



Housing Services - Estate Management Policy

Purpose	<p>To clarify Ipswich Borough Council's approach to key issues affecting our tenants in the proper management of their homes.</p> <p>This policy also sets out the role the Council will have in the wider management of the estates where Council homes are situated.</p>
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Contents

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.0 Policy Statement	3
2.0 Scope	3
3.0 Principles	3
4.0 Aims and Outcomes	4
5.0 Local Context	4
6.0 Tenancy Management	4
6.1 Property Alterations by Tenants/Leaseholders	4
6.2 Garden Management	5
6.3 Routine Inspections	6
6.4 Neighbourhood Disputes	8
6.5 Noise Nuisance	9
6.6 Vehicles and Parking	9
6.7 Hoarding	10
6.8 Pets	10
6.9 Infestations and Pest Control	12
6.10 Mobility Scooters	12
6.11 Running a Business from Home	13
6.12 Health and Safety in the Home	14
6.13 Fire Safety	15
7.0 Estate Management	16
7.1 Communal Areas	16
7.2 Smoking and Electronic Cigarettes/Vaporisers	17
7.3 CCTV and Security Lighting	17
7.4 Graffiti and Fly Tipping	18
7.5 Litter and Dog Fouling	18
7.6 Environmental Improvements	19
7.7 Garages	19
7.8 Pathways and Access	20
7.9 Gritting	20
7.10 Trees	21
8.0 Statutory and Regulatory Requirements	21
9.0 Equality and Diversity	22
10.0 Right to Review	22
11.0 Policy Monitoring and Review	23

1.0. Policy Statement

Ipswich Borough Council's Corporate Strategy, Proud of Ipswich, recognises the importance of meeting the housing needs of our community. We aim to be an excellent Landlord to the people who live in our properties.

This policy aims to clarify Ipswich Borough Council's approach to key issues affecting tenants in the proper management of their homes, as well as the role the Council will have in the wider management of the estates where Council homes are situated.

2.0. Scope

The overall management of our homes, communities and estates fall into two broad categories: "Tenancy Management Functions" and "Estate Management". These categories and the areas covered include (but are not restricted to) the below:

Tenancy Management	Estate Management
Property Alterations by Tenants/Leaseholders	Communal Areas
Garden Management	Smoking and Electronic Cigarettes/Vaporisers
Routine Inspections	CCTV and Security Lighting
Managing Neighbourhood Disputes	Graffiti and Fly Tipping
Vehicles and Parking	Litter and Dog Fouling
Hoarding	Environmental Improvements
Pets	Garages
Infestations and Pest Control	Pathways and Access
Mobility Scooters	Gritting
Running a Business from Home	Trees
Health and Safety in the Home	

The Estate Management Policy forms one element of a wider policy framework for Landlord Services at Ipswich Borough Council and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- **Tenancy Management Policy**
- **Succession Policy**
- **Leasehold Management Policy**
- **Rent & Service Charge Policy**
- **Damp & Mould Policy**
- **Decant Policy**
- **Asset Management Strategy**

This policy does not set out in detail the Council's approach to managing anti-social behaviour; this is set out in the **Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure**.

3.0. Principles

- 3.1. This policy will clarify the estate management responsibilities of Ipswich Borough Council and residents of all tenure types. Any matters that are specific to those who hold an Ipswich Borough Council tenancy will refer to "tenants", matters relevant to all tenure types will refer to "residents".

4.0. Aims and Outcomes

This policy aims to:

- Clearly explain the responsibilities of Ipswich Borough Council and its residents in the management of tenancies, their homes and communal spaces.
- Provide assurance and clarity around matters that relate to health, safety and general wellbeing across our communities.
- Provide a consistent, responsive service that meets the evolving needs of our service users.
- Promote our residents in the maintenance and upkeep of communal spaces, ensuring we are “Proud of Ipswich”.
- Promote engagement with all stakeholders to ensure the continued development and improvement of our communities.
- Ensure proportionate action is taken to address tenancy breaches and incidents of environmental anti-social behaviour.

5.0. Local Context

The Council owns and manages around 7,900 properties across Ipswich. This contains a mixture of property types ranging from houses, bungalows, maisonettes, flats within low-rise blocks and properties exclusive to sheltered housing schemes, including one high rise block. In addition, there are leaseholders, owner occupiers and private renters within Council Estate areas,

6.0. Tenancy Management Functions

6.1. Property Alterations by Tenants/Leaseholders

Secure tenants and leaseholders have the right to undertake alterations/improvements to their property, subject to approval from the Council, which must be sought in all cases. In all cases alterations/improvements must comply with the following conditions:

- All works shall be carried out without cost to the Council.
- All work must be carried out in accordance with the manufacturer’s specification by a competent or qualified tradesperson.
- All works must comply with the relevant Building and Planning Regulations.
- When ending a tenancy, the tenant must remove any of the improvements and return the property to its original condition, unless permission is granted by the Council for the improvements to remain.
- If the improvement directly or indirectly causes a damage to the property which is not corrected, the outgoing tenant is liable for all costs incurred by the Council in rectifying the damage.

