



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE 13 NOVEMBER 2025
Subject	PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY AND MOBILE HOMES POLICY.
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment Email: Lidia.Arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing, Executive Director Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk
Report author	Philip Measures, Service Leader Email: philip.measures@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To Renew the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy and Caravan Sites Policy.
Annexes	Annex A – Private Sector Housing Strategy Annex B – Mobile Homes Policy Annex C – Equalities Impact Assessment. Annex D – Sustainability Impact Assessment
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the Private Sector Housing Strategy as set out in Annex A and the Mobile Homes Policy as set out in Annex B.2. Recommend to Council to approve a new Stock Conditions Survey.3. Instruct / authorise officers to schedule the next Stock Conditions Survey once budgetary provision has been made.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• A Good Quality of Life for All
Key Decision	NO

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Head of Service for Housing

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report introduces two policies that fall within the remit of the Private Sector Housing team. This team deals with HMO and Caravan site licensing and a range of other regulatory work concerned with living conditions and safety. The report updates existing policies to take into account the recent legislative changes concerning caravan site regulation and the significant changes to private sector housing regulation, also taking into account the imminent Renters Reform Bill, due to pass in October.
- 1.2** The policies identify the Council's priorities in line with the Council's Housing Strategy, Enforcement Policy and Long-Term Empty Homes Strategy. It sets out four commitments to proactively and effectively tackle poor conditions across the private housing sector; to continue to work with partners, landlords and registered providers to ensure that homes meet required standards so that residents can thrive safe homes; to support the Council's Strategy to bring long term empty properties back into use and to tackle unlicensed HMOs.
- 1.3** The Mobile Homes Policy deals with regulatory matters concerning the Licensing and inspection of residential caravan sites, the appointment of Fit and Proper Persons at the licensed sites, and the setting of fees required within the regulatory regime.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The current Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy was completed in 2011 and, whilst much of its contents remain relevant, there have been some significant legislative and organisational changes since then. The element dealing with Disabled Facilities Grants has moved to another service area and there is a current policy specifically for DFGs in place. The service is no longer able to provide financial support in the form of discretionary grants, but it does signpost to other areas where support may be available to landlords and residents. Government from time to time, provides additional grant funding to develop initiatives such as the enforcement of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards, which the Council took advantage of in 2022.
- 2.2** A significant legislative change occurred in 2016, with the Housing & Planning Act 2016 which introduced a range of measures to improve standards in private sector housing:
 - Civil penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution for certain specified offences,
 - Extension of rent repayment orders to cover illegal eviction, breach of a banning order and certain other specified offences,
 - Database of rogue landlords and property agents who have been convicted of certain offences or received multiple civil penalties,
 - The introduction of Banning Orders for the most serious and prolific offenders under The Housing and Planning Act 2016 (Banning Order Offences) Regulations 2018.
- 2.3** The definition of licensable HMOs also changed, removing the three-storey requirement thus increasing the numbers of licensable HMOs. New legislation passing through

Parliament, the Renters Reform Bill, is introducing a number of additional private sector housing duties, with greater protections for tenants and prospective tenants (criminalising rental bidding) which will increase the scope and workload of the service. It is therefore important that a policy is in place to incorporate these changes, to outline how the service enforces these new duties and provides support to landlords and residents. Given the new requirements in the Renters Rights Bill it is recommended this policy is reviewed and revised as necessary within the next two years.

- 2.4 Under Section 3 of The Housing Act 2004, the Council has a legal duty to keep the housing condition within our area under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken under various provisions of the 2004 Act. Although the frequency of this is not stipulated by legislation, the Council carried out the last stock condition survey in 2013, therefore, the survey is due to be refreshed. The new policy reiterates this requirement, and this report recommends approval for a budget to be allocated for the next survey to be scheduled. Opportunities to work in partnership with other Councils will be investigated.
- 2.5 The Mobile Homes Fees Policy was first introduced in 2015 to cover the fees requirements placed on licensed residential protected sites under the Mobile Homes Act 2013. The Act made provision for compliance notices to require improvements and injunctions for the most serious offences. In 2020, new requirements were brought in for such sites to appoint Fit and Proper Persons for each site and Councils are required to administer and enforce these requirements. The new Policy accommodates these new provisions and sets out the Council's approach for its caravans and mobile homes responsibilities.
- 2.6 In light of the imminent changes under the Renters Reform Bill, it is proposed to review the PSH policy within the next year and thereafter every three years. The Mobile Homes Policy has a default three year review period.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Council may approve, amend, or reject the proposed policies as they see fit.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The approval of the Private Sector Housing Strategy has no direct financial implications. However, in order to meet the new statutory requirements in the Renters Rights Bill, additional officer resources will be necessary and will be considered as part of the 2026/27 budget setting cycle. The current proposal under consideration includes the recruitment of one additional Private Sector Housing Officer (career grade) and one Tenancy Relations Officer. As these roles will be employed by Publica, they will operate as shared officers working across the partnership. Consequently, the associated costs will also be shared and reflected in the Council's 2026/27 budget and Medium-term financial strategy, subject to the approval of the business case. If approved by all three Councils, the TRO post would be split evenly. Although additional government funding is likely to be provided to support the implementation of the new legislation, this has not yet been confirmed. Future funding is expected to come mainly from civil penalties.

- 4.2** The typical cost of a stock conditions survey is £60,000. Therefore, this additional capital will be proposed as part of the budget setting cycle, and the survey can be completed in the year when the capital is allocated for this purpose.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The Private Sector Housing Policy and the Caravan Sites Mobile Homes Policy sets out how the Council intends to meet its duties particularly with its regard to its regulatory, inspection and licensing responsibilities under the legislation referred to in the policies. In addition, there are legal requirements to have such policies in place in order to carry out certain functions, such as the charging of fees for the inspection of residential caravan sites. Therefore, without these policies in place, the Council could be open to legal challenge.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1** An up-to-date Private Sector Housing Strategy underpins and supports the Councils work in this area. The Council could face legal challenge if it relies on data that is out of date. The Council would be unable to set fees if it did not have a current fees policy in place.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1** Provided in Annex C

8. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The SIAT tool has been completed and submitted for this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1** None

(END)