

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 April 2026
Report of: Director of Housing
Title of Report: HRA Property Services Policies

| Summary and recommendations | |
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| Decision being taken: | To recommend that Council approve the following policies: aids and adaptations, disposals, mutual exchange, no access to ensure the maintenance and good management of the housing stock. |
| Key decision: | Yes |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Linda Smith – Housing and Communities |
| Corporate Priority: | Good, affordable homes |
| Policy Framework: | HRA Asset Management Strategy |

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| Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to recommend that Council approve: |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The draft Aids and Adaptations Policy 2. The draft Disposals Policy 3. The draft Mutual Exchange Policy 4. The draft No Access Policy |

| Appendix No. | Appendix Title | Exempt from Publication |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Appendix 1 | Aids and Adaptations Policy | No |
| Appendix 2 | Disposals Policy | No |
| Appendix 3 | Mutual Exchange Policy | No |
| Appendix 4 | No Access Policy | No |

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Introduction and background:

1. Further to the Cabinet approving the damp and mould, fire safety, asbestos, disrepair, electrical safety, legionella, gas safety, radon, permit to work, health and safety and compliance policies, further policies are being presented to the Cabinet to ensure the safety of residents and the good management of the housing stock.
2. The policies being presented to the Council fall into two broad categories – ensuring the safety of all residents and secondly, ensuring the good management of the housing stock with the need to treat residents with dignity and respect when, in extreme circumstances, tenants have to leave homes temporarily for urgent maintenance work to be undertaken.
3. Making sure residents have a safe, affordable and decent place to call home is the core purpose of this work. Successive Governments has been working to strengthen the voice of residents and introduce legislation to ensure the quality of homes.
4. In 2018, the then Government published the Social Housing White Paper to ensure residents of social housing are safe, listened to, live in good quality homes and have access to help when things go wrong. Consequently, the Social Housing Regulation Act (“the Act”) received Royal Assent in July 2023. The Act forms a new regulatory framework for the social housing sector, aiming to give residents greater powers and improve access to quick and fair solutions to problems.
5. The Act aims to ensure Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are compliant with the consumer standards by giving the Regulator of Social Housing new powers to address RSLs who are not meeting their commitments to residents.
6. The Social Housing Charter detailed what social housing residents should expect from their landlords, including feeling safe in their homes, knowing how their landlords are performing and having their complaints solved quickly.
7. The Act sets out to deliver against each of these commitments:
 - Residents to be safe in their home.
 - Residents to know how their landlord is performing.
 - Residents to have their complaints dealt with promptly.
 - Residents to be treated with respect.
 - Residents to have their voice heard by their landlord.
 - Residents to have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in.
8. Technical policies are therefore required to adhere to this regulatory regime. They are also key to ensure the effective operation of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) property service as it ensures that asset management services

and the development of the social housing programme are set within a sound operating framework such as meeting key performance criteria, as well as achieving sustainability objectives are met and monitored.

9. The ability to refresh policies ensures key KPIs can be refined to meet the contemporary needs of tenants and of the wider city in respect of the role of housing in attaining economic growth.
10. At the same time, the need to ensure high standards are maintained, such as guaranteeing high standards with the installation of aids and adaptations are met which are attained by clear technical policies which ensures consistent follow through with operational work in addressing health and safety objectives.
11. The Council recognises its compliance responsibilities as well as the critical need to listen and act on the lived in experiences of our residents. There has been a series of meetings with the Residents Policy Review Group and survey work with residents which has amended and approved the policies which are being presented to Cabinet for approval with this report.
12. There is a need for a suite of other policies to be considered and approved by the Cabinet to meet these regulatory standards. It is envisaged that further policies, once they are considered by residents, will be presented to the Cabinet for approval.

Aids and Adaptations Policy

13. The aims of the policy are to ensure that wherever possible, the Council assists residents, to remain in their own homes and communities through the provision of aids and adaptations, ensuring that disabled people of all ages can build and sustain their independence.
14. The purpose of any installation of an aid or adaptation is to modify the home environment to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families. In addition, the policy ensures residents applying for aids and adaptations are treated in a fair and equitable way.
15. Aids and adaptations that can be installed in a property include minor adaptations which are, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Grab rails
 - Additional banister rails
 - Floor to wall / ceiling rails
 - Half steps
 - Adjustments to door handles / window latches
 - Lever taps
 - Flashing doorbells
 - Key safes
16. Examples of major adaptations include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Level-access showers
 - Wet rooms

- Over bath showers
- Ramps
- Stair lifts / through-floor lifts
- Wash / dry toilets
- Specialist baths
- Extensions and/or Structural Alternatives

17. The expected timescales for delivering adaptations as stipulated in the policy are as follow:

| Type of work | Cost of work | Desktop assessment | Delivered once accepted | As an example of work – includes but not limited to |
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| Minor Works | Less than £1000 | 4 weeks | 20 working days | Temporary ramps Half steps Hand rails Grab rails Sanitary ware |
| Minor Works | More than £1000 | 4 weeks | 12 weeks | Over bath shower The installation of stairlifts and special purpose equipment Ramps |
| Major Works | More than £1000 | 4 weeks | 52 weeks | Bathroom and kitchen adaptations, ground floor WC conversions, garage conversions, and access |
| Complex | More than £1000 involving planning consent, | 4 weeks | Dependent on complexity and involved third parties | |

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| | building control | | | |
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18. The Cabinet is asked to approve the draft Aids and Adaptations Policy and commend the policy for approval to Full Council.

