

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 working days have passed and the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

- (1) That the adoption and publication of the proposed Renter's Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy, as detailed in Appendix A to the attached report prepared to accompany the decision, to facilitate robust delivery of the Council's duties to investigate and enforce landlord non-compliance, be approved.**
- (2) That the Service Director Regulation, Housing & Customer Contact be authorised to implement the revised policy, making any essential minor textual or administrative amendments to the policy as appropriate.**

2. Date of decision

29 June 2026

3. Reasons for decision

The Council holds a statutory duty to investigate and enforce landlord non-compliance under legislation set out in the Renter's Right Act 2025, the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and the Housing Act 1988.

The policy facilitates clear guidance for staff to ensure action is fair, consistent and aligned to the legislation.

A published enforcement policy will set expectations clearly for landlords and their agents on the Council's duties to investigate and enforce standards in the private sector. The policy outlines the action that will be taken in response to non-compliance including informal and formal means such as notices served through to prosecution in serious cases.

The policy will protect and support tenants seeking redress for poor standards or failings of landlords to fulfil their duties for private sector tenancies. The policy intent is to help raise standards in private sector housing and enforce renter's rights, holding landlords and their agents to account.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The option to not create a new Policy was considered and rejected. To exercise a regulatory enforcement function without an up-to-date enforcement policy that explicitly covers the new legislative remits introduced by the Renter's Right Act was not considered a viable option for the following reasons:

- The need for clear guidance for staff to ensure a legally robust, fair and consistent approach is required.
- Published standards for landlords is vital to set expectations and act as a deterrent to non-compliance.
- Published standards will support tenants seeking redress.

5. How decision is to be funded

Publication of the proposed policy can be delivered within existing resources. Implementation of the proposed policy, to investigate and enforce complaints of landlord non-compliance will be a function of the current Regulatory Housing Team within the Housing, Homelessness and Customer Service Department. Additional environmental health officer and enforcement officer resource was recently approved following a business case and is supported by New Burden's grant funding.

Where the Council has incurred costs in a case, where the legislation allows, the Council will seek to recover reasonable costs and expenses through routes such as civil action, local land charges or enforcement against the property. Where permitted interest may be applied to outstanding sums until paid.

An effective and robust approach to enforcement, including issuing civil financial penalties may reasonably be expected to drive an income stream for the Council whilst raising standards in the private sector.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

29 June 2026


Signed: 

Date: **29 June 2026**

Name of Decision Taker: **Cllr. Andrea Spice**
Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, Planning, Housing & Regulatory Services

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:30June2026.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:9July2026.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, Planning, Housing & Regulatory Services

Date of Report: 29 June 2026

Report by: Head of Housing, Homelessness & Customer Contact

Subject: RENTERS' RIGHTS ACT ENFORCEMENT POLICY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents a new Enforcement Policy (**Appendix A**) on the Council's role and remit to investigate and enforce landlord legislation as set out in the Renter's Right Act 2025, the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and the Housing Act 1988.
- 1.2 The policy provides guidance for the Council's Housing Enforcement officers to ensure investigatory and enforcement action is taken in line with the legislation and that a consistent approach is taken. It sets out what owners; landlords and their agents may expect from officers when dealing with non-compliance.
- 1.3 The overarching policy aim is to support responsible landlords to raise housing standards and to protect tenants, providing a means of redress when failings occur.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder considers the contents of this report and appendices, and if satisfied:
 - i. Approves the adoption and publication of the proposed Renter's Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy, attached at **Appendix A**, to facilitate robust delivery of the Council's duties to investigate and enforce landlord non-compliance.
 - ii. Delegates authority to the Service Director Regulation, Housing & Customer Contact to implement the revised policy, making any minor textual or administrative amendments to the policy as appropriate

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council holds a statutory duty to investigate and enforce landlord non-compliance under legislation set out in the Renter's Right Act 2025, the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and the Housing Act 1988.
- 3.2 The policy facilitates clear guidance for staff to ensure action is fair, consistent and aligned to the legislation.
- 3.3 A published enforcement policy will set expectations clearly for landlords and their agents on the Council's duties to investigate and enforce standards in the private sector. The policy outlines the action that will be taken in response to non-compliance including informal and formal means such as notices served through to prosecution in serious cases.
- 3.4 The policy will protect and support tenants seeking redress for poor standards or failings of landlords to fulfil their duties for private sector tenancies.
- 3.5 The policy intent is to help raise standards in private sector housing and enforce renter's rights, holding landlords and their agents to account.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Approximately 19% of residents, (some 40,000 people) live in the private rented sector in Bedford Borough as compared to 17% in the social rented sector with 63% as homeowners (half of which have a mortgage).
- 4.2 The majority of landlords may be responsible, setting fair and reasonable secure tenancy terms and rents whilst maintaining good, property standards. However, it is recognised that across the sector, some landlords have let tenants down through poor or unsafe property standards, unreasonable rising rents and insecure tenancies.
- 4.3 The Renter's Rights Act received royal assent in October 2025 with the first enforcement powers to Council's launched in May 2026. The Act aims to raise property standards and renter's rights as follows:
 - No more Section 21 'no fault' evictions (landlords must now have a valid reason).
 - An end to fixed term contracts so that all tenancies in the private sector will roll on.
 - Fairer rent rules (a landlord can only let with the advertised rent to end bidding wars, can only ask for one months rent upfront maximum and can only raise the rent annually).
 - It is now illegal to discriminate against tenants because they are on benefits or have children.

