



EXECUTIVE 19th May 2022

Report Title	Council Housing Policy Update
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Lead Member	Cllr Andy Mercer, Executive Member for Housing & Communities

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Tenancy and Estate Management Policy

Appendix B – Lettable Standard

Appendix C – Tenant Involvement Plan

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval from the Executive for one harmonised policy, a new harmonised Lettable Standard, and a new North Northamptonshire Council Tenant Involvement Plan to be approved for adoption by North Northamptonshire Council.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Executive to adopt the harmonised council housing documents.
- 2.2. The current status quo is that Corby and Kettering housing teams have their own separate approaches in these areas.

2.3. The adoption of these key documents will assist in enabling consistency of the housing function within North Northamptonshire.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Executive:

- a) Approve the Tenancy and Estate Management Policy at **Appendix A**
- b) Approve the Lettable Standard and Tenant Involvement Plan at **Appendix B**
- c) Approve the Tenant Involvement Plan at **Appendix C**
- d) Approves the creation of a Tenancy Advisory Panel as part of the Tenant Involvement Plan and delegates authority to the Executive Member for Housing and Communities in consultation with the Assistant Director of Housing and Communities to agree Terms of Reference.
- e) Delegates authority to the Executive Member for Housing and Communities, in liaison with the Executive Director, Adults, Communities and Wellbeing to take any further decisions and/or actions required to implement these policy documents. This will include changing some of the photographs within both the Lettable Standard and the Tenant Involvement Plan and making minor amendments.

By approving this recommendation, Council officers will be able to: -

- Offer one consistent approach to the tenancy and estate management part of the tenancy and landlord services.
- Comply with regulation that requires all social housing providers to incorporate tenant involvement into their service.
- Offer one consistent standard for letting council owned homes throughout the North Northamptonshire area.

3.3. Alternative Options Considered: -

- The only other option is to do nothing or to delay the harmonisation of working practices across the two teams.
- This is not an option that can continue to be maintained effectively over time. The best option is to harmonise working practices as soon as possible to ensure consistency of service, reduce the risk of challenge, and most importantly make improvements to the service.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. North Northamptonshire has council housing stock in the Kettering and Corby areas. As of 1st April 2021:
- Kettering 3625 homes of which 401 are sheltered
 - Corby 4615 homes of which 536 are sheltered
- 4.2. The Council also owns and manages 94 units of Temporary Accommodation.
- 4.3. Prior to the formation of North Northamptonshire Council, Kettering, and Corby had their own different documents, policies, procedures and working practices which were automatically transferred to the new authority upon Vesting Day.
- 4.4. These all require harmonisation to ensure that the service is operating in a consistent way across the whole area and there is improvement for tenants within the Council's housing stock.

Tenancy and Estate Management Policy

- 4.5. A North Northamptonshire Tenancy and Estate Management Policy follows on from the adoption of North Northamptonshire Councils Tenancy Agreement and Tenancy Policy and will help to underpin the service level offer in two of the authorities' key functions.
- 4.6. The Tenancy Management aspect of this policy provides clarity on how North Northants Council manages tenancies to meet current legislation and its statutory obligations as a landlord.
- 4.7. The Council is keen to adopt a successful tenancy management service that promotes security of tenure within council housing. The Policy supports this approach, setting out how the Council will deal with breaches of tenancy, whilst providing a framework for effective tenancy Management operating within legislation, regulation, and best practice.
- 4.8. The tenancy management aspect explains how the Council will support successful tenancies, confirms expectations from tenants and sets out how the authority will review tenancies.
- 4.9. The Estate Management aspect of this policy sets out the approach the Council will take to maintaining well managed neighbourhoods where people want to live.
- 4.10. The Policy provides clarity on where the Council will intervene in matters of Estate Management and sets out expectations for the estates that it looks after.
- 4.11. There is a synergy between these two key elements of housing management, and it therefore makes sense for the two elements to be combined within one policy.

Lettable Standard

- 4.12. The proposed new Lettable Standard clearly sets out an acceptable standard that will be applied to all council owned properties prior to letting.
- 4.13. The standard has been developed and designed in consultation with tenant representatives.
- 4.14. The focus of the standard is to provide safe, clean, and secure homes that are in good repair.
- 4.15. The Council has conducted a trial period of the proposed Lettable Standard with operational teams and have updated the standard as a result.
- 4.16. The proposed harmonised standard represents an enhanced quality for both Corby and Kettering homes.
- 4.17. An important element of the Lettable Standard is the photographs that are included in some of the sections that point out what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.
- 4.18. The photographs will help provide clarity to staff and tenants on what to expect from the standard.
- 4.19. The Council is collating improved photographs to include in the standard that better reflect what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.

