



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

# Mobility Scooter Policy Consultation – Sheltered & General Needs Housing 2021



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## Executive Summary

1. Tenants in both sheltered housing schemes and general needs housing were asked for their views on a proposal to introduce a policy governing all aspects of mobility scooter ownership in council properties during a four-week consultation which took place earlier this year.
2. Opening on 26 August 2021 and closing a month later on 26 September 2021, 404 responses were received from tenants in SKDC's sheltered housing schemes and 79 from those in general needs housing.
3. The surveys were completed by those who owned/leased mobility scooters and those who didn't and revealed the majority of scooter owners (in both sheltered and general needs housing) tended to store and charge their scooter either outside or in a garden shed.
4. When asked if they supported a proposal to introduce a requirement for tenants to register their scooter with the Council, just over a third of tenants in general needs housing (28 or 36.8%) agreed. This compared to three fifths of tenants in sheltered housing (235 or 59.8%). Slightly less than half (36 or 48.6%) of tenants in general needs housing agreed with the proposal that mobility scooters should only be charged during the day – between the hours of 8am and 8pm. The proportion of tenants in sheltered housing that agreed with this proposal was higher (240 or 62.5%).
5. In the majority of instances, the proportion of tenants in sheltered housing agreeing with each of the proposals was higher than the proportion of tenants in general needs housing. This is perhaps not surprising; given that over 90% of those responding who lived in general needs housing already owned or leased a scooter or were thinking of getting one soon; compared to around a third of those who lived in sheltered housing who had responded to the consultation. In general terms, those who already own a scooter or are thinking about getting one, tended to have stronger opinions about the proposals, than those who didn't.
6. Many tenants took the opportunity to comment on the various proposals contained in the Council's Mobility Scooter Policy and quotes illustrating the main themes of their observations have been included in this report.

## Purpose of report

7. The purpose of this report is to update South Kesteven District Council (SKDC), Cabinet and Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the results of the consultation that took place with various stakeholders during August and September 2021.



## Background

8. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005<sup>1</sup> requires the Council to assess the risk created by the use of mobility scooters when used in their residential properties, particularly in relation to how they are stored and charged. The Mobility Scooter Policy has been drafted to address these issues, doing this by placing conditions on the use of scooters in council properties. Adopting the Mobility Scooter Policy would include the introduction of a registration scheme where residents must ask for permission to have a mobility scooter and for this to be dependent on the availability of safe storage and charging facilities. Tenants would also be required to insure and maintain their scooter.

## Purpose

9. The purpose of this consultation is to inform the decision due to be taken by SKDC in respect of a proposal to introduce a Mobility Scooter Policy. Covering the use, storage and charging of mobility scooters within the Council's housing stock- both general needs and sheltered housing, the policy would, if adopted, also require tenants who own or lease a mobility scooter to register it with the Council, and to fulfil certain conditions. This would meet the statutory requirement, as set out in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which requires SKDC to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire in any premises they have responsibility for.

## Scope

10. The scope of this consultation was focused on ensuring that the views of those who will be affected by the proposed changes, or, if their circumstances alter, are likely to be affected by the proposed changes, were reflected in the responses. This included the following stakeholders:
  - Tenants living in sheltered housing "corridor" schemes.
  - Tenants living in sheltered housing "non- corridor" schemes.
  - Tenants and leaseholders living in general needs housing. Specifically, those tenants who have informed the Council that they have a mobility-related disability and/or are eligible for the assisted garden maintenance scheme and /or the assisted refuse and recycling collection scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> The Regulatory Reform Fire Safety order requires any person who has some level of control in respect of premises, must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from **fire** in those premises and make sure people can safely escape from those premises if there is a **fire**.

- Key stakeholders who work with/ support those who may be affected by the introduction of the policy e.g., carers

## Objectives

11. The principle objectives of this consultation were to:

- Ensure that various stakeholders were consulted on the proposal to manage the use and storage of mobility scooters in sheltered housing and general needs housing properties in the district.
- Ensure that various stakeholders were consulted on the proposal which will require those owning or leasing a scooter to register the appliance with SKDC.
- Fulfil the statutory requirement for the Council, as set out in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which is to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire in any premises they own.

