

Fire Safety in Communal Areas Policy

Date: September 2024

Department: Housing Services, Communities Group

Next Review: September 2027

Accessibility of Document

Our aim is to make our services easy to use and accessible for everyone. We will take steps to make any reasonable adjustments needed for you to contact us, access our policies, or any requests to provide responses in other formats.

Depending on the individual's needs, these might include but is not limited to:

- Using larger print, or a specific colour contrast
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1. Introduction:

Cambridge City Council is committed to ensuring that all communal areas in our housing stock are well-kept, meet all regulatory requirements and are a safe place for residents, visitors, staff and contractors to use.

The council adopts a zero tolerance approach to the storage of items in communal areas. Residents are not permitted to use the communal areas to store any belongings or dispose of rubbish.

Communal areas such as hallways, staircases, communal cupboards, utility meter rooms and landings do not belong to any resident, including the areas immediately outside the front door.

Cambridge City Council reserves the right to remove any item stored in communal areas immediately if deemed to be highly flammable or significantly increase fire risk.

2. Aims & Purpose:

This policy outlines the council's approach to keeping communal areas safe and free of items that could increase the likelihood of fire or impede evacuation.

- **Fire Prevention:** the overall purpose of this policy is to minimise fire risks. Wherever possible the council will aim to prevent fire safety issues by educating residents from the beginning of their tenancy and ensuring that information, support and advice is readily available.
- **Health and Safety:** keep our residents safe through the proactive management of health and safety risks in our communal areas.
- **Ensure Clear Escape Routes:** ensure that communal areas are free from combustible materials and obstructions, and for safe access and evacuation in the event of an emergency.
- **Promote Safety Awareness:** to give clear advice, engage with residents to ensure that they are aware of the risk posed by items left in communal areas, and that they understand the fire safety measures within the building.
- **Cleaning and Maintenance:** allow cleaning and maintenance staff and contractors to carry out their job effectively, supporting the upkeep of communal areas.
- **Compliance with Legislation:** ensure full compliance with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, Fire Safety Act 2021, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and any subsequent fire safety legislation.
- **Support Vulnerable Residents:** provide tailored advice to vulnerable residents to address special requirements or vulnerabilities.
- **Provide Guidance to Staff:** this document aims to provide guidance for Cambridge City Council Estate Services Officers, Education, Engagement and Enforcement Officer, Housing Officers, Assistant Housing Officers, Leasehold Officers and any other Housing Services employee regularly required to manage and assess fire risks in communal areas across our housing stock.

3. Definitions

3.1. Residents: for the purpose of this policy, a resident is any person who lives in a building owned or managed by Cambridge City Council, including council tenants, leaseholders, sub tenants and licensees.

3.2. Communal areas: parts of a block of flats, street or estate that residents have a right to use in common with other residents, and for which we as the landlord and freeholder are responsible. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Entrances and communal hallways/walkways
- Shared staircases and balconies

- Communal Cupboards and meter rooms
- Bin and storage areas
- Access paths
- Communal gardens
- Drying areas

3.3.Zero tolerance: A ‘zero tolerance’ approach is one in which residents are not permitted to use the communal areas to store or dispose of their belongings or rubbish - no exceptions apply. This is to ensure that communal areas are free of combustible material, ignition sources and obstructions.

4. Scope:

This policy applies to all shared communal areas in and around buildings owned and managed by Cambridge City Council.

5. Legislation and Regulations

The legislation and regulations listed below will be taken into consideration when implementing this policy:

- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
- The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.
- The Building Safety Act 2022, Section 156.
- Fire Safety (England) Act 2021.
- The Building Regulations 2010 (Approved Document B).
- The Equality Act 2010.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- The Housing Act 2004.
- Local Government (Misc. Provision) Act 1982, Section 41.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

6. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy links to and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and documents:

- Adaptations Policy
- Disposal of Possessions and Personal Data Procedure
- Tenancy Agreement
- Leasehold Agreement
- Tenant Sign-up pack
- Fire Safety in Flats – leaflet

