

HOUSING MANAGEMENT POLICY

Date of policy	March 2021
Date for review	March 2024
Policy author	Helen Sudbury, Housing Operations Lead Specialist
Policy owner	John Holman, Assistant Director Housing
Approved by	Cabinet 17.3.21

REVISION HISTORY			
Version	Date	Revision description	Revision author
0.1	October 2020	Draft policy	Helen Sudbury
0.2	24 November 2020	Updated in light of EIA	Jonathan Hicks

NEW POLICY / POLICY REVIEW	
New policy	Yes
Early review – change in legislation	
Early review – significant changes in practice	
Review due – significant changes	
Review due – cosmetic changes or unchanged	
Other reason	

REASON FOR NEW POLICY / SUMMARY OF CHANGES
New Housing Service for FHDC October 1 2020

CONSULTATION	
List of people/roles who have been consulted	Date
STLB	
HMT	

Housing Operations Legal Services	
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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Completed	Date
	YES	24/11/20

DISSEMINATION		
Role	Awareness	Essential
All housing and associated staff	Yes	

TRAINING		
Role	Trainer	Date completed
Team managers		30.4.21

MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE		
Method	Responsibility	Frequency

1. Purpose of Policy

1.1 This policy summarises Folkestone and Hythe District Council's offer regarding tenancy compliance and its housing management obligations on estates.

2. Policy objectives and scope

2.1 Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) is committed to increasing the provision of housing and making the best use of stock to meet the needs of existing and new tenants. We understand the importance of tenancy compliance so that tenants experience the 'quiet enjoyment' of their homes. We are also committed to ensuring that our properties and communal areas are compliant regarding health and safety.

2.2 The scope of this Policy covers the FHDC housing management service.

2.3 This Policy applies to FHDC employees and tenants.

3. Legal/Regulatory Framework

3.1 The primary legislation for the housing management service is the Housing Act 1985 (as amended) and the regulatory framework is the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards.

4. Responsibility

4.1 The Housing Operations Team have the responsibility to ensure that breaches of tenancy are addressed appropriately.

4.2 All FHDC employees have a responsibility to identify when breaches of tenancy may have taken place and report them to the Housing Operations Team.

5. Policy Position

Tenancy agreements

5.1 FHDC will ensure that all tenants are aware of their full range of rights and responsibilities through robust tenancy agreements and the pre-tenancy work of the on boarding process. Enforcement action is the last resort and we will use a range of methods to support tenancy sustainment and prevent eviction.

Abandonment and disposal of goods

- 5.2 When a property appears to have been abandoned we will carry out reasonable checks prior to serving a Notice to Quit and subsequently taking peaceful possession or applying for a court order for possession.
- 5.3 If goods have been left in a property after the tenancy has ended we will serve a Torts Notice and store the goods in the property for either 28 or 14 days, depending on the circumstances. If they are not claimed by the former tenants, they will be disposed of.

Hoarding and property condition

- 5.4 We recognise that hoarding and poor property conditions are particularly difficult tenancy management issues to deal with. We will support tenants to move towards compliancy. However, if the property condition does not improve, tenancy enforcement action may be taken in view of the detrimental effect this has on our property and risk to neighbouring homes.
- 5.4.1 Where hoarding is the result of an underlying mental health issue, we will actively work with the tenant(s) through a bespoke action plan and access support from other agencies. Our primary concern at all times being the health, well-being and safety of tenants in their homes.

Pets

- 5.5 FHDC recognises that pet ownership can offer significant benefits to tenants. However, irresponsible pet ownership can lead to nuisance for other residents and will not be tolerated. FHDC will advise on pet ownership in line with the Pet Procedure. Permission to keep a pet in the property will be considered on a case-by-case basis and take into account the tenant's needs and suitability of the property.

Tenancy Fraud

- 5.6 FHDC takes a very pro-active approach to prevent and detect tenancy fraud including:
- Verifying potential tenants before they are offered a property.
 - Undertaking reviews of introductory tenancies during the 12-month period
 - Undertaking tenancy audit checks.
 - Acting on reports of refused access to properties immediately.
 - Dealing with unauthorised occupation and sub-letting.
 - Working closely with the Council's Investigations Team

Safety compliance

- 5.7 We will comply with all statutory and regulatory obligations to keep our homes safe. Where we need access to tenants' homes to carry out health and safety compliance checks, and tenants continue to refuse, we will use controlled access or take legal action to gain entry.

Independent Living Service

- 5.8 The Housing Operations service includes the Independent Living Service which manages FHDC's sheltered accommodation stock. This is independent living accommodation for those people aged 60 years or over or for younger people who are disabled. These are mainly traditional housing schemes where the tenant has their own flat and they have the use of communal facilities such as lounges, kitchens, laundry rooms, wet rooms and in some schemes a guest room. All of the housing management obligations in this policy also apply to this service.

Estate Management

Abandoned Vehicles

- 5.9 Abandoned, untaxed (including the use of SORN) or un-roadworthy vehicles are not permitted on FHDC Housing land. We will attempt to contact any owner, giving them reasonable chance to remove the vehicle whilst not compromising public safety. Failure to respond to our notice will result in the removal and disposal of the vehicle.

Block Inspections

- 5.10 FHDC carries out regular inspections of blocks of flats where there are internal communal areas to ensure that health and safety issues are identified and actioned. We will also ensure that tenancy management issues identified through fire risk assessments are acted upon.

Removal of Goods from Communal Areas

- 5.11 FHDC is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of all our communal areas in blocks of flats. This includes ensuring that these areas are kept free of all obstructions, many of which may represent a fire hazard. The storage of items in communal areas is not permitted and any such items will be removed following a Torts Notice being placed on them, or served to relevant addresses.
- 5.12 Permission to store mobility scooters or other walking aids will be assessed in line with our mobility scooter procedure, to ensure effective measures are in place for their safe use and storage. Where we are able, our aim is to provide external, purpose built, scooter storage units at our Independent Living schemes.

6 Key controls and reporting

- 6.1 Case progression and closure is performance managed through case reviews and regular meetings with employees in the Housing Operations Team.
- 6.2 Key areas of Team performance and outputs are reported on a monthly basis.

7 Associated Documents

- 7.1 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the associated procedures at Appendix 1. Our procedures may be altered in line with service requirements, while the overarching policy may remain unchanged.

8 Equality and Diversity

- 8.1 FHDC recognise that different people and communities may have specific needs which may require flexible approaches. We also appreciate that some groups or individuals may experience discrimination and disadvantage. This may be due to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. We believe that everyone should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness, regardless of their characteristics.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy which will be updated in line with policy reviews (see 14 below,) to ensure there is no discrimination and opportunities to improve equality and access are maximised.

9 Review

- 9.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years by the person who is in the job role of the author. If necessary, this Policy will be reviewed sooner to incorporate legislative, regulatory, best practice developments, council decisions or address operational issues.

Appendix 1 – Housing Management Procedures

Abandoned Property

Death of a tenant

Introductory tenancy – monitoring

Introductory tenancy – extension / failure

Poor property / garden conditions

Torts Notice

Abandoned vehicles

Block inspections

Decant

Ending a tenancy – residential care

Estate inspections

Garages

Hoarding

Pets

Removal of goods from communal areas

Customer of concern

Safeguarding

Squatting and unauthorised occupation

Unlawful sub-letting

Mobility Scooters