The secondary objectives of this consultation were to:

- Explain the new approach to the management, storage and charging of mobility scooters, and why it is necessary.
- Explain why tenants would be required to register their mobility scooter and what the conditions of registration would be.
- Measure the degree of support or otherwise for the proposals.
- Understand and be aware of the impact this may have on specific groups of stakeholders.

## Methodology

12. The responses to these consultations were collected over a four-week period (26 August through to 26 September 2021) and 483 responses were received in total. The majority of these were from tenants in sheltered housing (404) with the remainder coming from tenants in general needs housing (79). The data was gathered via a web link to on-line surveys – one for tenants in general needs housing, one for tenants in sheltered housing. Tenants were also sent printed copies of the surveys, along with a pre-paid envelope so had a choice about how they would like to respond.

13. The surveys were designed to communicate the reasons for the introduction of the Mobility Scooter Policy, and to ascertain support (or not) for the proposals it contains, particularly in respect of registration, storage, insurance, and charging. They included sections on:

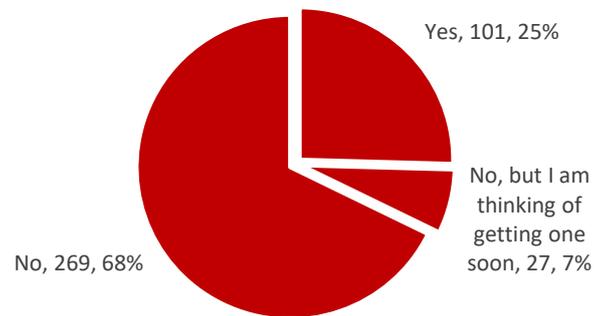
- Mobility Scooter ownership - if they currently own/lease a mobility scooter and if they do, what type
- Sections on each of the various proposals. Tenants in sheltered housing schemes and general needs housing were asked if they support the proposals or not. They were also given the opportunity to detail any negative impacts adopting the proposals may have.
- Tenants were also asked for their opinion on proposals specific to their type of housing. For example, those in sheltered housing schemes were asked if they would be prepared to contribute towards the costs of charging mobility scooters if these are in dedicated areas within the schemes, or not. They were also asked about how places to store and charge mobility scooters in sheltered housing schemes would be determined.
- An option for them to ask questions or make further observations about the proposals
- An opportunity for them to supply their details so that they can be contacted in relation to their query
- A statement on how any personal data they supply will be treated
- A question to identify their gender, age, disability status and postcode- down to sector level. For those in sheltered housing schemes –identification of scheme.
- A question to identify what type of stakeholder they are
- A thank you and closing date

## The results

14. The first section on each of the surveys asked respondents if they owned or leased a mobility scooter, and if they did, what type it was and where they stored and charged it. Just under a third of respondents living in sheltered housing said that they either owned or leased a mobility scooter or were thinking of getting one soon. This is illustrated in the pie chart overleaf:



**Q1. Do you own or lease a mobility scooter at the moment?**

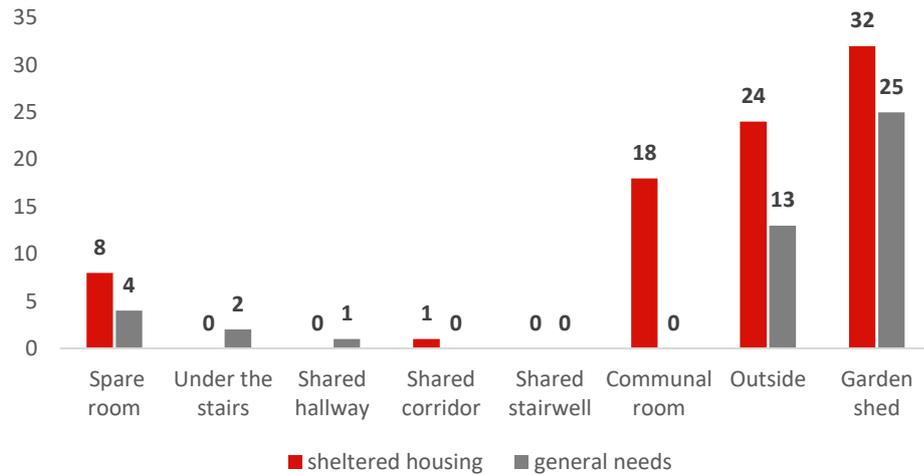


The proportion of respondents living in general needs housing who owned or leased a mobility scooter, or were thinking of getting one soon, was much higher. 92.2 % of respondents (71) were either current or potential scooter owners/leasers.