Disposals

19. The policy outlines the approach of the Council to the appraisal and potential disposal of HRA assets that are no longer meeting the needs of the Housing Service and where the capital receipt generated could be better utilised elsewhere to support the objectives of the HRA Business Plan.
20. This policy ensures that HRA property and asset decisions are transparent. The policy sets out the criteria to decide how assets will be appraised and outlines a procedure to consider when potentially disposing of HRA assets.
21. This policy is designed to ensure any disposals fit within defined criteria which goes beyond financial management to also ensure social and environmental objectives are considered before a disposal is considered. A series of detailed questions must be addressed in the affirmative before a disposal is agreed to.
22. This policy is in line with best practice across social housing and supports the principle of value for money by avoiding disproportionate financial impact from a small number of low performing assets.
23. This policy applies to the appraisal and potential disposal of HRA land or void housing assets deemed financially unviable or otherwise surplus to the requirements of the HRA
24. This policy does not cover HRA properties sold under the right to buy (RTB) scheme. The RTB scheme has its own process, as set out in legislation.
23. The Cabinet is asked to approve the draft Disposals Policy and recommend the policy for approval to Full Council.

Mutual Exchange Policy

24. The policy sets out the Council's commitment to providing tenants with a good customer experience by giving good advice, managing, and supporting the Mutual Exchange process.
25. The aim of this Policy is to deliver the Council's Mutual Exchange scheme in line with legislation and the relevant guidelines, and to apply the conditions for Mutual Exchanges fairly, consistently and within the statutory timeframe.
26. A mutual exchange is a process which allows Council tenants to swap homes and tenancies with tenants of other social housing landlords. This process can occur with more than two households in a chain of swaps. The exchange can only take place with the written permission from each respective landlord.
27. Mutual Exchange partners assign tenancies and move into each other's properties 'as seen' and take on all the rights and responsibilities set out in the tenancy agreement for the property they move into.
28. The Council recognise the benefits a Mutual Exchange can have for both the tenant and the Council. The process helps:

- tenants to meet their housing needs.
- move closer to work.
- Tenants to be closer to family members and / or support networks

29. For many tenants who are adequately housed; not in a high priority band for a transfer; or where there is a high demand for the accommodation that they need, a Mutual Exchange can provide the only realistic opportunity for them to move from their current home into one which better meets their needs.

30. The Cabinet is asked to approve the draft Mutual Exchange Policy and recommend the policy for approval to Full Council.

No Access Policy

31. This policy concerns the Council's approach when tenants refuse access for essential maintenance work to be undertaken.
32. Potential risks resulting from refusals / no access for improvement work include the following:
- Effective delivery of the capital programme and related workstreams, such as significant underspends in the year.
 - Value for money – one-off replacements usually cost more, plus may have a longer lead in time compared to a planned approach.
 - Health & safety – some elements of work are required from a health and safety perspective
 - Safeguarding concerns – The need for these concerns to be identified.
33. Tenancy agreements state that tenants must allow access to inspect and carry out repairs and improvements, and that if a tenant does not allow access that we could take legal action, with the tenant having to potentially pay the costs. When a tenant refuses work or allow access, they are effectively breaching their covenants under the tenancy agreement.
34. Access is required to address maintenance issues for the following reasons:

| Type of work, maintenance or survey | Intrusive/non-intrusive | Internal/External | Enforcement Action Required | Comments |
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| Windows | Intrusive | External/Internal | Yes | Potential minimal intrusion in colder months. Integral component to fabric of building. Contributes to |

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| | | | | Decent Homes and Zero carbon targets |
| Doors | Intrusive | External/Internal | Yes | Potential minimal intrusion in colder months. Integral component to fabric of building. Contributes to Decent Homes and Zero carbon targets. May be required due to Fire Risk Assessment |
| Asbestos surveys | Intrusive/Non-intrusive | External/Internal | Yes | Required under Decent Homes Standard legislation and the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974. Tenants may need to be decanted dependent on circumstances |
| Roofs | Non-intrusive/Intrusive | External | Yes | Potential minimal intrusion if items stored in loft or disruption to garden and or parking. Integral component to fabric of building. Contributes to Decent Homes target |

