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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out how we will allocate our garages to local residents, and how we will manage these resources effectively, including income collection and repairs.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Lewisham Council directly manages over 2,000 garages. Many of these are let to tenants and leaseholders living in properties directly managed by our Housing service, along with others let to other residents who live in this borough.
- 2.2 This policy aligns to values defined in our corporate strategy which include 'Put service to the public first' and 'Open, honest and fair in everything that we do'.
- 2.3 By managing the garage stock effectively, we maximise the number of garages in use at any time, and prevent them from falling into disrepair or being misused.

3. Allocation and agreed use

- 3.1 Lewisham Council maintains a waiting list of applicants for garage spaces on an estate/area basis. Anyone over the age of 18 living in the London Borough of Lewisham can apply to rent a garage but priority will be given to existing tenants and leaseholders of Lewisham Council. New applicants will be considered in the following order:
 - 1) Disabled tenants/leaseholders (blue badge holders) on the estate where the garage is situated.
 - 2) Other tenants/leaseholders on the estate where the garage is situated
 - 3) Other tenants/leaseholders on neighbouring estates
 - 4) Tenants/leaseholders of Lewisham Council from all other estates
 - 5) Anyone else whose principal residence is in the London Borough of Lewisham



- 3.2 Garages in Lewisham may be charged at different rents to reflect demand in different areas. These will be reviewed from time to time. All charges are exclusive of VAT, which will be charged to non-tenant/non-resident leaseholders.
- 3.3 When a garage becomes available, the highest applicant on the waiting list will be contacted and will be given 2 working days to decide to accept the offer. If a tenant or leaseholder is found to be in debt to Lewisham Council, they will only be offered the garage on the condition that the debt is cleared within five working days. After this time has passed, the garage will be offered to the next person on the waiting list.
- 3.4 Garages are let on the basis that they are used for the primary purpose of storing a private motor vehicle. The vehicle must be taxed or have a valid Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN). The garage agreement sets out conditions of use which must be followed. Any failure to comply with these conditions may result in termination of the agreement.
- 3.5 All vehicle and/or belongings are stored at the risk of the licensee. Lewisham Council accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage to items stored in a garage space. Those letting a garage are encouraged to obtain their own insurance for any contents.
- 3.6 Under no circumstance may a garage be used to run a business; be used as accommodation for animals/pets; or used to store items which are dangerous, offensive, or illegal.
- 3.7 All garage lets must be paid for in advance. New lets are encouraged to be paid by direct debit.
- 3.8 Lewisham Council will take steps to terminate the licence where rent arrears have built up on a garage account; where the garage appears to have been abandoned; where the garage agreement has been breached; or where vacant possession is otherwise required in line with this policy and the garage agreement.
- 3.9 No-one is permitted to join the garage waiting list or let a garage if they are known to owe money to Lewisham Council or are in breach of a tenancy/lease condition. This may be checked at application stage; prior to a let; and periodically thereafter for existing garage licensees. Where a tenant/leaseholder owes us money and we are taking legal action to recover this, we will check if they also have a garage account and if so, we will arrange for that account to be terminated.
- 3.10 Garages must be made available for access by Lewisham Council staff or to contractors working on our behalf, where reasonable notice is given. Notice will usually be at least 48 hours, but may be less in an emergency.
- 3.11 The garage licensee is responsible for reporting any repairs to us promptly (via our Housing Repairs Team). Repairs will generally be undertaken in line with responsive repairs guidelines, as set out in the Housing Services Repairs policy.
- 3.12 Where a repair cost is likely to be high, we may decide that it will be uneconomic to repair the garage. If this happens, we will arrange to take back possession of the garage and will try to offer the licensee an alternative garage.
- 3.13 Where a repair is expected to take longer than an advised repair timeframe, and prevents the licence holder from using their garage, we will try to offer an alternative garage either on a permanent basis or until the repairs are completed. If this is offered



but the licence holder prefers to keep and use their current garage, they will be unable to claim any refund of charges from the point of being offered the alternative. They will also be reminded that continued use is at their own risk (see 3.5).

- 3.14 Lewisham Council may recharge the licensee for the cost of certain work in line with our policy for rechargeable work. This will typically include deliberate or accidental damage, lost keys, as well as clearance of goods, storage and disposal costs.
- 3.15 One weeks' written notice by either Lewisham Council or the licence holder is required for the garage licence to be terminated. Four weeks' notice is given for rent arrears and garages identified for development. The garage should be returned empty of all belongings, and all keys should be returned.
- 3.16 Empty garages may from time to time be used by Lewisham Council for internal use. Decisions on the use of such resources will be made in line with our delegated authority levels, after having taken into account the costs or savings of this option, our business needs, and the impact on our residents.
- 3.17 The garage licensee must only park vehicles inside the garage and not outside or on the forecourt. Any space outside the garage is not included in the terms of the agreement.

4. Monitoring and controls

- 4.1 Lewisham Council will monitor the implementation of this policy in the following ways:
 - Maintaining a garage waiting list
 - Monitoring garage rent accounts
 - Required access for inspection
 - Photographic records where required
 - Monitoring repairs costs
- 4.2 Lewisham Council's Housing Services Complaints policy and process will be used for any complaints regarding this policy or its implementation.

5. Legislation and regulation

- 5.1 Section 24 of the Housing Act 1985, which governs Local Authorities power to determine rent for the tenancy or occupation of properties, does not apply to garages. Lewisham Council can therefore fix what it considers to be a reasonable rent in respect to the letting of its garages.
- 5.2 Other relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:
 - Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – Section 41
 - Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977
- 5.3 In line with our legal duty, we can¹:
 - Immediately dispose of perishable goods or goods that would involve an unreasonable cost or inconvenience to store;

¹ See also our Abandoned goods policy



- Serve a notice on the owner to collect goods
- If goods are not collected within one month of notice being served, Lewisham Council becomes the owner and can sell or dispose of items.

6. Equality, diversity, and inclusion

- 6.1 As part of the review of this policy we have undertaken an Equality Assessment. There was no impact on any protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.2 We have continued to give priority to disabled applicants who wish to rent a garage to store a vehicle in their local area.

7. Communication

- 7.1 This policy will be communicated to residents through Lewisham Council's website.
- 7.2 All existing garage licence-holders were informed of the policy when it was last fully updated (May 2022). New garage licence-holders are informed of and encouraged to read this policy alongside their garage licence agreement.

Replaces: Garage policy 2022 (Lewisham Homes) with minor updates 01/10/23 Minor updates to reflect the return of landlord services previously managed by Lewisham Homes to Lewisham Council	
Date approved:	Effective date: 17/01/24
Next review: May 2026	
Approved by: Lewisham Council's Housing Executive Team	
Policy owner: Director of Resident Engagement and Services	