Garage Allocations Policy

April 2018

Katherine Bishop – Policy and Partnership Officer.

1 Summary description of the proposed change
- What is the change to policy/service/new project that is being proposed?
- How does it compare with the current situation?

The Garage Allocations Policy sets out how garages are allocated, and the terms and conditions associated with letting a garage. This policy has been updated to introduce one set charge for garage rents regardless of tenure. The Garage Allocations Policy has been placed online for customer consultation and reviewed by tenant consultation groups to provide feedback, prior to publication.

From April 2018 existing Council tenants that apply to rent a garage will pay the same charge as a non council tenant from the offset. The garage rent charges will remain consistent across all Council sites. Garage rents will be increased by 5% for everyone renting a garage.

The priority for allocating garages will also be changed

**Historic garage priority criteria**
- Priority 1 - Disabled council tenants (subject to having a clear rent account)
- Priority 2 - Disabled non council tenants
- Priority 3 - Council tenants (subject to having a clear rent account)
- Priority 4 - Existing garage tenants wishing to exchange
- Priority 5 - Former council tenants (sold council houses)
- Priority 6 - Non council tenants

**Updated garage allocation priority criteria;**
- Priority 1 - Medway resident applicants with a 'Blue Badge' disabled driver parking permit
- Priority 2 - All other Medway resident applicants, in date order
- Priority 3 – Non- Medway resident applicants with a 'Blue Badge' disabled driver parking permit
- Priority 4 - All other non-Medway resident applicants, in date order.
2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment

- Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.
- Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile

Garage priority

Upon review it was felt that the current awarding of priority to Council tenants disadvantaged non council tenants. Prioritising Council tenants may also reduce the interest non council tenants have in renting a garage from the Council. It has therefore been decided to remove this priority.

It was felt that in order to advance equality, priority should be given to applicants with a Blue Badge' disabled driver parking permit. This is to ensure that their vehicles can be stored close to their properties, making it easier for them to be mobile.

In order to ensure we are fully utilising stock the Council will rent garages to non-Medway residents. However they will be given lower priority as the emphasis is on providing parking for local residents to help reduce on street parking.

Garage rents

Traditionally Council tenants have been charged a lower baseline rent than non Council Tenants.

As of November 2017 there were 161 garages let to Council tenants and 248 garages let to non-Council tenants.

It was felt that the current practice of charging a lower garage rent for non council tenants adversely impacted on them. In April 2018 161 council tenants will have their garage rent increased by £1 + 5% to start align their rents with non council tenants.

Analysis has identified that all council tenants renting a garage will see their overall payment increase despite the 1% rent reduction. For the 108 council tenants renting 1 garage the increase will range from £17.74 to £36.61 per year. However 59 of the 108 are in receipt of some form of Housing Benefit for their residential property.

Consultation

To ensure tenants were informed of the changes tenants were consulted on the changes to their Garage Rents at the 15 January Annual Budget Meeting. No objections were raised against the proposed changes to garage rent charges.

The Garage Allocations policy was placed online for consultation in March 2018. No objection was raised to the strategy.
3. What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

*Is it likely to:
- Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don’t? (Insert ✓ in one or more boxes)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protected characteristic groups</th>
<th>Adverse impact</th>
<th>Advance equality</th>
<th>Foster good relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender reassignment</td>
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<td>Marriage/civil partnership</td>
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<td>Pregnancy/maternity</td>
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<td>Race</td>
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<td>Religion/belief</td>
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<td>Sex</td>
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<td>Sexual orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low income groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council/Non Council tenants</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Summary of the likely impacts

- Who will be affected?
- How will they be affected?

The policy is likely to advance equality between council and non-council tenants as everyone will now be charged the same regardless of tenure.

Awarding priority to residents with blue badges will help advance equality for people with mobility disabilities.

However some low income groups in social housing may experience a slight disadvantage due to the increase in costs.

Tenants that rent 1 garage will be minimally affected by the increase overall, by around £17.74 to £36.61 per year. Some of these tenants will have the financial impact lessened through Housing Benefit contribution to the rent of their residential property.
Council tenants that have more than one garage linked to their tenancy will be more significantly impacted by an additional garage rent payment of £72 per year for each additional garage rented. Non Council tenants renting a garage may be negatively affected but the increase would be minimal, by 45p (+VAT) per week.

5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?
- Are there alternative providers?
- What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?
- Can demand for services be managed differently?

Support for Low income groups

The rent convergence will be done over a 3 year period so will not impact on tenants at once straight away.

Additionally each tenant will receive a written notification a minimum of four weeks in advance of the date any rent charge adjustments become operative.

If someone were to fall into garage arrears there would be potential for them to enter into a payment plan to recoup the arrears prior to repossession.

All garage tenants will be informed in writing at least 4 weeks prior to the increase informing them of payment changes.

Disability

Priority will be given to applicants with a Blue Badge' disabled driver parking permit. Allowing residents to store their vehicles close to their properties, making it easier for them to be mobile.

Council/ Non Council tenants

All applicants will now adhere to the allocations criteria, regardless of home occupancy status, i.e. council housing tenants. This will provide a fair and consistent application process for all, who wish to rent a garage from the Council.

The waiting list will be reviewed every 2 years, and applicants will be required to confirm they wish to remain on the waiting list.

6 Action plan
- Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Lead</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consult with residents on changes and potential impact.</td>
<td>January 2018 -</td>
<td>Policy and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implement the Garage Allocation Policy.</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>Housing Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitor complaints regarding the Garage Allocation Policy.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Housing Manager</td>
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March 2014
Diversity impact assessment

7 Recommendation
The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:

- to proceed with the change, implementing action plan if appropriate
- consider alternatives
- gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

The recommendation is to proceed with implementing the Garage Allocation Policy to provide an equal and consistent application process for Garage Allocations through Medway Council.

8 Authorisation
The authorising officer is consenting that:

- the recommendation can be implemented
- sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned
- the Action Plan will be incorporated into service plan and monitored

Authorising Officer

Marc Blowers
Head of Housing Management

Date

9 - 5 - 18

Contact your Performance and Intelligence hub for advice on completing this assessment
RCC: phone 2443 email: annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk
C&A: (Children’s Social Care) contact your normal P&I contact
C&A (all other areas): phone 1481 email: paddy.cahill@medway.gov.uk
BSD: phone 2472/1480 email: corppl@medway.gov.uk
PH: phone 2636 email: david.whiting@medway.gov.uk
Send completed assessment to the Corporate Performance & Intelligence Hub (CPI) for web publication (corppl@medway.gov.uk)