

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## HOUSING COMMITTEE

28 MARCH 2023

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Tenant Information &amp; Property Update</b>			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To update members on what was formerly known as the Tenant Handbook and updates that are being considered.			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to accept and support the changes to the tenant handbook including its renaming to Tenant Information and Property Update.</b>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Consultation took place in February 2022 with tenants at three café conversation events and with colleagues in Property Care.			
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<b>Options</b>	The committee could decide not to accept the changes			
<b>Background Papers</b>	None			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	Yes	No

### 1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Tenant Information and property information outlines tenancy conditions, informs tenants about their rights and responsibilities as a tenant and the rights and responsibilities of Stroud District Council as a landlord. The information can be found on the Stroud District Council website at <https://www.stroud.gov.housing/council-tenants-and-leaseholders>
- 1.2 A review of the tenant handbook was undertaken during February 2022 by staff and tenants during a café conversation focus group. The focus of this review was on the ease of finding appropriate information on the Stroud District Council website and understanding of responsibilities in line with the tenancy agreement.
- 1.3 Since becoming an online document, the information is not held in a typical handbook method and therefore we have re-addressed the information to be known as Tenant Information and Property Update. Any searches on the Stroud District Council website for a Tenant Handbook, will refer searchers to the Tenant Information and Property Update section.
- 1.4 The tenant information and property pages aim to answer many of the common questions that tenants ask about their homes. It also clearly defines the responsibilities of our tenants and of us as a landlord and is split into the following main sections:
  - Your Tenancy
  - Council Housing Repairs
  - Your Home

- Your Neighbourhood
- Our customers matter
- Right to buy/ Leasehold/ shared ownership
- Tenants News
- About Tenant Services

## **2. CHANGES TO TENANT INFORMATION AND PROPERTY UPDATE**

- 2.1 The main changes to the Tenant Information and Property Update are set out the following paragraphs.
- 2.2 All reference to Sheltered Housing to be changed to Independent Living to reflect recent changes.
- 2.3 All reference to Neighbourhood Management Officers to be changed to Housing Officer to reflect recent change in title.
- 2.4 Permissions required to be highlighted, to remind tenants that permissions need to be sought for any alteration or additions to the property.
- 2.5 Inclusion of the requirement to seek permission for installing Hot Tubs – during lockdown it became noticeable that many tenants had purchased hot tubs. As these feed into the electricity supply it is important that permission is sought so that the electricians can be checked for suitability.
- 2.6 Refusal of permission for wood burners added. Whilst we acknowledge that wood burners can provide a relatively efficient form of heating, there are significant risks with the appliances in respect to health & safety, if they are not correctly installed, maintained and used.
- 2.7 Fluorescent Lighting - in response to feedback from tenants it has been agreed that we as a landlord will be responsible for removing and replacing fluorescent lighting. In the longer term this type of lighting will be replaced by LED lighting.
- 2.8 A reminder that fences surrounding a property are the responsibility of the tenant, but stone walls are the responsibility of the landlord.

## **3. CHANGES TO TENANCY AGREEMENTS**

- 3.1 In addition to the above, changes to the Tenancy Agreement are necessary to ensure that the Tenancy Agreement is more robust. Once the Tenancy Agreement has been reviewed and agreed with One Legal further changes to the Tenant and Property Information required.
- 3.2 If these changes are agreed officers will consult with tenants on the amended Tenancy Agreement. We are looking to
  - Changes suggested to the tenancy agreement include:
  - Explanation concerning the depooling of service charges.
  - Temporary accommodation due to a property becoming inhabitable and the Councils responsibility.

- The responsibility for tenants to accept and allow radon equipment to run in the property.
- A Clear loft space
- CCTV and Doorbells with CCTV and relevant permissions required.
- Communal gardens to be kept clear of personal items and to be left as open spaces.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 This report provides Housing Committee with updated information in relation to the current proposed changes and the changes being considered for the future in line with the Tenancy Agreement change.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications**

There are no implications arising directly from this report. Any expenditure arising will be met through established budgets.

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##### **5.2 Legal Implications**

Except for the variation of rent and service charges, Sections 102 and 103 of the Housing Act 1985 give the Council the power to vary the terms of the tenancy agreement by serving notice of variation on the Tenant. Before serving a notice of variation, the Council has to give a preliminary notice and the tenant has to be invited to make comment on the proposed changes. The Council is then required to consider the comments made.

One Legal are being consulted about the proposed variations and are in the process of making recommendations to the Council's Housing Manager.

One Legal

Email [legalservices@onelegal.org.uk](mailto:legalservices@onelegal.org.uk)

##### **5.3 Equality Implications**

An EIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and no equality implications arise, please see appendix A.

##### **5.4 Environmental Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.