

**Report for:** Cabinet Member Signing — November 2025

**Title:** **Adopting a new Clear Communal Areas Policy**

**Report authorised by:** Jahedur Rahman, Director of Housing

**Lead Officer:** Scott Kay, Assistant Director Repairs and Compliance

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Key

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1 The Council is transforming landlord services for its own tenants and leaseholders. To support that process, the Council is undertaking a full review of all policies relating to its tenants and leaseholders in its role as the landlord.
- 1.2 The new Clear Communal Areas Policy provides guidance (including enforcement) on how Haringey Council manages the common areas of its council housing.
- 1.3 This report seeks approval from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning for adoption.

## **2. Recommendation**

That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning, and Deputy Leader of the Council

- 2.1 Adopt the Clear Communal Areas Policy to come into effect from xx 2025.

## **3. Reasons for decision**

- 3.1 This newly drafted clear and accessible policy provides guidance (including enforcement) on how Haringey Council manages the common areas of its council housing
- 3.2 The new policy will help the Council meet the Social Housing Regulator's consumer standards, specifically the Tenancy Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

## **4. Alternative options considered**

- 4.1 **We could have continued with an out-of-date policy for the Council's communal areas or not had a policy at all.** These options were rejected because it would not meet the Council's needs or those of its tenants. Introducing this new policy will assist the Council to meet the Social Housing Regulator's safety and quality standard to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas. This option would also not meet our commitment to introduce updated policies in the Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029 and the Housing Improvement Plan 2023.

## 5. Background information

- 5.1 In June 2022, the Council brought most of the landlord and housing services back in house that had been run on its behalf by Homes for Haringey, its Arm's Length Management Organisation. The Council immediately began a process of reviewing that service provision and in April 2023 Cabinet adopted a comprehensive Housing Improvement Plan backed by significant financial investment. Amongst many other commitments, that plan committed to reviewing housing policies including income management.
- 5.2 The Regulator of Social Housing's Standards requires that Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs) must demonstrate that they understand the following:
- a. The Safety and Quality Standard requires RP's to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.
  - b. The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard requirement to deliver fair, reasonable, accessible and transparent policies.
- 5.3 The Council has included thorough research into best practice in social housing, and engagement in an interactive process of policy development with key stakeholders across the Council.
- 5.4 Council officer service leads from Estates and Neighbourhoods, Income Management, Tenancy Management, Home Ownership and Support and Wellbeing were all involved in the development of these policies.
- 5.5 Council tenants and leaseholders were engaged in the design of the policy's content as part of the new resident engagement structure, which is overseen by the Resident Voice Board (RVB). The RVB is the resident forum that assists the Housing Service by providing strategic influence on customer-facing housing strategy and policy as well as giving a resident perspective on the quality of housing services with the aim of improving customer satisfaction and organisation performance (housing services).
- 5.6 The RVB inputted to the development the policy from an early stage with broad outlines and approach agreed in July 2024 by residents. Proposals for the policy were well-received and generated a range of feedback and

recommendations that have been incorporated into the policy. This included confirming the following points:

- The importance of providing clear, consistent communication to inform tenants and leaseholders of the need to keep communal areas clear.
- The need to clarify how the policy links to the Council's fire safety policy including fire safety approach and reasons for not storing items in the communal areas.
- It was questioned how the clear communal areas policy would be enforced. There was also support expressed for the policy's managed approach instead of having a zero-tolerance approach.

5.7 In November 2024, the RVB reviewed and supports the newly developed policy incorporating their recommendations.

### **Key provisions of the draft Clear Communal Areas Policy**

5.8 The aim of the draft policy is to support the effective management of the communal areas of our council housing for the safety of tenants, leaseholders and other users of our premises.

5.9 A section on roles and responsibilities includes points such as the Council's legal duty to ensure that all means of escape and fire routes are always kept clear. It covers tenants' responsibilities to follow Health & Safety Advice provided by the Council and to accept responsibility for their goods in accordance with their Tenancy Agreement, Lease or Licence Agreement.

5.10 Explaining the following two legal powers the Council can use to support with keeping the communal areas of its council housing clear is the focus of one section:

- 1) A Permanent TORT notice which outlines that the Council as the Landlord has the legal powers to remove unapproved items immediately, dispose of removed items immediately without storing them and refuse to return any removed items to the owner.
- 2) Section 41 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 includes powers to refuse to provide compensation for the material loss of any items.

