

Rother Owned/Leased Accommodation

Fire Safety Policy

October 2025

Policy Statement and Service Standards

The main objectives of this policy are to ensure the council has adequate measures in place:

- I. to safeguard all relevant persons from death or injury in the event of fire;
- II. to minimise the risk of fire and to limit fire spread; and
- III. to ensure the Council is compliant with all relevant legislation

Rother District Council will comply with the requirements of all relevant legislation and regulation in respect of where Rother District Council is the freeholder and landlord in order to:

1. Provide a safe environment for all residents, visitors, employees and contractors that minimises the risk of injury or damage to homes;
2. Minimise and manage the risks of fire to blocks of flats; and
3. Provide tenants with advice and information about fire safety through the following means:
 - a. Newsletters, leaflets and posters
 - b. Referrals to East Sussex Fire and Rescue community team
 - c. At tenancy visits

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 imposes a number of legal duties upon the Council. The Regulations clarify the approach to be taken in relation to fire safety with an onus on risk assessment and managing risks rather than blanket fire precaution.

The Council will address these duties by:

- a) Developing policies and procedures to minimise the risks associated with fire;
- b) engaging a suitably qualified person to carry out, update and periodically review fire risk assessments of all accommodation where the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies;
- c) taking appropriate measures to minimise the risk to life and property from fire;
- d) maintaining a record of periodic testing of fire alarm, emergency lighting, smoke detectors, vents and fire protection equipment;
- e) ensuring contractors are managed and supervised to prevent inadvertent or unexpected breaches of fire safety or increased risk of fire;
- f) providing appropriate fire safety training to staff on induction and annually thereafter, applicable to their role;
- g) maintaining documentation and records in respect of fire safety management;
- h) liaising with the Fire and Rescue Service to promote fire awareness; and
- i) if fires occur, investigating the causes, identifying lessons and remedying deficiencies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Rother District Council, as landlord and owner of residential premises, is responsible for compliance with all statutory health and safety requirements regarding fire. This landlord responsibility cannot be delegated and rests with the Responsible Person and the Council.

Under legislation, the legal person or entity that has control of the premises for the purposes of a business or undertaking (such as social housing) is ultimately responsible for fire safety. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 they are known as the Responsible Person.

The Chief Executive of Rother District Council is the Responsible Person, as defined in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and has a duty to ensure that Rother District Council has a clearly defined and effective management system incorporating, planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventative and protective measures. They delegate actions to other responsible staff as set out below.

The Competent Person for fire, who has the training and responsibility of fire safety for Rother owned or managed accommodation, is the Housing Solutions Manager. The Competent Person is delegated the following duties to ensure the safety of residents, employees, contractors and visitors.

They will do this by ensuring that:

- I. A competent person carries out a periodic Fire Risk Assessment for each premises covered by this policy
- II. Significant findings of Fire Risk Assessments are recorded and, where deficiencies are noted, they are acted upon in a planned and organised manner
- III. Everyone on the premises or nearby, as far as is reasonably practicable, can escape safely if there is a fire
- IV. The golden thread of fire safety runs through all aspects of maintenance, refurbishment and capital works programmes.
- V. The Fire Safety Policy for RDC tenants is formulated and revised.
- VI. Audits are conducted to ensure that the provisions within the fire safety policy are being enforced to the standard required.
- VII. Planning and delivering fire safety improvements.
- VIII. Ensuring suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training is carried out for staff and contractors.
- IX. Ensuring that fire precautions are tested and maintained effectively.
- X. Ensuring the investigations regarding fires and near miss incidents are carried out and controls are introduced to reduce the risk of such incidents recurring.
- XI. Ensuring staff delivering services to properties where Rother District Council is the landlord stay up to date with current fire safety legislation and guidance.

The Council's Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for ensuring compliance with all statutory fire safety requirements in the case of an incident. This responsibility is shared and delegated to key members of staff, in the first instance a member of the Housing Team would notify the relevant Competent i.e. Person Housing Manager and they would follow up with the Head of Service if additional assistance is required.

Fire Safety Training

Fire safety training will be delivered to all staff who enter properties where Rother District Council is the landlord, particularly tenant's homes, to enable the monitoring of fire safety provisions in the building.

Staff will be given adequate information, instruction and training in order to identify and report any potential risks. A review of staff training needs will be undertaken in order to develop competence with regard to fire safety and to ensure staff are trained to a suitable standard.

Staff with specific duties or areas of work, especially in relation to emergency response, will be trained to undertake these tasks effectively and competently.

Fire Risk Assessments

Individual homes do not require a Fire Risk Assessment however Rother District Council will have Fire Risk Assessments for all flats that they are freeholder for, and any HMOs they own (regardless of size). Any property that Rother District Council is a leaseholder, will fall under the fire safety policy for the freeholder. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) will be developed for all tenants identified as requiring assistance during an evacuation.

Fire Risk Assessments will be reviewed at least annually, regardless of changes, to ensure ongoing compliance. All fire safety records, including FRA reports and maintenance logs, will be retained for a minimum of six years and subject to annual audit.

Blocks of Flats:

Rother District Council has a duty to ensure that a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment has been undertaken to evaluate the risks to the occupants and all other relevant persons who would be regarded as lawfully on the premises. The risk assessment is limited to the communal areas of the building up to and including the front door of the flat/maisonette. These common areas must adequately protect escape routes (including compartmentation and where necessary, fire related signage and lighting), have adequate

means for the testing and maintenance of all fire systems and adequate information to tenants/leaseholders to comply with the Fire Safety Order 2005. Additionally, the individual flat/maisonette should comply with the duty mentioned above for an “individual dwelling” under the Housing Act 2004

Fire risk assessments for the RDC owned blocks of flats and HMOs are carried out on a basis determined following each FRA based on the specific building and its use. However, RDC staff will review the FRAs annually by way of a site visit. Risk assessments are currently carried out by a 3rd party certified competent person, on behalf of RDC owned accommodation.

The risk assessments cover prevention as well as escape. An action plan is produced when required for any findings. Actions are recorded in the Council’s information system and passed on to the relevant team(s) to carry out.

The fire risk assessment will be also be reviewed:

1. After material alterations
2. After a fire
3. After significant works to address FRA short comings
4. After changes in regulation or general fire safety practice

Prevention

The following measures have been put in place by Rother District Council in order to prevent fire in enclosed flats:

a. No smoking signage

There is no smoking in any HMO or shared area within blocks of flats.

b. Security (reduce arson risk)

An entrance door, which in some flats includes a door entry system, reduces the risk of arson.

c. Keeping communal areas free of combustible material

See Appendix A of this policy for detail on this procedure.

d. Electrical testing

Electrical testing is carried out every five years or at change of tenant for flats where a tenant has been in place for two years. Emergency lighting in all communal areas has an annual full discharge test and a six-month operational test

e. Evacuation procedures

Evacuation procedures are displayed in the communal area of every enclosed block of flats

f. Fire risk assessments

Fire risk assessments are carried out at regular intervals

g. Rother District Council staff

Staff to be vigilant when visiting flats and report any concerns

Keeping communal areas clear of combustible material

Rother District Council have adopted a zero-tolerance approach for all general needs flats which means that communal area should be kept clear of all items at all times.

Our tenancy agreement states:- “Keep shared areas, including entrances, stairways, landings, stores and any other common parts, clean and tidy.”

Rother District Council regularly informs residents about their responsibility for keeping the communal areas clear and that items left in the communal areas may be removed and disposed of. Tenants will receive this information with the annual newsletter as well as at tenancy sign up.

The procedure for keeping common areas clear can be found in Appendix A.

Equipment and Fire Protection

All fire safety equipment will be serviced by a competent person and the service periods will be scheduled in accordance with the recommendations of relevant British Standards and manufacturers' instructions.

The risk of fire spreading through the building will be controlled by the provision of fire resisting doors and other structural fire protection measures.

A means of alerting people in the event of a fire will be provided within individual dwellings and an appropriate fire detection and alarm system will be provided to the building. Alarms will be tested regularly.