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| Structural work | Intrusive | External/Internal | Yes | Integral component to fabric of building, may impact other properties if not carried out |
| External painting | Non-intrusive | External | No | Cyclical painting of fascia's / gutters, fences etc. May extend life of those components plus benefits general appearance of property |
| Kitchen | Intrusive | Internal | No | Intrusive in one room plus storage required for kitchen items elsewhere. Potential disruption to essential services. Contributes to Decent Homes target. |
| Bathroom | Intrusive | Internal | No | Intrusive in one room. Potential disruption to essential services. Contributes to Decent Homes target |
| Rewire | Intrusive | Internal | Yes | Very intrusive, all areas of home affected. Potential disruption to essential services. |

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| | | | | Contributes to Decent Homes target. |
| Boiler replacement and central heating (with renewable heating) | Intrusive | Internal | Yes | Very intrusive (if central heating included), all areas of home affected. Potential disruption to essential services. Contributes to Decent Homes target and zero carbon target. |
| Insulation (External Wall) | Non-intrusive | External | Yes | Contributes to zero carbon target |
| Insulation (Internal Wall) | Intrusive | Internal | Yes | Very intrusive to front and rear internal rooms, plus gable if necessary. Contributes to zero carbon target. |
| Sprinklers | Intrusive | Internal | Yes | In connection with fire safety legislation |
| Fire risk assessment work | Dependent on area required | Internal/External | Yes | Work is mandatory to comply with Fire Risk Assessment action requirements. Potential fluctuations in temperature while work is being undertaken. |

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| Electrical condition reports | Intrusive | Internal | Yes | Minimal intrusion. Electrical condition reports are mandatory. Potential disruption to essential services. |
| Stock condition survey | Non-intrusive | Internal/External | Yes | To assist Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) compliance and assist future investment decisions. Compliance with revised consumer standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing. Potential decanting of tenants if a category one issue or issues has been identified. |
| Repairs | Intrusive/Non intrusive | Internal/External | Yes/No | Where the repair relates to a potential health and safety issue and could have an impact on the integrity of the building or the tenant's health and safety then |

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| | | | | enforcement action should be considered. Potential disruption to essential services. |
| Property Audits | Non-intrusive | Internal | Yes | Meter readings, photos etc. Visits and EPCs. Public funding could be at stake if these are not carried out. |

35. Consequently, the policy outlines the steps the Council would follow to enable access for essential maintenance work to be undertaken.

36. The Cabinet is asked to approve the draft No Access Policy and recommend the policy for approval to Full Council.

Financial implications

37. Any work required as a result of the implementation of these policies will be managed using the existing approved budgets.

Legal issues

38. The policies being presented for approval are required under the Consumer Standard as set by legislation and the Regulator for Social Housing.

Level of risk

39. The failure of the Council to have these asset management policies would go against the Corporate Plan to keep residents safe and could lead to regulatory infringements further to the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing, the Health and Safety Executive and the Building Services Regulator.

Equality impact

40. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) has been carried out in compliance with the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 in order to determine whether the policies would have an adverse impact on persons with protected characteristics..

41. Whilst the EqIA has identified that there are no adverse impacts anticipated by these policies on any person with protected characteristics nevertheless, it is identified that there are certain groups at increased risk from safety infringements. These groups are:

- children
- adults with learning difficulties

- oxygen users
- people taking certain medication
- those suffering the effects of drugs and alcohol
- adults aged 65 and older
- people with disabilities
- Individuals being supported by the Community Safety team and related support services

42. These policies aim to reduce the risks to these groups of people through proactively identifying these risk factors, raising awareness and education in furtherance of the Public Sector Equality Duty (s.149).

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

43. Adoption of these policies will contribute towards the good maintenance of properties further to the Climate Change Act 2008 and the Smoke Free Oxford strategy.

Conclusion

44. By approving these policies, this will help establish the framework to maintain the housing stock and further ensure the safety of our residents. This approval would also help meet the expectations of the Regulator of Social Housing that the Council is meeting its regulatory obligations. Further HRA policies will be presented to the Cabinet for its consideration after residents have been able to assess and, if necessary, amend draft proposals.

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Background Papers:

List the background documents and, if possible, link to them.

All background papers must be listed in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act and The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. This includes, any material which discloses facts or matters on which the report or an important part of it is based and which have been relied on in the preparation of the report. Each document must be listed and a copy of each document made available to members and the public on request, (or they should be directed where to find it if it is already published on the Council’s website). All confidential, exempt, copyrighted and published works are EXCLUDED from this requirement.

- 1 Consumer Standard – Regulator of Social Housing - [Regulatory standards for landlords - GOV.UK](#)
- 2 Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 - [Landmark Social Housing Act receives Royal Assent to become law - GOV.UK](#)

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