



## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 11TH DECEMBER 2014

**SUBJECT:       RESPONSE REPAIR POLICY**

**REPORT BY:    INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### **1.       PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1    The purpose of this report is to provide information on the implementation of a Response Repairs Policy for all Council properties.
- 1.2    Following consultation by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group, this report will be submitted to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee for recommendations and thereafter to Cabinet for decision/approval.

### **2.       SUMMARY**

- 2.1    The report proposes to introduce a Response Repairs policy document to replace the former 2004 policy statement.
- 2.2    The former 2004 policy was more of a staff training and procedure manual which included a policy statement (copy attached Appendix 1). This was not intended to provide information for tenants and as such was not made available on the Council's internet website.
- 2.3    Response repairs are defined in the attached policy as repairs which are required by tenants to existing elements of their property and tenants need to be aware of the arrangements the Council has in place for providing this service.
- 2.4    The Response Repairs Policy (copy attached Appendix 2) describes the activities and responsibilities involved in delivering a response repairs service to all Council properties by the in-house Housing Repair Operations team. The report also highlights its commitment to providing an effective and responsive housing repairs and maintenance service in order to ensure high levels of tenant satisfaction along with protecting the value of its housing stock.

### **3.       LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1    The Response Repair Policy will assist the Council in meeting the aims and priorities detailed in the following strategies:
- 3.2    **National Housing Strategy:** The Welsh Assembly Government's National Housing Strategy 'Better Homes for People in Wales' (2001) has key themes of quality and choice. The WAG vision for housing "*wants everyone in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing*".
- 3.3    **The Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017:** has a priority to: "Improve standards of housing and communities giving appropriate access to services across the county borough".

- 3.4 **Local Housing Strategy:** Property Theme: *“Providing the opportunity for everyone to live in affordable, sustainable, good quality housing, regardless of tenure.”*
- 3.5 And links specifically to Strategic Aim 6: Housing Management, *“To provide good quality, well-managed homes in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations.”*

#### **4. THE REPORT**

4.1 The Council as Landlord has an obligation to keep its housing stock in a good state of repair therefore the following principles have been included within the policy document in order to promote the understanding of the Council’s legal responsibilities and mutual obligations in relation to response repairs.

- Responsibilities of the tenant
- Responsibilities of the Council
- Damp and Condensation
- Landlord Lighting
- Rechargeable Repairs
- Repairs to Empty Properties
- Joint Liability Repairs
- The Right To Repair
- Review Process
- Compensation Payments
- Relevant legislation on regulatory compliance
- Repairs and Maintenance Processes.
- Equality Implications.
- Welsh Language
- Tenant Participation.
- Policy Monitoring
- Links to other relevant policies/documents.

4.2 The overall aim of the Response Repair Policy is to contribute to the efficient and effective maintenance of the Council’s housing stock.

4.3 The policy will be accessible on the Housing website and is supported by detailed internal procedures and agreed practices applied uniformly across the housing service.

4.4 Due to the length of time since the previous document had been reviewed, it has been agreed that this policy will be reviewed every three years unless there is an earlier change in legislation.

#### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The policy has been updated in terms of Equalities and Welsh language issues following consultation with the Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language).

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no financial implications associated directly with the Response Repairs Policy.

#### **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no direct personnel implications.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 Consultation has taken place with relevant officers, Cabinet Member for Housing, the Repairs and Improvement Group, all views and opinions have been included in the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 This report is to seek support for the introduction of a Response Repairs Policy, prior to consideration by Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter, Cabinet.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To provide an up-to-date Response Repair Policy which contributes towards the efficient and effective maintenance of the Council's housing stock.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Housing Acts 1985, 1996 and 2004.

