

Public Document Pack



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Friday, 28 May 2021

HOUSING COMMITTEE

A remote meeting of the Housing Committee will be held on **TUESDAY, 8 JUNE 2021** in the Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud at **7.00 pm**

Kathy O'Leary
Chief Executive

Please Note: Public access to this meeting is available, the meeting is being held in the Council Chamber at Stroud District Council.

A G E N D A

1. **APOLOGIES**

To receive apologies of absence.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

To receive declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES (Pages 5 - 12)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2021.

4. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Chair of the Committee will answer questions from members of the public submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF QUESTIONS
Noon on Thursday 3 June 2021

Questions must be submitted to the Chief Executive, Democratic Services, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud and can be sent by email to democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk

5. **COUNCIL HOUSING: INCOME COLLECTION & RECOVERY POLICY (Pages 13 - 42)**

To approve the policy.

6. **TENANT SERVICES COMPENSATION POLICY (Pages 43 - 56)**

To approve the updated policy.

7. **VISITOR ROOM POLICY (INDEPENDENT LIVING) (Pages 57 - 74)**

To adopt the Visitors Room Police for Independent Living.

8. **CLEANER ESTATES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN (Pages 75 - 88)**

To agree that the action plan is relevant, fit for purpose and implemented.

9. **SERVICE STANDARDS ACTION PLAN (Pages 89 - 110)**

To agree that the action plan is implemented.

10. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

Appointment of two Performance Monitoring Representatives for 2021/22.

11 **Member/Officer Report (To Note)**

a) Tenant Representatives – Chair to give a verbal update

12. **WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 111 - 112)**

To consider the work programme.

13. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

See Agenda Item 4 for deadlines for submission.

Members of Housing Committee

Councillor Mattie Ross (Chair)

Councillor Paula Baker
Councillor Laurie Davies
Councillor Trina Davis
Councillor Colin Fryer
Councillor Lindsey Green

Councillor Christopher Jockel (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Nick Housden
Councillor Steve Hynd
Councillor Jenny Miles
Councillor Loraine Patrick
Councillor Lucas Schoemaker



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HOUSING COMMITTEE

8 April 2021

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7.00 pm – 8.39 pm

Remote Meeting

Minutes

Membership

Councillor Mattie Ross (Chair)	P	Councillor Colin Fryer	P
Councillor Jenny Miles (Vice-Chair)	A	Councillor Lindsey Green	P
Councillor Catherine Braun	P	Councillor Julie Job	P
Councillor Stephen Davies	P	Councillor Norman Kay	P
Councillor Jim Dewey	P	Councillor Gary Powell	P
Councillor Chas Fellows	A	Councillor Debbie Young	A

P = Present A = Absent

Officers in Attendance

Strategic Director of Communities
 Head of Housing Services
 Head of Contract Services

Head of Community Services
 Housing Manager
 Democratic Services & Elections Officer

Other Member(s) in Attendance

Councillor Doina Cornell (Leader)

Others in Attendance

Carole Wise, Tenant Representative

Councillor Ross (Chair) paid tribute to the former Chair of the Committee, Chas Townley, for all his work over many years for housing and for Stroud District Council.

HC.034

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Miles, Councillor Fellows and Councillor Young.

HC.035

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

HC.036

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2021 were approved as a correct record

HC.037 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were none.

HC.038 **TENANT REPRESENTATIVES UPDATE**

Carole Wise was introduced and presented an update on behalf of Sandra Longstreth, Tenant Representative. She drew attention to the support that had been provided to tenants during the Covid pandemic, including remedying practical issues, homeseeker assistance, and advice for those requiring financial support. She outlined future plans for consultation with tenants on a range of issues, and for encouraging use of Community Hubs when it is safe to do so. She emphasised how much can be achieved through teamwork.

Councillor Fryer supported the aim to recruit an additional Tenant Representative to assist Sandra Longstreth within the District.

HC.039 **UPDATE OF THE TENANT LED SERVICE STANDARDS**

The Housing Manager introduced the report. She confirmed that consultation on the Service Standards with the Neighbourhood Ambassadors and the Tenants Voice Representatives had taken place in October 2019. The Service Standards demonstrate that Tenant Services provide a clear and transparent service to SDC's tenants, leaseholders and residents. Those involved in the consultation believed that the Service Standards could be further strengthened by making a number of additions and these are detailed in the report. The Housing Manager explained that, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Service Standards were not submitted to the Housing Committee in 2020.

The Housing Manager acknowledged that, at present, the number of involved tenants is small, and more work needs to be done to increase involvement. ARK consultants have been commissioned to look at how delivery of tenant involvement can be improved in the future. She noted, however, that SDC's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy, written with tenants in 2018, provides a solid platform to improve tenant engagement going forward. The Housing Manager detailed a number of new initiatives to encourage tenants to become involved including through social media, a programme of 'Love where you live' events, a digital equality programme, and a restart of Café Conversations when the easing of Covid restrictions allow.

The Housing Manager confirmed that an Action Plan, detailing the implementation of the Service Standards, including the involvement of tenants, and what action will be taken to improve tenant engagement, will be brought to the committee in June 2021.

Councillor Davies asked whether any statistics are available in relation to Tenant Services to measure performance. The Housing Manager confirmed that these are available through ongoing monitoring of services including allocations and lettings, complaint handling, and anti-social behaviour management.

Councillor Davies asked whether there was any work being done to provide a self-service facility online for tenants. The Housing Manager confirmed that a new housing management system is currently being developed. This will look both at self-service capability, such as booking appointments, as well as retaining a telephone service for those wishing to speak to someone directly.

Councillor Fryer expressed some concern about the low number of tenants involved in the consultation on Service Standards and asked how the consultation had been carried out. The Housing Manager confirmed that the consultation had been conducted with Neighbourhood Ambassadors and Tenants Voice Representatives. Whilst it is acknowledged that the numbers included are low, there are plans in place to improve tenant engagement in the future including consideration of the recommendations from the ARK consultants' report.

Councillor Dewey asked whether, when Covid restrictions allow, it is possible for those tenants who are less computer literate to have a face-face meeting with Tenant Services particularly for issues such as anti-social behaviour. The Housing Manager confirmed that this would be possible once restrictions were lifted, and currently Tenant Services talk to tenants by telephone and go through an action plan with them.

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Fryer.

Councillor Fryer stated that it was good to acknowledge the importance of the voice of tenants on the Housing Committee.

Councillor Braun acknowledged the importance of having clear standards and engaging with tenants to improve those standards. She also recognised the importance of using those standards to monitor performance so that the Housing Committee can be confident in the quality of service provided to tenants.

Councillor Kay referred to the particular challenge included in the report, to assist people in obtaining their own properties, when the number of properties available to rent continually reduces as people opt to buy their properties.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

- RESOLVED**
- a) To adopt the updated Tenancy Service Standards, and**
 - b) To delegate authority to the Strategic Director in consultation with the Chair of Housing to review the implementation of these service standards and provide an update and action plan to Committee in June 2021.**

HC.040 **CLEANER ESTATES STRATEGY 2021-2024**

The Head of Housing Services introduced the report. It constituted a new piece of work reflecting a commitment to improve the quality and cleanliness of the Council's estates. Consultation took place in December 2020 and January 2021 and tenant feedback has been incorporated into the Strategy. Successful delivery of the strategy required collaborative consultation and development of specific standards around levels of cleanliness, and a review to ensure the standards were being met.

Reporting on performance would be a critical part of the transparency of service delivery and a clear indicator of resident satisfaction which had been poor to date. The aspirations of the strategy reflected the need for improvements, through a careful balance of support, education and enforcement. Work had been commissioned to help better understand and strengthen tenant involvement which would be developed and incorporated into future policies and strategies.

The strategy set out the Council's expectations and aspirations to become an exemplar authority in its delivery of service, by putting communities at the heart of what it does.

The Head of Housing Services highlighted the four key principles and four delivery objectives the strategy was based on. He advised that an action plan was being developed and would be submitted to the Committee in June 2021. This would be more detailed and would outline when consultation and feedback took place, where the service touch points were, and the named person who would own each element.

Councillor Braun asked what the implications of the strategy would be for working with Ubico, and cited paragraph 1.9 of the report which referenced work undertaken by the Environment Committee in relation to the Waste Management Policy. The Head of Housing Services indicated the collaborative work undertaken with Ubico, but highlighted the importance of ensuring Ubico perform to expected Council standards as well as through contractual arrangements. He also emphasised the collaborative work that had already been undertaken between Tenant Services and Community Services within the Council to deliver an improved service across the district.

Councillor Powell asked whether it would be possible to speed up the response to incidents like fly-tipping from now on. The Head of Housing Services indicated that there was an urgency across the district to manage fly-tipping, and that with the right processes and people in place, work would be done to improve response times. This would form part of the action plan and include collaborative work with Community Services.

Councillor Davies suggested that, as the strategy had clear financial implications, it would have been useful to have detailed those in the report as justification for some of the work that was being progressed. The Head of Housing Services agreed to circulate this to the committee.

Councillor Dewey asked about the size of the estate and whether the strategy was likely to be applied more widely. The Head of Housing Services clarified that whilst initially the focus for the strategy would be on Council tenancies, the intention was to expand the work at a later date.

Councillor Fryer asked whether the Council charges that now applied for the removal of bulky waste could have increased the incidence of fly-tipping. The Head of Housing Services emphasised that fly-tipping could take many forms, and that whilst the Council charge could have had a small impact, the problem would not be solved by regular collections. The issue needed to be addressed through communication and education, with some punitive action taken when necessary. If affordability was a hinderance then more discussion with residents was required to resolve that.

Councillor Fryer proposed and Councillor Dewey seconded the motion.

RESOLVED **a) To adopt the Cleaner Estates Strategy, and**
b) To agree that a detailed action plan to deliver the strategy
is presented to Housing Committee in June 2021.

Councillor Kay proposed an amendment as follows:

The Committee RESOLVES to:

- a) **Adopt the Cleaner Estates Strategy, with the addition of “A commitment to ensure that specific needs are met with regard to any tenant or resident with protected characteristics category under the Equality Act 2010” into the key principles (3.3), and**
- b) **Agree that a detailed action plan to deliver the strategy is presented to Housing Committee in June 2021.**

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Braun and the wording was agreed by the Chair.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried unanimously.

The substantive Motion was then debated. On being put to the vote, it was carried unanimously.

HC.041 UPDATED TENANT SERVICES ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) POLICY

The Head of Housing Services introduced the report. He explained that the policy provided an up-to-date approach to the management of anti-social behaviour (ASB) which was a statutory requirement for social landlords, and was in line with the Social Housing White Paper 2020. The last revision to the policy was in 2017.

The Head of Housing Services detailed some of the revisions and additions to the policy:

- Acts of ASB towards elected members in relation to their Council duties would be included;
- The service would expand its abilities to take further action using Community Protection Notices against perpetrators of ASB;
- Drug dealing and substance misuse would be designated as high risk ASB, allowing greater powers to take action through the courts;
- Details of the use of the community trigger to validate actions taken as a social landlord would be included;
- A co-ordinated multi-agency framework of support approach would be applied when vulnerable persons were identified;
- The victim of ASB would be given an Action Plan detailing actions to be taken to resolve the ASB with the appropriate review period.

The Head of Housing Services emphasised that tackling ASB and nuisance effectively was a high priority for the Council's Tenant Services Team and corporately. The commitment was to tackle ASB swiftly and effectively, making use of legal powers where appropriate. It was important to maintain and improve strong working relationships with other agencies, including neighbourhood police teams and other support services, in order to achieve this. The Head of Housing Services highlighted the support for the policy from the Stroud Neighbourhood Police Team. In addition, staff would be supported and provided with the appropriate skills and knowledge to manage ASB effectively and safely. The Council's response to ASB must be measured and proportionate at all times, and all complaints must be investigated thoroughly with appropriate professional input to achieve the best outcomes for all.

The Head of Housing Services clarified that reports would be made on ASB cases where any equality issues were involved, and benchmarking would be carried out against other providers and included in performance reporting. He emphasised the importance of ongoing engagement and dialogue with tenants, including the effectiveness of actions taken to tackle ASB.

Councillor Kay explained that he was aware of a detailed proforma completed which explained the equality implications of this policy but was not included in the report. He asked whether in future it would be possible to include this detail, or to add this as an appendix to the report. The Head of Housing Services confirmed that he would discuss this with colleagues to ensure a uniform approach and update the committee.

Councillor Braun drew attention to the shocking increase in ASB cases reported this year for understandable reasons. She asked to what extent the number had decreased with the easing of lockdown, and when that information would be available. The Head of Housing Services confirmed that he would have expected the number of cases to have reduced slightly because of the proactive work carried out by the dedicated officer now in post to handle higher level ASB cases. He agreed to provide updated information to the committee as soon as possible.

Councillor Braun asked whether another Star Survey was planned for the new civic year and whether some focus could be placed on tenant satisfaction in terms of ASB so that monitoring was maintained. The Head of Housing Services confirmed that the Star Survey was conducted on an annual basis but that, in order not to overwhelm tenants with questions on a range of issues, a targeted approach was needed.

Councillor Fryer asked how many of the 193 cases reported this year were at the higher level. The Head of Housing Services explained that it was difficult to quantify without referring to specific cases as often cases started in one category but on investigation may be unsubstantiated and downgraded. However, he agreed to provide the committee with a breakdown of cases in due course.

Councillor Job asked whether, in view of some recent tragic events involving victims of dog attacks, whether consideration should be given to moving 'pets out of control' into a higher ASB category. The Head of Housing Services explained that the lead on such cases would be taken by the Animal Welfare Officers, unless the tenancy agreement had been fundamentally breached. He agreed to have further discussion with colleagues in the Animal Welfare service regarding the best approach and report back to the committee.

Councillor Davies requested feedback on how well the service was working with other agencies, and whether there are some organisations which were less helpful than others. The Head of Housing Services confirmed that excellent relationships with the police exist internally and externally, but that there were some problems working with Mental Health services as they were under great pressure and did not have the resources to attend multi-agency meetings. He emphasised that although there was still work to be done on multi-agency working, this had improved significantly over the last 18 months.

Councillor Green asked whether it would be possible to get a breakdown of reported ASB cases and how they were resolved. She asked if tenants could be given a realistic timetable for how cases were worked on, in order to educate people and manage expectations. The Head of Housing Services explained that this was part of the discussion about the Action Plan for a victim of ASB, detailing what the issues were and how they

would normally be resolved. The importance of being honest with victims about the details of the case and the likely timescales involved was recognised.

Councillor Dewey referred to paragraph 3.7 of the report and asked whether it was meant to read 'mental health or criminality' rather than linking the two. The Head of Housing Services confirmed this was an error and agreed to amend the text accordingly.

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Powell and seconded by Councillor Kay.

Councillor Davies stated that, whilst he was supportive of the policy, he wondered why this work had not been completed before, and why no details on the financial implications of the policy had been provided.

Councillor Braun stated that it was good to think about how these issues could be resolved with a focus on restorative justice in terms of low-level cases. Wherever possible neighbours should be encouraged to talk to each other to try to resolve these issues. She welcomed future reports offering a breakdown of cases by level and timescales taken to resolve them. She also welcomed the joint working with Community Services and all other agencies to resolve these difficult issues for tenants.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED **To adopt the updated Tenant Services Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.**

HC.042 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

There were none.

The meeting ended at 20.39 pm

Chair

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STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA
ITEM NO

HOUSING COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2021

5

Report Title	COUNCIL HOUSING: INCOME COLLECTION AND RECOVERY POLICY 2021			
Purpose of Report	To seek the Committee's approval for the policy which has been reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to approve the reviewed policy.			
Consultation and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Housing Services • Income Management team • Tenant Representatives 			
Report Author	Sara J Weaver, Income & Systems Manager Email: sara.weaver@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	N/A			
Background Papers	N/A			
Appendices	Appendix A – Income Collection and Recovery Policy 2021 Appendix B – Equality Analysis Form			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Effective rent collection is a core part of the Council's housing service. Responsibility for 5,000 rent accounts is shared between 7 Income Management Officers, 6 of which are responsible for a specific patch and 1 responsible for former tenancy arrears, leaseholder service charges and sundry debt.
- 1.2 While the Income Management team focus specifically on recovering rent arrears and sundry debt, a number of actions are in place from pre-tenancy checks, sign-up of a property and tenancy management to instil a culture across the service, and through tenants, to reduce rent debt.
- 1.3 This recent policy review helped to identify if any improvements could be made, ensuring our collection methods continue to be focused and offer best practice to increase opportunities to reduce debt levels. At the same time, it ensures our tenants remain supported at all times in order to sustain their tenancies by instilling a greater focus in this area and the importance of early intervention in reducing debt.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 Receipts from rents, service charges and sundry debts are the main source of income to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and it is therefore vital that Officers properly manage these accounts. Tenant Services invests significant resources in effectively managing its

Agenda Item 5

rent and service charge accounts, and in assisting tenants when their accounts go into arrears.

