



**WHANGANUI
DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Te Kaunihera a Rohe o Whanganui

Statement of Proposal

Review of Pensioner Housing Policy

1. SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

Whanganui District Council ('the Council') is seeking feedback on updates to the Pensioner Housing Policy ('the Policy'). The Council is proposing a trial run allowing pets at several facilities. It is also proposing to make other structural and phrasing changes, including changing the name to the "Council-Owned Housing Policy".

2. INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the Council adopted the Policy with the intention of providing affordable housing to moderate to low income elderly people within the district.

This is the first official review of the Policy since it was adopted. This review has been prompted by an issue with birds being bred and kept at one facility. Pets are currently not allowed in these facilities, and this incident has prompted public interest in the question of whether this rule should be updated. The Council is proposing to allow pets to be kept at three facilities (Eugene Crotty, Walter Nash and Puriri Street), with this serving as a test period to decide whether these rules can or should be implemented at other facilities. The results of the trial period will be assessed one year from when it is first implemented, with necessary changes implemented based on this.

Council is also proposing to specifically include the rent calculations, as well as make various updates to the structure and phrasing of the Council-Owned Housing Policy to make it clearer and better able to serve the needs of residents and the objective of the policy.

3. REASONS FOR PROPOSAL

Background

The Policy has been in place since 2012. This formal review was prompted by complaints about a resident breeding birds, and several other residents taking birds as pets.

After taking a resident survey, most were in favour of allowing fish, birds, and cats, with a little over 70% being against dogs. As a result of this, Council has decided to allow pets at the Eugene Crotty, Walter Nash, and Puriri Street on a trial basis, to be reviewed in 12 months. The benefits of allowing residents to keep pets are well recognised, and will be balanced against potential issues such as noise and property damage during the 12-month review. In order to keep a pet, residents will be required to sign up to a pet care agreement, which provides responsibility for pet care and damage caused by pets, a requirement to keep updated vet information, and to list another person who can take responsibility for the pet if necessary. The rules would allow Council to request a

resident to rehouse the pet if it becomes incompatible with other residents or animals, is causing damage to the unit, or is causing hygiene issues.

This review also involves shifting the entry requirements and resident rules into a guideline attached to the Policy, with the ability to make minor changes delegated to the property team. This will allow the rules to be updated without going through a full Council or Council Committee meeting. The guideline will also include the rules around keeping pets as well as the pet care agreement, which residents wishing to keep pets will be required to agree to. In the guidelines, some entry criteria has also been modified.

Also updated are the policy format and structure, wording, title, and other minor improvements.

Options

Removing the Rule Preventing Pets

This rule prevents residents from keeping any pets while living in Council-Owned Housing. This prevents pets from causing damage to units or creating a nuisance for other residents, but also denies residents access to the social and mental health benefits of caring for a companion animal.

Option A1 – Retaining the rules against pets (Status quo)

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A blanket ban on keeping pets is easier to enforce, preventing damage to facilities and nuisance against other residents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been issues of residents keeping pets against the rules. • This has led to public concern regarding allowing residents to keep pets. • The mental health benefits of allowing residents to keep pets can be significant, as can the impacts of forcing elderly people to part with long-term pets in order to become residents. |

Option A2 – Allowing the pets trial (Recommended)

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing residents to retain and look after pets will likely have positive impacts on their physical and mental health. • No longer requiring elderly people to give up their pets in order to become residents will also be better for them. • The Pet Care Agreement allows many aspects of care and maintenance to be managed by residents themselves, rather than Council. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mess and noise from pets may cause problems among complexes. • Our enforcement measures are reactive rather than proactive - if a resident is no longer able to care for their pet, or if a pet begins to cause issues, these could persist for some time until Council is notified and able to take action. |

Council-Owned Housing Guidelines

While a policy is an effective vehicle to set out the purpose and the framework of implementation for council-owned housing for older people, the process of updating it reduces its ability to pivot based on the changing needs and circumstances of both residents and the community. It is therefore recommended that guidelines be introduced to cover the management, entry criteria, and rules around keeping pets (where applicable), with authority delegated to the property team to make minor amendments.

Option B1 – Retain the rules in a policy

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping all the rules within one document will make it easier to locate and reduce some potential for misunderstanding. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining the rules within a policy reduces their ability to make minor updates, which makes it harder to keep up with shifts in the needs of residents and the community. |

Option B2 – Adopt the Council-Owned Housing Guideline

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will allow the application criteria, resident rules, and pet rules to undergo minor changes based on new needs and circumstances. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Splitting the ruleset into two documents may make it harder to locate and follow. |

General Updates

The policy requires minor updates in order to improve clarity and consistency, as well as some structural changes.

