

MACKENZIE DISTRICT COUNCIL
FAIRLIE AND TWIZEL PENSIONER HOUSING POLICY

Reviewed October 2011

Introduction

This policy sets out the Council's practice in regard to the provision, management and tenancy of pensioner housing in the Mackenzie District.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- To provide clear guidelines on tenant eligibility for persons wanting to live in Council-owned pensioner units.
- To provide clear guidelines for the level of rental, funding of the facilities and treatment of surpluses.

Principles

The principles underlying this policy are:

- Council sees its role in this area as “to respond to the community requirements for an appropriate level of pensioner housing”. It maintains the buildings and grounds, selects tenants, reviews tenancy agreements and rentals, and monitors long term demand for housing and maintenance
- That the Council's investment in pensioner housing will continue to be self-funding as much as possible without rates input. Relevant corporate overhead will be applied to the activity. Depreciation is recognised as an operating expense. The funded depreciation will be utilised to fund the on-going refurbishments of units on a cyclic basis.
- That the Council's pensioner housing units shall continue to be available for rental of 80% of private market rentals and no greater than 1/3 of National Superannuation
- Surpluses (or proceeds from divestment) will be applied to retire debt, support the Pensioner Flats Account for future maintenance, upgrades or development of pensioner units or considered for any other use which the Council at the time may think appropriate.

In developing this policy, the Council recognises that it is not the sole provider of accommodation for the District's elderly residents.

Definitions

“Current Market Rental” is the level of rental the units would attract if exposed to the open market, as determined by the local real estate market which will be reviewed annually.

Background

The Council owns a total of ten pensioner units, of which seven are located in Fairlie and three in Twizel.

The Fairlie units, when upgrades are complete, will consist of four two bedroom units suitable for elderly couples and three one bedroom units suitable for occupation by one or two persons. All units come with one or two bedrooms plus lounge/kitchen area, a storage space and a shower/toilet and separate laundry room.

The three Twizel units were constructed during 1992 and are made up of two one bedroom units and one two bedroom unit all with separate kitchen, bathroom, laundry and living areas

All units have off street parking.

All of the new Fairlie Units will have full level access, 810mm doors and wet floor bathrooms. One unit will be fully adapted for tenants with physical disabilities, however, handrails at entrances and wet area showers are provided as a standard.

For the complexes the Council provides vinyl floor coverings in the bathroom and kitchen areas, an oven, a storage unit, one smoke detector per unit, clothes-lines and all other fittings, furnishings and chattels are the responsibility of the tenant. Outdoor lawn and grounds maintenance is provided by the Council with the tenant being responsible for the small garden area adjacent to their unit.

Responsibility

The Manager Community Facilities has responsibility for review of this policy. The implementation of this policy is delegated to the Manager Community Facilities.

Policy Statement

Acceptance of an application for pensioner units

The acceptance (or otherwise) of applications remains at the full discretion of the Council. Amongst matters that the Council will take into account in the exercise of its discretion are the following selection criteria:

Whether the applicant can demonstrate a need for housing owing to

- Personal health and mobility
- Present Housing Situation
- Ability to care for themselves
- Age
- Marital Status

- Personal financial situation
- Waiting list position
- Residency in the district

Eligibility

To be eligible for a pensioner unit, prospective tenants must meet the following criteria:

- Pensioner – being a person of 65 years of age or more *or* a person who qualifies for National Superannuation or a War Pension
- The pensioner must be of low income and provide evidence of cash assets of less than \$100,000.
- All applicants must complete the application form
- Proof of income before tax will be required

Waiting List Management

Once the application form is submitted and there are no current vacancies, the forms will be kept on file.

Where a vacancy occurs all current applicants will be contacted to confirm their continued interest or any changed circumstances.

Applications will be evaluated by the local selection committee.

Tenant Selection

Selection of tenants will be carried out by the Selection Committee who will make a recommendation to the Chief Executive Officer of Council who may then enter into a Tenancy Agreement with the successful applicant. Applications will then be assessed in two stages

Stage 1: an informal interview with one of the Committee members to ascertain circumstances and suitability.

Stage 2: the Selection Committee using the selection criteria in the standard form (Pensioner Housing Eligibility Assessment Form) *Appendix 2*.

Selection Committee

The selection committee will be made up of the following persons:

Fairlie

- An Opuha Ward Councillor
- Practice Nurse
- The Community Facilities Manager
- Member of the Aged Welfare Association.

Twizel

- A Twizel Ward Councillor
- Practice Nurse
- Twizel Community Worker
- The Community Facilities Manager

Other Occupancy

Notwithstanding the above, where a vacancy cannot be filled and has been advertised, the units may be let to non-qualifying applicants at full market rental. Specific arrangements will be put in place to ensure the units are vacated in the event that they are required for Pensioner Housing.

Location Options

An applicant's preference for any particular location will be taken into account and accommodated where possible. Tenants can transfer to another Council unit or complex only in extenuating or special circumstances.

Changes in Circumstances

A tenant's eligibility to occupy a pensioner unit will be re-assessed if reasonable grounds to indicate a change in eligibility status exist.

Where it is suspected that there are existing or impending eligibility issues for medical reasons, the Council will in the first instance seek to facilitate the provision of the appropriate social service support. Subsequently, if the tenant is clearly unable to meet the eligibility on an on-going basis, the Council will give the tenant notice to vacate. This is based on the need to protect the interest and wellbeing of the tenant and the interests and wellbeing of other tenants.

Smoking

The Council does not support smoking. As at the adoption date of this policy, tenants will not be permitted to smoke within the units. This will not apply to tenants who were occupying units prior to the adoption of this policy. However, for these existing tenants, planned refurbishments will be undertaken (approximately every seven years) only if the tenant agrees not to smoke in the unit, or to allow others to do so.

Animals

Pets such as one bird and/or one cat be permitted(upon application and at the Council's discretion) provided that any such animal must be well behaved, and properly cared for so it does not pose a nuisance to other tenants.

Rental

Rental for the units shall be set at 80% of the current market rental and no more than 1/3 of current National Superannuation is to be updated every year. Tenants are required to pay a bond of up to two weeks' rent on acceptance of a unit. Rent must be paid fortnightly in advance by automatic bank payment.

Level of Service

Through its draft Long-Term Council Community Plan 2006-2016, the Council has reviewed levels of service associated with pensioner housing 2006

Standards for Pensioner Housing

Council will provide a safe, secure, healthy, adequately designed unit in a good state of repair. The Council will conduct an annual feedback and suggestion survey of its occupiers to support communication with tenants.

Marketing and usage

The Council will maintain a waiting list of prospective tenants which will be regularly review and updated. If a waiting list does not exist the Council will market and promote its pensioner housing to ensure maximum usage.

Welfare

The Council acknowledges its role as landlord, and as such, will be accessible and diligent towards the general welfare of its tenants. This will not extend to the provision of social services to tenants as these services are better provided by other professional service providers.

The Council will endeavour to provide its tenants with the contact information for professional services and service providers. Council staff will consult with health, social welfare and other professional service providers where tenant concerns or difficulties arise outside of the Council's expertise.

Complaints Procedure

The Council wishes to be as flexible as possible in receiving complaints. All complaints will be registered

Your complaint will be:

- Dealt with as quickly as possible
- Handled fairly and politely; and
- Investigated thoroughly

Our Complaints Procedure is set out below:

If You Want To Complain

Register your complaint by the following means:

By letter, phone, email, fax or in person at the Council offices in Fairlie or Twizel.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days and aim to address the complaint within 10 working days.

The complaint will be dealt with by the Community Facilities Manager.

My Complaint Has Been Investigated, But I Am Still Not Satisfied

At this stage the complaint will be addressed by the Chief Executive Officer

Again we will acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days and aim to address the complaint within 10 working days.

If this target of 10 days cannot be met, you will be informed of the delay, the reason for the delay, and the new target for responding.

Not Satisfied, What I Can Do?

If your complaint has still not been settled to your satisfaction, the Chief Executive Officer may refer you to the Commissioner of Complaints known as the Ombudsman.

Our complaints procedure does not remove your right, at any stage of the process, to complain to the Ombudsman. However, the Ombudsman will normally expect you to have thoroughly gone through Council's complaints procedure first.

The Ombudsman is completely independent of Council and of Government and the
If you feel that your complaint has been dealt with unsatisfactorily please contact the Ombudsman on telephone (03) 366 8556 free call 0800 802 602

Management of Pensioner Units

The Mackenzie District Council currently administers and manages the pensioner units in-house. The Council may consider alternative arrangements or partnerships for the future administration and management of pensioner units if it is in the best interests of tenants and is cost-effective.

References and Relevant legislation

Residential Tenancies Act 1986

Appendices

Application Form