

Report to Cabinet
10 December 2014
Report of Head of housing
Subject Communal area management and inspections

Item

18

Purpose

To consider the procedure for communal area management and inspections for homes rented by council tenants and owned by leaseholders.

Recommendations

To agree the procedure for communal area management and inspections for homes rented by council tenants and owned by leaseholders.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority of making Norwich a safe and clean city, with decent housing for all, and ensuring the Council provides value for money services.

Financial implications

The direct financial consequences of this report are up to £30,000 for signage and leaflets that can be met from existing budgets.

Ward/s All wards

Cabinet member Councillor Bremner – Housing

Contact officers

Tracy John, Head of Housing

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Background documents

None

Report

1. The council recognises the important role communal spaces can play in having a positive impact on tenants and leaseholders well-being and quality of life.
2. We want to encourage sensible use of communal spaces wherever possible, but we also have a statutory responsibility to maintain communal space as means of escape in the event of a fire.
3. Our duty is to ensure that escape routes are not obstructed. We are required to keep stairways/steps, corridors and all exit routes clear of obstructions, trip hazards and combustible materials
4. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires Norwich City Council to carry out a risk assessment, part of which focuses on escape routes and therefore includes communal areas.
5. A duty is placed on the Council as the landlord to carry out a fire risk assessment and take specific action to minimise the risk of fire in the common parts.
6. In light of recent serious fires resulting in deaths of tenants and fire fighters in other parts of the country, we have worked closely with Norfolk Fire Service to come up with an updated procedure, informed by consultation, which has been designed to keep people safe, allow the Fire Brigade access in the event of an emergency, whilst balancing the practical needs of the people who live there.
7. The updated procedure which will establish a step by step approach to the management of communal areas can be found at Appendix A.
8. The procedure sets out a 4 tier grading approach to housing rented by council tenants and owned by leaseholders to minimise risk in a balanced and proportionate way and provide clarity of understanding.
9. The four tiered approach is:
 - High risk enclosed communal areas = any flats/maisonettes above 3 floors (66 areas has been assessed as A).
 - Medium risk = any flats/maisonettes up to and including 3 floors plus any open walkway area above 3 floors (1180 areas have been assessed as B).
 - Low Risk - external (open) communal areas (358 areas have been assessed as C).
 - No risk = All other properties.

10. This procedure will be implemented in a managed way, working with tenants and leaseholders, supported by clear communications, including:

- Separate leaflets for the different designations will be provided for tenants and leaseholders to explain the designation and what can and cannot be kept in the communal areas.
- A sign will be placed inside the communal areas assessed to identify the designated grade of the block.
- Visits by housing officers to explain the situation and discuss any particular issues
- General communications e.g in the tenant magazine etc.

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	10 December 2014
Head of service:	Tracy John
Report subject:	Communal area management and inspections
Date assessed:	November 2014
Description:	To consider the procedure for communal area management and inspections for homes rented by council tenants and owned by leaseholders.

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cost of signage can be covered from budget
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ICT services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reduce risk
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The procedure specifies that we will work with the community to identify alternative storage solutions for commonly used items such as prams, bikes, etc. This will enable us to bring together different groups to reach an agreed positive outcome. This is an opportunity to involve tenants and leaseholders in the decision making process.

Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The measures outlined in our communal area procedures are designed to meet statutory fire safety requirements while having a mind that pleasant outdoor spaces can contribute to enjoyment of one's home. Measures are included to find alternative solutions as far as possible without breaching legislation.</p> <p>The procedure will have an overall positive impact as it will allow safe access and egress to properties off communal corridors and walkways and will allow safe evacuation in the event of a fire situation.</p> <p>All literature will be available in other languages and formats as requested/needed.</p>
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The procedure will have a positive outcome for tenants and leaseholders with a physical disability/mobility as obstacles will be removed from common areas allowing more/better access to shared amenities.</p>
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural and built environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Energy and climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Recommendations from impact assessment				
Positive				
Negative				
Neutral				
Issues				