

Draft Tenancy Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The effective date of this Tenancy Policy is 1 July 2013.

1.2 Under the Localism Act 2011 and the Homes and Communities Agency's Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, Registered Providers (predominantly, but not exclusively, housing associations and local authorities) must publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies, preventing unnecessary evictions and tackling tenancy fraud and set out:

- The types of tenancies granted
- Circumstances where a tenancy of a particular type will be granted and the length of the term
- Circumstances where a Flexible Tenancy term of less than 5 years will be granted
- Circumstances where another tenancy will be granted on expiry on the same or another property
- How applicants/tenants can appeal against the length or type of tenancy or the decision not to grant a further tenancy
- Taking account of the needs of vulnerable people
- Provision of Advice and Assistance if another tenancy is not granted at the end of the term
- Discretionary succession rights

1.3 This Tenancy Policy, in conjunction with the Tenant's Handbook and the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme, meets with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and the Regulatory Framework.

1.4 Comprehensive systems are in place to ensure the efficient delivery of the services referred to in this Tenancy Policy. The efficiency of these systems are confirmed by the Housing Directorate being accredited with both the international quality standard of ISO 9001:2008 and the Customer Service Excellence Award for all of its services, including tenancy management.

2. Tenancy Strategy

2.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy, which must set out the matters to which Registered Providers are to have regard in formulating their tenancy policies relating to:

- The types of tenancies they grant;
- The circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular type;
- Where they grant tenancies for a term certain, the lengths of those terms; and
- The circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.

2.2 The West Essex Housing Forum, comprising the three local authorities in West Essex, being Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils has adopted one joint West Essex Tenancy Strategy. Epping Forest District Council adopted the West Essex Tenancy Strategy at its Cabinet meeting on 22 October 2012.

2.3 All Registered Providers with housing stock in West Essex are required by the Localism Act 2011 to have regard to the West Essex Tenancy Strategy when formulating and implementing their own Tenancy Policies. The Tenancy Strategy was produced to give guidance to Registered Providers on the three councils' expectations of how their Tenancy Policies should be framed. The Council has had regard to the West Essex Tenancy Strategy when formulating this Tenancy Policy.

3. The Types of Tenancies Granted

Introductory Tenancy Scheme

3.1 The Council will operate an Introductory Tenancy Scheme whereby all new potentially Secure Tenants (sometimes referred to as "lifetime tenants") and Flexible Tenants ("fixed term tenants") are "on trial" for a period of 12 months in order that the Council can satisfy itself that the introductory tenant can sustain a tenancy and meet with the conditions of the Council's Standard Tenancy Agreement. Should any conditions be breached, the Council will be able to seek possession of the property through the County Court with the judge having to grant possession, provided all of the procedures have been followed correctly. In circumstances where the Council has concerns about an introductory tenant, but not serious enough to apply to the County Court for possession, the introductory period can be extended by a further 6 months. If the "trial" period is successfully completed, Introductory Tenancies automatically become either Secure periodic tenancies or Flexible Tenancies.

Introductory, Potentially Secure, Periodic ("Lifetime") Tenants

3.2 Introductory, potentially Secure Tenancies will be granted to appropriate homeseekers in accordance with this Tenancy Policy. The legislation governing Secure Tenancies is found in Part 1V of the Housing Act 1985. The rights of a Secure Tenant are set out in the Act, and are commonly referred to as the "Tenants Charter". A Secure Tenancy can only be ended by way of a Possession Order granted by the County Court.

Secure Tenants who Transfer or Mutual Exchange

3.3 Under the Localism Act 2011, all tenants who signed up to their tenancy prior to 1 April 2012 will be given "a tenancy with no less security where they choose to move to another social rented home". This means that their security of tenure is protected if they transfer to another social rented home. When a secure tenant transfers, they are granted a new tenancy of their new property. Although they will retain their secure tenancy status, there will be a reduction in tenancy rights. This is due to their new tenancy being a tenancy granted after the commencement of the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 on 1 April 2012 which, although secure, will have reduced succession rights for family members.

