

REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	19th NOVEMBER 2020	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	ALLISON THOMAS, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR – SERVICE DELIVERY	OPEN
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SUBJECT:	HOUSING SAFETY POLICIES	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee approves the Housing Safety policies and procedures attached at Appendix A.
- Draft Electrical Safety Policy (Appendix A)
 - Draft Fire Safety Policy (Appendix B)
 - Draft Gas Safety Policy (Appendix C)
 - Draft Legionella Policy (Appendix D)
 - Draft Lift Safety Policy (Appendix E)
 - Asbestos Policy and procedures (Appendix F)

2. Purpose of the Report

- 2.1. To inform the Committee of the review of the Council's Housing Safety Policy and to seek approval for the revised policies and procedures that have resulted from this review.

3. Detail

- 3.1. The Council's Housing Safety Policy has been in place since May 2017. This overarching Policy has been reviewed in the light of recent and likely changes in regulation and standards regarding safety in residential properties, communal areas and other facilities owned and managed by the Council.
- 3.2. As reported to the Committee in September 2020, since 2018 this area of work has been a major priority for the Housing Service. Its priority was not reflected in the Housing Asset Management Strategy (2016). The timetable for reviewing this Strategy has also been previously reported.

- 3.3. In order to properly address these changes, individual policy and procedure documents have been created to manage the specific requirements of each aspect of housing safety: Fire, Legionella, Electrical, Gas, Asbestos, Lifts.
- 3.4. Each Policy provides specific focus on the application of legislation, guidance and regulation to Council owned properties. The Policies also provide a clear framework for the operational delivery of safety measures, performance management and an enhanced escalation process which allows for additional reporting to the Council's Health and Safety Committee. Actions to mitigate property safety risks are already reported to the Committee in the Quarterly Performance Report.
- 3.5. Since January 2018, significant progress has been made to enhance the management and delivery of services to maintain secure and safe homes for Council tenant. New contracts have been let for fire safety, asbestos survey and removal, legionella testing and stairlift maintenance. The gas servicing contract has continued to deliver high levels of performance, ensuring that gas appliances are checked every twelve months and where necessary legal action is taken to gain access to properties to facilitate this. An external review of asbestos procedures was completed during 2019 and an ad-hoc inspection of these procedures by the Health and Safety Executive produced only one minor non-conformance which has been resolved. Other areas of housing safety work have been addressed through the repair and maintenance contract with NOVUS who has provided emergency electrical repairs. Fire safety contracts are in place and in the process of improving fire prevention in communal flats. A comprehensive fire door replacement programme is underway and currently property surveys are being undertaken.
- 3.6. The performance of all contractors, including those delivering specific safety measures is closely managed through regular contract monitoring meetings. Where non-compliance with contractual terms is identified the Council will take action to remedy this and if necessary, cease ordering work from specific contractors. This action has recently had to be taken against a fire safety contractor and alternative arrangements made to deliver this programme of work.
- 3.7. Property safety is a cyclical rather than one-off commitment. Consequently, further work is required to enhance routine and cyclical programmes of maintenance for safety equipment and processes. This policy review has also highlighted the need for an annual, independent audit of procedures in all areas of property safety. This will lead to additional costs of around £8,000 which will be borne by the Housing Revenue Account. The Council has already shown its commitment to ensuring compliance with safety requirements by approving the creation of a new post in the Housing Repair and Maintenance team to support the delivery of these services.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Each aspect of housing safety has its own budget within the revenue and capital streams of the Housing revenue Account. These budgets are reviewed annually in order to ensure that provision is made for any likely additional expenditure.

5. Corporate Implications

Employment Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct employment implications contained within this report.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 The policies and procedure documents within this report assist in maintaining the Council's compliance with statutory and regulatory housing safety requirements.

Corporate Plan Implications

- 5.3 The policies contained within this report directly contribute to the aims within the Council's Corporate Plan to "Supporting and safeguarding the most vulnerable and to Improve the condition of housing stock and public buildings.

Risk Impact

- 5.4 The policy and procedure documents within this report directly contribute to mitigating the risk identified in the Service Delivery Risk Register; SD3 Safety Standards.

6. Community Impact

Consultation

- 6.1 There is no direct requirement to consult with the public regarding these policies and procedures. There will be local consultation with tenants on housing schemes where contractors are carrying out works to address these policies.

Equality and Diversity Impact

- 6.2 There are no direct Equality and Diversity Impacts contained within this report

Social Value Impact

- 6.3 These policies have a positive social impact by improving the safety of residential dwellings and improving the safety of employees and contractors.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.4 These policies have a positive impact on environmental sustainability by effectively managing harmful substances and incidents.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 A review of the existing Housing Safety policy was necessary in light of recent events and likely changes to housing safety legislation and regulation.
- 7.2 A specific suite of policies and procedures is the most effective way to deliver services that meet the raised standards in these areas.

7.3 The revised policy and procedure documents provide the Council with legally compliant framework for the management of safety in Council homes.

8. Background Papers