

**SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL/
West Kent Housing Association Tenants
Under Occupation Scheme
(Second phase – 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015)**

Service Level Agreement

Between

Sevenoaks District Council

And

West Kent Housing Association

To support delivery of the Sevenoaks Under Occupation Strategy 2012-15 by providing financial and practical support to households living in social housing to assist people to down-size.

Sevenoaks District Council (the "Council")
and West Kent Housing Association (West Kent)

SERVICE SPECIFICATION

1.0 MAIN OBJECTIVES

1.1 Priority

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) has developed a strategy to try to reduce the level of under-occupation in social housing in the Sevenoaks District to ensure that the best use of the available stock to meet housing need is made.

Working in partnership with West Kent the Council has agreed to provide a grant to support the provision of cash incentives in addition to West Kent's "Small is Beautiful" scheme to assist tenants to downsize where they are currently under-occupying a West Kent home. It is hoped that through this scheme we can achieve 20 moves during the year.

Any resulting vacancies will then be offered to applicants from the Sevenoaks District Housing Register. It is recognised however, that to achieve this intended number of moves that mutual exchanges are probably to be the most likely route for managing a move.

Sevenoaks District Council's total contribution to the cash incentive not to exceed £20,000.

In addition, the Council will contribute 50% (£15,215.00) towards the employment of a dedicated full-time Under-Occupation Officer for 12 months to facilitate and support people to move.

2.0 SCOPE

2.1 Eligibility of Recipients for Council's cash incentive

To be eligible to receive the incentive applicants must:

- Live in a West Kent home with two bedrooms or more

- Be willing and eligible to move into smaller sized accommodation meaning they release at least one bedroom or more

- Move to another West Kent home or a home with another Registered Social Landlord

The incentive can be taken as cash payment or be used to pay for services arranged by West Kent, such as removals, carpets and curtains.

2.2 Support provided by the Under-occupation Officer

West Kent will employ an officer to provide an under-occupation service that:

- provides comprehensive advice and support to tenants who are under occupying West Kent homes
- actively assists those who wish to downsize to find new homes, through the register or via mutual exchange
- reduces the worry of moving by providing a high quality customer focussed service

3.0 SERVICE STANDARDS

3.1 The Council requires West Kent to undertake the following service standards to effectively manage the Under-occupation scheme.

- To produce at the end of the period the information as agreed (**shown at Appendix A**)
- To assist applicants to register on either /or both the SD Housing Register and Kent Homechoice Homeswap scheme
- To assist applicants to identify suitable alternative home either by bidding for homes advertised or matching potential mutual exchanges
- To assist applicants to apply for grant or practical assistance based on their individual circumstances

4.0 PROMOTION OF THE SERVICE

4.1 West Kent will ensure that the Under-occupation scheme is advertised in the following way;

- Posters and leaflets and Tenants Newsletters;
- From time to time if required in conjunction with the Council, to place articles in the Council's "In Shape" district wide Magazine or any other publication which is considered relevant.
- Websites.

4.2 Cost

West Kent has agreed to partner with the Council to assist in the delivery of the Under-occupation Strategy (as set out in this service level agreement) in respect of the period from 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015.

The amount payable to West Kent by the Council will be a total of **£35,215.00** for the period above.

West Kent will invoice SDC for the £20,000 cash incentive contribution and £15,215.00 for the contribution to the officer post.

5.0 PERIOD OF AGREEMENT AND TERMINATION

5.1 This service level agreement is between the District Council of Sevenoaks and West Kent Housing Association and is effective from **1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015**.

5.2 Implementation and Management of the Agreement

Day to day management of this agreement will be undertaken by the Homechoice Manager and will be discussed with the Housing Advice and Standards Manager at the regular quarterly meetings to deal with operational issues. Higher level meetings will take place as and when between the Chief Housing Officer and the Housing and Communities Director.

5.3 Requirements

The Council requires **West Kent Housing Association** to provide the service set out in this agreement, to provide the performance indicators, information and statistics as requested at Appendix A and to adhere to the Statement of Principles as set out at Appendix B.

West Kent staff will operate in accordance with West Kent policies and procedures including without limitation in relation to equal opportunities, quality standards, client feedback and confidentiality.

Both parties will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 insofar as they apply to the provision of the Service and/or otherwise to this Agreement.

5.3 Appropriate Documentation

The following documents shall be deemed to form and be read and construed as part of the **Service Level Agreement**

- Details of Performance Indicators and information and statistics (**Appendix A of this document**)
- Statement of Principles (**Appendix B of this document**)

6.0 ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

6.1 Dispute Resolution

In the first instance any dispute about the operation of this agreement or the performance of West Kent will be discussed and remedy sought between the Chief Housing Officer and Housing and Communities Director West Kent if the matter cannot be resolved within 21 days then a meeting between the Chief Executives of both organisations will be convened to resolve that matter.

6.2 Entire Agreement

This Agreement sets out all the terms and conditions that SDC and West Kent have agreed regarding the provision of the Service. This means that it supercedes any representations, documents, negotiations or understandings, whether oral or written, made, carried out or entered into before the date of this Agreement.

6.3 Variations to the Agreement

A variation to this Agreement (including to the scope and nature of the Service) shall only be valid if it has been agreed in writing and signed by both parties.

6.4 Contract (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999

Neither party intends to confer any right or benefit upon a third party and for the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 are expressly excluded from this Agreement.

Signed

Housing and Communities Director

Date

West Kent Housing Association
101 London Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1AX

Signed

Chief Housing Officer

Date

Community and Planning Services Department
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Sevenoaks District Council requires West Kent to provide information in March in respect of;

- Total number of tenants assisted under the scheme, broken down by:
 - Total of incentive paid
 - Number of over 55 years assisted
 - Number of under 55 year households
 - Numbers moved via register or mutual exchange

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL'S INDEPENDENT HOUSING ADVICE SERVICE
STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

1. The primary objective of the Sevenoaks District Council's West Kent Under-occupation scheme is to encourage up to 20 tenants to move from under-occupied West Kent homes via the SD Housing Register and/or Mutual Exchange.
2. This scheme will be made available to existing tenants who are under-occupying West Kent properties.
3. Equal opportunities policy and procedures must apply with the appropriate monitoring of BME groups to ensure fairness and equal access to all within the parameters of having a local connection.