

Decision Report / Scrutiny Report



Meeting or Proposed Decision Date –
23.01.25

Key Decision – Yes

Forward Plan Ref: FP/24/09/06

Award of contract for communal cleaning services

Executive Member(s): Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts., Executive Member Lead for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture, and Equalities and Diversity

Local Member(s) and Division(s) affected: Former SWT Jurisdiction

Executive Director: Chris Hall - Executive Director – Community, Place & Economy

Executive Summary

Somerset Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) retained landlord service has a need to procure one or more contractors to cover the cleaning of sheltered housing meeting halls, extra care housing schemes, communal areas within flat blocks, and to have ad-hoc arrangements in place, for example for the removal of graffiti, deep cleaning and disposal of sharps.

A procurement exercise was initiated in August 2024 to procure communal cleaning services that will commence with effect from 1st April 2025. Detailed financial information from the procurement exercise is contained in Appendix B (confidential appendix). In summary, the overall impact on the Housing Revenue Account will be cost neutral because any additional costs will be recovered from council tenant and leaseholder service charges.

Recommendations

The Executive Director – Community, Place and Economy is recommended to:

To award the following contracts for communal cleaning services to the preferred provider set out in Appendix B with the contracts commencing on 01/04/25 for a period of 2 years, with 2 x 1 year contract extension options available for up to a further 2 years for:

Lot 1 – Communal cleaning in meeting halls and extra care schemes (including specification for ad-hoc deep cleans and other ad-hoc requirements)

Lot 2 – Communal cleaning in flat blocks with internal communal areas. Lot 2 will cover 50% of HRA flat blocks based on a geographical split; and

Lot 3 – Communal cleaning in flat blocks with internal communal areas. Lot 3 will cover 50% of HRA flat blocks based on a geographical split.

2. Agree to treat the information in Appendix B as exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A as it contains commercially sensitive information and the case for public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing that information.

Should the meeting wish to consider the information contained in Appendix B in relation to recommendation 1 then it is required that the meeting treat the information in Appendix B as exempt (IN CONFIDENCE – NOT FOR PUBLICATION – as set out in the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A) and resolves to exclude the press and public for the duration of the discussion. Appendix B contains commercially sensitive information and the case for public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing that information.

Reasons for Proposals

Somerset Council's HRA retained landlord service has a need to procure one or more contractors to cover the cleaning of sheltered housing meeting halls, extra care housing schemes, communal areas within flat blocks, and to have ad-hoc arrangements in place, for example for the removal of graffiti, deep cleaning and disposal of sharps.

Appendix B should be treated as exempt as it contains commercially sensitive information related to the tenders received for each of the lots and relates to the financial and business affairs of the authority.

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Main report and supporting information



Background and purpose of report

Somerset Council has a need to procure one or more contractors to cover the cleaning of sheltered housing meeting halls, extra care housing schemes, communal areas within flat blocks, and to have ad-hoc arrangements in place, for example for the removal of graffiti, deep cleaning and disposal of sharps.

The requirement is divided into two workstreams as follows:

Workstream 1: Communal cleaning in meeting halls and extra care schemes (including specification for ad-hoc deep cleans and other ad-hoc requirements).

A contract is currently in place with Glen Cleaning for Work Stream 1. This contract was originally awarded by Southwest One to Sodexo in 2014, it was subsequently transferred to Mercury Infrastructure and ultimately to Mercury's then sub-contractor, Glen Cleaning. Lot 1 is based on a broadly equivalent specification.

Workstream 2: Cleaning of communal areas in flat blocks (including specification for ad-hoc deep cleans and other ad-hoc requirements).

Communal areas are identified as ground floor entrance areas, stairwells and upper floor entrance areas in low rise flat blocks. There are 334 blocks of flats. The Council has a long-term arrangement in place with AIS Contract Cleaners for the cleaning of the communal areas. The service is very limited in scope and only includes the quarterly removal of cobwebs above 1800mm and the cleaning of window and door glass within the communal area. This service was originally introduced as a result of the need to avoid the risk of residents working at height. The total spend is approximately £12,000 p/a.

Some residents have communicated a general disappointment in the level of service received and have indicated a desire to increase the scope and improve the quality of the cleaning service provided in the communal areas. The requirement on residents to clean communal areas has been less than adequate in terms of policing this and it can also present health and safety risks. This procurement acknowledges that relying on residents to carry out any significant levels of cleaning in communal areas is not a sustainable position for the upkeep of communal areas.