Residents are advised to contact the Council to request permission and discuss their plans prior to undertaking any works. Staff will provide advice on

the requirements of the work, including the need to have works undertaken by a suitably qualified technician.

Approval for alterations/improvements will not be unreasonably withheld; however, approval may not be given for tenants' alterations/improvements where there is a debt outstanding on any current/former accounts such as Rent account/Court Costs/Overpayment account. In most cases approval for the completion of works can be given by a Housing Officer. Some major or structural works may require approval from a Property Surveyor; these works may include (but are not limited to):

- Construction of garages, carports, greenhouses, sheds, or scooter stores.
- Extensions and loft conversions.
- Driveways, hard standing or paved parking area.
- Conservatories and porches.
- Raised patio or decking.
- Removal of internal walls or new window / door openings.
- Aids and adaptations such as ramps or level access showers.

For a variety of health and safety and legal reasons the following tenant improvements are not permitted:

- Wall mounted televisions on the chimney breast over a gas fire.
- Structural alterations.
- Fitting or reinstating solid or multi fuel appliances, with the exception of wood burning stoves.
- Fixings to external cladding.
- Surface level ponds.

In some instances, the tenant may request compensation to cover part of the costs of improvement they have undertaken at the property when their tenancy ends. Any compensation will depend on the age and / or the current condition of the improvement.

6.2. Garden Management

The Tenancy Agreement states that the tenant must maintain the garden(s) and keep them tidy. This includes keeping the garden free from rubbish, keeping grass short and ensuring that hedges are kept tidy and to a reasonable height.

Removal or planting of trees/hedges requires permission from the Council if works are undertaken without permission the tenant may be asked to reinstate the garden to the original state or pay damages for the costs incurred by the Council for any reinstatement.

The tenant, or any member of their household, must not place rubbish, old furniture or domestic or commercial appliances within the garden or any area

within or surrounding the property, unless the items are awaiting collection for disposal within 24 hours.

Tenants should ensure that garden fires do not cause a nuisance to neighbours nor set fire to unsuitable or hazardous materials within the garden or any area within the property or any other outside area in the locality. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council can investigate complaints about residents who cause a smoke nuisance to other residents by having regular bonfires. Tenants are expected to be considerate to their neighbours if having a garden bonfire.

Council staff will routinely check gardens while in the area and they will also respond to complaints from neighbours, residents and Councillors. If a garden is deemed to be in a poor or untidy condition the tenant will be contacted and provided with a reasonable timeframe to undertake corrective works. Failure to comply with requests of the Council to maintain or tidy a garden, may result in further action being taken. Support may be provided to those tenants who are unable to maintain their garden.

The supported garden maintenance scheme is intended to help only those tenants who, through infirmity, are unable to do this themselves and where they have no one else to help them. Tenants can apply for this service online or by contacting our customer service centre.

The supported garden maintenance programme can provide:

- *A grass cutting service up to nine times a year.*
- *A hedge trimming service once a year.*

The scheme does **not** include:

- *Weeding.*
- *Maintenance of flower borders or shrubbery.*
- *Clearance of grass cuttings.*

6.3. Routine Inspections

In order to support effective tenancy and estate management, the Council will seek to undertake routine inspections of the neighbourhood, the exterior of Council properties and the interior of properties. There may be occasions where the Council will visit unannounced. Where this is not convenient to the tenant, the tenant retains the right to request a future visit to be made at time suitable for both the tenant and the Council. This arrangement will be communicated in writing. Where the Council needs to gain access to the property for the purpose of the visit, the tenant will be given written notice within a minimum of 24 hours unless this is to carry out necessary emergency work.

All tenants can expect the following visits to be undertaken:

- **New Tenancy Visit** – A New Tenancy Visit will normally be undertaken within 8 weeks of the tenancy start date for a property. The visit will be

undertaken by the Housing Officer for the local area. The purpose of the visit is to introduce the tenant to their Housing Officer and to ensure that the new tenant is settling into their property. For those tenants living in sheltered housing schemes, this visit will be undertaken by the Scheme Manager.

- **Tenancy Visits** - Periodically an officer of the Council will visit the property to carry out a tenancy visit. The purpose of the tenancy visit will be:
 - *To check that the legal tenant is living at the property and is occupying the property as their main and principal home.*
 - *Check if there has been any change of any household members*
 - *Ensure the tenant is complying with the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement.*
 - *Provide information and advice about services and how tenants may become involved, for example, in tenant engagement and in giving customer feedback.*
 - *Signpost for additional support and services*
 - *Identify any fire risk safety risks or hoarding issues.*
 - *Check the condition of the property.*

- **Pre-Transfer Visit** – Prior to being allowed to transfer to a new property within the Council's housing stock, a pre-transfer visit will be undertaken. The purpose of this visit is to determine the condition of the property prior to the move. If the property fails to meet the expected standard the transfer may be refused, alternatively the tenant will be given a short period to bring the property up to the required standard or if necessary: recharged for any outstanding works. Transfers will not be allowed to progress unless a pre-transfer visit has been completed.