5.11 This is followed by section detailing the 'managed approach' to items stored in the communal areas of our council housing, which outlines the expectation that communal areas are kept clear.

5.12 A section on applications to store items in communal areas (in exceptional circumstances) follows. This confirms that tenants and leaseholders must seek and receive written permission from the Council before storing an item in the communal areas of council housing. It also notes that in some buildings the Council will designate specific identified areas that are suitable for the storage of bicycles only.

5.13 A section on alternative storage options confirms that the Council will consider the storage needs of tenants and leaseholders including in relation to

accessibility. It confirms that where additional storage is required, this will be considered subject to both funding and the ability to site a facility safely.

- 5.14 A section on communication commits to informing all tenants and leaseholders about the need to keep communal areas clear.
- 5.15 A recharges section outlines that in line with the Tenancy Agreement, Lease or Licence Agreement, where a reasonable request for removal of items from the communal areas has not been followed, tenants and leaseholders must pay the reasonable recovery and storage costs and the reasonable removal and disposal costs.

## **6 Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-2026 High level Strategic outcomes'?**

- 6.1 The recommendations in this report will support the Corporate Delivery Plan's theme 5, "Homes for the Future", and in particular its commitment to provide reliable, customer focused resident housing services and to undertake a full review of all policies relating to our tenants and leaseholders in our role as their landlord.
- 6.2 The recommendations in this report will also support the 2024-2029 Housing Strategy's second strategic objective, improving housing quality and resident services in the social housing sector, in particular commitments around transforming services to our tenants and leaseholders, and designing those services with them.

## **7 Carbon and Climate Change**

- 7.1 The recommendation to adopt this new policy supports delivery of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and becoming a net zero carbon borough by 2041 through commitments to improve building and fire safety of our council housing.

## **8 Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Head of Legal and Governance, Equalities)**

### **Finance**

- 8.1 There is no additional financial implication as a result of adopting this policy. It is anticipated that any cost incurred as a result of implementing any aspect of it will be contained within the existing service budget.

### **Director of Legal & Governance**

- 8.2 The Director of Legal & Governance has been consulted in the drafting of this report and comments as follows.
- 8.3 The Council is required to meet relevant Standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing, as detailed in the body of the report.

- 8.4 The Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977 enables the Council by notice to require the owner of goods left in common parts to remove them on pain of the Council seizing and selling them, accounting to the owner for the balance of the proceeds after recouping the costs of storage and sale.
- 8.5 Section 41 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 gives the Council the power to seize title to goods found on Council, including housing premises by notice to the owner.
- 8.6 There is no legal reason why the Deputy Leader should not adopt the recommendation in this report.

### **Procurement**

- 8.7 Strategic Procurement have been consulted in the preparation of this report Strategic Procurement note that the recommendation in section 2 of this report is not a procurement decision and have no objections to the recommendations.

### **Equality**

- 8.8 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not
  - Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not
- 8.9 The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex, and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.
- 8.10 Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.
- 8.11 The policy considered here will apply to Council tenants. Haringey Council's tenant population shows the following characteristics compared to the wider borough population:
- a significantly higher proportion of young people (under 24) and older people (over 50).
  - a significantly higher proportion of individuals who have a disability under the Equalities Act.

- a slightly higher proportion of individuals who report their gender identity as different from sex registered at birth.
- a significantly lower proportion of individuals who are married or in a registered civil partnership.
- a significantly higher proportion of individuals who identify as Muslim, and slightly higher proportion of individual who identify as Christian, Buddhist or another religion. This is countered by a significantly lower proportion of tenants who don't associate with any religion or identify as Jewish, Hindu or Sikh.
- a significantly higher proportion of female individuals.
- a significantly lower proportion of individuals who report their sexual identity as something other than Straight or Heterosexual.

8.12 The Clear Communal Areas Policy makes no changes to operational practices and is being updated to reflect the insourcing of the council housing function. The proposed policy is not anticipated to have impacts on groups that share the protected characteristics or other disadvantaged groups.

## 9 Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 — Clear Communal Areas Policy

## 10 Background papers

- **Haringey Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029:**  
[https://new.haringey.gov.uk/sites/default/files/202405/haringey\\_housing\\_strategy\\_2024 - 2029.pdf](https://new.haringey.gov.uk/sites/default/files/202405/haringey_housing_strategy_2024_-_2029.pdf)
- **Housing Services Improvement Plan:**  
<https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s138660/Appendix%201.pdf>