

## Cabinet

<b>Report Title</b>	Housing Management Policies
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday, 25 June 2025
<b>Report Author</b>	Louis Bebb - Housing Policy and Strategy Lead Officer
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Executive Director - Place
<b>Lead Cabinet Member(s)</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing & Sustainable Development
<b>Why is this a key decision?</b>	To be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
<b>Wards Affected</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Identify exempt information and exemption category</b>	Open
<b>Is the report urgent?</b>	No
<b>Appendices (if any)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reasonable Adjustments Policy</li> <li>2. Decant Policy</li> <li>3. Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy</li> <li>4. Equality Impact Assessment – Reasonable Adjustments Policy</li> <li>5. Equality Impact Assessment – Decant Policy</li> <li>6. Equality Impact Assessment – Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy</li> <li>7. Consultation Report - Reasonable Adjustments Policy</li> <li>8. Consultation Report – Decant Policy</li> <li>9. Consultation Report - Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy</li> </ol>

## **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 A Self-Assessment against the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards in 2024 identified improvements that could be made to our Governance and Strategic Oversight through the publication of new housing management policies.
- 1.2 The Housing Improvement and Transformation Programme has been established to ensure compliance with the RSH consumer standards and to ensure the service excellence in the future. Ensuring we have a comprehensive library of policies, which are regularly reviewed and updated, will underpin other work being delivered to transform the service.
- 1.3 This report seeks approval for three existing Housing Management policies: the Reasonable Adjustments Policy, the Decant Policy, and the Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy. To ensure we are following the correct governance procedures - and remain compliant with the Consumer Standards - these policies are being submitted to Cabinet for formal approval.
- 1.4 Further work is being undertaken on additional policies, which will be presented later.

## **2. Recommendations**

The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Approve the following policy documents:
  - Reasonable Adjustments Policy
  - Decant Policy
  - Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy

## **3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations**

### **3.1 Reasonable Adjustment Policy**

Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that all residents, including those with disabilities or long-term health conditions, can access housing and services on an equal basis. The Reasonable Adjustment Policy outlines how we will make changes to our services, properties, and practices to meet the individual needs of residents who require support.

This policy will enable us to:

- Ensure equal access to housing and services for residents with specific needs.
- Support independent living by providing tailored adjustments for residents.
- Promote inclusive communities by addressing diverse needs, ensuring no resident is left behind.
- Prevent discrimination and improve the wellbeing of those requiring additional support.

### 3.2 Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy

In situations where residents are affected by regeneration or redevelopment, Sandwell Council is committed to supporting those displaced from their homes. The Home Loss Policy ensures that individuals and families are provided with appropriate support, compensation, and alternative accommodation in a fair and timely manner.

This policy will allow us to:

- Minimise the disruption and distress caused by home loss for vulnerable groups.
- Ensure fair compensation and the provision of suitable housing alternatives.
- Protect residents' rights and help maintain community cohesion during redevelopment projects.
- Reduce the risk of homelessness and provide security to displaced households.

### 3.3 Decant Policy

Sandwell Council's Decant Policy outlines our approach to relocating residents temporarily while major repairs or redevelopment works are carried out on their properties. This policy ensures that residents are moved to suitable temporary accommodation with minimal disruption to their lives.

This policy will allow us to:

- Ensure that all residents affected by decants are offered appropriate, temporary accommodation.
- Minimise the impact on residents' wellbeing by providing support throughout the relocation process.
- Ensure that temporary housing meets the diverse needs of residents, including accessibility and proximity to support services.
- Prevent potential community instability by supporting residents during their temporary relocation.

## 4 **Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 The alternative option is to not seek adoption for the three policies subject to this report. However, if this were to be the process followed, it would not be possible to deliver the objectives of the Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028 and the Regulatory Housing Standards that came into effect in April 2024. Therefore, this would result in the sub-optimal management of our Housing Services.

## 5. **Consultation**

### 5.1 Online consultation

The online consultation for the draft policies was open for five weeks, commencing early May, via Citizenspace.

The surveys featured a mixture of qualitative and quantitative questions, providing respondents the opportunity to give feedback on the policy proposals, whether the document itself is resident-friendly and if there are any things missing in the policy document.

Following respondents' comments on each of the policies, feedback has been considered, and amendments have been made to the policy documents where applicable, before being finalised and taken to Cabinet.

## 5.2 Policy Engagement Sessions with Stakeholders:

Throughout the drafting of these documents, we conducted various engagement sessions with stakeholders to ensure we captured as many opinions as possible in order to share this policy. These include the following:

- **Collaboration Across Housing Teams and Partner Services:** These policies have been developed through collaboration across various housing teams and other relevant services, including Housing Management, Asset Management, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion and Service Improvement.
- **Policy Engagement Session:** On Friday 7th May, we held an engagement session with residents to discuss our Reasonable Adjustment Policy. The purpose of these sessions was to gain a better understanding of how our Housing services currently operate and to help shape the policy approach needed to tackle the Housing Management challenges facing our communities. These engagement sessions include input from Housing Management staff, as well as tenants and leaseholders taking part across the various meetings. During the session, we also distributed paper copies of the Decant Policy and Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy, giving residents the opportunity to review the documents and share their feedback either via postal survey or online.

## 5.3 Policy Scrutiny Working Group

The policies have been cascaded via email to the group consisting of Elected Members. Its purpose was to address any questions that arise and provide an opportunity for officers to seek specific guidance or direction from the scrutiny board. Feedback was provided by elected members and considered within the final versions of these policy documents, in addition to the individual consultation reports.

## 5.4 Consultation Report

A consultation report has been prepared for each of the three policy documents, summarising the overall satisfaction with the policies and addressing specific areas where proposals for amendments have been made. For a more detailed understanding of tenant and resident perspectives on each policy, the individual consultation reports are available. These reports provide an in-depth analysis of satisfaction levels, include qualitative feedback, and outline any revisions made in response to the recommendations. The full reports can be accessed in the appendix.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 Delivery of these policies will be through existing Housing Revenue Account (HRA) resources. The council's HRA is ring-fenced specifically for the provision of landlord related services or facilities, provided primary for the benefit of its tenants.

## **7. Legal and Governance Implications**

### **7.1 Reasonable Adjustment Policy**

**Legal:** Ensures compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and other anti-discrimination legislation. However, caution is needed to avoid rigid applications that may unintentionally disadvantage individuals.

**Governance:** Requires well-defined procedures to assess, implement, and review adjustments, ensuring transparency and accountability in delivering fair and inclusive services.

### **7.2 Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy**

**Legal:** Must adhere to housing legislation, including the statutory rights to compensation and assistance when tenants are permanently displaced. Challenges may arise if compensation is delayed or unfairly allocated.

**Governance:** Requires clear, transparent processes for assessing eligibility and determining compensation, with oversight and appeals mechanisms to ensure consistency and fairness.

### **7.3 Decant Policy**

**Legal:** Supports lawful temporary or permanent relocation in line with housing regulations and tenant rights, ensuring security of tenure is protected throughout. However, care must be taken to avoid breaching legal obligations around notice and consultation.

**Governance:** Needs structured criteria for initiating decants, clear communication with affected tenants, and effective monitoring to ensure decisions are fair, justified, and well-documented.

## **8. Risks**

- 8.1 Financial resources available to deliver the policies, including inflation.
- 8.2 Future changes to national policy and requirements that could impact on the content of the policies – for instance, new regulations and legislation.

## 9. **Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)**

### 9.1 Reasonable Adjustment Policy

**Equality:** Ensures individuals with disabilities or specific needs are given equal access to housing and services.

**Diversity:** Recognises the diverse needs of residents, providing tailored support for different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

**Challenges:** Ensuring adjustments are appropriate for all groups, particularly for those with non-visible disabilities or from minority communities.

### 9.2 Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy

**Equality:** Ensures fair compensation and support for all residents affected by redevelopment, prioritising vulnerable groups.