- **Pre-Termination Visit** – The Tenancy Agreement requires tenants to give four weeks' notice prior to ending their tenancy. During this period a pre-termination visit will be undertaken. This visit will determine the condition of the property and highlight any repairs which the tenant will be required to undertake before leaving the property. If these works are not undertaken as specified, the tenant may be charged for the outstanding works. If the tenant fails to pay the charge, they may be pursued through the courts for damages for the costs to the Council in re-instating the property to a suitable condition. This may affect future housing applications if the charges are not paid.

- **Estate Walkabouts** – Ipswich Borough Council are committed to walkabouts of internal and external communal spaces whilst increasing engagement with our residents across all of its communities.

In addition to these larger estate inspection events, Caretakers will monitor internal communal spaces regularly and note their attendance

on an inspection sheet located in each block. Caretakers will also inspect and report any issues with shared bin and recycling units.

Other visits will be undertaken as required. As such, the tenant should allow the Council access to the property, having been given a minimum of 24 hours' prior written notice. These visits may include safety and environmental matters such as: inspection or survey of the property, to carry out urgent repairs, gas and electrical safety checks.

It is a requirement of the Tenancy Agreement that the tenant provides access to the property, repeated failure to do so will be deemed as a serious breach of tenancy and legal action may be taken to gain possession of the property.

6.4. Neighbourhood Disputes

This section relates to low-risk neighbourhood disputes such as complaints about any behaviour which is not deemed to be a serious breach of the tenancy conditions. Incidents of this nature are managed in line with the "ASB Procedure – Tenancy Services (Early Intervention)". More serious breaches of the tenancy conditions as a result of the behaviour of tenants, members of their household or visitors to the property will be considered in line with the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and corresponding Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure.

In all cases, actions will be determined according to the particular circumstances of the case and consideration may be given to taking legal action if this is felt to be appropriate, necessary and proportionate.

Under the Council's Tenancy Agreement, tenants are responsible for the behaviour of all members of their household and visitors to the property and should therefore ensure that these individuals do not cause a nuisance to neighbours.

Within communal areas and shared spaces, for example, it is expected that tenants show consideration, respect and courtesy to others. In most incidents, where there are disputes between residents it is considered their responsibility to resolve such differences in the first instance in a private and civil manner.

The Council will aim to resolve low risk neighbourhood disputes as quickly as possible to avoid them escalating into more serious anti-social behaviour complaints. Residents are encouraged to resolve their issues in an amicable and conciliatory manner wherever possible. Resolution of neighbourhood complaints can include mediating between one or both parties to seek an amicable resolution, writing to both parties highlighting details of the complaint and the action required to resolve the issue or undertaking routine inspections. Mediation will primarily be offered to address low risk anti-social behaviour issues arising from incompatible lifestyles and instances where counter allegations have been made.

6.5. Noise Nuisance

Ipswich Borough Council will investigate reports of noise nuisance in cooperation with tenants, leaseholders and local residents. Under the Noise Act 1996, a “noise nuisance” is defined as “any noise which is prejudicial to health or a nuisance.” This can include a wide range of sounds that are deemed to be excessive or unreasonable, and that interfere with an individual’s right to enjoy their property or their quality of life.

When investigating noise nuisance, the Council may utilise various tools to gather an understanding of frequency, severity and impact, including diary sheets, “the noise app”, recording equipment or via unannounced visits to the affected area.

Reasonable and proportionate enforcement action will be taken to mitigate recurrence where a statutory noise nuisance is identified. In cases where the allegation is found to be domestic noise only (i.e., children playing, infrequent dog barking) appropriate advice will be given.

6.6. Vehicles and Parking

As a landlord the Council does not provide dedicated parking for all properties. Where there is dedicated parking within the boundary of the property, vehicles must be parked on a properly constructed and appropriately sized hard-standing, driveway, paved parking area or in a garage. Tenants wishing to build a garage, or have a parking space, drive or dropped kerb installed must comply with the Tenants Own Improvement procedure and only do so with written permission from the Council and with the appropriate planning permission. Dropped kerbs (specifically) must be agreed and undertaken by Suffolk County Council.

Tenants must not keep any vehicle, for example motorbikes, road scooters, quadbikes or any other similar fuel powered motorised devices, inside the property or inside any communal areas within a block of flats or maisonettes. Tenants must not park on grassed areas in or around properties managed by the Council.

Tenants who own caravans, boats or trailers must ensure that these are parked within the boundary of their property (and not within dedicated parking areas) with any gas supply disconnected, if applicable. Failure to comply with these requirements which results in a nuisance to neighbours and the local community may result in action being taken to have the vehicle removed, or in serious cases, to seek possession of the property. In cases where the vehicle is not taxed or insured the Council may use alternative statutory powers to seek removal of the vehicle. Tenants must not allow any person to live in a vehicle at their property.

Vehicle repairs should not be undertaken at the property where this is likely to result in nuisance or annoyance to neighbours, pollution to the locality or damage to interior or exterior of the property. The undertaking of repairs for

which you are being paid is strictly prohibited, as per the Tenancy Agreement.

