WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Approved by Resident Volunteers

Wokingham Borough Council

Fire Safety Policy

August 2026



This is the Policy for Fire Safety for Wokingham Borough Council's Housing Service.

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Document Control Information

Title: Fire Safety Policy

Date: August 2026

Version: 3

Classification: This is a working/live document and is subject to change.

Policy Writers: Neil Hutchinson, Interim Strategic Asset Manager

Version	Date	Description
1	April 2016	Fire Policy and Plan
2	March 2023	Fire Safety Policy and Procedure
3	August 2026	Fire Safety Policy

Implemented: August 2026

Review Date: May 2029



1. SIGNING OFF SECTION

This Policy has been subject to consultation, proof-reading, ease of reading and sign off with the following:

- Asset Management and Compliance Team.
- Repairs and Maintenance Consultative Panel.
- Local Housing Companies (Loddon Homes Ltd and Berry Brook Homes Ltd).
- Legal Services.
- Housing Leadership Team.
- Housing Innovation Partnership.

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Fire Safety Policy

1. Policy Overview

1.1 Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) manages approximately 3,000 residential properties which includes a number of multi-occupied buildings.

1.2 This policy provides a framework within which fire safety will be managed. It will include the associated roles and responsibilities, as well as the governance arrangements to ensure WBC is meeting its legal and moral duty to ensure that council tenants, employees, contractors and visitors are adequately protected from all foreseeable fire risks that may arise in homes and buildings owned and managed by the Council.

1.3 This Policy will be supported by a Fire Safety Management Plan (FSMP), which provides operational details to manage fire safety including monitoring arrangements, risk management, fire precautions and emergency protocols. The operational procedures in the FSMP set out how WBC will meet the statutory obligations outlined in this policy; therefore, the FSMP is enforceable through this policy.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all applicable fire safety systems (and controls) within the homes and buildings owned and/or managed by Wokingham Borough Council are monitored, well maintained and in a safe and compliant condition.

2.2 The policy is designed to protect the health and safety of tenants, residents, staff, contractors, and visitors by minimising the risk of fire, preventing injury or loss of life, and reducing damage to property and assets.

2.3 This policy outlines the statutory and regulatory obligations applicable to WBC and states the governance arrangements in place to meet these.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all residential properties owned and managed by Wokingham Borough Council where fire safety duties apply under relevant legislation, including communal areas of multi-occupied residential buildings.

3.2 It covers:

- Council-owned tenanted dwellings,
- Temporary accommodation provided by the Council,
- Communal areas of residential blocks,
- Multi-occupied residential buildings consisting of two or more sets of domestic premises,

- Gypsy, Roma and Travellers (GRT) sites,
- Properties managed by Wokingham Borough Council on behalf of a client.

3.3 The policy applies to all employees, contractors, and agents acting on behalf of the Council in the delivery of fire safety management, maintenance, and compliance services. It does not apply to commercial or corporate properties, which are governed by separate fire safety arrangements.

4. Legislation and Regulatory Requirements

4.1 Wokingham Borough Council recognises its statutory and regulatory obligations in relation to fire safety, as well as the available codes of practice, which can be found listed below:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Defective Premises Act 1972 (Section 4)
- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 11)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Housing Act 2004
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRFSO) 2005
- Decent Homes Standard 2006
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Reporting of Injuries Diseases & Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 2013
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Homes (Fit for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Building Regulations – Fire Safety: Approved Document B 2019
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (amendment) Regulations 2022
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023; Consumer Standards framework – Safety and Quality Standard

4.2 To comply with these requirements WBC will ensure compliance with the relevant statutory requirements. This will include but is not limited to the following activity:

- Ensure that works in relation to fire safety are carried out by a suitably qualified and competent person in line with regulations.
- Ensure that all parties contracted/commissioned by WBC to carry out works in relation to fire safety are working to current regulations and standards.
- Ensure Fire Risk Assessment's (FRA) are carried out on the applicable buildings owned and managed by Wokingham Borough Council, on a frequency aligned to the associated fire safety risk.
- Where actions and works are identified from an FRA, carry out the necessary activities or further investigations (e.g. compartmentation surveys) to remove or reduce the risk within the required timescales.
- Ensure buildings are maintained and in a good state of repair, and any management activity which could impact the risk of fire safety is monitored.
- Ensure the cyclical maintenance of fire safety systems and equipment is carried out in accordance with the required frequency, including but not limited to:
    - Detection and alarm systems,
    - Door entry systems,
    - Emergency lighting,
    - Automatic opening (smoke) vents (AOV),
    - Fire Doors,
    - Risers,
    - Sprinkler/misting systems,
    - External escape routes,
    - Portable firefighting equipment.
- Test smoke detection prior to re-occupation of homes and during annual gas safety checks, alternate heating checks, and five yearly electrical safety tests.
- Where battery smoke detection is identified, this will be upgraded to Grade D1, Category LD2, in accordance with BS5839 Part 6, ensuring the presence of interlinked mains powered alarms (with tamper proof back up batteries); smoke alarms on escape routes and main living areas, and heat alarms in kitchens.
- Ensure all new build accommodation and refurbishment work meets the requirement of the Building Regulations and other statutory requirements.
- Display applicable fire safety information in a common area of a building.
- Ensure that manufacturers' recommendations are applied when developing maintenance programmes or carrying out maintenance and installation of fire safety systems and equipment.
- Foster and maintain good working relationships with partner services, such as Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to ensure the necessary considerations and controls are in place for the safety of tenants, residents, staff, contractors, and visitors by minimising the risk of fire.

5. Definitions

5.1 For the purpose of this Policy and the FSMP, the following definitions apply:

- WBC: Wokingham Borough Council.
- Tenant: a person that has signed a tenancy agreement to rent a home from WBC.
- Licensee: a person who is granted permission to occupy a property without acquiring tenant rights.
- Resident: a person that is registered as living in a WBC home.
- Leaseholder: a person that owns a home within a WBC owned building.
- Visitor: a person that visits a WBC home / building and is not referenced amongst the above definitions.
- Employee: a person that is employed and works for WBC.
- Client: a person /company which WBC is working on behalf of e.g. Loddon Homes Ltd and Berry Brook Homes Ltd.
- Contractor / Agent: a person / company that works on behalf of WBC.
- Fire Risk Assessment: is a legal requirement under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, applicable to all non-domestic premises (e.g. shared areas of residential buildings) and is an evaluation of potential fire hazards, the people at risk, and the measures needed to prevent fire and protect everyone on the premises. Actions and recommendations are recorded, categorised by priority and shared for the building owner to review.
- Common Area: parts of a building shared by multiple households, including entrance halls, corridors, stairwells, landings, and shared balconies—where fire safety duties apply.
- Multi-occupied residential building: a building containing two or more separate domestic dwellings, such as flats or maisonettes, with shared communal areas subject to fire safety regulation.
- Detection: systems and alarms to identify early signs of fire, such as smoke or heat, and alert occupants regarding the presence of fire.
- Interlinked: connectivity between alarms, to ensure they sound simultaneously, providing a faster alert throughout a building to occupants, when an alarm detects smoke or heat.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) is the landlord responsible for ensuring the statutory and regulatory obligations are met.

6.2 The Chief Executive is the appointed Duty Holder (Responsible Person) and has the overall responsibility for health and safety across the organisation and will nominate appropriately qualified and suitable experienced people to discharge those duties in relation to the management of fire safety.

6.3 The Cabinet Member for Housing Services is responsible for ensuring performance on housing safety and compliance is reported to tenants and Members as appropriate.

6.4 The Service Director for Housing Services is responsible for ensuring that sufficient resources are provided for ongoing delivery of the policy and that employees have the appropriate competencies and qualifications, and for setting budgets that are sufficient to meet compliance requirements.