- Renters can ask for a pet, and landlords must reasonably consider it.
- The requirement for Landlords to register on a national database is to be introduced (date to be confirmed by MHCLG).
- A new independent private landlord ombudsman to help renters resolve complaints is to be introduced.

4.4 The current 'Housing Regulatory Compliance Civil Penalty Policy' (May 2025) does not cover the full remit of new extended duties introduced through the Renters Rights Act 2025, therefore a new policy is required to reflect this.

5. **DETAILS**

5.1 The proposed Enforcement Policy is summarised below and sets out when and how enforcement action may be taken in response to landlord non-compliance.

5.2 Generally, an informal approach is taken in the first instance such as providing advice (verbal or written) with the exception of category hazards when the Council may commence with formal action where there is:

- A risk to public health
- A blatant or deliberate contravention of the law
- A history of non-compliance
- Offences in relation to the licensing of HMOs

5.3 Investigatory powers include the gathering of evidence and information and entry to premises and the policy sets out when a notice may be served requiring information or entry and that it may be an offence to obstruct such an investigation.

5.4 The following formal action options are available to the Council and are detailed in the proposed policy (p.9):

- Improvement Notice in respect of any Category 1 and Category 2 requiring remedial action within a timeframe
- Prohibition Order preventing use of a property due to serious hazards
- Hazard Awareness Notice
- Emergency Prohibition Order
- Emergency Remedial Action when the Council may intervene and undertake remedial works on a property and charge this back to the landlord
- The Council may suspend action where it is in the interests of the tenant to minimise inconvenience with minor hazards
- Demolition and Clearance Options
- Conditions may be added to a HMO licence

- 5.5 Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice or Prohibition Order is a criminal offence, and the Council may consider prosecuting in serious cases. This decision will be subject to the evidential strength of the Council's case and relevant public interest factors. The Council will determine whether to pursue this on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.6 The Council also has the power to impose Civil Financial Penalties explained in detail in the proposed policy on p.11. Reasons include:
- Unlawful eviction and harassment of occupiers
 - Failure to comply with an improvement notice
 - Offences in relation to licensing of HMOs
 - Failure to comply with an Overcrowding Notice
 - Failure to give a tenant written tenant information as required under the Renters Rights Act
 - Attempting to let a property for a fixed term
 - Discrimination towards tenants in seeking a re-let of a property
 - Marketing a letting without stating the proposed rent or accepting an offer of rent that exceeds the stated rent advertised
- 5.7 A rent repayment order may also be issued alongside a civil financial penalty in certain circumstances.
- 5.8 If a person is convicted of one or more offences, a Banning Order may be issued in serious cases. The Council will consider relevant factors such as the harm caused to the tenant.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 6.1 The option to not create a fresh Enforcement Policy was considered and rejected. To exercise a regulatory enforcement function without an up-to-date enforcement policy that explicitly covers the new legislative remits introduced by the Renter's Right Act was not considered a viable option for the following reasons:
- The need for clear guidance for staff to ensure a legally robust, fair and consistent approach is required.
 - Published standards for landlords is vital to set expectations and act as a deterrent to non-compliance.
 - Published standards will support tenants seeking redress.

7. **KEY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 **Legal Issues – relevant legal power**

The proposed enforcement policy provides a framework for exercising the Councils duty under S3 Housing Act 2004 to keep housing conditions in their district under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken by them.

S107 Renters' Rights Act 2025 imposes a duty on the Council to enforce the Landlord Legislation. The Landlord Legislation is comprised of the following:

- Chapters 3 and 6 of Part 1 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025,
- Part 2 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025,
- Sections 1 and 1A of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977, and
- Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Housing Act 1988.

S110 Renters' Rights Act 2025 imposes a duty on the Council to report to the Secretary of State on the exercise of its functions under the Landlord Legislation

As a public body under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Council will apply the principles of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

7.2 **Policy Issues**

Currently the Housing Regulatory Compliance Civil Penalty Policy May 2025 covers civil penalties under the Housing Act 2004, the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 with additional provisions in 2007, Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020.

An updated enforcement policy is required to fully reflect new legislation and facilitate implementation of the New Renter's Right Act 2025.

The new proposed enforcement policy for Renters Rights particularly supports the following priorities and objectives of the Corporate Plan (<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/files/corporate-plan-report-2024-25-2027-28-designed.pdf/download?inline>):

- Supporting Individuals and Families, many of whom are vulnerable households needing housing support,
- Promote Health and Wellbeing by raising property standards and addressing housing hazards,

[Our Housing Strategy \(2021-2026\)](#) sets out the Council's intent to ensure that it makes the best use of existing housing to meet the needs of those in the Borough and support vulnerable households access housing that meets their needs.

Fundamentally, good quality, safe homes are a key building block of life as set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2027 ([Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)). The proposed enforcement policy will support enhancement of residents housing condition, affordability and tenancy stability supporting overall health and wellbeing across the Borough.

