

# **“Charter – Supporting Residents at Watkins House in Change”**

## **Draft version 1**

### **Purpose of the Charter**

This Charter will set out a range of support measures to Tenants and family members as the Council embarks on a journey of strategic change at Watkins house that will mean new homes being built on the site by a new owner of the property. The Charter is designed to give Tenants and their family members a checklist of guaranteed measures of support.

The Council is very aware that change means uncertainty for many Tenants. The service promises in this charter will give Tenants and family members a degree of reassurance and promote the notion that the wellbeing of residents, as Tenants of Watkins House, is the highest priority within any changes that they may face.

The Charter is open to change and will be endorsed by Tenants and family members. The completed and agreed Charter will be approved by the Council the Cabinet portfolio holder(s) and co-signed by Tenants and family members. It will be profiled within Watkins House and be available to all Tenants and family members.

Tenants have already contributed to the Charter through the informal and formal consultation on the housing options at Watkins House.

Some parts of the charter will spell out what Tenants should expect by law e.g. in home loss payments. Most of the charter will focus on how the Council will add a practical and caring dimension to the changes that tenants may face.

## **Our Service Promises**

### ***Keeping you informed and up to date***

- ✓ Newsletters at least once per month
- ✓ Group meetings at least every six weeks with tenants and family members at times to suit you
- ✓ We will meet you as a tenant on a one-to-one basis at any time when requested
- ✓ We will meet the language needs of all tenants to communicate as fully as possible
- ✓ We will review our communications for all tenants with special needs, especially for those who need additional communication features
- ✓ We will keep the display area at Watkins house up to date with fresh information

### ***Staff –dedicated to Watkins and meeting your needs***

- ✓ A dedicated staff member will be appointed to get to know all tenants and work with them on the best housing options for each resident. That person will get to know the best accommodation for you and seek to match your needs to available properties.
- ✓ The project team of staff working for residents in this period will be known to you and their photographs will be in the Watkins display area.

### ***Decisions***

- ✓ The timeline for change will be communicated clearly to all tenants and family members.
- ✓ Council decisions will be made known as soon as possible.
- ✓ As soon as the council has made a decision on the housing option for Watkins House or a key part of the change programme – we will meet and explain that with you.
- ✓ We will be open and honest with you on what we know.
- ✓ No Tenant(s) will be rushed into making decisions

## ***Improving activities at Watkins house***

- ✓ We will ensure that Watkins House does not run down as tenants may leave – care and support services will remain the same.
- ✓ In fact, in listening to you, we will increase activities at Watkins House in this period.

## ***Gaining support through an independent agency***

- ✓ We will appoint an external and independent agency specialising in working with older people so that your interests and well-being are always being assessed for your benefit – that agency will be independent of the Council.
- ✓ You will be able to meet with that agency – independently from the council

## ***Moving***

- ✓ We will take all tenants to see what other properties look like well before any viewings of individual properties – family members will be able to be involved in these site visits
- ✓ We will provide transport to view any property and transport on the day of a move.
- ✓ The (statutory) home loss payment of £5,300 (this figure will be reviewed in October) will be paid to each tenant who moves.

In addition, the Council will provide through *disturbance arrangements* – as a result of your move:

- ✓ Free use of a Council appointed removals service
- ✓ A council approved contractor to undertake packing and unpacking of your belongings – under your direction or that of a family member
- ✓ Replacement of carpets/curtains and other soft furnishings in your new home – we will help you with setting up your new home
- ✓ Free disconnections/reconnections e.g. TV; telephone;
- ✓ We will let other agencies know that you have moved
- ✓ Any adaptations in your current home will be installed in a new home

- ✓ We will set up a postal redirection service with the Post Office for 12 months after you move
- ✓ We will give you the options to have a “befriending service” from an established voluntary service for older people in your new home
- ✓ All tenants will have the right to return to a new home at Watkins House for up to 5 years after the new homes have been built
- ✓ We will do our best to re-house friends together or nearby but we can’t guarantee this
- ✓ All care plans will be brought up to date before a move
- ✓ We will be clear on the rental payments on any offers of transfers and assist you with applications for Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit

## ***Involvement***

- ✓ we will set up a steering group of tenants and family members as soon as the Council makes a decision on housing options for Watkins house
- ✓ we will involve tenants and family members in some key decisions e.g. in the selection of the developer and new owner for the site

## ***Ensuring your voice is heard***

You should be able to make comments and complaints about how you feel or how you have been treated

If you have any points to make about the service to you or how you have been treated in relation to the service promises in this Charter you should:

- a) Contact a staff member to discuss the issue (n.b. we will name the staff member and give contact details) to see if the matter can be resolved to your satisfaction
- b) Contact the independent service for older people that is working with the Council to take up the matter on your behalf - the details of the contact will be made known to all tenants and family members at a later date

Following these interventions, if you are still unhappy with the response you may use the Council's corporate complaints procedure and this can be accessed at.....

## ***Approving the Charter***

Insert an approval/signing-off process:

Council Portfolio Holder(s)

Tenants

Family Members

Lead Council Officer