**Diversity:** Considers cultural, accessibility, and language needs, providing tailored support for all residents.

**Challenges:** Vulnerable groups, such as refugees or those with learning disabilities, may need extra support to navigate the process.

### 9.3 Decant Policy

**Equality:** Guarantees fair treatment for all residents during temporary moves, especially vulnerable groups (e.g., families, elderly, disabled).

**Diversity:** Accommodates cultural, religious, and health-related needs when providing temporary housing.

**Challenges:** Extra support may be required for residents with language barriers or mental health issues to ensure equal access to housing.

## 10. **Other Relevant Implications**

### 10.1 Reasonable Adjustment Policy

**Health/Wellbeing:** Improves access to housing and services, supporting mental and physical health by addressing individual needs, but there may be challenges in ensuring consistency across all cases.

**Social Value:** Promotes inclusivity and fairness, allowing all residents to participate equally in community life, fostering a more cohesive society.

**Crime & Disorder:** Reduces the risk of marginalisation or isolation, which can lead to anti-social behaviour, but a lack of clear implementation may create frustration or lead to inequitable outcomes.

### 10.2 Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy

**Health/Wellbeing:** Ensures fair compensation and support for those displaced due to regeneration or redevelopment, promoting stability and reducing emotional and mental distress for affected families.

**Social Value:** Supports community cohesion by providing residents with appropriate alternative housing and maintaining the integrity of neighbourhoods, even during redevelopment.

**Crime & Disorder:** Reduces the risk of homelessness and related criminal behaviour that may arise from housing instability, but poor communication or inadequate support can lead to increased anxiety or frustration.

### 10.3 Decant Policy

**Health/Wellbeing:** Minimises disruption during housing repairs or redevelopment, ensuring that residents are rehoused in suitable accommodation, reducing health risks associated with overcrowding or poor living conditions.

**Social Value:** Promotes fairness by ensuring that all affected residents, especially vulnerable groups, are treated with care and consideration during temporary moves, maintaining social stability.

**Crime & Disorder:** Supports social stability during temporary relocations, reducing the risk of anti-social behaviour and crime that can occur when housing needs are not adequately met. However, poorly managed decants can lead to discontent and unrest.

## 11. **Background Documents**

- [Sandwell Council Housing Strategy 2023-2028](#)
- [Sandwell 2030 Vision: Corporate Plan 2021-2025](#)
- [Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan 2023-2053](#)
- [Regulatory Standards for Landlords](#)
- [Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#)
- [Tenant Handbook](#)
- [Tenancy Conditions](#)
- [Sandwell Community Safety Strategy 2022-2026](#)

## 12. **How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?**

### 12.1 Reasonable Adjustment Policy

**Growing Up:** Ensures children and families receive tailored support, enabling stable, inclusive home environments.

**Living:** Promotes independence and inclusion for all residents through accessible services and housing.

**Healthy:** Supports mental and physical health by removing barriers to daily living and service access.

**Economy:** Enables equitable participation in education, employment, and skills development.

**One Council:** Delivers consistent, joined-up support through coordinated service delivery.

#### 12.2 Home Loss and Disturbance Payment Policy

**Growing Up:** Minimises disruption to children's education and family stability during relocation.

**Living:** Provides fair, supportive rehousing for residents affected by regeneration or demolition.

**Healthy:** Reduces stress and health risks through planned support and appropriate alternative housing.

**Economy:** Protects residents' ability to remain in work and connected to community networks.

**One Council:** Requires coordinated delivery between housing, legal, and support teams.

#### 12.3 Decant Policy

**Growing Up:** Prioritises family-friendly decant planning to protect children's routines and wellbeing.

**Living:** Ensures residents are rehoused with minimal disruption during essential housing works.

**Healthy:** Addresses individual health needs in temporary accommodation arrangements.

**Economy:** Supports employment continuity and reduces financial strain through thoughtful decant logistics.

**One Council:** Encourages cross-service collaboration for smooth, consistent delivery.