- 2.2 The regular payment of rent and service charges are important conditions of our tenancies and leases, and any arrears could result in possession proceedings or other enforcement action being taken, which could ultimately result in the loss of a tenant's home.
- 2.3 Tenant Services aims to make it as easy as possible for our tenants to maintain their rent and service charge accounts and to provide support and advice to those who find themselves struggling to pay due to financial hardship.
- 2.4 All officers regularly receive specialist training in the recovery of rent arrears and other debts and are experienced in this time intensive and legally complex area.
- 2.5 The policy outlines our approach to arrears management, showing that we will take a preventative approach. This approach has proved effective and Members may wish to note that Tenant Services has a high rate of success in reducing arrears by continuing to engage tenants so they trust us to help and support them, rather than defaulting to enforcement action.
- 2.6 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an increase in arrears, which Officers manage by continuing to focus on the importance of face-to-face or phone contact with affected tenants to build relationships, ensuring they have access to appropriate help, including welfare benefits advice and help with making claims.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The policy continues to govern our approach to collecting rent, service charges and sundry debts due to Tenant Services from our tenants. Internal processes are continuously and regularly reviewed, considering any external factors which could reduce the ability to collect the annual rent roll and other charges.
- 3.2 The policy is based on established procedures for income collection and recovery, aiming to balance supportive and preventative work with a responsive approach to debt collection.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Income collection is important to the overall financial position of the Housing Revenue Account. Rents and charges fund the services provided by the HRA, including major works on properties and sustainable energy works.

Any policies included within this report will be delivered within existing budget provision and the ongoing impact of income collection will be monitored.

Lucy Clothier, Accountancy Manager
Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

One Legal

Tel: 01684 272691 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk

4.3 Equality Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out

There are no specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

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Income Collection and Recovery Policy 2021

Tenant Services

Weaver, Sara J

Last review: *June 2021*

Reviewed by *Sara J Weaver, Income & Systems Manager*

CONTENTS

- 1. POLICY CONTEXT**
- 2. CURRENT TENANT RENT DEBT**
- 3. SHARED OWNERSHIP LEASEHOLD RENT DEBT**
- 4. LEASEHOLD SERVICE CHARGES**
- 5. CHARGEABLE REPAIRS**
- 6. FORMER OCCUPIER DEBT**
- 7. GARAGE RENT DEBT**
- 8. WRITING OFF DEBT**
- 9. EQUALITY**

1. POLICY CONTEXT

Introduction

- 1.1 The Council aims to keep rent debt and other housing related debts at the lowest possible level, in order to maximise income to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and to demonstrate good financial management.
- 1.2 This policy will attempt to ensure the Council offers relevant support and advice to tenants, licensees and leaseholders helping them to understand their responsibilities.
- 1.3 The policy recognises the Welfare Reform Act, Housing and Planning Act, and the requirements of the Charter for social housing residents which sits at the heart of the housing White Paper. The Council acknowledges it will attempt, where it is possible and practical to do so, to proactively work with customers and partner agencies to sustain tenancies and minimise debt.
- 1.4 The policy states where a need for legal action may be considered and in what circumstances repossession action or other remedies may be considered or sanctioned.

Key Principles of the Income Collection and Recovery Policy

2. The key principles of the Income Collection and Recovery Policy are:
 - To keep rent (current and former) and service charge debt at the lowest possible levels in order to maximise income to the HRA
 - To keep the amount of income outstanding from rechargeable repairs at as low a level as possible, in order to maximise income to the HRA
 - To place emphasis on effective prevention and firm but fair action to tackle rent and service charge debt, in order to minimise debts and support and sustain tenancies
 - To ensure appropriate options for escalation exist where prevention has been unsuccessful and to make use of the full range of enforcement powers available for debt recovery
 - To take action for repossession where it is reasonable and proportionate to do so
 - To keep current and former tenants, shared-ownership leaseholders, and leaseholders informed about benefits and other financial help which may be available to them, and to maximise the take-up of benefits
 - To work in partnership with Revenues and Benefits and the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure effective liaison and efficient administration and with Housing Advice to implement available prevention measures
 - To take every opportunity, where it is possible or practical to do so, to support and assist tenants, shared-ownership leaseholders, licensees, and leaseholders to

manage their accounts effectively to minimise the chances of debt occurring and the need to take formal action for recovery.

- To comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements regarding debt recovery.
- Where a national situation exists such as a pandemic, the Council will follow the guidance, legislation, and the powers given to us or any other statutory body by central government. The action taken will be appropriate to the situation such as:
 - Communicating only by telephone, text, or email, with current and former tenants, shared-ownership leaseholders, and leaseholders
 - Carrying out risk assessments before a home visit can be scheduled.
 - Making use of appropriate technology, such as mobile phones for video recordings
- To treat current and former tenants, shared-ownership leaseholders, and leaseholders in a fair and non-discriminatory way, in accordance with the Council's Equality & Diversity Policy and the protected characteristics of the Equalities Act 2010.

Relevant legislation and regulatory compliance

3. The Council will ensure it recovers income and all other debt in accordance with relevant policy and legislation.

2. CURRENT TENANT RENT DEBT

Actions

- 2.1 We will provide accessible information about the importance of paying rent via, newsletters, rent campaigns, social media and on the Council website. Assistance will be offered, where possible, to help those with specific needs (for example, those who lack basic skills in literacy or numeracy, are considered vulnerable, or those who do not have English as their first language).
- 2.2 We will aim to carry regular articles in our tenants' newsletters on benefit advice and support available, to those tenants who fall into rent debt. We will also, where appropriate, use other publicity campaigns including social media to give advice and information to our tenants.
- 2.3 With each offer of tenancy, we will: -
- Contact the applicant and complete an Income Management and Vulnerability Assessment, which is designed to identify any vulnerabilities or disabilities at the earliest opportunity
 - If required, directly refer or signpost the applicant to any support agencies to assist with tenancy sustainment
 - Identify any financial incapacities and ensure a housing benefit or universal credit claim will be made at the sign-up stage
 - Advise on where to obtain free and independent debt management help with claiming welfare benefits or with debt counselling
 - Explain the need for a rent payment in advance
 - Offer advice on our current tenant rent debt recovery processes
- 2.4 At the "sign up" we will:
- Offer advice to the tenant on their obligations for paying the rent and the consequences of not paying regularly
 - Offer advice on methods available for paying their rent
 - Confirm the method of payment to be used by the tenant for rent payment
 - Expect a rent in advance payment to be made
 - Signpost the tenant to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit as appropriate
 - Identify and record the tenant's preferred method of contact
 - Provide the tenant with the Income Management team contact details
- 2.5 At the "sign up" we may also:
- Identify the need for direct payments and arrange to have rent paid directly to us as the landlord
 - Explain the dates for rent collection if paying via direct debit
 - Explain to joint tenants that they are legally jointly and severally liable for any debts.
 - Confirm that a series of new tenant visits will be carried out to check, amongst other things, rent payments are being made and any benefit claims have been successfully processed
- 2.6 We will promote a positive payment culture and in doing so make a wide range of payment methods available including (but not exclusively):

- Direct Debit
 - Bank Standing Order
 - Payment card at external payment points
 - Direct payment of housing benefit/universal credit
 - On-line payment
 - Automated telephone payment
- 2.7 Where tenants raise the issue of financial hardship, we will use a variety of support mechanisms including:
- referral or signposting for floating support or debt management advice depending on their individual needs
 - offering advice and practical support to ensure they have access to the full range of available benefits and initiatives
- 2.8 A rent statement will be issued to tenants who are in debt as part of our escalation policy.
- 2.9 We will encourage tenants to self-serve via an online housing account, so they have instant access to their rent account details allowing them to check payments received and account balances.
- 2.10 We will attempt to act promptly in contacting tenants who have rent debt. We will try to contact such tenants by letter, email, telephone, text, or home visits (planned or unannounced). Income Management Officers will endeavour to discuss rent debt with the tenant prior to instigating any legal proceedings. Home visits will always be offered for more vulnerable tenants or where it has not been possible to make contact by other means.
- 2.11 Where rent debt cannot be cleared in full, we will agree an affordable payment arrangement, based on the completion of an Income Management and Vulnerability Assessment, where we deem it reasonable to do so.
- 2.12 We will work with Revenues and Benefits regarding Housing Benefit (HB) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding Universal Credit (UC) to ensure tenants are aware of their benefit entitlement and how to make enquiries.
- 2.13 Where appropriate, we will aim to provide a co-ordinated phase of support to enable tenants to make the transition from benefits into employment without suffering any financial hardship, by signposting or directly referring them to a debt management or floating support agency as per 2.7

Non – Legal Remedies sought

- 3.1 We will remain clear and firm from the outset regarding a tenant's obligations and the consequences of non-payment.
- 3.2 We will use an escalation process based on a combination of time and monies owed, when taking action against tenants for non-payment of rent.

- 3.3 The escalation process may, in exceptional circumstances, be shortened to limit the impact on the Council's resources and to reduce the possibility of higher levels of debt.
- 3.4 We may accept direct deductions from benefit as a repayment arrangement where appropriate.
- 3.5 We will not consider possession action against tenants where repayment agreements have been made and adhered to.
- 3.6 We may seek voluntary contributions from tenants, who are subject to a debt relief order.
- 3.7 Any current rent debt will be disclosed to other social housing providers as part of Homeseeker Plus policy, as appropriate.

Legal Remedies sought

- 4.1 We believe applying to the Court to seek possession of a tenant's home should be considered as a measure of last resort where all other reasonable efforts to recover debt have failed.
- 4.2 We will always inform tenants if possible, in writing and verbally, when legal action has been decided upon to try and ensure they are fully aware of the implications.
- 4.3 We will normally only seek an order for possession when we are satisfied any outstanding Housing Benefit or Universal Credit issues have been resolved.
- 4.4 Tenants will be encouraged to attend any legal proceedings where they are the Defendant and we will always advise they seek independent legal advice.
- 4.5 We will always request any Court costs incurred for legal proceedings are awarded to us as the Claimant
- 4.6 We will generally seek a money judgement order with every application for possession.
- 4.7 Where a tenant breaches the terms of a suspended possession order, we may consider applying to Court to seek a fixed possession date.
- 4.8 Any tenant subject to a Court order will be offered our continuing support in managing their finances by our signposting service.
- 4.9 When we return to Court to seek a warrant for the eviction of a tenant we will, where appropriate:
 - Inform the Housing Advice team who will offer support to the tenant to try and ensure all avenues have been explored in their aim of preventing homelessness

- Liaise with Gloucestershire County Council's Community Adult Services Helpdesk where we believe there is a vulnerable adult living in the household
 - Liaise with Gloucestershire County Council's Children's Social Care Referral and Assessment Team where we are aware of children residing in the home
 - Inform relevant parties (e.g. Councillor)
 - Visit the tenant five working days prior to the eviction to confirm their intentions
- 4.10 All legal proceedings will be authorised by the Income & Systems Manager or the Senior Income Management Officer.
- 4.11 We will only consider a Court order to be satisfied when the rent debt, including any Court costs, have been repaid in full.

3. SHARED OWNERSHIP LEASEHOLDER RENT DEBT

Actions

- 1.1 We will collect Shared Ownership leaseholder rent over 12 months, payable on the first of the month, commencing on the 1st April in every financial year, in accordance with the terms of their Lease.
- 1.2 We will act promptly in contacting leaseholders who have a debt. We will contact leaseholders by letter, e-mail, telephone, and text. Home visits will be made for more vulnerable leaseholders (if necessary) or where it has not been possible to make contact by other means.
- 1.3 We will work with Revenues and Benefits (HB) and the DWP (UC) to ensure Shared Ownership leaseholders are aware of their benefit entitlement and how to make enquiries.
- 1.4 Non-payment of rent debt will be pursued as a breach of their lease. We will consider a sustainable payment agreement to repay any rent debt over a fixed period of time, based on the completion of an Income Management and Vulnerability Assessment, where we deem it reasonable to do so, prior to considering capitalisation of rent debt on to the mortgage balance,

Non-Legal Remedies sought

- 2.1 Where a Shared Ownership leaseholder has failed to make payment, thereby breaching the terms of their Lease and they have a mortgage, we will contact the mortgagee advising them of non-payment of rent and request that they consider the issue as there could also be mortgage arrears to be considered.
- 2.2 We will always inform the Shared Ownership leaseholder, in writing, that this information has been disclosed
- 2.3 Any Shared Ownership leaseholder debts will be disclosed to other social housing providers as part of Homeseeker Plus policy, as appropriate.

Legal Remedies sought

- 3.1 We will always inform the Shared Ownership leaseholder, in writing, when legal action has been decided upon to ensure they are fully aware of the implications.
- 3.2 Where the Shared Ownership leaseholder no longer has a mortgage, or where the mortgagee refuses to capitalise the debt, we will initiate action in the County Court to recover the debt, via a Money Judgement or Court order. Any action taken will incur Court fees plus interest.
- 3.3 Shared Ownership Leaseholders will be encouraged to attend any legal proceedings where they are the Defendant and we will always advise they seek independent legal advice.

3.4 We will always request any Court costs incurred for legal proceedings are awarded to us as the Claimant

3.5 If payment remains outstanding following the Court's determination, one of the following enforcement measures may then be used: -

- Application to Court to Obtain Information
- Attachment of Earnings Order
- Charging Order
- Bankruptcy proceedings

We may also seek to recover the debt via repossession of the property; which could include forfeiture.

3.6 On initiating legal proceedings we will inform the Housing Advice team. They will offer additional support to the Shared Ownership leaseholder to ensure all avenues have been explored in their aim of preventing homelessness.

4. LEASEHOLD SERVICE CHARGES

Actions

- 1.1 The Right to Buy team will provide leaseholders with a service charge invoice (in arrears) on an annual or six-monthly basis, depending on the terms of the lease. The invoice will include details of how service charges have been calculated.
- 1.2 The leaseholder will be given the opportunity to dispute the service charge if necessary. The dispute will be reviewed by the Right to Buy team and the leaseholder advised of the outcome.
- 1.3 Leaseholders will pay service charge invoices within 28 days, in accordance with the terms of their Lease.
- 1.4 We will make the following methods of payment available to leaseholders:
 - Direct Debit
 - Automated telephone payment by debit or credit card
 - On-line
- 1.5 Non-payment of service charges will be pursued as a breach of their lease if not paid in full within 28 days. We aim to prevent leaseholders from accruing serious debts and in doing so will explore any legal remedies available.
- 1.6 We will act promptly in contacting leaseholders who have a debt. We will contact leaseholders by letter, e-mail, telephone, and text. Home visits will be made for more vulnerable leaseholders (if necessary) or where it has not been possible to make contact by other means.
- 1.7 Where the debt relates to planned major works, and it cannot be cleared in full with a single payment, we may consider agreeing an affordable interest-free payment arrangement over a fixed period of time (not exceeding 48 months), based on the completion of an Income Expenditure form.
- 1.8 Interest-free payment arrangements would only be available to a leaseholder occupying the property as their only or principal home.
- 1.9 Interest-free payment arrangements would not apply to the service charge element of any invoice.

Non-Legal Remedies sought

- 2.1 Where a leaseholder has failed to make payment, thereby breaching the terms of their Lease and they have a mortgage, we will contact the mortgagee advising them of the non-payment of service charges and request that they consider the issue.
- 2.2 We will always inform the leaseholder, in writing, that this information has been disclosed.

Legal Remedies sought

- 3.1 We will always attempt to inform the leaseholder, in writing, when legal action has been decided upon to ensure they are fully aware of the implications.
- 3.2 Where the leaseholder is the outright owner of the property, or where the mortgagee refuses to capitalise the debt, we will initiate action in the County Court to recover the debt, via a Money Judgement or Court order. Any action taken will incur court fees plus interest.
- 3.3 If payment remains outstanding following the Court's determination, one of the following enforcement measures may then be used: -
- Application to Court to Obtain Information
 - Attachment of Earnings Order
 - Charging Order
 - Bankruptcy proceedings

We may also seek to recover the debt via repossession of the property, and this will include forfeiture.

- 3.4 On initiating legal proceedings we will inform the Housing Advice team. They will offer additional support to the leaseholder to ensure all avenues have been explored in their aim of preventing homelessness.

5. CHARGEABLE REPAIRS

Actions

- 1.1 Payment will be required in full before any repair work, which is rechargeable, is carried out.
- 1.2 Where an occupier incurs an out-of-hours rechargeable repair, Property Care will send them an invoice for the outstanding amount.
- 1.3 The occupier will be given the opportunity to dispute the invoice if necessary. The dispute will be reviewed by Property Care and the occupier advised of the outcome within 10 working days.
- 1.4 We will attempt to act promptly in contacting occupiers who owe monies for out-of-hours rechargeable repairs, following the dispatch of the invoice. We will contact occupiers by letter, e-mail, text and telephone. Home visits will be attempted for more vulnerable occupiers (if necessary).
- 1.5 Where rent debt cannot be cleared in full with a single payment, we may agree affordable repayment arrangements, based on the completion of an Income Expenditure form, where we deem it reasonable to do so.
- 1.6 We will make a wide range of payment methods available to our occupiers, including:
 - Direct debit
 - Standing order
 - Telephone banking
 - On-line payments

Non- Legal Remedies Sought

- 2.1 We will use an escalation process based on a combination of time and monies owed, when taking action against tenants for non-payment of any outstanding debt.
- 2.2 We may accept direct deductions from benefit as a repayment arrangement where appropriate.
- 2.3 We will not consider possession action against tenants where repayment agreements have been made and adhered to.
- 2.4 Any outstanding chargeable repair debt will be disclosed to other social housing providers as part of the Homeseeker Plus policy, where appropriate.

