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# Council-Owned Housing Policy

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Whanganui District Council  
As at ##/##/2021 (Resolution 2021/##)

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## **1.0 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This document sets out Council's position with regard to the management and delivery of the Council-Owned Housing service.
- 1.2 This housing is available for older residents with low to moderate financial means who are able to live independently.
- 1.3 The goal with this service is to provide and maintain a network of housing for older residents, in a manner that promotes their health, safety and well-being.
- 1.4 This is supported by the following objectives:
  - To provide housing to a standard that is suitable to meet the needs of older residents of low to moderate financial means that are able to live independently;
  - To charge rental rates that are affordable;
  - To ensure tenant's rights to quiet enjoyment are maintained;
  - To ensure the well-being needs of the tenants are supported as far as practicable; and
  - To contribute to Council's climate change mitigation efforts and incorporate environmentally sustainable practices.
- 1.5 This document is supported by guidelines and procedures to assist Council staff management of the service.
- 1.6 This policy provides pets (fish, birds and cats) to be trialled at the Eugene Crotty, Walter Nash and Puriri Street complexes. This will be reviewed after 1 year, at which point Council will consider modifying, restricting, or expanding the pet allowance to other complexes in its Council-Owned Housing portfolio.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Council, encouraged by significant financial support from Central Government, entered into housing older residents from the late 1940s to alleviate the acute housing problem. The ongoing delivery of Council-Owned Housing has continued to support the social well-being of older residents with modest financial means.
- 2.2 With an ageing population, rising property values and living costs, and growing housing demand, there is a community need for the provision of Council-Owned Housing to continue.
- 2.3 Council now provides housing in the form of 275 units in 16 complexes. The Council Property Group manages this portfolio. This activity is financially ring-fenced which means it does not receive ratepayer funding.
- 2.4 This policy is based on a review of the 2012 policy. A key issue that has arisen since that time is a demand for pets to be allowed to provide companionship for tenants.

### **3.0 Purpose of the Policy**

- 3.1 This policy sets out Council's commitments in relation to the delivery and management of the Council-Owned Housing service. The Council-Owned Housing portfolio consists of 275 units across 16 complexes. These are:
- Collins Street;
  - Eugene Crotty;
  - Jack Brotherston;
  - Puriri Street;
  - Sandown;
  - Rimu Street;
  - Walter Nash Place;
  - Konini/Parsons Streets;
  - Garden Court;
  - Heathdene Court;
  - Rothesay;
  - Kawakawa/Nixon;
  - Ladysmith;
  - Ivan Brown;
  - Pukatea.
- 3.2 The associated guideline and procedures explain how the policy will be implemented and provides flexibility in addressing issues that may arise. Delivery of the Council-Owned Housing service is supported by an external contractor to provide an independent well-being service and advise Council of issues and needs.
- 3.3 The following objectives drive the delivery of the Council-Owned Housing activity:
1. To provide housing to a standard that is suitable to meet the needs of older residents of low to moderate financial means that are able to live independently;
  2. To charge rental rates that are affordable;
  3. To ensure tenant's rights to quiet enjoyment are maintained;
  4. To ensure the well-being needs of the tenants are supported as far as practicable; and
  5. To contribute to Council's climate change mitigation efforts and incorporate environmentally sustainable practices.

## **4.0 Scope of policy**

- 4.1 This policy is based on the retention of housing complexes for older residents with low to moderate financial means. These complexes will not be retained for other purposes or categories of tenants. If occupancy levels are low, flexibility in terms of the entry criteria will be applied.

## **5.0 Policy context**

- 5.1 This policy document gives effect to the Council's Long-Term Plan and supports the Leading Edge vision and strategy particularly the strategic objective:

*Pursue initiatives that secure our health, our safety and instil a sense of belonging and well-being for all.*

- 5.2 It also supports Council's Age-Friendly Plan:

*To improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of pensioner housing in Whanganui.*

- 5.3 Council is required to comply with the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 and the Healthy Homes legislation.

## **6.0 Council-Owned Housing Guideline**

- 6.1 All applications for tenancy will be assessed against the eligibility criteria contained within the Council-Owned Housing Guideline (**Attachment 1**). The Guideline criteria will be reviewed by Council's Property Group on an annual basis.

## **7.0 Well-Being Service**

- 7.1 A contracted Well-Being Service shall be provided and all tenants shall engage with this contractor from the commencement of and through the duration of the tenancy.

## **8.0 Disruptive, Antisocial or Threatening Behaviour**

- 8.1 Tenants must be able to contribute constructively to harmonious community life within the complex. Disruptive, antisocial or threatening behaviour towards other tenants, their visitors, Council staff and their contractors will not be tolerated. Tenants shall comply with the Council-Owned Housing Tenancy Code of Conduct.

