Fire Safety Policy

1. **Introduction**

1.1 The policy outlines the way Medway Council (the Council) Landlord Services aims to minimise the risk of fires starting and spreading in Landlord Services properties and how the service will safeguard residents, staff, contractors and visitors in the event of fire.

1.2 The Council will ensure that it manages fire safety in accordance with best practice, council housing service standards and legislation.

2. **Purpose**

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

2.1.1 Ensure suitable resources are in place to prevent the cause and spread of fire and if/when they occur to minimise their impact within communal areas and individual properties.

2.1.2 Place primary importance on the life, safety and welfare of our residents and staff.

2.1.3 Protect the councils assets from the spread of fire and interruption of business.

2.1.4 Fulfil our legislative duties as landlord and ‘responsible person’.

3. **Scope**

3.1 This policy will apply to all residential properties under the management of Medway Council Housing Revenue Account (HRA), this includes Leasehold, General Needs and Homes for Independent Living and some General Fund properties.

4. **Legislation and Guidance**

4.1 **External**

4.1.1 Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

4.1.2 Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

4.1.3 LGA Fire Safety in purpose-built blocks of flats

4.1.4 NFCC Specialised Housing Guidance

4.1.5 Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating system

4.1.6 Equality Act 2010 – Equality Duty

4.2 **Internal**

4.2.1 Management of Fire in Communal Areas policy

4.2.2 Tenancy Management policy and procedure

4.2.3 Storage procedure

4.2.4 Medway Council Tenancy Agreement(s)

4.2.5 Fire Safety Management Strategy 2015-2018

4.2.6 Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy (Homes for Independent Living)

4.2.7 HRA Management of Fire Risk in Communal Areas Policy

4.2.8 Mobility Scooter Policy
5. The Policy

Fire Management Plans

5.1 Landlord Services will establish and maintain plans as well as procedures to identify the potential for and responses to, fire incidents (including emergency situations) in order to prevent or mitigate the likely illness and injury that may be associated with fires.

5.2 The Council will prepare and publish a fire safety management plan for preventing or controlling the risk of fire within all HRA properties.

Risk Assessments

5.3 Landlord Services will implement a fire risk assessment based regime, on communal areas and shared dwellings (excluding houses) that complies with legislation and takes action to prevent future fires and protect against death and injury. Ensuring that routes to emergency exits from premises and the exits themselves are kept clear at all times.

5.4 Fire Risk Assessments will consider the structure of the premises including fire resistance and containment of fire between common parts and residential accommodations.

Training and awareness

5.5 Landlord Services will ensure effective liaison with Kent Fire & Rescue Service (KFRS) and where practicable involving the emergency services in practice drills.

5.6 Landlord Services will implement ongoing Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) training, to include fire safety training, evacuation procedures and awareness programmes for staff.

Signage and Documentation

5.9 Fire Safety notices are displayed in Medway Council blocks and Homes for Independent Living Schemes and Fire Exits are clearly signposted.

5.10 The Council will ensure that communal properties have adequate illumination of escape routes.

Fire prevention works and surveys

5.11 In addition to carrying out Fire Assessment works, to keep homes safe the Council will regularly carry out a range of works and surveys including:

- asbestos surveys to ensure large scale works or capital works can be carried out safely
- structural surveys
- electrical testing to identify any repairs needed and full electrical rewiring programmes
- carbon monoxide detector installations
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- mains-operated smoke detector installations for properties without smoke detectors or with battery operated detectors
- annual gas service on all gas appliances that belong to the council, read our gas safety and servicing policy for more information.

5.12 The Void Standard includes consideration for means of escape, fire protection in the kitchen to include a kitchen fire rated door.

6. **Tenants and Leaseholders**

6.1 It is Tenants and leaseholders responsibility to be aware of possible fire hazards around their home and to take steps to protect their household from fire.

6.2 Fire safety awareness will be promoted to tenants and leaseholders via appropriate communication channels including but not exclusive to the Council websites Home Safety page, Social Media, newsletters, Information leaflets, tenancy handbooks.

6.2 The Council will be responsible for maintenance of the flat entrance doors. The council will undertake a section 20-consultation process to undertake the works on the leaseholder’s behalf for which the work will cost any one leaseholder over £250, the council will enforce works where access is prevented.

