

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET		
SUBJECT:	MOBILITY SCOOTER STORAGE POLICY		
DATE OF DECISION:	19 FEBRUARY 2013		
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND LEISURE		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
NONE

BRIEF SUMMARY

The policy sets out the current situation in terms of the storage of mobility scooters in communal areas of Council housing stock and associated hazards and dangers that such storage can cause.

The policy reinforces the Council's commitment to enabling older people to keep their independence whilst providing guidance on how and where mobility scooters can be stored and their batteries recharged and gives examples of options that tenants should consider in regard to mobility scooters.

The policy makes clear that the unauthorised storage of mobility scooters causes hazards in housing blocks and as well as being a risk to the health and safety of residents, staff, visitors and emergency personnel, is also a clear breach of the tenancy agreement.

The policy will be implemented over a period of six months during which interim measures will be discussed with Hampshire Fire and Rescue (HFRS), such as scooters all being on side of the corridor, whilst officers work with scooter users/ owners to look at options for individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the policy is adopted.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More and more people are purchasing mobility scooters to aid their independence as they become older and / or less mobile and the storage of these items in communal areas is a potential hazard especially around fire.
2. The Council is committed to enabling older people to stay independent for as long as possible and recognises that mobility scooters are a key part of this. The Council therefore wanted to ensure that guidance on the storage and recharging of mobility scooters is clear.

3. Hampshire Fire and Rescue have raised concerns that the Council did not have a formal policy in regard to the storage of mobility scooters and were clear that the Council needed to ensure that all communal areas in housing blocks were kept free from obstruction.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

4. That the situation be managed through reference to the Tenancy Agreement solely as the Tenancy does state that communal areas must be kept clear.
5. Due to the increasing number of older people wishing to purchase scooters, it was felt that a wider policy that includes proactive steps would be of benefit to all.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

6. Southampton City Council is committed to supporting residents who have mobility issues and who wish to utilise scooters to increase their mobility, independence and therefore improve their quality of life.
7. This policy aims to highlight the positive aspects that owning and using a mobility scooter can bring to a person's life whilst also highlighting that the storage and charging of mobility scooters must be accomplished safely for ALL residents, staff and visitors
8. Furthermore, that the Council has a responsibility to protect and preserve the health and safety of all residents living within our accommodation, as well as staff and visitors.
9. In recent years mobility scooters have become increasingly prevalent especially in the Council's housing complexes for people over the age of 60 and higher numbers of scooters are being stored in communal hallways.
10. Currently, the issue of storage in communal areas affects six of the twenty four housing complexes for older people across the City and a recent exercise suggested that there are approximately 50 mobility scooters being stored and charged in communal areas that are not designated for such practices and where efforts would be needed to find alternative storage solutions.
11. In the other nineteen housing complexes, scooters can either be stored in resident's flats due to the accommodation size and layout or there are designated scooter parking and charging areas.
12. A number of these scooters that are currently stored in communal areas are being recharged via extension cables trailing into a person's flat and others from electric plug sockets along the corridors themselves.
13. Both the storage of the scooters and recharging of batteries via extension leads pose hazards in the communal hallways in regard to evacuation routes, access to the building by emergency services in the event of a fire and trip hazards for all users of the corridors.
14. The tenancy agreement and tenants handbook already states that all communal areas should be kept clear and officers could have chosen simply to rely on the tenancy agreement to try and prevent scooters being stored.

15. However, following discussions with the Supported Housing Tenants Forum as well as the Joint Staff and Tenant Working Group, it was felt that it would be difficult for officers to both highlight the positives that owning a mobility scooter can bring to someone's independence whilst preventing inadequate storage by simple reference to the tenancy agreement.
16. During the development of this policy, an article was included in tenants Link highlighting some of the issues around mobility scooters. The article highlighted questions that residents should ask themselves before purchasing one.
17. The article went on to state that a policy on the storage of mobility scooters was being developed and residents were invited to send comments and questions in.
18. It was following these discussions that the development of the wider policy was decided on and is designed to encompass the purchase, safe storage, battery recharging and driving of mobility scooters into one document.
19. Discussion with Hampshire Fire and Rescue took place and their comments are contained within the policy and reference to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This highlights the Authority's responsibility to keep all "sterile" areas (which includes communal hallways, entranceways etc) clear from hazards.
20. HFRS went on to highlight some of the potential dangers of mobility scooters being stored in communal areas including increased fire loading, potential source of ignition and trip hazards/ obstruction in the event of fire officers needing to enter the building in an emergency of residents needing to be evacuated.
21. HFRS have submitted a paragraph for the report which can be found on Page 5 of the Policy and have agreed for their logo to be used in the publicity of this policy and through the communication strategy that has been proposed.
22. It is recognised that this policy is designed to carefully balance the needs of those residents whose dependence on mobility scooters is key to their ongoing independence with the health and safety of all users of the buildings.
23. Work already carried out by supported housing staff has highlighted that a number of people who have mobility scooters may use them very infrequently or not at all (they may have been given one, they may no longer feel confident on using it etc).
24. Some residents who no longer use their scooter have not disposed of it as they do not know how to.
25. A key element of the policy is to work with all existing owners/ users of scooters to explore options that are available to them, such as storing the scooter in their flat, disposing of the scooter if they no longer using it etc.
26. This exercise proved particularly useful at Manston Court during the refurbishment works where staff were able to work with residents and appropriately reduce the number of scooters being stored from over 25 to 12.

27. This policy covers all aspects of the purchase, storage and driving of mobility scooters in Council property and once implemented should allow officers to manage the safe storage of mobility scooters much more successfully across the City.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

28. The provision of additional Mobility Scooter Storage facilities will be undertaken as part of the Housing Investment Programme for supported housing.

Property/Other

29. This policy will support the Council's ability to meet its obligations for Fire Risk Assessments under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

30. Power to take action for non-compliance with this Policy is contained within the Tenancy Agreement and will be only used as a last resort

Other Legal Implications:

31. There is currently no national legal requirements around the ownership or insurance of all types of mobility scooter, however it is understood that this is currently being considered. This policy therefore places the Council in a positive position to respond to any potential future legislation or guidance.
32. The proposals in this report take into account the Council's duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and the need to have 'due regard' to the impact of the proposed policy on any person with protected characteristics. An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken in preparation of this report which sets out the potential impacts on affected groups and the full set of mitigation actions and measures that will be used to mitigate any potential impacts to ensure that the Council's actions are necessary and proportionate having regard to the wider safety concerns created by the inappropriate storage of mobility scooters in communal areas. The Council will work with all residents to identify appropriate solutions to individual needs.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

33. Housing Revenue Account business plan

KEY DECISION? Yes

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:

ALL WARDS

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	Draft Mobility Scooter policy
2.	http://www.southampton.gov.uk/Images/Tenants%20link%20Autumn%202012/tcm46-331475.pdf Tenants Link On Line- pg 10 for the article

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	Yes
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Other Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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1.	Equality Impact Assessment – Mobility Scooter Storage Policy dated 1st February 2013.	
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