7.3 Resource Issues

Publication of the proposed policy can be delivered within existing resources. Implementation of the proposed policy, to investigate and enforce complaints of landlord non-compliance will be a function of the current Regulatory Housing Team within the Housing, Homelessness and Customer Service Department. Additional environmental health officer and enforcement officer resource was recently approved following a business case and is supported by New Burden's grant funding.

Where the Council has incurred costs in a case, where the legislation allows, the Council will seek to recover reasonable costs and expenses through routes such as civil action, local land charges or enforcement against the property. Where permitted interest may be applied to outstanding sums until paid.

An effective and robust approach to enforcement, including issuing civil financial penalties may reasonably be expected to drive an income stream for the Council whilst raising standards in the private sector.

7.4 Risks

If an up-to-date policy is not published in respect of the new Renters Rights 2025 legislation the following risks will apply:

- Lack of clarity for officers may lead to inconsistencies in approach and decision making may be less legally robust.
- Not publishing a clear policy as to how enforcement will be carried out may result in complaints from landlords and disputed actions.
- Weaker actions before a court without a policy to refer to.
- Tenants may not be aware of how the Council is able to support them in resolving matters with their landlords.
- Failure to effectively raise property standards in the private sector.

7.5 Environmental Implications

The Council is committed to reducing its carbon footprint in all its efforts. Raising property standards in the sector will include addressing poor energy efficiency such as sub-standard heating, faulty boilers, insulation, broken windows. The proposed policy therefore will have a positive impact on environmental concerns.

7.6 Equalities Impact

There has been consideration of the Council's public sector equality duty under the Equalities Act 2010 in the preparation of the proposed enforcement policy.

The proposed policy implements the Borough's duties introduced through the Renter's Rights Act 2025. The equalities impact assessment for the bill highlights how the new legislation will not discriminate by protected characteristics and will advance equalities overall. The assessment was conducted by MHCLG [Renters' Rights Bill Impact Assessment](#)

It states "The policy objective is to deliver a fairer, more secure and high quality PRS. As a result of reforms:

- a. All tenants should have access to a decent, safe and secure home.
- b. All tenants should feel that they can treat their house like a home and be empowered to challenge poor practice such as rental bidding and unfair rent increases.
- c. All landlords should have information on how to comply with their responsibilities and be able to repossess their properties when appropriate.
- d. Both landlords and tenants should be supported by a system that enables effective resolution of issues.
- e. Local councils should have strong and effective enforcement tools to crack down on poor practice.

7.7 Impact on Families

The proposed policy will have a positive impact on families in the Borough who are renting in the private sector, enforcing their Renter's Rights, from a stable tenancy agreement, protection from eviction and affordable rents whilst ensuring the condition of their home meets expected standards.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

Community safety outcomes are typically improved alongside improved housing conditions. This policy supports stability in communities through protection from eviction and will tackle rogue landlord harassment behaviours.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

Improved property standards have a directly positive impact on health and wellbeing for families and so this proposed policy will support local residents and their families to thrive.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity, Planning, Housing & Regulatory Services
Interim Strategic Director for Environment
Head of Housing, Homelessness & Customer Contact
Manager for Housing Options
Manager for Regulatory Housing and Gypsy and Traveller Services
Head of Legal Services
Service Director for Finance

9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

9.1 Not applicable

10. CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

Report Contact Officer:	<i>Anna Robbani: Head of Housing, Homelessness and Customer Services</i>
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	<i>None</i>
File Reference:	<i>RRA_Enf_Pol_2026</i>
Previous Relevant Minutes:	<i>N/A</i>
Background Papers:	<i>N/A</i>
Appendices:	<i>Appendix A – Renters Rights Act Enforcement Policy</i>



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Renters' Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy

May 2026



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Introduction

This policy sets out the Council's principles for enforcing and executing its duties as a Housing Authority under the relevant statute.

S3 Housing Act 2004 imposes a duty on Councils to keep housing conditions in their district under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken by them.

S107 Renters' Rights Act 2025 imposes a duty on the Council to enforce the Landlord Legislation. The Landlord Legislation is comprised of the following:

- Chapters 3 and 6 of Part 1 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025,
- Part 2 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025,
- Sections 1 and 1A of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977, and
- Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Housing Act 1988.

S110 Renters' Rights Act 2025 imposes a duty on the Council to report to the Secretary of State on the exercise of its functions under the Landlord Legislation.

In this policy, the term 'landlord' should be read as including letting agents, managing agents, licensors, property owners, directors of corporate landlords and any other person involved in the letting or management of privately rented accommodation.

In this policy, the terms 'House of Multiple Occupation' or 'HMO' are defined by the Housing Act 2004.

Aims of the Policy

The purpose of this enforcement policy is to provide guidance for Housing Authority officers to ensure enforcement action is taken in line with the provisions of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 and mandatory guidance to local authorities.

The Act and the 'Landlord Legislation' (as defined by S107) sit outside of the Regulators' Code, and its provisions do not apply.

Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 is also outside of the code's scope.

Notwithstanding this, the following legislation and its enforcement does come within the Legislative and Regulatory Reform (Regulatory Functions) Order 2007 and is therefore within the scope of the Regulators Code and the principles of good regulation:

- Parts 8, 9 and 10 of the Housing Act 1985
- Part 8 of the Housing Act 1996
- Parts 2 to 5 of the Housing Act 2004

This policy document sets out what owners, landlords, their agents or any other person involved in the letting or management of privately rented accommodation, and tenants of private rented sector properties, can expect from officers when dealing with non-compliance.

All enforcement actions taken will be in accordance with relevant statutory Codes of Practice, Council procedures and protocols, and official guidance from central and local government bodies.

As a public body under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Council will apply the principles of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Approach to Enforcement

The Council wants to support responsible landlords to raise housing standards. However, the Council expects landlords to have a good understanding of the housing standards and management issues that should be met in privately rented accommodation.

S5 Housing Act 2004 places a duty on Councils to take appropriate enforcement action where a Category 1 hazard exists.

S7 Housing Act 2004 gives Councils a discretionary duty to act where a Category 2 hazard exists.

In addition, Council officers will often investigate and identify the need to take enforcement action through a range of routes, including (but not limited to): proactive inspections of dwellings through licensing provisions; in response to a complaint or request for assistance; and referrals from other public bodies. All investigations will be carried out in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements. The Council will ensure that appropriate governance is in place to ensure that action is taken in accordance with appropriate policies.

The Council may commence enforcement with formal action instead of informal action in the first instance. In deciding whether to do so, the circumstances of the case will be considered.

Relevant factors may include, but are not limited to:

- Where there is a risk to public health.
- Where there is a blatant or deliberate contravention of the law.
- Where there is history of non-compliance.

The Council will usually take formal action in the first instance if there has been:

- Non-compliance with previous formal or informal action.
- Offences in relation to the licensing of HMOs.

Investigatory Powers

In addition to the Council's informal and formal powers of enforcement, there are investigatory powers relating to the collection of information and relating to the entry of premises including, but not limited to, the powers detailed below.

Power to Investigate

S114 Renters' Rights Act 2025 gives the Council power to issue a notice to a relevant person to require the person to provide specified information to the Council.

This notice may be given to any person with an estate or interest in the land; the licensor; their agents; or a marketer of a property. It may be given regarding any offence under the following Legislation:

- Sections 1 and 1A of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977;
- Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Housing Act 1988;
- Section 83(1) or 84(1) of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013;
- Sections 21 to 23 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016;
- Chapter 3 of Part 1 and Part 2 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025.

Failure to comply with a s114 notice is an offence under s131 Renters' Rights Act 2025, as is being obstructive and intentionally or recklessly making false or misleading statements in response to a s.113 notice.

S115 Renters' Rights Act 2025 permits the Council when it reasonably suspects a breach of the Rented Accommodation Legislation to issue a notice to any person requiring them to provide the information specified. This may only be done to investigate whether a breach has occurred under the Rented Accommodation Legislation, or to determine the amount of a penalty. For the purposes of this section, the Rented Accommodation Legislation means:

- Sections 1 and 1A of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977;
- Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Housing Act 1988;
- Parts 1 to 4 and 7 of the Housing Act 2004 ;
- Section 83(1) or 84(1) of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013;
- Sections 21 to 23 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016;
- Chapter 3 of Part 1 and Part 2 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025.

Where an individual has not complied with a s115 notice, s116 Renters' Rights Act 2025 enables the Council to make an application to the Court to enforce the provisions of the notice and seek reimbursement for the costs of the application.

S131 Renters' Rights Act provides that, in addition to the offence of non-compliance with a s114 notice, it is an offence for an individual to obstruct a Council officer seeking to exercise their powers without reasonable excuse. It is also an offence to fail to give an officer any additional assistance or information which they reasonably require without reasonable excuse.

S235 Housing Act 2004 allows the Council to issue a notice to relevant individuals, including occupiers, directing them to provide specified documents under their control for the purpose of investigating whether an offence has been committed under Parts 1 to 4 of the Housing Act 2004 or exercising the Council's functions under Parts 1 to 4 of the Housing Act 2004.

S16 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 also permits the Council to issue a notice to an occupier, manager, or individual with an interest in the land to compel them to provide the Council with information on the nature of their interest and the names and addresses of current occupiers and of any others with an interest in the land.

Entry to Premises

S118 Renters' Rights Act 2025 permits Council officers to enter business premises of relevant people (including landlords, letting agents, and marketers) if it is necessary for the production or seizure of documents under s122-s123 Renters' Rights Act 2025. This power will be exercised without a warrant.

S121 Renters' Rights Act 2025 allows a Council officer named in a warrant to enter premises used for a rental business which is not mainly accommodation if there are documents on the premises which the officer could require under s122 or seize under s123. In addition, for this power to be exercised, one of the following conditions must be met:

- That access to the premises has been or is likely to be refused, and the Council has provided notice of their intention to apply for a warrant to the occupier.
- Those documents on the premises would likely be concealed or interfered with if notice of entry were to be given;
- That no occupier is present, and waiting for their return might defeat the purpose of the entry.

Following a s118 or s121 Renters' Rights Act 2025 entry, s122 allows an officer at any reasonable time to require a relevant person on the premises to produce any documents relating to the business and to take copies of them. This may only be exercised to ascertain whether there has been a breach of the Rented Accommodation Legislation where an officer reasonably suspects there has been a breach or an offence; or to ascertain whether the documents may be required in evidence for proceedings regarding a breach or offence.

