

Thursday, 30 September 2021

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Social Housing and Homelessness Prevention

Review of policy and procedure for Electrical Inspections in Council Housing

Exempt Information

Not exempt

Purpose

The report seeks approval for the review and implementation of the Council's policy on undertaking periodic electrical inspections

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:-

Endorses and approves the Electrical Inspections – Technical Policy

Executive Summary

The Council has an obligation to ensure that its Council Houses and other premises are safe for the occupants and users, this includes the fixed electrical installation within properties.

It is considered good practice that inspections of the fixed electrical installations within a property are carried out once every five years. Budgets have been in place for a number of years now to enable this work to be carried out and inspections have been undertaken; it has however been noted that there is no formal policy in place that sets out the Council's approach to electrical safety inspections.

This reports along with the attached policy sets to formalise the current programme of inspections and sets out the Council's commitment to electrical safety including approaches designed to encourage tenants to provide access.

Options Considered

There is at present no legislation that requires the inspection of fixed electrical installations in Council properties, it is however considered to be good practice and could be considered to be part of the requirements of a landlord to ensure that rented properties are safe for habitation. Whilst the Council could choose not to undertake electrical inspections it is not considered to be a viable option in terms of tenant safety.

Resource Implications

There are no additional resource implications directly associated with the implementation of this policy as resources are already in place and testing/inspection has been taking place. The budget is currently set at £400,000 per annum within the Housing Revenue Account and this is considered to be sufficient to deliver a 5 year cycle of inspections. Minor repairs arising from inspections are dealt with through the response repairs budget and major works would be moved into a capital funded programme.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

The Council has a legal obligation to ensure that its properties are fit and safe for habitation/occupation. Whilst there is no specific legal requirement to undertake electrical inspections it is considered to be good practice and having a formal policy sets out the Council's approach to the process.

| Risk | Implication | Mitigation | Alternative Options |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Failure to undertake electrical inspections in line with recommendations</p> | <p>Whilst there is no specific legal obligation at this time to undertake electrical inspections there is an obligation to ensure that homes are safe and electrical inspections form part of this process.</p> <p>Should there be an electrical related incident in a property and there was no formal inspection regime it would be difficult for the Council to defend against a claim or prosecution.</p> | <p>Continuing with the current inspection regime and strengthening the access arrangements would ensure that the Council is compliant with current best practice and would leave the Council in a defensible position should there be an electrical incident in a property.</p> | <p>The Council could rely on electrical inspections being done whilst properties are void. This approach would not ensure that all properties were inspected every 5 years.</p> <p>This approach would result in cost savings.</p> |
| <p>Failure to implement formal policy.</p> | <p>This policy formalises what is currently happening in practice and strengthens some areas relating to the approach to accessing homes.</p> <p>The Housing Regulator has indicated that they want to see that Social Housing Providers have formal policies relating to building and tenant safety.</p> | <p>Approval of the policy formalises current practice, sets out clearly the Council's approach to electrical inspections and sets out what the Council expects of its tenants in relation to cooperation and access.</p> <p>Approval of the formal policy should satisfy the expectations of the Housing Regulator in respect of this matter.</p> <p>There is no additional cost to</p> | <p>The Council could simply continue to operate a programme of electrical inspections without a formal policy or procedure in the background.</p> <p>There would be no cost savings to be had from not formalising this policy.</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|--|
| | | implementation of this policy. | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|--|

Equalities Implications

There are no specific sustainability implications related to the adoption of this policy. Access to tenant’s homes will be managed in the same way as other servicing and maintenance works.

Sustainability Implications

There are no specific sustainability implications related to the adoption this policy.

Background Information

The Council has budget in place and a programme of electrical safety inspections but to date has not formalised a policy in relation to electrical inspections.

The Council has an obligation to ensure that its properties are fit and safe for habitation.

There is no legal requirement for the Council to carry out fixed electrical inspections in its properties but it is considered to be good practice.

The development of this policy formalises what has been happening in practice for some time now.

This policy will be subject to review as and when either legislation of accepted good practice changes.

Report Author

Paul Weston – Assistant Director Assets

List of Background Papers

None

Appendices

Electrical Inspection Policy

This page is intentionally left blank