6.7. Hoarding

The Council understands that hoarding is often a symptom of deeper support needs and will therefore seek to support tenants with hoarding disorders by way of signposting to relevant available services. Where the tenant is willing to engage, the Council will help them to plan and manage their own clearance or engage with an organisation that can assist them. When working with a tenant to clear a property of hoarded items, the Council, as a priority will;

- *Make the property safe from fire in accordance with recommendations from the fire risk report obtained from Suffolk Fire and Rescue.*
- *Clear any room that houses a boiler with an outstanding safety check.*
- *Re-establish reconnection of utilities, cooking and washing facilities.*

There are instances however where the hoarding becomes a significant issue to neighbours or begins to pose a substantial health and safety risk to the tenant or members of their household. In these cases, the Council may decide to take enforcement action to require the tenant to clear the property or to obtain possession of the property.

6.8. Pets

The Council welcomes responsible pet ownership. All tenants who wish to keep pets at their property are encouraged to have them neutered, micro-chipped, vaccinated and insured. All dogs over the age of 8 weeks and cats over the age of 20 weeks are legally required to be fitted with microchips. The Council will not unreasonably withhold permission if tenants have access to a private entrance and exclusive use of garden space. Permission may also be given to tenants who do not have private access and sole use of a garden to keep a small dog and / or cats subject the type of pet, the suitability of the pet and the tenancy history.

The Council may require evidence from a recognised agency that a Support Dog has been provided to a tenant. Where the property is not usually suitable for keeping a dog a transfer to an appropriate property may be considered. In some circumstances tenants living in properties that are not deemed suitable for a dog to live may be given permission for a Support Dog.

Tenants living in Sheltered Housing will be allowed to keep a small dog or cat if they live in:

- A Neighbourhood scheme.
- A Bungalow
- A ground floor flat with a door leading to the outside
- A small dog would be allowed in a ground floor flat with an entrance within five meters of their front door.

Permission should be sought for animals that will be in the property for over 48 hours if the property does not have access to a private entrance and garden. Permission will not be unreasonably refused although consideration will be given towards where the pet is kept and the ability of the tenant to care for the pet properly.

All tenants are able to keep a reasonable number of small, caged animals or fish at the property, although the permission to do so may be subsequently revoked if the Council considers this to be the number to be inappropriate. The construction of aviaries and external fishponds is subject to the criteria for Property Alterations by Tenants/Leaseholders.

Tenants are not permitted to keep or allow into the property or any shared area any animal which the Council considers to be unsuitable for the property. This will include;

- *Dog breeds banned under the Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order 1991/1743. This includes "XL Bully" breeds where an exemption certificate has not been provided.*
- *Endangered species (for example listed on the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976).*
- *Any venomous (poisonous) insects and spiders.*
- *All venomous and / or large constrictor snakes or lizards.*
- *Any animal which is classed as dangerous under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (as amended).*
- *Livestock (for example, pigs, goats, sheep, geese, ducks, cockerels and horses) as these are not considered pets.*
- *Any other animal deemed inappropriate for a domestic dwelling.*

It is the tenant's responsibility to ensure that their pets do not cause a nuisance in the local area; this includes ensuring a secure garden for dogs, clearing up after pets (including within the boundary of the property) and taking steps to prevent noise nuisance caused by pets.

When staff or contractors visit the property, tenants may be asked to secure their pets in another room of the property to allow the Council to undertake their responsibilities as a landlord. Any failure to do so would be a breach of the tenancy conditions.

Any damage to the property which results from the keeping of animals could mean that the tenant is in breach of the Tenancy Agreement. Consequently, tenants will be required to repair any damage to the property caused by their pets, or animals belonging to other members of the household or visitors to the property. If any damage has not been rectified at the end of the tenancy the Council may pursue the tenant via the courts for the costs of putting the property back into a suitable condition.

6.9. Infestation and Pest Control

Infestations of pests within properties can occur naturally, particularly in warm weather. The Council will only deal with infestations which are likely to damage the fabric of the building (for example wood worm) and provide treatments in external, communal areas to mitigate the risk of wider spread.

Tenants and Leaseholders are wholly responsible for infestations and treatments within their own home and may be charged for the removal of pests and infestations if the Council are made aware of issues emanating from their address. In some instances, infestations can be caused due to the actions of the resident. Tenants and Leaseholders must ensure that their property is kept free from pests and vermin and must not do anything which will encourage their presence, including feeding wild pigeons, squirrels or foxes or failing to appropriately dispose of household waste.

6.10. Mobility Scooters

The Council recognises that the use of electric mobility scooters can have a significant impact on an individual's ability to maintain an independent life. The increase in the number of mobility scooters has presented a number of specific issues in relation to storage and charging of scooters in communal areas, security of scooters stored in properties and potential damage caused by inappropriate use of the scooters inside properties.

In the event that a tenant experiences permanent mobility problems, appropriate support will be offered to the tenant, including more suitable housing options.

Permission

Tenants owning a mobility scooter must obtain written permission from the Council to use it within any communal areas within Council owned properties, such as blocks and sheltered housing schemes. Tenants are recommended to obtain adequate insurance cover and must have a valid PAT testing certificate for their Mobility Scooter.

All mobility scooters stored or charged within any Council owned property should have appropriate insurance, to include liability insurance, personal injury, and property damage. Any damage to a Council owned property caused by a vehicle will be recovered from the owner's insurance. If the owner does not have adequate insurance, they will have to meet the full cost of all repairs.

