

TENANTS FORUM	Agenda Item
Thursday 8 th September 2016	7(i)

Implementation of Sterile Environment Policy

This report provides a progress update on the implementation of a Sterile Environment policy in Kettering Borough Council's general needs blocks.

The agenda item is for information and there will be an opportunity for discussion.

INTRODUCTION

Following fires in the communal areas of two of our general needs blocks on the Highfield Estate (in April 2012 and May 2015), we began to work closely with the Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service to improve safety standards. The steps have included both the installation of new door entry systems and of internal doors that are compliant with fire safety standards.

Kettering Borough Council runs a 'Stay Put' policy in its general needs blocks, should a fire occur in a location other than a tenant's property. To support this, and following discussions at the Tenants Forum, work has now started to implement a Sterile Environment policy in communal areas, which will be completed over the next 12 months.

REPORT

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service have confirmed that they will support the council, in terms of the introduction of a Sterile Environment policy in all of our blocks' communal areas, designed to ensure customers are safe in their homes by reducing fire risks, and ensuring access to the building is clear for residents and emergency services should an emergency arise. The council is also mindful of taking a preventative approach in terms of protecting its buildings, something of which is viewed positively by insurers in terms of the annual buildings insurance premium charged.

In order to build on the steps we have already taken, we believe now is an ideal time to move towards wholesale implementation of Sterile Environments in all of our general needs blocks.

Though we acknowledge that there may be some opposition - particularly in those blocks where residents have placed tables, ornaments and plants as a means of making the communal area and the block a more attractive place to live it is important that we now take steps to mitigate the risk of fire.

We have created a phased programme to ensure the policy is implemented in a careful and structured way. To this end, the policy will be rolled out across four phases – each of which is expected to take three months to complete.

Phase 1 - which covers 13 blocks spread over Sackville Street, Highfield Road, Highfield Crescent and Grafton Street - began on 1 August 2016 and has an implementation date of 1 November 2016.

A number of teams and officers - including Neighbourhood Management, the Surveying team and Depot colleagues - have defined the key actions to be carried out during the three-month implementation period.

Work so far includes:

- A letter sent to all ward members informing them of the implementation of Sterile Environments
- A Notice sent to all residents affected in Phase 1 of the programme, advising them of the planned implementation of the policy and its implications
- Ensuring Keyways adverts clearly inform prospective tenants of the policy

Additionally, the policy and its implications will be clearly explained at our Pre-tenancy Welcome Meetings. Attended by prospective tenants prior to tenancy sign-up, Attendees also include Council tenants who are transferring from one property to another within our own stock.

During the implementation of the four phases, we will carry out any identified communal repairs and install a new lockable communal noticeboard, which will include information relevant to the area/block, such as the name and contact details of the block's Neighbourhood Manager.

As well as being given a reasonable amount of time to remove any items that are identified and recorded during our inspections, tenants will also be given regular progress updates.

NEXT STEPS

Work required prior to the implementation of Phase 1 on 1 November 2016 will continue.

The Forum may like a further update following implementation of Phase 1 either in December 2016 or January 2017.

The work is reviewed collectively on a monthly basis, and input/involvement from a member of the Tenants Forum would be welcomed.

Leona Mantle
Tenancy Services Manager
24 August 2016

Associated paperwork

Copy of the Notice sent to residents (**Appendix A**)

Copy of blocks situated within each of the four phases (**Appendix B**)