A recent tenant satisfaction measures (TSM) report highlighted that only 59% of our tenants are satisfied with communal areas. A more recent consultation survey (March 2024) of residents who reside in flat blocks with internal communal areas pointed to a preference for an increase in the scope and frequency of cleaning and the level of acceptable service charge they were willing to contribute, which we have taken to be £2 to £3 per week.

The design of the procurement for Workstream 2 therefore looks to balance these two competing influences:

1. The need to reduce demand on residents to clean the communal areas while still providing an expanded service.
2. Requirement to keep any subsequent service charge affordable for all residents, in particular for those that are self-funders.

More detailed information relating to the procurement of the cleaning services can be found in the following documents:

- Appendix A: The tender evaluation report - management summary;
- Appendix B: The confidential tender evaluation report – award recommendation;
- Appendix C: Non-Key Decision report – procure communal cleaning service;
- Appendix D: Summary of survey responses March 2024;
- Appendix E: PRO1000101 – Standard service requirements Lot 1;
- Appendix F: EPRO1000101 – Standard service requirements Lots 2 and 3; and
- Appendix G: EPRO1000101 – Procurement document B: specification.

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

A healthy and caring Somerset – We want our tenants and residents to stay as healthy as possible, for as long as possible and having access to good quality housing that promotes our tenants and residents mental and physical health supports us in so doing.

A fairer and ambitious Somerset – The provision of decent social housing is integral to us in delivering a fairer county.

A flourishing and resilient Somerset – Promoting the opportunity to bring local jobs for Somerset people.

Other options considered

In terms of the delivery of services, two delivery options have been considered by the project team:

- In-house service delivery; and
- Appointment of external contract cleaners.

The main reason(s) why the option to provide cleaning services via an in-house delivery team was rejected were due to the local market being very mature as well as competitive.

Key considerations for the Council

Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

1. The Opposition Spokesperson and the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny committee were both informed of the housing services project to procure communal cleaning services as set out in the non-key decision report dated 12th September 2024. A copy of the non-key decision paper is attached at Appendix C.
2. The Opposition Spokesperson and the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny committee were both consulted on the proposals set out in this report relating to the housing services project to procure communal cleaning services. The Scrutiny chair Cllr, Gwil Wren was in support of this decision. The Opposition spokesperson, Cllr, Suri Aujla asked for clarification on the cost implication to tenants and its affordability. Alongside, querying the split of Lots 2 & 3 which was to allow SME's to place bids. After clarification Cllr. Suri Aujla approved the key decision report.

Consultation and feedback

1. The feedback the housing service has received from tenants and residents relating to the condition of internal communal areas has been one of the key drivers for the service initiating the project to procure cleaning services. Tenant Satisfaction Measures data is collected six-monthly by the housing service and reported to the Regulator of Social Housing on an annual basis. This data shows a significant number of our tenants are dissatisfied with the existing arrangements for cleaning communal areas within flat blocks.

In March 2024 the findings of a tenant and resident survey pointed to the following:

- Dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of internal communal areas of flat blocks;
- Support for the introduction of an enhanced internal communal cleaning service;
- Support for the weekly cost of the service to be in the range of £2 to £3; and
- The cleaning service to include several internal areas, namely: windows, stairs/walls, stairwells and landings. A summary of the survey response is attached at Appendix D.

In December 2024 council tenants were invited to provide their view/opinion on the provision of an enhanced communal cleaning service. We received 89 responses. This has given us a useful indication of where opinion is – see Table 1 below.

Table 1

View/opinion received	Number of responses	Examples of comments received.
Positive/supportive.	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good idea if not too expensive.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modest fee would be acceptable to raise standards.
Not supportive.	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't agree to the additional payment. • I/we carry out the cleaning ourselves.
Statements.	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a difficult one, I'm not sure. • A waste of time.
Does not apply to me.	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not live in a flat.

The development of the cleaning service specification and cleaning frequencies have been designed with these thoughts in mind. Procurement 'Lots' were also structured to allow potential bidders to respond to potential service and price options.

