City of
Stoke-on-Trent

TENANCY STRATEGY

2027–2032

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Draft replacement strategy for consultation

Status	Draft
Strategy period	2027–2032
Applies to	The council and registered providers operating in Stoke-on-Trent
Review	Kept under review and updated where legislation, regulation or local need changes materially

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Table of Contents

1. Executive summary 4
2. Purpose and scope 4
3. Strategic context and evidence 4
4. Legal and regulatory framework 5
5. Strategic objectives 6
   1. Provide Safe and Secure Homes 6
   2. Prevent Homelessness 6
   3. Make the Best Use of Our Homes 6
   4. Support Residents Who Need More Help 6
   5. Promote Fairness and Inclusion 6
   6. Listen to Residents 6
   7. Build Strong and Sustainable Communities 6
   8. Meet Our Responsibilities 6
6. Our approach to tenure 6
   6.1 General principles 6
   6.2 Introductory and probationary tenancies 7
   6.3 Lifetime tenancies 7
   6.4 Fixed-term and specialist tenancies 7
   6.5 Mutual exchange and mobility 7
7. Expectations of Registered providers 8
8. Allocations, nominations and making best use of homes 8
9. Tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention 9
   9.1 Affordability and Financial Resilience 9
10. Safe, good-quality homes 10
   10.1 Hazards and Awaab's Law 10
11. Vulnerability, equality and accessibility 11
12. Resident voice, transparency and complaints 11
13. Strong and sustainable communities 11
14. Partnership working 12
15. Governance, assurance and monitoring 12
16. Equality impact and data 13

DRAFT

17. Consultation and review 13
Appendix A: Legislative and regulatory framework..... 13

DRAFT

1. Executive summary

Stoke-on-Trent City Council, as a local housing authority and registered provider of Social Housing, is required to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy.

This Tenancy Strategy sets out the council's strategic approach to social housing tenancies and the matters to which registered providers operating in the city should have regard when developing and reviewing their own tenancy policies. It replaces the previous Tenancy Strategy and is intended to provide a clear, modern framework centered on safe homes, tenancy sustainment, fairness, resident voice and effective use of reducing social housing within Stoke-on-Trent.

The strategy recognises the importance of security and stability. The council's preferred approach is for introductory tenancies to lead to lifetime secure tenancies for council tenants, subject to the statutory framework and successful completion of the introductory period. Registered providers should make tenure decisions that are lawful, transparent, proportionate to the purpose of the accommodation and responsive to household need.

This strategy should be read alongside the council's Allocations Policy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Tenancy Policy and other relevant housing, safeguarding, equality and community strategies.

2. Purpose and scope

Section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 requires each local housing authority in England to prepare and publish a tenancy strategy. The strategy must set out the matters to which registered providers of social housing in the locality are to have regard when formulating tenancy policies, including the kinds of tenancies granted, the circumstances in which different tenancies are granted, the length of fixed terms and the circumstances in which a further tenancy is granted at the end of a fixed term.

This strategy applies to the council in its landlord and strategic housing roles and provides the strategic framework to which registered providers operating within Stoke-on-Trent should have regard when developing and reviewing their tenancy policies. Registered providers remain responsible for their own tenancy policies and for meeting the legal and regulatory duties that apply to them.

The council will reflect this Strategy when exercising its housing management functions and will keep the strategy under review.

3. Strategic context and evidence

Demand for affordable housing, homelessness pressures, household affordability, changing demographics and the need to make best use of existing homes require a coordinated approach across the city. Social housing must provide more than access to accommodation:

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it must support safe and sustainable tenancies, respond to individual needs and contribute to stronger neighbourhoods.

Social landlords are operating within a changing housing environment characterised by increasing financial pressures on households, rising expectations of service quality, and a strengthened regulatory framework for social housing. The council and registered providers must balance the need to make effective use of limited housing stock with the importance of providing security, stability and support for residents.

The council's strategic approach is informed by housing need, homelessness prevention priorities, tenancy management experience, resident feedback, equality considerations and partnership engagement.

The strategy will be kept under review to ensure it remains responsive to legislative, regulatory and local changes and continues to reflect the needs of residents and communities across the city.

4. Legal and regulatory framework

This strategy is framed by the Localism Act 2011 and the wider statutory and regulatory framework governing social housing. Registered providers must comply with all legal duties applying to their housing stock and their tenants. The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards apply to registered social landlords, including local authorities, and establish outcomes covering safety and quality, transparency and accountability, neighbourhoods and communities, and tenancies.

The Tenancy Standard, which forms part of the Consumer Standards framework, requires a fair and transparent allocation and letting of tenancies, support for tenancy sustainment, appropriate tenure, compliance with legal requirements for tenancy agreements, and support for eligible mutual exchanges. It also requires providers to co-operate with the council's strategic housing functions and homelessness duties, address under-occupation and overcrowding, and maintain accessible tenancy-management policies.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 strengthened the consumer regulation framework for social housing by introducing new legislative provisions by what is known as Awaab's Law. This was implemented through the Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025 with Phase 1 having applied since 27 October 2025. The Government has published Phase 2 guidance which is intended to apply from 30 November 2026. The council as a registered provider of Social Housing must maintain arrangements capable of responding to applicable hazard duties and future changes in the law.

Appendix A identifies the principal legislation and regulatory requirements relevant to this strategy. It is not a substitute for legal advice and registered providers must ensure their policies reflect legislation in force at the time decisions are made.

5. Strategic objectives

1. Provide Safe and Secure Homes
Help residents to have safe, secure and suitable homes that meet their needs.

2. Prevent Homelessness
Help residents to maintain their tenancies and provide support early to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

3. Make the Best Use of Our Homes
Make sure homes are allocated fairly and used effectively, helping to address overcrowding and under-occupation.

4. Support Residents Who Need More Help
Make sure our approach recognises individual needs and helps vulnerable residents to live as independently as possible.

5. Promote Fairness and Inclusion
Provide housing services that are accessible, fair and inclusive, and that meet the diverse needs of our communities.

6. Listen to Residents
Give residents opportunities to influence housing services and use their experiences and feedback to make improvements.

7. Build Strong and Sustainable Communities
Support residents' wellbeing, financial resilience and opportunities, helping to create communities where people can thrive.

8. Meet Our Responsibilities
Ensure our approach to tenancies meets legal and regulatory requirements and reflects the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards.

6. Our approach to tenure
For the purposes of this Strategy, "tenure" refers to the type of tenancy granted and the rights, responsibilities and level of security associated with it, including whether the tenancy is periodic, fixed-term, secure, flexible or introductory/probationary.

6.1 General principles
- Tenure should provide appropriate security and stability while enabling homes to be used effectively.
- The tenancy offered should be compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, household needs, community sustainability and efficient use of housing stock.

DRAFT

- Decisions must be fair, transparent and supported by clear published policies.
- Household vulnerability, disability, health, safeguarding risks and support needs must be considered where relevant.
- No household should receive less security than the law permits, and statutory protections must be applied.

6.2 Introductory and probationary tenancies

The council has adopted an introductory tenancy regime and will continue to grant introductory tenancies in accordance with the statutory framework before a secure tenancy is granted. Registered providers using starter or probationary arrangements should clearly explain the duration, tenant rights, review arrangements, standards of conduct expected and the circumstances in which the tenancy may be ended or extended.

6.3 Lifetime tenancies

The council's strategic preference is for lifetime tenancies for mainstream social housing where this is appropriate to the purpose of the accommodation and household circumstances. Security of tenure supports stability, tenancy sustainment and community resilience.

Particular care must be taken where a household is vulnerable or where domestic abuse is relevant. Statutory protections for lifetime social tenants affected by domestic abuse must be reflected in tenancy policies and operational decisions.

6.4 Fixed-term and specialist tenancies

The council's strategic approach is to grant lifetime secure tenancies for general needs social housing. The council does not currently make use of flexible (fixed-term) tenancies but reserves the right to review this approach in the future should legislative, regulatory or local housing circumstances change.