3.4 Where any tenant enters into a mutual exchange, in law, this is done by way of an Assignment of the tenancy. However, it is important to note that if one of the exchange partners is a Flexible Tenant then, in law, the tenancy of each party will be ended and a new tenancy will be granted on the new property. As with transfers, depending upon the circumstances, there could be a reduction in tenancy rights. The Council offers "HomeSwapper", an internet-based mutual exchange service, free of charge to assist qualifying tenants who want to enter into a mutual exchange. Any tenant who does not have access to the Internet will be provided with support on request.

3.5 The law on transfers and mutual exchanges is complicated. Any tenants who are considering either a transfer or a mutual exchange should seek advice from their Housing Management Officer.

Introductory, Potentially Secure, Flexible Tenancies

3.6 The Localism Act 2011 provides for a new type of fixed-term tenancy to Council tenants – the "Flexible Tenancy". Flexible Tenancies (or Fixed Term Tenancies) are tenancies that are offered for a specified period of time, as opposed to traditional "lifetime tenancies". A Flexible Tenancy is a form of secure tenancy, and generally, tenants with a Flexible Tenancy have the same rights as other secure tenants (as set out in the "Tenants Charter" under the Housing Act 1985).

3.7 The Localism Act 2011 amends the Housing Act 1996 to allow Introductory Tenancies to become Flexible Tenancies at the end of the introductory period, if local authorities wish to provide Flexible Tenancies. All Flexible Tenancies granted in accordance with this Tenancy Policy will have an introductory period of 12 months added to the beginning of the fixed-term, which may be extended by a further 6 months where there are minor breaches of tenancy conditions. A written notice will be served before the Introductory Tenancy is granted making clear the arrangements for the transition from Introductory to Flexible status providing no possession proceedings have been commenced, setting out the length of the fixed term and other expressed terms of the tenancy.

Assessment Criteria – Decision on re-granting a Flexible Tenancy

3.8 At the commencement of each Flexible Tenancy, the tenant will be informed of the Assessment Criteria that will be applied to determine, at the end of the flexible term, if a further tenancy will be granted. At least 6 months prior to the ending of the fixed-term the Council will provide Notice in writing to the tenant stating that it either proposes to grant a further tenancy (Flexible or Secure – of the same or another property) on the expiry of the existing fixed term or that it intends to end the tenancy. Prior to serving the Notice, the Tenant will be assessed against the Assessment Criteria. The general presumption will be that a further tenancy is granted. However, a further tenancy (Flexible or Secure) will generally not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Where the tenant (or a member of their household) who, during the Flexible Tenancy term has been guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour. Such behaviour is behaviour that would give sufficient grounds to issue possession proceedings if they were a Secure or Flexible Tenant and includes rent arrears (including housing benefit and Court cost arrears), and other breaches of tenancy conditions.

- Where the tenant has been subject to an Anti-Social Behaviour Order or an Anti-Social Behaviour Contract, or any similar penalty introduced under future legislation
- Where the tenant is under-occupying the accommodation (when taking into account people required to live with the tenant i.e. family members and not lodgers etc), then a further Flexible or Secure Tenancy (as appropriate) will be offered on a suitable smaller property, provided all of the other requirements of the Assessment Criteria are met
- Where the tenant is statutorily overcrowded in the accommodation a further tenancy (Flexible or Secure as appropriate) will be granted on a larger property, subject to availability and provided all of the other requirements of the Assessment Criteria are met
- Where the property has been extensively adapted and there is no one in occupation who is in need of these adaptations, and there is an applicant on the Housing Register who is in need of the adapted accommodation, then a further Flexible or Secure Tenancy (as appropriate) of an alternative suitable property will be offered, provided all of the other requirements of the Assessment Criteria are met.
- Where, in accordance with the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme, the Flexible Tenant, in the opinion of the Council, has sufficient income and/or assets to enable them to meet their housing need themselves (e.g. by purchasing a home of their own). The current thresholds at which this criterion will apply are where;
 - (a) three times the gross household income, plus assets (including savings and property equity), exceeds £200,000 and the tenant has a housing need for a studio or 1 bedroom accommodation
 - (b) three times the gross household income, plus assets (including savings and property equity), exceeds £275,000 and the tenant has a housing need for 2-bedroom or larger accommodation.

