



Title	Housing Landlord Services Policies
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise – Executive Director for Communities & Adult Social Care
Report author	Natalie Waters – Director for Housing Landlord Services
Lead Councillor	Councillor Matt Yeo – Lead Councillor for Housing
Corporate priority	Thriving Communities
Recommendations	1. For the Policy Committee to approve the following policies for publication: • Housing Landlord Services Decant Policy – this policy has been created to set out Reading Borough Council’s approach to supporting tenants who need to move temporarily or permanently from their home. • Housing Landlord Services Repairs and Maintenance Policy - this policy has been created to set out Reading Borough Council’s approach to delivering a responsive, efficient and tenant-focused repairs service for council homes. • Housing Landlord Services Compliance Policy - this policy has been created to set out Reading Borough Council’s approach to managing the six key areas of statutory housing compliance: gas safety, electrical safety, water hygiene, fire safety, asbestos management, and lift safety.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines and seeks agreement for the approval and publication of the following Housing Landlord Services policies; Decant Policy, Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Compliance Policy which are required under the Regulator of Social Housing Standards, and their expectations of Landlords. These policies are based on best practice examples and propose no changes to the current service offered to tenants. However, the published policies will ensure the Council as a Landlord is clearly setting out their obligations to tenants, managing the expectation of tenants, and improving ease of access of information for tenants.

2. Policy Context

2.1. Regulatory Context of these Policies

- 2.2. The policies presented form a fundamental component of the Council's role as a social landlord, underpinning its tenancy and property management responsibilities and obligations to tenants.
- 2.3. In April 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) introduced a revised set of Consumer Standards that all registered providers of social housing must comply with. This sets out clear expectations for how tenancies and properties are managed and maintained. The Consumer Standards relevant to these amended policies are set out in Appendix 4.
- 2.4. The Housing and Communities Service aims to tailor services to meet the individual needs of the tenants, and provide homes that are safe, whilst aligning this with our corporate parenting responsibilities. This approach allows all tenants moving into Council stock, including those leaving child or adult social care housing provisions, to have the specific support they need to sustain their tenancies and thrive.

2.5. Purpose of the New Policies

The proposed recommendations ensure documented compliance with the updated regulatory framework and statutory obligations for social housing landlords, and to meet the expectation, as landlords, to have clear, concise policies.

- 2.6 The policies have also been reviewed through the Council's tenant scrutiny arrangements, providing assurance that they have been tested with tenants and reflect tenant feedback and expectations alongside regulatory requirements.
- 2.7 These policies reflect best practice in tenancy and property/estate management, including proactive support for tenants. They also support the Council's broader strategic objectives, including:
- Tenancy sustainment - helping residents maintain stable housing;
 - Community safety - ensuring tenancies are managed in a way that promotes safe and cohesive neighbourhoods;
 - Housing standards - ensuring that tenancies are aligned with the Council's commitment to quality, well-managed homes.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. It is proposed that the following policies which reflect best practice standards are approved, and ensure the Council meet the requirements of the standards as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing (Appendix 4), whilst continuing to meet all current legal requirements.
- 3.2. All policies are designed to protect tenants, uphold community safety, and provide the Council with appropriate mechanisms to respond to evolving challenges. The updated policies primarily strengthen the Council's responsibilities as landlord and do not introduce any new requirements for tenants beyond those that already exist.