Emergency lighting will be provided for escape routes, where applicable. The locations will be determined by the findings of the fire risk assessment.

It is not considered appropriate to provide fire extinguishers within the individual dwellings or the communal areas of block of flats. We provide fire blankets in the kitchens and staff advise new residents how these should be used.

Evacuation

Evacuation policies for each building will be specific to that building (and subject to the FRA), however the general principles apply.

In general needs accommodation all occupants to self-evacuate in the event of fire or **once** the fire alarm sounds.

Communication

Fire safety updates will be communicated to tenants either face to face, via email or text alerts or by the Council's website.

Rother District Council will ensure that all persons employed by them, and any contractors that are used, are provided with all relevant information related to fire safety. Housing Solutions Manager will advise housing staff on all relevant matters of fire safety policy and will ensure residents are kept informed of any changes that are made to fire safety procedures.

Fire Action Notices will be clearly displayed at various locations about the premises for all visitors to see.

Tenant fire safety will take the form of:

- a) Fire Action Notices
- b) Leaflet information (at sign up and throughout tenancy)
- c) Newsletters
- d) Visits by East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Community Team

Rother District Council will record the findings of its periodic tests and checks. The following records will be kept:

1. Fire Risk Assessments and reviews
2. Fire alarm testing
3. Emergency lighting testing
4. Scheduled and unscheduled maintenance of fire alarm systems

Regulatory Framework

1. Housing Act 2004:

This Act brought in a new system of regulation for fire safety in existing residential premises through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System which uses a risk assessment approach to look at the condition of

all properties. In the section relating to fire, it states that there should be **"sufficient, properly designed and appropriately sited smoke and/or heat detectors with alarms in every dwelling"**.

2. The Building Regulations 2006 Approved Document B (Fire safety) – Volume 1:

These Regulations cover fire safety related matters within and around dwellings. This includes the satisfactory means of giving warning and means of escape in case of fire; stopping the spread of fire over internal and external linings; ensuring the stability of buildings in the event of a fire; and to ensure satisfactory access for fire appliances to buildings and facilities within dwellings.

3. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005:

This Order applies to the common parts of multi-occupied residential housing, and requires landlords or housing owners to carry out a fire Risk Assessment and implement appropriate precautions to minimise the risk of fire in the common parts

4. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA):

This Act requires organisations to ensure that all people, including the disabled, can safely leave the building in the event of a fire.

5. The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988:

These Regulations cover the levels of fire resistance for domestic upholstered furniture and furnishings. It includes minimum standards, including the requirement for labelling furniture.

6. The Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002 (DSEAR):

These Regulations require employers to assess the risk of fires and explosions arising from work activities involving dangerous substances, and to eliminate or reduce these risks.

Policy Review

This policy will be kept under review annually and updated in light of any changes, including legislative or regulatory changes.

Appendix A

The approach for keeping the communal areas clear is set out below. It applies to all blocks of flats

The procedure for maintaining a 'zero tolerance' approach is:

1. Identification of item and its owner
 - Items will be identified by the Mobile Cleaning team when they are on the premises and by other officers about the estate. Enquiries will be made by door knocking at the time. Where we make contact with the owners of the items they will be instructed to remove the items immediately.
 - Where we cannot identify the owner at the time, or when residents report items left in communal areas, we will attempt to ascertain who owns the item and instruct the owner to remove them immediately. If unsuccessful, a clearance sheet will be raised to have the items removed.
2. Removal and/ or storage
 - Where officers decide disposal of items would impact on a tenant's ability to travel e.g. buggies adult bicycles, these will be stored for a period of 28 days before being disposed of. This will be a very limited number of items.
 - All other items, with the exception of disability aids, will be disposed of without storage.
3. Recharging for removal/storage/collection

- A fee can be charged via the Council's recharge policy for removal if the owner has been identified and not removed the item themselves, or if the owner is identified at a later point.

- Charging a fee for removal will discourage repeat offending. This could be a discretionary charge.

4. Disposal of property

- Property not claimed after 28 days will be disposed of