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### Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Response Repairs Policy Statement  
Appendix 2 Response Repairs Policy – May 2014

**Response Repairs Manual - INDEX**

<b><u>SECTION</u></b>		<b><u>TOPIC</u></b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Page 1</b>	1.0 Maintenance Policy Statement
<b>B</b>	<b>2-4</b>	1.0 Repairs reporting - General Guidelines and Customer Care Requirements.
	<b>5-8</b>	2.0 Guidance on Repairs Prioritisation.
<b>C</b>	<b>9</b>	1.0 Academy Housing System - Features.
	<b>10-15</b>	2.0 Requirements for Repair Reporting. (inc. priorities/ workforce/ work types/ trades)
	<b>16-19</b>	4.0 Emergency 'Out of Hours' Procedure.
<b>D</b>	<b>20-21</b>	1.0 Inspection Procedure.
<b>E</b>	<b>22-25</b>	1.0 Response Maintenance Process and Computer Interface for DLO Jobs.
	<b>26</b>	2.0 Procedure in the Event of Computer Failure.
	<b>27-30</b>	3.0 Job Tickets Disputes and Queries Procedure.
	<b>31-32</b>	4.0 Contractor 'No Access' Procedure.
<b>F</b>	<b>33</b>	1.0 Procedure for Administering Non-DLO Jobs.
	<b>34</b>	2.0 Solid Fuel Appliances Repairs Procedure. Gas Appliances/Systems Repairs Procedure.
	<b>35</b>	3.0 Stair lifts.
	<b>36</b>	4.0 Graffiti removal.
<b>G</b>	<b>37</b>	1.0 Empty Property Management Procedures.
<b>H</b>	<b>38-45</b>	1.0 Rechargeable Repairs Policy. 2.0 Procedure. 3.0 Mutual exchanges. 4.0 End of Tenancies.
<b>J</b>	<b>46-47</b>	1.0 Tenants' Maintenance Responsibilities. 2.0 Appeals Process.

L	50-54	1.0	Tenants' Right to Repair
M	55-56	1.0	Joint Liability Repairs
N	57	1.0	Co-ordination with Planned Maintenance.
O	58-62	1.0	Decoration Allowance and Compensation.
		2.0	Compensation for loss of Heating.
P	66-69	1.0	Damp and Condensation Procedure.
Q	70-71	1.0	Electrical Inspection and Testing
		2.0	Landlord Lighting
R	72	1.0	Porches
S	73-74		Contractor Customer Care Charter.
	75		<b>REPMAN INDEX</b>

## SECTION A

### 1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

#### 1.1 General Policy

1.1.1 A repairs policy with clear definitions of responsibility and expectations can result in the best use of resources both financial and human. A detailed repairs policy forms the basis of an effective repairs service.

1.1.2 Tenants have the right to expect their homes to be properly maintained and to have their repair request dealt with in a professional and customer orientated manner. Customer care therefore plays an essential role in the delivery of this service.

1.1.3 The Councils aim is a 3-pronged approach to maintaining and improving the physical condition of its dwellings:

- 1) Housing Stock requiring unforeseen repairs will be tackled through **Response Maintenance**
- 2) Housing stock in good or adequate condition will be tackled through **Planned maintenance**
- 3) Housing stock in poor condition and requiring major work will be tackled by a range of alternative strategies as part of the **Major Works Policy**

1.1.4 By evaluating and implementing a range of alternative approaches to restore its stock to good condition, the Council will be focusing on a strategy which is in the best interests of tenants and residents.

#### 1.2 RESPONSE MAINTENANCE POLICY

1.2.1 The majority of repairs dealt with by the Council are known as response repairs, i.e. those repairs arising as a result of a personal request by a tenant (or someone representing them) or those relating to empty dwellings. Because of the large volume of such repairs, it is important to prioritise them in some way to ensure that those, which are most urgent, are attended to first. The Authority does this by categorising response repairs into a number of different priority groups, each with specific target times.(see page 5)

1.2.2 It is anticipated that, subject to satisfactory resource levels and the introduction of Planned Maintenance in the Caerphilly County Borough area, expenditure on response repairs will decrease in real terms over the next few years.