7. Policy Statements:

- 7.1. It is residents' responsibility to keep communal areas clear and free from obstruction at all times. This includes not having door mats in corridors, plants or any other items.
- 7.2. The council will be proactive in ensuring communal areas are clear of items and will use a range of powers to enforce the policy, including removal of items.
- 7.3. Where a resident stores items in the communal areas in breach of this policy, they will be asked to remove their items immediately.
- 7.4. Depending on the priority and value of items stored in communal areas, the council reserves the right to remove, store or dispose of these items if not removed by the resident.
- 7.5. Items deemed as posing a significant fire risk will be removed immediately, or as a last resort within 24 hours.
- 7.6. Any other items will be issued with a 5 working days' notice to be removed. If they are not removed within 5 working days of the notice, the council will remove them without any further notice.
- 7.7. If items are removed from communal areas, reasonable steps will be taken to identify the owner. If, after these steps, the owner cannot be identified items deemed to be perishable or of low value will be disposed of if not removed by the time indicated on the notice attached to the item.
- 7.8. If an item is of high value – worth £500 or more – it will be stored if not removed by the time indicated on the notice attached to the item (in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1982). If stored items are not collected within the period specified in the notice, they will be either sold or disposed.
- 7.9. The council reserves the right to recharge either the individual resident, or all residents of the block, the reasonable costs of removing and disposing of items.

8. Our Responsibilities

- 8.1. **Safety Inspections:** to carry out fire risk assessments annually to identify and remove any fire hazards in communal areas.
- 8.2. **Communication with Tenants:** to provide residents with relevant fire safety information in a format that is easily understood by the residents. All new residents will be given the 'Fire Safety in Flats' leaflet in with their Sign-up Pack.
- 8.3. **Fire Safety Measures:** to ensure that all fire safety measures are in place, functional, and regularly maintained.

8.4. Communal Areas Repairs: we are responsible for ensuring that the communal areas are safe and secure for our tenants and leaseholders. For more information, check: www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-home-repairs

8.5. Support Vulnerable Residents: we recognise that some residents may be at greater risk than others, of having a fire start in their property, or being able to safely exit in an emergency situation. Residents are encouraged to contact us on 01223 457000 to discuss arrangements or advice where the following apply to them or member of their household:

- A disability, impairment, or health condition, that could adversely affect a safe exit from the building if required in an emergency Safety Policy.
- Advice and assistance for dealing with clutter and hoarding.
- Other reasons or combinations of reasons that could increase a risk from fire (for example smoking and living with dementia).
- We will also offer fire safety advice where requested.

9. Tenant and Leaseholder Responsibilities:

9.1. Communal areas: to keep communal areas clear and free from obstruction at all times. Residents do not have the right to store or leave anything in the communal areas of the building or in communal gardens.

- Report any items left in communal areas at: www.cambridge.gov.uk/report-flytipping or you can call 01223 457000 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm or 0300 3038389 Out of Hours for emergencies.

9.2. Fire safety: To shut fire doors when not in use, and to read the 'Fire Safety in Flats' leaflet and Fire action notices posted in communal areas.

9.3. Bicycles, e-bikes, mopeds, motorbikes: Not storing bicycles, e-bikes, mopeds and motorbikes in communal areas unless specific storage has been provided by the council. Servicing or cleaning of these items should not take place in the communal areas.

9.4. Mobility scooters: storing mobility scooters inside their homes or storage shed or an appropriate storage facility that is suitably located.

- It is not a reasonable adjustment to allow a resident to keep mobility aids in communal areas if these present a risk to other residents. In such cases, the council will endeavour to accommodate the needs of a resident with disabilities where possible. For example, the council might assess the feasibility and cost of providing additional storage for mobility aids. The Housing Officer can also support customers to secure suitable alternative accommodation if their current home does not meet their needs.

9.5. Bins and bin stores: closing and locking bin store doors when not in use. Not leaving wheelie bins in communal areas or under staircases. Where provided, wheelie bins must be stored away from the building.

- Any large items of household waste such as furniture must not be left in the bin store. If residents have any items that are too large or too heavy for your normal household waste collection Cambridge City Council provides a 'bulky waste collection' service. Check www.cambridge.gov.uk/bulky-waste-collections for more details.

9.6.Storage and electrical meter cupboards: Keeping storage cupboards in communal areas locked shut and not using them to store flammable items.

- Not using electrical meter cupboards for storage and to keep these cupboards locked shut at all times.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation:

Senior Managers within Housing Services will monitor the effectiveness of the policy and keep the policy under review as a result of any future legislative changes.

Notes

None.

End of Policy.