Given that the proportion of scooter owners living in sheltered housing is lower than those living in general needs housing, the difference in the distribution of responses between “users” and “non-users” should be kept in mind when considering the responses from each of the different groups of tenants.

15. Most mobility scooter owners (living in either sheltered housing schemes or general needs housing) owned a class 3 type of scooter – a machine that can be used either on the pavement or on the road – with a top speed of 8 miles per hour. 88 sheltered housing tenants (82.2%) and 44 general needs housing tenants (71.0%) chose this option.
16. When asked where they stored their mobility scooter, most respondents stored their scooter either outside or in a garden shed. 38 tenants in general needs housing (84.4%) and 56 sheltered housing tenants (67.4%) chose these options. Around a fifth of sheltered housing tenants (18 or 21.7%) said that they stored their scooter in a communal room. Storage locations for both categories of tenant are illustrated in the graph overleaf:

### Q3. Where do you store your mobility scooter?



17. The proportions of respondents choosing each of these options when asked where they charge their scooter were similar. 57 respondents (69.5%) living in sheltered housing said that they charged their mobility scooter outside or in a garden shed. 36 tenants (83.7%) living in general needs housing chose these options. Just under a fifth (16 or 19.5%) of sheltered housing tenants stated that they charged their scooter in a communal facility.

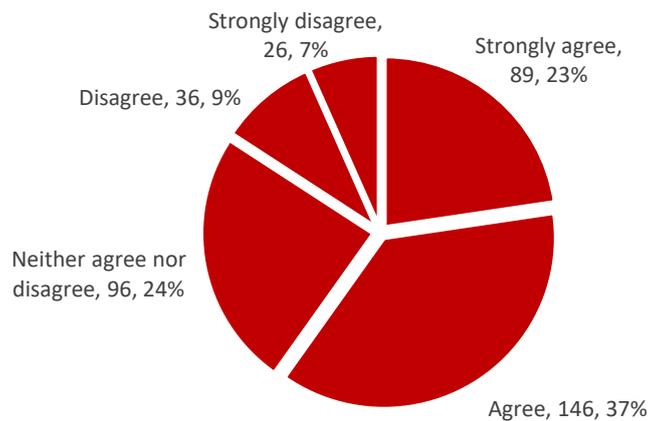
These similarities are perhaps not surprising. Respondents tend to store and charge their scooter in the same location. Around a fifth of sheltered housing respondents store/charge their scooter in a communal facility.

18. The final question in the first section of the survey asked respondents when they tended to charge their scooter. Just over a third of tenants living in sheltered housing (37 or 36.3%) said that they charged it during the day, with a fifth (20 or 19.6%) saying that they charged it overnight. Just under half (45 or 44.1%) said that it varied as they tended to charge it before they need to use it, rather than at a specific time. The proportions of tenants in general needs housing charging their scooter during the day, or overnight, or when they needed to, were similar. Just over a third (22 or 36.1%) charged their scooter during the day, with a fifth (13 or 21.3%) choosing to charge their scooter overnight. 26 respondents (42.6%) charged it when they needed it.



19. Respondents were then asked for their views of one of the main constructs of the Council's new Mobility Scooter Policy – the proposal to introduce a registration scheme for mobility scooters. Tenants were told that if this proposal is adopted they will not be able to have a mobility scooter whilst living in sheltered housing without receiving permission from the Council first and that they would also be required to register their scooter with the Council and abide by the rules on its use. Around three fifths of respondents living in sheltered housing agreed with this proposal as illustrated in the pie chart below:

**Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?**



20. The proportion of tenants living in general needs housing who agreed with this proposal was lower. Just over a third (28 or 36.8%) supported the idea. Just under half (36 or 47.4%) disagreed. When asked if they would like to see the proposal amended in any way, respondents used this space to make various points about the scheme. These included:

- The impact the scheme will have on peoples' ability to live an independent life-particularly if they have limited mobility or a disability.