## SECTION B

### 1.0 REPAIRS REPORTING GENERAL GUIDELINES AND CUSTOMER CARE REQUIREMENTS

- 1.1 The accurate reporting of a request for a repair is an essential task, but one to which many organisations fail to give sufficient priority, either in ensuring that proper procedures are in place or in training their staff. This section will provide an essential reference point for staff involved in repairs reporting.
- 1.2 The name and address of the tenant (which may be different to that of the caller) will be identified. All repair requests will be logged within the computerised repair system or the alternative manual system in the event of computer failure. (see Section E 2.0.)
- 1.3 A little extra care at this stage of the repairs process can help to reduce the level of secondary enquiries from tenants. Staff receiving repair complaints must ensure that tenants are clearly informed of the priority of the repair, the likely response time and the job number. Staff must also ensure that they take sufficient details of the repair complaint and use the job fax system of logging where possible **to ensure that each job is correctly prioritised.**

Where Clerical Assistants are unable to specify using the job fax manual, adequate and accurate information will need to be passed to the Repairs Inspector, via an inspection note.

### 1.4 REPAIRS REPORTED BY TELEPHONE

- 1.4.1 When a repair is reported by telephone, the person receiving the call should identify themselves by giving their name and section. The identity of the caller should be established. The address of the property where the repair is needed should be confirmed and the name of the Council tenant. Where possible the telephone number of the caller should be obtained in case any further information is required, or to arrange an appointment.
- 1.4.2 The caller should be asked for full details relating to the repair by asking relevant questions to enable the job to be correctly specified- see para.1.9 below.

A check should then be made on the computerised Repairs History Screen to see if the repair has been reported previously. If it has, it should be explained to the caller that the job has been recorded. The caller must be informed of the priority allocated to the job and the estimated time in which the repair will be completed.

- 1.4.3 If the repair has not been previously recorded, it should be logged on the Repairs Computer system, either by
  - a) the Clerical Officer raising a works order directly by using job fax.

CAERPHILLY COUNTY  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING SERVICES  
RESPONSE REPAIRS POLICY

MAY 2014



**Contents**

<b>SECTION</b>		<b>PAGE NUMBER</b>
SECTION 1	<a href="#">Introduction</a>	3
SECTION 2	<a href="#">Policy statement</a>	3
SECTION 3	<a href="#">Principles of the policy</a>	3 – 6
SECTION 4	<a href="#">Review Process</a>	6
SECTION 5	<a href="#">Compensation Payments</a>	6
SECTION 6	<a href="#">Legislation</a>	6 - 7
SECTION 7	<a href="#">Repairs and maintenance process</a>	7 – 9
SECTION 8	<a href="#">Equality Implications</a>	9
SECTION 9	<a href="#">Tenant Participation</a>	9 - 10
SECTION 10	<a href="#">Policy monitoring</a>	10
SECTION 11	<a href="#">Links to other relevant policies/documents</a>	10 – 11
SECTION 12	<a href="#">Review</a>	11
SECTION 13	<a href="#">Approvals</a>	11

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Caerphilly County Borough Council (the Council) is committed to providing a responsive and effective housing repairs and maintenance service in order to ensure high levels of tenant satisfaction and to protect the value of its housing stock.
- 1.2 This policy details the arrangements for the repairs and maintenance of properties owned by the Council.
- 1.3 Tenant Representatives were consulted in the development of this policy.

## **2.0 Policy statement**

- 2.1 The council will keep its housing stock in good condition by providing an efficient and effective repairs and maintenance service to tenants.
- 2.2 The council will ensure that its repairs and maintenance service reflects the following overall principles:
  - 2.2.1 To repair and maintain the housing stock to a good standard, in compliance with statutory legislation and where relevant in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
  - 2.2.2 To provide a flexible, convenient and customer oriented repairs service that gives priority to the safety, comfort and needs of tenants.
  - 2.2.3 To measure and monitor customer satisfaction and make use of the information to continuously improve services.
  - 2.2.4 To meet the Council's legal and contractual obligations
  - 2.2.5 To ensure the repairs service meets the performance and quality standards set out by the Council in the "Reporting a Repair" leaflet and the "Charter for Trust".
  - 2.2.6 To ensure the services provided are outcome and quality focused, cost effective and obtain the best value for tenants from available financial resources.
  - 2.2.7 To ensure the principles of Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities are central to working procedures and practices.

## **3.0 Principles of the policy**

Maintenance of the tenant's home in partnership with the Council and the tenant. As with any partnership there are responsibilities and these are set out below:

- 3.1 Responsibilities of the Tenant
  - 3.1.1 The tenant is responsible for reporting repairs to the council and must allow access to their home in order for the repair to be carried out.

