This report outlines responsibilities for the safe evacuation of Council Sheltered Housing complexes.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

(i) note the contents of the report;

(ii) agree that sheltered housing communal lounges can continue to be used by non resident groups only where arrangements are made in advance with Social Work staff and a nominated responsible person with appropriate skills is present.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Housing Division operates a number of sheltered housing premises as part of their normal day-to-day service delivery. All of these premises are required to comply with legislation related to Fire Evacuation (Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, as amended, and the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006) and Health and Safety (The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations). Guidance to meet the legal requirements has been produced by the Scottish Government and Neighbourhood Services management are applying that guidance across all buildings under its management control.

2.2 As well as providing actual flat or cottage accommodation for elderly people, the sheltered housing complexes also include communal areas (lounges, seating areas and corridors) and guest accommodation.

3. SAFE EVACUATION OF SHELTERED HOUSING COMPLEXES

3.1 The Council needs to ensure that arrangements are in place for evacuation of sheltered housing premises if the situation requires it. This responsibility cannot be delegated to the Fire and Rescue Service. The fire evacuation plan has now been reviewed and an outline, specifying evacuation procedures for everyone likely to be in the buildings on a regular basis, is attached at Appendix 1.

3.2 However, there remains an issue with ad-hoc use of the communal lounges by non residents and community groups for meetings and other events. Whilst emergency evacuation plans clearly detail responsibilities for residents and staff, these plans do not cover the use of facilities by these external groups. Fire safety legislation makes it clear that there needs to be a nominated responsible person present who will ensure that evacuation plans are followed if an emergency occurs.

3.3 To ensure that the Council is complying with fire safety legislation, Members are, therefore, recommended to agree that sheltered housing communal lounges can continue to be used by non resident groups only where arrangements are made in advance with Social Work staff and a nominated responsible person is present. Where these arrangements are made, the nominated person will be asked to sign an undertaking that they have read and understood the fire evacuation plan and will be responsible for making this known to other group members.
3.4 Similarly, when non residents make arrangements to book guest accommodation, they will also be asked to sign an undertaking that they have read and understood the evacuation plan.

4. RISKS
4.1 An assessment of the current situation indicates that the Council could be at risk from prosecution under fire safety legislation unless evacuation procedures are clarified and implemented consistently. There is a particular risk with non resident groups using communal lounges without a nominated responsible person present. If this report is approved risks to staff, residents and non residents will be reduced.

5. PROPERTY IMPLICATION
5.1 Safety procedures will be improved and made more consistent in the Council’s property assets as a result of this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report

7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS
7.1 There are no Human Rights implications for the Council arising directly from this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS
8.1 The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective. An equalities impact assessment is required.

9. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT
9.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the single outcome agreement for Angus:-

- Our communities are safe, secure and vibrant.

10. CONSULTATION
10.1 The Chief Executive, the Directors of Corporate Services, Infrastructure Services, Social Work and Health and the Heads of Finance and Law & Administration have been consulted on the content of this report. Tayside Fire Service has also been given the opportunity to comment.

11. CONCLUSION
11.1 Legislative requirements mean that users of Council buildings must be covered by appropriate safe evacuation plans. Whilst these are in place for residents and staff using sheltered housing communal areas, they are not in place for non resident groups to use the facilities outwith working hours of the staff. Only if robust and appropriate plans which meet the legislation are put in place, will sheltered lounges continue to be available for non resident groups to use. It is, therefore, essential that advance notice is provided to Social Work staff and a nominated responsible person with the appropriate skills to effect evacuation is present.

RON ASHTON
DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

NOTE: The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparation of this report:

- Report No. 16/11 – “Fire safety guidance and the safe evacuation of disabled persons from buildings”

NS/Hsg/AMcK/JM
Fire Evacuation Plans for Angus Council Sheltered Housing

1. Aim

Angus Council is committed to providing safe places for people to live and work. This includes appropriate precautions to prevent fires, detect them if they arise and maximise the safety of residents, visitors and staff. We fulfil our responsibilities in line with Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, as amended, and the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

2. Objectives

- Provide safe buildings that have appropriate fire protection, fire detection and alarm equipment and evacuation routes;
- Provide information to residents, staff and visitors on what to do if an alarm sounds when they are in a communal area;
- Provide information to residents, staff and visitors on what to do if an alarm sounds when they are in a flat or cottage.