Where a registered provider chooses to use fixed-term tenancies, its policy should provide a clear evidence-based rationale, specify the circumstances in which they will be used, explain the length of the term, and set out the review and appeal arrangements. Fixed terms should not be used routinely where they would undermine the objectives of this strategy.

Before the end of a fixed term, registered providers should undertake a timely, fair and documented review that considers household need, vulnerability, affordability, availability of suitable alternatives, use of the home and relevant tenancy conduct. Where a tenancy will not be renewed, meaningful housing advice and homelessness-prevention assistance should be offered in sufficient time to support a planned move.

6.5 Mutual exchange and mobility

The council and registered providers operating within Stoke-on-Trent should support eligible tenants to access mutual exchange and other appropriate mobility options, providing clear and accessible information about eligibility, consent and any conditions that apply.

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7. Expectations of Registered providers

Registered providers operating in Stoke-on-Trent should ensure their tenancy policies are consistent with applicable law, guidance and initiatives, the Regulator's Standards and the strategic direction in this document. Policies should be published, accessible and kept under review.

- Set out the tenancy types offered and when each will be used.
- Explain any fixed-term tenancy lengths and arrangements for renewal or ending.
- Set out approaches to tenancy sustainment, early intervention and prevention of unnecessary eviction.
- Explain how vulnerability, diverse needs and reasonable adjustments are identified and responded to.
- Provide fair and accessible decision-review or appeal arrangements where required.
- Prevent and tackle tenancy fraud.
- Support eligible mutual exchange.
- Co-operate with the council in meeting local housing need, homelessness duties and nomination arrangements.
- Use accurate information and resident insight to assess whether services produce fair outcomes.

8. Allocations, nominations and making best use of homes

Social housing should be allocated fairly and transparently in accordance with the council's Allocation Scheme, nomination agreements and registered providers' lawful allocation policies. The council expects registered providers to co-operate with the council's strategic housing function and to assist it in meeting identified housing need and its homelessness duties.

To support these objectives and ensure that social housing stock is used effectively, fairly and in a way that responds to local housing need, registered providers are expected to:

- Make effective use of adapted, accessible and specialist homes.
- Develop and deliver approaches to under-occupation and overcrowding that focus on tenants' needs.
- Provide clear information and accessible routes to challenge allocation decisions where applicable.
- Work with the council to maintain effective nomination arrangements and monitor outcomes.
- Take action to prevent and tackle tenancy fraud.
- Not put unreasonable barriers or restrictions in place which exclude fair access to social housing
- Consider incentives and practical support to assist households wishing to downsize where this would make better use of housing stock and meet the needs of the tenant.

DRAFT

9. Tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention

Preventing homelessness and avoiding unnecessary tenancy failure are core objectives of the Council. Registered providers and the Council should intervene early where a tenancy is at risk and use proportionate, person-centred approaches before possession action, while recognising that enforcement may sometimes be necessary. To support these objectives, the council and registered providers should:

- Identify emerging tenancy risks and offer early support.
- Provide accessible advice on rent, benefits, debt, household budgeting and relevant support services, directly or through referral.
- Signpost or refer to local welfare assistance schemes, discretionary financial support, utility affordability programmes and other initiatives designed to help residents maintain their tenancy and manage financial hardship.
- Work with council homelessness services and relevant partners where a tenant is threatened with homelessness.
- Consider vulnerability, disability, safeguarding, domestic abuse and communication needs before making significant tenancy decisions.
- Where a tenancy or licence is being ended, provide affected residents with timely housing advice and assistance.
- Look to make use of own stock where a licence or fixed term tenancy comes to an end where a requirement for rehousing exists and is applicable.

9.1 Affordability and Financial Resilience

The council recognises that financial pressures and changes in household circumstances can affect residents' ability to sustain their tenancies. The council in its capacity as a registered provider and other registered providers should take an early and preventative approach to financial hardship, helping residents to access appropriate advice and support before difficulties escalate.

