

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE

2 NOVEMBER 2021

Report Title	REVISED TENANCY & ESTATES MANAGEMENT POLICY			
Purpose of Report	To effectively manage tenancies and the environment in our communities.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to: a) Adopt the revised Tenancy & Estates Management policy. b) Give delegated authority to the Head of Housing Services, in consultation with the Chair & Vice Chair of Housing Committee to make minor amendments as necessary.			
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation has taken place with Involved Tenants, Officers and Councillors			
Report Author	Michelle Elliott – Housing Manager michelle.elliott@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	N/A			
Background Papers	None			
Appendices	Appendix A – Tenancy & Estate Management Policy (proposed) Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has a duty to ensure its tenancies and estates are managed in line with the relevant housing legislation and effectively manages its assets and maintains good relationships with tenants and stakeholders
- 1.2 Stroud currently has 5051 housing properties, which are defined as:
- 1516 Flats
 - 1279 Bungalows
 - 14 Maisonettes
 - 2242 Houses.
- 1.3 We strive to remain a responsible landlord and be transparent, ensuring our tenants and staff are fully aware of their obligations and that they are adhered to.
- 1.4 The revision of the policy ensures the Estate Management Policy is in keeping with the current services it supplies to both its tenancies and on its estates.

1.5 Estate Management covers a diverse range of services including:

- Inspection & Maintenance of communal areas
- Ensuring tenants comply with tenancy conditions
- Monitoring empty properties
- Providing advice and referrals to tenants & residents on services which enhance the local community
- Supporting initiatives to reduce crime
- Environmental improvements
- Partnership working with other agencies.

2.0 Management Responsibilities, Legislation & Guidance

2.1 It is critically important that the District Council's Tenancy Management Service ensures that legislative changes and acknowledged good practice are reflected in its tenancy and estates management policies. Landlord and tenants' responsibilities must be defined and clear service standards remain up to date and in line with best practice. This policy will be periodically reviewed to make sure it keeps up to date with legislation, regulation and local requirements

2.2 Housing Services will enforce procedures for ensuring that tenancy obligations are fulfilled and tenancy management breaches are identified.

2.3 There is a range of legislation relating to the management of our housing stock,

- The Housing Act 1985
- The Housing Act 1988
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Localism Act 2011
- The charter for social housing residents: Social Housing White Paper 2020.

2.4 The Social Housing White Paper 2020 sets out a new Charter for Social Housing Residents. While much of the responsibility for delivering the expectations set out in the White Paper rests with social landlords, its implementation will be underpinned by a strengthened consumer regulation regime. It seeks to:

- Provide clarity on the standards that every social tenant in England is entitled to expect from their landlords
- Raise the standard of social housing and meet the housing aspirations of residents now and in the future
- Engender quality, safe environments free from crime & anti-social behaviour
- Ensure tenants feel protected and empowered by a regulatory regime and a culture of transparency, accountability, decency and service befitting the intentions and traditions of social housing
- Provide routes to self-ownership.

2.5 The White Paper's charter addresses the relationship between landlord and tenant, and how landlords can work with their tenants more effectively. It confirms that the Regulator of Social Housing will focus on the following areas:

- Changes needed to the consumer standards that all social landlords will be required to meet
- The proactive consumer regulation activity (including, for example, a programme of inspections as outlined in the White Paper) through which we will monitor and assess whether those standards are being met; and
- Agreeing a set of tenant satisfaction measures that will both inform our regulation and help tenants hold their landlords to account.

3.0 Stroud Districts response to the housing paper

- 3.1 Responding to the White Paper, the District Council, recognising its landlord responsibilities has established an officer and member working group to oversee a series of action to strengthen tenancy involvement and ensure a strong and effective tenant landlord relationship.
- 3.2 The Tenant Service Standards action plan and the Cleaner Estates action plan identify areas where greater tenant involvement is being prioritised, including scrutiny, complaints and repairs. Task and finish groups are also in place covering resident involvement, voids and repairs and energy/retrofit.
- 3.3 In unison with these, there is commissioned work around resident involvement, Strategic Housing and landlord services. Complaints reports for the whole service have been shared with Housing Committee performance scrutiny members and Tenant Representatives.

4.0 Key changes to the Policy include:

4.1 Community Involvement

- 4.2 The policy in line with the service standards action plan promotes focus groups, estate walkabouts and tenant events ensuring that there is a comprehensive tenant engagement plan in process. This will ensure that tenants have the opportunity of being involved and to influence decision making.
- 4.3 To further ensure tenants views are represented the council housing committee has co-opted two volunteer tenants, called 'Tenants' Voice Representatives', who help shape housing services by representing the views of tenants and influencing decisions at Housing Committee meetings.
- 4.4 Linking in with the cleaner estates policy we are also promoting the role of a green champion to encourage engagement and ownership from communities.
- 4.5 The draft paper was sent out to all involved tenants and the following comments were received.
- Add in how often estate walkabouts take place
 - Happy with Report
 - 2x involved tenants Concerns that enforcement never takes place
 - Concerns about dog fouling being addressed
 - Comments were specific to an independent living scheme, so are being addressed by Service Delivery Manager
 - Concerns about untidy gardens and enforcement/ possibility of online training for Neighbourhood Ambassadors/ scrutiny of services by tenants

5.0 Home Contents Insurance

- 5.1** The Council does not provide home contents insurance, however, it does expect tenants to take out appropriate home contents insurance to protect their belongings in the event of a fire, theft, accidental damage or natural disaster.

5.2 Rechargeable Repairs

- 5.3** Repairs that are caused by mistreatment will be categorized as a recharge and remain the responsibility of the tenant.

5.4 Independent Living Schemes

- 5.5** Independent Living HUBS are operating across the district for social inclusion and the wellbeing of tenants and residents.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

It is important to have and enforce a Tenancy and Estate Management Policy. The Housing Revenue Account has seen an increase in fly tipping and spend on clearing properties when vacated by tenants. This reduces funding available for rest of the housing service, including retrofit works.

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6.2 Legal Implications

In addition to the specific obligations referred to in the report, the Council has a duty under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 to ensure that the terms of its tenancy agreements are not unfair, and a general duty as a local authority to act reasonably.

Adopting a general policy in respect of tenancy and estates management helps to ensure that tenancy obligations (on both landlord and tenant) are consistent and fairly applied across the Council's residential properties.

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6.3 Equality Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and can be found in Appendix B.

6.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.