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19 October 2017

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

A meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group will be held in Committee Room 1 at the Arun Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton on **Thursday, 2 November 2017 at 6.00 pm** and you are requested to attend.

Members: Councillors Hughes (Chairman), Mrs Porter (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Ayres, Bicknell, Blampied, Edwards, Mrs Harrison-Horn, Purchase, Mrs Rapnik and Miss Rhodes.

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Please send your apologies to Erica Keegan – tel: 01903 737547 or e-mail: erica.keegan@arun.gov.uk

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and Officers are reminded to make any declaration of personal and/or prejudicial/pecuniary interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda.

You should declare your interest by stating:

- a) the item you have the interest in
- b) whether it is a personal interest and the nature of the interest
- c) whether it is also a prejudicial/pecuniary interest

You then need to re-declare your interest and the nature of the interest at the commencement of the item or when the interest becomes apparent

3. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group held on 7 September 2017 (attached).

4. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. *FIRE SAFETY IN COMMUNAL AREAS POLICY

This report sets out a Policy for the management the communal parts of Council housing areas, with particular regard to fire safety.

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN WORK PROGRAMME

A verbal update will be given by the Group Head of Residential Services.

(Note: *Indicates report is attached for Members of the Working Group and Cabinet only and the Press (excluding exempt items). Copies of reports can be viewed on the Council's web site at www.arun.gov.uk or can be obtained on request from the Committee Manager.)

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

7 September 2017 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Hughes (Chairman), Mrs Porter (Vice-Chairman), Edwards, Mrs Harrison-Horn, Mrs Rapnik and Miss Rhodes.

Councillor Bence, Cabinet Member for Residential Services, was also present for the duration of the meeting.

8. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, representatives of the public, press and officers to the meeting. The newly appointed Group Head of Residential Services, Satnam Kaur and the Group Head of Neighbourhood Services, Joe Russell-Wells were introduced and welcomed as Lead Officers to the working group.

9. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Ayres, Blampied and Purchase.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer has advised Members of interim arrangements to follow when making declarations of interest. They have been advised that for the reasons explained below, they should make their declarations on the same basis as the former Code of Conduct using the descriptions of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Reasons

- The Council has adopted the government’s example for a new local code of conduct, but new policies and procedures relating to the new local code are yet to be considered and adopted.
- Members have not yet been trained on the provisions of the new local code of conduct.
- The definition of Pecuniary Interests is narrower than the definition of Prejudicial Interests, so by declaring a matter as a Prejudicial Interest, that will cover the requirement to declare a Pecuniary Interest in the same matter.

Where a Member declares a “Prejudicial Interest” this will, in the interest of clarity for the public, be recorded in the Minutes as a Prejudicial and Pecuniary Interest.

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

11. MINUTES

In approving the minutes, the Chairman pointed out a typographical error in the Recommendation at Minute 6 and this was amended from ‘...in approved’ to ‘...is approved’. Following this amendment the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Service Working Group held on 6 July 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

12. UPDATE ON HOUSING FIRE SAFETY

The Working Group received a verbal update from the Group Head of Residential Services in view of the recent and horrendous fire disaster at Grenfell Tower in London. This outlined the action that the Council was taking, in response, with its social housing.

The first point made was that the Council did not have any Council housing that could be categorised as ‘high rise’. This had been classified by the Department of Community and Local Government (DCLG) as being over six floors high. Secondly, it was confirmed that the Council had no buildings which had any form of aluminium cladding.

The Council had begun investigations on its housing stock in July 2017 and initial testing at Wick had confirmed that the cladding material used there was non-combustible and met required standards. It was confirmed that there would be further tests carried out to ensure materials had been fitted according to the manufacturer’s specification.

In terms of the fire risk assessments at Wick, no major risks had been identified. One potential issue had been identified in relation to communal areas being kept clear. In order to reduce risk to residents in relation to the communal areas – halls, stairs, stairwells and landings, it was identified general housekeeping would be required to maintain clear accessibility with no obstructions. The Group Head of Residential Services informed Members that the Council would be introducing a Policy for residents so that they could recognise and adhere to their responsibilities with respect to fire hazards. It was advised that the draft Policy would be brought to the working group for comment and approval.

It was confirmed that the Council continued to work closely with West Sussex Fire Service. Arrangements were underway for fire alarm systems in Council owned two storey blocks of flats to be linked. This involved more than 130 properties, with work commencing in April 2018 over a five year period. Fire Risk Assessments would be carried out on all flats in the District not just those with cladding. It was noted that recent fire drills in the Council’s sheltered housing accommodation had seen some residents refusing to leave their property. This issue was being addressed by the Council’s Housing Neighbourhood team.