Legal Remedies Sought

- 3.1 We will always attempt to inform the occupier, in writing, when legal action has been decided upon to ensure they are fully aware of the implications.

- 3.2 Where an occupier fails to pay the sum outstanding for a rechargeable repair, we will consider initiating action in the County Court to recover the debt, via a Money Judgement or Court order. Any action taken will incur court fees plus interest.
- 3.3 Where the Court makes a judgement in our favour, we will take appropriate action to enforce the judgement.
- 3.4 If payment remains outstanding following the Court's determination, one of the following enforcement measures may then be used: -
- Application to Court to Obtain Information
 - Attachment of Earnings Order
 - Charging Order
 - Bankruptcy proceedings

6. FORMER OCCUPIER DEBT

Actions

- 1.1 We will attempt to obtain the new address of all former occupiers (including former tenants and leaseholders), who have left the property owing us an outstanding debt (rent debt, service charge debt, court costs, occupancy charges, and rechargeable repairs).
- 1.2 We will send them a letter and rent statement (rent debt) or invoice (service charge debt, occupancy charges and rechargeable repairs) for the sum outstanding.
- 1.3 We will send a letter to the former occupier, should they not respond to the invoice.
- 1.4 Where a former occupier contacts us in relation to a debt, we will provide them with information about how the debt accrued and make arrangements for them to repay the debt.
- 1.5 Where the debt relates to a former occupier who has died, we will contact their next of kin or the executor of the Estate to establish whether the former occupier's Estate has enough funds to cover the debt. Where there are: -
 - sufficient funds, we will seek to arrange repayment of the debt from the estate.
 - insufficient funds, and this has been verified in writing by the next of kin or executor, the debt will be written off.

Non- Legal Remedies Sought

- 2.1 We will use an escalation process based on a combination of time and monies owed, when taking recovery action for non-payment of any outstanding debt.
- 2.2 The escalation process may, in exceptional circumstances, be shortened to limit the impact on the Council's resources and to reduce the possibility of higher levels of debt.
- 2.2 We may accept direct deductions from benefits as a repayment arrangement where appropriate.
- 2.3 We will not consider possession action against a former occupier where a repayment agreement has been made and adhered to.
- 2.4 Any former occupier debt will be disclosed to other social housing providers as part of Homeseeker Plus policy, where appropriate.

Legal Remedies Sought

- 3.1 We will always attempt to inform the occupier, in writing, when legal action has been decided upon to ensure they are fully aware of the implications.

- 3.2 Where a former occupier owes a debt in excess of a sum which is to be agreed annually and has failed to make arrangements to repay the debt, or has failed to comply with the terms of a repayment agreement, we will seek a legal remedy. Any action taken will incur Court fees plus interest.
- 3.3 If payment remains outstanding following the Court's determination, one of the following enforcement measures may then be used: -
- Application to Court to Obtain Information
 - Attachment of Earnings Order
 - Charging Order
 - Bankruptcy proceedings
- 3.4 Where a Court has granted a money judgement order, we will normally seek enforcement.

7. GARAGE RENT DEBT

Actions

- 1.1 We will provide accessible information about the importance of paying rent in newsletters and on the Council's website. Assistance will be made to help those with specific needs (for example, those who lack basic skills in literacy or numeracy, or those who do not have English as their first language).
- 1.2 We will make the following payment method available:
 - Direct debit
- 1.3 Where garage tenants raise the issue of not being able to pay via Direct Debit, alternative payment methods may be considered.
- 1.4 We will review garage rent debt on a weekly basis as part of the standard escalation process.
- 1.5 We will send a rent statement showing any debt since the date it accrued.
- 1.6 Where debt cannot be cleared in full with a single payment, garage tenants will be expected to supply us with information in relation to their financial circumstances, by completing an Income and Expenditure form, in order to agree an affordable repayment arrangement.

Non-Legal Remedies Sought

- 2.1 We will use an escalation process based on a combination of time and monies owed, when taking action against a garage tenant for non-payment of rent. This could result in possession of the garage.
- 2.2 In the case of repeat debtors the escalation process may be shortened to limit the impact on the Council's resources and to reduce the possibility of higher levels of debt for the tenant.
- 2.3 We will not take legal proceedings against tenants in relation to any monies specifically identified in a bankruptcy or debt relief order.
- 2.4 We will oppose any debt relief order where we believe it is inappropriate to incorporate garage rent debt into the order.
- 2.5 Any garage debt will be disclosed to other social housing providers as part of Homeseeker Plus policy, where appropriate.

Legal Remedies Sought

- 3.1 We will always attempt to inform the garage tenant, in writing, when legal action has been decided upon to ensure they are fully aware of the implications.
- 3.2 Where a garage tenant owes a debt and has failed to make arrangements to repay it or has failed to comply with the terms of a repayment agreement, we will seek a legal remedy. Any action taken will incur Court fees plus interest.

- 3.3 If payment remains outstanding following the Court's determination, one of the following enforcement measures may then be used: -
- Application to Court to Obtain Information
 - Attachment of Earnings Order
 - Charging Order
 - Bankruptcy proceedings
- 3.4 Where a Court has granted a money judgement order, we will normally seek to enforce it.

8. WRITING OFF DEBT

Actions

- 1.1 The Council will consider writing off debt in exceptional circumstances. Debts may be written off for the following reasons (this list is not exhaustive):
 - The debt is uneconomic to recover
 - The Council has been unable to trace the former occupier, or they died leaving no funds in their estate
 - Recovery action has proven unsuccessful
 - Recovery of the debt would cause severe financial hardship
- 1.2 All debts will be written off by the Council's Audit Team. Recommendations in relation to the writing off debt will be made by the Income & Systems Manager.

9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and promote quality of opportunity. The Council's goal is to ensure these commitments are reinforced by the Council's values and statutory and legislative requirements, ensuring these are embedded in our day to day working practices.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to equality of opportunity for all people regardless of race, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, religious belief (including non-religious beliefs), gender (including gender reassignment), marital status, and pregnancy and maternity. We recognise and value the diversity of the local community and believe equality is central to the provision of modern quality services. We are committed to being inclusive with our approach and determined to make sure our approach to managing income and allocating resources supports this.

Actions Taken

- 2.1 The Council's staff and contractors will operate in such a way to ensure their procedures and practices are sensitive to the needs of individual residents and to ensure they do not discriminate on the grounds of any strand of the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.2 Income collection and recovery action will be tailored to meet the needs of individuals as appropriate. All cases will be considered on an individual basis and the Council will work with Support Workers, Social Workers, and advocates of the tenant where necessary.
- 2.3 The Council will, in all reasonable circumstances, make information available in a variety of information formats, including (but not exclusively):
 - Large print
 - Audio CD
 - Community languages

10. POLICY REVIEW

- 1.1 This policy will be reviewed as the need arises through changes to legislation or regulation or no later than 3 years from its implementation date.
- 1.2 Where there has been a change in legislation which has an impact on the policy, the policy will be reviewed within 3 months of the legislation or regulation coming into effect.

EQUALITY ANALYSIS FORM

By completing this form you will provide evidence of how your service is helping to meet Stroud District Council's General Equality duty:

The Equality Act 2010 states that:

*A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have **due regard** to the need to –*

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are listed in Question 9

Stroud District Equality data can be found at: <https://inform.gloucestershire.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity/>

Please see Appendix 1 for a good example of a completed EIA.

[Guidance available on the HUB](#)

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Name(s): Sara J Weaver	Telephone: 01453 766321
	E-Mail: sara.weaver@stroud.gov.uk
Service: Tenant Services	Date of Assessment: 4 May 2021

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Income Collection and Recovery Policy

Is this new or an existing one? Existing

3. Briefly describe its aims and objectives

The Council aims to keep rent debt and other housing related debts at the lowest possible level, in order to maximise income to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and to demonstrate good financial management.

The policy will attempt to ensure that the Council offers relevant support and advice to tenants, licensees and leaseholders helping them to understand their responsibilities.

4. Are there external considerations? (Legislation / government directive, etc)

Compliance with statutory and regulatory legislation and government directives.

The policy also acknowledges the Welfare Reform Act, Housing and Planning Act and the requirements of the Charter for social housing residents which sits at the heart of the Housing White Paper.

5. Who is intended to benefit from it and in what way?

Future, current and former tenants, Shared Ownership Leaseholders and Leaseholders.

6. What outcomes are expected?

To keep rent (current and former) and service charge debt at the lowest possible levels in order to maximise income to the Housing Revenue Account.

To place emphasis on effective prevention and firm but fair action to tackle rent and service charge debt in order to minimise debt and support and sustain tenancies

To keep current and former tenants, shared-ownership leaseholders, and leaseholders informed about benefits and other financial help which may be available to them, and to maximise the take-up of benefits

To work in partnership with Revenues and Benefits and the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure effective liaison and efficient administration and with Housing Advice to implement available prevention measures

To take every opportunity, where it is possible or practical to do so, to support and assist tenants, shared-ownership leaseholders, licensees, and leaseholders to manage their accounts effectively to minimise the chances of debt occurring and the need to take formal action for recovery.

To treat current and former tenants, shared-ownership leaseholders, and leaseholders in a fair and non-discriminatory way, in accordance with the Council’s Equality & Diversity Policy and the protected characteristics of the Equalities Act 2010.

7. What evidence has been used for this assessment?: (eg Research, previous consultations, Inform (MAIDEN); Google assessments carried out by other Authorities)

Review of current policy.

Consideration given to recent legislative changes including “Breathing Space” and mediation at the Possession stage.

Inform (MAIDEN). Equality & Diversity: Change in projected population 2016-2041

8. Has any consultation been carried out?

Yes

Details of consultation: Draft copy of policy supplied to the following for comments:-

- Head of Housing Services
- Income Management Officers
- Tenant Representatives

If NO please outline any planned activities

N/A

9. Could a particular group be affected differently in either a negative or positive way?

(Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure)

Protected Group	Type of impact, reason and any evidence (from Q7 & 8)
Age	<p>Neutral – There were 119,019 residents in Stroud in 2018, approximately 8% more than 2001. This is below the county average of just over 10%.</p> <p>The district population by age is projected to be 49.3% in the 20-64 year age group and 29.7% in the 65+ age group</p> <p>More vulnerable tenants (65+) might struggle with fuel poverty as well as digital services. However, there are many reasons why some of our tenants may be unwilling or unable to engage with our services and these are not just attributed to their age.</p> <p>For example, many might struggle to use a digital service, due to mental health issues or learning difficulties; physical or cognitive disabilities; they lack language or literacy skills; or they can't access or afford the technology to go online.</p> <p>Offline services, such as access to support and assistance are available to those who prefer to complete tasks using non-digital methods with the aim of helping all tenants sustain their tenancies.</p>
Disability	<p>Neutral – 15,430 16-64 year olds identified as having a disability (or long-term health problem) which impacted on their day-to-day activity (limited a little to a lot) and 20,910 65+ year olds. (see comments above regarding support)</p>
Gender Re-assignment	<p>Neutral – No specific impacts have been identified either through consultation or through equality analysis.</p> <p>Gender reassignment estimates for the district (lower and higher) equalled 1.6%</p>

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Appendix

Appendix B

Pregnancy & Maternity	<p>Neutral – No specific impacts have been identified either through consultation or through equality analysis.</p> <p>There were 1065 live births in the district in 2018 or which 14 mothers (1.3%) were under the age of 20.</p> <p>Younger, single parents are more likely to experience problem debt and live in persistent poverty; however, they are referred to debt management advice and offered floating support.</p>
Race	<p>Neutral - No specific impacts have been identified either through consultation or through equality analysis.</p> <p>94.9% of the Stroud population identified themselves as White British in 2017. This is significantly higher than the England average of 79.8%.</p> <p>However, SDC's tenancy agreement and sign up process highlights the importance of respecting the individuality and views of others (including disability, race etc).</p>
Religion – Belief	<p>Neutral - No specific impacts have been identified either through consultation or through equality analysis.</p>
Sex	<p>Neutral - No specific impacts have been identified either through consultation or through equality analysis.</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>Neutral - No specific impacts have been identified either through consultation or through equality analysis.</p>
Marriage & Civil Partnerships (part (a) of duty only)	<p>Neutral – No specific impacts have been identified either through consultation or through equality analysis</p> <p>Persons in a registered same-sex civil partnership (2011) equalled 0.3% (284 persons)</p> <p>SDC's allow same sex couples to have tenancies; we do not discriminate against marriage or civil partnerships.</p>
Rural considerations: le Access to services; transport; education; employment; broadband;	<p>Neutral - No specific impacts have been identified either through consultation or through equality analysis</p> <p>Home visits are made to vulnerable tenants where extra support is necessary and/or where they are not digitally enabled.</p>

10.If you have identified a negative impact in question 9, what actions have you undertaken or do you plan to undertake to lessen or negate this impact?


Please transfer any actions to your Service Action plan on Excelsis.

Action(s): N/A	Lead officer	Resource	Timescale

Declaration

We are satisfied that an Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy and where a negative impact has been identified, actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact.

We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment

Completed by: S J Weaver	Date: 4 May 2021
Role: Income & Systems Manager	
Countersigned by Head of Service: 	Date: 5 May 2021
Kevin Topping, Head of Housing Services	

Date for Review: Please forward an electronic copy to eka.nowakowska@stroud.gov.uk

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STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA
ITEM NO

HOUSING COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2021

6

Report Title	TENANT SERVICES COMPENSATION POLICY 2021			
Purpose of Report	For Housing Committee to agree the updated policy			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to approve the updated policy			
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation has taken place with Tenant Services Management team including Property Care, Property Services including the Right to Buy team, Housing Committee tenant rep and Neighbourhood Ambassadors.			
Report Author	Kevin Topping, Head of Housing Services Email: kevin.topping@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	N/A			
Background Papers	Compensation Policy			
Appendices	Appendix A – Compensation Policy 2021			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	No

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tenant Services is continually seeking to improve and deliver its business effectively, efficiently and in a timely manner.

The Regulator of Social Housing places an emphasis on effective complaint handling and learning from feedback through the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (One of the four standards that apply to SDC within the regulators consumer standards), additionally the Housing Ombudsman expects social landlords to have a clear policy evidencing how it manages compensation claims.

2.0 KEY PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

- Clear guidance for managers when handling a serious complaint, ensuring consistency of complaint responses across the service.
- Reduced risk of Ombudsman or Regulator involvement in line with statutory requirements including the new Housing White Paper.
- Promote excellent customer service across Tenant Services.
- Long term value for money savings as a result of improved service delivery.
- Stricter guidelines ensure staff will be in a stronger position when dealing with vexatious complainants.

3.0 OUTCOMES

- The document content has been reduced by 2 pages.
- Removed irrelevant items such as full legislative text.
- Brought clarity to roles and responsibilities.

Agenda Item 6

- Neighbour nuisance – more ownership goes back to the tenant to resolve in the first instance in line with the Anti-Social Behaviour policy 2021.
- Compensation payments and lessons learned to form part of an annual report to Housing Committee and tenants.
- Recognition of events out of the Councils control such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report, with any compensation payments to come from existing budgets.

Lucy Clothier, Accountancy Manager

Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant legal implications.

One Legal

Tel: 01684 272691 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk

4.3 Equality Implications

An EqIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.



Compensation Policy

June 2021

Tenant Services

Last updated: September 2017

Next document review by: March 2024

Reviewed by: Kevin Topping Head of Housing Services

PART 1 POLICY BACKGROUND & COVERAGE

Introduction

- 1.1 We aim to provide a high-quality of service for our tenants; however, we acknowledge that sometimes mistakes are made. If tenants are dissatisfied with our service and wish to complain about our lack of action, or standard of our work, we will deal with their complaint quickly, fairly and appropriately. The details of our complaints procedure can be found in our SDC Corporate Complaints Policy.
- 1.2 We recognise that sometimes an honest apology is not enough and some tenants have a right to compensation when things go wrong. This policy aims to ensure that fair and consistent remedies are taken in these circumstances.
- 1.3 The policy covers two main sections Statutory Compensation and Discretionary Compensation.

These include the following areas:

STATUTORY COMPENSATION	DISCRETIONARY COMPENSATION
Home Loss payments	Repairs
Disturbance payments	Neighbour nuisance
Right to buy	Housing management
Home improvements	
Right to repairs	

- 1.4 This policy covers the following areas (as appropriate) in each section:

- Appropriate action
- Financial compensation
- The effect of the complainants own actions
- Money not paid to the complainant
- Quantifiable loss
- Loss of non-monetary benefit
- Distress
- Time and trouble
- Offsetting compensation

Key Principles of the Compensation Policy

- 2.1.1 The key principles of the Compensation policy are:

- To ensure a clear, fair and transparent approach to compensation for all tenants.
- To outline the degree of service failure that necessitates compensation.
- To make clear what actions tenant's needed to have taken to be eligible for compensation.
- To clarify the process managers should take when dealing with a complaint or compensation claim.

Relevant legislation and regulatory compliance

- 3.1 We will ensure that we compensate our tenants in accordance with best practice and relevant policy and legislation, including the following:

Land Compensation Act 1973 (as amended).

- The act entitles a qualifying legal tenant to a Home Loss payment where they are required by Stroud District Council to move permanently move out of their property because it is due to be demolished or reconstructed. A tenant or joint tenants sharing the payment are entitled to a lump sum, the payment amount is determined by the home loss payments (prescribed amounts)

regulations 2008, which are reviewed annually. The current maximum set in October 2020 is of a maximum of £6500.

Section 124 of the Housing Act 1988 and Sections 153A, 153B and 138C, Part V of the Housing Act 1985 (the Right to Buy).

- The act entitles tenants to compensation if there is an undue delay in completing the sale of their property within the required timescales, due to a failure by SDC.
- The act entitles tenants to financial compensation for outlaid expenses incurred in preparing to buy a property before a demolition notice is imposed.

The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations – Statutory Instrument 1994 No. 133

The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Compensation for Improvements) Regulations – Statutory Instrument 1994 No. 613

PART 2 AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

5.1.1 Compensation will be paid at the discretion of the appropriate manager in accordance with this policy. All compensation claims will be discussed and documented by managers to ensure the service learns from complaints. (All personal data will be anonymised).

Service Manager	Compensation Amount
Unit Manager	Up to £500
Head of Service	£500 - £3000
Strategic Director	£3000+

PART 3 TRAINING

- 6.1 We will ensure that all of our staff and contractors are aware of and have a good understanding of this policy and our corporate complaints process.
- 6.2 Training on the policy will be provided by The Tenancy Operations Manager, once the policy is adopted by Housing Committee. Subsequent training will take place every 3 years in accordance with the policy review or sooner if any flaws are identified through management of complaints.
- 6.3 All regular contractors are expected to fill out a pro-forma to confirm that they have received the training.

PART 4 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

7.1.1 All claims for compensation will need to be assessed as part of the corporate complaints process.

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/about-the-council/contact-us/compliments-and-complaints/corporate-complaints-policy-and-procedure>

Managers should assess each complaint against the guidelines stipulated within this policy and make an offer of compensation, if and when appropriate, to the complainant within their response letter. The tenant is then obliged to contact the manager to state whether or not they accept the compensation amount. If they accept the amount of compensation offered, they will

be required to sign a disclaimer stipulating that they consider the complaint closed and will not pursue further action. The [disclaimer template](#) is held by service managers.

7.1.2 All claims will need to be checked against outstanding arrears to SDC, this includes housing benefit, council tax and rent arrears. Payments will be off set against arrears and the remainder will be paid directly to the tenant.

7.1.3 If a tenant wishes to appeal the decision made regarding compensation they can approach the Head of Housing Services or Head of Contract Services as appropriate within 28 days of the receiving an offer.

PART 5 STATUTORY COMPENSATION

8.1 Home Loss

Home loss payments are made in recognition of the personal distress and inconvenience experienced by tenants who need to permanently leave their home through no fault of their own.

Financial compensation

A lump sum payment of up to £6,500 (as at October 2020) will be paid to the tenant. In the case of a joint tenancy, the payment will be split between both tenants. All payments may be authorised by either the property services project manager, Head of Housing Services, Head of Contract Services or Head of Property Services as appropriate.

To qualify for this payment:

- The move must be initiated by the Council and must be permanent.
- The move must be a consequence of demolition or reconstruction.
- The tenant must have been in legal occupation for at least one year prior to the date of moving out.

All claims will need to be checked against outstanding arrears to SDC, this includes housing benefit, council tax and rent arrears. Payments will be off set against arrears and the remainder will be paid directly to the tenant(s).

8.2 Disturbance payments

Disturbance payments are made to tenants who are required to move out of their property by the Council as a temporary measure to enable it to improve or redevelop the property. The payment should cover the costs associated with the move, in order that the tenant is not out of pocket.

Financial compensation

A lump sum payment may not reflect individual circumstances therefore we will seek to meet reasonable and appropriate expenses (Upon production of evidence of the expenditure), up to a maximum of £1000.00 including:

- Furniture removal.
- A packing service for vulnerable tenants.
- Lifting and refitting of carpets and curtains and replacement if damaged in move.
- Disconnection and reconnection of electricity, gas, telephone and fitted appliances.
- 3 months postal re-direction.

8.3 Right to buy

Tenants who have made an application to buy their home are entitled to claim compensation if the sale has not completed within our statutory timescales, as a result of our inaction.

Tenant's will need to:

Issue a "Notice of Delay" to officers giving one month in which to resolve the delay.

A further "Operative Notice of Delay" must then be issued by the tenant if the delay is not resolved within a month.

Financial compensation

We will deduct the sum of the weekly rent amount x the delay period. For instance, if the rent is £78.60 a week and there has been an 8-week delay, we would take £78.60 x 8 =£628.80 off the final purchase price'.

Tenants who have exercised their Right to Buy, before we serve a demolition notice, are also entitled to claim financial compensation for any, reasonable and appropriate, outlaid expenses incurred in purchasing the property before the notice was served. Compensation would be paid on production of receipts.

8.4 Home Improvements

Many tenants take pride in their homes and make improvements to their property during their tenancy. Under the Local Authorities (Compensation for improvements) Regulations 1994 or Section 100 of The Housing Act 1985, these tenants may be able to claim compensation for the improvements made at the end of their tenancy, providing the improvement is considered a 'qualifying improvement' in accordance with our specified list.

Financial compensation

Qualifying tenants can claim financial compensation up to a maximum of £4000. Compensation will be paid on works based on the equation provided in the 1994 Compensation for Improvements Regulations.

$$C \times \left(1 - \frac{Y}{N}\right)$$

C = Cost of improvement

N = Notional life of improvement

Y = Number of years since completion

Tenant's will need to:

- Gain written permission for the improvements in advance from their Neighbourhood Management Officer.
- Obtain three quotes for works from contractors and have sent copies to Stroud District Council
- Request an expert site inspection before works start.
- Gain necessary statutory approval i.e. planning permission, building control for improvements.
- Provide evidence of cost of install.
- Provide evidence of notional life of improvement.
- Carry out works to an acceptable standard, and have them verified by a Repairs Inspector.
- Submit their claim to their Neighbourhood Management Officer within the period from 1 month before the tenancy ends to 14 days after the date the tenancy ends.

Provisos:

- Compensation will not be paid to tenants who have exercised their Right to Buy or where the tenancy ends as a result of a Court Order for possession.
- Any compensation will be paid at the end of the tenancy and will be offset against any sums owed to Stroud District Council.

- Interior decoration such as painting and wallpapering will not qualify for compensation
- Compensation will not be paid for sums under £50.

8.5 Right to Repair

Under the Right to Repair Scheme our tenants have the right to be compensated if certain small, urgent or emergency repairs, costing less than £250, are not carried out within specific time limits. These are defined as ‘qualifying’ repairs under regulations issued by Government.

Failure to repair within set timescales

The Right to Repair Scheme gives tenants the legal right to have certain, urgent, repairs completed within prescribed timescales. If these timeframes are not adhered to, a tenant may pursue a disrepair claim against us which could lead to compensation being paid if proven.

Financial compensation

The compensation is fixed by the legislation at an initial sum of £10, plus £2 for every day thereafter that the repair is not completed, up to a maximum of £50. A full list of qualifying repairs is set out within this procedure.

If you have any rent arrears, we will use the compensation to reduce the arrears rather than paying you the money.

Tenant’s own actions

Financial compensation would not be due if the complainant has done any of the following:

- Failed to inform the service about works required on the property.
- Where tenant lifestyle has resulted in the property getting into disrepair.
- The tenant has damaged the property.
- The tenant has delayed works being done to the property either by restricting access or postponing appointments.
- Entitlement to compensation is removed if exceptional circumstances occur which are beyond the control of the Council.

Qualifying repairs under the right to repair scheme

A qualifying repair will be considered a repair which does not cost in excess of £250 to carry out, but if not completed within a specified time is likely to endanger the health or safety of the tenant. The majority of these repairs would be electrical or plumbing work, although there will be instances where building repairs will be deemed as a qualifying repair.

Repair type	Response time (working days)
Total loss of electric power	1
Partial loss of electric power	3
Unsafe power or lighting socket or electrical fitting	1
Total loss of water supply	1

Partial loss of water supply	3
Total or partial loss of gas supply	1
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1
Heating or hot water not working between 31 October and 1 May	1
Heating or hot water not working between 1 May and 31 October	3
Blocked/leaking foul drain, soil stack or toilet	1
Toilet not flushing (if there is only one toilet in the property)	1
Blocked sink, bath or basin	3
Tap cannot be turned	3
Leak from a water pipe, tank or cistern	1
Leaking roof	7
Insecure external window, door or lock	1
Loose or detached banister or hand rail	3
Rotten timber flooring or stair tread	3
Door entry phone not working	7
Mechanical extractor fan not working	7

This list has been prepared for guidance and should not be considered exhaustive.

PART 6 DISCRETIONARY COMPENSATION

9.1 Repairs

We know how important it is to tenant's that we help them to maintain their home and fix their repairs as quickly as possible. When considering paying discretionary compensation we will/consider:

- Each claim for compensation is on an individual basis, taking into account all relevant known circumstances and supporting evidence or documentation supplied. Where evidence is requested and is not supplied, claims may not be considered.
- Offset against arrears, service charges or other debts owed to the Council unless reimbursement is being made for loss and damage or costs reasonably incurred, where it will take the form of a financial payment to allow for the financial disadvantage of the individual to be corrected.

Appropriate action

That the following has been taken:

- Practical action to find a remedy to a complaint.
- Consideration of any practical action suggested by the complainant.
- A property inspection.
- Council arrears check – any compensation will be off set against outstanding council arrears and the remainder paid to the tenant.

Financial Compensation

Financial compensation may be appropriate for:

Loss of amenities or rooms

If we are unable to complete a responsive repair within the set response times, in operation at the time, the tenant may have to cope without the use of amenities and/or rooms. In such cases, compensation may be awarded and will be calculated on the amount of rooms which are unable to be used and the amount of rent payable.

For non-pecuniary losses, officers should follow the “*Gesture of Goodwill*” process set out within the document.

Service Failure

Tenants are encouraged to feedback incidents where they are unhappy with the service that they have received. In such cases offering a small amount of compensation may be appropriate to recognise any inconvenience caused.

Temporary heating

In some circumstances it may not be possible to carry out a repair to heating systems during the first visit due to the availability of spare parts, or the system is beyond economical repair. In such circumstances we will provide tenants with temporary heaters. Tenants will be compensated for the daily use of each heater provided, at the rate set out within the table below. The rate will be reviewed annually in line with the average UK rate as 1st January each year.

Based on 6 hours per day at maximum output using the **Average** rate of **17.90p/kWh** (January 2021 tariff) for a unit of electricity. Heaters with a thermostat will automatically turn off when required room temperature is reached.

Power Rating	Per Hour	Per Day	Per Week
2000W (2kW)	36.00 2000W	£2.16 12kWh	£15.12 84kWh

Missed Appointments

Tenants can claim compensation for financial loss if a pre-arranged appointment that has been confirmed in writing is broken by a member of staff or one of our contractors. On such occasions we will pay compensation, except in exceptional circumstances which are beyond the control of the Council, its officers, or appointed contractors.

Tenants must be able to provide evidence of the financial loss suffered.

For non-pecuniary losses, officers should follow the “*Gesture of Goodwill*” process set out within the document.

Tenants will not be eligible for compensation if the tenant was advised that the appointment would not be kept 24hours before the appointment and an alternative appointment was arranged within 7 working days.

Damage to property

Tenants can claim compensation for accidental damage to their property caused by our contractors or staff.

We may, at our discretion, issue compensation to tenants as a result of decorations, furniture or personal items being damaged due to neglect by a member of staff or a contractor acting on our behalf, where it can be reasonably proven. Where possible, compensation will be issued in the form of a voucher, taking into account the value of the goods at the time of the loss and/or damage rather than the full replacement value.

In the case of damp and mould an independent assessment will be made of the property to assess if Stroud District Council is responsible for excessive damp and mould in a property. If a tenant's possessions have been damaged by damp and mould, the tenant should claim on their contents insurance. In extreme cases, if the tenant does not have contents insurance and Stroud District Council has been found negligent in the up-keep of the property, we will pay compensation to replace furniture on a like for like basis. **We will not provide replacement on a new for old basis.**

Distress, Time and Trouble

We may decide that through our actions or inaction, we have caused a tenant to experience stress, upset or inconvenience and as such may look to compensate them for this. We do not compensate for loss of earnings, but may consider for example that if a customer had to take time off work, that this was an inconvenience.

If a good will gesture is offered managers should aim to tailor it to the individual and base each offer on the particular circumstances of the case.

Gesture of Goodwill

We reserve the right to choose, sometimes even without acceptance of fault, to offer a gesture of goodwill. This can take the form of a physical, token or financial gesture. Such gestures of goodwill will be considered on a case by case basis, but should not normally constitute more than a value of £25.

Tenant's own actions

We will not pay compensation if any of the following applies:

- A tenant has failed to inform the service about works required on the property.
- Where tenant lifestyle has resulted in the property getting into disrepair.
- The tenant has damaged the property.
- Loss that is due to negligence by the tenant, that is deemed to be the fault of a third party, or is beyond our control.
- The tenant has delayed works being done to the property either by restricting access or postponing appointments.
- The tenant has not been heating their home adequately.
- The tenant has been drying clothes in the home near or on a radiator.
- The tenant's tumble dryer is not externally vented.
- The tenant has been using bottled gas or paraffin heaters.
- Insurance claims relating to financial loss, damage to third party property or personal injury, as a result of our negligence, which will be dealt with in accordance with the insurance procedures.
- The tenant could have afforded but has neglected to purchase contents insurance.
- The tenant has contributed to the damp and mould in their property in any way.
- Cases where there is tribunal or legal proceedings under way.
- Evidence is not provided where required to justify any claims for out of pocket expenses.

9.2 Neighbour Nuisance

We want our tenants to feel safe in their homes and therefore take an uncompromising stance towards anti-social behaviour. When considering paying discretionary compensation we will consider:

Appropriate Action

That the following action has been taken:

- Practical action to find a remedy to the complaint in accordance with our Anti-social behaviour policy.
- Consideration of any practical and reasonable action suggested by the complainant.
- Council arrears check – any compensation will be off-set against outstanding council debts and the remainder will be paid to the tenant.

Financial compensation

Financial compensation may be appropriate for:

Financial loss

In extreme circumstances, where our tenant has been driven from their home to stay with family and friends and we have delayed in taking action against the neighbour nuisance, they are entitled to claim any additional living expenses incurred in escaping the nuisance on production of receipts.

Reasonable expenses will be paid after we have sought a view from the police that our tenant was 'at risk' in their home and will include:

- Furniture removal.
- A packing service for vulnerable tenants.
- Lifting and refitting of carpets and curtains and replacement if damaged in move.
- Disconnection and reconnection of electricity, gas, telephone and fitted appliances.
- One months postal re-direction
- A contribution to the monthly rent only where it is in excess of the current rent.

Distress

Tenants who are effected by anti-social behaviour are likely to have suffered some form of distress to a greater of lesser degree. If we have failed to follow our policies and procedures correctly and delayed in responding to neighbour nuisance it is appropriate to pay compensation in recognition of this. A discretionary, one-off payment should be made after taking the following into account:

- The length of time the nuisance persisted after the council was notified before we took effective action.
- The severity of the neighbour nuisance.
- How often the anti-social behaviour happened.
- The number of people affected in the property.
- The vulnerability of the complainant or anybody else affected.
- The extent of our maladministration.

Compensation can be paid up to £2000 per year depending on the severity of the case.

Time and Trouble

We expect our tenants to co-operate with us in taking effective action against the perpetrator. This may involve filling out diaries and monitoring their neighbour's behaviour, this would not constitute financial compensation. However, some tenants may have to go to extensive time and trouble to persuade us to recognise their complaint and take action. In this instance it is appropriate to pay compensation in recognition of our inaction. A guide to a discretionary payment is:

- 10% of their monthly rent for the duration of the inaction.

Tenants own actions

Financial compensation would not be due if the complainant had done any of the following:

- Failed to provide us with any information requested, including monitoring diaries.
- Caused an unreasonable delay in any part of the process.
- Been abusive or threatening to our staff.
- Had not tried to resolve the issue themselves.

