

**Ipswich Borough Council**  
**Fire Safety Policy – Housing**

**Aim**

This Policy seeks to ensure that a formalised framework is in place to manage fire risk across the housing portfolio and that this can be planned, delivered, monitored and reviewed in such a way that continuous improvement is achieved, and that the Council has strategic direction to manage fire risk appropriately.

**Scope**

This policy relates only to property assets within the Council's Housing Revenue Account.

**Objectives**

Ipswich Borough Council (the Council) is the “*responsible person*” as defined by Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended) and it is the policy of the Council that fire risk will be managed in accordance with regulatory requirements and best practice guidance.

The principal objectives of the Policy are:

- To provide high-level commitment within the Council's leadership and governance structure that appropriate attention is paid to managing fire risk, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- To provide a high-level framework for the creation and thereafter maintenance of a formal fire risk management system.
- To identify duty holders within the Council and define, at high-level, the fire risk management roles assigned to those duty holders.
- To identify the buildings to which the Policy applies.
- To identify the relevant legislation applicable at the time of preparing the Policy.
- To set out the high-level commitments of the Policy.
- To ensure all measures are undertaken as far as reasonably possible to prevent or reduce the risk of fire within its housing portfolio.

**Duty holders and authorities**

The Council is a corporate entity and discharges its fire safety duties in the course of its functions, in respect of the housing portfolio, as follows:

- **Council Executive** – responsible for setting high-level policy, including supporting the implementation and thereafter maintenance of this Fire Safety Policy, as well as ensuring that the Policy is reviewed at appropriate intervals.
- **Broader elected members (via The Council and The Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee)** – responsible for scrutinising the Council Executive in ensuring that fire risk is managed in accordance with the Policy, and that the Policy is maintained up to date through regular review.
- **Corporate Management Team (CMT)** – responsible for implementing the fire risk management system, maintaining the system, reviewing and improving the system, such that fire risk is managed in accordance with BS 9997:2017 Fire Risk Management Systems and applying best practice in a ‘plan, do, check, act’ model to implement, maintain and improve fire safety management.
- **Fire Programme Board (FPB)** – responsible as the Council's Steering Group to focus on all aspects of Fire Safety in relation to the activities of the Council and provides updates to CMT when appropriate.
- **All Council staff** – responsible for discharging their duties as assigned via the fire risk management system set by the CMT in a diligent and compliant manner.

The Council will empower and encourage staff throughout the organisation to be actively involved in the fire risk management system and the continuous improvement of the system and will engage with all stakeholders to achieve this objective.

### **Buildings to which this Policy applies**

The housing stock to which this policy applies includes:

- 1x High Risk Residential Building (Cumberland Towers).
- 14 x additional sheltered housing schemes.
- 4 x temporary accommodation schemes for homeless families.
- Circa 346 x flat blocks with general needs accommodation.

### **Relevant legislation**

The principal fire safety legislation applicable to the operation of the Council's housing portfolio, at the time of this Policy, includes:

- The Building Safety Act 2022 and associated secondary legislation (the in-use requirements of which apply only to Cumberland Towers at present).
- The Building Act 1984 (as amended) and The Building Regulations 2010 (as amended) (which applies to all *building work* as defined by the Regulations).
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended) (which applies to all properties within common parts). (This includes amendments made by the Fire Safety Act 2021.)
- The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 (which applies to all properties with common parts and two or more dwellings).
- The Housing Act 2004.

It is noted that there is other legislation which indirectly impacts on or governs to some extent fire safety and fire risk and the Policy intends to address these requirements to the extent necessary.

### **Policy commitments**

The Council commits to:

- Employing, at all times, a competent person to provide strategic advice to the Council on matters relevant to fire risk and fire safety.
- Implementing a fire risk management system according to the principles set out in BS 9999:2017 Fire Safety in the Design, Management and Use of Buildings, with a focus on continual improvement.
- Communicating the Fire Safety Policy to all staff and any other relevant stakeholders/tenants, as well as communicating appropriately to support the ongoing maintenance of an appropriate fire risk management system.
- Discharging all duties imposed by relevant legislation, by adopting a best practice approach in following current relevant guidance.
- Ensure that all building work is subject to appropriate statutory controls and delivered to a safe standard.
- Carry out suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments regularly of all housing stock, in accordance with best practice set out in Article 50 guidance supporting regulatory requirements, which, in turn, the Council commits to keep under review.
  - The Council recognizes that the risk to vulnerable residents may be higher, and therefore commits as part of this Policy to carry out reviews of all fire risk assessments for specialised housing (including Cumberland Towers) on an annual basis, or sooner should a significant change or event occur, using third-party certified competent fire risk assessors.
  - The Council commits to carrying out three-yearly fire risk assessments, using third-party certified competent fire risk assessors, in all general need's accommodation, within which the Council will additionally carry out annual reviews to verify that fire risk assessments remain valid and suitable and sufficient.
- Ensuring that all work is carried out by competent persons, with suitable due diligence carried out on persons contracted or employed by the Council to deliver any works which could impact on fire risk within the housing portfolio.

Carry out all relevant testing and maintenance of fire precautions, with sufficient records kept and audited at appropriate intervals.

- Provide suitable and robust fire safety training, repeated within suitable timeframes, of a level suitable to their roles and responsibilities in terms of managing fire risk.
- Engage with residents on relevant matters relating to fire safety, including actively promoting fire prevention, fire protection awareness (including the importance of fire doors) and information relating to fire procedures and how to report fire safety concerns to the Council, so that tenants' opinions and our services align with their aspirations as well as IBC requirements.
- Consulting with residents to an appropriate extent in relation to decisions about fire safety programmes and works.
- Listening to and responding to all fire safety concerns and complaints and ensuring that there are appropriate arrangements to adequately deal with such.
- Engage with other stakeholders, including Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, the Council's Building Control Department, the Building Safety Regulator and others, to the extent necessary to achieve the objectives of the Fire Safety Policy.

### **Policy reviews**

The Policy will be reviewed as follows:

- Annual internal review at CMT level and/or FPB level
- Three-yearly review at Executive level.
- Should a significant change or event occur.

Where there has been clear evidence that the Policy or the supporting fire risk management system has been ineffective or is out-of-date, for example by substantial changes in the regulatory regime, or other similar factors, the Policy may be reviewed outside of these timescales by exception.

### **Policy endorsers**

We hereby endorse this Fire Safety Policy:

The Leader of the Council:

Chief Executive:

Director of Resources and Housing:

Assistant Director of Housing & Communities

Date:

Next date for review: