

New Forest National Park Authority - Tenancy Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Authority has built two homes at Bransgore for the purposes of providing affordable housing to meet local needs. The properties will be retained and managed by the Authority as the Landlord, using the services of a local Agent. Tenancy nominations will be through New Forest 'Homesearch' which is the waiting list and allocation scheme for New Forest District Council and Housing Association housing in the New Forest.
- 1.2 This policy is based on the New Forest District Council's Tenancy Strategy and takes into account the Authority's 'duty' to *"...seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park"*.

2. Objectives of the tenancy policy

- 2.1 The objectives of the Authority's tenancy policy are to:
 - i. Promote economic activity and reduce dependency – the Authority considers that tenancy and allocation policies should encourage work and reduce dependency. Priority will be given to economically active applicants who can demonstrate a local connection.
 - ii. Seek to minimise any under-occupation by encouraging tenants to explore other housing options if they have the resources to do so and/or where their circumstances change such that they no longer have a local connection.
 - iii. Make the best use of the Authority's very limited housing stock whilst recognising that affordable housing supply will never keep pace with housing need in the New Forest.

3. Tenancy

- 3.1 The properties will be let unfurnished on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement to ensure the best use of the limited housing stock and to link tenancy renewal to being a responsible tenant.
- 3.2 The Authority considers that there should be a clear link between the expected behaviour of tenants and the prospect of tenancy renewal and this will be communicated at the sign-up of the tenancy.
- 3.3 A tenancy renewal assessment will consist of:
 - i. An assessment of the housing need and bedroom and other requirements of the household;
 - ii. An assessment of the income and resources available to the household;
 - iii. An assessment of the conduct of the tenancy; and

- iv. Consideration of any special circumstances (e.g. employment, schooling, welfare etc.)
- 3.4 The Authority expects that tenancies will not normally be renewed in the following circumstances:
 - i. Where households are under-occupying their home and there is a housing need for the property in which they are living;
 - ii. Where the household no longer has a housing need or has the resources to secure and maintain housing in the private sector; and
 - iii. Where there have been serious and/or persistent breaches of tenancy conditions.
- 3.5 In those circumstances where a tenancy is not renewed, the tenant will be advised of the reason for the decision and given advice and assistance to help the tenant consider alternative options. In doing so, there will be close liaison with the New Forest District Council's Homesearch and Homelessness and Housing Advice teams.
- 4. **Joint and sole tenancies**
- 4.1 The Authority considers that joint tenancies should only normally be granted to married couples or civil partners or to couples where there is satisfactory evidence that they have been living together for a period of at least one year.
- 4.2 Both parties to any joint tenancy should intend to occupy the property as their only or principal home and should not normally have an interest in a property elsewhere.
- 4.3 The Authority considers that cross-generation joint tenancies (e.g. parent and child) or joint tenancies where the applicants are not a couple should not normally be granted as this could compromise the availability of housing stock in the future. However, the Authority recognises that, in exceptional circumstances, joint tenancies may be granted to protect the occupation rights of vulnerable individuals.
- 4.4 Where an existing tenant requests a joint tenancy, the Authority will explain the full implications to the tenant in writing.
- 4.5 Where one or more existing joint tenants may be ending the joint tenancy due to relationship breakdown, then the Authority will not automatically offer the tenancy to any former-tenant still occupying the property. The level of occupation and tenancy conduct should be considered as part of any decision on the future of the tenancy.
- 5. **Rents**

5.1 The Authority will be charging affordable rents at no more than 80% of open market rent level. Rents will be set taking into account the financial viability of maintaining the properties in good order and the need to administer the lettings through a local property agent acting on behalf of the Authority.

5.2 Rent levels will be set so as not to reinforce benefit dependency and to reflect incomes that households in work can reasonably expect to sustain.

6. **Affordable Housing Fraud**

6.1 The Authority will do all it can when allocating tenancies to ensure that potential housing fraud is identified prior to any tenancy being offered.

6.2 The Authority will operate a robust system for identifying and tackling tenancy fraud, to include home visits to check on occupancy.

7. **Equalities**

7.1 This tenancy policy has been prepared in accordance with the duties of the Equality Act and has regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those that do not.