plan for advertising opportunities for tenants to downsize, for example, articles in tenant magazines and council social media pre-programmed posts.

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