9.3 Housing Management

We want our tenants to be able to be happy in their homes for as long as possible, sometimes this might mean they require an adaptation to their property or even need to transfer to a more suitable property for their needs. When considering paying discretionary compensation we will consider:

That the following action has been taken:

- Practical action to find a remedy to the complaint has been taken in accordance with Tenant Services' policies.
- Consideration of any practical action suggested by the complainant.

Financial compensation

Financial compensation may be appropriate for:

Non-payment of grant

If our tenant has been denied a decoration grant or moving home grant that they were entitled to, it would be appropriate to pay the equivalent amount in compensation.

Financial loss

If our tenant has incurred additional living expenses as a result of an adaption not being installed, it would be appropriate to reimburse any additional expenses on production of receipts.

Distress

Tenants who have been wrongly denied an adaptation or a transfer are likely to have suffered some form of distress to a greater or lesser degree. If we have not correctly followed our policies, it is right to pay compensation in recognition of this. A one off discretionary payment should be made after taking the following into account:

- The tenant has been limited or unable to use the part of their property that required adapting.
- The tenant's physical health has been affected.
- The length of time that the adaption should have been made.
- The number of people affected by the delay in installing the adaptation.
- The tenant's safety has been put at risk.

Payments up to £1000 a year should be considered by manager's depending on the severity of the case.

Time and trouble

Our tenant may have had to go to extensive time and trouble to persuade us to revise our decision or recognise their complaint. In this instance it is appropriate to pay compensation in recognition of our inaction. If we have failed to follow our processes within the permitted timescales, tenants would be entitled to a payment equivalent to:

- 10% of their monthly rent for the duration of inaction.

Tenant's own actions

Financial compensation would not be if the complainant had done any of the following:

- Failed to provide us with any information requested.
- Caused an unreasonable delay in any part of the process.
- Been abusive or threatening to our staff.
- Rejected a transfer offer which we consider reasonable.

Information

10.3 We will, in all reasonable circumstances, make information available in a variety of information formats, including:

- Large print.
- Audio tape.

PART 7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

11.1 We will monitor our performance in acting and learning from complaints and amounts payable in compensation will feed into this.

Performance Monitoring

11.2 To help achieve our aims of ensuring continuous improvement in the services we provide and to ensure that we meet all statutory obligations, we will put in place systems and processes which allow us to monitor and evaluate performance.

11.3 We will continually review our services by measurement against the performance of other social housing providers and research of their processes and procedures, with the aim of achieving continuous improvement and to ensure compliance with best practice.

PART 8 REVIEW OF THE COMPENSATION POLICY

12.1 This policy will be reviewed by the Council every three years unless there is a change in legislation or regulation. Statutory amounts that are subject to annual uplift will be automatically added without the need for the entire policy to be reviewed.

12.2 Where there has been a change in legislation which has an impact on the policy, the policy will be reviewed within 3 months of the legislation or regulation coming into effect.

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA
ITEM NO

HOUSING COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2021

7

Report Title	VISITOR ROOM POLICY (INDEPENDENT LIVING)			
Purpose of Report	To inform Committee of a new Policy for Visitors Rooms within Independent Living sites to establish the accepted uses of this facility with a set daily charge.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to adopt; a) The Visitors Room Policy for Independent Living, and b) A charge for using the Visitor Room in Independent Living schemes of £20 for the first night plus £10 for each additional night.			
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation has taken place with all tenants in Independent Living sites.			
Report Author	Lynne Mansell Service Delivery Manager (Independent Living) Email: lynne.mansell@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	To continue without a policy with no set expectations may lead to misuse, non-compliance of facilities and inconsistent management.			
Appendices	Appendix A - Consultation Letter to Tenants Appendix B – Tenant Feedback Appendix C - Visitor Room Policy Appendix D - Equality Analysis Form			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	No

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 For many years, all Independent Living schemes (formerly Sheltered Housing) have had guest rooms as part of the communal facilities for friends and families of tenants living at the schemes. The rooms have always been free of charge for the first 7 nights. On the 8th night and thereafter a charge of £7.74 per night was applied.
- 1.2 The guest rooms were originally purposed for families and carers of tenants, to be close at hand in the case of illness. Much of the tenanted accommodation is small and designed for one person. Over time, guest rooms have been used more generically resulting in the service providing a free room for up to 7 nights whilst visiting friends/family and the area.
- 1.3 The guest room facility has never had a policy to adhere to which has instigated a lack of clarity for both user and officer with regard to occupancy, minimum age, booking procedure, provisions/toiletries available through to laundering and cleaning the rooms.

2. MAIN POINTS

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- 2.1 The introduction of a Visitor Room policy will clarify accepted use of the facility whilst outlining the main aims and objectives. This will alleviate potential misunderstanding around occupancy, minimum age, booking procedures, conditions of use and available facilities (i.e. linen/toiletries etc.)
- 2.2 A Visitor Room policy will provide set expectations for both staff and visitors to adhere to. The policy will be reviewed and updated annually or sooner if required, ensuring compliance of conditions are fully upheld.
- 2.3 It is relevant that the usage of the existing guest rooms is low however, the policy will state the charge for use which will generate an income back into the service. This will allow a fund for wear and tear replacement of furniture, linen etc., ensuring the visitors room is kept to a good, quality standard. The existing rooms within Independent Living schemes which are not being used as Visitor Rooms will be multi-purpose for use such as health & wellbeing classes, confidential meetings and 1-2-1's, breakout rooms for training purposes.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 It is essential to have a Visitor Room policy in place to establish the accepted uses of all facilities providing a consistent open and transparent approach of use for all Visitors. There are clear conditions for use which will mitigate confusion.
- 3.2 The Visitor Room has the potential to become a valuable resource. With the introduction of a charge per night, income will be regenerated back into the scheme.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications arising from this report. A charge for using the guest rooms in Independent Living Schemes is expected to only cover the cost of providing the accommodation and will not impact the overall position of the HRA.

Lucy Clothier, Accountancy Manager
Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendation made in this report.

One Legal
Tel: 01684 272691 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk

4.3 Equality Implications

An EqIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and no equality implications arose.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.



EMAIL: lynne.mansell@stroud.gov.uk
DIRECT DIAL: 01453 766321
OUR REF: LM/VISRM/IL

Dear Resident

Re: Guest Room

I am writing to you with regard to the current guest room within the scheme where you live. You may be aware that, on some of our schemes there are no facilities in the guest room such as a toilet and/or access to water, therefore I am looking at repurposing the room for different use and activities such as clinics, meeting rooms, personal wellness space and many other potential opportunities to enable this within your scheme.

This may include working with Health and Wellbeing services who carry out physiotherapy, rehabilitation, exercise classes as well as other clinics such as diabetic clinics, flu jab clinics and chiropody clinics. The room may also lend itself to being a space for 1-2-1 visits and/or consultations which would involve a booking system.

There will still be a Guest Room facility for you to book in the nearest scheme to your home which will be renamed Visitors Room with full toilet and washing facilities as well as bedding and towels provided. There would also be a kettle provided for guest use. These rooms will be of good standard with improvements carried out where required. A daily fee will be applicable and all requests and payments will operate on a booking system through the Site Officer.

The areas which will accommodate Visitor Rooms are as follows:

- Walter Preston Court - Cashes Green
- Dryleaze house - Wotton-Under-Edge
- St Nicholas Court - Hardwicke
- Ashcroft House - Stroud
- Hazelwood and Burdett House - Stonehouse
- Grange View - Uplands
- Concorde - Nailsworth
- Ashwell House - Painswick
- The Corriett - Cam
- Hamfallow Court – Sharpness
- Archway Gardens

If you have any thoughts and/or views around the contents of this letter, I would be pleased to hear from you by Monday 1 March 2021. You can contact me on 01453 827394 or email me at lynne.mansell@stroud.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Lynne Mansell

Service Delivery Manager (Independent Living)

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Feedback from Guest Room use changes

24.2.21 Mr XXX, 27 Concorde – I think it is a brilliant idea

24.2.21 Mrs XXX 25 Walter Preston Court – great idea long time coming

24.2.21 Mrs XXX Burdett House, happy to pay the daily fee, great idea

24.2.21 Dear Lynne,

From the letter I received this morning it appears that Jenner Court will have no room to accommodate guests. This is disappointing. There is a lot of wasted space here. The large store room at the top of the right hand stairs, and the unnecessarily large office space. It would be great to have an ensuite bedsit room here to welcome relatives and friends to stay in. I'm embarrassed to show the present accommodation to anyone, it so shabby and awkward, not to mention the terrible stairs!

There are many brilliant ideas buzzing around about the communal lounge. It would be good to invite people from outside Jenner Court to come in and use the space with the residents. The structure of the kitchen and lounge don't lend themselves to great changes due to the different levels, but easier access to the kitchen would be good.

I look forward to the rejuvenation of Jenner Court.

Thanks for your time.

Yours sincerely

Flat 6

24.2.21 XXXX 25 Ashwell House, pleased it will be available, querying cost (tba)

24.2.21 As much as I look forward to using the new facilities at Springfields Court I am sorry that we have lost the guest room.

I am hoping that when things go back to normal that a friend from Zimbabwe will come to stay. I hope that she could be put up at The Corriett in Cam. She will not have a car so I hope it's not too far away from here.

I look forward to your reply.

Regards

xxxxxxxxxx

31 Springfields Court

26.2.21 23 St Nix. Is very pleased that guest room will not be being repurposed as daughter uses regularly in normal times. She has asked if it can be announced somehow when it does reopen such as a notice on the board etc so she is aware.

26.2.21 I am in receipt of your letter regarding the proposed closure of the guest room.

I appreciate that a guest room is not a USP for most of the residents here and is not greatly used, but a couple of points

It is sad when any facility is lost. I would like to see all assets kept for the residents and future residents

I understand the guest room is a "luxury" but surely it could be adapted to fill all the criteria and still be maintained for guests?

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Appendix

Appendix B

The loss of the facility is only worthwhile if the "carrot" of proposals actually happens.

We are continually being asked how we would like to see our community lounge used. It would be a shame to create another underused space.

The guestroom may have been used more if access had been easier and more accessible

The use of the guest rooms at other facilities would be problematic if you or your guest do not drive. Getting from A to B would be a problem

I doubt if my thoughts will have any bearing on the outcome, but I think it important to air my views and for Vizard Close to be acknowledged as our home

Thank you for your letter regarding the above facility.

We are new residents at Concord in Nailsworth.

We were delighted to hear that there will still be a Visitors Room at this site.

We have a very large family and we will look forward to booking the Guest Room on many occasions so that our family can visit once the Covid Restrictions have eased.

Will we be able to book the Visitors room from the 12th April as the recent announcement about overnight stays starts then.

Thank you for assistance.



Visitor Room Policy

June 2021

Independent Living - Tenant
Services

Next document review by: *June 2022*

Reviewed by: *Lynne Mansell; Service Delivery Manager (Independent Living)*

Approved by: *tbc*

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Appendix

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1.0 **Introduction**

1.1 Independent Living schemes provide Visitors Room facilities in 11 schemes across the district (Appendix A), historically these have been used intermittently and often not for the purpose they were intended for.

1.2 It is essential, therefore, to have a policy in place to establish the accepted uses of this facility and enable the effective management of this facility.

2.0 **Aims and Objectives**

2.1 The main aims and objectives of the visitor room policy are as follows:

- To specify the persons permitted to book the visitors rooms and the circumstances under which they may be used.
- To clarify the order of priority for visitor room bookings.
- To outline the conditions to which visitors using this facility must adhere.
- To ensure fairness and equal opportunity to those seeking to use this facility

3.0 **Permitted categories for use of visitor rooms**

3.1 The following are permitted categories of use of the visitor room facility in an Independent Living scheme:

- Relatives and friends of a tenant in an Independent Living scheme which is geographically closest.
- Short term decant solution - emergency/crisis of a tenant in the wider community i.e. evacuation due to fire/flood.

3.2 Stroud District Council (SDC) may use the visitor room for a short term let during remodeling works, the visitor room would then be considered to be temporarily unavailable for any other purpose.

3.3 SDC reserves the right to refuse any booking where it has reasonable cause for concern about the booking, for example previous history of misuse or damage to the visitor room.

4.0 **Conditions of use of visitor room**

4.1 Only persons listed at Section 3 will be permitted to book an SDC visitor room (unless an alternative is agreed by Service Delivery Manager in exceptional circumstances for example temporary accommodation is required by tenancy Management in case of flood/fire). Bookings will be cancelled or refused where this is not the case.

4.2 Occupancy of the visitor room must not exceed the number of bed spaces.

4.3 Persons under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult when staying in a visitor room (subject to 4.2).

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Appendix

- 4.4 Visitors will be required to familiarise themselves with the fire procedures in the scheme, which will be made available to them on arrival and prominently displayed in the room.
- 4.5 Smoking, vaping/e-cigarettes and use of any non-prescribed drugs will not be permitted in the visitor room.
- 4.6 Pets will not be permitted in the visitor room, except in the case of assistance dogs for disabled persons. However, if a guest is visiting a tenant of the scheme, their pet would be permitted to stay in that tenant's property, subject to SDC Pet Policy.
- 4.7 Visitors will be notified that they will be held responsible for any damage caused during their stay, and that they will be required to pay for any damage or breakages. Should such circumstances arise and the visitor refuses to do so, appropriate action may be taken to recover costs arising from such damage or negligence. SDC would also reserve the right to refuse any future bookings from the visitor.
- 4.8 Visitor rooms should not be over occupied with the exception of babies'/toddlers travel cots.
- 4.9 There is no designated Car Parking for visitors using visitor rooms.
- 5.0 **Booking Arrangements**
- 5.1 A Minimum of 24 hours' notice is normally required for booking a visitor room, in order to ensure the room can be made ready for use.
- 5.2 Advance bookings can be made up to one month in advance.
- 5.3 The maximum length of stay would normally be seven nights. Any requests for longer bookings would be considered locally, at the discretion of the Service Delivery Manager, taking into account of any other demand.
- 5.4 Payment should be made online on receipt of an invoice at £20 for the first night plus £10 for each additional night. In case of emergency/difficulty cash may be accepted at time of booking.
- 5.5 Keys must normally be collected from staff during office hours – week days only, at which point visitor room regulations will be explained to the visitor.
- 5.6 Visitor rooms must be vacated by 11.00am at the end of the agreed stay. SDC reserves the right to charge for an extra night should the visitor fail to vacate the room by this time.
- 6.0 **Visitor Facilities**
- 6.1 Visitor rooms will be fully cleaned for every new booking. Rooms will not be cleaned during the visitor's stay.

- 6.2 Visitor rooms will be equipped with fresh bed linen and towels at the start of any stay.
- 6.3 Some visitor rooms have en-suite facilities; visitors will be advised at the time of booking if this is not the case.
- 6.4 All visitor room will have a kettle/hot water facility, however there will be no fresh provisions available such as tea/coffee/milk.
- 6.5 Visitor rooms do not have cooking facilities and visitors are responsible for making their own catering arrangements.
- 6.6 Other communal facilities can be available to visitors; it must be noted that they will not have sole use of these facilities and priority will be given to tenants for example the communal kitchen and lounge area.
- 7.0 **Charging for use of visitor room**
- 7.1 All bookings will be charged on a per night, single or double occupancy basis. The double occupancy will be the equivalent of the single charge plus 50%. This charging structure recognises the fact that there is no real difference in the cost of managing the visitor room for one or two people, but there are increased servicing costs for two visitors.
- 7.2 A seven-night stay will be charged at the price for six nights.
- 7.3 A lesser charge will apply where visitors do not have sole use of bathroom facilities.
- 7.4 Charges will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 8.0 **Application of the policy**
- 8.1 The delivery of the policy objectives will be achieved via an accompanying procedure which sets out the process to be followed by staff when taking visitor room bookings.
- 8.2 An information note on visitor rooms will also be produced, clarifying the conditions of use.
- 9.0 **Equal Opportunities**
- 9.1 SDC aims to promote equality and diversity and operate equal opportunities policies which inform all aspects of its business. It will ensure that it adheres to the Equality Act 2010 by continuing to being committed to equal and fair treatment for all and opposed to any form of unlawful discrimination.

Agenda Item 7

Appendix

- 9.2 As such, in considering bookings for visitor rooms, no one will be treated differently or less favourably than others because of any of the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010:
- SDC will make reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities where necessary and possible to do so.
- 9.3 Upon request, SDC will make information on visitor rooms available in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, pictorial representations and community languages if required.
- 10.0 **Policy Review**
- 10.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and more frequently should circumstances require. The review will assess the effectiveness' of the policy and accompanying procedure (Appendix B), and identify any changes which may be required.
- 10.2 As part of this policy review, consultation will take place with both staff and tenants to ensure account is taken of operational issues and opinions of service users.

Appendix A

List of Independent Living Schemes with Visitor Rooms.