**"This discriminates against people with walking/health issues"**

- The requirement to obtain permission

**"Why should we need the councils permission for this?"**

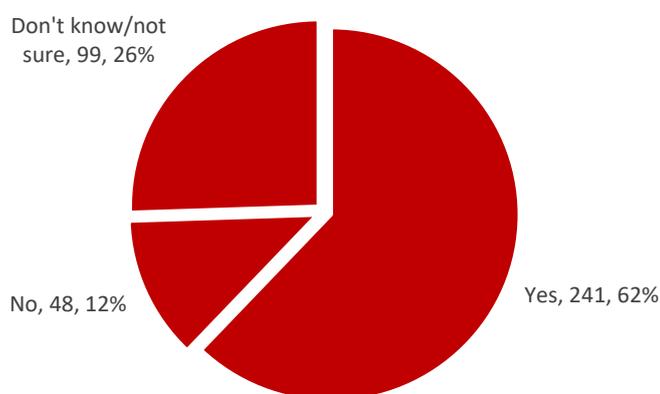
- Others could see why it might be necessary to advise tenants on how best to store and charge their scooters but disagreed with the need to register their appliance.



**"While I agree in principle that the council may need a policy on advice for how to store them and charge them to avoid hazards, I feel that a registration scheme is over the top and is discriminatory for those of us who need them."**

21. Tenants in sheltered housing were then asked for their opinion on a proposal to determine the order in which people should be given permission to have a scooter, as space to store and charge mobility scooters is limited. It is proposed that permission to have a scooter would be given to those who have a blue badge first, followed by those who already have a scooter. Those wishing to purchase or lease a scooter would be next in line. Just over three fifths of respondents (241 or 62.1%) agreed with this proposal. This is illustrated below:

#### Q8. Do you agree with this approach?



22. Sheltered housing tenants were then given the opportunity to state why they didn't agree with this approach. They were forthright in their opinions. Their opinions ranged from giving priority to current scooter owners; to objecting to having to ask for permission for something that they believe is a right. Some respondents mentioned that they don't have a blue badge because they have never driven; but do have significant mobility issues. These are illustrated below:

**"Those with scooters should be given permission first"**

**"People should be able to have a scooter if they need one, they shouldn't have to ask for permission"**

**"I don't support this at all. It is discriminating against sick people who need a mobility scooter because of ill health who may never have driven or applied for a blue badge."**

A number of respondents commented on the proposal to grant permission to Blue Badge holders first. Some have never driven so are not eligible or have never applied for a Blue Badge but have significant mobility issues.

23. Tenants in sheltered housing were then asked if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal that mobility scooters should only be stored and charged in a dedicated area. Two thirds of respondents (259 or 66.9%) agreed with this proposal with just under a quarter (87 or 22.5%) choosing to neither agree nor disagree. When asked why they didn't agree, the main reason was because they would be unable to walk to a storage/charging facility. This is illustrated below:

**"My partner can just walk the length of our flat aided, how would you expect her to go further?"**

It is important to acknowledge that the proposal to store and charge mobility scooters in dedicated areas in sheltered housing schemes could potentially cause problems for those with very limited mobility.

24. All respondents were then asked if they supported a proposal to allow a mobility scooter to be stored either inside or outside of a property if this can be done safely. The majority of tenants in sheltered housing schemes (281 or 73.0%) agreed with this proposal. A similar proportion of tenants in general needs housing were also in agreement (58 or 79.5%).

25. To ensure that it is safe to store the scooter/and or charge the battery inside the home, tenants were also asked if they agreed to be visited by a housing officer, who will undertake a risk assessment. 275 (71.6%) of sheltered housing tenants agreed with this proposal. 48 tenants (67.6%) in general needs housing agreed with this proposal. A few took the opportunity to comment on the proposal and weren't happy about it.

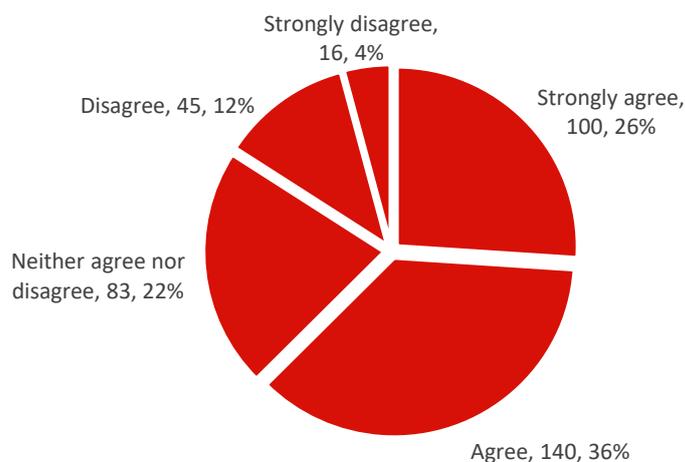
**"I may be disabled but I am not stupid, and I feel very strongly that I would not like a visit from the housing officer to do a risk assessment."**

