

Housing Fire Safety Policy

1. Overview/Policy Statement

- 1.1 South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils (the councils) are committed to ensuring fire safety in council-managed homes. This aligns with the Regulator of Social Housing's Safety & Quality Standard and contributes to providing safe and secure housing for tenants.
- 1.2 The councils' approach incorporates recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's report and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and follows the principles of the 'Golden Thread' in building management. Fire safety is treated as a critical component of housing management, supported by sound policy and risk management.
- 1.3 The councils are dedicated to:
 - Preventing fire-related incidents
 - Providing appropriate fire safety information, instruction, and training
 - Regular communication with tenants about fire safety
 - Monitoring and reviewing fire safety systems and procedures
 - Meeting statutory requirements and striving for best practice
 - Coordinating with managing agents where the councils have leasehold interests

2. Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of the policy are as follows:
 - Comply with all relevant fire safety legislation and regulatory standards
 - Identify and manage fire risks in all council-managed housing
 - Maintain appropriate fire safety systems and procedures
 - Promote tenant awareness and cooperation regarding fire safety
 - Monitor, review, and improve fire safety management continuously

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all housing accommodation provided by the councils.

4. Roles and Responsibilities for Delivery

- 4.1 The roles and responsibilities for delivery of this policy are as follows:
 - Chief Executive: Overall accountability for fire safety compliance

- Development and Corporate Landlord Property Operations Manager: Ensure implementation of fire safety arrangements
- Staff and contractors: All staff and contractors involved in fire safety must be properly trained, inducted, and follow agreed fire safety procedures

5. Relevant Legislation

5.1 The relevant legislation is as follows:

- [Regulatory standards for landlords - GOV.UK](#)
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire Safety Act 2022
- Housing Act 2004
- Building Regulations
- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
- Relevant health and safety legislation

6. Relevant Policy and Procedure

6.1 The relevant policy and procedures are listed below:

- Housing Compliance policy
- Housing Electrical safety policy
- Housing Gas safety policy
- Housing Repairs policy
- Housing Void policy
- Data Protection policy

6.2 The relevant health and safety policy and codes for the councils will also apply to this policy. This includes, but is not restricted to:

- First Aid
- Violence and Aggression at work
- Workplace Safety
- Working at Height
- Electrical Safety Personal Protective Equipment
- Asbestos Management
- Incident Reporting and Investigation
- Manual Handling

7. Policy and Procedure

Fire Prevention and Risk Management

7.1 The councils work to eliminate or reduce fire hazards by:

- Training key staff in fire safety awareness
- Enforcing rules against unsafe tenant behaviour
- Installing and maintaining appropriate fire safety systems and equipment

7.2 Communal areas are subject to annual Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) by competent external contractors. The Housing Delivery and Development and

Corporate Landlord Property Operations teams regularly review and track actions and remedial works from FRAs to completion, with full documentation.

Fire Precautions

- 7.3 Fire precautions include both passive elements (e.g., building layout, signage) and active systems (e.g., smoke detectors, alarms, emergency lighting). All systems are regularly inspected and maintained according to manufacturer guidance or fire risk assessment findings.
- 7.4 Tenants with additional support needs are risk-assessed upon placement to identify any barriers to evacuation that may be posed by a particular property.
- 7.5 Domestic smoke detection systems in individual dwellings are checked annually, and fire integrity is reviewed during stock condition surveys or capital maintenance projects.
- 7.6 Fire safety information is shared with tenants at sign-up and recorded in the tenant handbook.

Tenant Cooperation

- 7.7 Because most buildings are not permanently staffed, tenant cooperation is essential. Tenants are expected to:
 - Not interfere with fire safety systems (e.g. fire doors, smoke detectors)
 - Keep communal areas clear of combustible materials
 - Understand and follow emergency procedures
- 7.8 Fire safety responsibilities are outlined in tenancy/licence agreements and the welcome pack. Breaches related to fire safety may result in enforcement action.

Monitoring and Controls

- 7.9 The Housing Landlord team reviews fire safety performance through audits, and reports to the Corporate Risk Register. Fire safety is reviewed regularly with key performance indicators monitored across teams.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

- 7.10 The councils comply with the following key legislation:
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - Fire Safety Act 2022
 - Housing Act 2004
 - Building Regulations
 - Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
 - Health and Safety legislation relevant to fire risk
- 7.11 Typical fire risks in council-managed hostels include faulty appliances, combustible materials, obstructed escape routes, smoking, and arson.

7.12 All data pertaining to this policy will be stored and managed in line with statutory data protection requirements, as outlined in the councils' data protection policy.

Operational Arrangements

7.13 Fire safety measures include:

- Ensuring regular inspections of fire doors, escape routes, and communal areas.
- Keeping updated records on inspections, tests, and risk assessments in Concerto.
- Maintaining fire alarms, emergency lighting, and firefighting equipment.
- Conducting annual fire drills and updating evacuation procedures.
- Ensuring furniture complies with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations.

Firefighting Equipment and Alarms

7.14 Communal and vacant areas in the hostels are equipped with firefighting equipment, which is regularly maintained. When tenants move in, officers must show them fire alarm call points and equipment locations.

7.15 The alarm system is connected to an automatic receiving centre, which notifies the Fire and Rescue Service and keyholders. Residents must not tamper with or silence alarms. Only Oxford Security Services or the Fire and Rescue Service may reset the system.

Emergency Routes and Exits

7.16 Emergency routes must be:

- Clearly marked and unobstructed
- Equipped with emergency lighting and signage
- Maintained to ensure immediate and safe egress

7.17 Any obstruction (e.g. furniture, bicycles) will be removed without notice and costs recharged to residents.

Inspections and Maintenance

7.18 The Housing Landlord and Development and Corporate Landlord Property Operations teams work together to ensure:

- Weekly checks of communal stairwells and fire doors in the hostels
- Regular testing of fire detection systems and emergency lighting in the hostels
- Annual fire drills with documented outcomes in the hostels
- Annual fire alarm testing of houses as part of gas servicing
- All actions and inspections are logged in Concerto

Incident and Hazard Reporting

7.19 All fire-related incidents or hazards must be reported to the councils. Reports will

be investigated by the relevant manager and Health and Safety Adviser, with updates made to relevant risk assessments.

8. Employment Contractual Status

8.1 This policy does not form part of the contract of employment for South Oxfordshire District Council or the Vale of White Horse District Council.

9. Communication and Contact Information

9.1 For further information about this policy, please contact the Housing team on email: email tenants@southandvale.gov.uk or telephone 01235 422422.

10. Alternative Formats

10.1 Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Housing team if you would like this policy in an alternative format, via email tenants@southandvale.gov.uk or telephone 01235 422422.

11. Change Record

| Change Record | |
|----------------------|---|
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