- Archway Gardens – Paganhill
- Ashwell House – Painswick
- Concorde – Nailsworth
- Dryleaze house – Wotton-Under-Edge
- Grange View – Uplands (Stroud)
- Hamfallow Court - Berkeley
- Hazelwood – Stonehouse
- St Nicholas Court – Hardwicke
- The Corriett – Cam
- Walter Preston Court – Cashes Green

Agenda Item 7

Appendix

Appendix B

Procedure for Visitor Room Bookings.

The Booking System will operate through a central telephone number with an answerphone service available. The contact details will be displayed on the Independent Living Scheme Information Point located by the main entrance on every scheme.

On contact, arrangements will be made for the keys to be handed to the Visitor or tenant of visitor. On arrival the visitor will be informed of the booking conditions, fill in the Visitor Booking form and pay the fees. The tenant may complete the forms if visitor arriving out of hours.

Information required;

- Name, address and contact details of person(s) staying
- Name and address of tenant being visited

The room will be prepared and cleaned for each new booking, provision of towels and fresh bed linen will be in place.

Once the room has been vacated, the keys must be left in the post box outside the visitor room. Site Officer will launder bed linen and towels in preparation for next booking. A thorough clean will also take place.

EQUALITY ANALYSIS FORM

By completing this form you will provide evidence of how your service is helping to meet Stroud District Council’s General Equality duty:

The Equality Act 2010 states that:

*A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have **due regard** to the need to –*

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are listed in Question 9

Stroud District Equality data can be found at: <https://inform.gloucestershire.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity/>

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Name(s): Lynne Mansell	Telephone: 01453 827394
Service Delivery Manager (Independent Living)	E-Mail: lynne.mansell@stroud.gov.uk
Service: Tenant Services	Date of Assessment: 05/05/2021

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Visitor Room Policy

Is this new or an existing one? **New**

3. Briefly describe its aims and objectives

- The main aims and objectives of the visitor room policy is to specify the persons permitted to book and use the visitor’s rooms and the circumstances under which they may be used. The policy will also clarify the order of priority for booking and outline conditions to which the visitors must adhere to during their stay.
- The policy will ensure fairness and equal opportunity to those seeking to use the facility.

4. Are there external considerations? (Legislation / government directive, etc)

Regulatory Reform (fire safety) Order 2005

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Appendix

Appendix D

5. Who is intended to benefit from it and in what way?

Tenants families and friends will benefit from using the room, enabling them spend time with tenants without incurring excessive travel and expense of hotels. B & B's etc.,

6. What outcomes are expected?

Improved tenant satisfaction of service delivery from Independent Living service, tackling social isolation/loneliness of tenant by providing a fairly priced, good clean accommodation for friends and family

7. What evidence has been used for this assessment? (e.g. Research, previous consultations, Inform (MAIDEN); Google assessments carried out by other Authorities)

8. Has any consultation been carried out?

Yes

Details of consultation – Papers shared with the following for feedback:

Letters to tenants introducing charge for facility

Chair and Vice Chair of Housing Committee

If NO please outline any planned activities

9. Could a particular group be affected differently in either a negative or positive way?

(Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure)

Protected Group	Type of impact, reason and any evidence (from Q7 & 8)
Age	Yes – Positive – enables family and friends to visit elderly relatives with reduced capacity
Disability	Yes – Positive – enables family and friends to visit less mobile tenants
Gender Re-assignment	No defined affect

Pregnancy & Maternity	No defined effect
Race	No defined affect
Religion – Belief	No defined affect
Sex	No defined affect
Sexual Orientation	No defined affect
Marriage & Civil Partnerships (part (a) of duty only)	No defined affect
Rural considerations: le Access to services; transport; education; employment; broadband;	Most Independent Living schemes are in rural locations – enabling friends and family to hire visitor room reduces excessive travel to and from the schemes. Where visitors have to travel to the nearest scheme – this is less than 3 miles.

10. If you have identified a negative impact in question 9, what actions have you undertaken or do you plan to undertake to lessen or negate this impact?


Please transfer any actions to your Service Action plan on Excelsis.

Action(s):	Lead officer	Resource	Timescale

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function * (delete those which do not apply) and where a negative impact has been identified, actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact.

We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment

Completed by: Lynne Mansell	Date: 05/05/2021
Role: Service Delivery Manager (Independent Living)	
Countersigned by Head of Service: 	Date: 28 May 2021
Kevin Topping, Head of Housing Services	

Date for Review: Please forward an electronic copy to eka.nowakowska@stroud.gov.uk

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STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA
ITEM NO

HOUSING COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2021

8

Report Title	CLEANER ESTATES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN			
Purpose of Report	For Housing Committee to agree that the action plan is fit for purpose in line with the Cleaner Estates Strategy.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to agree to adopt the Cleaner Estates Strategy Action Plan.			
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation has taken place with the Tenancy Management Team, involved tenants, Housing Committee Tenant Rep, Community Group Middle of the Hill (MoTH) and Community Services colleagues.			
Report Author	Kevin Topping, Head of Housing Services Email: kevin.topping@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	Committee may review and add or retract any actions following debate.			
Background Papers	Cleaner Estates Strategy 2021-2024			
Appendices	Appendix A - Cleaner Estates Strategy 2021-2024 Action Plan			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	No	No	Yes

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Tenant Services Cleaner Estate Strategy is a new piece of work and reflects a commitment to improve the quality and cleanliness of where people live and somewhere they can be proud of. The strategy was presented to Housing Committee and adopted in April 2021 with a resolution to present a comprehensive action plan that met the needs of the strategy and our communities.
- 1.2 The action plan aims to address concerns raised by members and tenants regarding the condition of estates, fly tipping and community engagement.
- 1.3 Stroud District Council has a critical leadership role supporting and encouraging strong communities for the best possible quality of life, so that all can live well together. We are committed to developing a sustainable, proactive and respected relationship with our communities. This will be reflected in how our services are organised and delivered and the two-way communication which works to meet the needs of all our communities and individuals who need our support.
- 1.4 The Regulator for Social Housing requires landlords as part of the Neighbourhood and Community Standard (One of four regulatory consumer standards for social housing) to ensure their neighbourhood's and communal spaces are kept clean and safe. In addition, landlords should co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties.

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2.0 KEY PRINCIPLES

2.1 The action plan has been broken down into four key elements as follows:

2.2 **Communities**

How we as an organisation support and interact with our communities and work together for mutual benefit.

2.3 **Consultation**

Insight from tenants, leaseholders, ward members, town and parish councils and internal and external partners.

2.4 **Satisfaction**

Activities and governance of standards and conditions on our estates and in our communities linking with the regulator of Social Housing and the Charter for social housing tenants as part of the government white paper.

2.5 **Innovation**

Activities that are new, which may benefit our communities by doing things a little differently to what we have done previously and again increasing satisfaction levels with the Council.

2.6 A number of areas naturally cross over into other principles but the key piece of work is to capture the detail of the action plan.

3.0 ACCOUNTABILITY

3.1 This action plan sets out the expectations, aspirations and methodology we utilise in the delivery of services by putting our communities at the heart of what we do. The ability to transition from a Tenant Services only approach to a 'one Council' approach working together with our communities is a journey and one which we have successfully begun.

3.2 The Housing White Paper includes the Charter for Social Housing Residents outlining seven key commitments that residents should expect from their landlords and this underpins all the work we deliver; the charter includes:

- 1. To be safe in your home.** Government will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
- 2. To know how your landlord is performing,** including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
- 3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with access to a strong Ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
- 4. To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer Regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- 5. To have your voice heard by your landlord,** for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Governance board (Housing Committee). The Government will provide help, if you want it to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
- 6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in,** with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
- 7. To be supported to take your first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

4.0 OUTCOMES

- Excellent customer service including satisfaction.
- Sustainable and stronger greener communities.
- Partnership working.
- Stronger enforcement for persistent offenders of fly tipping including condition of gardens, communal areas and open spaces with other items such as bulky rubbish (sofas white goods etc).

5.0 SUMMARY

- 5.1 The approach outlined in the action plan require resourcing and financial support some of which is not exactly known until the process begins to roll out, where practical a view has been taken on expected costs but this may be subject to change depending on any unknown factors that occur during the duration of this action plan. Tenant feedback has included that it is pleasing to see cleaning standards being addressed and that of waste and fly-tipping specifically in and around communal blocks.
- 5.2 As always finance colleagues will be heavily involved in this process and any additional spend that has not been budgeted for will require committee sign off.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

Any actions would need to be delivered within existing resources. Any bids for additional funding will need to be put forward to Housing Committee and Council as part of the budget setting process and considered against other priorities.

Lucy Clothier, Accountancy Manager
Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk

6.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant legal implications.

One Legal
Tel: 01684 272691 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk

6.3 Equality Implications

An EqIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

6.4 Environmental Implications

There may be a continued increase in fly tipping and a small number of cases of bad behaviour and non-compliance, in the short term as we align work streams and colleagues however, these will be directly addressed as outlined in the strategy.

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CLEANER ESTATES STRATEGY 2021-2024 ACTION PLAN

Communities

What (specific)	How (Attainable)	When (Timely)	Why (Relevant)	Investment	Outcomes (Measurable)	Owned by (Officer)	Review
<p>Regeneration projects including a number of work streams subject to specific consultation events that define the requirements for each project including (but not limited to) groundworks, tree-scaping and fencing</p>	<p>Ongoing programme of works</p>	<p>Ongoing 2021-2024</p>	<p>These projects form the basis of improvement works across the district and are delivered on a larger scale than other projects where small scale benefits are seen and intended. All works carried out within projects are subject to resident consultation that define objectives</p>	<p>£500K pa</p>	<p>Improved satisfaction of residents (reflected in performance information e.g. direct feedback from works carried out and STAR survey), reduced ongoing costs to the Council, reduced occasions of ASB and improved aesthetics of estates, improved relationships with stakeholders both internally and externally</p>	<p>Tara Skidmore (Investment Team) Michelle Elliott</p>	<p>Annually from June 2022</p>
<p>Establish tenant/resident green champions on estates encouraging engagement and ownership from communities</p>	<p>Links to the tenant Involvement and empowerment strategy, direct engagement with residents on our estates, estates supported by training and reporting structures - including regular formal reporting sessions at a local district level with a "you</p>	<p>Between June 2021 and September 2021</p>	<p>It has been clearly identified from consultation events held before the pandemic lockdown and the STAR survey of 2019 that there is a significant issue with tenant satisfaction on estates. This approach empowers residents to take the lead and begin</p>	<p>Officer time only and cost of events in local venues, possibly external trainers</p>	<p>Engagement directly with our communities and enabling a voice for all residents with a "you said we did" approach. A further sense of pride in the place where you live and ownership form the actual community</p>	<p>Christine Welsh</p>	<p>Annually from June 2022</p>

	said we did approach” the recent success of willing tenants to be involved in how we deliver services and are more accountable, reflecting the charter for social housing tenants in the housing white paper		to drive some of the changes that will improve estates and people’s lives					
Page 78	Targeted clean and tidy events including skip use	Planned events over 2 years on estates advertised as part of the pride in your neighbourhood events *	Scheduled throughout the year in consultation with residents (all tenures) and linked to regeneration projects	Quick wins to clear estate rubbish and affording the opportunity to get amongst communities to understand why refuse is such an issue on estates	£2,000	Improved satisfaction on estates and communities based on meaningful engagement. The number of events will depend on consultation demand and need but is expected to be four per year with updates to Housing Committee on progress bi-annually	Christine Welsh Community Services Officer NHW’s	With a week of each event to pick up any learning and next steps (subject to resourcing)
	Estate walkabouts	Structured estates visits with green champions, involved tenants and stakeholders on a 4- 12 week cycle (based on demand) supported by actions and outcomes. Walkabouts will be planned in advance for the coming year and circulated to relevant stakeholders	From July 2021	Enabling closer links to communities and tackling any issues that are of a concern to neighbourhoods	Officer resource	Improved satisfaction on estates and communities based on meaningful engagement (Measured through a new suite of performance indicators created by Pat Andrade utilising benchmarking with other providers)	Patricia Andrade supported by NMO's, NHW's, Community Services Officers	Bi-Annually to Housing Committee
	re-introduction of pride in your neighbourhood events with corporate colleagues	See targeted events above *	Linked to targeted events such as skip use and estate walkabout feedback	The opportunity to engage directly with communities to facilitate pride in where you live and sustainable community involvement. Delivered with cross	Officer time and small budget for events £2000 per event	Improved satisfaction on estates and communities based on meaningful engagement	Michelle Elliott	Within 4 weeks of each event to pick up any learning

			service/agency approach (i.e. communities from all areas including Housing, Communities, health and wellbeing and environmental health, Police, voluntary sector and support services				and next steps
Design and usability of Bin stores at communal blocks	Linked to regeneration projects and identified issues through consultation and estate inspections	2021 - 2023	A series of complaints have identified that bin stores at communal blocks are not effective and need to be re-considered, this also is supported by the regeneration projects where changes to bin storage in areas such as Paganhill and Bearlands have been extremely effective	TBC	Improved design and serviceability, Greater satisfaction with residents, less additional waste collections and instances of fly tipping at these locations, improved safety including that of fire risks.	Christine Welsh	Annually from June 2022
Introduction of the best garden competition	Plan for introduction in Spring of 2022 and roll out in August/September 2022	2022 then annually	There is an excellent opportunity to return to a well-liked and represented activity that improves neighbourhoods and the environment	£2000 plus contractor investment in line with social value	Greater social engagement on estates and in communities, sense of pride in neighbourhoods and health and wellbeing effects of gardening at any age both physical and mental	Christine Welsh	Annually to Housing Committee

Consultation

What (specific)	How (Attainable)	When (Timely)	Why (Relevant)	Investment	Outcomes (Measurable)	Owned by (Officer)	Review
Ward Member insight	Email survey and follow up with calls if required, ward walks and site meetings (subject to available resource)	From June 2021	To understand the issues raised to ward members from their constituents and link together with activities and support. Address and resolve issues where possible at an early stage	Officer time	Improved relationships between members and officers to deliver the right solution for communities Support for ward issue/case work anticipating and dealing with issues	Patricia Andrade	Annually Appendix 8
Town and Parish Council insight	Email survey and follow up with calls if required	From June 2021	To understand the issues raised to town and parish councils from their residents and link together with activities and support. Address and resolve issues where possible at an early stage	Officer time	Improved relationships between Town and Parish councils and officers to deliver the right solution for communities	Patricia Andrade	Annually
Tenant and leaseholder insight	Direct structured contact with tenants through reps, ambassadors and other informal tenant representation, face to face meetings supported by letters and emails. SMS has proven effective in the recent round of activity to enable tenants to engage. Regular ambassador meetings, Tenant representation at Housing Committee, neighbourhood events and ward walks etc	Starting Now to be completed by September 2021	To understand the needs and demands of our residents that will improve their communities	Officer time	Improved satisfaction levels when the right solution is delivered and maintained Reported to members through information sheets	Christine Welsh Michelle Elliott	Bi-Annually

Colleague insight	Continue to develop and build strong relationships with colleagues in Community Services Collaboration on joint health and wellbeing work, Inclusion of Housing services representation on community insight internal working group	From June 2021	A joined up approach and ethos is critical to understand and deliver the right solution to our communities	Officer time	Greater unity and understanding of different services both within the council and its external stakeholders	Michelle Elliott with Community Services (NHW)	Annually
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Satisfaction

What (specific)	How (Attainable)	When (Timely)	Why (Relevant)	Investment	Outcomes (Measurable)	Owned by (Officer)	Review
Define and agree cleaning service standards. These will include frequency and manner of cleaning (e.g. water based or dry mopping) and health checks to drive consistency and hold us as a landlord to account	Consultation with tenants and leaseholders in communal blocks	Initial consultation to be started in June 2021 with standards agreed by September 2021	This is an area where there are no defined standards for cleanliness and a source of ongoing complaints from residents of communal blocks	Officer time	Clarity on standards and expectations, ensures compliance with regulator Update reports to Housing Committee	Michelle Elliott Mike Towson	Annually Appendix Agenda Item 8

Resident communication and reinforcement of consistent messages	Notice boards in blocks, on estates, tenants bi annual newsletter, website, social media *	To commence following consultation with residents between June 2021 and September 2021 then rolled out across the district	Ensure that the message remains relevant and actions outlined are followed through, this will include performance information based on conditions and satisfaction levels	Officer time	Satisfaction that messages are clear, concise and easily understood, improvements are maintained and learning is applied from any feedback from residents. Monitored and managed and reported to tenants and members of housing committee	Christine Welsh Michelle Elliott	Bi-Annual Appendix Agenda Item 8
Performance indicators monitoring and reporting including equalities	Benchmark against similar organisations and national sources such as Housemark	September 2021 by way of a report to Housing Committee, performance scrutiny members and tenants residents annually by newsletter	A suite of performance indicators benchmarked against similar landlords shows our tenants, residents and members how well we are doing as a landlord and that we have robust measures in place to address gaps or failures in the services we provide	Officer time	Improved satisfaction levels, improved performance and ownership from the service to put things right. Performance reports to be provided to Housing Committee via the performance scrutiny members	Patricia Andrade	Annually
Condition of gardens	Linked to service standards, NMO's to have pictures of gardens that are satisfactory as a physical reference point to show tenants what is acceptable	June 2021 to be completed by September 2021 and continued to be rolled out	Satisfaction levels are low from residents and members and are re-enforced from consultation events and the STAR survey outlining how this is driving down the look of estates and communities	Officer time and small budget to support tenants who cannot manage themselves	Improved look of gardens, improved satisfaction from other residents and members that the matter is being dealt with, feeling of belonging to the community when your own property is of a good standard. Less likelihood of ASB linked to garden condition	Michelle Elliott	Annually to Housing Committee