Financial and Risk Implications

1. Detailed information relating to the cost of the communal cleaning services is set out in Appendix B. All tenants and residents benefiting from the service will pay for the full cost of the service through a service charge. The overall impact of the service on the Housing Revenue Account will be cost neutral because any additional costs will be recovered from council tenant and resident service charges on an ongoing basis from 1st April 2025. The 2025/26 HRA Fees and Charges report to members (February 2025) will set out the full weekly charge amount to be paid by tenants for the service. Residents (leaseholders) will be notified as part of their formal notification of annual services charge costs.
2. With any procurement process there are inherent risks relating to a failure to award a contract and or to a legal challenge to the outcome of the process by those organisations that have been unsuccessful. Actions have been taken throughout by the project team to reduce the likelihood of these risks crystallising that include ensuring that the specification for the service is reasonable, deliverable and holding market engagement events.
3. A risk relating to the cost of the communal cleaning service charge to tenants and residents, or to the council, exceeding all expectations was identified early by the project team. The cleaning specification and the frequency of cleaning, together with the 'Lot' structure were designed to help mitigate this risk.
4. A risk related to contractor under performance or non-performance leading to expected improvements and value for money not being delivered, increased costs and tenants and residents being dissatisfied have been considered by the project team. To mitigate this risk a contract monitoring regime will be implemented at the start of the contract. Performance indicators will be contained within the contract and monitored through contract management meetings, In addition, there is a clause within the contract which allows

termination under certain circumstances by giving notice in writing to the supplier with immediate effect.

Current Risk Score:

Likelihood	4	Impact	3	Risk Score	12
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Projected risk score if recommended actions are agreed and delivered:

Likelihood	2	Impact	1	Risk Score	3
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Legal and Procurement Implications

In order to mitigate the risk of challenge it has been essential to be able to evidence a fair, open and transparent procurement process has been undertaken that is compliant with both Public Procurement Regulations and best practice.

The procurement element of the process has been managed with support from the Commercial and Procurement Team, who have been actively involved throughout the procurement exercise.

Legal expertise has been engaged to develop contractual arrangements and support with any legal queries that arose during the project.

HR / Workforce Implications

There are no internal HR implications for this contract. The staff who currently provide these services are not employed by Somerset Council and it was determined at the start of the process that TUPE would apply should their current employer have chosen to not tender for the service or have been unsuccessful.

Prospective bidders were informed that TUPE would apply during the initial market engagement event and in information provided as part of the tender process.

The existing cleaning contractor provided the information needed for the procurement process in a timely manner.

Equalities Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment was initiated at an early stage in the procurement exercise. This has identified the following action are required:

- To help support tenants on low incomes the housing service will continue to provide a number of initiatives to enable them to manage their finances and maximise their income:
 1. Publish clear information on rent and service charges which helps tenants and residents to manage their own finances;
 2. Signpost tenants to a relevant benefit agency to help ensure they are maximising their income to meet their living costs;

3. Take action to raise the awareness of accessing a range of welfare benefits;
4. Provide the opportunity to access direct support in checking they are in receipt of the welfare benefits they are entitled to claim; and
5. Provision of financial hardship fund for tenants struggling with debt and who qualify.

- Those for whom English is not their first language are made fully aware of changes. We will offer translation of communication into alternative languages. We will engage with minority groups using existing tenant involvement channels.
- We will make it the responsibility of all contractors to have effective arrangements in place to ensure their onsite workforce adhere to the standard of conduct Somerset Council requires of them and that all have access to training as necessary.
- Communications on any complex changes may disproportionately worry tenants in sheltered/supported housing. We will communicate with all tenants to explain any significant changes affecting them and what we are investing in.
- Any potential adverse impact on disabled people will be mitigated by the insistence on rigorous and legally compliant safety measures and procedures being practised by the contractor when cleaning the blocks, meeting halls etc. As part of the contract implementation process, full risk assessments and method statements will be required and compliance against these will form part of the contract monitoring quality control process.

Community Safety Implications

1. Cleaning services will support the delivery of community safety. This will be achieved through cleaning communal areas of debris, removal of graffiti, carrying out deep cleans and the disposal of sharps

Cleaning services will support the Council in taking all reasonable steps to ensure that its premises are made safe from fire.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

The communal cleaning service will contribute towards providing sustainable and appropriate housing for households within local communities.

Health and Safety Implications

There are no negative impacts on health and safety. Any cleaning contractor that is appointed will have legally compliant safety measures and procedures in place when undertaking their cleaning operations.

As part of the contract implementation process, full risk assessments and method statements will be required and compliance against these will form part of the contract monitoring quality control process.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

1. The awarding of the cleaning contract will have no negative impacts on health and wellbeing.

Cleaning communal areas to an acceptable standard will advance the health and wellbeing of tenants, residents and their families.

Social Value

As part of the procurement bid response, bidders were invited to offer specific measurable social value commitments in addition to the stated requirements of the specification. These commitments were evaluated by a panel of officers and moderated by staff from the Commercial and Procurement Team at the Council.

