Tendring
District Council

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING FIRE SAFETY

January 2025

POLICY

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1. Policy Statement

1.1 Tendring District Council (hereafter TDC) is committed to meeting our obligations as a landlord and ensuring that fire safety is adequately managed, ensuring the safety of our residents and those visiting our residential properties.

1.2 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that TDC residents and visitors can use our residential buildings and facilities safely. This extends to taking all reasonable steps to mitigate any foreseeable risks associated with fire in domestic properties.

1.3 This policy complies with all relevant legislative requirements. TDC has chosen to apply fire safety standards to a more rigorous degree than is required in the regulations.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all of TDC's dwellings, except houses and bungalows.

2.2 Tenants of houses and bungalows are urged to familiarise themselves with fire prevention and precaution advice available from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/ and provided in their tenancy information pack.

3. Legislative context

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 creates duties for the Council to take general fire precautions including fire risk assessments, clear escape routes, maintenance and providing information. It applies to all dwellings except houses.

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 create further duties of increasing degrees of rigor,that apply to:

1. all premises where there are communal areas.
2. All buildings including more than one dwelling with a height over 11m 3. All buildings including more than one dwelling with a height over 18m

The order only applies to the communal areas and excludes private dwellings and residents' accommodation. Residents within their individual accommodation will be protected by the level of structural fire precautions implemented during the construction of the building or subsequent work.

Building heights are to be measured from external ground level to the finished floor level of the uppermost dwelling.

TDC does not own any residential buildings falling into categories 2 or 3. The Housing regulator has made enquiries of local authorities on a slightly differing basis: either 11m or 5 storeys. TDC has 3 buildings that fall into the 5 storey category, although just short of 11m.

Part B1 of The Building Regulations 2010 amended 2020 and 2022 provides standards for fire precautions in new buildings and when alterations are carried out. Other parts of the regulations govern matters such as conservation of energy, access and safety.

4 Responsible Person

4.1 The responsible person under this policy and the Fire Safety Order is the Corporate body Tendring District Council.

5. Stay Put Approach

5.1 TDC operates a 'stay put' approach across all blocks apart from

- Rivers House, Spendells Close, Walton on the Naze
- Rochford House, Spendells Close, Walton on the Naze
- Darcy House, Spendells Close, Walton on the Naze
- Sayers House, Victoria Place, Brightlingsea
- Mayflower House, Church Street, Harwich
- White Hart Court, West Street, Harwich
- All Sheltered Housing Units

In these buildings an evacuation policy applies in conjunction with fire alarm systems that are installed in these particular blocks.

5.2 The stay put policy takes into account recent reflections across the sector and is consistent with both statute and current best practice for housing of the type owned and managed by TDC.

5.3 TDC fire signage is clear in relation to actions required of the residents with regards to the stay put policy with the general principles being:

5.3.1 If the fire is in your flat, you should close the door to the room affected and leave the flat immediately, closing the main entrance door and alerting the fire brigade immediately.

5.3.2 If the fire is in another part of the building, you should stay in your flat keeping windows and doors closed. You should alert the fire brigade immediately by telephone. You should only leave your flat if it is directly affected by smoke or heat, or if directed to do so by the fire brigade.

5.4 TDC has an evacuation process in place at the blocks identified in 5.1. The evacuation procedures are documented in information given direct to the tenants and are recorded in the building's Fire cabinet and information.

6. Prevention and Risk Management

6.1 In order to protect all persons from the hazards of fire, TDC will:

6.1.1 Perform fire risk assessments on all applicable blocks managed by TDC.

6.1.2 Implement appropriate measures to eliminate, reduce or control the risk of fire and the spread of fire as recommended by the fire risk assessments.

6.1.3 Carry out fire door checks to all buildings with communal areas.

6.1.4 Provide and maintain appropriate means of escape in the event of fire.

6.1.5 Provide appropriate training to relevant employees in fire precautions, emergency procedures and actions in the event of fire.

6.1.6 Provide appropriate guidance and advice to all employees, residents and contractors on how to prevent fires.

6.1.7 Provide and maintain all fire equipment and systems.

6.1.8 Provide and maintain appropriate fire signage.

6.1.9 Liaise with appropriate enforcing authorities as necessary.

6.1.10 Regularly communicate key fire safety messages to all residents and staff members

7. Fire Risk Assessments

7.1 A fire risk assessment is a method of identifying fire hazards and assessing the likelihood and potential safety of buildings, so that appropriate general fire precautions can be implemented to reduce the risk of fires starting and to ensure that residents and visitors are as safe as possible in the event of a fire.

