

Slough Borough Council

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| Report To: | Cabinet |
| Date: | 22 June 2026 |
| Subject: | Housing Decant Policy |
| Lead Member: | Housing, Homelessness and Communities – Councillor Iftakhar Ahmed |
| Chief Officer: | Will Tuckley, Chief Executive |
| Contact Officer: | Victoria Boateng, Director of Housing Management |
| Ward(s): | All |
| Purpose of report: | For decision |
| Key Decision: | Yes |
| Exempt: | NO |
| Decision Subject To Call In: | YES |
| Appendices: | Appendix 1 – Slough Borough Council Decant Policy |

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report presents the proposed Decant Policy, which sets out the Housing Department's approach to managing temporary and permanent home moves in a fair, safe, transparent and well-coordinated manner. The policy establishes clear service standards, roles and responsibilities to ensure households required to move from their home are appropriately supported, with a particular focus on tenant safety, effective communication and consistent decision-making. Adoption of the policy will strengthen governance and operational practice, support compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards—particularly the Safety and Quality and Transparency, Influence and Accountability (TIA) standards—and provide clarity for both tenants and staff on expectations throughout the decant process.

1.2 Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. To approve the Housing Decant Policy, as appended at Appendix 1.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the lead member for housing, to make minor amendments to the policy in line with service delivery requirements.

Reason:

Approval of the Decant Policy will ensure the Council has an agreed and compliant framework for managing decants.

The recommendations support compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Safety and Quality standard and TIA standard, with performance reporting providing transparency and public accountability to residents.

Commissioner Review

This policy is an important part of the architecture for a safe, transparent, compliant and robust housing service. The Regulator of Social Housing is very clear about expectations in this policy area so this will signal a further step on the housing improvement journey. Its application must be applied fairly and consistently if it is to be of value so Officers must ensure there is training to embed this across the service and that it is monitored regularly.

2. Report

2.1 Approval of these policies will support the Council in delivering its vision and the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2023–27, particularly the commitment to provide safe, high-quality homes, protect vulnerable residents, and strengthen trust through transparent and professional services. The policies directly support compliance with the RSH Safety and Quality Standard and the TIA Standard by ensuring staff are competent, accountable, and equipped to deliver services that meet tenant expectations.

Options considered

2.2 Option 1: Approve the Decant Policy

This option provides assurance that the Council is responding to the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations by introducing a formal Decant Policy. Approval of the policy will support compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Safety and Quality standard, Tenancy standard, and TIA standards.

The policy establishes a clear framework for managing decants, including effective communication through a single, named point of contact and a collaborative approach to securing suitable alternative accommodation. This option strengthens governance, promotes consistency of practice, and improves the tenant experience during the decant process.

2.3 Option 2 – Do nothing

This option would involve not adopting a formal Decant Policy and continuing with existing practices. This would not address the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations and would leave the Council exposed to ongoing operational, regulatory and reputational risks.

In the absence of clear standards and governance arrangements, there would be an increased likelihood of inconsistent practice, poor communication with tenants, increased complaints and potential findings of maladministration.

This option would not support compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Safety and Quality, Tenancy, or TIA standards and is therefore not recommended.

2.4. Background

The Council does not currently have a formal Decant Policy in place. The Housing Ombudsman has identified the need for the Council to introduce a clear policy framework. In addition, Awaab's Law (Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025) requires landlords to secure alternative accommodation where emergency hazards cannot be made safe within 24 hours, or significant hazards within five working days. This reinforces the need for a formal policy to set clear standards and procedures for managing decants.

The proposed policy is informed by the statutory requirements of the Land Compensation Act 1973 and the Housing Act 1985, learning from the Housing Ombudsman's casework, and the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards. It sets out the Council's approach to managing temporary and permanent decants in a safe, fair, transparent and well-coordinated manner. The policy establishes clear service standards, including securing suitable alternative accommodation, providing a single point of contact, and maintaining regular communication throughout the decant process. It also clarifies tenant responsibilities and the expectations placed on Council staff.

During development, an initial staff consultation highlighted the importance of collaborative working with tenants, clear communication of financial responsibilities, and consistency of practice to meet the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards.