Storage

Storage of mobility scooters within the communal areas of buildings is not permitted, unless this is in designated areas specifically provided for this purpose. Where suitable designated areas are not provided, mobility scooters must be stored within a tenant's property or in their garden.

Tenants may apply to store mobility scooters in personal sheds within their own garden or within communal garden areas. Tenants will be given advice and guidance in relation to acceptable dimensions, height and position of the shed and must comply with the Tenants Own Improvement Procedure. Any electrical work to a shed must be completed by a suitable NICEIC qualified contractor.

Under no circumstances are alternations to be made to any property or communal area, without the written consent of the Council. To support a resident within a sheltered scheme, it is advisable for the resident to consult with the Council about the suitability of storage and charging of a motorised vehicle. All visitors who use a mobility scooter must park / leave them outside the scheme.

The Council do not accept any liability in visitors parking mobility scooters outside any sheltered scheme. With regards to blocks of flats, all visitors who use a mobility scooter must park / leave them outside the block. The Council do not accept any liability in visitors parking mobility scooters outside any block.

Each tenant is only allowed to own 1 scooter per person if they intend on storing them in communal storage areas and not in their own home.

Where a mobility scooter is stored outside of a designated customer storage area, without prior written permission, the Council reserves the right to ask the owner to remove the scooter using the TORT process. If they pose a Health & Safety/fire risk they may be removed immediately, without permission, and the cost of the removal will be passed on to the tenant.

Charging

The owner is responsible for the cost of charging electric mobility scooters from the mains within their own property. Some sheltered schemes have designated storage areas with charging facilities provided. In some instances, these are equipped with pre-payment meters. The Council reserves the right to review the use of the mains supply of electricity within communal spaces without pre-payment meters and consider installing pre-payment meters or introducing a rental charge for storage and / or battery charging.

Any charge would be collected in the form of a service charge and would not be eligible for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit under the current legislation. All vehicles charged within communal areas must have a current PAT (portable appliance test) to ensure that the charging equipment is safe to use.

6.11. Running a Business from Home

Tenants wishing to run a business from their home will require permission from the Council. While permission will not be unreasonably refused, an application may be rejected if it is deemed that the business is likely to cause a nuisance to neighbours or the local community. Permission will not be given for adverts or similar to be placed on the building or communal areas.

Examples of businesses which may be considered as unreasonable include: a business which may lead to a significant level of noise (such as pet sitting or animal breeding) any business requiring a significant number of visitors to the property or businesses which require work to be undertaken or stock to be stored outside (such as car repairs).

If permission is granted to run a business, then the tenant must have the necessary insurance, legal permissions, waste disposal arrangements and an appropriate level of public liability insurance.

6.12. Health & Safety in the Home

Tenants are required to act responsibly to ensure the health and safety of all members of the household and visitors to their property. Specifically, tenants should not (without written permission):

- *Use portable oil, paraffin or gas cylinder heaters within the property or store these items in the property.*
- *Store flammable materials or gas at the property, in any communal area, sheds, or storage area in the blocks of apartments, including storing large quantities of paper and cardboard boxes.*
- *Store or repair petrol- or diesel-powered appliances at the property (excluding lawn mowers, garden strimmer and battery powered wheelchairs).*
- *Keep within the property any firearm, shotgun, or air-powered weapon (for example, an air rifle) unless they have the appropriate firearms or shotgun certification required by law.*
- *Not discharge any firearm, shotgun, and rifle, air weapon in the property, and/or in any communal areas or in the locality.*
- *Throw items from windows or balconies.*
- *Use communal facilities for their own gain, for example, taking electricity for use in their own home.*

Council staff will provide advice to tenants on the safe storage of potentially hazardous items within the home. Tenants must not block, obstruct or create any hazard within the communal areas. This includes wedging open any fire door or security door. Tenants who do not have regard to health and safety issues may be in breach of their tenancy conditions, in line with the Tenancy Agreement and will be given a reasonable period to rectify the issues before legal action is progressed.

Tenants must not tamper with any gas or electric meters or supplies attached to the property. Tampering with meters is a criminal offence and the Council will provide tenancy details to utility companies and the Police if there is evidence that a meter has been damaged. Action will also be taken by the Council as this is considered to be a breach of the tenancy conditions.

It is the tenant's responsibility to ensure that all appliances within the property are properly maintained and safe to use. Tenants will be asked to remove appliances that are not considered safe or suitable for the property.

Tenants should not use any rooms within the property which has an open flue gas fire or boiler for the purposes of a bedroom. Whilst all gas appliances, flues and gas pipe work installed in Council-owned homes are serviced annually in accordance with legal requirements, tenants are fully responsible for the safety and servicing of all gas appliances that they own. If the Council comes across any unsafe gas appliances in a tenant's home they will be disconnected and labelled as dangerous, and gas supply to the appliance will be capped-off. The tenant will be required to ensure that the necessary work is completed by a competent person (Gas Safe) before the gas supply is uncapped.

