



## FIRE SAFETY POLICY (HOUSING)

### Housing Services

<b>Policy:</b>	Fire Safety Housing Services)
<b>Scope:</b>	SADC Housing Service, Housing Assets
<b>Effective Date:</b>	August 2025
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<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Simon Smith</b>
<b>Author:</b>	Jason Grace/Mark Johnson
<b>Statute:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005</li> <li>• Fire Safety Act 2021</li> <li>• Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022</li> <li>• Building Safety Act 2022</li> <li>• Building Regulations - Document B (Fire Safety)</li> <li>• Housing Act 1985</li> <li>• Housing Act 2004: Part 1</li> <li>• Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 (Consumer Standards)</li> <li>• Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998</li> <li>• Electrical Wiring Regulations BS7671 – 18<sup>th</sup> Edition</li> <li>• Equalities Act 2010</li> <li>• General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)</li> </ul>
<b>Related Policies/Agreements:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SADC Tenancy Policy</li> <li>• SADC Tenancy Agreement</li> <li>• SADC Repairs Handbook</li> <li>• Gas Safety Policy</li> <li>• Electrical Policy</li> <li>• Alteration and Improvement's Policy</li> <li>• Vulnerable tenants &amp; reasonable adjustment Policy</li> </ul>

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# Fire Safety Policy

## 1.0 Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all general needs properties, housing block common parts, sheltered accommodation, mobile home sites and temporary accommodation managed by the Council's Housing Department.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all tenancy types as listed in the Tenancy Policy Housing Services, and leaseholders.
- 1.3 This Policy does not apply to any corporate or commercial properties managed by Council Departments outside of the Housing Service.

## 2.0 Policy Statement

- 2.1 As a landlord, St Albans City and District Council (SADC) sees the health and safety of people living, working in or visiting our properties as a priority. Under the Housing Act 2004, Building Safety Act and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, we have a responsibility to ensure certain safety standards are met and adhered to.
- 2.2 This policy will outline our approach to managing fire safety in properties which are owned and managed by SADC Housing Service. SADC, as the Accountable Person for its housing stock, has appointed a Principal Accountable Person to provide focused and effective leadership in managing fire and structural safety risks across its high-rise residential buildings. The Principal Accountable Person plays a central role in ensuring compliance with legal duties, coordinating with accountable persons, and continuously improving building safety measures.
- 2.3 Responsible Persons - The table below lists duties and responsibilities of current post-holders with regards to various aspects of fire safety within the department.

Post	Post-holder Name	Responsibility
Assistant Director Housing	Simon Smith	Overarching responsibility for fire safety within the Housing Dept
Asset Manager	Jason Grace	To ensure compliance, keep Asset Register up to date with relevant information and

		make sure budgetary provisions are available. Principal Accountable Person, also acting as 'Responsible Officer' for specific named properties in the current 'long-term' absence of the Estate Services Team Leader
Tenancy Services Manager	Lydia Bradbury	Management of Estates and team managing estates
Safety and Risk Manager - Housing	Corey Perry	Managing and monitoring all statutory compliance associated with Housing Asset Management (new role introduced September 2025, this role will include Responsible Person duties).
Planned Maintenance Manager	Mark Johnson	Managing Planned Maintenance contractors, delivering planned and reactive 'Fire Safety' works identified through FRAs and relevant intrusive property surveys ensuring contractor compliance with regards to Fire Safety. Safety checks on contractors. To act as 'Responsible Officer' for specific named properties in the current 'long-term' absence of the Estate Services Team Leader
Estate Services Team Leader	Andrew Ilott	Named as "Responsible Person" under Regulatory Reform Order. To undertake regular inspections of communal areas assisted by the caretaking team. Responsible for making sure FRA's are carried out in due course. To liaise with colleagues to progress works that may arise. Currently on 'long-term' absence
Repairs Contract Manager	Gareth Heavey	Managing Repairs contractors, ensuring contractor compliance with regards to Fire Safety. Safety checks on contractors. Safety