A public consultation was subsequently undertaken, including an online survey, virtual engagement and an in-person session. Feedback emphasised the need to take account of individual household circumstances and vulnerabilities, ensure proactive and regular communication with decanted tenants, and improve information sharing between services to avoid tenants having to repeat information and to strengthen continuity of support

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 *Financial implications*

3.1.1 The proposal is to approve the Housing decant policy which sets out service standards required to move tenants from their home where appropriate and does not in itself have direct financial implications. Any costs arising from the decants will be met from the HRA revenue budgets.

3.2 *Legal implications*

3.2.1 The Housing Ombudsman's website sets out various landlord expectations, including that, "*landlords should have a clear and accessible policy for decant procedures, outlining the circumstances a decant may be considered.*"

3.2.2 Although the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) does not expressly require a standalone decant policy, as the Council is a registered provider of social housing the combination of the RSH's policies and standards impose duties on the Council including to provide safe, good quality homes; deliver effective and timely repairs and planned repairs, ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes, and communicate clearly with tenants about service standards and outcomes.

3.2.3 A decant policy is required to demonstrate compliance with requirements of both the Housing Ombudsman and the RSH's standards.

- 3.2.4 The TIA Standard further requires landlord services and policies to be fair, accessible and transparent. A decant policy will assist to demonstrate compliance with the same, ensuring consistent criteria for when a decant is necessary, suitability assessments, equality considerations, and clear resident-facing information.
- 3.2.5 The Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025, (i.e., Awaab's Law) introduces prescribed requirements with fixed timeframes for addressing emergency and significant hazards and includes the requirement to secure suitable alternative accommodation, at the landlord's expense, where relevant safety work cannot be completed within those timeframes. A decant policy is therefore operationally necessary to ensure the Council can comply consistently and transparently with these statutory duties.

3.3 *Risk management implications*

- 3.3.1. The Housing Ombudsman has recommended that the Council implement a formal Decant Policy following complaints relating to poor communication and inconsistent practice, highlighting weaknesses in governance and service standards. Without an agreed policy framework, the Council remains exposed to significant operational, financial and reputational risks.
- 3.3.2. In the absence of clear procedures, there is an increased risk of poor communication with tenants, delays in securing suitable alternative accommodation, extended displacement from homes, and inconsistent decision-making. This can result in tenant distress, loss of confidence in Council services, increased complaints, Ombudsman findings of maladministration and potential compensation liabilities.
- 3.3.3 There are also legal and regulatory risks associated with the lack of a formal policy, including potential non-compliance with statutory duties relating to safeguarding, equality and the provision of suitable alternative accommodation, as well as failure to meet the Regulator of Social Housing's Safety and Quality, and TIA standards.
- 3.3.4 Approval and implementation of the Decant Policy will mitigate these risks by establishing clear standards, accountability, and oversight, supporting consistent practice, improved tenant communication, and strengthened compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements.

3.4 *Environmental implications*

- 3.4.1 There are no direct environmental impacts arising from this decision. However, improved professional competence contributes indirectly to better management of homes, including repairs, maintenance, and asset stewardship—areas that support the Council's sustainability ambitions outlined in the Corporate Plan.

3.5 *Equality implications*

- 3.5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed in relation to the proposed Decant Policy. The assessment considered the potential impacts on tenants and residents with protected characteristics, including age, disability, sex, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment.

- 3.5.2 The EIA has concluded that the policy is broadly positive in its impact, as it establishes a clear, consistent framework for supporting residents who are required to move from their homes, often in circumstances that may already present vulnerability or risk. The policy strengthens the Council's ability to provide safe, suitable temporary and permanent accommodation and ensures that tenant welfare remains central to decision-making.
- 3.5.3 Potential risks of disadvantage were identified, particularly for residents with disabilities, older people, households with young children, and those with specific cultural or support needs. These risks have been mitigated through the inclusion of provisions within the policy to:
- undertake individual needs assessments prior to any decant;
 - ensure suitable alternative accommodation is identified, taking account of medical, accessibility, and location needs;
 - provide clear communication and tailored support throughout the decant process;
 - make reasonable adjustments where required.
- 3.5.4 The assessment confirms that the policy does not introduce unlawful discrimination and is compliant with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Ongoing monitoring and review arrangements will be in place to ensure that any emerging impacts are identified and addressed, and that the policy continues to operate in a fair and equitable manner.

4. Background Papers

Public consultation survey results

Decant Policy Public Consultation Feedback Session

Staff Consultation

Staff Decant Policy Meeting 2nd Consultation and Implementation