Following a s118 or s121 Renters' Rights Act 2025 entry, s123 authorises Council officers to seize and detain documents that the officer reasonably suspects may be required as evidence in proceedings relating to a breach of, or an offence under, the Rented Accommodation Legislation. When doing so, the officer will provide evidence of the officer's identity and authority if reasonably practicable. The officer will take reasonable steps to inform the person from whom documents have been seized that they have been seized and will provide that person with a written record of what has been taken.

S126 Renters' Rights Act 2025 permits the Council to enter residential premises used for a tenancy at a reasonable time if the officer considers it necessary as part of an investigation into potential offences specified in subsection 1(b). Where required, the Council will give at least 24 hours' notice of this to the occupier and individuals with an interest in the property as per subsection 1(c), detailing in writing why the entry is necessary and the suspected offences. Where there are occupiers found on the premises, the officer will provide evidence of the officer's identity and authority to at least one of the occupiers if reasonably practicable.

In addition, s239 Housing Act 2004 permits Council officers to enter, if necessary and at a reasonable time, a property to carry out a survey or examination. This may be done if any one of the following is met:

- To determine if any Part 1-4 enforcement functions should be exercised.
- The premises are part of an Improvement Notice or Prohibition Order;
- A management order is in force under Chapter 1 or 2 of Part 4 on the premises.

In certain circumstance the Council may obtain a warrant to enter, by force, if necessary, under s240 Housing Act 2004.

Informal Action

Informal action taken by the Council may be written or verbal advice. Additionally, a visit may be made at the outset by Council Officers in cases where the initial complaint or contact indicates that an immediate investigation by a Council officer is warranted.

In cases where officers visit an address, whether this is a result of a landlord's failure to adequately resolve a highlighted issue or as part of an audit or other investigation, written or verbal advice may be deemed sufficient should the inspection highlight only very minor deficiencies.

Where written advice is deemed appropriate by the Council and is provided, timescales will normally be included to undertake any specified work or actions.

While the Council will use its discretion on whether to carry out informal action for a Category 2 hazard, it does not need to provide written or verbal advice before commencing formal action.

Formal Action

If formal action is considered appropriate, the following options are available to the Council.

Housing Act 2004 Part 1

- Issue an Improvement Notice in respect of any Category 1 hazards and any Category 2 hazards on the property. This requires the person to whom it is served to undertake the remedial action specified on the Notice within a given timeframe. The mandated work and the timeframe will be determined by the Council depending on the nature and scale of the work.
- Issue a Prohibition Order in respect of any Category 1 hazards and any Category 2 hazards on the property. This prevents occupation of whole or part of the property, or can be used to limit occupant numbers, within a specified time frame.
- Issue a Hazard Awareness Notice in respect of any Category 1 hazards and any Category 2 hazards on the property. This makes the owner and occupiers aware of the hazards identified; however, it does not require remedial action. As a result, and because it does not secure risk-reducing works within a specified timeframe, a Hazard Awareness Notice will not usually be the most appropriate course of action where remedial works are necessary to reduce the risk of harm to occupiers or potential occupiers.
- Make an Emergency Prohibition Order. This immediately prohibits the use of all or part of a dwelling if there is an imminent risk of serious harm to the health or safety of the occupants or others.
- Where there is a Category 1 hazard present, S40 Housing Act 2004 allows the Council to undertake Emergency Remedial Action on the Category 1 hazard without prior notice.
- The Council also has the power to suspend action taken under Part 1 Housing Act 2004 in situations where it has the power or duty to take enforcement action through the service of an Improvement Notice or Prohibition Order. This will be at the Council's discretion and will normally be considered for the purpose of minimising inconvenience to the current occupiers.
- Demolition and Clearance are options for both Category 1 or Category 2 hazards.
- S30 Housing Act 2004 provides that failure to comply with a Improvement Notice is a criminal offence, which will normally be followed by prosecution or the issuing of a civil penalty.
- S32 Housing Act 2004 provides that failure to comply with a Prohibition Order is a criminal offence, which will normally be followed by prosecution.
- Other formal notices served by the Council may not relate to the landlord undertaking remedial works but may cover a range of other matters including, but not limited to, exercising a right of entry under s.239 of the Housing Act 2004 and a request to provide information or the need to abate or avoid overcrowding.

Work in Default

The enforcement options for non-compliance with formal Notices or breach of license conditions include the carrying out of works specified in the Notice. This power may be exercised in addition to other enforcement proceedings taken for non-compliance. The Council has no duty to undertake works in default and it will be at its discretion.

Emergency or Suspended Enforcement Action

Where there is a Category 1 hazard present, s43 Housing Act 2004 permits the Council to issue an Emergency Prohibition Order. This immediately prohibits the use of all or part of a dwelling if there is an imminent risk of serious harm to the health or safety of the occupants or others.

S40 Housing Act 2004 allows the Council to undertake Emergency Remedial Action on the Category 1 hazard without prior notice. The Council may then seek reimbursement of costs incurred on the work and the administration of the scheme.

