

Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 9 September 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lee Brazier, Housing

Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director - Housing, Health & Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Julie Davidson, Business Manager - Housing Services

Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open Report / Non-Key Decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - Housing Community Centre Policy
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	This report sets out the Council's approach to managing Housing Community Centres financed and supported via the Housing Revenue Account.
<b>Recommendations</b>	That Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) endorse the Policy;</li> <li>b) note that no charges will be levied for the use of HRA Community Centres;</li> <li>c) note the alignment with the Community Plan Ambition Seven <i>"Be a top performing, modern, accessible Council that get its everyday services right for the residents and businesses that it serves"</i></li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	Not having a policy in place could result in ineffective management and misuse of valuable community spaces.
<b>Reason for Recommendations</b>	To ensure effective management of the Council's 29 HRA Housing Community Centres.

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council has 29 community centres within the Housing Revenue Portfolio; these are located across the district either within or adjacent to areas of housing for older people.
- 1.2 All these community centres provide facilities for tenants in the surrounding locality creating a communal, social space to encourage neighbourhood cohesion and integration.
- 1.3 The policy at **Appendix A** sets out how the Council will manage and maintain these assets to ensure their longevity and cement their place in communities.

- 1.4 As detailed in the report, community centre provision aligns with the Council's Community Plan Ambition 7:

*"Be a top performing, modern, accessible Council that get its everyday services right for the residents and businesses that it serves"*

## **2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered**

- 2.1 Consideration was given to apply a charge for the use of the Council's HRA community centres; however, this would result in the properties being liable for business rates and to cover this charge, hire costs would be prohibitive for community-based groups across the district.
- 2.2 Established on average charges levied by other local venues we would attract an annual sum of £87,700 based on the current usage of all the community centres. Charges for business rates, for all the properties, was estimated at circa £96,000 for 25/26 with the anticipation of a year-on-year increase. However, work with the valuation office has resulted in the business rate charge being removed across all HRA community centres as a more detailed description was provided regarding their function and value they added within the locality, and the fact that no charge would be levied for the use of the facility.

## **3.0 Tenant Feedback**

- 3.1 Feedback from tenants was mixed: positive regarding the clear and transparent guidance provided within the Policy and associated documents so the centres are managed and maintained well. Tenants noted the improvement to the booking form and conditions attached to usage of the centres. Tenants are pleased to note the digital programme underway to fit WiFi in all the centres.
- 3.2 The not so positive included tenants wanting commercial users to be charged and an improved key management system to be put in place. Currently key safes are in place but often keys are lost or not returned to the safe.
- 3.3 Tenants are keen to see a cyclical maintenance programme established to ensure they are all kept in a good condition, including replacement of carpets and regular decoration.

## **3.0 Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

### **Financial Implications - (FIN24-25/8971)**

- 3.1 As there is currently no charge for the use of the community centres, the HRA receives no income and as stated in paragraph 2.3, there are no business rate charges.

- 3.2 As stated in paragraph 2.2, the estimated income for charging for the use of the community centres is around £87,700, based on the current usage. Due to charging for the use of the service, the HRA would then be liable to pay business rates, the estimated business rate charges are £96,000 for 25/26. Therefore, the HRA would incur an estimated net expenditure of £8,300 if the policy was changed to charge for the use of the community centres.

#### HR & Equalities implications

- 3.3 Access to the community centres is not restricted, and whilst predominantly the centres are for tenants' benefit, they are open to all in the wider community, including residents.

#### ICT Implications

- 3.4 There is a digital programme in place to equip all community centres with WiFi to make them fit for purpose in line with modern technology and widen their use, due to be complete by March 2027

#### Legal Implications (LEG2425/9458)

- 3.5 The report is for endorsement. Officers should contact Legal if they would like template venue hire agreement terms and conditions to be reviewed.

#### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None