Set up a governance board on cleaning standards?	Linked to resident involvement actions and new take up from new reps and ambassadors	By September 2021	Critical to keep tenants involved with oversight and challenge to ensure impartial client based focus	Officer time	Compliant with the regulator and improved satisfaction levels amongst residents with panel reports to update Housing Committee	Michelle Elliott Christine Welsh	Annually
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Innovation

What (specific)	How (Attainable)	When (Timely)	Why (Relevant)	Investment	Outcomes (Measurable)	Owned by (Officer)	Review
Investigate alternate provision for fly tipping removal	Benchmark against other social housing providers to ascertain their delivery models and if applicable implement at Stroud	Commence June and report back to Director of Communities on viability by October 2021	Current arrangement with Ubico is costly, time consuming in terms of collection availability of Ubico staff and satisfaction levels from tenants and leaseholders is low	Officer time	Improved satisfaction among residents if service improves, reduced cost to the HRA by direct management, fly tipping dealt with quicker and estates improved	Patricia Andrade	Quarterly
Investigate the use of CPN's	Consultation with Community Services and One legal	Commence June 2021 to be completed by September 2021	take action against offenders and publicise if appropriate	Officer time	Improved satisfaction when residents see action regarding higher level fly tipping and ASB	Michelle Elliott	Annually
Use of CCTV for persistent areas	Consultation with Community Services and One legal	Now to be completed by September 2021	Identify and take action against offenders	Officer time potentially £12K pa	Improved satisfaction when residents see action regarding higher level fly tipping and ASB	Michelle Elliott	Quarterly
Cleaning of communal bins	Check if possible locally with Site Officers and benchmark against other councils	To be investigated and completed by September 2021	Improve the condition and general environment	TBC - potentially an additional resource at STR3	Improved satisfaction and increased cleanliness reducing risk of contamination or infestation	Christine Welsh/Lynne Mansell	Quarterly

Offer garden waste collections (Ubico have reached capacity so alternate solutions need to be considered)	Benchmark against similar organisations	Mar-22	Assist with support to those more vulnerable tenants who cannot manage themselves	Provisionally £3000pa	Assists those most in need who can't manage themselves	Michelle Elliott	Bi-Annually
Bulky items (incl white goods)pilot programme to encourage engagement with the existing system or residents propose alternatives	Benchmark against other social housing providers to ascertain their delivery models and if applicable implement at Stroud	Dec-21	It is recognised that there has been an increase in bulky item waste on our estates and in our communities which is having a detrimental effect on residents and dissatisfaction with the Council	Small budget provision of £3000pa	Dealing directly with tenants to resolve issues quickly and understand why such situations occur then through a programme of learning, understanding and development we can remove this issue from our estates and communities working in collaboration with our partners internally and externally	Michelle Elliott	Bi-Annually
Bike storage/lockable facilities?	Linked to regeneration projects and identified issues through consultation and estate inspections	Mar-22	Supporting the health and wellbeing agenda making useable and accessible sites available for tenants, additionally those in communal blocks who have bikes have some comfort they are secure and are not causing a fire risk when left in communal areas	TBC - linked to regeneration projects	Opportunities for tenants to have healthier travel options supporting in a small way the councils drive to CN2030 by reducing vehicle travel	Christine Welsh/Community Services Officer/health & Wellbeing officer	Annually

Specific areas - Nouncells cross laundry rooms	Tenant/leaseholder consultation	Identify solutions by December 2021	Areas are no longer fit for purpose and have become a dumping ground for rubbish, ASB and potential fire risk	Officer time with budget costs identified following consultation and options	Increased satisfaction from residents and the creation of alternative use following consultation that removes the possibility of activities mentioned	Neighbourhood Management Officer, ASB Officer, NHW	Dec-21
Review and repurpose of the plans to manage conditions of communal blocks	Existing contract allows flexibility beyond the current painting programme	Plan now for implementation in May 2022	Condition of the interiors of communal blocks has been raised as an ongoing issue and source of complaints from tenants, leaseholders and members	£500K pa	Improved aesthetics in communal blocks, improved satisfaction from tenants, leaseholders and members, increased lettable for new tenants and reduced future costs in maintain areas	Planned Maintenance Team/Michelle Elliott	March 2023 ongoing

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STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA
ITEM NO

HOUSING COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2021

9

Report Title	SERVICE STANDARDS ACTION PLAN			
Purpose of Report	To provide Housing Committee with an action plan (following April 2021's Housing Committee) to improve Tenant Participation and empowerment.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to agree that the action plan is relevant, fit for purpose and implemented.			
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation has taken place with the Neighbourhood Ambassadors, Community group Middle of the Hill (MoTH) and Housing Contracts including Property Care.			
Report Author	Kevin Topping, Head of Housing Services Email: kevin.topping@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	N/A			
Background Papers	N/A			
Appendices	Appendix A – Service Standards Action Plan Appendix B - Tenant Led Service Standards			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	No	No	No

1.0 INTRODUCTION**1.1 Following the Housing Committee on 8 April 2021 the committee resolved to:**

- a) Adopt the updated Tenancy Service Standards, and
- b) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director in consultation with the Chair of Housing Committee to review the implementation of these service standards and provide an update and action plan to Committee in June 2021.

1.2 The Regulator of Social Housing requires Stroud District Council (SDC), as a social landlord to provide a detailed level of customer service standards that reflect the aspirations of SDC's tenants. This is in line with the Consumer standards and in particular the tenant involvement and empowerment standard.

1.3 Service Standards demonstrate that Tenant Services provide a clear and transparent service to SDC's tenants, leaseholders and residents. Those involved in the consultation of the standards presented to Housing Committee in April felt the standards were still good but wished to strengthen them by making a small number of additions.

1.4 The service standards action plan (APP A) provides further detail regarding how and why we will be delivering a number of activities including new avenues of engagement that benefits our tenants and leaseholders and the wider community.

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2.0 THE ROLE OF STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL – A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITIES

2.1 Stroud District Council has a critical leadership role supporting and encouraging strong communities for the best possible quality of life, so that all can live well together. We are committed to developing a sustainable, proactive and respected relationship with our communities. This will be reflected in how services are organised and then delivered and in two-way communication which works to meet the needs of all our communities and individuals who need our support.

2.2 The District Council's Tenant Services team aims to provide well-managed and relevant support for all our residents, focusing on those who need us most. Quality conversations and easy community access is at the heart of what we do, enabling our communities to engage with us in an efficient and effective way to access services but also promoting two way conversations that lead to improvements and contribute to priority setting.

3.0 THE IMPACT AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SOCIAL HOUSING WHITE PAPER

3.1 The Social Housing White Paper (2021) includes the Charter for Social Housing Residents outlining seven key commitments that residents should expect from their landlords including:

- i. **To be safe in your home.** Government will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
- ii. **To know how your landlord is performing,** including repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
- iii. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with access to a strong Ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
- iv. **To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer Regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- v. **To have your voice heard by your landlord,** for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Governance board (Housing Committee). The Government will provide help, if you want it to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
 - i. **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in,** with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
 - ii. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

3.2 These commitments will form the direction of travel of services we provide and underpin these with future Strategies and policies across the service. A number are updates of the current consumer standards from the Regulator that we are already compliant with.

4.0 ACTION PLAN

4.1 Our Commitment is to deliver the 14 actions contained within it, which are critically linked to full and effective engagement, actively listening to our residents and not imposing actions and activities upon them is the foundation upon which we will improve our services.

4.2 In line with the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing, the White Paper and meeting the expectations of our tenants the attached action plan has been shared with our Neighbourhood Ambassadors and Community Groups.

5.0 INVOLVED TENANTS

- 5.1 This action plan has been reviewed by our involved tenants. Stroud has had a long and successful relationship with involved tenants and their input into how we design and deliver services has proven invaluable. This positive relationship reflects our approach to involvement and meets the requirement of the regulator and many of our tenants.
- 5.2 Tenant involvement is however an ongoing relationship, involving support, encouragement and cultural change. In line with SDC commitment to tenant involvement and the Social Housing White Paper, refreshed tenant's involvement mechanism, which are fully representative of the tenancy profile, will be established over the coming months. Their work will include supporting and monitoring standards.

6.0 RISK

- 6.1 There is a concern over officers resourcing this action plan with available staff that has been outlined in several specific areas within the plan and as such Committee need to be aware of the pressures this places the service under when planning delivery. Joint working will partially support activity but there may be a requirement for additional budget to support elements of this plan.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 It is important that tenant led service standards and the implication for social housing providers from the Social Housing White paper will also be considered as part of a wider review of community access, including all residents of the district. Similarly, the Council's commitment to carbon reduction and energy efficiency (as reflected in its adoption of the Stroud District 2030 Strategy – Limiting, Adapting, Recovering and Responding in a Changing Climate) has implications across the district, including of course those who live in District Council managed properties. To this extent, service standards will regularly need to be reviewed and where necessary refreshed'.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial Implications

Any actions would need to be delivered within existing resources. Any bids for additional funding will need to be put forward to Housing Committee and Council as part of the budget setting process and considered against other priorities.

Lucy Clothier, Accountancy Manager

Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk

8.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant legal implications.

One Legal

Tel: 01684 272691

Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk

8.3 Equality Implications

An EqIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

8.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

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SERVICE STANDARDS ACTION PLAN

What (specific)	How (Attainable)	When (Timely)	Why (Relevant)	Investment	Outcomes (measurable)	Owned by (Officer)	Review
Consult on and update Tenant Empowerment Strategy	Working with Neighbourhood Ambassadors, Community groups and interested members to update the Strategy including benchmarking data regarding what works well and what does not. A number of meetings will be programmed based on demand	June 2021-October 2021	Linked to the housing white paper, tenants charter and the regulator of social housing embodies the approach of putting tenants at the forefront of having the opportunity of being involved and to influence decision making of policies and strategies.	Officer time	Greater involvement from tenants and transparency of the housing service leading to improved satisfaction levels.	Michelle Elliott	Mar-23
Implement Comprehensive Engagement Programme	Promote focus groups/ café conversations through social media - Planned programme includes: Two café conversations/ Older peoples event/Love where you live events/ Estate walkabouts.	June 2021-ongoing	Linked to the housing white paper, tenants charter and the regulator of social housing embodies the approach of putting tenants at the forefront of having the opportunity of being involved and to influence decision making of policies and strategies.	Officer time and event management costs of £1430	This will additionally feed into the tenant empowerment strategy and identify gaps and opportunities for engagement not just regarding Housing but also wider community issues. and health and wellbeing. We have already had two successful love where you live events at Brimley and Nouncells Cross and a walkabout	Michelle Elliott/ Christine Welsh/ Hannah Drew/ Emma Keating Clarke?	Verbal update to Housing Committee in December 2021 regarding progress.

					at Victory Road. The love where you live events have been promoted through social media		
Rollout Digital Equality Programme	Tablets purchase and set up with appropriate apps and a phased training schedule to volunteer tenants who do not have their own ICT equipment. This is in progress with 12 tablets having been procured and will shortly be rolled out	Nov-21	Greater inclusivity	Officer time/ equipment & data packages £6500 spent to date.	Increase tenant involvement by supporting digital enablement and access to information quickly and improving satisfaction.	Christine Welsh	Jun-22
Implement specialist Tenant Engagement Roles within the Neighbourhood Management Team	Discussion and outcomes following consultation with housing consultants regarding shape of the service and the role of specialist officers, this also fits in with the corporate fit for the future programme.	September 2021- November 2021	It is recognised that following redesigns of the Tenancy Management Service several years ago and the loss of dedicated resident involvement officers there were gaps in service delivery created which have not been fulfilled within existing officer roles.	Currently officer time, however, changes may have a cost which will need to be agreed with finance colleagues regarding viability.	Additional resource should drive up satisfaction levels and provide a transparent service regarding engagement, the regulator in particular will be looking at this.	Keith Gerrard/ Kev Topping/ Michelle Elliott	May-22

Benchmark Service Standards with Housemark/HQN.	Jul-21	July 2021-September 2021	Benchmarking provides clear evidence and transparency about how services are performing.	Officer time	Greater understanding of good practice throughout the housing sector, sharing learning and communicating this with tenants. A report to Housing Committee will outline activity.	Patricia Andrade	Annually
Produce Annual Report	Liaise with tenants, members and delivery through the Corporate Communications Team.	Oct-21	Annual reports reflect how the service is performing and poses what tenants would like to see in the future, is the information relevant to them and offers transparency of service delivery (good and bad).	Officer time	Tenants are more satisfied that the service is being transparent, recognising both good work and failures and what remedies are in place to improve.	Patricia Andrade	Annually
Produce easy to read ASB leaflet & update website	Generate information that is relevant to both victims and perpetrators of ASB.	Aug-21	Clear communication with our tenants that is easily understood including those who are most vulnerable or have learning difficulties and may be either victims or perpetrators.	Officer time/ cost of easy read interpretation service (£160)	Increase tenants understanding of processes including managing expectations, additionally this approach is supported by the police, support providers and the court service.	Charlie Mosse/ Michelle Elliott	Annually Appendix

Set up tenant scrutiny panels for repairs	Property Care Officer led supported by TPAS. The panel will set areas that it wishes to prioritise over the civic year and plan work accordingly	Dec-21	Transparent and independent checks of the service in line with the regulator of Social Housing and the housing white paper.	Officer time and Tpas support (£630 per day)	Greater transparency of services and accountability with feedback being shared to Housing Committee and tenants via regular social media updates included the annual report.	Adrian Erwood	Annually
Set up tenant scrutiny panels for complaints	Tenancy Operations Manager led supported by TPAS. The panel will have reports each quarter on complaints and may choose to focus on certain elements over the civic year and report their findings to Housing Committee	Dec-21	Transparent and independent checks of the service in line with the regulator of Social Housing, the Housing Ombudsman and the housing white paper.	Officer time and Tpas support (£630 per day)	Greater transparency of services and accountability with feedback being shared to Housing Committee and tenants via regular social media updates included the annual report.	Patricia Andrade	Annually

Reinstate tenant repairs inspectors	Property Care Officer led supported by TPAS. The inspectors will set areas that it wishes to prioritise over the civic year and plan work accordingly	Dec-21	Transparent and independent checks of the service in line with the regulator of Social Housing and the housing white paper.	Officer time and Tpas support (£630 per day).	Greater transparency of services and accountability with feedback being shared to Housing Committee and tenants via regular social media updates included the annual report.	TBC	Annually
Full review of all service standards	6 elements form the current service standards but these need to be refreshed and enhanced with a wider audience of tenants and increased standards such as cleaning of communal blocks.	Jun-22	Engagement with tenants is key to ensure the standards are what tenants want, expect and deserve. This also complies with the regulator of social housing and the housing white paper.	Officer time	Transparent and meaningful engagement leading to increased satisfaction and standards that we as the landlord are quite rightly kept to account by our tenants.	Michelle Elliott	2024
Implement mini STAR survey for satisfaction levels annually for the next 2 years with a standard STAR survey in year 3	Mini survey purely to consider satisfaction levels across key themes such as grounds maintenance, waste and fly tipping, repairs service, ASB and ability to get involved with your landlord.	Nov-21	Satisfaction levels were poor in some areas at the last STAR survey in 2019 and supported by consultation that took place in the same year regarding the HRA delivery Plan.	Officer time plus survey company costs (expected to be around £6000pa)	This is an opportunity to benchmark any improvement or further failures and tackle quickly, an annual mini survey with the same subject headers will support this.	Christine Welsh	Annual

Select and propose to full Council 2 x Tenants Voice Representatives	Selection event has taken place in May 2021 and we are in the process of meeting the applicants individually with an intention to nominate in June 2021	June 2021 - September 2021	Co-opt two representatives to Housing Committee to represent the wider spectrum of tenants for a 2 year tenure.	Officer time/ Mentor from TPAS (£630 per day)	Supporting the principles of the housing white paper for tenant involvement, Compliant with the councils constitution for tenant representation.	Christine Welsh	May-22
Induction & Training programme for full range of Tenant involvement roles	Identification of tenants wishing to be involved as part of the comprehensive engagement programme.	October 2021 and ongoing	Ensures tenants have a full understanding of their role and how it can positively affect all tenants.	Officer Time	Increased tenant involvement and improved satisfaction from residents.	Christine Welsh	Annually

Agenda Item 9
Appendix

Tenant Involvement
& Empowerment

Home

Tenancy

Neighbourhood
& Community

Value for Money

Customer Care Service Standard

We will treat all tenants and leaseholders politely, fairly and professionally because we value and respect you. Our customer care standard sets out what you can expect when we have contact with you.