In addition the tenant must also allow access for planned/improvement works to be carried out by the Council providing 10 working days prior notification, or by agreement.

- 3.1.2 If a tenant is unable to fulfil an appointment for any reason, they have a responsibility to notify the Central Repairs Team (CRT) in order that alternative arrangements can be made. Should the tenant fail to keep an appointment or notify the CRT, charges may be levied in accordance with the No-Access Procedure.
- 3.1.3 Tenants also have a duty to allow access for the council to undertake an annual service of the heating system and smoke alarms.
- 3.1.4 The tenant is responsible for the maintenance, repair and replacement of minor items within the home, as described in the Tenants Maintenance Responsibility Procedure.
- 3.1.5 The tenant is responsible for any repairs required to the property as a result of wilful damage, neglect or negligence by them or person residing in or visiting the property and for the removal and any necessary reinstatement work of any unauthorized alterations or improvements. This is explained more fully in the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.

### 3.2 Responsibilities of the Council

- 3.2.1 The Council is responsible for the maintenance, repair and replacement of the structure and common parts of its properties, as set out in the tenancy agreement and the Tenants Handbook.
- 3.2.2 The Council fulfils its repairing responsibilities through a combination of an improvement, responsive and planned maintenance approach.
- 3.2.3 Responsive maintenance
  - 3.2.3.1 Responsive maintenance is work carried out, usually at the request of the tenant, to repair damage to an item or part of structure of the building. This may also include replacement of the item if required.
  - 3.2.3.2 An appointment system is available so that tenants can arrange for repairs to be carried out at a time and date to suit themselves
  - 3.2.3.3 An emergency service is provided to tenants for any response repair required outside the Council's normal working hours.
- 3.2.4 Planned/Improvement works WHQS (This type of work is not covered under this policy)

Planned/Improvement work is work organized and carried out on a planned programme in line with the council's 30-year business plan. This includes all major repairs and improvements needed to bring homes up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

Planned maintenance also includes cyclical and preventative works, which are repeated at regular intervals, such as external painting, boiler servicing, electrical testing, smoke alarms servicing, water treatment, lift servicing, fire alarm servicing.

### 3.2.5 Damp and Condensation

The Council will investigate all reports of dampness however caused offering advice and solutions to tenants concerning the management of condensation and remedial works in the case of rising or penetrating dampness. Independent advice can be obtained where necessary.

### 3.2.6 Landlord Lighting

Lighting to communal areas will be checked weekly and replacements made. All landlord lighting will be subject to an annual electrical safety test.

### 3.2.7 Re-chargeable Repairs

Any damage, which is deemed to be the tenant's responsibility, will be identified and dealt with in an appropriate manner. Where the statutory responsibility for the repair lies with the council, or there is a health and safety risk, the damage will be repaired and where necessary the costs charged to the tenant in line with the Rechargeable Repairs procedure.

Details of rechargeable repairs are provided within the Tenants Handbook and can also be accessed via the council's housing website.

Tenants are also charged for any repairs found in a property after their tenancy has ended which also includes the condition of the property in line with the Rechargeable Repairs procedure, Empty Property Management Procedure and Termination of Tenancy Procedure. Photographic evidence, before and after the repair/s has been undertaken, should be provided in such circumstances.

### 3.2.8 Repairs to Empty Properties

The Council will repair all empty properties to its Letting Standard, in line with the Empty Property Management Procedure.

### 3.2.9 Joint Liability Repairs

Often repairs are reported by the tenant that affects a component of the property that is shared by the adjoining property, e.g. chimney stack, fencing. If this adjoining property has been sold there is a joint responsibility for the cost of the works. Full consultation needs to be undertaken and agreement reached with the Owner before the work is completed.

### 3.3 The Right to Repair

3.3.1 Tenants have a right to expect repairs to be completed within set timescales. These timescales are defined in the “Reporting a Repair” leaflet and in the Tenants Handbook.

3.3.2 Under the Right to Repair legislation, tenants may be entitled to claim compensation where a qualifying repair has not been completed within agreed timescales.