		checks on void properties including looking for breaches in compartmentalisation
Specialist Works Manager	Vacant post	Managing specialist repairs (disrepair, damp and mould, and large-scale responsive repairs) contractors, ensuring contractor compliance with regards to Fire Safety. Safety checks on contractors.
Senior Surveyor – Energy (job under re-evaluation)	Robert Smith	Managing decarbonisation and energy efficiency projects, ensuring contractor compliance with regards to Fire Safety. Safety checks on contractors
Senior Building Services Surveyor	Steve Todd	LGSR management. Servicing of Fire detection and firefighting equipment.
Electrical Surveyor	Vacant post	Landlord's electrical supply and emergency lighting inspections (annual). 5-year programme of cyclical electrical inspections.
Project Surveyor	Matthew Barnes	Programming works arising from FRA working with Estate Services Team Leader to make sure actions programmed and completed
Accommodation Support Team Leaders	Kate Padley/ Louise Wallis	Responsible for ensuring fire checks are carried out and regulations complied with in temporary accommodation and sheltered housing
Housing Options Co-ordinator – Special Projects	Nicola Lee	Fire safety compliance – mobile home sites
All Staff	All staff	Report any concerns regarding Fire Safety to line manager

- 2.4 The Council will promote awareness of Fire Safety to its residents making them aware of responsibilities that they have to safely maintain their tenancies for their own safety and that of other residents residing within a block, in such a manner that minimise the risks in relation for Fire Safety.

- 2.5 The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that staff understand their role in reducing the risk of fires and will also provide training to its staff to ensure that they are aware of their obligations.
- 2.6 The Council will work in partnership with other services to ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations and to ensure the ongoing safety of our residents. This includes Herts Fire and Rescue Services.
- 2.7 To meet our duties in relation to fire safety SADC will:
- Carry out our Fire Risk Assessments in accordance with Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
  - Maintain and improve fire safety as required through the recommendations of the fire risk Assessments and the Fire Audits.
  - Carry out all necessary servicing to ensure that fire prevention equipment is always in full operation, this includes smoke/fire detection systems.
  - Consider Fire Safety in all improvement programmes and day to day repairs carried out by SADC.
  - Provide relevant employees with Fire Safety Training.
  - Carry out joint training exercises with Herts Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies as necessary to ensure readiness for an emergency.
  - Undertake Fire Risk Audits with Herts Fire and Rescue Service where required.
  - Give Herts Fire and Rescue Service access to any properties as required in order to train and prepare for dealing with fires.

### **3.0 Management and review of Fire risk Assessments (FRA)**

- 3.1 As part of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, The Council-must carry out a fire risk assessment on all residential blocks owned by SADC and take reasonable steps to remove or reduce any risks that have been identified.
- 3.2 Where it is practical the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) report will be located within the premises. However, where this is not practical the FRA report will be held centrally on SharePoint. All Housing staff will have read only access to these documents.
- 3.3 New FRAs for the Council's High-Rise blocks, Sheltered Accommodation and Temporary Accommodation Hostels will be undertaken by a specialist FRA surveying practice, on an annual basis.

- 3.4 New FRAs, undertaken by specialist FRA surveying practice, for other general needs blocks and mobile home sites will be carried out within 4 years of the date of the previous assessment, on a three-year cyclical basis. The Council will however carry out annual 'in-house' reviews of those FRAs.
- 3.5 In addition to the planned programme, Fire Risk Assessments will be reviewed if they are either considered to be no longer valid, or there has been significant change in the premises which may have affected the fire risk, or the fire safety measures currently in place. Situations that may prompt this include but are not restricted to:
- A significant change in the number of people present or in the characteristics of the occupants.
  - Structural alterations to the building or new internal layouts.
  - Becoming aware of shortcomings in fire safety measures or potential improvements.
  - If a fire occurs.
  - Updates in legislation
- 3.6 Fire Risk Assessments will be carried out by a competent person in line with the Regulatory Reform Order.
- 3.7 The Council will review all Fire Risk Assessments to establish what works are recommended to be undertaken.
- 3.8 The works will be prioritised based on the information received in the FRA report. The Council will work to reduce the fire risk on all our stock to a tolerable level, by programming these works based upon the information available in relation to the risk, the nature of the work involved, and the buildings concerned.
- 3.9 The Building Safety Act 2022 and Fire Safety act 2021 has introduced new areas for consideration in terms of Fire Risk Assessments in particular the Building Envelope construction. Remedial works to actions identified in relation to these areas require specialist design and Building Control approval, which can increase timescales in terms of delivery. Additional regulations around Compartmentation (including fire doors/screens) requires similar design and Building Control consideration, thereby extending lead in times for remedial works.
- 3.10 The Council has funding within the Housing Investment Programme which will be reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process to ensure there are sufficient resources to carry out the fire safety work required.

