

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

FIRE RISK IN COMMUNAL AREAS POLICY

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

Reason for Report: To review the Fire Risk in Communal Areas Policy.

RECOMMENDATION(S): Cabinet approves the revised Fire Risk in Communal Areas 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 housing stock is a valuable asset and the Council is required to take steps to minimise fire risk to communal areas. Effective neighbourhood management enables the Council to identify any health and safety risks and to minimise claims arising from public liability claims.

Legal Implications: The contractual obligations of tenants are contained in the tenancy agreement. Individual leases set out the liabilities and responsibilities of leaseholders.

We have a duty to minimise fire risk in communal areas. Part 1 of the Housing Act (2004) requires local authorities to deal with identified or known hazards within residential properties. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires us to carry out risk assessments which focus on escape routes which includes communal areas.

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 legislation. It provides a framework for staff which sets out how they are to manage fire risk in communal areas.
- 1.2 The Fire Risk in Communal Areas Policy was last approved at the meeting of the Decent and Affordable Homes Policy Development Group in February 2012. The policy was due to be reviewed by February 2016.
- 1.3 Tenants Together approved the draft Fire Risk in Communal Areas Policy at their meeting on 9 June 2016.
- 1.4 Members are asked to consider the proposed changes and to agree the adoption of the reviewed policy.

2.0 Proposed policy changes

- 2.1 The updated policy sets out how the Council will manage fire risks in communal areas within its housing stock. It identifies how it will monitor communal areas so they are kept free from obstructions and hazards to protect the health and safety of all users of its buildings.
- 2.2 The policy has been amended to provide more clarity on existing clauses relating to risk assessments, preventative measures, communal inspections and maintenance of communal areas.
- 2.3 The policy introduces a section on permission requests. This explains that the tenant is to seek written permission from us for any alteration to any communal area, such as hanging baskets from the building. It explains where we will not grant permission, for example anything which is combustible or poses a fire risk or causes obstruction.
- 2.4 An additional section has been included to reinforce the policy that a tenant must not cause an obstruction or fire hazard in a communal area. It highlights that we will investigate any misuse of the communal area and make every attempt to make contact with the owner of any items left in a communal area.
- 2.5 The policy emphasises that tenants must not leave items in communal areas when their tenancy ends. Tenants will be recharged for the cost of clearing and the removal of any items left behind.
- 2.6 In addition, the policy includes a section on mobility scooters which advises the tenant that a mobility scooter must not be stored or charged in communal areas. It also advises the tenant that if they plan to store a scooter inside their home, they must ensure there is sufficient space to store and secure it safely without blocking any fire escape routes.
- 2.7 The policy highlights that tenants, employees, contractors, agents or visitors are not permitted to smoke including e-cigarettes and other substance misuse in communal areas. This policy applies to all areas covered by the Smoke Free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006, these includes areas include stairs, hallways, landings or common rooms.

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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