**"Your policy is singling a protected group out and telling us we need permission to leave our house and you don't trust us enough to keep ourselves and the property**

**safe. It may be your house, but this is my home and I look after it as I am sure most others in my situation do."**

26. Another of the proposals contained in the Council's Mobility Scooter Policy related to the charging of mobility scooters. When asked what they thought of the proposal that mobility scooters should only be put on charge during the day (between 8am and 8pm), around three fifths of tenants in sheltered housing agreed, as illustrated below.

**Q14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that mobility scooters should only be put on charge during the day (between 8am and 8pm)?**



27. The main reason people disagreed with this proposal was because they are likely to be using their scooter during the day. They also mentioned that it is much cheaper to charge an appliance overnight rather than using premium rate electricity. Some mentioned that modern scooters are charged on a trickle feed continuously and switch off automatically when fully charged. These are illustrated in the quotes below:

**"If the scooter is used during the day charging at night is the only option"**

**"It's a lower economy tariff overnight"**

**"According to my scooter manual, the batteries in scooters are charged on a continuous trickle feed with automatic cut off mode for safety when the battery is fully charged."**

28. These were also the themes of the comments made by tenants in general needs housing, where around 3 in 10 respondents (22 or 29.7%) were not in favour. Just under half (36 or 48.6%) supported the proposal.
29. Sheltered housing tenants were then asked for their opinion on the charges that are incurred when scooters are charged in communal areas, and if they thought the user should pay or the costs should be spread across all those living in that scheme. Most thought that the individual tenant using the facilities, should be asked to contribute towards the costs. 233 tenants (82.3%) chose this option.
30. The majority of comments made about this proposal were not in favour. This might be because they thought these services were already included in their service charge  
**"We already pay towards the costs"**  
or because they thought the council should provide these services free of charge  
**"I think the council should provide this facility free of charge"**  
others because they thought the user should pay.  
**"Grossly unfair to charge people who do not have scooters."**

The majority of tenants in sheltered housing thought that the individual tenant should pay to store and charge their mobility scooter, rather than the costs be spread across all those living in that scheme.

31. To minimise the risk of fire, the Mobility Scooter Policy also states that scooters should only be charged directly from a power socket, and not via an extension lead. This also applies when the battery has been removed from the scooter to allow for charging inside the home. When asked about this proposal, just over three fifths of tenants in general needs housing (46 or 62.2%) supported it.
32. When asked why they didn't agree with the proposal, the comments all related to the availability and location of sockets in their properties, and who is going to pay for additional ones. This is illustrated in the quotes overleaf:

**"Council properties hardly have any sockets!"**

**"It is not always possible to access a plug socket without the use of an extension lead."**

**"Who is going to pay for outside electrical sockets?"**

33. Tenants living in sheltered housing and those living in general needs housing were then asked about another of the proposals outlined in the Council's Mobility Scooter Policy relating to insurance. The Council is proposing that any tenant using a mobility scooter must have suitable insurance to cover for injury to individuals or damage to property. This would be a condition of registration, and a tenant would not be given permission to own/lease a mobility scooter without it. They were also told that the policy would also require tenants to ensure that their scooter is tested once a year by a qualified person and certified as meeting the safety requirements for electrical equipment. This is known as Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and would be carried out at the tenant's expense.

34. When asked for their opinion on either of these proposals, some used the opportunity to say that they agreed with them.

**"I agree the scooter should be checked over once a year; I agree the scooter should be insured."**

Others stated that they already have insurance or that they thought they would be covered by their home insurance

**"Both my scooters are insured and checked regularly by the firm I bought them from."**

**"Most people will have home insurance that covers fire damage"**

Some agreed with asking tenants to insure their scooter, but not the requirement for an annual PAT test

**"Agree with insurance but surely a PAT if having to pay for it every 2 years is not on."**

Others disagreed with both proposals. Some because they didn't think it was affordable, others because they thought it was discriminatory.

