

# **MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR LETTABLE HOUSING**

## **1 Introduction**

This section sets out the standard that Harrow Council properties will meet when they are let to new tenants.

The intention of these standards is to strike a balance between ensuring that the property is safe, clean and in a reasonable state of repair and the need to return properties to use as quickly as possible to reduce rent loss and to improve the living conditions of the incoming tenant.

The Council will endeavour to undertake all works before the tenant moves into the property, but, where works are not of an urgent nature, the Council may give an undertaking to carry them out after the tenant has moved in. In most cases, a target time for completion will be given.

### **The Basis for the Void Standard**

The Void Standard has been set to meet the needs of Harrow customers and to comply with the latest Building Regulations., but will be subject to annual budget constraints.

## **2 Health and Safety**

The Service Provider will ensure that the condition of the property does not put at risk the health and safety of the future tenant. In particular it will:-

- i. ensure that all gas and electricity supplies and appliances are safe to use. Tenants will be provided with the appropriate certificates when issued with the keys, to confirm that the supplies have been checked by a "competent" office and that they are safe to use;
- ii. ensure that any asbestos present in the property is identified and, where necessary, has been removed in accordance with the required standard. Where asbestos-containing material is left in the property, the Service Provider will ensure that the tenant is advised of its presence and any precautions that need to be taken;
- iii. ensure that the property is free from dampness and any other visible structural defect that affects the safe occupation of the property;
- iv. provide all the new tenants with advice on dealing with, or minimising, condensation.

## **3 Heating, Hot Water and Plumbing**

All systems for heating and supply of hot water will be checked to ensure they are safe and operating correctly.

Where central heating is not fitted, this will be installed in future as part of the Council's improvement programme.

All plumbing will be in good working order with no leaks or blockages.

*All stopcocks will be labelled to identify their purpose.*

A gas safety check will be carried on the gas carcass and gas equipment.

A CP12 certificate will be issued.

All gas heating and hot water equipment will be safe and in good working order.

*A minimum level of 200mm? of loft insulation will be provided.*

## **Electrics**

An electrical safety check will be carried out under NIC IEE regulations.

All unsafe wiring and fittings will be removed and replaced.

All electrical heating and hot water systems will be in good safe working order.

**All sockets and pendants will be clean.**

## **4 Kitchens**

Kitchen units will be operationally sound, in proper working order, clean and fit for use. The number of units will reflect the type and size of the property, work surfaces will be of adequate size and quality including a work surface either side of cooker .. Where replacement units are required, this will be of the same quantities as originally provided.

All sanitary ware, kitchen units and worktops will be thoroughly and chemically cleaned.

Kitchen sinks should be fit for purpose and taps should be securely mounted and fully operational.

Kitchen will have a stainless steel sink unit.

*Missing or broken tiles will be replaced to match existing wherever possible. If this is not possible, defective tiling will be replaced. Ceramic wall tiling will be provided above worktops and behind the cooker space if none existing.*

*Where possible, four double power sockets will be provided above the worktops in addition to a cooker outlet and a socket below.*

Where necessary, worktop joints will be raked-out and replaced with suitable mastic.?

*Where possible, kitchens will have space and adequate provision for a fridge/freezer, a cooker and an automatic washing machine.*

*Where existing layout permits washing machine connection valves and waste outlets will be fitted and in good working order.*

Kitchen floors will be covered with vinyl sheet or tiles.

**NB.** The Council has a kitchen modernisation programme that will result in the upgrading, on a programmed basis, of kitchen over 20 years old. Kitchen units will not be renewed as part of the void process unless this is essential.

Facilities will be provided to enable the connection of either a gas cooker or electric cooker, subject to gas and electric supplies currently being provided to the dwelling.

## **5 Bathrooms and Toilets**

All properties will be provided with a bathroom and toilet with the following facilities (space permitting), which will be clean and free from damage:-

- bath and panel
- toilet and seat
- toilet cistern
- wash-hand basin

The Council will replace missing plugs and chains from baths and wash-hand basins.

All joints around fittings will be sealed with a suitable waterproof mastic.

All broken/missing tiles will be replaced to match existing, where possible. If this is not possible, defective tiling will be replaced.

