



Cabinet : 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024

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Report of: Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor N Pyrce-Roberts

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**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF THE COUNCIL'S EMPTY HOMES FOR COUNCIL OWNED HOUSING POLICY, TENANT RECHARGE POLICY AND DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY FOR HOUSING SERVICES.**

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## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To request approval of two new and one updated policy:

- Empty Homes for Housing Policy (New)
- Tenant Recharge Policy (Updated)
- Domestic Abuse Policy – Housing Services (New)

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the policies detailed in section 1.1 be approved.

2.2 That future revisions of these policies be agreed in conjunction with Council Officers and the Portfolio holder / Lead Member for Housing.

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 Work is being undertaken to ensure that the actions and processes that the Housing Service take are documented for complete transparency. By producing formal, written policies and procedures it will improve the service provided to tenants by detailing processes and expectations.

3.2 Legislation and regulation, as detailed in each individual policy, dictates the need for each policy to be formalised and documented.

- 3.3 The Empty Homes for Housing Policy and the Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing are new Policies whilst the Tenant Recharge Policy is an update of an existing Policy.

#### **4.0 Empty Homes for council Owned Housing Policy**

- 4.1 Each year approximately 450 of our homes are repaired and let to new tenants. The Empty Homes for Housing Policy (Appendix A) sets out the Council's approach to dealing with empty homes to ensure that the Council provides an efficient and customer focused service which complies with regulatory and legislative requirements.
- 4.2 The policy ensures value for money in repairing empty homes and achieving the relet standard whilst maximising customer satisfaction in relation to the standard of a tenant's new home.
- 4.3 The Council aims to ensure that homes which become empty are re-let as quickly and efficiently as possible, with due regard to the needs of outgoing and incoming tenants, and the need to maintain homes to the agreed relet standard.
- 4.4 The Policy supports the delivery of our strategic objectives to provide high quality and safe homes, and to meet our legal and regulatory requirements.

#### **5.0 TENANT RECHARGE POLICY**

- 5.1 The Tenant Recharge Policy (Appendix B) outlines West Lancashire Borough Council's approach to the raising and collection of charges from its tenants and former tenants for repairs and making good, damage to our homes.
- 5.2 It is a key priority to ensure that the homes our tenants live in meet decent homes standards and that the obligations of both parties are followed. We are mindful that the rental income provides the funds to maintain homes and provide services; and supports the Council's business plan. As a result of this we will aim to ensure that the cost of putting things right falls to those who have not followed the terms of the tenancy agreement through the charging and recovery process.

#### **6.0 DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY – HOUSING SERVICES**

- 6.1 The Domestic Abuse Policy (Appendix C) outlines West Lancashire Borough Council's approach to supporting housing tenants and customers who are experiencing or threatened with Domestic Abuse.
- 6.2 The Policy aims to:
- Put the safety of the victim and their family first.
  - Create an environment where victims/survivors of domestic abuse feel that they can approach us and will be listened to.
  - Provide information and support to enable victims to make informed decisions about their lives.
  - To respond to any cases of abuse that may arise by working in partnership with relevant agencies.

- Work in partnership to offer support to perpetrators of domestic abuse who recognise and seek to change their behaviour.

6.3 To support the implementation of this Policy, procedural guides for staff will be developed in consultation with specialists in the field.

6.4 Each policy provides absolute clarity on our policy position, commitments, and processes.

## 7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

## 8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 A more efficient and effective repairs service will generative savings.

8.2 An effective recharge policy will support the Council's business plan.

## 9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1

Risk Number	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Rating
1	Lack of an Empty Homes for Housing Policy would mean that tenants would not be aware of how we manage our empty homes. It may also lead to the Council having an inconsistent approach in this regard.	Unlikely	Significant	3 Comfortable
2	Failure to have a policy to be able to recharge tenants would lead to homes being left in a worse condition, and an increase in repair costs to rectify the issues. In additional the Council would be unable to seek recovery of these costs from tenants despite tenants not complying with the terms of their tenancy agreement.	Unlikely	Significant	3 Comfortable
3	Failure to support tenants at risk of domestic abuse could lead to serious physical and emotional injury.	unlikely	Significant	3 Comfortable

## **10.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The Policies requested for approval will assist in providing a more effective repairs service for empty homes and that tenants acknowledge their responsibilities under the terms of their tenancy agreement. This will lead to homes being kept in a better condition.
- 10.2 The Domestic Abuse Policy will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of those tenants who may be at risk of Domestic Abuse ensuring that they remain safe and are sign posted to specialist services.

### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Empty Homes for Housing Policy  
Appendix B – Tenant Recharge Policy  
Appendix C – Domestic Abuse Policy Housing Services