

RYE TOWN COUNCIL**AMENDED DRAFT DISCOUNTED ACCOMMODATION ALLOCATION POLICY**

This document summarises Rye Town Council's Discounted Housing Scheme and how tenancy agreements are issued.

OVERVIEW

Rye Town Council has one unfurnished, 2(-3)-bedroom property, close to Rye town centre, which is let to qualifying applicants at a discounted rent. The purpose of the scheme is to provide cheaper accommodation to those with a strong local connection to the Parish of Rye in order to help them stay in – or move back to – Rye. Priority will be given to households with the strongest connection with the Parish.

LEGAL CONTEXT

Rye Town Council is a parish council with the power to let residential accommodation. It is not a housing authority or a housing association. When the Town Council lets property it is subject to the same regulations applicable to a private sector landlord – including the Equality Act 2010. The Council has regard also to the Public Sector Equality Duty contained within the Act.

PROPERTY PARTICULARS

97 South Undercliff is an extended 2-bedroom Victorian property with one other room having the potential to be used as an additional bedroom. It is a terraced house within easy walking distance of shops and amenities.

The ground floor consists of a lounge, dining room, kitchen, wet room and utility room. The first floor comprises two bedrooms and bathroom. Above this is attic space.

The rear courtyard garden (which includes a shed) backs on to allotments.

The cooker, central heating and hot water systems are gas-fired. The Council Tax Band is C.

There is no off street parking and on street parking is restricted.

Smoking is not permitted within the dwelling. Pets are considered.

ACCESS

The Town Council will make reasonable adaptations to accommodate tenants' accessibility requirements. A number of adaptations are in place – including a ground floor wet room.

PERIOD OF TENANCY

Successful applicants are offered an initial one-year tenancy (with a six-month break clause). Subject to the applicant/s continuing to meet the 'Eligibility' criteria – and not disqualifying themselves – a maximum of four further (successive) one-year tenancies will be offered.

Rye Town Council does not offer secured tenancies.

RENT

Rye Town Council aims to set the level of the property's discounted rent around 15% lower than the market rent (as determined by the Council's appointed letting agent) at the time applications are invited.

As at February 2018 the market rent for the property has been assessed to be £775 per calendar month and the discounted rent payable has been set at £650 per calendar month.

RIGHT TO BUY

As a parish council, Rye Town Council is not a Right to Buy Landlord and, therefore, it is not possible for tenants to purchase the property at a discount. However, the time spent with the Council as a residential tenant can be taken into account when the former tenant is considering exercising the Right to Buy from a Right to Buy Landlord (such as a local authority) in the future.

ELIGIBILITY

a) Age

Applicants must be at least 18 years of age (the minimum legal age a tenancy may be held).

b) Local Connection

To establish a 'local connection' with the Parish of Rye the applicant – or one of the applicants if it is a joint application – must, as a minimum, meet any of the criteria following:

- (i) Reside currently in the Parish as their only or principal home and have done so continuously for the previous 10 years;
- (ii) Reside currently outside the Parish but have lived previously within the Parish for an aggregate of at least 10 years.
- (iii) Have been employed, or have owned and run a business within the Parish of Rye for an aggregate of at least 10 years.

Notes

- *An applicant may combine (i-iii) in order to meet the minimum 10-year local connection qualification – for example, they may have lived previously within the Parish of Rye for 6 years but have then lived outside the Parish (whilst working within the Parish) for 4 years.*
- *Examples of evidence of current/past residency include: a selection of old utility bills; school certificates; (dated) letters addressed to the applicant at an address within the Parish; bills or letters sent to this applicant's parents/guardians; tenancy agreements.*
- *Examples of evidence of employment or business ownership include: old pay slips/P60s; contracts of employment; a letter from an employer confirming appointment and start date; a letter from a current employer confirming length of employment; company registration number; old business utility bills; tenancy agreements; old business rates demand notices; old business bank statements.*

c) Financial considerations

Applications will not be considered if any of the following apply:

- The household has an annual gross income of £35,000 or more.

