

Use of Communal Lounges Policy for Independent Retirement Living (IRL) Scheme (Housing, Maggie Ward)

Synopsis of report:

This report outlines a draft Use of Communal Lounges Policy for Independent retirement Living (IRL) Schemes

Recommendation:

Members approve a consultation on the draft policy (Appendix A) to be focused primarily on current residents of IRL Schemes.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 There has been no approved policy for the use of Communal Lounges within Independent Retirement Living (IRL) schemes. Historically managers have overseen the use and it is now deemed appropriate to have a consistent policy in place for all five schemes.
- 1.2 This policy applies to Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) tenants, and anyone that visits tenants in a IRL scheme.
- 1.3 This policy outlines the use of the communal lounges which exist in all of the Council's Independent Retirement Living Schemes (IRL).
- 1.4 This draft policy was considered by the Housing Member Working Party on 4th April 2022

2. Report

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure:
 - The safe use of communal lounges
 - Communal lounges are used in the best way to benefit all tenants, staff, and visitors.
 - Communal lounges can be safely evacuated in the event of an emergency
- 2.2 This policy provides a framework for how communal areas will be managed and what is expected of residents.
- 2.3 Policy Conditions for Tenant Usage
 - Tenants' belongings should not be stored in these areas.
 - Communal lounges are managed by the scheme manager. Permission for items to be placed in the communal lounges must be granted by the scheme manager.
 - The following are classed as permissible items that can be in communal lounges but not limited to;
 - Festive lights subject to installation and testing agreed and completed by RBC
 - Festive decorations subject to installation agreement by RBC

- Soft furnishings installed by RBC. No furniture to be gifted or donated for storing/placing in communal lounges
- Walkers or Wheelchairs, subject to a risk assessment
- Communal lounges can be used with scheme manager's approval for (not an exhausted list);
 - family visits, coffee mornings, celebrations, approved events, selling of appropriate items, physical fitness sessions.
- The communal lounge cannot be booked out by residents and will always remain open to all tenants.

2.4 Policy Conditions for External Organisations

- In some instances, external companies may request to use the communal lounges within the IRL schemes in these instances requests must go to the scheme manager for approval.
- Any external companies requesting to use the communal lounges must provide;
 - Evidence of suitable insurance cover
 - Ensure event is suitable for IRL tenants to attend if wanted
 - DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks (where appropriate)

2.5 A breach of this policy will be a breach of an IRL resident's tenancy agreement. IRL scheme managers will work with residents to maximise the use of the communal areas within these guidelines, a persistent and deliberate breach of the policy, impacting negatively on other residents could result in enforcement action.

3. **Policy framework implications**

3.1 Within the Older Persons Strategy 2021-2023 the Council commits to improving the communal areas in IRL and this policy ensures those spaces are accessible to all residents with appropriate use, managed by the Council.

4. **Resource implications**

4.1 No resource implications have been identified.

5. **Legal implications**

5.1 The provision of a room with furniture in it and facilities within a property owned by the Council is subject to several Statutory regulations:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Housing Act 2004
- Building Regulations 2000, 2010
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988

6. **Equality implications**

- 6.1 The Equality Impact screening found a full impact assessment is not required as this new policy is being put in place to ensure consistency in the use of Communal Lounges in a fair and transparent way.
- 6.2 There is no evidence that tenants with any of the nine protected characteristics will be negatively impacted by this policy. Rather, it is anticipated that this policy will promote equality.
- 6.3 It is therefore considered that the Council will comply with its Public Sector Equality duty when endorsing this Policy and a full impact assessment is not required at this stage.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1 None identified

8. Consultation

- 8.1 As this policy will only impact on the 210 homes within IRL Schemes it is intended to focus the consultation exercise on those residents. The consultation will also appear on the Council's website.
- 8.2 A coffee morning will be held at each IRL scheme where the Communal Lounge Policy will be explained, and feedback collected.
- 8.3 Posters will be placed in all IRL schemes

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 Members are asked to approve an 8-week consultation period on the draft policy.

(To resolve)

Background Papers

None