3.9 The thresholds or criteria to be used will be those applicable on the date the 6 months Notice is served.

3.10 At the end of the Flexible Tenancy term, where the tenant meets one or more aspects of the above Assessment Criteria but there are special circumstances including, where:

- the tenant is an active Foster Carer
- the Council's Medical Advisor confirms that the tenant or member of their household has a terminal illness or a long-term disability
- the tenant is a care leaver who is still in need of support
- there are dependent vulnerable children

3.11 In such special circumstances, a further Flexible Tenancy term of between 2 years and (in certain circumstances) 10 years may be granted. This is in order for the special circumstances to be monitored and re-assessed at a later date.

3.12 The Council recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances not covered by this Tenancy Policy where Flexible Tenants who would not ordinarily be eligible for a new tenancy may be granted a new tenancy. In such instances, the Director of Housing will have delegated authority to make decisions, as he considers appropriate.

Flexible Tenancies (Review Procedures)

3.13 All Flexible Tenancy Reviews will be undertaken in accordance with The Flexible Tenancies (Review Procedures) Regulations 2012 as follows:

Start of the fixed term

3.14 There is no right to a review of the type of tenancy offered. There is only one ground for a review at the commencement of the Flexible Tenancy, being that the length of the tenancy offered is inconsistent with the Council's published Tenancy Policy. In these circumstances, the Flexible Tenant (the applicant) must make an application for a review in writing including:

- The applicant's name and address
- A statement of the reasons why, in the applicant's opinion, the length of the tenancy does not accord with the Tenancy Policy as to the length of the term of the Flexible Tenancy it grants.
- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, require the review to be conducted by way of an oral hearing
- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, agree to receive communications relating to a review by e-mail and, if so, the e-mail address to which such communications should be sent

End of the fixed term – decision not to grant a further tenancy

3.15 If a further Flexible Tenancy is not granted, a written Notice informing the tenant will be served at least 6 months before the expiry of the tenancy term. The Notice will set out the reasons for the decision and, at the same time, notify the tenant of their right to request a review and the time within which a request may be made. An application for a review must be made in writing and include:

- The applicant's name and address
- A description of the original decision in respect of which the review is sought, including the date on which the decision was made
- A statement of the grounds on which the review is sought
- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, require the review to be conducted by way of an oral hearing

- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, agree to receive communications relating to a review by e-mail and, if so, the e-mail address to which such communications should be sent

3.16 Following receipt of the application, if the review is to be undertaken without an oral hearing, the Council will:

- Send a written Notice to the applicant stating that the applicant may make written representations in support of the application (which will be taken into account by the person undertaking the review) not less than five days after the day on which the Notice is received by the applicant

3.17 Following receipt of the application, if the review is to be undertaken by way of an oral hearing, the Council will, in addition to sending the Notice referred to in paragraph 3.16 above:

- Notify the applicant of the day on which, and the time and place at which, it is proposed that the oral hearing is to take place, which will not be earlier than five days after the day on which Notice is received by the applicant

Procedure at the hearing

3.18 The hearing will be conducted by an officer senior to the officer who made the original decision and who was not involved in the original decision. The tenant will be given every opportunity to make written or oral representations and be able to call persons to give evidence on any matter relevant to the decision to be made on review and put questions to any person who gives evidence at the hearing. The applicant will be able to be accompanied or represented by another person (appointed by the applicant) who will have the same rights and obligations as the applicant for the purposes of the conduct of the hearing.