- The applicant/s own accommodation; have a legal interest in home ownership; or have the financial resources to own accommodation.

DISQUALIFICATION

Applicants shall not qualify for consideration for a tenancy – or, if applicable, a tenancy renewal – if:

- A member of the household has – or is the subject of - a conviction, civil injunction, Community Protection Notice (CPN) or Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) that is **linked to a property or the locality of a property**. Examples include:
 - Playing loud music at night
 - Threatening behaviour towards a neighbour
- A member of the household has a property-related arrear owed to a local authority, housing association or private sector landlord – unless six months of regular repayments have been made subsequently.
- They are found to have deliberately given false information, not disclosed full facts, or not disclosed relevant changes to their situation.
- Their household gross annual income exceeds £35,000 or they own accommodation; have a legal interest in home ownership; or have the financial resources to own accommodation.
- They have failed to comply with their last or current tenancy agreement.

HOW TO APPLY

Rye Town Council does not operate a waiting list. When its discounted accommodation becomes available a lettings agent is appointed to publicise the vacancy and help the Council find qualifying tenants. The Town Council also publicises the vacancy through its web site and social media presence.

a) Viewings

Because there is usually considerable interest in vacancies, individual viewings of the property are arranged in exceptional circumstances only. Instead, no later than one week prior to the closing date, the Town Council will hold at least two open house viewings at the property.

b) Application

When we are inviting applications the application form can be found on our home page at www.ryetowncouncil.gov.uk. Alternatively, the form may be requested by emailing townhall@ryetowncouncil.gov.uk or by collecting one from the Town Hall, Market Street, Rye between 9am and 1pm, Monday-Thursday.

Those who require the form in a different format or need assistance with its completion should contact the Council by emailing townhall@ryetowncouncil.gov.uk or telephoning 01797 223902.

We do not consider applications received after the closing date.

We may need to contact applicant/s if information is missing or unclear.

ASSESSMENT

Applications are evaluated against the 'eligibility' criteria. The Discounted Accommodation Assessment Panel* assesses the strength of the applicant/s' – and their household's - local connection to the Parish and the financial circumstances of the applicant/s.

*Comprising the Town Clerk (or nominated member of staff), one other member of staff and one Elected Member.

Up to three applications are then shortlisted and the shortlisted applicants are invited to meet with the Panel members.

OFFER

Before a tenancy is offered the Assessment Panel seeks advice from the Town Council's appointed letting agent.

Tenancies are offered subject to satisfactory credit referencing and other relevant checks.

The lettings agent carries out a number of checks on the successful applicant/s – including: verifying identity, confirming that the rent can be afforded, credit checks and obtaining references.

Assuming the outcome of the checks is satisfactory the offer of a tenancy is confirmed and the letting agent is authorised to prepare and issue a tenancy agreement.

LETTINGS TO STAFF, COUNCIL MEMBERS AND THEIR RELATIVES

Council staff and Members and their relatives are treated as any other applicant and must not be seen to be gaining any advantage, disadvantage or any preferential treatment in the course of their application.

Accordingly, the aforementioned persons must declare their interest and have no direct input into any decisions regarding their application.

DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION SHARING

Information provided by applicant/s is used by the Council's Discounted Accommodation Assessment Panel – and any staff who service it – only. However, some information may be shared with the Council's nominated letting agent.

The information provided by applicants is subject to data protection regulations and will be used for the purpose of assessing applications for – and issuing - a tenancy only.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Rye Town Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunity and accessibility in relation to its discounted housing scheme.

We seek to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and that no-one receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender, religion, race, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or other factor that might cause unjustifiable disadvantage.

As far as is reasonable and practical Rye Town Council will endeavour to help anyone who needs assistance in accessing its discounted accommodation scheme.