Option C1 – Not adopting minor changes (Status quo)

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no issues in operative sections and the Policy is functional in its current form. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor errors can leave the Policy looking untidy or unprofessional. |

Option C2 – Adopt minor changes (Recommended)

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Policy would look tidier and more professional. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. |

4. CONSULTATION AND SUBMISSION

In making, amending, or revoking the policy, Council must use the Special Consultative Procedure set out in section 83 of the LGA 2002. Council has prepared and adopted the proposed policy for public consultation. Any person can make a submission on the proposed policy.

A copy of the Statement of Proposal, including the proposed bylaw and information about making a submission can be obtained from the Council website www.whanganui.govt.nz

Submissions can be made online at <http://www.whanganui.govt.nz/have-your-say>, or alternatively, submission forms are available from the Whanganui District Council Customer Service counter at the main municipal building located at 101 Guyton Street, the Davis Central City Library and Gonville Library. Submitters can indicate whether they would like to speak to their submission and include contact details. People who wish to be heard by Council will be given the opportunity to do so. The time and venue for the hearing of submissions is yet to be confirmed.

For any queries please contact William Johnston, Policy Adviser on (06) 349 0001.

The period for making submissions is from **14 April to 28 May 2021**.

5. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Council-Owned Housing Policy



Council-Owned Housing Policy

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

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DRAFT CONFIDENTIAL

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 the health, safety and well-being of the tenants.
- 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
 - To contribute to councils 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 extending 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 Property Group manages this portfolio on behalf of the Council. This activity is financially ring-fenced which means it does not receive ratepayer funding.
- 2.4 This policy is 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.

- 2.5 The Climate Change Strategy signals a new policy direction for Council and a requirement for environmentally sustainable practices to be incorporated into service delivery.

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 is supported as far as practicable
5. To contribute to councils 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.
- 4.2 A decision was made by Council on 2015 to discontinue the Granny Flat service.

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 with 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. This policy will be reviewed 1 year from the

date of adoption, at which point Council will consider expanding the allowance to other complexes in the Council-Owned Housing portfolio.

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.

12.0 Monitoring and evaluation

12.1 Compliance with this policy and accompanying guidelines will be regularly monitored by the Team Leader Property.

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 Team Leader Property.

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 of 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 | <p>Current age to qualify for NZ Superannuation https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/nz-superannuation.html</p> <p>During periods of high vacancy, Council will consider accepting applicants in the age of 60-65.</p> |
| Assets threshold ¹ | \$129,423 or less | \$129,423 combined | <p>As set by MSD residential care asset threshold</p> <p>Definition of assets set by MSD for residential care subsidy</p> <p>https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/residential-care-subsidy.html</p> <p>With the exclusion of owning a house. To qualify for Council-Owned Housing an applicant must not own any property or share therein.</p> <p>Assets can Include any combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cash or savings• Bonus bonds• Investments or shares• Life insurance policies• Loans made to other people (including family trusts)• Boats, caravans and campervans• Investment properties• Kiwisaver accounts |

¹ Linked to Residential Care subsidy

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| Income | \$55,002 income or less pa gross \$29,484 + \$25,518 | \$97,684 combined income or less pa gross \$58,968 + \$38,716 | 75% of current minimum wage Gross (40 Hour Week) https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-and-wages/pay/minimum-wage/minimum-wage-rates/ + Current NZ Super Gross https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/nz-superannuation.html |
| Able to live independently – See definition of Independent Living | Yes | Yes to both applicants | Assessed by Welfare Officer Assessed by GP Assessed by Council Officer using Council’s definition of Independent Living |
| 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 of 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. |
| Transfers | Tenant requests for transfer to alternate units will be considered on a case-by-case basis. |
| Double units | <p>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.</p> <p>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(?)</p> |
| Alterations to units | <p>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.</p> <p>Three units have been modified for wheelchair users. No further units will be modified for wheelchair users.</p> |
| 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. |
| 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. |
| Maintenance | <p>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.</p> <p>Essential repairs will be undertaken as and when required.</p> |
| Garden and patio care | <p>Tenants are responsible for maintaining the small garden areas to the immediate front and rear of the units.</p> <p>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</p> |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| | furniture, aside from purpose built outdoor furniture and plants. |
| Recycling and waste | Tenants using the recycling and green waste facilities must not incorrectly use these (i.e. for household rubbish). |
| 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. |

3. Definitions

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 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. |
|---------------------------|--|

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4. 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 Agreements 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 pets 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.

PTO

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 | | |
| <i>(Signature)</i> | | | | | | | |
| Agreed by Council Manager | | | | | | | |
| <i>(Signature)</i> | | | | | | | |
| Probation end date | | | | | | | |

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

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

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