

Housing Services Dirty and/or Verminous Properties Policy

Department	Housing Services
Responsible Person	Director of Housing
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1. Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all properties managed by the Council are maintained in a safe, hygienic, and habitable condition. It sets out how the Council will respond when a tenant's home becomes dirty and/or verminous and outlines the expectations placed on tenants to maintain their homes appropriately. The policy aims to protect the health and wellbeing of tenants, neighbours, and the wider community by preventing conditions that may pose health risks or create statutory nuisances.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 A property is considered dirty when hygiene standards have deteriorated to a level that may pose a health risk, such as through the accumulation of waste, rotting food, strong odours, or blocked access routes.
- 2.2 A verminous property is one that is infested with pests such as rats, mice, cockroaches, fleas, or bedbugs, or where conditions are likely to attract vermin. In some cases, issues may be linked to hoarding behaviour, where excessive accumulation of possessions obstructs safe use of the home or creates fire and health hazards.

3. Legal Framework

- 3.1 The Council's available actions under this policy are supported by several legal frameworks, including: -
- Environmental Protection Act 1990,
 - Public Health Act 1936,
 - Housing Act 2004, which allows intervention where a property presents a statutory nuisance or health and safety risk.
- 3.2 Additionally, tenancy agreement conditions require tenants to maintain their homes in a clean and safe condition. These legal powers enable the Council to act where necessary to safeguard health and safety, and the condition of the property.

4. Tenant Responsibilities

- 4.1 Tenants are responsible for keeping their home clean, hygienic, and free from conditions that may attract pests. This includes taking reasonable steps to

maintain cleanliness, store food safely, dispose of waste appropriately, and manage clutter.

- 4.2 Tenants must also report any issues promptly and allow access for inspections or treatment when required.

5. Council Responsibilities

- 5.1 The Council is responsible for investigating concerns raised about dirty or verminous properties. When a report is received, officers will carry out an inspection to assess the level of risk, identify any infestation, and determine whether the tenant may require additional support. The Council will work with relevant agencies, such as social care or mental health services, where appropriate. If a tenant fails to cooperate, the Council may take enforcement action, including serving notices or carrying out works in default, with costs recharged to the tenant.

6. Intervention Process

- 6.1 The intervention process begins when a concern is raised by housing staff, neighbours, emergency services, or other agencies. A property inspection will then be carried out to determine the extent of the issue, including any fire risks, vermin activity, or barriers to safe living. Following the inspection, an action plan may be agreed with the tenant, which could include cleaning schedules, pest control treatments, referrals for support, or follow-up visits. If the tenant does not engage with the agreed plan, enforcement measures may be taken, including legal notices or tenancy action.

7. Vulnerable Tenants

- 7.1 Where tenants are vulnerable due to mental health issues, physical disabilities, cognitive impairment, substance misuse, or self-neglect, the Council will adopt a support-first approach. This may involve working closely with Adult Social Care, safeguarding teams, NHS mental health services, or family members where appropriate and with consent. The aim is to address the underlying causes of the behaviour while ensuring the property is made safe.

8. Recharges

- 8.1 Tenants may be recharged for the costs of deep cleaning, pest control, waste removal, or repairs caused by neglect. Charges will reflect the actual costs

incurred by the Council. Recharges may be applied where the Council has had to intervene due to a tenant's failure to maintain their home or comply with an agreed action plan.

9. Monitoring and Review

- 9.1 The Council will monitor cases through follow-up inspections to ensure that improvements are sustained. Repeat cases may be referred for additional support or enforcement action.

10. Equality and Fairness

- 10.1 All actions taken under this policy will be carried out in a fair and non-discriminatory manner, ensuring compliance with equality legislation. The Council will consider individual circumstances and vulnerabilities when determining the most appropriate course of action, balancing the need to safeguard health and safety with the duty to support tenants who may be struggling.