3.3. The proposed changes are summarised below:

- 3.3.1 The Decant Policy (Appendix 1) sets out Reading Borough Council's approach to supporting tenants who need to move temporarily or permanently from their home due to major repairs, refurbishment works, redevelopment, or where a property has become unsafe or uninhabitable. The policy establishes a clear framework for managing decants, ensuring that tenants are provided with suitable alternative accommodation wherever possible, while maintaining their tenancy rights and minimising disruption. It also confirms the Council's commitment to meeting its legal and regulatory responsibilities, including those relating to housing standards, health and safety, equality and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
- 3.3.2 The Decant Policy defines the responsibilities of both the Council and tenants throughout the decant process. The Council will provide a named Officer, maintain regular communication, support vulnerable households, cover reasonable decant-related costs, and ensure properties are safe and fit for occupation before tenants return. The policy also includes provisions for emergency decants, adapted accommodation, reasonable adjustments, tenant support, and complaint handling. A strong emphasis is placed on equality, accessibility and tenant wellbeing, ensuring that individual household needs are considered throughout the process and that tenants receive appropriate support to achieve a successful move and return home where applicable.
- 3.3.3 The Repairs and Maintenance Policy (Appendix 2) sets out Reading Borough Council's approach to delivering a responsive, efficient and tenant-focused repairs service for council homes. The policy defines the respective responsibilities of both the Council and tenants, providing transparency of service standards for responsive repairs, planned maintenance and major repairs, and ensures that homes are maintained in a safe, decent and compliant condition. It supports the Council's obligations under housing and consumer regulation, including the Decent Homes Standard, Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), and emerging requirements linked to Awaab's Law.
- 3.3.4 The Repairs and Maintenance Policy clearly details repair priority categories and target response times, ranging from emergency repairs attended within three hours to planned and major works delivered through longer-term maintenance programmes. It also sets out arrangements for void properties, tenant adaptations, rechargeable repairs, permissions for home improvements, and tenant rights. In addition, the policy places a strong emphasis on health and safety, performance monitoring, tenant engagement, equality and accessibility, with commitments to make reasonable adjustments for vulnerable tenants and to use tenant feedback, performance data and regulatory measures to drive continuous service improvement.
- 3.3.5 The Compliance Policy (Appendix 3) brings together Reading Borough Council's approach to managing the six key areas of statutory housing compliance: gas safety, electrical safety, water hygiene, fire safety, asbestos management, and lift safety. The policy sets out the Council's responsibilities as a landlord to ensure homes remain safe, compliant with legal requirements, and well maintained, while also outlining tenants' responsibilities, including allowing access for inspections, reporting faults promptly, and following safety guidance. The policy aims to provide a clear and consistent framework for delivering compliance services, meeting regulatory requirements, and maintaining effective communication with tenants.
- 3.3.6 The Compliance policy details the inspection, maintenance, monitoring and record-keeping arrangements for each compliance area, including annual gas

safety inspections, five-yearly electrical testing, fire risk assessments, asbestos management procedures, water hygiene controls, and lift servicing and safety inspections. It also places a strong emphasis on tenant engagement, accessibility, equality, diversity and inclusion, ensuring that information is available in accessible formats and that reasonable adjustments are made where required. Performance will be monitored through audits, key performance indicators and tenant feedback, with the policy reviewed every two years to ensure continued compliance with legislation and best practice.

- 3.3.7 Once agreed the policies will be made accessible via the Council's website, under the strategies, plans and corporate policies page as well as on the Housing, Council Tenant web page to ensure transparency and easy access, for tenants. The policies will also be proactively advertised with tenants and shared with the teams that deliver these services or work closely with Landlord Services.
- 3.3.8 The policies will be reviewed every 2 years, or sooner if triggered by legislative changes, changes to consumer standards or the identification of further best practice.

4 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 Implementing these new policies will contribute to the vision and priorities outlined in the Reading Council Plan 2025–2028, particularly under the priority to '*Secure Reading's Economic and Cultural Success*' ensuring high-quality, affordable housing, which contributes to a stable, inclusive community and a thriving local economy.
- 4.2 The publication of transparent policies adheres to Housing and Communities common purpose of 'Supporting the life that matters to you' for tenants and contributes to the objective to improve tenant satisfaction with social housing by clearly defining tenant rights, responsibilities, and service standards, fostering transparency and stronger relationships between tenants and the Council.

5 Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 Adopting these policies will not have any environmental or climate impact or implications as they propose no change to current service delivery.

6 Community Engagement

- 6.1 The draft Decant Policy, Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Compliance Policy were reviewed and scrutinised by the Tenant Sounding Board. Feedback was positive, with tenants confirming that in the main the policies were clear, accessible and written in plain English albeit tenants were keen for us to remove any abbreviations which has happened. No substantive concerns were raised. Several minor amendments were subsequently made to improve clarity, transparency and accessibility.