The Council also has the power to suspend action taken under Part 1 Housing Act 2004 in situations where it has the power or duty to take enforcement action through the service of an Improvement Notice or Prohibition Order. This will be at the Council's discretion and will normally be considered for the purpose of minimising inconvenience to the current occupiers.

HMO License Conditions

Conditions can be added to HMO licenses to require work to meet specified standards or to address HMO Management Regulation requirements. In general, authorities should seek to identify, remove or reduce category 1 or category 2 hazards in the house by the exercise of Part 1 functions and not by means of license conditions however this does not prevent the authority from imposing license conditions relating to the installation or maintenance of facilities or equipment even if the same result could be achieved by the exercise of Part 1 functions; Failure to comply with these conditions is a criminal offence, which may result in prosecution or the issuing of a civil penalty.

Other Legislative Alternatives

There may be other legislative alternatives available to remedy deficiencies that cause Category 2 hazards which the authority may choose as a more appropriate enforcement approach.

Prosecution

Where a Civil Financial Penalty is an available alternative to prosecution, the Council will only consider using its power to prosecute under Part 1 Housing Act 2004 in more serious cases.

The decision to prosecute will be determined by the evidential strength of the Council's case and the relevant public interest factors set down by the Director of Public Prosecutions in the Code for Crown Prosecutors.

In many circumstances, where an offence is committed by a body corporate, legislation enables local authorities to pursue persons involved with the body corporate in addition to, or instead of, the body corporate. These include company officers and, where applicable, company members.

The Council will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether to take enforcement action against any person or persons that they consider fall within the scope of this category in addition to prosecuting the body corporate.

Civil Financial Penalties for Specified Offences

This section relates exclusively to Civil Financial Penalties issued by the Council for breaches of the housing law below.

The Council has the power to impose a Civil Financial Penalty for the following:

- Unlawful eviction and harassment of occupiers as defined under the Protection from Eviction Act 1997.
- Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice [s30 Housing Act 2004].
- Offences in relation to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) [s72 Housing Act 2004].
- Offences in relation to the Selective Licensing of 'houses' [s95 Housing Act 2004].
- Failure to comply with an Overcrowding Notice [s139 Housing Act 2004].
- Failure to comply with a management regulation in respect of an HMO [s234 Housing Act 2004].
- Offences in relation to Regulation 3 of the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020.
- Failure to comply with a banning order [s21 Housing and Planning Act 2016].
- Failure to give a written statement of terms under section 16D of the Housing Act 1988.
- Failure to give an existing tenant information about changes made by the Renters' Rights Act under paragraph 7(2) of schedule 6 to the Renters' Rights Act 2025.
- Attempting to let a property for a fixed term under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988.
- Attempting to end a tenancy orally or by service of a notice to quit under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988.
- Serving an eviction notice that attempts to end a tenancy outside the prescribed section 8 process under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988.
- Relying on a ground where the person does not reasonably believe that the landlord is/will be able to obtain possession under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988.
- Relying on a ground knowing the landlord would not be able to obtain possession or being reckless as to whether they would under section 16J of the Housing Act 1988.
- Failing to provide a tenant with prior notice that a ground which requires it may be used under section 16E of the Housing Act 1988.
- Reletting or remarketing a property before expiry of the 12 month no-let period after using the moving and selling grounds under sections 16E and 16J of the Housing Act 1988.
- Discriminating against prospective tenants during the letting process on the grounds that those tenants are in receipt of benefits or have children under sections 33 and 34 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025.
- Marketing a letting without stating the proposed rent under section 56 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025.
- Inviting or encouraging any person to offer to pay an amount of rent under the proposed letting that exceeds the stated rent under section 56 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025.
- Accepting an offer from any person to pay an amount of rent under the proposed letting that exceeds the stated rent under section 56 of the Renters' Rights Act 2025.

Civil Financial Penalties in respect of these offences operate according to their own independent standalone policy.

Rent Repayment Orders

Part 2 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 permits the Council to seek a Rent Repayment Order at the First Tier Tribunal Property Chamber to require the landlord of the property where the offence(s) has been committed to refund rent to the tenants or the Council. S48 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 places a duty on the Council to consider applying for Rent Repayment Orders.

Where a landlord has been convicted or received a Civil Financial Penalty in respect of the offence, the Tribunal must award the maximum applicable amount, except in exceptional circumstances.

This power will be considered in response to all qualifying offences and where there is sufficient evidence for successful application to the First Tier Tribunal.

The qualifying offences are:

- Unlawful eviction and harassment of occupiers as defined under the Protection from Eviction Act 1997.
- Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice [s30 Housing Act 2004].
- Offences in relation to unlicensed HMOs [s72(1) Housing Act 2004].
- Offences in relation to unlicensed houses [s95(1) Housing Act 2004].
- Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice [s30(1) Housing Act 2004].
- Failure to comply with a Prohibition Order [s32(1) Housing Act 2004].
- Breach of a Banning Order [s21 Housing and Planning Act 2016].
- Using Violence to secure entry [s6(1) Criminal Law Act 1977].
- Knowingly or recklessly misusing a possession ground [s16J(1) Housing Act 1988].
- Letting or marketing of a property within twelve months of using the 'moving in' or 'selling' ground of eviction [s16J(2) Housing Act 1988].
- Continuous breach of certain tenancy reform requirements [s16J(3) Housing Act 1988].

