

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 16 December 2025

Rent Setting, Repairs, Empty Homes (Voids) and Recharge Policies

Accountable member:

Cllr Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services

Accountable officer:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

Ward(s) affected:

All wards with council housing stock

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

This report brings forward new policies for the following:

- Rent Setting
- Recharges
- Empty Homes (Voids)
- Repairs and Maintenance for Tenanted Properties

The policies were considered by the Cabinet Housing Committee on 26 November 2025 who unanimously agreed to recommend them to cabinet for approval.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet approves:

1. The Rent Setting Policy (Appendix 2)
2. The Recharge Policy (Appendix 5)

3. The Empty Homes (Voids) Policy (Appendix 8)
 4. The Repairs and Maintenance for Tenanted Properties Policy (Appendix 11)
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

Empty Homes (Void) Policy

The Empty Homes (Voids) policy sets out the Councils' process for managing empty homes. Where properties become void, an assessment will need to take place as to the levels of work required to bring the properties back to rentable condition. The costs for minor and major works will need to be scrutinised to assess whether works can be completed within the budgets set by Council, as well as checking to see if any funding available to offset expenditure. Where damage has occurred to properties vacated by tenants, the policy sets out the conditions for recharging tenants for the cost of repairing any damage or unauthorised alteration to the property.

The main risk to the council of long-term void properties apart from materials and staff costs of repairs to properties, is the loss of rental income from void properties. Voids will need to be continually monitored with realistic targets for completion in order properties can be returned to market as soon as possible and provide future income to the council.

Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy for Tenanted Properties

The Housing Repairs and Maintenance policy sets out the criteria for providing a high-quality repairs service in order to significantly enhance tenants' quality of life and the enjoyment of their homes. Any costs associated with the repairs to tenants' properties will need to be closely scrutinised within the monthly budget monitoring process to ensure expenditure is in line with agreed budgets. Any significant variances will need to be highlighted and reported to cabinet to assess if corrective action is required.

Rent Setting Policy

Rent Settings are looking to be increased by CPI 3% plus 1%, income received will depend on how many VOID properties throughout the year.

Services Charges are looking to remain the same as previous year.

We are looking again at a 52-week financial year managed over 48 weeks.

Recharges Policy

VOID Recharges have increased & more properties are in disrepair

Signed off by: Jon Coldridge, HRA Accountant jon.coldridge@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Signed off by: Claire Hughes, Monitoring Officer

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

There are no direct environmental or climate change implications associated with this report.

Signed off by: Maizy McCann, Climate Officer, Maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Securing our future
- Quality homes, safe and strong communities
- Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes
- Taking care of your money

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

Equality impact assessments have been completed for each policy and are annexed to this report.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

Where relevant performance will be monitored through KPIs

2 Background

2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) provides a wide range of local services, including the provision of social housing, maintaining approximately 5,000 domestic properties, communal blocks and schemes.

2.2 As part of our service delivery and the provision of homes it is essential that the council has a robust policy framework in place which clearly sets out to our tenants what they can expect from the council as their landlord.

2.3 This report brings forward a number of new policies for approval. Each policy is

supplemented with a tenant summary.

2.4 All policies have been reviewed by the tenant and leaseholder panels, and their feedback has been incorporated.

2.5 The policies were considered by the Cabinet Housing Committee on 26 November 2025 who unanimously agreed to recommend them to cabinet for approval.

3 Rent Setting Policy (Appendices 2 – 4)

3.1 This policy explains how the council sets and reviews rents for its housing stock. It provides information on the difference between social rent and affordable rent and on service charges.

3.2 The policy confirms that rent is charged weekly throughout the year, with four rent free weeks and that rent is payable in advance.

4 Recharge Policy (Appendices 5 – 7)

4.1 This policy provides tenants with information on when they may be recharged for repairs, for example when damaged has been caused to a home or changes have been made without the council's consent. Items which tenants may be recharged for include broken doors or windows, lost keys, unsafe DIY work or rubbish left in the home.

4.2 The policy also provides information on special cases where recharges would not apply, including where damage is a direct result of a crime or domestic abuse.

5 Empty Homes (Voids) Policy (Appendices 8 – 10)

5.1 This policy sets out the council's process for managing empty homes to make sure that they are ready for new tenants quickly, safely and fairly.

5.2 It provides information to tenants on terminating their tenancy and what they can expect during the termination period. It also sets out the council's lettable standard so that tenants know in advance what they can expect from their new home.

5.3 The policy provides KPIs for performance so that the council can measure its performance against the policy standards.

6 Repairs and Maintenance for Tenanted Properties Policy (Appendices 11 – 13)

6.1 This policy sets out the process for repairs and maintenance in the council's tenanted properties. It provides information on how to report repairs, types of

repairs, response times and appointment schedules.

6.2 Following feedback from the leaseholder panel it was decided to update this policy to make it applicable to tenants only to avoid confusion between tenant and leaseholder responsibilities. A separate policy for leaseholder repairs and the s20 process is being developed. This will be subject to leaseholder consultation before being brought forward to the cabinet housing committee for consideration in January 2026.

7 Alternative options considered

7.1 None

8 Consultation and feedback

8.1 Tenant and Leaseholder panels and the cabinet housing committee

9 Key risks

9.1 As set out in appendix 1

Report author:

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Appendices:

1. Risk Assessment
2. Rent Setting Policy
3. Rent Setting Policy Summary for Tenants
4. Rent Setting Policy Equality Impact Assessment
5. The Recharge Policy
6. The Recharge Policy Summary for Tenants
7. The Recharge Policy Equality Impact Assessment
8. The Empty Homes (Voids) Policy
9. The Empty Homes (Voids) Policy Summary for Tenants
10. The Empty Homes (Voids) Policy Equality Impact Assessment
11. The Repairs and Maintenance for Tenanted Properties Policy
12. The Repairs and Maintenance for Tenanted Properties Policy Summary for Tenants
13. The Repairs and Maintenance for Tenanted Properties Policy Equality Impact Assessment

Background information:

Report to Cabinet Housing Committee – 26 November 2025

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
1	The Council has a legal duty to ensure that properties it manages are safe and comply with all applicable statutory requirements. If the Council fails to adopt clear policies then this could result in ambiguity potentially putting tenants and residents at risk	Director of Governance, Housing and Communities	5	3	15	Reduce	Produce, approve and implement clear and robust policies and associated procedures.	Director of Governance, Housing and Communities	December 2025
2	If the Council does not have clear policies in place or does not comply with the provisions of the policies then there is a risk that the council could be subject to legal and/ or financial risk.	Director of Governance, Housing and Communities	5	3	15	Reduce	Produce, approve and implement clear and robust policies and associated procedures.	Director of Governance, Housing and Communities	December 2025