6.2 Amendments following tenant consultation

Policy	Amendment
Decant Policy	Clarified that tenants will be allocated a dedicated named Officer who will act as the main point of contact throughout the decant process.

Decant Policy	Expanded information on financial support available during a decant, including moving, storage, disconnection and reconnection costs, except where recharges apply
Decant Policy	Confirmed that tenants will not be expected to pay for two properties or be left out of pocket during a decant, except where costs arise from a breach of tenancy conditions.
Decant Policy	Strengthened wording regarding the frequency of contact between tenants and the named Officer throughout the decant period.
Decant Policy	Minor formatting and presentation amendments to improve readability and accessibility.
Repairs and Maintenance	Added clearer signposting and strengthened links to the Rechargeable Repairs Policy to help tenants understand the process when repairs do not progress as expected.
Compliance Policy	Reviewed technical abbreviations and terminology to ensure terminology is written in full when first used and added definitions to improve understanding of compliance-related terms.

6.3 The amendments do not alter existing service delivery arrangements. They are intended to improve understanding of the policies, clarify the Council's responsibilities as landlord, and provide greater transparency regarding the standards of service tenants can expect and their responsibilities under their tenancy agreement.

6.4 The policies are being introduced to clearly define the Council's obligations as a landlord and ensure transparency to tenants. They set out the ways in which we deliver services within legal parameters, the obligations we have as a landlord, and the expectations we set out for tenants based on their tenancy agreement.

7 Equality Implications

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 There are no proposed changes to services, and no impact on the way people access and experience services, therefore there is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment for the purposes of this report.

8 Health Implications

- 8.1 Safe, secure and well-maintained homes are a key determinant of health and wellbeing. These policies support residents' physical and mental wellbeing by setting clear standards for repairs, property safety, statutory compliance and support during decants.
- 8.2 The policies support the Building Blocks of Health, particularly through housing quality, housing stability and safe living environments. They help ensure tenants have access to well-managed homes and clear information about the services and support available to them.
- 8.3 The policies include provisions relating to accessibility, reasonable adjustments and support for vulnerable households, helping to promote equitable access to services and reduce potential inequalities in tenant experience and outcomes.
- 8.4 A separate Health Impact Assessment is not considered necessary because the policies do not introduce new services or change existing service delivery arrangements. They primarily formalise and make transparent the Council's existing landlord responsibilities, service standards and regulatory obligations.

9 Other Relevant Considerations

- 9.2 There are no other relevant considerations.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The Regulator for Social Housing has set out its requirements for Safety and Quality, Transparency, Influence and Accountability, Tenancy and Neighbourhood and Community Standards. These policies cover the Council's requirements to meet these standards.
- 10.2 The Policies must also align with a range of statutory frameworks, and these are all listed within each policy. The main legislation relevant to these policies is highlighted below:
- The Housing Act 1985 and Housing Act 1996, which govern the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords in the social housing sector;
 - The Equality Act 2010, ensuring that tenancy policies and practices do not discriminate and promote equality of opportunity;
 - The Rent Standard 2026, which regulates rent-setting to ensure affordability and fairness;
 - Decent Homes Standard 2006, which sets the minimum standard that social housing homes must meet;
 - Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, which requires landlords to ensure that rented properties are safe, healthy, and free from hazards, with tenants able to take legal action if their home is unfit.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1 All known costs associated with the implementation of these policies are accounted for within the existing Housing Revenue Account budget as the proposals are in line with current service delivery.

12. Timetable for Implementation

- 12.1 Within a month of approved, these policies will be made accessible via the Council's website, under the Strategies, plans and corporate policies section, as well as on the Housing, council tenant web page and distributed to all relevant stakeholders.

13. Background Papers

13.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. Decant Policy
2. Repairs and Maintenance Policy
3. Compliance Policy
4. Regulator of Social Housing Standard