When you telephone us we will:

- Be helpful and courteous and aim to resolve your query at first contact.
- Answer your call within 25 seconds with a greeting including the name of the Team you have called and the name of the person answering your call, if appropriate.
- Tell you either the name and contact details of the person you are being re-directed to or the name and contact details of the team you are being re-directed to, if your query can't be handled by the person who answered the call.
- Offer to take a message if the appropriate person is not available and pass the message on to that person.
- Only use voicemail as a last resort.
- Answer all messages within 1 working day. If the member of staff you want to speak to is not available, we will let you know.
- Provide you with the opportunity to speak to us in the language of your choice, by using our translation facility.
- Make available a Minicom system to assist your call should you have a hearing impairment.

When you contact us by letter or e-mail we will:

- Reply to you fully within 10 working days. If we cannot respond fully in that time we will tell you who is dealing with your enquiry and when you can expect a full response.
- Reply to you in a way that is easy to understand, in your preferred language and format.
- Keep a record of how you would like us to respond to you, either in person, by telephone or in writing.

When you contact us by text we will:

- Fully respond to your enquiry within 10 working days.

When we visit you in your home we will:

- Make and keep an appointment with you, giving you the name, job title and contact details of the person who will visit you.
- Let you know if the person who is due to visit you can't make the appointment and offer you another date.

- Carry proof of identity and be respectful to you and to your home.
- Leave a calling card should you not be at home, giving details of why we visited you and who you should contact to re-arrange the appointment.

When you visit one of our offices we will:

- Ensure that the reception area is welcoming and that you have a comfortable environment to wait in, with seating and appropriate facilities.
- If you have an appointment, we aim not to keep you any longer than a maximum of five minutes before being seen.
- If you arrive without an appointment and you can't be seen immediately we will advise you of this and offer you an appointment at a later date with a named Officer.
- Try and resolve complaints there and then.
- Make sure the office is accessible.
- Offer you the opportunity to discuss your issue in a private interview room.
- Provide induction loops, arrange sign language facilities, interpreters or translation facilities if you require them. These may not be immediately available, so we may have to make an appointment for you at a later date.
- Ensure that your issue is dealt with fairly and efficiently by a trained member of staff.

If you wish to compliment, comment or complain about us we will:

- Let you know how to do this and value your contact.
- Reply to you fully within 10 working days. If we cannot respond fully in that time we will tell you who is dealing with your enquiry and when you can expect a full response.
- Ensure that compliments are shared with the relevant Officers and teams.

If we have not delivered a service to the agreed standard we will:

- Put the matter right within the timescale laid down in the relevant Service Standard.
- Investigate your complaint promptly.
- Send you a written apology where we're at fault.
- Learn from our mistakes and offer to involve you in, or advise you of the changes we intend to make as a result of your complaint.
- Provide you with information about making a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if you are not happy with how we have handled your complaint.
- Give a summary of all complaints to the Tenant Services Resident Scrutiny Panel for information and comment.

To keep you informed about how well we're doing we will publish the following performance measure each year:

- % of complaints replied to within 10 working days.
- Average resident satisfaction out of 10 for how we handled the complaint.
- Number of complaints received.
- Number of compliments received.
- Details of changes we've introduced as a result of feedback.

Tenant Involvement
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Value for Money

Equality and Diversity Service Standard

Recognising and respecting the diverse needs of our tenants and leaseholders we will provide services to meet these needs

To achieve this, we will:

- **Monitor the diversity of tenants and leaseholders by:**
 - Keeping a record of the diverse make up of our tenants and leaseholders to help us to target and tailor our services to meet their needs.
- **Ensure our services are accessible to all tenants and leaseholders by:**
 - Making sure our Officers are accessible to you at a range of locations throughout the District and that our Offices are accessible.
 - Using language that is easily understood in your preferred choice of language in our letters and leaflets and providing written information in Braille, on CD or in large print as required.
- **Ensure our services treat all tenants and leaseholders fairly by:**
 - Making sure that we don't discriminate against anybody **in line with the protected characteristics contained within the equalities act 2010.**
 - Making sure our staff are aware of equality and diversity issues and work towards creating a workforce representative of the local population.
 - Monitoring our services, policies and procedures to see whether we are treating all tenants and leaseholders fairly, and adjust them if we find that they aren't.



Rent and other Income Collection Service Standard

We will provide an effective rent and service charge collection that maximises income. We will support tenants and leaseholders who have difficulty paying their rent and service charges

To achieve this, we will:

- **Provide you with information about your rent and service charges, by:**
 - Explaining how much rent and other service charges you have to pay. If you claim benefits, we will tell you how much rent you are likely to have to pay each week.
 - Writing all our rents and arrears letters in plain language (English or other languages). These letters will be approved by the Communications and Equalities Service Development Group before they are used.
 - Giving you four weeks' notice in writing of any change to your rent (other than Housing Benefit changes).
 - Giving you secure on-line access to your rent account.
 - Responding quickly to your notification of any change in circumstances you have (such as a bereavement) and advise you how this affects the amount of rent you will have to pay.
- **Provide you with ways of paying your rent and service charges which are convenient to you, by:**
 - Offering you the opportunity to pay your rent in one of the following ways:
 - Direct Debit
 - Standing Order
 - Post Office
 - by debit or credit card
 - via our website
 - by telephone
 - Offering advice to tenants to pay rent in ways that reduce our processing costs (for example by Direct Debit or via our website).
 - Where we have collected too much rent or service charge income from you, repaying you within 10 working days by your preferred method.

- **Taking a firm but fair approach to recovering rent and service charge arrears and other debts which are outstanding, by:**
 - Intervening at an early stage to prevent rent or service charge arrears from building up.
 - Helping you to claim housing benefit and council tax benefit and provide you with information about other benefits you may be entitled to.
 - Directing you to specialist agencies who provide benefits advice.
 - Directing you to money advice services that are provided by other agencies.
 - Striving to collect as much money owed to us as we possibly can and telling you how we performed.

To keep you informed about how well we're doing we will publish the following performance measures each year:

- % of rental income collected.
- Number of tenants who were evicted for Rent Arrears.
- Number of tenants supported with additional Welfare benefits advice and financial inclusion support.

Tenant Involvement
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Value for Money

Anti-Social Behaviour Service Standard

We take an uncompromising stance towards anti-social behaviour. By this we mean behaviour which might disturb or intimidate you or spoil your quality of life. It is anything which interferes with the peaceful enjoyment of your home and surrounding area. We will encourage people to report incidents they experience or witness, so working together with other agencies we can tackle problems experienced by individuals, families and communities.

To achieve this, we will:

- **Support you when you report an incident to us by:**
 - Taking your complaint seriously and thoroughly investigating it.
 - Treating all information you give us in confidence and in accordance with legal requirements.
 - Providing you with written confirmation of your report and give you a unique case reference number.
 - Giving you the name and contact details of the member of staff who will deal with your case.
- **Support you when we investigate your complaint, by:**
 - Responding within 24 hours of your complaint if it involves actual or threats of violence.
 - Interviewing you within 5 working days of your complaint, if your complaint doesn't involve violence or the threat of violence.
 - Putting your and your family's safety first. We will offer to meet you in an accessible, private and safe environment.
 - Giving you advice and guidance so you can make your own decisions.
 - Working with you to agree an action plan and monitor this on at least a monthly basis or more frequently in more serious cases.
 - Providing you with appropriate support, working with our partners and other agencies, including the Police.
 - Considering the full range of criminal and civil legal actions that may be taken against the individual(s) or group causing the problem.
 - Arranging for the installation of noise monitoring equipment in the case of complaints of noise nuisance.

- Providing observation sheets with guidance on recording the details of incidents. We will regularly review this information and agree on what action can be taken.
 - Arranging for any abusive obscene or threatening graffiti to be removed within 1 working day.
 - Offering you security improvements if your personal safety is at serious risk
 - Rehousing you if it is not possible for you to remain or return to your home
 - Identifying with you any other support needs you may have and discuss how these might be addressed.
 - Offering to transport and escort you to and from any court hearings if you are required to attend to give evidence.
 - Providing you with support while you are at Court by making sure you feel comfortable and protected, if you are either a victim or a witness.
 - Referring you to Victim Support, should you require it.
- **Treat you fairly if a complaint is made against you by:**
 - Speaking with you within 10 working days of the complaint being made*.
 - Informing you of the allegations being made against you and listening to your response*.
 - Giving you the opportunity, if appropriate, to rectify your behaviour and get support*.
 - Letting you know how we believe you have breached your tenancy or leasehold agreement.
 - Discussing with you options such as an Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, mediation or other options, before taking formal legal action*.
 - Providing you with written notice of any legal action we intend to take against you and the reasons for that action*.

****Except where there is violence or the threat of violence involved, when we will consider taking immediate legal action without notice. In this event you will have the opportunity to state your case in court.***

To keep you informed about how well we're doing we will publish the following performance measure each year:

- % of all higher level cases of anti-social behaviour resolved.
- Average satisfaction out of 10 with the way ASB complaints were dealt with.
- % of tenants who made a complaint about anti-social behaviour who are satisfied with our response to addressing the problem.



Estate Management Service Standard

We will deliver an estate management service to help our tenants and leaseholders live in homes and places they are proud of

To achieve this, we will:

- **Undertake a schedule of estate inspections, which will:**
 - Include all of the areas where we own homes at least once every three months (monthly on larger estates) to make sure standards agreed with tenants, residents and other partners are being met.
 - Include garage sites with estate inspections.
 - Give all tenants and residents advance notice of inspections by publishing their dates in advance and inviting local people to attend.
 - Provide feedback on the issues raised and actions taken following estate inspections.
 - Inspect communal areas within blocks of flats at least once a month to ensure that they are safe and clean.
- **Consult you about environmental improvements or regeneration projects on your estate:**
 - Survey garage users about their use of the site they lease from time to time.
 - Where the garages no longer serve a useful purpose, consult with the local community on a more beneficial use for the site.
- **Carry out work on our estates to ensure that they are safe and in a good condition, this includes:**
 - Removing any dangerous or substantial accumulations of litter on our land within 6 hours of identifying the problem or receiving a complaint. We will remove all other litter within 5 working days of identifying the problem or receiving a complaint.
 - Working with other Council Departments, Gloucestershire County Council and other partners to:
 - Investigate and resolve issues relating to abandoned vehicles within 28 days which may, in some cases, result in removal.
 - Maintain communal grassed areas, footpaths, roads, street lighting, sewers and drains.
 - Completing repairs to the communal areas of flats within 10 working days. Where the repair is an emergency repair we will complete this within 1 day

- Keeping the communal areas of blocks of flats clean and tidy.
 - Removing any obscene or offensive graffiti within 1 working day and all other graffiti within 5 working days.
 - Carrying out repairs to communal aerials and CCTV cameras within 2 working days.
 - Making sure gardens in empty council owned properties are kept tidy.
 - Quickly deal with any pest infestations within communal areas.
 - Trimming or removing trees that are hazardous within 28 days of being notified, unless the trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order in which case an application to the Council's planning department must be made prior to works commencing.
 - Carrying out appropriate repairs to garages and their sites.
- **Ensure that tenants and residents do their bit to maintain the quality of the environment by:**
 - Investigating any breaches of Tenancy Agreements, making sure that tenants:
 - Maintain their gardens and hedges, keeping them tidy and free from rubbish.
 - Dispose of household, garden and recycling waste properly.
 - Park vehicles in proper parking spaces or on driveways with a dropped kerb crossing.
 - Do not allow dogs to roam the neighbourhood or foul in public places.
 - Making sure that the occupiers of former council homes maintain their gardens, where covenants allow.
 - Making sure that tenants and leaseholders keep communal areas in blocks free from rubbish.

To keep you informed about how well we're doing we will publish the following performance measure each year:

- % of priority 1 and 2 inspections carried out with a tenant or representative.
- 10/10 satisfaction of new tenants with the service received.
- We will survey our residents once a year to find out the % of residents who are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.



Repairs and Maintenance Service Standard

We will ensure that all our homes are of a good standard. We will provide a responsive repairs service that achieves high standards of quality, safety and tenant satisfaction and a planned maintenance service that helps ensure that our homes remain in good condition

To achieve this, we will:

- **Provide a responsive repair service that:**
 - Allows you to report emergency repairs to us 24 hours a day, every day.
 - Attends and makes safe all emergency repairs within 24 hours of them being reported. We will complete any follow up work within 3 working days.
 - Completes urgent repairs within 5 working days from the date you report them. We will offer you an appointment, confirm the appointment and the work to be carried out by letter, sent to you within 1 working day of the receipt of your request. To remind you of your appointment we will send you a text or phone you the day before.
 - Completes routine repairs within 20 working days from the date you report them. We will offer you an appointment, confirm the appointment and the work to be carried out by letter, sent to you within 1 working day of the receipt of your request. To remind you of your appointment we will send you a text or phone you the day before.
 - Lets you know, by phoning you, if our contractor is unable to make the appointment we've arranged with you.
 - Gives you a clear written description of the work our contractor will undertake
 - Completes all repairs during the first visit. Where this is not possible the contractor will arrange another appointment to complete any follow up work.
 - Leaves your home in a clean and tidy condition after carrying out repairs.
 - Completes all repairs to communal areas within 10 working days.
 - Returns within 2 working days if you're not completely satisfied with the quality of your repair.
 - Recharges repairs to tenants when they are the tenants' responsibility.
 - Ensures an insurance assessor is appointed, if accidental damage over £500 is caused to your property while repairs are being carried out. If the damage is less than £500 we will liaise with the contractor to ensure that you are compensated.
 - Consults with all affected leaseholders before we start repairs to communal areas, unless the work is minor or an emergency repair.
 - Gives you a copy of a repairs handbook which explains our repair priorities and target timescales.

- **Provide a planned maintenance service that:**
 - Services your gas or oil heating appliance each year.
 - Tests the mains electrical supply to your home and the electric system within your home every 10 years.
 - Publishes details of our planned maintenance and improvement programme each year.
 - Advises you in writing 6 weeks before work is scheduled to be undertaken to your home.
 - Provides you with a choice of fittings and finishes when we replace kitchens and front and back external doors.

- **Our contractors will:**
 - Wear a recognisable uniform, carry an identity card which they will show you.
 - Treat your home and possessions with respect.
 - Treat you in a courteous and respectful manner.
 - Let you know when they have completed the work and are leaving your home.
 - Leave a calling card if you're not in when they call, giving you our contact details.

- **Ask you what you think of our services at least once a year and use what you tell us to help improve those services.**

To keep you informed about how well we're doing we will publish the following performance measures each year:

- % of tenants satisfied with our responsive repairs service.
- % of tenants satisfied with our planned maintenance service.
- % of responsive repairs completed within timescale.
- % of repairs completed at the first visit.
- % of gas central heating appliances serviced during the year.

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STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
HOUSING COMMITTEE
8 JUNE 2021
WORK PROGRAMME

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**
12

Date of meeting	Matter to be considered	Notes (e.g. lead Member/Officer)
14.09.21	Mobility Scooter Policy	Service Delivery Manager (Independent Living)
	Revised Homeseeker Policy	Senior Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer
	Responding to The Social Housing White Paper (2020)	Head of Housing Service
	Options Appraisal - Decarbonisation and Energy Efficiency of Council Housing	Head of Contract Services
	Pet Policy	Housing Manager
	Decant Policy	Head of Housing Services
	Corporate ASB Policy	Head of Housing Services, Head of Community Services
	Progress update on key action plans (Cleaner Estates and Service Standards)	Tenancy Operations Manager Housing Manager
	Tenancy & Estate Management Policy	Tenancy Operations Manager Housing Manager
	Member Reports: QTR 1 Performance	Scrutiny Members
Work Programme 2021/22	Chair, Strategic Director of Communities	
07.12.21	Budget	Strategic Director of Resources
	Annual Review of the HRA Delivery Plan	Head of Housing Services
	Decant Policy	Head of Housing Services
	Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Strategy	Housing Manager
	Tenant Handbook	Tenancy Operations Manager
	Independent Living – Approval of Schemes for 2022/23	Project Manager – New Homes and Regeneration Team
	Older Persons Strategy and action plan review	Head of Housing Services Service Delivery Manager (Independent living)
	Play Areas Strategy	Head of Housing Services, Community Services Manager
	Member Reports: QTR 2 Performance	Scrutiny Members
	Work Programme 2021/22	Chair, Strategic Director of Communities

Agenda Item 12

Items to be considered at a future meeting

- 10 Year Strategy on Housing's Contribution to CN2030 – Head of Contract Services (Date TBC)
- Private Sector Housing Standards – Housing Renewal Manager (Date TBC)
- De-pooling Rent and Service Charges - General Needs (TBC) - Tenancy Operations Manager, Principal Accountant

Published Members' Information Sheets	
Date sent & ref no	Topic
June 2021 HC.016	Continue from HC.016

Future Information Sheets:

- Updated Local Plan Affordable Housing Policies in September – Pippa Stroud