

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 13 January 2025

Report to Cabinet 15 January 2025

Housing Policies: (Compensation, Short-term Alternative Accommodation, Stock Condition, CCTV)

Report of the Head of Crawley Homes, *CH/211*

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To request approval for the attached draft Crawley Homes policies to be adopted to comply Housing Regulation.
- Compensation (Appendix A)
 - Short-term alternative accommodation (Appendix B)
 - Stock Condition (Appendix C)
 - CCTV (Appendix D)

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission consider the attached policies and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

- 2.2 To the Cabinet

That the Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Approve the policies (Appendices A-D of report CH/211) for adoption and subsequent publication.
- b) Delegate authority to the Head of Crawley Homes, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make amendments to these policies as further changes to legislation and statutory guidance are introduced or following a subsequent review. (Generic Delegation 7 will be used to enact this recommendation).

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1. To fulfil regulatory requirement to provide information to tenants about our service, processes and operations, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- 3.2. To ensure that Crawley Homes staff and representatives operate within the law and best practise during the course of their work.

4. Background

- 4.1. Crawley Homes has embarked upon a policy programme aimed at meeting the requirements of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 including expectations upon social housing providers from both the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman.
- 4.2. These policies address issues pertinent to customers and that have been identified through analysis of complaints and resident engagement activities and against the Consumer Standards. They form part of Crawley Homes' service plan and will be subject to scrutiny during any regulatory inspection.

5. Description of Issue to be Resolved

- 5.1. Crawley Homes has few existing policies with staff reliance upon internal documents and procedures rather than public-facing documents with monitoring, ongoing update and evaluation and accountability to those affected.
- 5.2. Crawley Homes' service plan identifies the need for these policies to be written, approved and implemented.

6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

- 6.1. These policies commence a programme of policy development in key areas to meet the expectations upon us as a social landlord
- 6.2. Residents have been consulted widely on these policies, utilising mixed methods such as during engagement events, surveys and via our Tenant and Leaseholder Action Panel. These engagement activities have resulted in recommendations and suggested improvements to our service, which have been reflected in these policy drafts.
- 6.3. These policies are underpinned by an analysis of complaints and the actions set in response to these, with the aim of being fair, learning from outcomes and putting things right, in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's dispute resolution principles.

7. Implications

- 7.1. There is a need to drive up standards in the sector, of which the implementation of these policies is part. Each policy may attract financial implications as follows:
 - Compensation – the Housing Ombudsman expects us to consider compensation as part of complaint handling and may even make its own orders for compensation if a complaint escalates that far. For example in 23/24 we received one order from the Housing Ombudsman requiring the Council to pay £1,425. There are existing compensation budgets within Crawley Homes, for 24/25 the total budget is £32,000.
 - Short term alternative accommodation – associated costs are already considered and paid but this policy formalises the approach and creates certainty for the resident. As a result we do not expect that costs will increase with any significance. There are also management controls in place to oversee, challenge and verify officer decisions for temporary moves to

help limit demand and ensure that temporary moves are only agreed in exceptional circumstances.

- Stock condition – the cost of stock condition surveyors are already accounted for in budgets following a growth item in 2023/24 in line with report CH/203. However, in the process of developing our understanding of stock condition, capital investment may be required over the longer term to meet requirements of the Consumer Standards and decent homes standards (a revision to the latter is expected).
- CCTV – no additional costs are anticipated as a direct result of this policy but over time we may make further investment in CCTV if there is a proven need for additional security measures at a particular scheme and/or designs for new build properties incorporate CCTV provision which as a result would bring more schemes within the remit of this policy.

- 7.2. Legal – Adoption of these policies will assist all staff to operate within the law. Specific legal advice will be sought as necessary.
- 7.3. Equalities - Equalities Impact Assessments have been carried out for each policy and impacts addressed (Appendix E)
- 7.4. Environmental - The policies consider environmental impacts and the Council’s net zero commitments.

8. Background Papers

None

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