#### **4.0 Fire Risks**

4.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places a duty on the Council as a Landlord to take general fire precautions to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of the people on the premises and in the immediate vicinity. Examples of risk include but are not limited to:

- Arson
- Faulty electrical installations
- Accumulation of flammable rubbish
- Smoking
- Failures in construction (fire doors, lack of emergency lighting, etc.)

## **5.0 Fire Precaution, Prevention & Protection**

5.1 In order to reduce the risks that the above present there are fire precautions that the Council will follow to protect people, property and assets against the loss of life, injury and damage caused by fire.

5.2 The Council will manage, undertake and maintain the following fire precautions, preventions and protections:

### **5.2.1 Clear landings policy**

- The Council operates a clear landings policy. This means that no items will be permitted to be kept in any common areas, including meter cupboards and bin stores. Items in communal areas will be removed, and tenants may need to pay a fee to have the items returned.
- One doormat per property may be kept in the communal areas providing that they are no bigger than 70cm x 40cm and they must be in good condition. The decision about the condition of the mat lies with the Council.
- Corridors, walkways, landings, and exit routes must be kept clear of items, no rubbish/debris should be left outside flat doors. All rubbish should be disposed of in the designated bin areas.

### **5.2.2 No smoking**

- Smoking in communal areas is forbidden. In accordance with the Health Act 2006 and the Smoke Free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006. This does not apply to tenants smoking in their own dwellings within a block. No smoking signs will be placed in communal blocks.

### **5.2.3 Fire stopping**

- Contractors working on any block either on behalf of the Council or any other persons or body should take care to avoid penetrating walls ceiling



or floor slabs for passing through cable, pipes or conduits. Where this is unavoidable the contractor will ensure that the penetration is sealed and fire stopped by a suitably accredited body with specific methods agreed with the Council and its relevant contractors who oversee the works. Firestopping must be designed and approved by the Council and the relevant contractors before work commences and inspected upon completion. Completed works must be accurately labelled and/or mapped, both on-site and within the relevant database that forms part of the Golden Thread.

#### 5.2.4 Fire detection systems

- It is noted that there is no general need for fire detection systems in general needs blocks, however where alarms and fire-fighting equipment are fitted these will be regularly tested and serviced. Alarms are tested on a weekly basis and fire-fighting equipment on a six-monthly basis. Where premises have an alarm system, records of the alarm tests and evacuation practices will be kept in the secure information boxes.

#### 5.2.5 Smoke Alarm

- All Council properties are fitted with hard-wired smoke detectors to a minimum of LD3. Smoke, Heat and CO detectors are tested on an annual basis at the same time as the annual gas safety check. Where a property is 'Non-Gas' the detectors are tested annually by the Council's electrical works contractor.
- Smoke detectors within sheltered schemes are connected to the Careline who will alert Herts Fire Service if necessary.

#### 5.2.6 Fire Exits

- All Fire Exits must be kept free of all obstructions, both inside and out, and be available for use when required.
- To ensure that security of the building is maintained, Fire Exits will not be left open, nor shall fire exits be used by the occupants of the building as a main entrance/exit to the building.

#### 5.2.7 Fire Doors

- Fire doors in communal blocks are provided to help prevent the spread of smoke and fire and must be kept closed. Fire doors are checked on a quarterly basis as part of our ongoing block inspections. A visual check is carried out on all doors including flat entrance doors looking for tampering, adaptations or damage. We will carry out further investigation if the visual check deems it necessary. We are unable to gain access to our flats on a regular basis to examine flat entrance doors but encourage staff to look at and report any issues when visiting flats for other reasons.

