



Older Persons' Council Housing Policy

Whanganui District Council
As at 24/06/2021 (Resolution PBC/2021/24)

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(Resolution SFC/2022/41)

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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 Older Persons' Council 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.

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 Older Persons' Council 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 Older Persons' Council 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 The following objectives drive the delivery of the Older Persons' Council 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.

3.2 This policy sets out Council's commitments in relation to the delivery and management of the Older Persons' Council Housing service.

3.3 The associated guideline and procedures explain how the policy will be implemented and provides flexibility in addressing issues that may arise. Delivery of the Older Persons' Council Housing service is supported by an external contractor to provide an independent well-being service and advise Council of issues and needs.

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 Older Persons' Council Housing Guideline

- 6.1 All applications for tenancy will be assessed against the eligibility criteria contained within the Older Persons' Council 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 Older Persons' Council Housing Tenancy Code of Conduct.

9.0 Pets

- 9.1 The keeping of pet fish or a bird is permitted at all housing complexes. Keeping a cat is allowed at **all complexes except** those which Council has identified as cat-free.
- 9.2 This policy will be reviewed with 3 years of the date of adoption.

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 Older Persons' Council Housing rental rates on an annual basis.
- 11.2 The rent for Older Persons' Council Housing single rent (one person) is set at 30% of the net Superannuation rate (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 Older Persons' Council Housing double rent (two people) is set at 25% of the combined 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 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.

Further information

Who to contact

For further information about the Older Persons' Council Housing Policy or the housing complexes, please contact the Property Team.

Related documents

These documents have been developed to support the implementation of the Older Persons' Council Housing Policy:

- Older Persons' Council 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:

Older Persons' Council 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>
Asset 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>Assets can include any combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cash or savings• 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

			<p>Any share or shares owned in Māori land is/are not included in the asset threshold.</p> <p>For the purposes of clarity, owning a house or a share in one disqualifies an applicant from access to older persons' Council housing regardless of its value or whether the applicant is above or below the asset threshold.</p>
Income	<p>\$55,002 income or less pa gross</p> <p>\$29,484</p> <p>+</p> <p>\$25,518</p>	<p>\$97,684 combined income or less pa gross</p> <p>\$58,968</p> <p>+</p> <p>\$38,716</p>	<p>75% of current minimum wage Gross (40 Hour Week)</p> <p>https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-and-wages/pay/minimum-wage/minimum-wage-rates/</p> <p>+</p> <p>Current NZ Super Gross</p> <p>https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/nz-superannuation.html</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 Older Persons' Council 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 primarily be offered in descending order based on who has been longest on the waiting list, but at the discretion of Council officers.
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>
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	<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 Older Persons' Council 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 Older Persons' Council Housing property.</p>
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	<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>
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 Older Persons' Council 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. Tenants must not have any additional people semi-permanently or permanently living in their unit.

Attachment 2

3. Pet Care Agreement

Pet Care Agreement for Whanganui District Older Persons' Council Housing

Pets (fish, a bird, or a cat) appropriate to the environment are able to be kept in Older Persons' Council 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.

PTO

Tenant and Pet Information

Tenant name									
Complex name (if applicable)									
Complex address					Unit no.				
Pet name				Type			Sex	M	F
Vet to contact					Phone				
Pet contact person (to be confirmed annually)									
Phone:	Day			Night			Mobile		
Email address									
Agreed by tenant and/or family									
		(Signature)						Date	
Agreed by Council Manager									
		(Signature)						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 along with a photo of the pet in question.

Attachment 3

Complex list:

- Captain Laye;
- Collins Street;
- Eugene Crotty;
- Garden Court;
- Heathdene Court;
- Ivan Brown;
- Jack Brotherston;
- Kawakawa/Nixon;
- Ladysmith;
- Parsons Street;
- Pukatea;
- Puriri Street;
- Rimu Street;
- Rothesay;
- Sandown;
- Walter Nash Place.

Cat-free complexes:

- Ladysmith;
- Walter Nash;
- Parsons Street; and
- Kawakawa/Nixon.