

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 19 December 2011

Decent Homes Standard - Definition

Report of the Housing Property Services Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

Executive Summary

This report seeks to give guidance and an explanation of the information regarding “What is a Decent Home?” as included in the document issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in February 2004 entitled “A Decent Home”. It is intended as a much simplified version of the descriptive part of the ODPM document and as such cannot encompass all that was originally included.

Background

In July 2000, following its Spending Review, the Government announced a significant increase in resources for housing, especially social housing. As part of its wish to link increased spending to better outcomes, the Government established a target to:-

“Ensure that all social housing meets set standards of decency by 2010, by reducing the number of households living in social housing that does not meet these standards by a third between 2001 and 2004 with most of the improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas...”

The 2002 Spending Review renewed the commitment and expanded it to cover vulnerable households in the private sector. The ODPM publication “Sustainable communities: building for the future” reaffirmed the commitment to provide all social housing tenants with a Decent Home by 2010 and it explained that reforms would be put in place to improve the way the target was delivered. There were no changes made to the Standard itself but there was a need to clarify aspects of the definition and to set it in a wider context.

The target related to Local Authorities, other Registered Social Landlords and private housing occupied by vulnerable groups.

Guidance was first issued by the ODPM in July 2001, updated in April 2002 with the final version incorporating the Housing Health and Safety Rating System being issued in February 2004. This replaced the original Fitness Standard of the Housing Act 1985 subsequently amended in the Local Government and Housing Act of 1989.

Definition of the Decent Homes Standard

Please see attachment Appendix A.

Finance Comments

Funded by the Major Repairs Allowance from Central Government

Legal Comments

N/A Information clarification report only.

Links to Corporate Aims

Tackling Deprivation, Regeneration, Affordable Housing and Climate Change

Equalities

N/A Information clarification report only.

Next Steps

The 30 year Business Plan currently being developed is based on guidelines from within the Standard and these will ensure that, provided funding is available, then Decent Homes will be sustainable within Taunton Deane.

Recommendations

The Tenant Services Management Board is asked to note the content of the report.

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DEFINITION OF THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD - APPENDIX A

A DCLG 'Decent Homes Standard'

A 'decent home' is a property that meets a minimum standard set by the DCLG (formerly ODPM) by 31st December 2010 and is maintained to that standard thereafter. The property must meet the landlord's and the tenant's priorities and meet the following four criteria:

- Is free from Category 1 Housing Health & Safety Rating risks
- Be in a reasonable state of repair
- Have acceptable and modern facilities and services
- Provide an acceptable level of thermal comfort

Further definitions of these criteria are provided below:

1. Free from Category 1 Housing Health & Safety Rating (HHSRS) hazards

The HHSRS was introduced in the Housing Act 2004 and replaced the original 'Fitness Standards' as Criteria 1 of the Decent Homes Standard in April 2006.

It uses a risk assessment approach to provide a system (not a standard) to enable risks from hazards to health and safety in dwellings to be removed or minimised.

The HHSRS addresses all the key issues that affect health and safety and it provides an analysis of how hazardous a property is (potentially). The key principle of the system is that a dwelling (including the structure and associated outbuildings and garden, yard and/or amenity space) and means of access should provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupants and, by implication, for any visitors.

It should be recognised that all properties contain hazards (stairs, electrical outlets etc) and it is not possible (or desirable) to remove all hazards. The emphasis is to minimise the risk to health and safety as far as possible either by removing the hazard altogether or minimising the effect, as appropriate.

The HHSRS system assesses a number of hazards, including:

- Dampness, excessive cold/heat
- Pollutants e.g. asbestos, carbon monoxide, lead
- Lack of Space, security, lighting or excessive noise
- Poor hygiene, sanitation, water supply
- Accidents – falls, electric shocks, fires, burns, scalds
- Collisions, explosions, structural collapse

All risks identified are 'scored' in respect of the likelihood of an event occurring (e.g. a fall down some stairs) and the likely outcome of harm that may occur. Category 1 hazards are typically those that are deemed more likely to occur than normal and would typically result in serious harm.

2. A reasonable state of repair. If one or more of the key building components are old *and* because of their condition need replacing or major repair

Should any of the following key elements be in poor condition, they could have an immediate effect on the integrity of the building and cause further deterioration in other components.

- External wall structure
- Wall finish/applied surface (pointing or render)
- Chimney stacks
- Roof structure
- Roof covering
- External doors
- Windows
- Central Heating system
- Central Heating Boiler
- Electrical supply system

3. Reasonably modern facilities and services

A dwelling will fail this Decent Homes criterion if it lacks three or more of the following:

- Kitchen units less than 20 years old.
- A kitchen with adequate space and layout.
- Bathroom fittings less than 30 years old.
- An appropriately located bathroom and WC.
- Adequate noise insulation.
- Adequate size and layout of common areas to blocks containing flats.

4. Reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

A dwelling must have efficient heating and effective insulation to pass the Standard.

Dwellings that have gas/oil central heating systems installed should have cavity wall insulation (where possible) and a minimum of 50mm loft insulation.

Dwellings that have electric storage heaters/LPG or programmable solid fuel central heating systems should have cavity wall insulation (where possible) and a minimum of 200mm of loft insulation.

B TDBC DECENT HOMES STANDARD

The DCLG Decent Homes Standard is a minimum standard of housing provision. Recognising that this may not fully meet residents' aspirations, TDBC Housing has, in consultation with residents and other stakeholders, developed a Decent Homes Standard which exceeds the Government's minimum standards in certain areas but will not include environmental work to estates, security improvements or adaptations for disability. These works are contained within other planned investment work streams.

Of course, TDBC Housing will continue to use the DCLG standards as a base measurement of its stock to assess the impact of properties meeting, failing or potentially failing the minimum Decent Homes standard beyond 2010.

TDBC Housing's Decent Homes Standard takes into account resident feedback and expectations and sets standards accordingly, for example;

Windows	Double Glazing wherever possible, preferably with secure PVCu frames
Doors	Energy efficient doors made from composite material, draught-proof and secure
Lighting	External lighting adjacent to communal doors
Kitchens	Safe modern kitchen layout with choice of design and colours. Plumbing for washing machine or dishwasher if required and space allows. Non-slip sheet flooring, improved lighting
Bathroom	Over-bath electric shower or possible provision for future installation. Shower rail and curtain. 3 tile height general splash-back, full height around shower. Improved lighting to new Regulations. Non-slip sheet flooring. Sheltered and OAP accommodation option of shower cubicle
Cavity Wall	Insulated where cavity exists and where possible
Electric system	Minimum of 2 sockets per habitable room, 4 doubles in kitchen
Heating	Full heating systems with SEDBUK A rated energy efficient boiler where gas supply available and funds allow
Communal Doors	Programme to eventually install Door Entry Security systems to all blocks
Smoke detectors	Mains operated, linked if more than one installed per property
Communal Lighting	Adequate energy efficient lighting in all communal areas
Digital TV	One digital receiver point for whole block on existing communal systems