

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Housing & Wellbeing Committee – 26 March 2024
SUBJECT:	Housing Policy & Strategy Review
LEAD OFFICER:	Richard Tomkinson, Group Head of Housing
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Birch
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION:	
<p>By reviewing housing's policies and strategies and assisting the housing team with expediency to manage the identified gaps and reviews will support the following areas in the corporate vision:</p> <p>Delivering the right homes in the right places:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This approach will support our tenants, leaseholders, and service users to ensure that staff are guided by policy whilst making operational decisions within the day-to-day activities of the housing and homelessness services. <p>Improving the wellbeing of Arun:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having policies and strategies in place will ensure a more consistent service delivery and decision-making approach.• Protect all parties within interactions that take place within Housing and Homelessness service delivery. This includes legal and legislative alignment, ensuring officer decisions are based on policy guidance.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT:	
<p>The Group Head of Housing presents a collaborative review of existing and absent policies within the Housing Service and seeks approval to implement and review policies and strategies at pace.</p> <p>This request aims to support the overall effectiveness of the Housing Service and will assist with the successful implementation of our new IT housing management system.</p> <p>Members of the Housing Management Team have undertaken a gap analysis of policies that are in place and those that require minor review and updates, which is outlined in Appendix 1.</p>	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY:	
None	

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report aims to present a thorough review of new and existing strategies and policies that are required within the Housing Service.
- 1.2 The goal is to ensure alignment with current best practices, legal and regulatory requirements, and evolving customer needs.
- 1.3 Importantly, we will address the critical need for the creation of policies and strategies in areas where they currently do not exist, leaving us exposed to potential finding of non-compliance with the consumer standards through the new pro-active approach to social housing regulation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Committee is asked to approve the programme of policy reviews for 2024-25, as detailed in Appendix 1, which identifies those of most importance to bring through the committee process (high-level/strategic) and those which can be delivered through delegated authority to the Group Head of Housing (operational).

3.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 The Housing Service has undergone significant changes since the adoption of its existing strategies and policies.
- 3.2 To ensure their continued effectiveness and relevance, a comprehensive review framework has been developed to identify areas for improvement, set a programme of policy reviews to update outdated policies, and introduce new policies and strategies where gaps exist, to ensure regulatory compliance, build resilience and consistency of service delivery and to ensure that efficiencies are maximised through the implementation of Civica CX.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The review encompasses a range of focus areas, including:
- 4.2 **Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** Ensuring all policies align with the latest legislative and regulatory requirements.
- 4.3 **Service Challenges and Community Needs:** Assessing the current and future service challenges, along with evolving needs of our community and adjusting strategies to address changing dynamics.
- 4.4 **Best Practices:** Benchmarking our policies against current best practices within the housing sector.

4.5 **Critical Gaps:** Identifying areas where policies and strategies are lacking, leaving us exposed to potential finding of non-compliance with the consumer standards through the new pro-active approach to social housing regulation.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 The programme detailed in Appendix 1 highlights those policies and strategies which will be subject to wider consultation.

6.0 OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

6.1 This review and decision-making process will provide a transparent gap identification which is pivotal for ensuring that our housing service remains adaptive, legally sound, and responsive to the needs of customers.

6.2 Approving delegated authority on some of the policies and strategies, will ensure that there is sufficient time within the Housing & Wellbeing Committee meetings to focus on those policies and strategies of most important to Committee i.e. those policies and strategies deemed to require collaborative input.

6.4 Not providing delegated authority on some policies and strategies to the permanent Group Head of Housing, will result in all policies contained within Appendix 1, needing to be presented to Committee for individual approval and this will delay policy and strategy implementation.

7.0 COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER

7.1 All strategies and policies contained within Appendix 1 are core requirements of the Housing Service and are contained within base budgets.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 **Individual Policy Reviews:** Each policy and strategy due for implementation will undergo individual risk assessments before being presented to the committee or the Group Head of Housing for approval. This assessment will ensure a comprehensive evaluation of potential risks associated with the policy, including legal compliance, financial implications, and operational challenges.

