

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND HEALTH

Decision Made: 4 October 2023

MBC Housing Management Policies

Issue for Decision

To approve a suite of housing management policies that support the management of the Council's new affordable housing stock.

Decision Made

That the suite of Housing Management Documents attached in the appendices to the report of the Head of Housing and Regulatory Services are approved.

Reasons for Decision

The regulatory framework for social housing that was in place when the Council transferred its housing stock in 2004 has changed significantly. Following the decision by the Council to acquire and manage 1,000 new affordable homes, advice was taken from a specialist housing law firm on the type of tenancy to be issued and what other policy documents would be required.

The Council is a Registered Provider of Social Housing for both development and management purposes. As such, the Council is subject to the Regulator of Social Housing, which according to its website 'promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver and maintain homes of appropriate quality that meet a range of needs.'

With the assistance of the Council's Research & Policy Officer, the Head of Housing & Regulatory Services identified that circa fifteen separate documents would be required. Some policy documents would be more urgent to adopt than others, as certain policies such as the tenant consultation guide are best suited to when the Council has acquired the right quantum of properties.

The first tranche of seven documents are attached to this report and represent those policies are needed soonest in order to provide excellent management services. Some of the policy documents are aimed at informing our tenants, others are marked as officer documents to guide staff in their decision-making, whilst the remainder apply to both staff and tenants.

Much of the content of these policies is governed either by legislation or regulation. However, the tone and style of the documents is a matter that Members may want to comment on.

The first set of policy documents includes:

- The Tenant's Handbook

- Tenancy Management Policy
- Succession Policy
- Pet Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Rent Arrears and Income Policy
- Mutual Exchange Policy

The second set of policy documents will cover:

- Compensation Policy
- Complaints & Dispute Resolution Policy
- Damp & Mould Rectification Policy
- Recharge Policy
- Repairs & Maintenance Handbook
- Right to Buy Guide
- Tenancy Fraud Policy

The Tenants' Handbook is a useful guide intended for all tenants that will be given at the time of the sign up. The remaining documents will be made available to tenants through our website. A dedicated area on our website is being developed for tenants to be able to log onto to view their rent accounts, report repairs and other matters, and have access to the policy documents.

The Tenancy Management Policy provides an overview of the range of policies that contain more detailed information about each topic.

The content of the policy documents has been developed to reflect the current statutory and regulatory framework, and to take account of emerging legislation and reform such as Social Housing Regulation Act.

The Communications Team has assisted the Housing Service in developing an in-house style for the policy documents that reflects our ambition to have a professional and accessible service to our tenants.

The Housing, Health and Environment Committee considered the matter on 7 September 2023 and recommended that the suite of Housing Management Documents attached to the report were approved.

Alternatives considered and Why Rejected

The Council could choose to change the wording of the policies which would delay the policies or it could choose not have a suite of housing management policies but this is strongly not recommended, as this would leave the Council open to criticism and possible censure by the Regulator of Social Housing and the

Housing Ombudsman.

Background Papers

None.

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.



Signed: _____
Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid, Cabinet Member For Housing And Health

Full details of both the report for the decision taken above and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#)

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm on Thursday 12 October 2023**