An application for an RRO may be in addition to other formal action, such as prosecution proceedings or the imposition of a Civil Penalty. Where the Council has issued a Civil Financial Penalty or pursued prosecution, it will usually apply for a Rent Repayment Order where public funds have been paid to a landlord who has committed a qualifying offence.

S49 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 enables the Council to assist tenants in applying for Rent Repayment Orders. The Council will usually assist tenants by referring or signposting them to a relevant organisation.

Banning Orders

Part 2, Chapter 2 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 permits a Council to apply for a Banning Order against a person who has been convicted of one or more of the relevant offences. This would prevent the landlord from:

- Letting housing in England.
- Engaging in English letting agency work.
- Engaging in English property management work; or
- Doing two or more of those things.

The Council may consider a Banning Order for the more serious offenders. It will consider the seriousness of the offence(s), whether the landlord has committed other offences (or received any Civil Penalty in relation to a Banning Order offence) and any history of failing to comply with their obligations or legal responsibilities. It will also consider other relevant factors, including but not limited to:

- The harm, or potential harm, caused to the tenant.
- The need to punish the offender.
- The need to deter the offender from repeating the offence.
- The need to deter others from committing similar offences.

Costs and Charges

The Council incurs costs in carrying out its functions. Where legislation allows, the Council will seek to recover reasonable costs and expenses associated with its enforcement, licensing and wider regulatory activity. This may include (non-exhaustively) costs arising from inspections, investigation, evidence gathering, notices and other statutory documentation, follow-up action, compliance monitoring, and works or other interventions.

Recovery may be pursued using all available lawful routes, which may include civil action, local land charges, and enforcement against the property.

Where permitted, interest may be applied to outstanding sums until paid.

Complaints

Contact may be made with the Council about any matters listed here by email at ehadmin@bedford.gov.uk or by post at:

Bedford Borough Council
Borough Hall
Cauldwell Street
Bedford
MK42 9AP

Tel No: 01234 718099

A service user can still make a complaint in cases where the Council has instigated legal proceedings. However, making a complaint will not stop any impending legal action.

Where statutory notices have been served, making a complaint does not replace the statutory rights of appeal or the right to make representations. It also does not allow extra time to comply with any notice or order.

If a service user disagrees with a statutory notice, they should act as specified in the notice or order to make an appeal, if any exists. Reference should be made to any notes that may accompany the notice or order for more detail.

Appendix 1

Statement of principles to determine the amount of a penalty charge under Part 4 of The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 as amended by The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 (“the Regulations”)

Section 13 of the Regulations requires local housing authorities to prepare and publish a statement of principles which they propose to follow in determining the amount of a penalty charge.

The Regulations introduced legal requirements on relevant landlords to:

1. Equip a smoke alarm on each storey of the premises on which there is a room used wholly or partly as living accommodation.
2. During any period when the premises were occupied under the tenancy, to ensure that a carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room of the premises which is used wholly or partly as living accommodation and which contains fixed combustion appliance other than a gas cooker.
3. Carry out checks by or on behalf of the landlord to ensure that each prescribed alarm is in proper working order on the day the tenancy begins if it is a new tenancy.
4. Where, following a report made on or after 1st October 2022 by a tenant or by their nominated representative to the landlord, a prescribed alarm is found not to be in proper working order, the alarm is repaired or replaced.

For the purposes of the legislation, living accommodation includes a bathroom or lavatory.

Where the Council believe that a landlord is in breach of one or more of the above duties, the Council must serve a remedial notice on the landlord. The remedial notice is a notice served under Regulation 5 of the Regulations.

If the landlord then fails to take the remedial action specified in the notice within the specified timescale, the Council can require a landlord to pay a penalty charge and can arrange for remedial action to be taken under certain circumstances. The power to charge a penalty arises from Regulation 8 of the Regulations. Failure to comply with each remedial notice can lead to a fine of up to £5,000. Fines will be applied per breach, rather than per landlord or property.

The Council will impose a penalty charge where it is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the landlord has not complied with the action specified in the remedial notice within the required timescale.

A landlord will not be considered to be in breach of their duty to comply with the remedial notice if they can demonstrate they have taken all reasonable steps to comply. Where there is evidence, including written correspondence, of repeated and consistent efforts to obtain access to the property, with access repeatedly being prevented by the occupant(s) of the property, a landlord will not be considered to be in breach of their duty to comply with the remedial notice.

A landlord will be expected to have:

- Communicated the risk of harm that the lack of functioning alarms posed to all occupants in writing on multiple occasions.
- Requested access to comply with the remedial notice on a regular basis of no longer than every seven days in writing.

In considering the imposition of a penalty, the Council may look at the evidence concerning the breach of the requirement of the notice. A non-exhaustive list of methods that may be used to obtain relevant evidence includes, but is not limited to:

- Evidence obtained from a property inspection.
- Evidence provided by the tenant or agent.
- Evidence provided by the landlord demonstrating compliance with the Regulations by supplying dated photographs of alarms, together with installation records.
- That all detector heads have not passed their expiration or replacement date.

