

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Housing Services Cabinet Committee

Date: 2 February 2023

Reporting officer: Vicky May, Service Manager (Housing Options)

Subject: Updated Property and Management Standards Applicable to Houses of Multiple Occupation (Amenity Standards)

Purpose and summary of report:

To outline to Housing Services Cabinet Committee the updated Amenity Standards applicable to Houses of Multiple Occupation.

Recommendations:

1. For information only.

Key Implications:	
Item	Implications
Legal	The minimum HMO amenity standards are set at a national level however local authorities have the ability to set their own standards, improving on the national level.
Finance and Value for Money	There is a cost associated with not adhering to amenity standards, both in regard to disrepair litigation but also officer's time where enforcement action or intervention is required. Where amenity standards are not adhered to, and a breach witnessed in accordance with The Houses in Multiple Occupations Regulations (England) 2006 there is the potential for a Financial Penalty to be issued, or other enforcement action pursued.
Corporate Plan	#1 People - enforce a high quality of private housing' and 'provide pro-active, supportive and financially efficient housing service' and 'safeguards / protects residents including the most vulnerable. #2 Place 'Improve residents wellbeing'
Climate Change	The updated Amenity Standards, with Officers input, will address upgrading measures such as insulation levels to help achieve thermal comfort , whilst looking to reduce or remove where possible the risk of damp and mould.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) form a vital part of the housing sector, often providing cheaper accommodation for people whose housing options are limited.

HMOs are commonly known to be occupied by students but there are also a growing number of young professionals and migrant workers sharing houses and flats. Some HMO's are occupied by the most vulnerable people in our society. The minimum HMO Amenity Standards are set at a national level and these include the basic requirements such as minimum room sizes and amenities which should be made available based on the number of occupants. The last change to the stands was in October 2018, where additional guidance was provided for local authorities.

- 1.2 It is important that this existing and growing sector has clear guidance on how to develop suitable accommodation with some flexible options based on an understanding of the housing stock and the need for good quality HMOs across the borough. The guidance is intended to assist in the provision of accommodation of all HMO's with the borough irrespective of size, which contributes to safe and healthy environments for the occupants and their visitors
- 1.3 Requirements stated are the minimum requirements expected within all Gravesham HMOs, whilst also considering the individual property itself. The list and work items noted are not exhaustive and further measures may be required, property specific. Non-compliance with such a requirement may not constitute an offence in its own right, but the local authority is likely to require it as a condition of the HMO license which can then be enforced.

2. Appendices

- 2.1 Appendix 1- HMO Amenity Standards 2023

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Gravesham has introduced these revised and enhanced standards from January 2023. The document will be reviewed periodically, and capture legislation changes as they happen.

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Secondary Implications	
Risk Assessment	There are several risks with HMO's not achieving required amenity standards. Non-compliant properties resulting in an array of fire safety breaches, lack of amenities and potential overcrowding.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data?</p> <p>A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links. No</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p> <p>N/A</p>

Equality Impact Assessment	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Crime and Disorder	N/a
Digital and website implications	The accessible document will be made available on the Gravesham Borough Council website.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	Residents living in HMO's are too entitled to live in safe and warm dwellings. They are to be protected as far as reasonably practicable, with all parties having a duty of care. Where enhancements to safety measures can be made, they should be.