3.3.3 The Council will provide tenants with information on the Right to Repair where relevant.

3.4 Permission for a tenant to carry out an improvement will not be unreasonably withheld, but permission may be withheld if the requested improvement:

3.4.1 Will make the property more expensive to maintain.

3.4.2 Will make the property less safe

3.4.3 Will reduce the value of the property

Compensation for improvements may be payable in line with the provisions of the Compensation Schemes for Council Tenants leaflet.

## 4.0 Review Process

4.1 Tenants have a right to ask for a review of a decision in both the Recharge Procedure and the Tenants Maintenance Responsibilities Procedure. However tenants can also refer a complaint through the Corporate Complaints Procedure for any decision to be reviewed.

## 5.0 Compensation Payments

5.1 A decoration allowance may be paid for consequential damage following a Landlord repair in certain circumstances.

5.2 Compensation may be payable to tenants who suffer total or partial loss of heating. The criteria for winter payments and summer payments differ as do the level of compensation payable.

5.3 Compensation will be payable to tenants if their energy supply is utilised in the undertaking of any repairs in line with the Charter for Trust.

## 6.0 Relevant legislation and regulatory compliance

6.1 Caerphilly Council will ensure that properties are repaired and maintained in accordance with best practice and relevant policy and legislation, including the following:

- 6.1.1 Tenancy agreement and Tenant's handbook
- 6.1.2 Housing Acts 1988,1996,1998,2004
- 6.1.3 Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- 6.1.4 Defective Premises Act 1972
- 6.1.5 Building Regulations
- 6.1.6 Leasehold Reform Act
- 6.1.7 Equality Act 2010
- 6.1.8 Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- 6.1.9 Gas Regulations (Gas Safe)
- 6.1.10 Electrical Regulations (NICEIC)

## **7.0 Repairs and Maintenance Process**

- 7.1 Responsive repairs can be reported by tenants or their representatives in the following ways and will normally be dealt with by the Centralised Repairs Team.

By telephone

By letter

By email

In person at local housing/council offices

In person during estate inspections

By telephone to the 'out of hours' call-out service for emergency repairs only. Misuse of this service may result in a recharge.

- 7.2 The Council is continuously improving the methods of reporting repairs and will seek to develop more modern methods through the use of new technology.

- 7.3 The Council has set the following categories of responsive repairs with target timescales for responding to and completing repairs. In exceptional circumstances, for instance where the tenant is in poor health, the Council may consider a faster response time than the published targets.

### **7.3.1 Emergency repairs**

Emergency repairs are those that need to be carried out to avoid serious danger to health and safety or where a failure to carry out the repair could cause extensive damage to buildings and property.

Priority 01 out of hours emergency repairs should be completed or made safe within 2 hours.

Priority 02 working hours emergency repairs should be completed or made safe the same day as they are reported.

#### 7.3.2 Response Repair Appointments

For the convenience of its tenants, the Council offers an appointment system for carrying out responsive repairs during normal working hours.

Appointments are arranged with the individual tenant, with morning, afternoon, School run or all day appointments offered. They should be completed to the tenant's convenience which should be within 25 days of the repair being reported.

#### 7.3.3 Planned Response Works

Planned response works are larger type repairs, which generally take more than one day to complete that are not urgent, although they may cause inconvenience to tenants.

Planned works should be completed within 50 days of being reported.

#### 7.3.4 Pre-inspections

Certain repairs may need to be inspected in order to assess the nature of the work and its priority. Where possible, all inspections will be carried out within 3 working days.

### 7.4 Quality Control

7.4.1 The Council believes that the quality of its maintenance service is extremely important, not only to ensure the health, safety, comfort and satisfaction of its tenants, but also to protect the fabric and value of its housing stock.

7.4.2 The Council requires all staff and contractors working in tenants' homes to comply with the 'Charter for Trust' developed by the council.

7.4.3 Tenants who report a response repair may be contacted by telephone after the repair has been completed, to help assess the performance and quality of the repairs service by completing a satisfaction survey.

7.4.4 Every 3 months the Council will send out pre-paid questionnaires to a random selection of tenants who have recently had a repair completed to obtain feedback on the standard of our service delivery

7.4.5 The Council will ensure a minimum of 20% of all repairs works are inspected following completion. Any issues arising from these post-inspections will be referred to the Foreman responsible for investigation who will ensure that any necessary remedial works are carried out, or the response repairs procedure may require reviewing.