8.2 **Streamlining Decision-Making Process:** In an effort to implement policies and strategies quickly to mitigate exposure to reputational and other risks, delegated authority is being requested to make decisions within shorter timeframes. This will allow us to enhance our responsiveness in addressing housing challenges.

9.0 COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

9.1 The Housing and Wellbeing Committee is responsible for exercising the Council's functions in relation to the Housing Revenue Account and Homelessness and for approving any service area policies within those services that do not require a Full Council decision under the Policy Framework (currently only the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan).

- 9.2 The Committee is then able to delegate to officers the function of approving service area policies that it considers should be prepared and approved under that delegated authority.
- 9.3 This report sets out for members the full range of policies and strategies that fall within the functions of the Housing Service, together with a plan for bringing all of those up-to-date and ensuring they are reviewed at the appropriate frequency (as all policies and strategies should be), and seeks the Committee's decision on which of those policies and strategies should be approved by the Committee and which should be approved under delegated authority.
- 9.4 The Committee should be concerned to ensure that it is responsible for policies and strategies that carry a high-level strategic function, while officers should be responsible for those policies and strategies that are operational in nature. This is the accepted and well-established approach to such document development and ensures that the Committee and its members have sufficient time across each annual and four-yearly cycle to focus on the Council's strategic needs.

10.0 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 10.1 None

11.0 HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 11.1 None

12.0 PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

- 12.1 None

13.0 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

- 13.1 In considering the implementation of housing policies and strategies, we will continue to conduct EIAs within the implementation process, which will ensure that our initiatives promote fairness, inclusivity, and diversity within the housing and homelessness community. By systematically evaluating the potential impact of our policies on different client groups, we will identify and address any disparities or barriers to access, whilst fostering a more equitable housing environment for all residents.
- 13.2 Furthermore, incorporating social value considerations into our housing initiatives allows us to consider the positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes for our community. We will review social values and ensure our housing policies meet the needs of our residents and contribute to broader goals to running a more efficient Housing and Homelessness service.

13.3 This focus on equalities impact and social values will enhance the effectiveness of our housing and homelessness strategies and reinforce our commitment to creating inclusive communities.

14.0 CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

14.1 None

15.0 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

15.1 None

16.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

16.1 None

17.0 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

17.1 None

CONTACT OFFICER:

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Appendix 1 – Policy & Strategy List

Arun District Council

Appendix 1

Key:

DA	Delegated Authority
E	Existing Policy/Strategy – requires review/update
GT	Gill Taylor – Development Consultant
IH	Ian Hippach – Compliance Manager
JK	Jayne Knight – Housing Options Manager
JB	Johanne Batty – Neighbourhood Services Manager
KF	Keith Francis – Repairs & Maintenance Manager
N	New Policy/Strategy – requires development
NA	Not Applicable
Q	Quarter – refers to quarters within the financial year
RT	Richard Tomkinson – Group Head of Housing
SH	Sasha Hawkins – Business Improvement Manager

Policy & Strategy List:

Policy/Strategy	Lead Officer	New or Existing	Policy Development	Resident Engagement	H&WC Date/Delegated Authority?	Comments
Access Policy	KF/JB/IH	E	Q1 24/25	N/A	DA	To support access for compliance.
Aids & Adaptations Policy	KF	N	Q3 23/24	N/A	DA	To set out the Council's approach to the provision of aids and adaptations in our homes.