In discussing the update provided, the Working Group confirmed that it was pleased to know that the Council had and was continuing to take fire safety very seriously and were also pleased that the Council’s tenants were being kept informed.

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

13. MOBILITY SCOOTER STORAGE CHARGES

The Business Improvement and Policy Manager presented this report which provided a brief overview of the recent introduction of charges for Mobility Scooter Storage.

It was noted that mobility storage provisions take the form of brick built garages, purpose built scooter stores and a variety of wooden sheds. Historically the Council provided the storage area and access to an electrical plug socket to charge the scooter without making a charge to the end user.

The Business Improvement and Policy Manager explained the new charging arrangements which equated to 50 pence a day for safe, secure storage and charging of mobility scooters. Members were advised that tenants had, on the whole, been positive and understanding of the reasoning behind the need to charge.

It was explained that the Council now had a programme of planned works to bring the mobility scooter storage up to a safe and consistent standard across all Council locations. A waiting list had been introduced for charging spaces and this had enabled the Council to assess demand and would help with future marketing and storage provision. Members were pleased to note that the waiting list was not long, with 4 residents currently waiting, and were happy that the Council would respond by finding imaginative ways to target demand with provision.

Following questions that were responded to at the meeting, the Working Group noted the report and the Chairman thanked the Housing Business Improvement & Policy Manager for this update.

14. STOCK CONDITION REPORT

The Working Group received a report with regard to the work on the Housing Stock Condition Survey presented by the Group Head of Residential Services.

Members were informed that, following discussion with the Cabinet Member for Residential Services during May 2016, it was deemed appropriate for a stock condition housing survey to be undertaken on all of the Council's housing stock. It was noted that since work had begun in March 2017 more than 700 surveys had been completed. This programme of work was expected to take two years with completion by March 2019.

The Working Group noted the benefits of this survey, which would help the Council effectively plan its programme of housing maintenance work as well as being important in terms of budgeting, by providing details of expected maintenance costs. It was also noted that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, to be presented for consideration at the Full Council meeting on 13 September 2017, would reflect an increase in budget for Housing Planned Maintenance in 2018/19.

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

The Group Head of Residential Services stated that a further update on progress with the Stock Condition Survey would be provided at a future meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group in a year’s time.

In receiving this report, Members welcomed the Survey and congratulated the Cabinet Member for Residential Services on his foresight to initiate this project that would not only take stock of the Council’s assets but also provide the Council with the tools to effectively plan and cost housing maintenance.

15. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The Working Group received and noted its Work Programme for 2017/18.

(The meeting concluded at 6.21 pm)

AGENDA ITEM NO.5ARUN DISTRICT COUNCILHOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP – 02 November 2017

Recommendation Paper

Subject : Communal Areas Policy

Report by : Judy Knapp

Report date: 6 October 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out a Policy for the management the communal parts of Council housing areas, with particular regard to fire safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to recommend to Cabinet the adoption of this Policy.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of the Council's response to the Grenfell Tower fire, consideration has been given to the health and safety provisions in communal areas of Council housing.
- 1.2 In particular, there has been a review of the way that the Council will deal with items left in the communal areas of Council housing, particular internal corridors and stairwells.
- 1.3 This policy is intended to set out the Council's approach to such issues, to give clarity for residents and to guide procedures for staff.

2.0 POLICY

- 2.1 The Policy is set out at Appendix A.
- 2.2 Its purpose is to set out the way that the Council will manage communal areas, particularly in blocks of flats, to minimize any risk factors.
- 2.3 The Housing Department already exercises the approach that is set out in this Policy, carrying out regular inspections and addressing issues of residents' personal items left in communal areas.

2.4 This Policy will formalize the Council's response.

3.0 COMMUNICATION

- 3.1 As a result of this Policy, information will be provided to all Council tenants and leaseholders to inform them of the rules for communal areas and to advise them of the actions that will be taken to enforce the Policy.
- 3.2 Information about the Policy will be available on the Council's website and the rules will be explained to all new tenants moving into a Council property.
- 3.3 Housing staff will receive training and guidance on the Policy to ensure it is being implemented consistently.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Members are asked to recommend to Cabinet the adoption of this Policy for the management of communal Housing areas.