7.2 Fire risk assessments are undertaken by a competent person, as defined by the Fire Risk Assessment Competency Council (FRACC), to all buildings that require one under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 at the following frequencies:

- All three storey and above blocks with the exception of Sheltered Housing blocks – Every 2 years,
- Sheltered Housing blocks – Annually

7.3 Fire risk assessments will also be reviewed sooner when any of the following occur:

- A full block refurbishment
- Structural changes are proposed
- Change of use or layout
- New plant, equipment, processes or procedures are introduced which involve fire hazards
- It is proposed to store any flammable substances

7.4 TDC will review fire risks assessment actions actively across the financial year ensuring actions are completed within the timeframes highlighted by the assessment.

7.5 Completed fire risk assessments are held centrally on the asset management database. As well as in the red emergency fire cabinets in each block.

7.6 Fire Risk Assessments will be made available to residents on request and broader lessons will be communicated to residents. Opportunities will be taken to raise awareness and capture resident feedback.

8. General Fire Risks

8.1 To prevent the outbreak of fires in general needs communal areas and in corridors and stairwells of sheltered schemes, TDC tenancy agreements specify that there should be no storage of any items in communal areas, whether combustible or non-combustible. Escape routes are to be kept clear at all times across all blocks. Tenancy Management Officers complete block inspections to ensure that this is adhered to.

8.2 It is considered the residents' responsibility for the use/storage of any flammable liquids at their home and they do so at their own risk.

8.3 Under the TDC tenancy agreement, it is prohibited for residents to store flammable liquids which pose a fire and/or explosion risk in communal storage areas of blocks.

8.4 Smoking is prohibited in any internal communal areas of blocks owned by TDC. Smoking is permitted in individual resident's flats or external communal areas.

8.5 To limit the risk of arson, staff should be aware of strangers and challenge them politely, especially if they are in restricted and/or isolated areas.

8.6 Residents and visiting staff should ensure the block is kept secure and all communal main entrance doors are closed when entering and leaving the blocks.

9. Fire Fighting Equipment and Fire Systems

9.1 TDC. will provide appropriate fire equipment and systems where appropriate in line with regulations, guidance and recommendations from the fire risk assessments.

9.2 All of the equipment and systems will be serviced by TDC. and/or replaced in line with statutory requirements.

9.3 All fire equipment and systems will consider the capabilities of the existing and potential residents.

9.4 Firefighting equipment, where provided, is not for use by residents or staff members unless specifically trained.

10. Fire Signage

10.1 TDC will ensure fire escapes routes, fire doors, fire alarm call points and, where appropriate, firefighting equipment are all clearly marked.

10.2 TDC will ensure that the action to be taken on discovering a fire or fire alarm sounding is prominently displayed on Fire Action Notices; these notices are to comply with the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) best practice guidance for clear and large print.

11. Escape Routes

11.1 All buildings will conform to the building regulations in force at the time of construction.

11.2 Buildings undergoing alterations will conform to the Approved Document B (Fire Safety) Volume 1 in order to achieve and maintain the fire compartment integrity for the required time period.

11.3 Any openings or apertures, to existing buildings, between fire compartments such as door openings or letter boxes shall be smoke sealed, designed and constructed to maintain fire compartment integrity.

11.4 All corridors and staircase enclosures, to existing buildings, that are designated as escape routes will be protected routes. These routes should be unobstructed and clear of any items at all times.

12. General Procedures

12.1 Sheltered Housing residents will not be subject to Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP's) because the schemes are provided as independent living and not classified as residential care.

12.2 If residents are affected by a fire and the property is deemed non-habitable, suitable temporary accommodation will be provided. Further details are set out in TDC's Decant Policy for.

12.3 Residents who require oxygen cylinders for temporary/permanent health issues are required to make TDC aware which is then notified to the local fire service.

12.4 Each three storey and above blocks is fitted with a red fire cabinet which houses all documentation relating to emergency light testing, fire alarm testing, where applicable, and copies of the fire risk assessment and any related certificates of works carried out.

13. Review

13.1 The policy holder will review this policy every 12 months, or as legislation, current thinking or best practice change