3. Responsibilities

The Housing Division should:

- Provide and maintain an effective fire alarm system;
- Provide and maintain an effective smoke detection system;
- Provide and check effective fire extinguisher equipment;
- Provide and maintain effective fire doors where necessary;
- Provide and effective emergency lighting where necessary;
- Set out an emergency plan for each sheltered scheme;
- Provide block layout notices inside entrances to each complex clearly marking location of assembly points and fire alarm reset panel;
- Provide information to each tenant on sign up on what action to take on discovering a fire, reacting to an alarm when in a flat or cottage and reacting to an alarm when in a communal area. A copy should be fixed on the inside of each tenant’s front door and each guest room front door.

Social Work and Health through tenancy support should:

- Put in place arrangements to ensure that a nominated responsible person (not necessarily staff) with the appropriate skills to effect eviction is present on site whenever communal lounges are being used by non residents;
- Test the fire alarm on a weekly basis;
- Ensure good housekeeping by checking that corridors are free of obstacles and fire doors are not wedged open;
- Ensure that staff are familiar with the emergency plan;
- Provide personal evacuation plans for each tenant;
- Conduct twice yearly fire drills from communal areas for tenants;
- Ensure that the no smoking policy in communal areas is complied with;
- Provide out-of-hours emergency cover via Community Alarm.

Tenants should:

- Familiarise themselves with information provided on what action to take on discovering a fire, reacting to an alarm when in a flat or cottage and reacting to an alarm when in a communal area;
- Tenants should also ensure that their visitors are also made aware of this action;
- If tenants feel they have specific needs in evacuating the building they should make this known to the TSO who will prepare a personal evacuation plan.

4. Description of fire safety systems in place

Angus Council operates a ‘stay put’ policy in its sheltered housing schemes, following consultation with Tayside Fire Service. This is based on the following:
• An effective fire alarm system; smoke detection; concrete floors; fire doors on all flats, communal areas and plant rooms; emergency lighting, no smoking policy, fire retardant soft furnishings and good housekeeping standards in communal areas;
• When a fire alarm is activated, automatic notification transmits via dedicated phone line to emergency 24 hour service providers (ADT/Gent) who immediately notify Tayside Fire Service.
• An automatic call also goes to Community Alarm who will organise for an on-call Officer to attend, who will check the status on site and if necessary re-set the fire alarm (this is not the duty of the fire service).

5. Emergency Plan

The purpose of the plan is to ensure that everybody knows what to do in the event of a fire or emergency.

Tenants:

• If tenants discover a fire in a communal area, they should sound the alarm and then vacate the building by the nearest fire exit;
• If tenants discover a fire in their flat or cottage, they should vacate their property, closing any doors behind them and in flatted properties, leave the building by the nearest fire exit;
• They should then wait at their appointed assembly location. On no account should they use the lift. They should not attempt to fight the fire with extinguisher equipment unless required to aid escape;
• If tenants are in their flat or cottage when the alarm sounds they should make sure the front door is shut and *stay put but be prepared to evacuate* and await further instruction from Fire Service Officers. They should make themselves visible at a window, with coat and shoes to hand;
• If tenants are in any of the communal areas when the alarm sounds they should make their way to the nearest fire exit and vacate the building. They should then wait at their appointed assembly location.

Staff:

• If staff discover a fire they should sound the alarm and then vacate the building by the nearest fire exit;
• If staff are in the communal area or tenant’s flats/cottages when an alarm sounds they should vacate the building by the nearest fire exit and direct any tenants encountered in the communal area to the same exit, then wait at their appointed assembly location for the fire service. On no account should they use the lift. They should not attempt to fight the fire with extinguisher equipment unless required to aid escape.