7.4.6 The Council's complaints policy is also available to any tenant who is dissatisfied with the responsive repairs service provided. Details are available on the council's website, at local housing offices or at any of the council's main offices.

## **8. Equalities and Welsh Language Implications**

- 8.1 The Council is committed to giving an equal service to all. Any action taken under this policy will comply with current Equalities and Welsh language legislation.
- 8.2 The Council's staff will operate within the requirements of the current corporate Strategic Equality Plan and Welsh Language Scheme, and meet any specific needs which may arise in respect of tenants' requirements regardless of their individual circumstances and backgrounds.
- 8.3 The Repairs and Maintenance procedure will be tailored to meet the needs of individuals, for example the priority of a repair may be increased for vulnerable tenants. All cases will be considered on an individual basis.
- 8.4 All contractors will be asked to provide their Equality and Diversity policy prior to allocating any works.
- 8.5 The Council will make information available in a variety of information formats on request, including:
  - 8.5.1 Large print
  - 8.5.2 Audio tape
  - 8.5.3 Other languages

## **9. Tenant Participation**

- 9.1 The Council will provide performance information to tenants through the various Tenants Groups, Caerphilly Homes Task Group, Housing website and the 'Housing' newsletter so tenants can measure and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the services delivered.
- 9.2 The Council will listen to tenants' views at every opportunity to enable continuous improvements to services, in line with the Local Tenant Participation Strategy.
- 9.3 The Council will:
  - 9.3.1 Involve our Tenants in decisions regarding response repairs
  - 9.3.2 Involve our Tenants in developing repairs policies
  - 9.3.3 Involve our Tenants in the selection and drawing up of specifications for contractors and key components.



- 9.4 The Council will ensure that wherever possible tenants are able to exercise a choice on repairs, for example through our appointment system or on colour schemes.
- 9.5 The Council will undertake all building repair work in line with the provisions of the Charter for Trust for building maintenance work.

## **10. Policy Monitoring**

- 10.1 To help achieve our aim of being a continuously improving organization and to ensure that we meet all statutory obligations, the Council has systems and processes in place which allow us to monitor and evaluate our performance.
- 10.2 The Council will constantly monitor repair standards and the performance of its contractors. Appropriate action will be taken if the repairs are not performed to the required standard.
- 10.3 The Council will continually review its standards by measurement against performance benchmarks set by the Welsh Government in comparison with other social housing providers.
- 10.4 The Council will benchmark its performance against other similar housing organizations with the aim of achieving continuous improvement and to ensure compliance with best practice and promote through newsletters.
- 10.5 Reports on the Response Repairs Service will be considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group, which consists of seven Councillors and seven elected Tenant Representatives.
- 10.6 The Repairs and Improvement Group will meet on a regular basis to review the service and identify any areas for improvement. This group will also act as the council's main consulting body for the Response Repairs Service

## **11. Links to other relevant policies/documents**

- 11.1 This policy links closely with the following policies and documents:
  - 11.1.1 Tenancy agreement
  - 11.1.2 Tenants' Handbook
  - 11.1.3 Local Tenant Participation Strategy
  - 11.1.4 Re-chargeable Repairs Policy
  - 11.1.5 Planned and Cyclical Maintenance Policy
  - 11.1.6 Empty Property Management Policy
  - 11.1.7 Charter for Trust

Response Repairs Policy

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- 11.1.8 Complaints Policy
- 11.1.9 Health & Safety Policy
- 11.1.10 Reporting a Repair Leaflet
- 11.1.11 No Access Procedure
- 11.1.12 Compensation Procedure
- 11.1.13 Tenants Maintenance Responsibilities
- 11.1.14 Response Repair Joint Responsibility Procedure
- 11.1.15 Landlords Consent Procedure
- 11.1.16 Annual Service No Access Procedure
- 11.1.17 Termination of Tenancy Procedure

**12. Review**

- 12.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years unless there is an earlier change in legislation.

**13. Approvals**

Date approved by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group

Date for review of the policy: \_\_\_\_\_

Responsible post: \_\_\_\_\_