6.13. Fire Safety

The Council is committed to keeping its tenants safe in terms of fire safety. The Council has a prioritised Fire Risk Assessment programme, completed by competent Fire Risk Assessors, which is subject to regular review. Smoke and/or heat detection systems are fitted in each property. The relevant equipment is also installed in communal areas within blocks of flats and sheltered housing schemes, including emergency lighting, fire doors, fire safety signs and other items as recommended via the Fire Risk Assessments.

The council has taken on board the changes in the Fire Safety Order with the changes brought in by The Fire Safety Act 2021, all reviewed fire risk assessments will incorporate structure and external walls. As well as all doors between common parts and domestic premises.

The council has engaged with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 in ensuring all tenants have been given fire safety instructions bespoke to their premises and information on their fire doors.

The Council will undergo scheduled fire safety checks for all high rise, medium rise, blocks with 6 or more residential units and sheltered housing. All passive and active fire safety systems and equipment will be serviced, maintained, tested and checked by the Council in line with current legislation and standards.

Following a Fire Risk Assessment, an individual Fire Safety Management Plan is developed for each relevant scheme or block and all high-rise blocks. Full records of Fire Risk Assessments, action plans and remedial works are held both centrally and made available to relevant managers and site-based staff. Where applicable, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) will be drafted for any vulnerable tenant that takes account of their ability to evacuate. If additional measures are required a Person-Centred Risk Assessment (PCRA) will also be drafted. The PEEP will be placed in the red box within their block.

Depending on the outcomes of Fire Risk Assessments, the approach to fire safety will be communicated to tenants so that they are clear about whether to 'Stay Put' or 'Evacuate' their property. The Council will ensure that tenants know which policy applies to them.

Ipswich Borough Council has a Stay Put procedure agreed with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service.

This means that unless the fire is in the residents home, they should stay in their flat unless affected by heat/smoke or if they have been advised to follow an evacuation procedure. High- and low-rise blocks of flats and Sheltered Schemes are designed to prevent fire from spreading and residents are safer in their flats, unless they are affected by smoke or flames.

For those living in **Broke Hall House** and **Holywells Court** where there is currently a waking watch and simultaneous evacuation procedure in place. Please refer to the bespoke guidance currently in place at these premises

All tenants must comply with the fire evacuation procedure in their block and respond to all activations in accordance with these procedures and / or test scenarios. Where a tenant repeatedly fails to respond and / or cause an obstruction or nuisance during this process, they may be considered in breach of their tenancy and appropriate action will be taken.

7.0. Estate Management

7.1. Communal Areas

The Council owns and manages various maisonettes and flats across the town, within low rise blocks as well as sheltered housing schemes, of which one is high rise. All of these types of accommodation have communal areas which are maintained by the Council, which includes:

- *Specific areas linked with blocks of flats or grouped dwellings, both internally and externally.*
- *Open space owned by the Council.*
- *Internal areas that include communal lounge/ activity space, guest room facility, communal entrance doors, stairs, corridors, lifts, sheds, laundry / drying areas and facilities for refuse disposal.*
- *External areas like bin areas, sheds, drying areas, communal green spaces, the footways and access paths owned by the Council, grassed or landscaped areas, garage sites and forecourts.*
- *Parking areas, fencing and walls.*
- *Lifts.*

Access to the internal communal areas may be through a door entry system. Visitor access can be allowed through door entry mechanisms within each apartment. Residents should not allow access to any visitors for another property or a visitor who cannot provide official identification. Regular occurrence of this may be deemed a breach of tenancy.

Maintenance of the communal areas is the responsibility of the Council.

The Council is committed to keeping communal areas free from fire and other health and safety hazards. The Council will apply a “managed use” approach to communal areas ensuring they are kept clear of items that can increase the intensity of a fire, increase the risk of a fire starting by the introduction of an ignition source or giving off toxic smoke. It is essential therefore that all communal areas are kept free from personal effects. Items left in communal areas will cause trip hazards and obstruction to occupants escaping the fire and the Fire Service entering the building to rescue occupants or tackle the fire.

No items should be stored in communal areas. Storage cupboards, where communal cleaning materials might be stored, will always be kept locked. It is a requirement of the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that fire safety regulations are met, and fire escape routes are clear, and is essential to maintaining the safety of all other residents, staff and fire officers. Tenants should not have door mats outside the front door as these may obstruct the fire escape routes out of the building or prevent residents moving freely within the communal areas.

Tenants and leaseholders will be required to remove any other items in communal areas. If the item is deemed to be an immediate health and safety risk, it will be removed immediately and stored until collected. A notice will be left to inform the reason for the removal and how to retrieve the item.

7.2. Smoking and Electronic Cigarettes/Vaporisers

When staff or contractors visit the property, tenants may be asked to refrain from smoking or using an electronic cigarette (e-cigarette) within the property. In some cases, if it is deemed necessary, failure to do so could be considered as a failure to allow the Council to undertake their responsibilities as a landlord and a breach of the tenancy conditions.

Smoking or the use of e-cigarettes is not permitted within communal areas of sheltered blocks and any blocks of apartments. Tenants wishing to smoke or vape may do so within 5 metres of the building, avoiding entrance areas and having regard to other tenants within the accommodation. Disposal of used cigarettes should be done in an appropriate and safe manner, using disposal bins where these are provided.