The completion of the evaluation exercise is subject to further clarifications with the bidders, however any amendments to the scoring that may result from the clarification cannot affect the ultimate result of the overall evaluation due to the differential in the current scores, between the first and second placed bidders, exceeding the maximum 5 points available for the Social Value element.

Delivery of the social value commitments by the successful bidder will be monitored as part of contract management.

Moderated scores are available in Confidential Appendix B, including the proposed award decision

Background Papers

1. Non-key decision report: Procure Communal Cleaning Service dated 12th September 2024.

Appendices

- Appendix A Tender Evaluation Report: Management Summary – HRA Cleaning Contract Ref: EPRO1000101.
- Appendix B Confidential Tender Evaluation Report: Award Recommendation – HRA Cleaning Contract Ref: EPRO1000101.
- Appendix C Non-key decision report: Procure Communal Cleaning Service.
- Appendix D Summary of survey responses: March 2024.
- Appendix E: PRO1000101 – Standard service requirements Lot 1;
- Appendix F: EPRO1000101 – Standard service requirements Lots 2 and 3; and
- Appendix G: EPRO1000101 – Procurement document B: specification.

**Report assurance checklist ahead of report publication
(for Audit, Executive, Full Council and Scrutiny Committees)**

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	Scott Wooldridge Jill Byron	13.01.25 14.01.25
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	09.01.25
Workforce (*)	Dawn Bettridge	13.01.25
Asset Management (*)	Simon Lewis	13.01.25
Executive Director	Chris Hall	15.01.25
Executive Lead Member	Cllr. F Smith Roberts	14.01.25
Consulted:	Councillor Name	
Opposition Spokesperson(s)	Suria Aujia	13.01.25
Relevant Scrutiny Chair(s)	Gwill Wren	12.01.25

Note:




Directors may nominate additional officers to act on their behalf

(*) – these areas only need to be consulted on proposals if the proposals have workforce or asset management implications

Reports will not be published if assurance checklist has not been adequately completed – report author to liaise with Democratic Services well ahead of publication deadlines

Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment

Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)	 Somerset Council	x	 NHS Somerset	 NHS Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
Version	2		Date Completed	03.01.25
Description of what is being impact assessed				
<p>The proposal is to introduce a new cleaning service for tenants and residents living in the council’s accommodation served by communal entrances, internal halls, stairways and landings;</p> <p>The proposal is to introduce a new cleaning service for the council’s sheltered housing meeting halls and 2 no. extra care schemes; and</p> <p>The proposal is to introduce a new cleaning service to provide ad-hoc arrangements, for example the removal of graffiti, deep cleaning and disposal of sharps.</p> <p>The service will be introduced following unacceptable Tenant Satisfaction Measure survey dissatisfaction levels (2024) over the cleanliness of these areas.</p> <p>Somerset Council has a need to procure new contracts to ensure the spend is compliant with procurement regulations, presents value for money, meets the needs of Somerset Council and its tenants and residents and is appropriately managed under a formal contract.</p>				

The service, when introduced, will be paid for by levying a service charge on affected tenants and residents (leaseholders), calculated on the total price per property per week.

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

Engagement:

- Somerset Council Tenants' Strategic Group briefing (September 2023);
- Somerset Council Tenant Satisfaction Measure feedback data (former Somerset West and Taunton area only - 2023/2024);
- Pilot project: Communal cleaning feedback (January to May 2024);
- Tenant and resident (leaseholder) survey questionnaire (March 2024);
- Somerset Council Tenants' Action Group recommendation and briefing in April 2024 and December 2024;
- Somerset Council Housing Revenue Account (retained landlord) Leaseholder notice – stage 1 (October 2024);
- Somerset Council tenants' consultation (December 2024); and
- Somerset Council Tenants' Strategic Group briefing (December 2024).

Data:

- The most current available data on our tenants and residents (leaseholders) and our housing stock.

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

All affected tenants and residents (leaseholders).