## **9.0 Pets**

- 9.1 The keeping of pet fish, a bird, or a cat per tenancy is permitted on a trial basis at Eugene Crotty, Walter Nash and Puriri Street complexes, subject to the tenant entering into a Pet Care Agreement (**Attachment 1**). This policy will be reviewed 1

year from the date of adoption, at which point Council will make any appropriate amendments and/or expansions dependent on the outcome of the trial.

## **10.0 Unit Upgrades**

- 10.1 Units will be upgraded to meet the Healthy Homes Standards in accordance with legislative timeframes and incorporate environmentally friendly options where possible.

## **11.0 Rental Review**

- 11.1 Delegated authority is given to the Council Chief Executive to review Council-Owned Housing rental rates on an annual basis.
- 11.2 The rent for Council-Owned Housing single rent (one person) is set at 30% of the GRI (net Superannuation). It was increased to this following a resolution on 30 May 2017 in order to make the portfolio more financially viable. This is part of a staggered increase that will rise to 31% in October 2021 and 32% in November 2022. Any further increase to this percentage must be approved by the Council or the Strategy and Finance Committee.
- 11.3 The Council-Owned Housing double rent (two people) is set at 25% of the combined GRI. It was increased to this following a resolution on 30 May 2017 in order to make the portfolio more financially viable. This is part of a staggered increase that will rise to 26% in October 2021 and 27% in November 2022. Any further increase to this percentage must be approved by the Council or the Strategy and Finance Committee.

## **12.0 Monitoring and evaluation**

- 12.1 Compliance with this policy and accompanying guidelines will be regularly monitored by the Property Team.
- 12.2 A survey of tenant's satisfaction will be undertaken on an annual basis.
- 12.3 The policy will be reviewed at least every five years. The Pet Policy will be reviewed one year after the adoption of this policy.

## **Further information**

### **Who to contact**

For further information about the Council-Owned Housing Policy or the housing complexes, please contact the Property Team.

### **Related documents**

These documents have been developed to support the implementation of the Council-Owned Housing Policy:

- Council-Owned Housing Guidelines
- Well-Being Contract

In addition, administration of the Policy is in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 and Privacy Act 1993.

#### **Definition -- Independent Living**

A person who is able to look after themselves and engage or manage any support services they require in order to live in the unit as it is presented at the commencement of the tenancy. Support services can include assistance with personal care and cleanliness of the unit but cannot extend to the requirement of a full time or overnight/live in carer. A person who can live without presenting avoidable risk or harm to themselves or others.

**Attachment 1:**

## Council-Owned Housing Guidelines 2021

This guideline outlines the eligibility criteria but also provides a flexible approach to be taken for managing the housing service and addressing issues by enabling issues to be considered by Council officers on a case by case basis.

### 1. Eligibility criteria

	Requirement for a single person	Requirement for a couple	Defined as:
Age	Applicant is 65 years or older	One person to be 65 years or older	Current age to qualify for NZ Superannuation <a href="https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/nz-superannuation.html">https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/nz-superannuation.html</a>  During periods of high vacancy, Council will consider accepting applicants in the age of 60-65.
Asset threshold <sup>1</sup>	\$129,423 or less	\$129,423 combined	As set by MSD residential care asset threshold  Definition of assets set by MSD for residential care subsidy  <a href="https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/residential-care-subsidy.html">https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/residential-care-subsidy.html</a>  Assets can include any combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cash or savings</li><li>• Bonus bonds</li><li>• Investments or shares</li><li>• Life insurance policies</li><li>• Loans made to other people (including family trusts)</li><li>• Boats, caravans and campervans</li><li>• Investment properties</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> Linked to Residential Care subsidy

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kiwisaver accounts</li> </ul> <p>For the purposes of clarity, owning a house or a share in one disqualifies an applicant from access to Council-owned housing regardless of its value or whether the applicant is above or below the asset threshold.</p>
Income	\$55,002 income or less pa gross  \$29,484 + \$25,518	\$97,684 combined income or less pa gross  \$58,968 + \$38,716	<p>75% of current minimum wage Gross ( 40 Hour Week)</p> <p><a href="https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-and-wages/pay/minimum-wage/minimum-wage-rates/">https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-and-wages/pay/minimum-wage/minimum-wage-rates/</a></p> <p>+</p> <p>Current NZ Super Gross</p> <p><a href="https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/nz-superannuation.html">https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/nz-superannuation.html</a></p>
Able to live independently – See definition of Independent Living	Yes	Yes to both applicants	<p>Assessed by Welfare Officer</p> <p>Assessed by GP</p> <p>Assessed by Council Officer using Council's definition of Independent Living</p>
Able to live compatibly with others	Yes	Yes to both applicants	Two character references attesting to applicants' ability to live compatibly with others and satisfy any other background checks and/or enquiries as may be completed by Council.
Be a New Zealand citizen or resident	Yes	Yes to both applicants	A current NZ passport or visa
Criminal convictions			Will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis.
Next of Kin	Yes		A New Zealand domiciled next of kin must be provided. In the event that this is not possible then either an Enduring Power of Attorney or Solicitor is required. These details must be re-confirmed/updated annually.