Landlords need to take steps to demonstrate that they have met the testing requirements at the start of the tenancy requirements. A non-exhaustive list of methods that may be used to evidence compliance with these testing requirements includes, but is not limited to:

- Tenants signing an inventory form which states that they observed the alarms being tested and confirming that the alarms were in working order at the start of the tenancy.

Where a landlord is in breach, the local housing authority may serve a remedial notice. Failure to comply with each remedial notice can lead to a fine of up to £5,000. Fines will be applied per breach, rather than per landlord or property

When determining the amount of the penalty charge, regard will be had to whether this is a first breach under the Regulations.

Determining the amount of the penalty charge for a first breach

The minimum amount of a penalty charge for a first breach of the Regulations will be £2500. Only in exceptional circumstances may the Council depart from the application of this statement of principles and issue a penalty charge for less than £2500. Exceptional circumstances are rare and unusual and are not established merely by the presence of multiple mitigating factors

The starting level of a penalty charge for a first breach of the Regulations will be £3000. The penalty charge amount will then be varied depending on aggravating and mitigating factors.

Aggravating factors include, but are not limited to:

- The number of alarms not working or missing (the Regulations state there should be one per storey).
- Other fire safety concerns/defects in the property which increase the risk posed to the occupants.
- The length of time the offence is believed to have been on-going.
- The frequency of complaints by the occupiers to the landlord about the non-working or missing alarms.
- The costs of any remedial work the Council have carried out in response to the breach.
- Whether the property is let as a HMO (which increases the overall risk).
- The number of occupants living in the property.
- Presence of vulnerable occupiers such as elderly, children or disabled people.
- Any history of previous enforcement or non-compliance of the landlord.
- Attempts to obstruct the investigation.

Mitigating factors include, but are not limited to:

- The property being small and low-risk (for example a one-bedroom ground floor flat with a large number of fire escapes including large windows).
- A single occupant living in the property.
- Evidence that all required alarms were checked and in working order at the start of the tenancy.
- Written evidence that some efforts to gain access and comply with the remedial notice were made and access was prevented by the occupant.

Determining the amount of the penalty charge for a subsequent breach

The penalty for subsequent breaches by the same landlord will be £5000. Only in exceptional circumstances may the Council depart from the application of this statement of principles and issue a penalty charge for less than £5000. Exceptional circumstances are rare and unusual and are not established merely by the presence of multiple mitigating factors.

Appendix 2

Statement of principles to determine the amount of a penalty charge for a breach of minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) with respect to domestic privately rented property

The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 (“the Regulations”) make it unlawful to rent out a domestic property if it has an EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) rating of F or G (unless a valid exemption has been registered on the PRS Exemptions register).

The Regulations make it unlawful to fail to comply with a compliance notice served by the Council.

The Regulations cover all relevant properties, even where there has been no change of tenancy.

The Regulations were introduced to improve the energy efficiency of housing in the private rented sector and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and tackle climate change. They should help make tenants' homes more thermally efficient.

An energy performance certificate (EPC) gives the property an energy efficiency rating – A rated properties are the most energy efficient and G rated are the least efficient. It's valid for 10 years and must be provided by the owner of a property, when it is rented or sold.

If you are a landlord and you fail, when requested, to provide an EPC for the start of a tenancy, you will be in breach of the Regulations.

An EPC contains information about the type of heating system and typical energy costs. It also gives recommendations about how the energy use could be reduced, lowering running costs. You can find the recommended energy efficiency improvements on the current EPC.

If you're a private landlord, you must either:

- Ensure your rented properties have an EPC with a minimum 'E' rating.
- Register a valid PRS exemption on the PRS exemptions register.

Failure to do either of these is a breach of the Regulations.

The Council investigates any potential breaches of the regulations. If the Council is satisfied that you are or have at any time in the 18 months preceding the date of service of the penalty notice, breached the Regulations, you may be subject to a penalty notice imposing a financial penalty. The Council may also impose a publication penalty.

The “publication penalty” means publication, for a minimum period of 12 months, or such longer period as the Council may decide, on the PRS Exemptions Register of such of the following information in relation to a penalty notice as the Council decides:

- Where the landlord is not an individual, the landlord’s name.
- Details of the breach of these Regulations in respect of which the penalty notice has been issued.
- The address of the property in relation to which the breach has occurred, and
- The amount of any financial penalty imposed.

The Council will impose the following financial penalties:

- a. Letting a property with an F or G rating for less than 3 months: £2,000.
- b. Letting a property with an F or G rating for more than 3 months: £4,000.
- c. Registering false or misleading information on the PRS exemptions register: £1,000.
- d. Failing to provide information to the Council demanded by a compliance notice: £2,000.

The Council may not impose a financial penalty under both subsections (a) and (b) above in relation to the same breach of the Regulations. But they may impose a financial penalty under either paragraph (a) or paragraph (b), together with financial penalties under paragraphs (c) and (d), in relation to the same breach. Where penalties are imposed under more than one of these paragraphs, the total amount of the financial penalty may not be more than £5,000.

Finding out more

If you would like further information about us and our services, please telephone, email or write to us at our address below.

Për Informacion

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المعلومات

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Informacja

برای اطلاع

Za Informacje

Per Informazione

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