



Older Persons Housing Policy

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Purpose and Scope

1. The purpose of Council's Older Persons Housing is to provide safe accommodation for older persons with limited financial means.
2. This policy;
 - a. sets out the Council's practice in regard to the provision, management and tenancy of Council's Older Persons Housing portfolio within Ōtorohanga District.
 - b. provides clear guidelines on tenant eligibility for persons wanting to live in Council-owned houses.
 - c. provides guidelines for the level of rental, with the intention of the facilities being self-funding.
 - d. ensures Council meets its statutory obligations with respect to tenancies.
 - e. confirms Council's commitment to the provision of housing.

Principles

The core principles of this Policy are:

3. There is a genuine and growing need for long-term accommodation for older persons in the Ōtorohanga District.
4. Council has agreed they have a role in meeting this need and acknowledges that there are other housing providers delivering these services in the community.
5. Council's investment in housing will continue to be self-funding without rates input.
6. Older Persons Housing is listed as a strategic asset in Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.
7. Any monies generated within the activity in excess of operational needs (including the proceeds of any divestment) will remain in the activity and be utilised as considered appropriate for the maintenance, management, renewal and extension of the housing activity.
8. Council will recover reasonable administration costs in the management of the housing portfolio.
9. Council administers its pensioner housing portfolio in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1986.

Definitions

10. For the purpose of this policy:

“Current Market Rental” is the level of rental the units would attract if listed on the open market, as determined by an independent rental appraisal.

“Older persons” are those people aged 60 or over.

Older Persons Housing Portfolio

11. The Council owns 28 units, located in 3 complexes within the urban centres of Ōtorohanga and Kawhia. The units were mainly constructed at a time when Central Government provided loans to Local Authorities at low concessionary interest rates to encourage Council involvement in pensioner housing.
12. There are 13 bed-sits and 9 one bedroom units available in Ōtorohanga. A bed-sit unit is smaller than a one-bedroom unit and includes an open plan area that serves as a lounge/bedroom with a separate bathroom.
13. The 6 units in Kawhia are all one-bedroom.
14. There is generally a waiting list of potential tenants.
15. The units are self-contained and are surrounded by other units in the various complexes. They provide for privacy and independence, while also providing a community atmosphere.
16. Twelve carports are available, four in Windsor Court and eight in Elizabeth Place.
17. Wet area showers are provided in many of the units. Where possible, facilities for the disabled are incorporated into any upgrading.
18. Ground maintenance is provided by the Council, although tenants are encouraged to be responsible for any gardens adjacent to their units.
19. A standard unit is furnished with vinyl and carpet floor coverings throughout, full cooking/kitchen facilities, full bathroom facilities including a shower (level access showers when units are upgraded), a compliant and functioning smoke detector, clothes-line, letterbox and curtains. Outdoor storage sheds are not provided by Council but tenants are permitted to install them with approval from Council staff.
20. All units are inspected no less than six-monthly. Heating will be installed into each unit in the 2020-22 period to meet new landlord regulations.
21. Rents are set so there is no impact on rates and the facilities are self-funding. Rents are reviewed annually.

Social Support for Tenants

22. The Council acknowledges its role as a responsible Landlord, and as such, will be accessible and diligent towards the general wellbeing of its tenants.
23. This will not extend to the provision of social services to tenants as these services are better provided by other professional service providers.
24. The Council will however, endeavour to provide its tenants with the contact information for professional services and other service providers.
25. Council staff will liaise with and refer to other agencies, professional service providers and next of kin where tenant concerns or difficulties arise which are outside of the Council's role as Landlord to manage.

Application Process

26. Application Forms along with the Housing for Older Persons Information Booklet will be available on Council's website, at the Council Offices and at Te Whare Awhina (Otorohanga Support House).
27. People wishing to apply for Older Persons Housing must do so in writing by completing the official Application Form, and by providing all the supporting documentation required as requested in the Application Form and explained in the Information Booklet.
28. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant with an accompanying letter outlining the information still required to process their application.
29. Applicants will be informed in writing as to whether their application has been successful, securing them a place on the Waiting List for a Council unit.
30. If their application is unsuccessful the applicant will be advised in writing as to which part of the criteria they didn't meet.
31. Council staff will also offer unsuccessful applicants suggestions as to what other housing providers may be better suited to meet their needs.