7.3. CCTV and Security Lighting

The Council may choose to make use of Closed-Circuit TV (CCTV) technology to help improve the management and security of tenants, leaseholders and visitors. Use of CCTV will be advertised in all areas where it is in use. Footage from CCTV may be used as evidence in any legal proceedings.

Security lighting is not generally fitted to Council accommodation.

Residents who wish to install CCTV or security lighting will need to adhere to the Property Alterations by Tenants/Leaseholders requirements (**see section 6.1.**) and seek permission from the Council prior to any works taking place. An officer from the Council may request to view your CCTV footage in real time to approve any such request

In the UK, the rules for private CCTV use fall under **the Information Commissioner's Office** (ICO). It's their mission to make sure that the nation's cameras comply with two key data protection laws: The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 1998 & 2018 (DPA). As the owner of any CCTV device, the resident as "the data handler" will need to ensure that the only images captured are within the boundary of their premises and that any images of persons / belongings / property captured from outside the property boundary are deleted accordingly.

7.4. Graffiti and Fly Tipping

It is the Council's aim to keep all estates safe and clean. The Council has a zero-tolerance stance on graffiti and will do everything in its powers to ensure any offenders are dealt with as quickly possible. No advertising, notices or other items should be placed by residents and will be removed. Fly tipping is a crime that blights our communities, it is unsightly, can be hazardous and can lead to injuries both to the public and wildlife and is costly to remove. Therefore, all graffiti or the illegal dumping of waste (known as fly tipping) on all Ipswich Borough Council estates will be removed as soon as possible.

Where graffiti is considered to be discriminatory or offensive, this will be removed within 24 hours after being reported. Rubbish that is dumped and considered to be a health and safety hazard will also be removed within 24 hours after being reported. Legal action can be taken against householders whose waste is tipped illegally, which can lead to a fine or imprisonment for those found guilty of fly tipping.

7.5. Litter and Dog Fouling

The Council will proactively work to raise awareness around the prevention of littering and dog fouling on the estates, particularly where complaints are received. Communal green spaces should not be used for dog walking/exercising dogs. This includes activities within our communities, using lamp post stickers or stencils on the pathways and via correspondence in writing and social media platforms. Where a person is witnessed by a Council officer committing an offence, the Council will pursue proportionate enforcement action.

Residents need to comply with conditions set out in the Council's Public Spaces Protection Order (Dog Control and Dog Fouling) 2022.

https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/www.ipswich.gov.uk/files/sealed_dog_control_and_dog_fouling_pspo_03.02.22.pdf

Not to cause or allow dogs to:

- Enter and/or pose a hazard or cause a nuisance in areas including (but not limited to) play areas, paddling pools and sports grounds.
- Disturb or threaten animals or birds or wildlife.
- Cause the public, particularly children or vulnerable adults, to feel threatened or distressed.
- Pose a risk to the safety of pedestrians and/or cyclists and/or motorists
- Cause damage to public property, including trees and plants
- Hunt in packs.
- Be walked in groups of 4 or more dogs by one or more individual(s)
- Defecate in a public place and fail to remove the faeces from the land

7.6. Environmental Improvements

The Council may undertake specific works to an estate, a small area within an estate or a small number of properties as part of improving the wider environment of the estate or as part of the planned works programme. These works may be undertaken to facilitate better use of the space, resolve local issues, reduce anti-social behaviour, improve security or facilitate better community integration.

The Council will provide funding on an annual basis for Area Housing Panels and invite bids for funding from local communities via their Housing Officer. Local communities will be encouraged to develop ideas for improvements to their local area working with Council officers, police, the fire service or other local stakeholders. Eligible works can include (but are not limited to);

- *Fencing.*
- *Paving*
- *Bin stores.*
- *Tree removal.*
- *Communal/Street lighting.*

Bids will be considered by the respective Area Housing Panels for approval. Information on funding can be provided by the Council staff. Details of schemes completed under this programme will be promoted by the Housing Officer and wider Council.

7.7. Garages

In addition to the housing stock the Council owns and manages various garages and garage sites across the district. Garages and garage sites are offered on a licence agreement to residents and as such the resident has no right to buy on the site and there is no right of succession. Applicants must not have any current or former arrears in respect of any residential premises or garages. Garage tenants may be offered a garage on the same site or another local site if their garage is considered to be uneconomical to repair or the site is suitable for an alternative use. The Council is not responsible for replacement locks to garages as a result of lost keys. The garage must only be used for the storage of a private vehicle only. Upon termination of the license

agreement, the tenant is responsible for clearing any items or belongings to ensure that the garage is suitable to re-let.

Where a garage site is abandoned, evicted or terminated it is the tenant's responsibility to remove any vehicle or other items stored. If this is not done, the Council will take steps to do so, having served the appropriate notice, and recharge the former tenant any costs incurred. Vehicles which are considered to be in a dangerous or derelict condition may also be removed.

7.8. Pathways and Access

The Council will undertake scheduled inspections of communal green areas and pathways to ensure that the estates are safe, clean and well maintained. Where gardens or pathways are identified as requiring weeding, the removal of moss and litter (including drug paraphernalia) the Council will carry out the necessary work or removal immediately upon discovery if this is practicable or as part of a planned approach.