## 2. Units and their use

Allocation of units	Once an applicant has been approved for Council-Owned Housing, they will be offered the next available unit. If they decline the unit offered, it will be offered to the next approved applicant. Units will be offered in descending order based on who has been longest on the waiting list.
Alterations to units	Tenants are encouraged to approach providers specialising in accessibility equipment to access any specialist equipment they require to ensure they can live independently. At the end of the tenancy these fixtures or fittings are to be removed by the tenant if required by Council with make good provisions applying.  Three units have been modified for wheelchair users. No further units will be modified for wheelchair users.
Car parks and car ports	Eligibility for a car port is dependent on being a current tenant, however the car port allocation will not form part of the tenancy agreement. Allocated car ports to tenants will cost \$5.00 per week. A car port is to be used to park a vehicle that is in working order (able to be moved immediately upon request), registered and warranted. As there are less car ports than units, it is likely there will be a waiting list. Car ports may not be used for the following: campervans, mobile homes, caravans, boats, trailers, permanent structures and general storage.
Double units	In the event of one tenant in a double unit no longer being able to stay living in the unit, the remaining tenant will be reassessed using current eligibility guidelines. If they qualify for Council-Owned Housing they will have the option of moving into a single unit when one becomes available or staying in the original double unit at the double rate.  If they are not eligible to continue staying in the unit they must move to a unit for which they do qualify, or move out of the Council-Owned Housing property.
Garden and patio care	Tenants are responsible for maintaining the small garden areas to the immediate front and rear of the units.  The front and rear patio areas are to be kept tidy and are not to be used for the storage of household goods, effects or

	furniture, aside from purpose built outdoor furniture and plants.
Maintenance	Upon vacation of units, conditions assessments will be carried out and any decorating or necessary upgrading will be undertaken. Environmentally sustainable options will be considered.  Essential repairs will be undertaken as and when required.
Other potential uses	When giving consideration to making vacant units or complexes available for other housing needs, each proposal must be cost neutral to the Council-Owned Housing activity and ratepayers.
Recycling and waste	Tenants using the recycling and green waste facilities must not incorrectly use these (i.e. for household rubbish).
Transfers	Tenant requests for transfer to alternate units will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
Visitors	Tenants may have very short-term visitors to stay (1-2 nights). However, tenants must not have any additional people semi-permanently or permanently living in their unit.

### 3. Pet Care Agreement

#### **Pet Care Agreement for Whanganui District Council-Owned Housing**

Pets (fish, birds, cats) appropriate to the environment are able to be kept in Council-Owned Housing Units subject to entering into a Pet Care Agreement and compliance with the Agreement's conditions.

To ensure that appropriate care is given to the pet, the Pet Care Agreement outlines the responsibilities of the resident and/or their family or other designated contact person. The designated contact person shall be updated annually.

##### **Conditions:**

1. Council management may serve notice for any pet to be rehoused if it:
  - Becomes incompatible with other residents or animals
  - Is damaging the unit, or
  - Is creating hygiene issues
2. No animal breeding is permitted.
3. Should the pet approved under this agreement die or be rehoused, a new agreement shall be made for any replacement pet.
4. The tenant is responsible for the following:
  - The cost of the provision of care for the pet.
  - For ensuring the pet has current vaccinations (if required), and that these are maintained yearly (a copy of the pet's vaccination book is to be provided yearly for Council's records).
  - For providing proof that the cat has been spayed or neutered
  - Ensuring that the pet is given regular flea, worm and/or mite treatments.
  - Ensure faeces is picked up and disposed of appropriately.
  - The cost of fixing any damage that the pet causes to the unit.
5. Residents are required to identify a 'pet contact person' for each pet they intend to keep in their unit. A person can be the specified pet contact person for more than one pet.
6. If the tenant is unwell and unable to care for the pet the pet contact person shall take responsibility for the pet.
7. If the pet becomes seriously unwell, Council staff may request that the pet be removed from the premises.

**Tenant and Pet Information**

Tenant name							
Pet name			Type		Sex	M	F
Vet to contact				Phone			
Pet contact person (to be confirmed annually)							
Phone	Day		Night		Mobile		
Agreed by tenant and/or family					Date		
(Signature)							
Agreed by Council Manager							
		(Signature)					

Please outline what is to happen with the pet if it becomes unwell.

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*Once this document has been signed, scan and load into Hubble.*