**"Not everyone can afford this."**

**"I completely disagree as a lot of mobility scooter users do not have the money to pay extra for an insurance that is very often, never used or needed!"**

**All electrical equipment carries an element of risk be it a cooker, fridge, freezer, washer, dryer, computer/music equipment, electric beds, etc. So why are you solely discriminating against the disabled?**

There were some interesting responses to these questions. Some tenants, in both sheltered and general needs housing recognised the need to ensure those using, storing, and charging mobility scooters keep themselves and their neighbours safe. Others thought the proposals were discriminatory.

35. The next question asked tenants if they had any questions or would like to comment on anything in the survey. The comments made by tenants in sheltered housing were wide-ranging. Some comments related to peoples individual circumstances. Others were more generic. Some tenants agreed with some of the proposals, others used the opportunity to reiterate their opinion that only the user should pay. A handful of tenants were vehemently opposed and stated that they would not participate on the grounds that they thought the policy was discriminatory.

**"I cannot walk to a designated area."**

**"I believe third party insurance should be mandatory"**

**"I don't think it's fair to ask all tenants to contribute towards costs for charging scooters when you don't have one."**

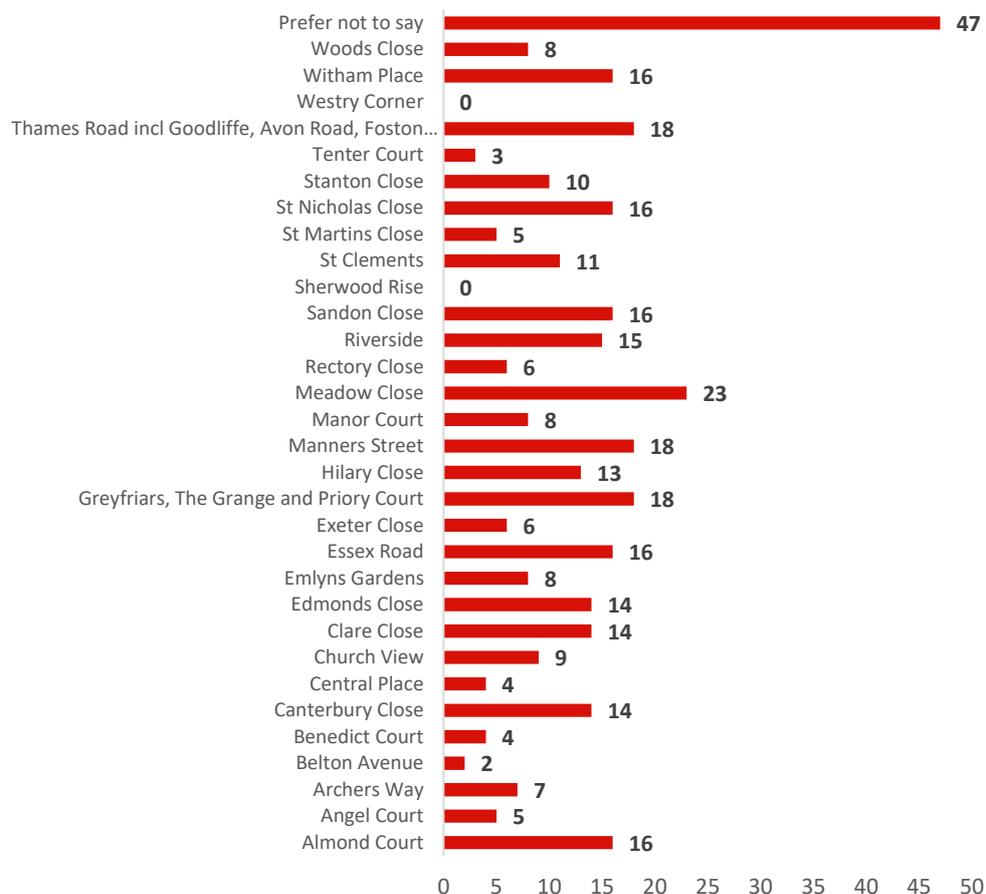
**"This is a disgusting move/proposal, designed to get even more money from disabled tenants. I will not comply."**

36. Tenants in general needs housing used the opportunity to comment on the policy as a whole. Comments were made about the policy being intrusive, discriminatory, and unfair. There were concerns about affordability and the impact adopting the policy will have on disabled tenants' independence. These are illustrated in the word cloud overleaf:





### No of responses received from each sheltered housing scheme



39. Just over a third of sheltered housing tenants were male (137 or 35.8%). Just over half (212 or 55.4%) were female, with the remainder choosing “prefer not to say”. The proportions of male and female respondents living in general needs housing responding to this consultation were quite similar. 25 (36.2%) of those responding to this consultation were male, 43 (62.3%) were female.

40. Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority of responses received from tenants in sheltered housing were from those aged 65 or over. Just over three quarters of them (298 or 77.6%) were older than 65. In contrast, three fifths of responses from tenants in general needs housing were from those aged between 25 and 64 (41 or 59.4%).

41. Just over half of sheltered housing tenants (204 or 55.0%) described themselves as having a disability. Three in ten respondents in this type of housing (113 or 30.5%) did not consider themselves disabled. Almost all of those responding to the survey who live in general needs housing (65 or 94.2%) described themselves as having a disability.

This distinction is important as there is likely to be a direct correlation between someone's disability status and mobility scooter ownership – although it will depend on the nature of their disability. This in turn may have an impact on what respondents think of the proposals included in the Council's Mobility Scooter Policy, and how they choose to answer questions about it. Nearly all general needs housing tenants described themselves as having a disability, compared to just over half of those in sheltered housing.

42. Most responses received were from sheltered housing tenants who described their ethnic group or background as white (359 or 94.7%). A small number (5 or 1.3%) described themselves as being from a black or minority ethnic background. This was also the situation for tenants in general needs housing.

43. When asked to specify their postcode, responses were received from across the district from tenants in general needs housing, as illustrated in the table below:

	No	%
NG23	1	1.5
NG31	19	27.9
NG32	5	7.4
NG33	13	19.1
NG34	2	2.9
PE6	4	5.9
PE9	8	11.8
PE10	16	23.5
Prefer not to say	0	-
Total	68	100.0

## Conclusion

44. Undertaking this consultation has been very useful. It has provided lots of feedback on the proposals outlined in the Council's Mobility Scooter Policy, and at the same time provided tenants with an opportunity to communicate and illustrate the important role mobility scooters play in maintaining their independence, both in sheltered housing schemes and general needs housing.
  
45. Responses were received from tenants who currently own or lease a mobility scooter, those who are thinking about getting one, and those who don't use one. The difference in the distribution of responses between those who are "users" or potential users and those who aren't should be borne in mind, as it is likely to have affected how people have responded to the proposals. It would probably be worth undertaking some further analysis at some point to establish if rates of support differ between these two groups of stakeholders. This is particularly pertinent when considering support for the proposals from those living on sheltered housing schemes, where only a third of respondents either owned or were considering getting a scooter.
  
46. Most tenants who stated that they own or lease a scooter, own or lease a class 3 scooter. This means they have a machine which can be used on either the pavement or the road, with a top speed of 8 miles per hour. This applied to tenants living in both general needs and sheltered housing schemes. Whilst some appreciated the need to insure their vehicle to cover for injury to individuals or damage to property, and have their scooter checked annually to ensure it was safe, others didn't. Affordability was a big concern. Others thought that it was discriminatory for the Council to focus on one appliance predominantly used by those with mobility issues - particularly one viewed by many as being pivotal to maintaining their independence.
  
47. It should be noted that the proposal to introduce designated areas on sheltered housing schemes where mobility scooters can be stored and charged could cause issues for those tenants with very limited mobility as they might not be able to get to the designated areas very easily. This was a real concern for some, and it might be beneficial to consider what mitigations could be put in place, if this proposal was to be implemented.



48. Another factor which is likely to have a significant effect on how respondents viewed the proposals is their disability status – particularly if their disability relates to mobility. The impact of approving these proposals on those who have a mobility-related disability should not be under-estimated and will need to be addressed in the equality impact assessment.
49. In general terms, those who already own a scooter or are thinking about getting one, tended to have stronger opinions about the proposals, than those who didn't. The proportion of general needs tenants in this position was much higher than the proportion of respondents living in sheltered housing schemes. This should be kept in mind when looking at the results of this consultation.
50. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

**Prepared by Deb Wyles**

**Communication and Consultation**

**November 2021**