Tenant Involvement Plan

- 4.20. Both the Corby and Kettering area teams have a strong history of successful tenant involvement spanning over 20 years. The proposed Tenant Involvement Plan sets out how the Council aims to continue this and meet regulatory responsibilities.
- 4.21. The current Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard states that housing providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in policies, decisions, and scrutiny of services.
- 4.22. The Councils proposed Tenant Involvement Plan has been developed with tenants from Corby and Kettering. The tenants have been working together for several years now and have combined to form a strong group following the formation of North Northamptonshire Council.
- 4.23. Tenants have helped in the past in areas such as in-depth scrutiny, decision making, monitoring standards and performance, setting up many new initiatives and overall service improvements. The Council is keen to continue this, and the involvement plan sets out a framework for doing this.
- 4.24. It is recommended that a Tenant Advisory Panel is formed as part of the new activities and initiatives, to act as a consultative group and sounding board for

the Council Housing service. It is recommended that the Executive Member, Assistant Director for Housing and Communities, and tenant representatives agree membership, confirm outputs and draft Terms of Reference.

- 4.25. The Tenant Involvement Plan will be underpinned by an action plan that will include all tenant involvement activity for the next three years. Work is ongoing within the housing teams and the tenant representatives.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The two teams in Corby and Kettering currently manage Council Housing functions in different ways. This presents obvious risks to the organisation. Furthermore, it presents issues of inconsistency for our customers.
- 5.2. The Council has a work plan to harmonise all our policies and procedures.
- 5.3. The Councils approach is to remodel existing procedures, taking the best from both, in line with best practice and legislation.
- 5.4. The Council has consulted with colleagues, including senior managers and our tenant representatives. All have favourable views towards the proposed documents and plans.
- 5.5. The Councils Lettable Standard has been tested by the teams in preparation for adoption. It meets best practice and we have compared it favourably to alternative providers.
- 5.6. The proposed Tenant Involvement Plan has been built on our own best practice, and also compares well against other providers. It meets our legal and regulatory responsibilities and presents ambitious activities for the service to develop over the next 3 years.
- 5.7. The Council is seeking to adopt these documents as part of ongoing plans to harmonise working practices. Leaving the current status quo is not the best option due to the risks that it creates of inconsistent management of tenancies, properties, and people.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Following the adoption and implementation of these three policies documents the Council will continue the harmonisation work towards a consistent service across our areas of operation.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1 The Council is currently resourcing its work through the two neighbourhood budgets within the overall HRA (Housing Revenue Account) budget. The new policies have been designed with current resources in mind.
- 7.1.2 Adoption of the policy documents will support a transition to a more consistent service where working practices are harmonised.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. Legislative requirements are contained within the appendices. The recommended harmonisation of policies will help to offset some current legal risks of inconsistency of service delivery.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1 The proposals are priorities in the development of harmonising of Policies for the Council Housing Teams within North Northants Council.

7.4. Risk

- 7.4.1 There are risks in managing North Northamptonshire Council Housing in the current way. Inconsistency within service delivery can lead to potential challenges from complaints.
- 7.4.2 Having one harmonised Tenancy and Estate Management Policy is fundamental in moving towards a consistent approach for our tenants.

7.5 Consultation

- 7.5.1 Consultation has taken place with existing tenant groups in the Corby and Kettering areas.
- 7.5.2 The feedback from these groups were positive in supporting the Council to propose the approval of the recommended approach and these documents.

7.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

- 7.6.1 These policy documents have not yet been reviewed by the Executive Advisory Panel; therefore, no comments or recommendations have been received.

7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

- These policy documents have not been reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee; therefore, no comments or recommendations have been received.

7.8 Equality Implications

7.8.1 The activities set out in the Tenant Involvement Plan demonstrate our aims to increase the ways that our tenants can get involved. One of the aims of the plan is to increase the diversity of our involved tenants.

7.9 Climate Impact

7.9.1 There are no short-term impacts upon climate, however our enhanced Lettable Standard in the medium and long term will provide a better energy efficiency rating in our homes.

7.10 Community Impact

7.10.1 Providing a consistent service to communities of North Northamptonshire Council will be a positive for residents.

7.10.2 Creating a consistent approach to the Councils tenant involvement offer will help to promote and develop tenant involvement for the authority.

7.11 Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1 The Council Housing Teams work in partnership with the local policing teams on matters of crime and anti-social behaviour. The Tenancy and Estate Management Policy includes an overview of our approach to these areas, but more detail will be within our Anti-Social behaviour Policy.

8 Background Papers

8.1 The following policies were considered:

- Corby Borough Council Quality Standard Voids
- Kettering Borough Council Lettable Standard
- Corby Borough Council Tenancy and Estate Management Procedures
- Kettering Borough Council Tenancy and Estate Management Procedures

8.2 North Northamptonshire Tenancy Agreement and Tenancy Policy