3.19 If the applicant fails to attend the hearing, the person conducting it will either proceed with the hearing or re-arrange the hearing if it is considered appropriate. If the hearing is adjourned for more than one day, the person conducting the hearing will specify the date on which it will be resumed by sending a Notice in writing to the applicant.

3.20 The decision on review will be made by the person conducting the review who will notify the applicant in writing of the decision.

3.21 If, generally, there is no engagement from the tenant in the Review process then the Council (if considered appropriate) will commence possession proceedings.

Ending the Flexible Tenancy

3.22 The Council, when it considers appropriate, during or at the end of the tenancy will apply for a Court Order to end any Flexible Tenancy during the fixed term if any of the grounds for possession (being the same grounds available for a Secure Tenancy) can be proven following any breaches of tenancy conditions.

3.23 If, in accordance with this Tenancy Policy, a further Flexible Tenancy is not granted, and the tenant has either requested a review and it is dismissed, or decided not to seek a review, the Council will seek possession of the property. The tenant will then be given no less than 2 months Notice in writing stating that the Council requires possession of the property, prior to starting an ordinary claim for possession in the County Court.

3.24 If the tenant refuses to vacate when the Notice period expires, possession proceedings will be taken. A Court can only refuse possession if the correct procedures have not been followed or if the decision was “wrong” in law.

3.25 A Flexible Tenant may give 4 weeks Notice in writing to end the Flexible Tenancy at any time during the fixed term; this may only be accepted by the Council provided there are no arrears outstanding and any other breaches of tenancies are remedied.

Advice and Assistance if a further tenancy is not granted

3.26 Where a further tenancy is not granted, the Council will provide advice and assistance to the tenant at least 6 months prior to the ending of the fixed term to help the tenant find alternative housing.

This advice and assistance will be provided by the Council’s Homelessness Prevention Team within the Housing Options Section and will include:

- Assistance with securing privately rented accommodation
- Assessing eligibility for a rental loan, damage deposit guarantee, a discretionary housing payment to assist with securing accommodation in the private rented sector; and/or any other forms of assistance available at that time
- Advice on securing owner occupied accommodation
- Advice on joining the Council’s Housing Register

3.27 Tenants should contact the Council to arrange a housing advice interview. The Council has a Service Agreement with the three Citizens Advice Bureaux in the District, who tenants can contact and be provided with a range of independent advice and support.

Flexible Tenancies and the Right to Buy

3.28 The “Right to Buy” extends to Flexible Tenancies, subject to the same qualifying criteria for Secure Tenancies.

4. Demoted Tenancies

Secure Tenancies

4.1 If the Council has concerns about the way in which a Secure Tenant has been conducting their tenancy but the concerns are such that seeking possession is not felt appropriate it may proceed to Court and seek a Tenancy Demotion Order. If the tenancy is demoted, the tenant will hold a lesser form of tenancy with reduced security of tenure for a period of 12 months. During this period, Demoted Tenants do not have the same rights as secure tenants, for example they do not have:

- The right to exchange
- The right of succession
- The right to take in lodgers
- The right to buy which is suspended until the tenancy is no longer demoted

4.2 If the tenant continues to breach their tenancy conditions, then the Council can proceed to Court for possession when the Judge will have no alternative, providing the correct procedures have been followed, other than to grant the Council possession.

Flexible Tenancies

4.3 In the case of Flexible Tenants, If the 12 month demotion period is successfully completed, then the Council will serve the Demoted Tenant with a Notice stating that the tenancy is to be restored from a Demoted Tenancy to a fixed term Flexible Tenancy and specifying the length of the fixed term and other express terms of the tenancy.

5. Joint Introductory Potentially Secure & Flexible Tenancies

5.1 A Secure or Flexible Tenancy can be held by one person or by up to four joint tenants all of whom must be qualifying persons. However many tenants there are, there is still only one tenancy and the rights and duties relating to the tenancy apply jointly and severally to all joint tenants.