6.5 The Strategic Asset Manager is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this Policy. They are also responsible for procuring services within the respective budgets allocated, as well as adhering to the Housing Services assurance framework in relation to fire safety.

6.6 The Building Compliance Manager is responsible for the contract management of suppliers and contractors as well as the performance monitoring and management of these agreements to ensure compliance with legislation. They are also responsible for ensuring that relevant employees and contractors have the necessary qualifications and training to undertake their roles in respect of fire safety.

6.7 The Compliance Officer is responsible for the day-to-day operational duties to ensure fire safety works are carried out within the required timescales, certification and service records are checked and stored, with the respective systems and documents updated. They will also support the Building Compliance Manager with the contract management duties of the suppliers and contractors engaged to deliver fire safety works.

6.8 Contractors will employ competent operatives who will have the knowledge, skills and experience to complete surveys, repairs, testing and installation works. They will arrange appointments with tenants and administer the required communications to arrange access where required. Upon completion of the relevant fire safety checks/works, they will provide the relevant certification, documents and reports to WBC.

6.9 Tenants will allow reasonable access to their homes for the purpose of fire safety works when requested. They will follow guidance provided by the Council on testing their detection systems, not tampering with their detection systems, safe evacuation procedures, as well as preventing an accumulation of possessions which would be liable to increase the risk of fire spreading and/or impede escape. They will also report concerns about any damaged fire doors, alarms, or fire safety equipment to the Council or its appointed contractor immediately.

7. Governance

7.1 Fire safety reports will be produced and presented to several internal groups and forums, aligned to the Housing Services landlord assurance framework, to provide evidence of compliance and ensure suitable operational and strategic oversight.

7.2 Fire safety performance will be submitted externally to the Regulator of Social Housing, on an annual basis, in accordance with the Technical Requirements of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM).

7.3 In addition, the following quality assurance activity is undertaken:

- The Compliance Officer will check applicable certification and documentation for completeness and will liaise with the respective contractor regarding any concerns until a satisfactory conclusion.
- Internal audit will provide independent assurance on the operation and effectiveness of controls regarding fire safety. The frequency is agreed as part of the Internal Audit Programme and reported to the respective WBC Committee.
- A third-party supplier, independent to the contractor completing the fire safety checks/works, will complete a percentage of post-inspection checks.

7.4 Employees undertaking key roles within the delivery and management of fire safety will have access to training and support applicable to their roles.

7.5 Fire related accidents, incidents and near misses will be reported on WBC's health and safety system in accordance with the Council's health and safety procedures and will be investigated by a member of the Asset Management and Compliance team. Any RIDDOR reportable incidents will be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

8. Policy Review

8.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner, if and whenever there are any relevant changes to legislation, regulatory requirements, case law or good practice that would impact this policy, as well as any required service improvements identified through internal audits, service reviews, learning from complaints or regulatory judgements.

8.2 The review process will:

- Assess the effectiveness of existing procedures and controls.
- Incorporate feedback from audits, inspections, and performance monitoring.
- Reflect any organisational changes or lessons learned.
- Ensure continuous improvement in fire safety management.

8.3 The Strategic Asset Manager will lead on future policy reviews and any revisions will be approved through the appropriate governance channels and communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

9. Equality and Diversity

9.1 Wokingham Borough Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion in the delivery of all its services, including fire safety. The Council recognises that some

tenants may have specific needs or vulnerabilities that require reasonable adjustments or additional support to ensure they can comply with fire safety requirements and access services safely.

9.2 In implementing this policy, the Council will:

- Ensure communication and information relating to fire safety is accessible and available in a range of formats and languages, where required.
- Make reasonable adjustments for individuals with disabilities, health conditions, or support needs, including offering alternative access arrangements or involving support services.
- Treat all tenants with dignity and respect, free from discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- Monitor the delivery of fire safety services to identify and address any inequalities in outcomes or access.

9.3 This commitment supports the Council's broader responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and its duty to foster good relations, eliminate discrimination, and advance equality of opportunity.

10. Appendices

10.1 Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment Form

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