- Positive 'close tests' are carried out on all communal doors from both a 90 and 10 degree angle. We will also check intumescent strips, door furniture and glass undamaged on communal doors. Any issues found will be recorded and passed to the Asset Management Team for remedial works.
- Fire Doors should NOT be propped open, tampered with, or compromised in any way, i.e.; materials affixed to frame/door to prevent banging noises. Fire doors will be marked – keep shut.
- The Council fits fire doors / entrance doors to tenant's flats and cupboards, where this has been identified as part of fire risk assessment. The Council also asks that Leaseholders comply with any recommendations in relation to such doors being installed and offers installation to all Leaseholders on a rechargeable basis. Where Leaseholders wish to fit their own fire door, they must provide certification in relation to the installation with regards to compliance. Where this is not undertaken, the Council will write to the leaseholder explaining why the door needs to be replaced and setting out the fire safety issues. Ultimately the Council may seek legal opinion for this work to be undertaken.

#### 5.2.8 Dry Risers

- Where installed Dry Risers are positioned and secured on each floor within the block. The Riser is either located behind a secure door to prevent tampering or theft of the valve, or by another lockable mechanism. They are inspected and tested, maintained and serviced on a regular basis.
- If the locks on the dry riser are changed for any reason, Herts Fire Service are made aware and given a set of keys if necessary.

#### 5.2.9 Emergency lighting

- Where we have installed emergency lighting, we will ensure that it is tested periodically, and that the records of these tests are kept on site and checked periodically.
- The lighting will be tested monthly and an annual "drain down" will be performed annually by a competent professional.

#### 5.2.10 Training

- We will provide training for staff in fire safety and prevention measures.
- We will provide advice for residents in our newsletters and make sure our contractors are aware of fire safety issues.
- A fire safety leaflet will be issued to residents in each block and those in temporary accommodation. Training requirements will be reviewed annually by the Estate Services Team Leader.

#### 5.2.11 Signage

- We will install, place and maintain clear safety signage where necessary to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, Wayfinding Signage (Regulation 8) introduced 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023.

#### 5.2.12 Service and Electrical cupboards

- Service and electrical cupboards within the communal areas must be kept locked at all times. Electrical and service cupboards must not be used for storage of any items. Any problems should be reported immediately to the Council.

#### 5.2.13 Electrical Installations

- The electrical installation to the communal parts within blocks of flats will be checked every 5 years in accordance with the guidance provided by the Institute of Electrical Engineers Wiring Regulations 18th Edition (as amended).
- PAT testing will be carried out to Council supplied electrical equipment in sheltered blocks and temporary accommodation annually and a register of Portable Appliances will be kept by the Council.

#### 5.2.14 Gas Installations

- In order to prevent a gas escape or combustible incident within blocks of flats, the buildings/individual heating systems are serviced annually by the Council to ensure compliance with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.

#### 5.2.15 Evacuation routes

- To ensure safe evacuation the Council has adopted a clear landing policy. To ensure safe evacuation the routes must be kept free of sources of ignition, flammable and combustible material and obstructions at all times.

#### 5.2.16 Evacuation Plans

- Providing the integrity of the front door to each individual flat is maintained and not compromised in any way, if there is a fire within a flat this will act as a sealed fire compartment. The flat should contain a fire for up to 30 minutes, with the fire doors and concrete walls resisting before spreading into the common parts of the block. In addition, residents in other flats will

have 1 hour protection when their own front door is taken into consideration.

- Purpose built blocks of flats generally have a 'stay put policy' (Residents should leave their flat if it becomes affected by heat or smoke). Where a stay put policy is in place on the arrival of the Fire Service they will determine:
  - When and if to commence a full evacuation.
  - When to instigate a visual inspection.
  - When residents can return to their premises.
  - When to involve the Police.
  - Any other steps appropriate to the circumstances
- Where the fire is located within the resident's property then it is necessary to escape the building, this should be carried out in an orderly fashion, through the nearest Fire Exit. If possible and if it is safe to do so, all windows and doors should be closed to prevent fire spreading to other areas of the building.
- On occasions the 'Stay Put' policy may, due to specific circumstances, need to be temporarily changed to 'Simultaneous Evacuation', whilst remedial and/or fire safety upgrade works are carried out. A change of Evacuation Policy, of this nature, is always accompanied by appropriate consultation with Herts Fire & Rescue Service, thorough communication (letters etc) with the residents/households affected, and on-site presence of relevant Council Officers on the day of switch over, with the aim of undertaking direct 'face to face' communication of the new arrangements (including information on designated assembly points) being put in place.