Eligibility Criteria

32. Council staff ascertain eligibility of housing applicants in accordance with the following Eligibility Criteria;
 - a. They are New Zealand citizens or residents, and;
 - b. They are 60 years of age or over, and;
 - c. Their total assets, including cash, investments, house and other property (but not including a car, furniture and personal effects) do not exceed \$25,000, and;

- d. Their income must not exceed 20% above their regular gross superannuation (this recognises those tenants who may have another income source such as a part-time job to supplement their superannuation), and;
 - e. They have a genuine need for Council's Older Persons Housing, and;
 - f. They have a letter from their Doctor to confirm they are capable of living independently and/or have the necessary support in place to do so, and;
 - g. They have no criminal convictions that would impact negatively on communal living, and;
 - h. They have two written references from previous Landlords that verify their good tenant history, and;
 - i. They are able to pay four weeks' bond and two weeks rent in advance before their tenancy commences, and;
 - j. They have completed the application in full, supplying all of the supporting documentation required by the application process as included in the Application Form.
33. Under exceptional circumstances, where an applicant does not meet the above criteria, special dispensation may be granted at the discretion of the Chief Executive.

Prioritisation Process

34. Demand for older persons housing is often in excess of the number of units available, therefore along with time on the waiting list, priority will be given to applicants who live in the District, and meet one or more of the following;
- a. Whose present housing conditions or situation is found to be unsatisfactory.
 - b. Who have close relatives in the area.
 - c. Who have been referred by a medical professional or professional service provider.
 - d. Who have been referred by The Ministry of Social Development.

Allocation of Housing Units

35. When allocating units to approved applicants on Council's Waiting List for Older Persons Housing, the following things will be taken into consideration by Council staff to ensure the best possible outcome for the new and existing tenants;
- a. The applicant's preferred unit location.

- b. Any pets the applicant has been approved as having in the unit (for example, if a cat has been approved there may be some housing complexes more suited to having a cat with minimal impact on other tenants).
 - c. Whether the applicant has a vehicle and whether the unit location is at a complex with appropriate available parking.
 - d. Whether the unit will meet the applicant's physical needs at the time of the tenancy commencing without Council needing to make improvements outside of the normal renewals or maintenance schedule (for example, if the applicant has a physical impairment that requires, ramps, hand rails or a level access shower it would make no sense for them to be housed in a unit that didn't already have these things or where an upgrade has not been funded/scheduled).
 - e. Whether the unit will satisfy the applicants preferences (for example space for a garden, car port for a car or an electric stove verses a gas one etc).
 - f. Whether the applicant will overall fit with the current tenant dynamics and contribute positively to the communal living environment offered at each housing complex.
36. Tenants with a good tenancy record may be considered for transfer to another Council unit or complex on request in writing and only in extenuating circumstances, such as a doctor's written recommendation.

Changes in Circumstances

37. A tenant's eligibility to occupy a housing unit will be re-assessed if there are reasonable grounds to indicate a change in eligibility status or by routine re-assessment across the whole tenancy portfolio.
38. Where it is suspected that there are existing or impending eligibility issues for medical, physical or mental health reasons; the Council will in the first instance seek to facilitate the provision of the appropriate social service support.
39. Following consultation with the appropriate social service, medical professionals and next of kin, if the tenant is clearly unable to meet the eligibility on an on-going basis, the Council will consider giving the tenant the required notice to vacate.

Smoking

40. Tenants and their visitors are not permitted to smoke inside the units under any circumstances.
41. In support of the National Goal of having New Zealand Smoke-free by 2025, and considering the well-being of our community along with the negative impacts of secondary smoke inhalation, Council is currently developing a Smoke-free Environments Policy to address this matter. This may result in smoking being prohibited in some or all of Council owned properties and facilities but if so, tenants will be notified in writing and given a reasonable notice period of such.

Pets

42. Dogs are not permitted in Council housing units, however, consideration would be given for a certified assistant dog.
43. Other pets may be allowed with written permission from Council. Pets must be well behaved and properly cared for so that they do not cause damage to the property or create a nuisance to other tenants, or neighbours.

Rent Reviews

44. Rent reviews will take place annually as part of Council's Annual Plan process and in line with the Residential Tenancies Act, with the required written notice period given to tenants.

Marketing and Occupancy

45. The Council will maintain a waiting list of approved applicants as prospective tenants which will be regularly reviewed and updated. If a waiting list does not exist, the Council will market and promote its housing to ensure maximum occupancy.

Date of Review

46. Council will review this policy every 5 years, or earlier if considered necessary.