

To: Council
Date: **26 January 2026**
Report of: Director of Housing
Title of Report: Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	Report to Council to recommend approval of the updated new Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Corporate Priority:	Good, affordable homes
Policy Framework:	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2028

Recommendation(s): That Council resolves to:

1. **Approve** and adopt the draft Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy.
2. **Delegate authority** to the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, authority to update the Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy with minor amendments to keep the documents up to date with any future changes in legislation, regulations, governance and best practice.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Draft Tenancy Strategy	No
Appendix 2	Draft Tenancy Policy	No
Appendix 3	Equality Impact Assessment	No
Appendix 4	Risk Register	No
Appendix 5	Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy Consultation Survey Response	No

Introduction and background

1. The Council is both a strategic housing authority and a registered provider of social housing for tenants of the Council and has a duty to publish a Tenancy Strategy as a strategic housing authority and a Tenancy Policy as a registered provider of social housing and landlord, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.
2. The purpose of the Tenancy Strategy is to set out the Council's requirements and expectations of all social housing providers operating within the City (including the Council as a social landlord). Under the Localism Act, all Registered Providers (RPs) of social housing are required to have regard to the Tenancy Strategy in their Tenancy Policies and how they are applied for new and existing tenants in Oxford. The Strategy seeks to ensure all social landlords operating within Oxford provide the types of tenancies and support required to meet local housing need and help tenants to successfully sustain their tenancies, remain in their homes and to prevent homelessness.
3. The Council's Tenancy Policy supports the objectives of the Tenancy Strategy, by setting out the Council's own approach to issuing and managing tenancies for its social housing tenants. The policy is for new and existing Council tenants and includes information on the types of tenancy, rent and support the Council will offer and is one of a suite of policies that outline the Council's approach to its tenants as a social landlord.
4. The Council's old Tenancy Strategy and Policy were adopted in 2018 and will be replaced by these new documents. The new strategy and policy reflect the updated priorities of the Council and tenants and comply with the new legislative and regulatory requirement of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and Consumer Standards.
5. Officers presented a report to Cabinet on Wednesday 10th December 2025 which requested approval of the new strategy and policy alongside the recommendation for the documents to be approved and adopted at the next full Council meeting. Cabinet approved the report and recommendations and further details including the minutes can be found [here](#).

Our updated Tenancy Strategy and Policy

6. The new Tenancy Strategy aligns with the aims of other key Council strategies and policies including the Council Strategy 2024-2028, Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 23-28 and the Allocations Scheme.
7. The core principles of the new Strategy remain consistent with the Council's longstanding approach to social housing in the City: tenants should be offered secure tenancies, at social rent where possible and receive the support they need to live in their homes (outlined in more detail below). There is a greater emphasis on requesting RPs to ensure there is suitable support in place to help their tenants living in Oxford and to work closely with the Council on tackling issues affecting residents including the prevention of homelessness, Domestic Abuse and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in local neighbourhoods.
8. The key objectives of the Tenancy Strategy (reflected in the Tenancy Policy for new and existing Council tenants) are:

- To promote Oxford City Council's housing vision with a focus on providing secure or assured social tenancies.
- New social housing tenancies are let at genuinely affordable rents i.e. in line with Social Rent levels ideally or at Affordable Rent capped at Local Housing Allowance (or equivalent measure) levels
- To reduce the risk of homelessness, promote tenancy sustainment and contribute to the Council priorities of delivering *good affordable homes* and *thriving communities*.
- To ensure that RPs of social housing have regard to and adhere to the Tenancy Strategy within their own policies and work closely with their tenants and in partnership with the Council to the benefit of the local community

9. Through this Strategy, the Council seeks to work in partnership to make the best use of existing and new social housing built in the City owned by RPs and the Council to be allocated through the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing. Furthermore, to ensure new housing applicants and existing tenants seeking to transfer or in housing need are helped, including those who are homeless, overcrowded or living in unsuitable housing and any tenants willing to downsize and free up larger homes for families in housing need.

10. The new Strategy and Policy is embedded into the Council's policy framework to comply with the changing legislative and regulatory regime for social housing in England. In recent years the government has increased the regulation of RPs and Councils to drive up the safety and quality of homes and to ensure the tenants' voice is listened to and central in policy development. The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and new Consumer Standards 2024 underpin the new regulatory regime administered by the Regulator of Social Housing.

11. The Tenancy Standard, part of the wider Consumer Standards brought in by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act that social housing landlords must comply with, imposes clear requirements on social landlords in their approach to tenancies. This includes the requirement to publish a clear policy on issuing of tenancies and to outline our approach to areas such as tenure, flexible tenancies, introductory tenancies and succession. The new Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy embed this approach in Oxford, ensuring regulatory compliance.