The council and other registered providers should, where appropriate:

- identify residents who may be experiencing financial difficulty and offer early support;
- provide or facilitate access to welfare benefits, money, budgeting and debt advice;
- support residents to maximise their income and access appropriate financial inclusion services;
- consider affordability and individual circumstances when working with residents experiencing rent arrears;
- ensure residents are aware of relevant support, hardship assistance and referral routes;
- work collaboratively with the council and partner organisations to prevent financial difficulties contributing to tenancy failure or homelessness;

DRAFT

- take account of vulnerability, disability, communication needs and other individual circumstances when providing support; and
- use information about rent arrears, tenancy sustainment and resident needs to identify emerging pressures and improve preventative support.

The aim will be to help residents build financial resilience, maintain their tenancy and reduce the risk of preventable homelessness, while ensuring that approaches to rent collection and tenancy management remain fair, consistent and proportionate.

This addition directly strengthens the response to the survey's questions about cost-of-living pressures, financial hardship, tenancy sustainment and wider wellbeing. It also complements the regulatory requirement for the council and registered providers to support tenants to maintain their tenancy or licence.

10. Safe, good-quality homes

Safe and secure homes are central to sustainable tenancies. The council, in its capacity as a registered Provider of Social Housing, and other registered providers operating within the city must meet applicable health and safety duties and the Regulator's Safety and Quality Standard, including maintaining an accurate understanding of stock condition, meeting decency requirements, delivering effective repairs and taking required health and safety actions within appropriate timescales.

The council and registered providers should recognise the role that energy efficiency and thermal comfort play in supporting tenancy sustainment, resident health and affordability. Where possible, providers should seek to improve the energy performance of homes and support residents experiencing fuel poverty.

10.1 Hazards and Awaab's Law

The council and other registered providers operating within the city must operate clear and accessible arrangements for residents and others to report hazards and repairs, including by telephone, online/digital channels and other accessible routes appropriate to resident needs. Information received through visits, inspections, complaints, contractors, staff or other channels should be acted on where it indicates a potential hazard.

In fulfilling the above social landlords must comply with the requirements of Awaab's Law. Phase 1 has applied since the 27th October 2025 and requires all providers, including the council, to address emergency hazards and significant damp and mould hazards within prescribed timescales. Phase 2 is due to extend the framework from 30 November 2026. The council and all providers of social housing must ensure that their policies, procedures, triage, record keeping, resident communications, contractor arrangements and escalation processes are reviewed and updated to reflect any changes in statutory requirements.

Where a home cannot be made safe within the applicable legal requirements, all providers must apply the duties of suitable alternative accommodation where those duties are engaged.

11. Vulnerability, equality and accessibility

Housing services and tenancy decisions must be fair, inclusive and accessible. The council and all registered providers should understand the diverse needs of their tenants and prospective tenants, including any protected characteristics, language barriers and additional support needs, and use that understanding to identify and address unequal outcomes.

To support fair access to housing services and promote positive outcomes for all residents, the council and registered providers should

- Provide information in formats and through channels suited to residents' needs.
- Make reasonable adjustments where required.
- Allow residents to use representatives or advocates where appropriate.
- Record relevant needs accurately and use the information to inform service delivery, subject to data-protection requirements.
- Consider safeguarding and domestic abuse risks and work with relevant agencies.
- Monitor outcomes to identify and address potential disadvantage or discrimination.
- Consider use of own resources where adaptations are required.

12. Resident voice, transparency and complaints

Residents should have meaningful opportunities to influence housing services and scrutinise performance. The council and other registered providers should demonstrate how residents have informed decisions and improvements, communicate clearly about services and standards, and provide appropriate performance information.

Complaints must be handled fairly, effectively and promptly in accordance with applicable regulatory and Housing Ombudsman requirements. Learning from complaints, tenant feedback, satisfaction information and scrutiny should be used to improve tenancy and landlord services.

