

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Housing

Date of meeting: 24th January 2017

Subject: Housing Pets Policy at Roslyn House Southsea

Report by: Director of Property & Housing Services

Wards affected: St. Thomas

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to amend the Local Authority Housing Pets Policy Appendix and categorise Roslyn House as a 'no pets' block.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Roslyn House be listed as a 'no pets' block in the Appendix attached to the Local Authority Housing Pets Policy.

3. Background

Roslyn House is currently affected by point 3.3d. of the Pets Policy (Appendix 1). It contains 54 flats over 7 storeys with open balcony access to the front doors. Residents can keep one cat or one dog as a pet. Prior to 2005 the block was categorised as a 'no pets' block. This meant that residents were not allowed to keep cats or dogs. In 2005 the pets policy (Appendix 1) was amended. The changes to the policy resulted in Roslyn House being re-categorised as a 'pets allowed' block and residents were therefore permitted to keep one cat or one dog.

In 2015 two residents living in Roslyn House challenged the policy due to nuisance caused from a dog barking in the block and concerns of dogs being allowed to run free in the communal garden. It was agreed that a survey would be undertaken to seek the views of the residents living in Roslyn House in relation to the pets policy. The survey was conducted in late 2015 and included door knocking and sending letters. Out of the 54 flats there were 28 responses. Of those that responded 15 wanted the block to revert to being a 'no pets' block, 11 wanted the block to remain as 'pets allowed', and 2 did not mind. Due to the fact that only 15 residents out of 54 were in favour of the block reverting to 'no pets' the decision was made not to seek a change in the policy.

In August 2016 the matter was raised again by the same two residents. They questioned the result of the survey and said it did not reflect what they believed was the majority view of the residents living in Roslyn House. They highlighted three main concerns:

1. Only 28 residents out of 54 responded.
2. Where leasehold properties have been sublet the survey should seek the view of the leaseholder rather than their 'transient' tenants.
3. Residents were not consulted when the policy was revised in 2005. (It does appear that similar blocks had a vote on the issue at this time. See point 3.3 h. of the policy (Appendix 1)).

It was therefore agreed to conduct a further survey by telephone and attempt to contact all Portsmouth City Council tenants and leaseholders (not tenants of leaseholders) and seek their view on the matter. Calls were made by staff at the Somerstown Housing Office during a period of 4 weeks at the end September and start of October 2016 using the attached questionnaire (Appendix 2).

The results were as follows:

There are 54 flats in the block, 29 are secure tenants and 25 are leasehold.

We could not contact 9 of the addresses so there are 45 responses in total. Of these, 24 are secure tenants and 21 are leasehold.

Of those questioned 30 want the block to revert to being a 'no pets' block. (66.7% of those questioned 55.6% of the block).

Of those questioned 15 want the block to remain a 'pets allowed' block. (33.3% of those questioned 27.8% of the block).

In summary:

No pets block	55.6%
Pets allowed block	27.8%
No response	16.6%

The majority would like the block to revert to being a 'no pets' block.

A letter was sent to all tenants and leaseholders in October 2016 informing them of the survey results and the next steps. (Appendix 3).

4. Reasons for recommendations

The results of the survey clearly indicate that the majority of tenants and leaseholders would like the block to revert to a 'no pets' block. This would not require a change in the policy but simply add Roslyn House to the list of 'no pets' blocks in the Appendix.

However, if it is agreed that Roslyn House should revert to being a 'no pets' block there are 2 further considerations which were the only two concerns raised during the telephone survey:

- A. What happens with those residents who already have cats or dogs? These residents would be permitted to keep existing pets but no new cats or dogs could be brought into the block.
- B. Are visitors allowed to bring pets into the block? Visitors can visit with well-behaved dogs that are kept on a lead when walking through the communal areas and do not cause a nuisance.

5. Equality impact assessment

Consideration has been given to tenants with disabilities or medical conditions who use a dog for assistance. Section 3.5 of the pets policy (Appendix 1) states that guide dogs and other assistants dogs are permitted in 'no pets' blocks. A Preliminary EIA has not been undertaken as this is not a change to the main policy for the keeping of pets in council properties. The change only affects one block of 54 flats and other properties are available and none of the protected characteristic groups will therefore be affected.

6. Legal implications

There are no legal comments save that whilst a sensible and credible consultation has taken place it would be prudent to check the current standard lease agreement to avoid the leases that may be granted in the future conflicting with the current policy. In addition it would be prudent to clearly confirm to those that already have pets that they are able to remain with the tenants not being in default.

7. Director of Finance's comments

The recommendations contained within this report do not have adverse effect on the Housing Revenue Account budget.

.....
Signed by: Cabinet Member for Housing

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Local Authority Housing Pets Policy
Appendix 2 - Roslyn House Pets Survey
Appendix 3 - Letter to tenants and leaseholders

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
NIL	

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by: