

# North Tyneside Council

## Report to Cabinet

Date: 16 October 2023

### Title: North Tyneside Council Housing Services Rent Policy Review 2023

---

Portfolio(s):  
Housing

Cabinet Member(s):  
Cllr John Harrison

---

#### Report from Service

Area: Housing Management Service

Responsible Officer: Peter Mennell

Tel: (0191) 643 6935

Wards affected: All

---

#### PART 1

##### 1.1 Executive Summary:

This Policy details how North Tyneside Council set new rents, review rents annually and the Authority's approach to rental income collection (although this does not include Aurora Homes, the Authority's Trading Company). The current policy was introduced in 2011 and has been reviewed in line with changes that have occurred within North Tyneside Council and externally. The reviewed policy applies to all housing and garage rented accommodation within North Tyneside Council's direct ownership and Leasehold Service Charges.

The formula by which rents are set is provided by government and is reviewed annually to reflect changes in Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) and rent caps, these factors combined with North Tyneside Council's asset value, investment requirements and financial planning allow Cabinet to decide to set a rent up to the maximum Government has allowed.

Effective income management ensures that the Authority can continue to deliver a good housing service, develop, and maintain homes and help sustain viable tenancy arrangements by ensuring that all tenants receive the appropriate

support and advice to enable them to deal with their finances. Providing an income collection with care approach highlights the responsibility of the Authority to ensure a person centred, flexible service which is responsive to diverse needs.

## 1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

Approve the revised policy and adopt the policy.

## 1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty-eight days' notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 08 September 2023

## 1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report relates to the following priorities in the 2021/25 Our North Tyneside Plan:

- **A Secure North Tyneside** – We will tackle health and socio-economic inequalities across the borough including through our Poverty Intervention Fund to tackle food poverty.
- **A Caring North Tyneside** – People will be cared for, protected and supported if they become vulnerable, including if they become homeless.

### **North Tyneside Housing Strategy 2023- 2028 – Building a better North Tyneside**

- **Support our Tenants and Residents and Improve our Communities** – The Strategy recognises the impact that the rising cost of living is having on many of our residents, and continuing to provide advice and support for people in need is a clear priority.

## 1.5 Information:

### 1.5.1 Background

The rent for social housing in North Tyneside is set annually by Cabinet based on Government guidelines included in the 2020 Regulator of Social Housing Rent Standard. The policy for the collection of the rent is based on relevant sections of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 legislation.

### 1.5.2 The policy review covers:

- **Income Collection with Care** – including promoting financial inclusion, maximising benefit take up and access to specialist support and advice.
- **Rent and garage charges and tenant responsibilities** – in relation to paying rent.
- **Leasehold Service Charges** – transparent and well communicated charges made annually.
- **Universal Credit and Housing Benefit** – ensuring collaboration and partnership working with Housing Benefit Service and Department for Work and Pensions.
- **Accessibility** – appropriate and accessible methods of communication, payment and support provision
- **Pre-tenancy affordability assessment** – to promote tenancy sustainment.
- **Rent arrears management procedures and legal action** – a comprehensive suite of procedures ensures a flexible person-centred approach to managing rent arrears and supporting tenants. Legal action is the last resort other than in exceptional circumstances in the arrears.

### 1.6 **Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

#### Option 1

Cabinet may accept and approve the revised rent policy and require this to be reviewed again in 3 years or as required by legislative changes.

#### Option 2

Cabinet may reject the revised rent policy; however, the Authority may then be at risk of failing to meet its duty to review and update the current rent policy.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

## 1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

Ensures regulatory compliance.

Promotes good practice in income collection.

## 1.8 Appendices:

- North Tyneside Council Housing Services Rent Policy, 2023

## 1.9 Contact officers:

Toby Hartigan – Brown – Head of Housing Management Services

Christine Allen – Service Manager Housing Management

Darrell Campbell – Senior Business Partner – Financial Strategy and Planning

## 1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

1. North Tyneside Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028  
[https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/sites/default/files/web-page-related-files/Housing%20Strategy%202023-2028\\_March2023%20v2](https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/sites/default/files/web-page-related-files/Housing%20Strategy%202023-2028_March2023%20v2).
2. [Equality Impact Assessment](#)
3. [Housing Act 1985](#)
4. [Local Government and Housing Act 1989](#)
5. [Housing and Regeneration Act 2008](#)
6. [Localism Act 2011](#)
7. [Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#)
8. [The Debt Respite Scheme \(Breathing Space Moratorium and Mental Health Crisis Moratorium\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2020](#)
9. [Mental Health Act 1983](#)
10. [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
11. [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#)
12. [Equality Act 2010](#)
13. [Care Act 2014](#)
14. [Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2028](#)
15. [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#)
16. [Rent Standard – April 2023](#)

## **PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING**

### **2.1 Finance and other resources**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this policy.

### **2.2 Legal**

There is no direct legal requirement to have a Rent Policy. However, it is good practice, and it demonstrates transparency and provides accessible information for tenants, which is in line with the requirements of Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. The rent setting process is governed by the Rent Standard 2023.

The policy will provide clarity as to the Council's approach to rent setting and serve as an evidence base to refer to.

### **2.3 Consultation/community engagement**

#### **2.3.1 Internal Consultation**

Officers internally within the council – Housing Options & Property Services Housing Sub 20 March 2023 (as known then) to consider and review the policy – Feedback was positive with the approach in the policy.

#### **2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement**

Tenancy service improvement group March 2023 (feedback was positively received by the tenant's group with the approach in the policy)

Consulted with the Housing Quality Network (HQN – specialist Housing sector) on development of Collection with Care policy and good practice.

Consultation with various local authorities in line with policy development and good practice.

### **2.4 Human rights**

There are no human rights implications arising from this revised Policy.

### **2.5 Equalities and diversity**

All potential equality implications that may arise from this Policy have been considered. There are some negative impacts that are highlighted in the Equality Impact Assessment. These impacts have measures in place to reduce these impacts

and support those needing assistance. The form is part of the background information.

## 2.6 Risk management

Any risks associated with this policy have been considered. The Income policy provides guidance to our tenants and leaseholders in North Tyneside on the Authority's approach to income collection with care. Without such a policy in place, there is a risk of failing to meet its duty to review and update the current rent policy.

## 2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications directly arising from approval of the proposed Policy.

## 2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability implications directly arising from this Policy.

## PART 3 – SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive  x
- Director(s) of Service  X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s)  x
- Chief Finance Officer  X
- Monitoring Officer  X
- Assistant Chief Executive  X