

Information Digest



Date: 3 December 2021

***Revision of the Private Sector Housing Renewal
Policy for High Peak Borough Council***

**Councillor Fiona Sloman
Executive Councillor for Housing and Licensing**

**Alicia Patterson
Head of Environmental Health**

1. Reason for the Report:

To update councillors on the proposed revision of the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, and to provide the opportunity for comment upon the same prior to the start of formal consultation.

2. Recommendation

2.1 To note and comment upon the draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy prior to formal consultation.

3. Executive Summary

3.1 The Council is required to publish a policy that outlines how it will comply with its obligations under the Housing Regulatory Reform Orders and the Housing Act 2004 to provide housing renewal interventions for the maintenance of the private sector housing stock and enforcement of their legal obligations.

3.1.1. The Housing Regulatory Reform Order 1994 requires that local authorities publish a policy on their interventions in the private housing sector in order to maintain and improve as necessary the housing stock in their area.

3.1.2. The Housing Act 2004 requires local authorities to publish their enforcement policy for the application of their legal powers and duties.

3.2 Local Authorities are required to review their Private Sector Housing policy from time to time to ensure that they reflect current housing regulation and guidance and current trends in housing renewal. The Council's Policy was last reviewed in 2016, and the current draft is intended, on implementation, to determine the Council's regulatory and discretionary interventions in respect of the private sector housing stock in the Borough for the next 5 years.

4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities

4.1 Aim 1 - Supporting our communities to create a healthier, safer, cleaner High Peak

4.2 Aim 4 – To protect and improve the environment including responding to the climate emergency

5. Background and Detail

5.1 The Regulatory Reform Order 1994 re-defined the landscape in which local authorities intervene in the private housing sector. The Order was instrumental in dismantling the previous grant-heavy private sector renewal programmes following the withdrawal of the majority of government funding for large scale renewal and private property renovation. The Order stated that local authorities were no longer required to make grant funding available, but instead were to produce Private Sector Housing Renewal policies outlining their approach to renewal, the interventions they would make and their priorities for doing so.

5.1.1 Since the Order took effect, High Peak and Staffordshire Moorlands have each produced three Renewal Policies, the last ones being 2016 for both Councils.

5.1.2. To date, the policies have remained separate and restricted only to the separate Council's work. Since the formation of the Strategic Alliance and the closer working relationships in the housing services team, and further to the close alignment of the two Councils' Corporate Priorities, the current proposed revisions to the policies include reference to cross-council initiatives and has regularised the intervention and enforcement processes across the two Councils.

5.2 The Housing Act 2004 brought in a requirement that local authorities publish their Housing Enforcement Policy, so that their use of the range of legal powers introduced by the Act was clear, open and transparent. The current revised Policy includes the Housing Enforcement Policy as an appendix to the main document.

5.3 The majority of the content of the revised Renewal Policy has been reviewed and updated where appropriate, and the opportunity has been taken to revise the format of the Policy so that the focus is on the aims, objectives and priorities of the interventions, and the detail of the specific methods of intervention have been included as appendices. This has made the documents more logical and makes reference to specific interventions much easier.

5.4 There have been some changes to the Policy to align the approach across the two Councils where possible and address any inconsistencies around assistance and enforcement. Some of the main changes are highlighted below:

5.4.1. The section relating to Landlord Accreditation has been revised to reflect the fact that neither Council now operates a local accreditation scheme, and where there is alternative provision, landlords are advised of other schemes available.

5.4.2. The section relating to Disabled Facilities Grants has been re-written to reflect the current arrangements at each Council and to

bring the arrangements for registering local land charges and recovering grant funding into line with the wider policies across Derbyshire and Staffordshire. This section has also been revised to include a suite of discretionary adaptation grants, designed to address some of the shortcomings in the mandatory regulated scheme, particularly with regard to means testing and top-up funding but also including assistance to move house where adaptations are unfeasible and to apply a holistic approach to home improvements for persons living with disability.

- 5.4.3. In relation to the mandatory and discretionary Adaptation Grants outlined in Appendix A of the Policy, changes to some of the grant values are proposed to reflect current intelligence regarding increasing costs of materials (at present, timber and glass are escalating quite significantly and there is evidence to suggest that other building materials are becoming more scarce and costly) and overall quotes for larger scale complex adaptations involving property extension. It is proposed that the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant limit is increased from £35,000 to £45,000 and that the discretionary Adaptation Grant is set at a level of £20,000, with an option for the Head of Environmental Health to consider an application for a greater sum in severe hardship cases based on the individual circumstances of the client. The level of funding for the Safe and Secure Adaptation Grant is proposed to be set at a maximum of £10,000.
- 5.4.4. The provision for other grant funding programmes has been rationalised to reflect the current realities of the resources available to the two authorities, so reference to Decent Homes grant funding has been removed from the current Policy. The Home Repairs Assistance Grant has been retained as it is planned to provide some limited funding for assisting vulnerable residents to heat and insulate their homes, and for helping the owners of empty properties to bring the properties back into use.
- 5.5 The section on Home Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth under PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND INITIATIVES in Section 7 of the revised Policy has been re-written to reflect the current moves towards enforcing minimum standards of energy efficiency in the private rented sector and how the housing service can contribute to the overall climate change agenda.
- 5.6 A copy of the draft Private Sector Housing Policy is appended to this Digest for information and comment by councillors prior to the start of the formal consultation stage.

Mark Trillo

Executive Director (Governance & Commissioning)

**Web Links and
Background Papers**

Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2021-26

Contact details

Mike Towers
Senior Officer (Housing and Licensing)
Mike.towers@highpeak.gov.uk
01298 28400 ext 4400