Walls around the bath will be tiled to a height of three tiles. Where a shower has been installed by the Council, full height tiling will be provided to adjacent walls.

## **6 Windows and Doors**

The Council will:-

- Replace any missing doors;
- Replace all broken and cracked panes of glass;
- Check all windows and doors to ensure that they open and close properly;
- Provide keys for all window locks;*
- Provide two sets of keys for external doors.

*Where door entry systems are fitted, these will be left in good working order.*

*All External doors will have new locks fitted with two keys for each lock. Where appropriate ? define the entrance door will be fitted with a five lever deadlock and night latch.*

All internal doors will be in good repair with handles and latches in working order.

*Windows will be cleaned inside and out.*

All windows and glazing will be in good repair with handles and catches working properly and securely. Glazing will be intact.

Windows are only replaced if they are beyond repair.

Restrictors will be fitted to all windows above the ground floor. Existing ones will be checked to make sure that they work.

Safety glass will be provided to glazing below 800mm high.

**NB.** UPVC window and door renewal will normally only be carried out as part of the Council's Major Works Programme. However, individual "one off" replacements may be required under the Term Maintenance Partnering Contract.

## **7 Floors**

Floors should be level and safe.

Floorboards must be free from rot and securely fixed.

Carpets and other floor coverings will be removed, unless new and requested by tenants when they will be lifted for inspection if necessary and tenant can arrange refitting.

Floors will be thoroughly cleaned.

Floor tiles will be replaced if they are broken or missing.

Properties will be checked and where identified, treatment will be applied to deal with fleas, other pests and woodworm.

## **8 Stairs**

Stairs and balustrades will be checked and repaired to ensure they are safe.

Stairs and staircases will be adequately lit.

## **9 Decoration**

All internal decorations will be checked to ensure that they are ready for redecorating by the tenant without large areas of poor finish or mould growth.

General needs tenants will be offered a "Decoration Allowance" towards the cost of redecoration. Where rooms are in excellent decorative order (that is freshly painted and clean) decoration allowances will not be offered. Decoration allowances are based on a pre-determined scale of costs on a per room basis.

If kitchens and bathrooms in general needs properties are in a very poor condition, they will be redecorated. Other rooms will not normally be redecorated.

In exceptional circumstances e.g. in supported housing properties, where tenants can demonstrate they have special needs or any property where significant repair work makes decorating necessary redecoration will be undertaken by the Council.

*Polystyrene tiles and coving will be removed and the ceilings/walls made good, where necessary.*

Any mould will be treated prior to the property being re-let.

## **10 Cleanliness**

The property will be cleaned as necessary to ensure that:

All ceilings and walls are free from cobwebs, black mould and grease stains;  
All sanitary ware is clean, free from excessive stains and all tiling is free from grease/soap stains or black mould growth;  
All kitchen cupboards are empty and all worktops/cupboards are free from grease including tiled splashbacks.

All other rubbish will be removed including loft clearance?

## **11 Footpaths**

Access paths and steps will be checked for safety. *Footpaths will be repaired where they represent a hazard to residents and visitors.*

## **12 Fences and Gates**

Where boundaries belong to the Council, they will be repaired if necessary to ensure the property is secure, but work will only be undertaken prior to occupation in cases where a safety risk is present.

### **Gardens**

Gardens will not be overgrown. Rubbish will be cleared from gardens.

Ponds will be filled or removed.

Any greenhouses, sheds or lean-tos will be removed. The incoming tenant will be given the option to keep these but will be asked to take on responsibility for the maintenance of the structure. Check with legal

*Major garden tidying is only carried out on sheltered and supported housing, or where the incoming tenants can demonstrate special needs.*

### **Fire safety**

The Council will check that the means of fire escape in flats is adequate.

The property will contain at least one smoke detector. The condition of the detector will be checked and the batteries will be replaced if required.

Any unused gas mains will be capped off.

### **13 Garages**

All garages and outbuildings will be checked and any health and safety issues addressed. Due to current budget constraints general defects will only be recorded.

### **Asbestos**

Any asbestos that is damaged and unsafe will be sealed or removed. For further information see separate policy and information leaflet.