

GARAGES POLICY

Statement of Purpose

This Policy is concerned with the allocation, letting, termination, asset management, collection of rent and maintenance of our garages.

Our Policy

Eligibility to Rent a Garage

1. Applicants must:
 - Be at least 17 years of age;
 - Have a clear rent account if a tenant of Sentinel Housing Association.
2. Applicants who are under 18 when they qualify for an offer of garage tenancy require a guarantor before a garage can be allocated. If their parents / guardians are tenants of Sentinel Housing Association, the garage tenancy will be placed in their name(s) until the applicant reaches the age of 18 years.
3. We will give priority to Sentinel Housing Association tenants in allocating garages, but where there is availability we will offer garage tenancies to non-tenants.
4. VAT will be charged for non-tenants and on second garages rented by Sentinel tenants
5. Allocations will be made on a 'first come first served' basis.
6. One week's notice to terminate must be given in writing by either party to terminate the tenancy, which will expire at 12 noon on the following Monday.
7. The use of garage accommodation for business purposes is strictly prohibited unless prior permission is obtained in writing from Sentinel Housing Association.

Use of Garages by Sentinel

8. We may occasionally use empty garages for:
 - Storage of materials for building contracts;
 - Storage of belongings from properties where households have been evicted and there is no forwarding address available;
 - Storage in cases where tenants have been decanted from their properties temporarily (one garage will be given free of charge to each household for the duration of the decant period if a tenant is decanting to a smaller property);
 - Temporary use for garage tenants whose own garage is being repaired;
 - The use of charities in areas where garages are low in demand (at the discretion of the Head of Neighbourhood Services)

Garages not Available for Letting

9. Garages may not be considered suitable for re letting. The reasons for this are likely to be:
 - Not cost effective to repair and located in a low demand area;
 - Awaiting re development;
 - Awaiting planned maintenance.
10. Garages out of debit will be reviewed every time an application is received for a garages that is out of debit / or annually by Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services with a view to maximising income where cost effective to do so.

Rent Arrears

11. We will send customer a quarterly statement setting out the transaction and balance on their account.
12. We will provide a range of different ways in which tenants can pay their rent.
13. Unless there are exceptional circumstances a customer will not be able to rent a garage if they go into house rent arrears and do not maintain agreed payments on these.
14. We will take prompt action to prevent arrears accruing on a garage.
15. If the lock has to be changed to gain entry, or the tenant leave belongings in the garage and does not respond to attempts to contact him/her, we will normally charge the costs of the lock change and/or clearance to the tenant.

Approval Stages

Named Departmental Sign off: Cindy Creasy

Date: November 2007

Named Director Sign off: Martin Nurse

Date: 13th March 2008

Implementation Date: 27th March 2008

GARAGES POLICY SUMMARY

Changes from previous version

An amelioration of Garages Policy and Garage Arrears Policy

Regulation & Legislation

This policy is linked to the following regulation and legislation:

Equality & Diversity Impact

The association is committed to meeting the needs and aspirations of customers and communities in a fair, respectful, and proportionate manner. Our approach to diversity and equality is to promote inclusiveness by recognising that anyone, regardless of origin or background, can make a positive difference in the achievement of the organisation's vision and in the wider society.

We will comply with best practice from legal, regulatory and inspection requirements. Codes of Practice and other guidance will be used appropriately to ensure progress on diversity.

Financial Impact Assessment

Although Garages are not central to the financial viability of the organisation, there is some risk associated with voids and rent arrears. This is medium risk.

Risk Assessment

Garage allocation is a supplementary service to the provision of homes, as such there is a low risk of any serious associated risks arising. However, we will continue to monitor performance through performance indicators on a monthly basis.

Monitoring and Review

The operation of this policy will be regularly reviewed by the Head of Neighbourhood Services, in conjunction with the Policy & Strategic Initiatives Officer, with adequate consultation of staff and customers. The outcome of that review will be communicated to the appropriate committee of the board.

Consultation

The stakeholders below have been consulted on the following dates:

Tenant and Leaseholder Forum Group: 8th & 9th January

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council: 25th January

Hart District Council: 25th January

Rushmoor Borough Council: 25th January