5.2 When a joint tenant dies, the remaining tenant/s will continue to hold the tenancy by "survivorship". The names of any joint tenants cannot be removed from the tenancy and if one joint tenant surrenders the tenancy then the tenancy comes to an end. Further information is available in the Council's leaflet on joint tenancies.

5.3 Introductory potentially secure joint tenancies will be offered to;

- (a) married couples or civil partners, provided that both homeseekers are named on the application form, unless both parties request the tenancy to be granted in a sole name;
- (b) unmarried couples, or those living as civil partners who can demonstrate a relationship similar to marriage or a civil partnership, providing that both request it and the partner of the lead homeseeker is registered on the application form; and
- (c) homeseekers and their live-in carers, where the live-in carer has occupied the property as their only or principal home for over 12 months and the Council considers it to be justified.

In all other circumstances, single tenancies will be offered to the lead applicant.

6. Non-secure Tenancies

6.1 Non secure tenants have less security of tenure than Secure, Introductory and Flexible Tenants and normally apply where short-term temporary accommodation is provided.

7. Circumstances where a tenancy of a particular type will be granted and the length of the term

Introductory, Potentially Secure Periodic (“Lifetime”) Tenancies

7.1 The Council will grant Introductory potentially Secure Tenancies to homeseekers allocated permanent accommodation in sheltered housing, or generally any property within the Council’s housing stock comprising two bedrooms or less.

Flexible Tenancies

7.2 Flexible Tenancies (“fixed term tenancies”) will be granted to all homeseekers who sign-up to a tenancy of a property comprising three or more bedrooms. This will assist the Council in tackling the problem of under-occupation in the future and remove the potential for tenants of working age on Housing Benefit to pay a proportion of their rent due to under-occupation. The fixed term for the Flexible Tenancy will be 9 years. An introductory tenancy term of 12 months (or 18 months where the term is extended due to minor breaches of tenancy conditions) will be included, in addition to the 9-year Flexible Tenancy making a total fixed term of, generally, 10 years. At the commencement of the Introductory Period, the Council will serve a Notice on the tenant stating that a Flexible Tenancy will be granted at the end of the introductory period and what the length of the fixed term will be, provided the terms of the Introductory Tenancy are not breached.

7.3 Flexible Tenants will be granted, through their Tenancy Agreement, the “Right to Improve” but not the “Right to Compensation for Improvements”. The financial incentives under the Council’s Housing Allocations Scheme for Council tenants to transfer to smaller accommodation will apply to Flexible Tenants during the fixed term, but only within the first 5 years of the fixed term (inclusive of the Introductory Tenancy period).

Flexible tenancies of less than 9 years

7.4 There are some exceptional circumstances where the Council will consider granting a Flexible Tenancy for a fixed term of less than 9 years, and possibly less than 5 years (generally the minimum period allowed under the Localism Act 2011, unless there are special circumstances) in order for the exceptional circumstances to be monitored and re-assessed. However, the absolute minimum period offered in such circumstances will be 2 years. Such exceptional circumstances include:

- Where the Council plans to re-develop, demolish or dispose of any Council accommodation within five years from the date of the commencement of the tenancy;
- Where the new tenant is an active Foster Carer; and
- Where the Council’s Medical Advisor confirms that an existing Flexible Tenant or member of their household has a terminal illness or a long term disability, or is a care leaver who is still in need of support, or where there are dependent children, in order for the circumstances to be monitored and re-assessed at a later date

8. Non-secure Tenancies

8.1 Non-secure tenancies may be granted when a tenant is moved to alternative accommodation whilst major works are undertaken, or in extremely rare circumstances in order for the Council to provide temporary housing under its homelessness duties.

