

Appendix B

Key findings report

Cyngor Sir Powys County Council

Housing Services
Fire Safety in Council Housing Policy
Public Consultation

Date of report : 5 December 2016
Report author : Henk Jan Kuipers
Housing Service Improvement Officer

1. Key Findings and conclusion

The respondents give support to the policy. They find it easy to read. No one indicates that the policy discriminates.

As a result of the comments made several small improvements have been made to the policy.

2. Background

2.1. Background to the policy and purpose of consultation

The Council's Housing Service (the Council) is landlord of 5,400 Council homes and 110 leasehold flats. This policy describes how the Council will ensure it complies with fire safety legislation. This includes fire risk assessments of communal areas in blocks of flats and fire safety in the home.

The policy details who is responsible for which activity to increase fire safety and complying with legislation. It provides Housing Staff with a reference on which they can base their decisions and actions. The policy should enable tenants to exercise their rights as Council tenants.

The consultation enabled Housing staff, tenant representatives and external stakeholders to provide comments.

2.2. Background to the consultation and engagement

Prior to the public consultation a draft policy was discussed with members of the Tenants' Liaison Forum's Housing Policies Sub-Group. The members are experienced in giving feedback on policies and recommendations on improving Housing services.

The draft policy was also discussed by the Fire Safety Working Group, which include Housing staff, the Corporate Health and Safety Adviser and representatives of the Fire Service.

The proposed policy and a survey response form were sent to:

- all Housing staff
- Heads of Service
- Health & Safety Adviser
- Team Manager Reablement Service
- Tenants' Liaison Forum members
- Housing Services Group 100

The following external stakeholders have been sent the proposed policy and response form:

- Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

- Powys Teaching Health Board
- PAVO
- Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
- Disability Powys
- Age Cymru Powys
- Shelter Cymru
- Care & Repair in Powys
- Tai Pawb
- Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru

In addition the consultation was advertised on the Powys County Council Tenant Engagement Facebook page.

There was a four week response period for staff and external stakeholders and a 19 day response period for Tenants' Liaison Forum members and Housing Services Group 100.

The consultation process was agreed with the Corporate Consultation Officer.

The Housing Service consults with Tenants Service Monitors and Tenants' Liaison Policies Sub Group to improve the consultation process.

Feed back has been that it should be considered to offer the option to fill in a questionnaire on line. Previously, an on line survey was used for the WHQS compliance policy. The WHQS compliance consultation was published on the Council's "Have your say" page. Developing this facility required additional staff resource, including staff from other services than the Housing Service. The response rates were very low and it was considered not worth the extra effort to have an on line survey in addition to the e-mailed questionnaire. People can opt for questionnaires on paper instead of e-mail.

2.3. Response rate

Ten completed questionnaires have been received. Eight are from Council tenants, one from a County Councillor and one from Housing staff.

In addition one supportive e-mail from one tenant has been received. Comments from the Fire Service have been received. Also five Housing staff members have responded via e-mail. All comment are included under "Question by Question analysis.

Although the response numbers are relatively small, there is no indication additional responses would have highlighted any additional issues.

2.4. Profile data

Sex

Female	7
Male	3

Age

Under 18	0
18-35 years	0
35-59 years	2
60 or over	8

Disability

day-to-day activities limited a lot	1
day-to-day activities limited a little	4
day-to-day activities not limited	5

Welsh

Speak Welsh	3
Speak, read and write Welsh	0
No Welsh skills	7

The response numbers are small, but it stands out no people under the age of 35 have responded.

2.5. A note about market research and consultations

When conducting market research companies use a margin of error and confidence level to ensure that their results are robust and representative of the population they are seeking views from. (I.e. the population of interest).

A consultation however isn't market research as people choose to respond and are not contacted using a sampling methodology. People self-select so sometimes when conducting a consultation you only hear the views of the people who are either strongly in favour or strongly object to a proposal. The silent majority may not have given a view. However when we analyse any consultation results we do consider how robust they are in terms of the population of interest.

When conducting consultation exercise Powys County Council works to the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales.

<http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/national-principles>

3. Question by question analysis

Question 1: Do you find the policy easy or difficult to understand?

Answers

easy	9
difficult	0
no response	1

Question 2: Please tell us if you find anything unclear

Question 3: Do you feel there is something missing in the policy? Does anything needs changing?

The following comments were received. Below each comment are the Council's Housing Service responses. These have been discussed and agreed at a meeting of the Council Housing Fire Safety Workgroup on 4 November 2016.

- A. 1.3.e: smoke alarm has been checked annually, plus twice by men in suits. It is September 2016. Smoke alarm says replace October 2012, so this statement is wrong.

Response: the policy is correct. The smoke alarm should have been replaced.

- B. Only a matter concerning mix of private/Council. My "rear escape route" crosses private. Already cleared once by Community Council.

Response: there will be situations where tenures are mixed. The Fire Service can be asked to visit vulnerable tenants to advise on fire safety and escape routes. Where neighbours are not able to solve issues, there is often little the Council can do.

- C. The only thing I think should be included is that appliances should be switched off before going to work or leaving the house.

Response: added the suggestion to 2.2 under advice.

- D. 1.3.e.VI.: does this include gas cookers installed by tenant especially those fuelled LPG?

Response: tenants are responsible for the safety and compliance of their own installations. If the Council becomes aware that a tenant's installation does not comply with regulation, the tenant should be asked to remedy the situation. If the situation is not remedied, ultimately the Council may enforce compliance through Court.

Where the Council gives permission to the tenant to improve the home themselves, the Council may add conditions to ensure safety.

- E. Only point I would like to raise is non locking windows in bedrooms? How do we help prevent falls from height involving young children?

Response: There should be restrictors on the windows to prevent falls.

- F. Would suggest you should add to 4.4 that this storage is not allowed and must be remove to a safe location.

Response: this suggestion has been added.

- G. I would like to comment on 1.3 e iv Bedrooms being inner rooms should not occur and the only solution would be to have a window escape.

Response: The Council will identify these flats and consult with the Fire Service how the situation can be improved.

H. 4.4 storage of any items must not occur in means of escape.

Response: added the following under communal areas 4.3:
“Storage of any items must not occur in means of escape or escape routes and these will be removed immediately.”

I. 1.3 - Approach Section that Fire Safety for blocks of flats meets the standards set out in Buildings Regulations and the guidance to follow is the LACORS guidance published August 2008 and not the LGA - Fire Safety in Purpose - Built Blocks of Flats document dated October 2011, perhaps we need to amend slightly?

Response: This guidance has been included.

J. Housing Surveyor responsibilities: b, reporting: this should be done by the person doing the assessment.

Response: This has been changed so that the Housing Surveyor is responsible for addressing findings in the Fire Risk Assessment.

K. Responsibilities: Contracts Officers seem to have no responsibilities even though their actions could affect the fire safety of the buildings – ie removing chimneys while re-roofing, but not fire stopping the area over the removed chimney and under the new roof.

Response: a section including contract officers and a general section for all staff have been added.

L. 4.3e: are there going to be timescales given, or just “reasonable”; what is the procedure for removing items?

Response: added that reasonable will be determined by the member of staff, typically 24 hours. If people refuse to cooperate and remove items, this can ultimately be remedied through a legal breach of tenancy procedure or an injunction.

Question 4: If you think our policy does discriminate or puts a person at a disadvantage compared to another person we would like to hear your views.

The Housing Service wants to be fair to everyone and not discriminate anyone. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- age
- being or becoming a transsexual person
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or having a child
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- sex

- sexual orientation

No responses were recorded, other than that there would be no discrimination.