

**CABINET**  
**6 DECEMBER 2022**

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**HOUSING SERVICES FIRE SAFETY POLICY**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Kevin Nicholson, Health and Housing Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -  
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To approve the Housing Services Fire Safety Policy 2022-2027.

**Summary**

2. Darlington Borough Council provides 355 homes for local residents in 7 Sheltered Housing schemes and 3 Extra Care schemes. We are committed to ensuring that all of our tenants enjoy their right to a safe home.
3. The Housing Services Fire Safety Policy 2022-2027 at **Appendix 1** sets out how we will provide staff, residents, visitors and partner organisations in Council owned Sheltered Housing and Extra Care schemes with clear guidelines as to how to prevent fires and what action to take in the event of a fire, to protect themselves and others.
4. The Tenants Panel has been consulted on the draft policy and the outcome of this consultation is given at paragraph 11. However, the proposals have received overwhelming support.
5. This report was considered by Health and Housing Scrutiny on 2 November 2022, who agreed its onward submission for approval by Cabinet.

**Recommendation**

6. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) Consider the contents of this report.
  - (b) Approve the Housing Services Fire Safety Policy 2022-2027.

**Reasons**

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) Darlington Borough Council has a duty to comply with fire safety legislation.
- (b) The Social Housing Regulator’s Consumer Standards places a duty on social housing landlords to provide their tenants with quality, safe accommodation.
- (c) The adoption of a formal Fire Safety Policy is one of the ways to demonstrate how we will achieve both compliance with the legislation and the Social Housing Regulator’s Consumer Standards.

**Elizabeth Davison**  
**Group Director of Operations**

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Anthony Sandys: Extension 6926

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
Health and Wellbeing	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Diversity	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	All wards with Council Sheltered Housing and Extra Care schemes
Groups Affected	Council tenants in those schemes
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This report supports the Council plan to provide tenants with good quality, safe Council housing
Efficiency	There are no implications
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

8. Darlington Borough Council provides 355 homes for local residents in 7 Sheltered Housing schemes and 3 Extra Care schemes. The schemes covered by this policy are as follows:

#### Sheltered Housing Schemes

Scheme	Number of Homes
Branksome Hall Drive	50
Dinsdale Court	22
Linden Court	20
Rockwell House	38
Roxby Court	32
Ted Fletcher Court	48
Windsor Court	32

#### Extra Care Schemes

Scheme	Number of Homes
Dalkeith House	39
Oban Court	32
Rosemary Court	42

9. The Housing Services Fire Safety Policy 2022-2027 sets out how we will provide staff, residents, visitors and partner organisations in these Sheltered Housing and Extra Care schemes with clear guidelines as to how to prevent fires and what action to take in the event of a fire, to protect themselves and others.
10. The policy covers the following areas:
- (a) **Relevant legislation** – this section sets out the relevant fire safety legislation that Darlington Borough Council must comply with as part of our statutory duties to provide our tenants with safe homes.
  - (b) **Policy statement and aims** – these sections set out the key aims of the policy, as follows:
    - (i) To provide appropriate guidance for staff.
    - (ii) To provide procedures and resident information as to what actions need to be taken in the event of a fire at any of our schemes.
    - (iii) To ensure that staff, residents, visitors and partner organisations are safe and protected.
    - (iv) To meet the requirements of Darlington Fire and Rescue Services.

- (v) To improve resident's knowledge of fire awareness and promote responsibility towards fire safety.
- (c) **Our schemes and responsibilities** – these sections set out the responsibilities for the Council, residents, visitors and partner organisations in relation to fire safety arrangements. This includes the Council's responsibilities to provide suitable and sufficient inspection, service and maintenance arrangements for each building, along with fire safety awareness training for staff and fire risk assessments for residents.
- (d) **Construction features and fire alarm systems** – this section sets out the construction features for each scheme to prevent fires and the procedures in place for when a fire alarm is activated, including the responses by staff.
- (e) **Fire risk assessments** – this sections sets out the processes as to how fire risk assessments will be conducted and reviewed.
- (f) **Personal emergency and evacuation plans and care assessments** – this section sets out the processes for residents who may require assistance to evacuate a building.
- (g) **Stay put policy** – this section sets out the guidance for residents as to when they should evacuate or remain in the building in the event of a fire. This policy has been developed with the Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.
- (h) **Instructions for residents and visitors** – this section sets out the key advice for residents and visitors in the event of a fire.

#### Regulator of Social Housing

11. Social Housing is controlled by the Regulator of Social Housing and they have set out specific expectations and outcomes that providers of social housing must comply with. One of the four statutory Consumer Standards set by the Regulator is the Home Standard.
12. The Home Standard sets expectations for registered providers of social housing to provide good quality homes for residents and in particular, to meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of occupants in their homes, including fire safety legislation.

#### **Outcome of Consultation**

13. The Tenants Panel were consulted in September 2022 and overall, the Panel supported the proposed Housing Services Fire Safety Policy. Examples of the Panel's comments were as follows:
  - (a) "As with any policies some of the text is slightly longwinded, but that is completely understandable as you would want all bases to be covered. Maybe it could be an options to deconstruct it so that everyone could understand it. All in all it is a good policy."

- (b) "After reading the policy I think that it is very informative and covers any questions that I had. It is vital for any policies such as this to be understandable and it certainly is that."
- (c) "I think it is a brilliant piece of work and is extremely well written. It takes me back to my scheme manager days as we had to revise Fire Policies. I think the length is perfect and there isn't anything that I could think off that was missed off. The 'Stay Put Policy is a great name, because it is clear and ensures that everyone knows what they are doing. I have no issues."
- (d) "I think as a whole the document is really good. It is informative and covers everything that is needed. My only issue is that some people would not care about the legislation and only read about what they need to do in the case of a fire. So maybe that information should be higher up the policy because people may switch off and not read the rest."