9. Contractual Succession Rights – Family Members

Pre- April 2012 Tenancies

9.1 All of the Council's secure tenants who signed up to their tenancy prior to 1 April 2012 enjoy many rights under the Housing Act 1985 Part IV ("Tenants Charter"). One of these is the right of succession to a tenancy which takes place upon the death of the tenant. Any successor tenant who is either a spouse or a Civil Partner is able to remain at the accommodation regardless of any under-occupation. Under the current legislation, in the case of succession by a family member who meets all of the rules, if the accommodation afforded by the dwelling-house is more extensive than is reasonably required by the tenant then the Council can serve a notice of seeking possession more than six months but less than twelve months after becoming aware of the tenant's death requiring them to vacate and move to smaller accommodation unless the Council's under-occupation policy applies.

Post April 2012 Tenancies

9.2 Under the Localism Act 2011, for all tenancies (including Flexible Tenancies) commencing after 1 April 2012, the right to succeed was repealed for family members. However, from 1 April 2012, all of the Council's secure tenants have been granted additional contractual succession rights within their Tenancy Agreement, in addition to those set out in the Localism Act. If at the time of the tenant's death, the dwelling-house is occupied by a family member (as defined by Section 113 of the Housing Act 1985) and not occupied by a spouse or a civil partner of the tenant as his only or principal home, the following additional rights will apply through the terms of the Tenancy agreement;

- Provided there is no under-occupation, a family member will be allowed to succeed to the tenancy provided they meet all of the succession rules set out under the Housing Act 1985 Part IV and has been residing at the property as their only or principal home for over three years
- Where the property is under-occupied by a family member, if the family member meets all of the succession rules set out under the Housing Act 1985 Part IV and has been residing at the property as their only or principal home for over three years, they will be made one offer of suitable alternative accommodation. If the successor tenant refuses to move, then the Council will take Court action to seek possession under Ground 16 of the Housing Act 1985
- Where the property is under-occupied by a family member who has resided at the property for less than three years then they be required to vacate. If the occupier refuses to vacate, then the Council will take Court action to seek possession

10. Tenancy Management

10.1 The Council offers a range of support to tenants in order to assist them in sustaining their tenancy and preventing evictions, including:

- Undertaking in-depth sign up interviews with all new tenants to ensure the tenant understands the terms and conditions of their tenancy
- Housing Management Officers undertaking new tenant visits within 12 weeks of the commencement of the tenancy to offer advice and support and to clarify the conditions of tenancy
- Recognising that early identification and intervention in response to unpaid rent can prevent long term difficulties for the tenant, including the use of standard letters, regular rent statements, home visits, office interviews, pre-court visits etc.
- Housing Management Officers undertaking visits to all tenants who have been identified as being affected by the social sector size limits of the Welfare Reforms to discuss their options and to offer advice and support
- Working in partnership with the floating support provider Family Mosaic, who provide support to vulnerable tenants
- Housing Management working closely with the Council's Homelessness Prevention Team
- Safeguarding polices including staff training and reporting procedures
- Undertaking in-depth Special Needs Assessments whereby an officer visits a prospective tenant of sheltered accommodation to ensure the property will meet their needs
- All tenants receiving the Council's quarterly tenants magazine "Housing News" which includes articles on tenancy sustainment issues
- Offering mediation services to assist in resolving neighbour disputes
- Liaising regularly with the Council's Safer Communities Team, Noise Team, Animal Warden etc in order to design out anti-social behaviour, working in partnership to seek methods to avoid neighbour conflict and attend network meetings with partner agencies to resolve cases
- Meeting with representatives from the three Citizens Advice Bureaux in the District on a quarterly basis to give them an opportunity to raise any concerns and to update them on major issues and any policy changes
- Meeting with senior staff in the Council's Benefits Division on a quarterly basis to raise any concerns and to update on any policy changes

11. Tackling Social Housing Fraud

11.1 In July 2010, the Council appointed a new a part-time Social Housing Fraud Officer as part of the Government's national initiative to tackle social housing fraud, with the main focus on the unlawful sub-letting of Council properties. As social housing is a very valuable asset, the Council considers it is important to ensure that properties are let fairly and are occupied by legitimate tenants. Within 12 months of the appointment there was a great deal of progress in this area of work including:

- Identifying 37 cases of potential social housing fraud which had either been, or continued to be, investigated.
- Assisting the Council's Housing Benefit's Division in the recovery of overpaid housing benefit.
- Introducing a system to provide photographic ID of tenants and housing applicants.
- Introducing the "Tell Us Once" initiative whereby people registering deaths at the Registrar's Office can opt to have the Council automatically notified.
- Undertaking "Tenancy Audits" on certain housing estates to ensure that properties are being occupied by the lawful tenants,
- Undertaking joint visits with the Council's Valuer when Right to Buy valuations are undertaken.