13. Strong and sustainable communities

The council expects tenancy management to contribute to neighbourhoods in which residents can live safely and thrive. All providers of housing should work collaboratively with residents, the Council and partner agencies on neighbourhood safety, anti-social behaviour, hate incidents, domestic abuse and wider social, environmental and economic wellbeing.

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All providers are encouraged to connect residents with opportunities that strengthen financial resilience, digital inclusion, skills, employment, health and wellbeing where this is appropriate to their role and local partnerships.

14. Partnership working

Effective delivery of housing services depends on collaboration between the council, registered providers, health and care services, police and community-safety partners, voluntary and community organisations, support providers and residents. The council will use strategic housing relationships and nomination arrangements to promote shared understanding of local need and coordinated responses.

15. Governance, assurance and monitoring

The council will work with registered providers to monitor key tenancy outcomes, including tenancy sustainment, evictions, homelessness prevention activity, use of fixed-term tenancies, management of overcrowding and under-occupation, and compliance with relevant regulatory requirements. Where appropriate, outcome information will be reviewed through the city's registered providers Forum to support transparency, accountability and continuous improvement.

The council will monitor delivery of this Strategy through existing strategic housing and landlord governance arrangements and will use available evidence to identify where action or partnership working is needed. Monitoring should focus on outcomes rather than activity alone. In particular, the council will have regard to:

- Tenancy sustainment and tenancy endings.
- Homelessness prevention and referrals.
- Allocations, nominations, overcrowding and under-occupation.
- Use of adapted and specialist housing.
- Resident safety and property-condition intelligence.
- Resident feedback, complaints and satisfaction.
- Equality, accessibility and outcomes for residents with additional needs.
- Provider compliance and emerging legal or regulatory change relevant to tenancy strategy.

Registered providers should be able to explain how their tenancy policies have had regard to this strategy and provide relevant evidence through strategic partnership arrangements where reasonably requested.

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16. Equality impact and data

The council will have due regard to its obligations under its Public Sector Equality Duty when implementing and reviewing this Strategy. Decision-making will be supported by proportionate data and analysis so that any impact on different groups can be understood and mitigated. A formal Equality Impact Assessment will accompany the strategy through the council's approval process.

17. Consultation and review

In preparing or making a major modification to this strategy, the council will comply the consultation requirements in section 151 of the Localism Act 2011, including consultation with private registered providers operating in the area and such other persons as the council considers appropriate.

The strategy will be kept under review. An earlier update will be made where there is a material change in legislation, regulation, statutory guidance, local housing need or council policy that affects the strategic approach to tenancies.

Appendix A: Legislative and regulatory framework

Framework	Relevance
Localism Act 2011	Sections 150–151 establish the tenancy-strategy framework and related requirements.
Housing Act 1985 and Housing Act 1996	Core statutory framework relevant to secure tenancies, allocations and homelessness.
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Amends homelessness legislation and strengthens duties relating to the prevention and relief of homelessness
Equality Act 2010	Equality and non-discrimination duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty for public authorities.
Human Rights Act 1998	Relevant to the exercise of public authority housing functions including decisions affecting occupation of the home and possession proceedings.
Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Act 2018	Provides protection for qualifying lifetime social tenants in specified domestic-abuse circumstances.
Domestic Abuse Act 2021	Wider statutory framework for responding to domestic abuse.

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Framework	Relevance
Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023	Strengthens regulation of social housing and consumer protection and provides the legislative framework for Awaab's Law.
Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, including sections 10A and 10B (as inserted by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023) pertaining to Awaab's Law	Duties relating to housing conditions and prescribed social-housing hazard requirements.
Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025	Introduced phase 1 of Awaab's Law requirements, which came into force on 27 October 2025..
Awaab's Law Phase 2 framework proposals	Government guidance indicates that Phase 2 is intended to come into force on 30 November 2026 and will extend the prescribed hazard requirements. Providers should ensure they have regard to the legislation and guidance in force at the relevant time.
Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards	Safety and Quality; Transparency, Influence and Accountability; Neighbourhood and Community; Tenancy Standard, together with the Consumer Standards Code of Practice.
Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code	Provides the relevant requirements for landlord complaint handling.

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