Tenant, Registered Provider and Public consultation

12. Officers have engaged registered providers, residents (including social housing tenants and prospective tenants) and the wider public in the development of the Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy.

13. The Council ran a public consultation from Monday 29 September 2025 to Sunday 26 October 2025 which included the draft Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy alongside a set of questions which focused on gaining insight into the views of registered providers and residents in key areas of the strategy including security of tenure, rental type, tenancy sustainment, etc..

14. Officers wrote to all registered providers of social housing in Oxford who are participating in the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing (ORAH) partnership. The Council promoted the consultation to all City residents via social media and local press, and specifically to Council tenants in the 'Tenants in Touch' newsletter

and engaged Oxford City Councillors through the regular members newsletter. Officers also promoted the consultation to housing applicants on the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing via the Council's Choice-Based Lettings website used to advertise and let social housing to new and existing tenants.

15. Officers also engaged directly with Oxford City Council tenants through two on-line focus group sessions. Through this process a summary of the proposed changes were presented, and the tenants were given the opportunity to discuss the proposals, raise any queries and suggest any changes or improvements. Tenants in this process were broadly supportive of the Council's proposed approach, including on the issuing of lifetime secure tenancies and seeking to offer social rent whenever possible.
16. Taking into account feedback from the tenants on suggested improvements Council Officers have amended the final documents to include clearer reference to other Policies, Strategies, Guidance and Legislation referenced within Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy and the on-line consultation questionnaire was updated and made clearer.
17. A detailed report of the on-line consultation is included in **Appendix 5**. The questions covered views on the objectives of the Tenancy Strategy and Policy, our strong preference for lifetime secure/assured tenancies offered at social rent level, to provide support to tenants to prevent homelessness and help to those affected by Domestic Abuse and ASB. In addition, views were asked on how easy it was to understand the Tenancy Strategy and Policy.
18. The responses can be split into feedback from RPs of Social Housing, Oxford City Council Tenants and all respondents. Almost 50% of respondents were tenants of the Council, key findings from the consultation include:
 - The responses from the RPs all strongly agreed or agreed with all the proposals and found the Tenancy Strategy and Policy straightforward to understand. With the exception of one RP which was unsure whether lifetime tenancies should be issued to all tenants.
 - The responses from Council tenants also strongly agreed with or agreed with the proposals. The majority also agreed that the Tenancy Strategy and Policy were easy to understand although one disagreed regarding the Tenancy Strategy. Following on from this and feedback from the tenant focus groups this has been reviewed to make it clearer.
 - Overall, the majority of all the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with all the proposals within the Tenancy Strategy and Policy and found both straightforward to follow. Further feedback was also received agreeing with the key aims of supporting tenants in their homes, regular visits to ensure homes were of a decent standard and keeping in contact with tenants to better understand their needs around health and to help older tenants to move to smaller more suitable homes if required. Dealing with ASB was also agreed as a priority and keeping the Tenancy Strategy and Policy under review to ensure they are kept up to date with any changes in legislation.
19. This supports the recommendation to Council to approve the new strategy and policy.

Options considered

18. Recommendation – Approve the draft Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy to ensure the Council is compliant with current legislation and regulations and RPs have a clear decision-making framework related to the issuing of tenancies for new and existing properties.
19. Do nothing – Under this option, the Council would not approve the draft Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy. The Council would risk being non-compliant with legislative requirements under key legislation such as the Social Housing Regulations Act and Consumer Standards.

Financial implications

20. There are no direct financial implications arising from the Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy. The Tenancy Strategy provides a framework for decision making related to issuing and managing tenancies and aims to encourage partnership working and value for money for residents.
21. Any subsequent financial implications arising as a result of the implementation of this Strategy & Policy document will be formally reported / requested through the appropriate governance processes as and when required.

Legal issues

22. Local Authorities are required to issue and review their Tenancy Strategies in line with the Localism Act 2011 (sections 150 and 151). Approval of the updated Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy ensures the Council continues to meet its duties under the Act.
23. The updated documents also ensure compliance and alignment with associated legislation including the Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023 and Consumer Standards and the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) incorporating the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
24. The Council's governance regarding its landlord and strategic housing functions is under review and the monitoring of this strategy may be updated in line with these developments.

Level of risk

25. A comprehensive risk register has been completed as part of this report and can be found in **Appendix 4**.

Equality impact

26. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and can be found in **Appendix 3**.

Carbon and Environmental considerations

27. The Strategy does not have direct actions which relate to carbon and environmental impact.

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Background Papers:

1. Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy 2018 – 2023

[Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy | Oxford City Council](#)

2. Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 - 2028

[Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 to 2028 | Oxford City Council](#)