

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 58

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Housing & Social Inclusion – Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011		
Date of Meeting:	7 November 2011		
Report of:	Head of Housing and Social Inclusion		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Alan Smith	Tel: 29-1072
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1 SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing requires that social housing providers have a Neighbourhood Policy, the Adverse Weather Policy (Appendix 1) sits under the Neighbourhood Policy and contributes to the neighbourhood and community standards outlined in the policy, and the Annual Report To Council Tenants and Leaseholders.
- 1.2 The aim of the policy is to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Housing and Social Inclusion on housing land during severe weather conditions effecting employees, tenants, leaseholders contractors and members of the public. The document sets out the minimum standards of service which will be provided and defines the required responsibilities. This policy also forms a part of the corporate plan and sets out the provisions in the event of extreme weather.
- 1.3 The aim of the policy is to create a safe and well maintained environment, to develop sustainable and independent communities, and to ensure consistent and fair treatment of council housing residents
- 1.4 This policy has been developed to work in partnership with fellow department plans, including: The Corporate Service Winter Plan, Civil Contingency and Adult Social Care and Health Plans, all of which address the risk of adverse weather.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing approves the Housing & Social Inclusion – Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011 for publication and implementation.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 How we deal with adverse weather and in particular snow and ice has been raised at a number of residents' forums including Tenant and Residents' Associations, The Sheltered Housing Action Group and the Area Panels.
- 3.2 The council has developed a Highways Adverse Winter Service Plan in January 2010 in response to a recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny and this policy and we are working in partnership with Highways to provide a complementary service on Housing land.

- 3.3 The policy recognises that severe weather can be defined as extreme conditions that may have a direct impact upon a person's health, safety and well being, and outlines the process for undertaking a risk assessment and action plan in such conditions
- 3.4 With residents and leaseholders an online map will be available on the Brighton and Hove City Council website with the location of grit bins and snow clearing equipment. The possible use of additional resource of estates services across the city; this involves staff time being reprioritised.
- 3.5 This policy outlines our commitment to providing the materials and resources to enable residents to participate in the care of their neighbourhoods in adverse weather.
- 3.6 As part of this review, a number of further service improvements have been identified. These include the need for improved planning, mobilisation and management of the estates service resource for the deployment in the event of adverse weather conditions.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The draft Neighbourhood Policy was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 19th September 2011
- 4.2 The draft Neighbourhood Policy was circulated for comments from the General Management Team on 6th October 2011.
- 4.3 The draft Neighbourhood Policy was circulated for comments from the Estates Services Monitoring Group on 17th October 2011.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

Costs associated with the publication and implementation of this policy will be met within existing Housing Revenue Account Budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen, Principal Accountant

Date: 12 October 2011

5.2 Legal Implications:

The Occupiers Liability Act 1957 imposes upon the occupier of land a common law duty of care. The occupier must take such care as in all the circumstances of the case is reasonable to see that a visitor will be reasonably safe in using the premises for the purposes for which he is invited or permitted by the occupier to be there. In the context of housing land, the Council is the occupier of the common parts of buildings and all housing owned land. The Adverse Weather Policy will assist the Council in discharging that duty.

Legal Officer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 19 October 2011

5.3 Equalities Implications:

Housing and Social Inclusion has completed an Equality Impact Assessment relevant to the policy and attached for HMCC to view.

The consultation group for EIA for this policy is being agreed at GMT on 6th October

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

Housing and Social Inclusion's neighbourhood and community standards outlined in this policy will improve the environmental, social and economic well being of the housing area.

This policy reinforces Housing and Social Inclusions' commitment to the council's Environmental Policy.

This policy will provide opportunities for residents to be involved in the care of their neighbourhoods and help develop more sustainable communities.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Potential for the theft of grit, this has the possibility to impact on our reaction in the event of cold weather conditions. Vandalism is also a potential criminal action which could also impact on our service level.

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The policy development in this area was undertaken with due regard to the appropriate risk assessment requirement, a risk assessment is included as a supporting document.

We will endeavor to encourage staff and residents who are willing and able to work together to grit where this is safe to do so. This would facilitate the "Salt, Sweep & Shovel" initiative that the Highways department promotes.

The only risk at present that can be identified is the ability to reach bin locations to re-stock if conditions are extreme.

From lessons learned from past experience, we will try to, where practical and safe, carry out requests for assistance with access and regress problems, in all types of weather. This stance could potentially help maintain the local economy by enabling access to amenities.

In the event of severe snow and ice, the resource at hand could also impact on the cleaning service that the Estates department provide, staff would be asked to take on additional tasks dependable on the situation and conditions.

5.7 Public Health Implications:

There are strong links between improving housing and reducing health inequalities. The policy will reduce the isolation of our most vulnerable residents and improve well being in adverse weather conditions.

5.8 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

This policy contributes to the council priorities of improving safety, and improving health and council tenants and leaseholders. However it aims to compliment the City wide Winter Service Plan and Adult Social care and Health Plans which support vulnerable people in times of adverse well being .This policy applies to Management of Council Housing Land and support provided to tenants and leaseholders.

6. **EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1 The consequences of no action could potentially have lasting repercussions with a particular focus on the vulnerable with the potential of isolation and risk to health and well being
- 6.2 We could explore further developing the partnership with the community payback service and request that they redirect their service during adverse weather.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- 1. Housing & Social Inclusion – Council Housing Adverse Weather Policy 2011

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

- 1. Housing & Social Inclusion Neighbourhood Policy
- 2. Adverse Weather Risk Assessment 20113.
- 3. Equalities Impact Assessment (Upon completion for HMCC review)
- 4. Brighton & Hove City Council's Winter Service Plan