

**DECENT & AFFORDABLE HOMES PDG
19 JULY 2016**

TENANCY INSPECTION POLICY

Cabinet Member Cllr Ray Stanley
Responsible Officer Claire Fry, Housing Services Manager

Reason for Report: To review the Tenancy Inspection Policy.

RECOMMENDATION(S): Cabinet approves the revised Tenancy Inspection Policy.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Council must run the Housing Service efficiently and effectively in accordance with legislative requirements and the provisions of the regulatory framework.

Financial Implications: The Council is required to make the best use of its housing stock which includes managing it efficiently and taking steps to prevent tenancy fraud to avoid any financial losses.

Legal Implications: In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to publish a clear and accessible policy which outlines its approach to tenancy management which includes reference to the prevention of tenancy fraud. The Council has a Tenancy Policy and uses tenant inspections as a means of preventing fraud.

Risk Assessment: Failure to provide housing management staff with the appropriate policies could result in a less consistent and effective service.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The review of this policy reflects changes in good practice and legislative changes. It provides a framework for staff which sets out how they can make the best use of the housing stock by carrying out regular tenancy inspections. The policy explains the purpose of carrying out tenancy inspections, the type of information collected during an inspection and the action that will be taken where concerns are raised.
- 1.2 The Tenancy Inspection Policy was approved at the meeting of the Decent and Affordable Homes Policy Development Group in July 2012. The policy is due to be reviewed by July 2016.
- 1.4 Tenants Together approved the draft Tenancy Inspection Policy at their meeting on 9 June 2016.
- 1.5 Cabinet is asked to consider the proposed changes and to agree the adoption of the reviewed policy.

2.0 Proposed policy changes

- 2.1 The policy has been updated and sets out the reasons the Council carries out regular tenancy inspections. This may be due to checking that the tenant is complying with the terms and conditions of the tenancy, investigating alleged tenancy fraud, unauthorised subletting or assignment.
- 2.2 The policy has been amended to give more clarity about how Officers will prioritise tenancy inspections. This may be due to:
- concerns that the property's keys have been passed to an unauthorised person and the tenant is allowing them to reside at the property;
 - complaints have been received from neighbours of frequent visitors; or
 - there has been communal damage to blocks of flats.
- 2.3 The section on household information has been updated to explain the type of information that will be collected during a tenancy inspection, i.e. details of household members, date of birth, gender, national insurance number and details of income.
- 2.4 The proposed changes to legislation relating to Pay to Stay may affect a number of tenants earning £30,000 or above. Obtaining income details will enable us to identify those tenants affected by legislative changes and will highlight where additional income may be generated by charging tenants appropriately. We will also offer advice and support to those affected by the changes.
- 2.5 The policy introduces a section on stock condition. This explains that tenancy inspections provide Officers with an opportunity to access a property including external areas such as gardens and outbuildings to check the condition. The policy highlights that where there is wilful damage or neglect to the property, the tenant will be recharged for such damage.
- 2.6 The policy highlights the terms and conditions of tenancy. It states that the tenant is expected to keep the inside and outside of the home, including garages and any outbuildings in a clean and reasonable condition and keep the garden in a well maintained condition, this includes cutting the grass and trimming hedges.
- 2.7 An additional section has been added to remind tenants that under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013, it is a criminal offence to sub-let or part with possession of social housing. It emphasises that the Council will take appropriate action to ensure that their properties are only occupied by those with a legal right to reside.
- 2.8 A section relating to safeguarding concerns has been included in the policy to highlight that a number of services of the Council, such as Housing play an important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of individuals as part of their day to day work. This is achieved through recognising welfare issues,

sharing information, making referrals and subsequently managing or reducing risks. It highlights that Officers are responsible for raising safeguarding concerns which have been brought to their attention with the Council's designated officer.

Contact for more Information: Claire Fry, Housing Services Manager (01884 234920 cfry@middevon.gov.uk)

Circulation of the Report: Councillor Ray Stanley, Management Team

List of Background Papers: A copy of such papers to be made available for public inspection and included on Website