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications on any complex changes may disproportionately worry tenants in sheltered/supported housing. 	☒	☐	☐
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants, residents and visitors to the premises who are visually impaired or whose mobility is poor could be affected adversely by this service if appropriate health and safety procedures (e.g. signage) are not practised by the contractor. 	☒	☐	☐
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conduct of and the use of language by the onsite contractor workforce could be offensive and or discriminatory. 	☐	☒	☐

Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group. 	□	⊗	□
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group. 	□	⊗	□
Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication about the new cleaning service may not fully reach those for whom English is not their first language. • The conduct of and the use of language by the onsite contractor workforce could be offensive and or discriminatory. 	□	⊗	□
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conduct of and the use of language by the onsite contractor workforce could be offensive and or discriminatory. • 	□	⊗	□
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conduct of and the use of language by the onsite contractor workforce could be offensive and or discriminatory. • 	□	⊗	□
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conduct of and the use of language by the onsite contractor workforce could be offensive and or discriminatory. 	□	⊗	□

<p>Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group. 	□	⊗	□
<p>Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increase to service charges will be applied across all our flats with internal communal areas, sheltered housing schemes with meeting halls and our two extra care schemes. This increase in the service charge for existing tenants and new tenants moving into our general needs flats, sheltered and extra care housing will have a neutral effect on protected groups. The cost rise to tenants and residents (leaseholders) is a relatively modest one that will enable the council to continue to provide a much-improved service. Cleaning is deemed as a service charge eligible for benefits therefore those tenants on benefits should have this charge covered by benefits. • To help support tenants on low incomes the housing service will continue to provide a number of initiatives to enable them to manage their finances and maximise their income: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Publish clear information on rent and service charges which helps tenants to manage their own finances; 2. Signpost tenants to a relevant benefit agency to help ensure they are maximising their income to meet their living costs; 3. Take action to raise the awareness of accessing a range of welfare benefits; and 	⊗	⊗	□

	<p>4. Provide the opportunity to access direct support in checking they are in receipt of the welfare benefits they are entitled to claim.</p> <p>5. Provision of financial hardship fund for tenants struggling with debt and who qualify.</p>			
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Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
Any potential adverse impact on disabled people will be mitigated by the insistence on rigorous and legally compliant safety measures and procedures being practised by the contractor when cleaning the blocks, meeting halls etc. As part of the contract implementation process, full risk assessments and method statements will be required and compliance against these will form part of the contract monitoring quality control process.	03/02/2025	Procurement Officer Contract Manager	Contractor meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communications on any complex changes may disproportionately worry tenants in sheltered/supported housing. We will communicate with all tenants to explain any significant changes affecting them and what we are investing in.	06/01/2025	Tenancy Specialist	Housing Management meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
We will make it the responsibility of all contractors to have effective arrangements in place to ensure their onsite workforce adhere to the standard of conduct Somerset Council requires of them and that all have access to training as necessary.	03/02/2025	Tenancy Specialist	Contractor meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Those for whom English is not their first language are not made fully aware of changes. We will offer translation of communication	06/01/2025	Tenancy Specialist	Housing Management meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>into alternative languages. We will engage with minority groups using existing tenant involvement channels.</p>				
<p>Those for whom English is not their first language are not made fully aware of changes. We will offer translation of communication into alternative languages. We will engage with minority groups using existing tenant involvement channels.</p>	06/01/2025	Tenancy Specialist	Housing Management meetings	□
<p>The increase to service charges will be applied across all our flats with internal communal areas, sheltered housing schemes with meeting halls and our two extra care schemes. This increase in the service charge for existing tenants and new tenants moving into our flats, sheltered and extra care housing will have a neutral effect on protected groups. The cost rise to tenants and residents (leaseholders) is a relatively modest one that will enable the council to continue to provide a much-improved service.</p> <p>To help support tenants on low incomes the housing service will continue to provide a number of initiatives to enable them to manage their finances and maximise their income:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Publish clear information on rent and service charges which helps tenants to manage their own finances; 2.Signpost tenants to a relevant benefit agency to help ensure they are maximising their income to meet their living costs; 3.Take action to raise the awareness of accessing a range of welfare benefits; 4.Provide the opportunity to access direct support in checking they are in receipt of the welfare benefits they are entitled to claim; and 5. Provision of financial hardship fund for tenants struggling with debt and who qualify. 	06/01/2025	Tenancy Specialist	Housing Management meetings	□
<p>If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.</p>				

The service will meet the Council's responsibilities in relation to quality and diversity. There is no adverse impact on protected groups that is not sufficiently mitigated against.

Completed by:	Stephen Boland – Tenancy Specialist
Date	03/01/2025
Signed off by:	Simon Lewis - Head of Housing, Income and Tenancy
Date	06/01/2025
Equality Lead sign off name:	Tom Rutland
Equality Lead sign off date:	06.01.2025
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	Simon Lewis
Review date:	01.01.2027