Background Papers: Communal Areas Policy – Appendix A

Contact: Judy Knapp Housing Services Manager Ext: 37740



Housing Services

Communal Areas Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy sets out how Arun District Council manages communal areas in our blocks of flats, in order to minimise the risks of fire in those areas.
- Communal areas are spaces which are shared with other people, usually in blocks of flats. Communal areas include communal gardens.
- 1.2 Arun District Council manages a number of communal areas within low-rise and medium-rise blocks, sheltered housing schemes, communal gardens and outside spaces. The Council does not own any blocks which are taller than 4 storeys high.
- 1.3 The Council will aim to ensure that all internal and external communal areas are kept free from obstruction or hazards in order to protect the health and safety of residents and other users of its Council housing properties.
- 1.4 This Policy applies to:
- Communal areas within buildings including entrance halls, staircases and hallways.
 - Shared facilities within buildings such as bin stores or bin chutes, and any other storage areas.
 - External communal areas such as gardens and walkways.
 - Shared communal and social facilities such as communal lounges, kitchens, laundry rooms, and guest rooms.
 - Leaseholders are also subject to this Policy where they, or their tenants, have access to shared areas and facilities.
- 1.5 The Council is aware of its legal obligations and aims to comply with the following legislation with regards to provision of health and safety:
- Housing Act 2004
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - Building Regulations 2010
- 1.6 This Policy meets the Council's corporate guidelines.

2.0 Policy Objectives

- 2.1 To enable the Council to carry out its obligations regarding the communal areas as stated in the Tenancy Agreement.
- 2.2 To enable the Council to take necessary action in relation to these obligations. This may include taking enforcement action, using legal remedies as appropriate, when the conditions of the Tenancy Agreement are not adhered to.
- 2.3 To reduce the risk of fire in the communal areas of blocks of flats, by controlling and limiting combustible materials.
- 2.4 To reduce the risk of obstruction in access or exit routes in the event of an emergency.
- 2.5 To reduce the risk of accidents as a result of potential trip hazards.
- 2.6 To ensure that all communal areas are welcoming for residents and visitors, and to encourage residents to take pride in their living environment.

3.0 Policy

- 3.1 Communal areas do not form part of individual tenants' homes. This includes the areas immediately adjacent to tenants' homes. As a result, residents are not permitted to use these communal areas for the storage of their personal property. They do not have exclusive use of these communal areas, particularly when access to such communal areas or facilities is required by other residents.
- 3.2 Internal communal areas such as hallways, corridors, entrance halls, landings, stairwells, common rooms and lobbies must be kept entirely free from obstruction.
- 3.3 External communal areas include gardens, courtyards and outside space which are available for the shared use of more than one resident. External bin stores, sheds, storage areas and walkways are also considered to be external communal areas.
- 3.4 Neighbourhood Housing Officers and Caretakers will carry out regular inspections of all blocks of flats and communal areas.
- 3.5 In addition to these inspections, all Arun District Council housing staff visiting Council housing areas are responsible for identifying and responding to the storage of personal belongings in communal areas.
- 3.6 The following action may be taken where obstructions, hazards or inappropriate use of communal areas is identified:
- A warning given to the responsible party or residents of the whole block.
 - Enforcement action for breaching the conditions of tenancy.
 - An obstruction will be recorded and a strict time period given for its removal. If the obstruction is refuse or is considered flammable, or there is a risk that it will block access or exit routes, it will be removed as soon as it has been identified.
 - If other items are not removed within the stipulated time period, the Council will remove and store the items for 28 days, to allow the resident to collect them.
 - If the items are not collected by the end of that period, the Council will dispose of them without further notice. The costs of removal and disposal may be recharged to the responsible resident.
- 3.7 The Council will notify all current and future Council tenants and leaseholders of the Policy and will erect notices in communal areas in blocks of flats to inform residents that items must not be left or stored in these areas.
- 3.8 Mobility Scooters may not be stored in any communal areas, apart from the designated mobility scooter storage areas, as they may cause a significant obstruction.
- 3.9 Residents may store a mobility scooter inside their own home, but they are solely responsible for ensuring there is sufficient space for storage and that the scooter does not block any fire escape route from the dwelling. The storage of a mobility scooter is entirely at residents' own risk.
- 3.10 The use of mobility scooters in communal buildings must be undertaken safely and with regard for other residents' safety.
- 3.11 Residents must obtain permission from the Council to keep pets in any property that has shared facilities or communal areas. The Council reserves the right to refuse permission if it is felt to be inappropriate for a pet to be kept within a block or a sheltered housing scheme.
- 3.12 Pets are not permitted to be left unattended in any communal areas and dogs must be kept on a lead at all times when using communal gardens or communal areas of the building.
- 3.13 It is the responsibility of the resident to clean up after any animal kept in, or visiting, their home, and all waste must be correctly disposed of.
- 3.14 Residents may be recharged for any costs incurred by the Council for damage to their home or communal areas as a result of any animal kept in, or visiting, their home.

4.0 Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 This Policy has been compiled to deal with fire safety and health & safety issues in communal areas of all blocks of flats and maisonettes, sheltered housing schemes, and outside space.
- 4.2 All residents will be treated in the same manner regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, age, disability, or sexual orientation. Page 10 of 31
 4.2 All residents will be treated in the same manner regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, age, disability, or sexual orientation. and/or obstruction.