Policy/Strategy	Lead Officer	New or Existing	Policy Development	Resident Engagement	H&WC Date/Delegated Authority?	Comments
Allocations Policy	JK	E	Approved 06/23	N/A	DA	Small annual updates to existing policy.
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy	JB	E	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	21/11/24	Required by HA 2004.
Asbestos Policy	IH	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2025
Asset Management Strategy	KF/IH	N	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	21/11/24	To guide the council in the efficient and effective management of its homes.
Chargeable Repairs Policy	KF/JB	N	Q2 24/25	N/A	DA	Ready for implementation in 25/26 financial year.
Communal Areas Policy	JB/KF	E	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	DA	Update existing policy.
Compensation Policy	SH	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2025
Compliance Strategy	IH	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2025
Damp & Mould Policy	KF	N	Q1 24/25	Q1 24/25	18/6/24	In development.
Data Strategy	SH	N	N/A	N/A	DA	2025 development
Decant Policy	JB	E	Q1 24/25	N/A	DA	Update existing policy.
Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy	JB/JK	N	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	08/01/25	Will aspire to incorporate Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance.
Electrical Safety Policy	IH	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2025
Estate Management Policy	JB	N	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	DA	To achieve a high level of performance and quality in Estate Management and Inspections.
Fire Safety Policy	IH	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2025

Policy/Strategy	Lead Officer	New or Existing	Policy Development	Resident Engagement	H&WC Date/Delegated Authority?	Comments
Garage Allocations and Management Policy	JB/KF	E	Q2 24/25	N/A	DA	Update existing policy.
Gas and Heating Policy	IH	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2025
Homelessness Strategy	RT/JK	E	In development	Q4 23/24	18/6/24	Already part of committee work programme.
Housing Strategy	RT	E	In development	Q4 23/24	18/6/24	Already part of committee work programme.
HRA Business Plan	RT	E	N/A	Q3 24/25	26/3/25	Requires updating annually.
Income Recovery Policy	JB	E	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	DA	Update existing policy.
Introductory Tenancy Policy	JB	N	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	10/09/24	Currently included tenancy and lettings policy.
Leasehold Management Policy	SH	N	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	08/1/25	S.20, asset management and income recovery requirements.
Lift Safety Policy	IH	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2025
Major Works Recharge Policy	JB/KF	N	Q2 24/25	N/A	DA	Consider inclusion in Service Charges Policy.
Mobility Scooters Policy	JB/IH	N	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	DA	Storage, compliance & resident engagement to be considered.
Mutual Exchange Policy	JB	N	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	DA	Currently included tenancy and lettings policy.
Pets Policy	JB	E	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	DA	Update existing policy.

Policy/Strategy	Lead Officer	New or Existing	Policy Development	Resident Engagement	H&WC Date/Delegated Authority?	Comments
Repairs Policy	KF	N	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	DA	Drawing together repairs handbook, right to repair and repairs priorities.
Resident Engagement Strategy	SH	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2026
Service Charges Policy	JB/SH	N	Q4 23/24	On-going to implementation	18/6/24	Will be developed with introduction of service charges.
Self-Neglect and Hoarding Policy	JB	N	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	DA	Policy to address specific operational issues.
Social Housing Decarbonisation Strategy	RT/KF	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2025
Temporary Accommodation Allocations Policy	JK	N	Q1 24/25	NA	21/11/24	Required by legislation if placing out of area.
Temporary Accommodation Procurement Policy	JK	N	Q1 24/25	N/A	21/11/24	Required by legislation. Will combine with above.
Tenancy and Lettings Policy (Tenancy Management Policy)	JB	E	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	10/9/24	Update to take account of Housing Strategy.
Tenancy Audit and Tenancy Fraud Policy	JB	N	Q4 24/25	N/A	DA	Ready for implementation in 25/26 financial year.

Policy/Strategy	Lead Officer	New or Existing	Policy Development	Resident Engagement	H&WC Date/Delegated Authority?	Comments
Tenancy Strategy	JB	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Incorporated into tenancy and lettings policy.
Void Policy (including void standards)	JB/KF	E	Q1 24/25	NA	18/6/24	To effectively manage voids standards and turnaround.
Water Hygiene Policy	IH	E	N/A	N/A	N/A	Due for review 2025