

PETS POLICY

Report of the Head of Operations (Housing Management & Housing Options)

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a review of the implementation of the current policy since it was introduced in June 2015 and also details a review of the current Pets Policy based on our experience and feedback from customers during recent consultation exercise.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approved the reviewed Policy as attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 To consider the suggestion made by customers that a new requirement should be included which requires owners to keep dogs on leads in communal areas.

3. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Consultation with customers suggests that the Policy remains generally fit for purpose with the proposed inclusion of a new requirement for dogs within communal areas.

4. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 On 25 June 2015, Derby Homes approved a new pets policy following the approval of revised tenancy conditions by Derby City Council Cabinet on 18 February 2015.
- 4.2 The Policy established a requirement for all new tenants who wanted to have a pet to inform Derby Homes and request a permit. All existing tenants who wanted a new pet would also need to get a permit. Any request for a permit would not reasonably be withheld, however staff would be mindful of the type of pet and the circumstances, and would normally give permission unless;
- The type of property is not suitable for that sort of pet.
 - Where we are not satisfied that proper arrangements are in place for keeping the pet.
 - We think the tenant either has or wants to have too many pets.
 - We have reason to believe the tenant has previously caused nuisance to other residents through not properly controlling a pet.
 - The pet is of a type that is not allowed under the tenancy conditions.
- 4.3 During the last calendar year, staff have dealt with and issued 371 pet permits.

- 4.4 In the consultation, one customer made the point that they thought it 'a breach of human rights that tenants should have to ask permission to have a pet in their own home' however it seems most respondents accept the need to manage pets so as to prevent ASB.
- 4.5 During the last calendar year, staff have dealt with 115 cases of pet related ASB. This breaks down to 51 cases of pet related noise, primarily barking dogs and 64 cases of other pet related nuisance, primarily dog mess in communal areas and dogs roaming free. At the moment we have 14 pet related ASB cases out of a total of 219 live ASB cases.
- 4.6 Although the percentage of pet related nuisance is relatively small, it is an issue that causes a lot of upset for those customers who are adversely affected. A number of respondents to the consultation said that they felt dogs should always be kept on leads in communal areas.
- 4.7 The Pet Policy covers the permit process and where pets are allowed as explained in 4.2 above. It also further amplifies the rules for tenants that are laid down in the tenancy conditions. The tenancy conditions contain quite a lot of detail on this and make clear what is expected of tenants in a specific section on pets. In addition pet related nuisance is dealt with in the general section on ASB. The tenancy conditions and the Pets Policy do not however say that dogs should be kept on a lead while in a communal area. It is recommended that Operational Board consider whether this should be inserted into the Policy. This would be beneficial for staff dealing with antisocial behaviour. If agreed this would be added to the current permit conditions and has been inserted as a proposed tracked change in the current Policy which is attached as an appendix.
- 4.8 Derby Homes Pet Policy is externally recognised as good practice. We have, for the second year running been awarded the RSPCA Pawprints Silver Housing Footprint award. This award is given to successful housing organisations who can demonstrate an ongoing commitment to responsible pet ownership, including having a pet policy which includes an approach to dealing with Dangerous Dogs, having a knowledge of animals living within our properties which we do through our pet permits, offering support to microchipping and neutering campaigns which we do through our partnership work and annual pet days, and the promotion of information around organisations that can provide our tenants with advice and assistance on pet ownership.

5. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None

6. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An email was sent to 5,200 customers inviting them to tell us what they thought of the current Policy and for them to give us any suggestions they had. There were 132 respondents, of which 123 were tenants and 7 were leaseholders. Of the 132 respondents, 75% thought the Policy was positive, and 17% neither agreed or disagreed. Only 9% or 11 respondents thought that the Policy was not positive. There was however a slightly higher percentage of people (16%, 20 respondents) who felt that the Policy does not help tenants to manage pets responsibly.

- 6.2 In addition, 63% of respondents are directly affected by the policy, either as pet owners or as people affected by pets and the majority of respondents were 35 years old or older. Only 19%, 25 respondents were aged under 35.

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.

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

Financial and Business Plan
Legal and Confidentiality
Council
Personnel
Environmental
Equalities Impact Assessment
Health & Safety
Risk

If Board Members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact:

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Background Information: None

Supporting Information: Pets Policy - Operational Board 25 June 2015

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Managing Director	Maria Murphy	8/10/18
Head of Service	Clare Mehrbani	25/09/18
Director of Finance & Company Secretary	David Enticott	1/10/18
Company Solicitor	Taranjit Lallia	1/10/18