11.2 Due to the success of the scheme, in March 2012, the Council agreed to make the part-time Social Housing Fraud Officer post full-time, and to appoint a full-time Senior Social Housing Fraud Officer. These additional resources allow the Council to introduce a public awareness campaign encouraging members of the public to provide information on potential social housing fraud.

12. Taking account of the needs of vulnerable people

12.1 When a Flexible Tenancy comes to an end, in accordance with the Assessment Criteria, if the Council's Medical Advisor confirms that the tenant or a member of their household:

- has a terminal illness or a long term disability
- is a care leaver who is still in need of support
- there are dependent vulnerable children

12.2 A further Flexible Tenancy for a fixed term of between 2 years and (in certain circumstances) 10 years will be granted. This is in order for the exceptional circumstances to be monitored and re-assessed.

12.3 The Council has granted all new tenants whose tenancy commences after 1 April 2012, additional contractual succession rights to family members above those set out in the Localism Act 2011. This will ensure that family members in the District will continue to be housed by the Council provided that they meet the requirements of the policy.

12.4 The Council's Introductory Tenancy Scheme has been successful in reducing anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance and continues to allow the Council to ensure that "unsuitable" tenants do not cause difficulties for vulnerable tenants.

12.5 The Council has a comprehensive Flexible Tenancy Review process which will take into account the needs of any vulnerable tenant prior to any decision not to grant a further tenancy. In addition, the needs of vulnerable tenants are taken into account with any Introductory Tenancy Review decisions.

12.6 A range of support is offered to tenants which are set out under the Tenancy Management section of this Tenancy Policy.

13. Equal Opportunities

13.1 The Council has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment on both the Housing Allocations Scheme & this Tenancy Policy to determine how they will impact upon those classes of persons with protected characteristics and complies with the Equalities Act 2010. A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment is available upon request free of charge.

13.2 The Council is committed to equal opportunities in the provision of its housing services. The Council will have regard to, and implement, the provisions of the Race Relations Code of Practice in Rented Housing, which it has adopted. The Council will also abide by the Equality Act 2010.

13.3 As an aid to ensuring that homeseekers are not discriminated against on the grounds of race, through the Council's Housing Scrutiny Panel the Council will monitor the racial origin of:

- a) homeseekers on the Housing Register
- b) homeseekers allocated housing
- c) homeseekers on the Housing Register seeking sheltered accommodation
- d) homeseekers offered sheltered accommodation

13.4 The practices and procedures of the Housing Directorate will be monitored by the appropriate Assistant Director of Housing to ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly. Changes will be made if it is established that practices or procedures may be contravening the Equality Act 2010.

14. Consultation on the Tenancy Policy

14.1 The Council sent a copy of a draft version of this Tenancy Policy to all of the following interested parties giving them a reasonable opportunity to comment:

- Every private Registered Provider of social housing
- Local Councils
- The Tenants and Leaseholder's Federation
- Partner Agencies with an interest in the management of the Council's housing stock

15. Publishing the Tenancy Policy

15.1 A copy of the final version of this Tenancy Policy was sent to all of those consulted above. In addition, copies can be downloaded on the Internet from the Council's web-site: www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing

16. Reviewing the Tenancy Policy

16.1 The Tenancy Policy will be reviewed on at least a three-yearly basis by the Council's Housing Scrutiny Panel in consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, which shall recommend any changes to the Council's Cabinet.