

This Report will be made public on 9 March 2021

Report Number **C/20/82**

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 17 March 2021  
**Status:** Non key  
**Responsible Officer:** Helen Sudbury, Housing Operations Lead Specialist  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects

**SUBJECT:** Housing Operations Policies

**SUMMARY:** This report seeks approval for the new policies which form the framework for the Housing Operations service.

## **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

As the Housing Service has returned to the Council, it is important to have a framework of policies to ensure operational effectiveness and good governance. The following forms part of a library of policies that members will be asked to approve in due course.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note Report C/20/82.
2. To approve the following new Housing Operations policies:
  1. Tenancy Policy
  2. Housing Management Policy
  3. Housing Community Safety Policy
  4. Home Ownership Policy
  5. Shared Ownership Policy
  6. Right to Buy Policy
3. To give delegated authority to the Director of Housing and Operations, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects, to approve minor amendments to housing operational policies in the future, and to bring substantive changes back to Cabinet for approval as necessary.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The new Folkestone and Hythe Housing Service was created on 1 October 2020, when the landlord service was brought back under the management of the Council.
- 1.2 East Kent Housing did not have these policies and they have therefore been created to provide governance for the Housing Operations service (tenancy and leasehold management).
- 1.3 A Tenancy Policy was approved in 2012 by Shepway Council to reflect the changes brought in by the Localism Act 2011. This policy mainly focused on the proposal that the Council should adopt flexible (fixed term) tenancies rather than secure tenancies as it had done previously. It is a regulatory requirement for social housing providers to have a Tenancy Policy.
- 1.4 The policies for Member approval are high level and a range of detailed operational procedures support them.

## 2. SUMMARIES OF THE POLICIES

- a. **Tenancy Policy** – this policy deals with access to housing, the type of tenancies the Council offers, tenancy sustainment, assignment, succession, mutual exchanges and grounds for possession.
- b. **Housing Management Policy** – this policy highlights the areas of work undertaken to manage our tenancies, estates and communal areas, making the best use of stock to meet the needs of existing and new tenants. We understand the importance of tenancy compliance so that all tenants can 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.
- c. **Community Safety Policy** - this policy covers the housing related community safety service provided to tenants of the Council. The term community safety covers issues such as anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, hate related incidents and safeguarding. Our aim is to balance enforcement action with intervention programmes which address the issues and make communities better. The housing service will work closely with other colleagues in the council to deal with tenants whose behaviour is having a negative impact on the community.
- d. **Homeownership Policy** – this deals with ensuring the accuracy of service charges; keeping the level of service charge arrears to a minimum; ensuring that a consistent approach is taken to service charge arrears collection and how the Council consults with leaseholders and other shared owners with regards to Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, as amended by Section 151 of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002.

- e. **Shared Ownership Policy** –this sets out how the Council assess and administers its responsibility in terms of eligibility, affordability, resales and subletting with regard to shared ownership properties.
- f. **Right to Buy Policy** – this policy ensures that the Council administers and processes all RTB applications fairly, accurately and in accordance with the legislative timeframes.

### 3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Tenant and Leaseholder Board, tenants who have offered to be consulted, staff in housing management, case management, legal services and community safety. The policies have been amended to incorporate consultation feedback.

### 4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

#### 4.1

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Policies are not adopted	Serious	Low	Cabinet members understand the importance of having a policy framework for Housing Operations
Policies are not adhered to	Medium	Low	Training for staff working within the policies' framework

### 5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

#### 5.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

The Council's policies have a key role to play in the good governance of the Council and supports the objectives and the functions of the Council and also ensures that the Council complies with the law.

#### 5.2 Finance Officer's Comments

There are no financial implications linked to the approval of these policies.

#### 5.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications

Individual Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been carried out on all of these policies. The outcomes of these assessments have been positive or neutral. Where any initial elements of the policies have indicated a negative effect, amendments have been made to bring that to a positive outcome.

## **6. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Helen Sudbury, Housing Operations Lead Specialist

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report: None

### **Appendices:**

- Appendix 1 Tenancy Policy
- Appendix 2 Housing Management Policy
- Appendix 3 Housing Community Safety Policy
- Appendix 4 Home Ownership Policy
- Appendix 5 Shared Ownership Policy
- Appendix 6 Right to Buy Policy