6.3 Housing Officers and our contractors undertaking tenancy visits will report any unauthorised property alterations that may compromise fire safety.

6.4 Tenants and leaseholders have a duty to request written permission from the Council before commencing any significant changes to their flat. This will be refused if the fire integrity of the property is likely to be adversely affected.

6.5 Tenants and leaseholders are required to re-instate any alterations that have not been approved in writing by the Council. If they fail to do this within a reasonable time, the Council will carry out the works and charge the tenant or leaseholder for the work. More information can be found in the Rechargeable Repairs Policy

6.6 Tenants and Leaseholders are not permitted to BBQ in communal areas, such as communal walkways or balconies, or on private balconies and grassed areas.

7 **Homes for Independent Living Schemes**

7.1 Every scheme will have a specific fire procedure that sets out the process the process in the event of a fire. The Scheme Support Officer carries other various Health and Safety checks within the schemes including regularly testing scheme alarms such as pull cords and fire call points.

7.2 The Scheme Support Officer is responsible for making residents aware of the fire procedure and Stay Put Policy. This is done during the resident’s scheme induction & at intervals subsequently.

7.3 Fire instructions are displayed on the inside of every resident’s front door in each scheme.

7.4 Each Scheme’s Fire Risk Assessment is reviewed periodically by an external consultant. Resident’s Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) are reviewed regularly & if their circumstances change.
7.5 Fire alarms are tested on a weekly basis, residents and visitors will be pre-warned.

7.6 Residents are not permitted to fit extra door locks or chains to their front door. In case the Scheme Support Officer or emergency services need to gain urgent access to the property.

7.7 BBQ’s are only permitted if a Scheme Support Officer is on site and a bucket of sand must be available, in the event of a fire
   - A BBQ can be used if it is not gas, and is a safe and reasonable distance away from the building.
   - Gas BBQ’s are not permitted.
   - BBQ’s are not permitted if there is a planned Fire Strike.

7.8 Tenants preparing food in communal areas, are required to hold a basic food hygiene certificate and a Scheme Support Officer must be on site, whilst food is being prepared.

7.9 The Scheme Support Officer ensures Health and Safety activities in relation to fire safety are carried out in line with the checklist detailed in the Management of Fire Risks of Communal Areas Policy.

8. Mobility Scooters

8.1 The Council does not permit scooters to be stored on site in communal areas. This is due to scooters being considered a health and safety risk and fire hazard in terms of either blocking or reducing the means of escape in the event of a fire or the scooters themselves causing the fire. More information can be found in the Mobility Scooter Policy.

8.2 The upholstery on scooters must be fire retardant and other flammable materials must not be present.

9. Storing goods in communal areas

9.1 Housing Services have a list of ‘non negotiable’ items that are not allowed to be kept in communal areas under any circumstances as detailed in appendix B of the Management of Fire Risks in Communal Areas Policy.

8.2 Action is taken in accordance with Housing Services procedures should breaches of this policy and/or the terms of a tenancy be identified as detailed in the Management of Fire Risks in Communal Areas Policy.

10. Role, Responsibilities and Authority

10.1 The Assistant Director of Physical and Cultural Regeneration retains the overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

10.2 The Head of Housing is responsible for the operational delivery of this policy, the associated procedures and has the responsibility for ensuring that this policy complies with Regulatory and Legislative requirements.
11. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

11.1 Senior management will monitor the effectiveness of this policy in addition to forums and focus groups that consult our residents.

11.2 This policy will be reviewed every year or in line with legislative or regulatory changes.

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<th>Policy Version Control Sheet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Title: Management of Fire Risks in HRA Properties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Author(s): Business Development Officer, Policy and Partnership Manager, Health and Safety Compliance officer, Housing Manager, Homes for Independent Living Manager.</td>
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<td>Cross References: Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy, Support Plan Policy, HRA Management of Fire Risk in Communal Areas Policy, Mobility Scooter Policy, Asset Management Strategy, Tenancy Management Policy, Medway Council Tenancy Agreement(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amendments Made: New policy to adhere to legislative and regulatory requirements.</td>
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