

DERBY HOMES PETS POLICY REVIEW 2022

Report of the Head of Housing Management

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This policy is included in the Key Policy Review Schedule and should now be considered for review.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 To approve the reviewed Pets Policy which sets out what Derby Homes expects in terms of pet ownership from people living in our properties.

3. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To ensure compliance with the timescales for review and update policies on a regular basis.

4. MATTER(S) FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 A consultation exercise has been carried out with customers and the feedback from that consultation has been incorporated into the updated policy.
- 4.2 The feedback has highlighted that we do not always check for new pets in the household at property visits. This has now been included in the Pets Procedure.
- 4.3 Customers also said that they felt more information should be available on who to contact if they wanted to get a pet, and for information on their responsibilities as pet owners. When a new tenant moves into one of our properties, we ask them if they have any pets and issue permits at that stage if appropriate. We also offer advice at that time about their responsibilities if they are considering getting a pet. We publish information on pet ownership on our website, which also gives information on how to request permission, and our Pets Procedure instructs officers to check whether any new pets have been added to a household when they are conducting their visits.
- 4.4 Customers wanted to see enforcement action being taken when a breach of the pet policy has taken place. The Policy already allows for enforcement action to be taken through the tenancy agreement and pet policy where we can evidence a problem. Breaches of the pet policy and/or the tenancy agreement will initially result in contact with the tenant to ask them to adhere to the agreement(s). Failure

to comply with our request could lead to legal action, which may include action against the tenancy or injunctive proceedings.

- 4.5 Customers highlighted dogs kept in flats as a particular issue. The Policy already gives consideration and discretion to officers when deciding how many pets are allowed in a particular property type. For example, we would look at whether a property had its own entrance or was accessed through a communal area before deciding whether certain pets were appropriate in that property, and we would look at the size of the property when considering requests to keep multiple pets.
- 4.6 Customers also asked if disabled people were disproportionately affected by dogs in communal areas, as some people with sight impairment may have problems with dogs not being on their leads. Our pet policy states that dogs must be kept on a lead in communal areas. If people do not abide by this, we will contact them and ask them to make sure they abide by this rule. If they continue to allow dogs to roam communal areas, we will consider legal action, which could include action against the tenancy or an injunction.
- 4.7 Customers suggested working in partnership with the RSPCA to report abuse of animals. We already have a list of organisations published in our Pets Procedure, to whom we can refer any issues around the wellbeing of pets, and guidance for officers is contained within the policy.

5. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None

6. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A consultation exercise was carried out with 26 members of the Customer Voice to ask for recommendations to improve the existing policy.

7. POLICY REVIEW IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This is a key policy of Derby Homes and is included in the Key Policy Review Schedule. In accordance with Derby Homes Board Minute 10/51 this policy will be reviewed no later than 3 years from the date of this meeting.

8. LEGAL AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 8.1 During the review of this policy it was identified that there was a discrepancy between the City Council's Secure Tenancy agreement, which allows pet ownership, and the Derby Homes Assured Shorthold tenancy agreement which does not.
- 8.2 We need to ensure that Derby City Council tenants and Derby Homes tenants have the same rights in terms of pet ownership.
- 8.3 Existing Derby Homes tenants can be allowed to keep pets under the current assured tenancy agreement with our permission – this would just be classed as a variation of the existing agreement.

- 8.4 Going forward, we will be able to carry out a general review of the full tenancy agreement to alter the clause around pet ownership to mirror the City Council's stance. All new Derby Homes tenants would be signed up to this new agreement. A future report will be brought to Operational Board to seek approval for any recommendations that come out of the review of the tenancy agreement.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Assistance dogs – such as guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people or dogs for disabled people – must always be permitted. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits anyone renting or selling a property from discriminating against a disabled person, this includes discriminating against a person with an assistance dog. The Equality Act 2010 also ensures people with disabilities have the same right to and access to services as everyone else.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report:

Financial and Business Plan
Council
Personnel
Environmental
Health & Safety
Risk

For more information please contact:

Graeme Walton / Area Housing Manager / 01332 888630 / graeme.walton@derbyhomes.org

Background information: None

List of appendices: Appendix 1 – Pets Policy Appendix 2 – Pets Procedure

This report has been approved by the following

Managing Director	Maria Murphy	24/02/2022
Finance Director/Derby Homes Accountant	Helen Samuel	11/2/22
Company Solicitor	Taran Lalria	28/02/2022
Head of Service	Lorraine Testro	2/01/2022