#### 5.2.17 Mobility Scooters

- The Council does not allow mobility scooters to be stored or charged in communal areas unless a specific area has been allocated to do so.

#### 5.2.18 Void inspections

- Voids will be inspected for breaches in compartmentation. Any issues found will be brought to the attention of senior management so that it can be appropriately assessed and remedial carried out as required.

## 6.0 Policies and procedures

- 6.1 The Council commits to regularly review its fire policy and any supporting procedures amended to ensure that it meets the needs of the Council and its residents living in its housing blocks.

- 6.2 The Council will carry out FRAs in accordance with its policy as set out in section 3 of this document.
- 6.3 The Council will carry out Fire Audits as necessary and/or appropriate.
- 6.4 The Council will provide training to relevant St Albans City & District Council staff.

## **7.0 Partnerships**

- 7.1 We will work closely with Herts Fire & Rescue Service and our specialist Fire Risk Assessors.
- 7.2 We will carry out fire familiarisation exercises with Herts Fire Service when requested to ensure procedures are in place and that they are familiar with block layouts in the event of a real fire
- 7.3 We will work jointly producing relevant policies and procedures where applicable.
- 7.4 The Council will work with other organisations and partners to gain technical and expert advice to ensure we are meeting our obligations under the Regulatory Reform Act 2005.

## **8.0 Vulnerable People**

- 8.1 Purpose built high rise and sheltered blocks – If the fire is not within the residents own property, it is a recommendation that all residents stay in their home until rescued by the fire service. If the fire is within the resident's home – they must escape safely from within their property, through a fire exit or a designated escape route. If possible and it is safe to do so, all windows and doors should be closed to prevent fire spread to other areas of the building.
- 8.2 All residents of 1-61 Telford Court (tower block), which is currently being decommissioned, were advised of a switch to a Simultaneous Evacuation policy for the block, which was implemented on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023 were consulted as to whether they foresaw any difficulties in complying with the new Evacuation Policy.
- 8.3 Sheltered schemes - Information about vulnerable tenants or those with mobility problems will be recorded in the premise information boxes for the fire service in the event of an emergency.

## **9.0 Publicising the Policy**

- 9.1 The Council will publicise the Housing Fire Safety Policy, and raise public awareness by:
- Issuing a copy of this policy publicly on the Council website.
  - Regularly putting articles regarding fire safety into the Housing Times magazine sent to residents quarterly to remind them of their obligations, how to reduce the risk of fire and how to arrange a fire safety visit from Herts Fire Service.
  - Providing information leaflets for tenants in flats with communal areas and those in high rise blocks and to all tenants as part of the sign-up process.
  - Providing fire safety information in the tenant's handbook and on the Council's website.
  - Use the opportunity at Residents Forums and Community Days to publicise fire safety awareness within the home and associated communal areas.
  - Engage with our contractors to share this policy highlighting their responsibilities and obligations in-relation to fire safety. Contractors to promote fire safety awareness through regular toolbox talks.
  - Arranging awareness campaigns for our residents.
  - Encouraging our residents to take up the offer of Herts Fire Service free home fire visits to current and new tenants as part of the sign-up process.

## **10.0 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

- 10.1 The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity through its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The Council will take steps to make any reasonable adjustments required for tenants to contact us. This policy will be available in other formats as required.

## **11.0 Performance Monitoring**

- 11.1 Fire Safety is included within the Consumer Standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing which came into effect in 2024. In addition, Fire Risk Assessments are included within the Tenant Satisfaction Measures reported annually to the Regulator and Housing and Inclusion Committee.
- 11.2 In addition information on Fire Risk Assessments and actions arising from them are also reported to Housing and Inclusion Committee on a quarterly basis as part of the performance report property update.