7.9. Gritting

This policy applies only to property and land within the ownership and management of Council managed housing stock, estates and land. The gritting of adopted public roads and pavements are dealt with separately by Suffolk County Council's Highways Department.

During times of severe winter weather (icy or snowy conditions) the Council will take reasonable actions to grit or clear snow from the main communal entrances, paths or access roads to some locations. There is no legal obligation to grit or clear areas due to snow and ice. As the Council is unable to grit every location, priority will be given to grit communal paths or entrances on housing land locations where there are particular access difficulties or high concentrations of elderly tenants, such as sheltered housing schemes.

Whilst there is no clear definition of severe weather, the Council will consider the Met Offices status alerts / classifications and take into account local variations; (weather conditions can vary widely across the town, with some housing estates being more prone to the impact of such conditions than others). The Council is unable to preventively grit ahead of any forecast severe weather. It is the tenant's responsibility to clear individual paths or drives for tenants living in houses, bungalows or maisonettes.

There are a number of grit bins on housing land – these provide grit for both Council staff and residents to use themselves (but this depends on available stock and budget). The use of these by residents is at their own risk. During severe weather, Council staff can suspend their normal duties in order to lay grit and clear snow. However, there are insufficient staffing resources to provide this service to every location, so gritting and snow clearance is prioritised, and resources allocated to reflect higher priority areas first. Extreme severe weather conditions may prevent staff from accessing locations and so the Council would be unable to take action to clear or grit communal paths. The provision of gritting and snow clearance will only take place during office

hours. No service can be provided out of hours, at weekends or during holiday periods (such as Christmas).

Even when paths are cleared or gritted this is not a guarantee that the paths are completely safe or slip-proof. Additionally, roads and pavements may still be untreated. Tenants are advised to avoid unnecessary travel during such conditions and if travel is essential, to ensure caution is used.

7.10. Trees

The Council will prune and cut back trees, when appropriate, that are on Council-owned land. Checks are carried out through the Planning Portal to establish whether the tree is within a Conservation Area or has a Tree Preservation Order before any work is begun.

If the tree is within a Conservation Area or has a Tree Preservation Order, works that fall under the category of;

- Dead.
- Dying
- Dangerous.
- Diseased

may be carried out in an emergency by the Council, following an assessment by the Council's arboriculture specialist. Otherwise, no works will be undertaken until permission is sought by the Planning Department.

If the tree is within a tenant's garden, they are fully responsible for any maintenance and upkeep. Tenants will be given assistance with minor pruning if they are considered to be vulnerable or have health issues. More specialist pruning or larger works may be conducted by the Council or a contractor on behalf of the Council.

8.0. Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

The Estate Management Policy complies with the following legislation:

- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 including the Regulator for Social Housing
- Consumer Standards
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Fraud Act 2006
- Localism Act 2011
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
- Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013

9.0. Equality & Diversity

The Council recognises that it provides housing for communities which include wide social diversity and is committed to providing equal access to services. This policy aims to treat all residents fairly, with respect and professionalism. In line with the duty placed on the local authority under the Equalities Act 2010 specific consideration of the impact of this policy has been given to people with protected characteristics, including gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.

The approach adopted within this policy focuses on understanding individual circumstances in order to provide appropriate advice and support; this includes understanding the needs of tenants who have protected characteristics.

Consideration will therefore be given to language barriers, accessibility and cultural issues which may affect a tenant's ability to manage their tenancy or seek advice on problems, and resolutions which take account of the individual's beliefs and abilities.

The Council will enable all our tenants to have clear information and equal access to available services and information in a range of appropriate languages and formats will be provided when requested. This policy has been designed to be fully inclusive regardless of the ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious belief, or disability of service users or residents. The Equality Impact Assessment will be reviewed as part of reviewing the policy document in order to inform any changes that may be required.

From time to time the Council may ask tenants to provide details of their gender, age, religion, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation in line with the protected characteristics identified within the Equalities Act 2010 to help the Council to deliver more effective, appropriate and inclusive policies and practices. All data collected is used only for monitoring purposes and kept securely.

10.0. Right to Review

We commit to equality and fairness in decision-making affecting tenant's homes. The right to a review gives tenants the opportunity to challenge decisions and present additional information about their personal circumstances which they wish us to consider.

Tenants are given the opportunity to request an internal review of certain Council decisions. Details of the right to a review will be set out in a letter accompanying any relevant legal notice. For all other disputes or complaints about estate management, tenants and residents may raise a formal complaint.

The request for a review must be in writing and received before the deadline. Tenants are given 14 calendar days from the date of service to submit a written request for review of a Notice of Seeking Possession under mandatory grounds.

The person conducting the review will be an Officer of greater seniority than the Officer who made the decision, and who was not involved in the original decision. The tenant can choose to submit information to the reviewing Officer either in writing or by way of an oral hearing. At least 5 days' notice must be given by Ipswich Borough Council before any oral hearing and reasonable adjustments will be made to allow for the tenant to attend.

11.0. Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or in the event of legislative changes.

This policy is dated February 2025 (next policy review scheduled no later than February 2028).