

## SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report of:** Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health

**To:** Cabinet, 3 December 2019

**(Author:** Chris Mycock Housing Repairs Manager)

**Subject** Housing Repairs and Fitness for Habitation Policy.

**Purpose:** To seek approval for adoption of the Housing Repairs and Fitness for Habitation Policy.

### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1) That Members consider approval of the Housing Repairs and Fitness for Habitation Policy.
- 2) That amendments to the appendices of the Policy are delegated to the Housing Landlord Services Manager in consultation with the Portfolio for Housing and Health.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In 2017, the council undertook a fundamental review of a number of Place based services. This included all teams within the Housing Service. The focus on the review was to meet identified savings targets; re-design services to address long-standing cultural and performance issues; To future proof the services so that they are well placed to meet service demands; To ensure best value and high performance in the delivery of frontline services. A phased approach of these objectives has been accomplished with the teams now able to move to further process and procedural redesign and technological improvements.
- 1.2 The Council is responsible for most of the repairs of its housing stock, the legal framework that obliges Council's to maintain their stock is outlined in:
  - The Tenancy Agreement
  - Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
  - Fitness for Human Habitation Act 2018
- 1.2 We will ensure that the policy sufficiently defines the responsibilities of the Council (as a Landlord) and the tenant. It will ensure that the tenants are aware of what their responsibilities are and what their rights are in relation to repairs, maintenance and improvements to their Council property.
- 1.4 The Housing Repairs and Fitness for Habitation Policy sets out the Council's overall approach to maintaining and repairing its housing stock to a habitable standard as reflected in the legal obligations mentioned above.
- 1.5 The policy sets out in detail:

- What repairs we will carry out
- Within what time scales we will carry repairs out
- What repairs we will recharge a tenant for
- What we class as an emergency repair and within what timescales we will respond to emergency repairs
- The tenant's rights in regards to repairs
- The tenant's responsibilities in regards to repairs
- What permissions tenant's will require to carry out alterations or improvements.
- The minimum standard that we will bring a property up to before re-letting it.

1.6 Once approved, the policy will give a clear understanding, in terms of repairs and maintenance, as to what is expected of the Council as a Landlord but equally what is expected of the tenant in terms of looking after their home. The policy states clearly the tenant's responsibilities and rights and enables the Council to have a fair and consistent approach to repairing our stock.

1.7 This policy deals with what repairs we are able to charge for, it should be noted that the Housing Income Policy deals with the levels of those charges and therefore both policies should be read in conjunction with each other.

## 2.0 **OPTIONS**

2.1 That the Housing Repairs and Fitness for Habitation Policy is approved for consideration by the Policy Development Panel and amendments to the appendices of the Policy are delegated to the Housing Landlord Services Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health

2.2 Do nothing and continue to operate with the existing policy. However it should be noted that this will not provide a mechanism for recharging repairs as outlined in the Housing Income Policy.

## 3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 The Policy clearly sets out the responsibilities of both the Council as a Landlord and those of the tenant. This gives the tenant clear expectations that can be managed whilst ensuring there is no ambiguity as to what they are responsible for and what is expected of them as a tenant of the Council.

3.2 Adopting the policy will enable us to clearly state when a recharge for a repair caused by damage or neglect is applicable, thus allowing us to recuperate costs where applicable.

## 4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 The policy will enable us to be consistent and maintain our stance when liaising with tenants on what repairs can be expected to be undertaken. As the message that the policy seeks to give gets embedded amongst our tenants it is anticipated that the number of calls will reduce. In particular we will receive fewer repeat calls where a tenant is insistent we carry out a repair that is their responsibility - this is because the policy is clear on who is responsible for what.

4.2 As the policy sets out the tenant's responsibilities and therefore what repairs they are responsible for we will see a reduction in repairs appointments that we currently attend. This will mean a reduction in costs and thus a budget saving as we will attend fewer appointments.

4.3 In addition, where we attend an appointment that the policy states is a rechargeable repair we will be in a position to administer that charge and recuperate the cost.

## 5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

### 5.1 **Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues**

5.1.1 The policy sets out clearly what is the tenant's responsibility and what is the Council's. There is likelihood that we will attend fewer repairs than previously thus potentially reducing, albeit a minor amount, our carbon footprint.

### 5.2 **Corporate Priorities**

5.2.1 The policy promotes our priority of providing the right services, at the right time and in the right way and also supports our ambition to have pride in South Holland by supporting our residents to develop and thrive.

### 5.3 **Crime and Disorder**

5.3.1 The policy places an emphasis on the tenant to pay for wilful damage, this could deter some tenants from deliberately damaging the property.

### 5.4 **Financial**

5.4.1 The policy will reduce the amount of repairs having to be undertaken by our Housing Repairs Team thus reducing our costs, there is also the potential to recuperate charges via the recharging element of the policy.

### 5.5 **Health & Wellbeing**

5.5.1 The aim of the policy is not only to set out roles and responsibilities but by doing so to improve the standards of our accommodation, better living conditions will have a positive impact on the tenant's health and wellbeing.

### 5.6 **Reputation**

5.6.1 The Council aspires to be a Landlord of choice and continue to build a strong reputation. In order to deliver strong outcomes for customers clearly setting out our expectations and responsibilities will further drive this forward.

## 6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 We carry out repairs in all the Wards within our district so all wards and communities are affected.

## 7.0 **ACRONYMS**

7.1 n/a

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Background papers:- none

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**Lead Contact Officer**

Name and Post: Chris Mycock Housing Repairs Manager  
Telephone Number 01775 764831  
Email: cmycock@sholland.gov.uk

**Key Decision:** N

**Exempt Decision:** N

**This report refers to a Mandatory Service**

**Appendices attached to this report:**

Appendix A **Housing Repairs and Fitness for Habitation Policy.**