

Estate Management Policy

AS WITH ALL OF THE ASSOCIATION'S POLICIES and PROCEDURES, THIS GUIDE, IN FULL AND IN PART, CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE IN SUMMARY, ON TAPE, IN BRAILLE, AND IN TRANSLATION INTO MOST OTHER LANGUAGES –

**PLEASE ASK A MEMBER OF STAFF IF YOU WOULD LIKE
A VERSION IN A DIFFERENT FORMAT**

Approved By	Committee at meeting on 3 rd February 2016
Next Review	February 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Whiteinch and Scotstoun Housing Association recognises estate management as a vital part of the overall Housing Management function and the main objective of the policy is to ensure that the housing stock is managed to the highest possible standard by providing a sensitive and efficient estate management service to all residents. In order to achieve this objective it is essential that the Association maintains to the highest possible standard the physical condition of its properties and grounds in terms of fabric and cleanliness and to create a safe and well-managed environment where people wish to live.

2. Aims and Objectives of the Policy

- 2.1 The objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure that all tenants are able to live in a safe and well managed environment and have quiet enjoyment of their homes.
- To ensure that the tenants are aware of, and accept, their responsibilities in relation to the upkeep of their property and the surrounding area.
- To ensure that tenants are made aware of the Association's responsibilities in relation to estate management and that these are carried out as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.
- To act promptly in dealing with estate management issues so that any problems are resolved as early as possible. In relation to anti-social behaviour, refer also to the Association's Policy on Anti-Social Behaviour.
- To recognise that estate management is not just about ensuring that buildings and the environment are preserved and maintained; it is about providing advice and support to our customers and working in partnership with other agencies to achieve living conditions which the community expects.

3. Policy Outline

- 3.1 This policy will cover the following:

- The requirements for a successful policy
- Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

- The prevention of problems and sustaining tenancies
- The inspection of properties and common areas
- The response to complaints
- Liaising with other agencies
- Performance monitoring and reporting to committee

4. Requirements for implementing a successful policy

4.1 The general requirements for implementing a successful estate management policy include:

- Ensuring that estate management services are planned, effectively budgeted for and managed to a high standard
- Ensuring that sufficient staff resources are provided for estate management services
- Ensuring that the estate management policy is regularly reviewed to assess if it is operating effectively in relation to achieving its aims and objectives and is updated as appropriate to promote efficiency and effectiveness and/or to address any new legislative requirements or best practice guidance.
- To consult with and involve tenants in developing initiatives for the improvement of their local environment and amenities.
- It must be said, however, that tenants and other residents are also expected to play their part for the policy to be fully effective. This means recognising their responsibilities with regard to tenancy agreements, deeds of condition, etc. For example, reporting repairs promptly and assisting staff by advising if contractors fail to turn up as soon as this is established (e.g. in respect of regular, scheduled works such as weekly backcourt cleaning, grass cutting, etc.)

5. Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

5.1 The Policy seeks to meet all legislative requirements relevant to the responsibilities and activities carried out under estate management.

5.2 The Policy seeks to ensure compliance with the following outcomes as laid down in the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

Outcome 1: Equalities

Social Landlords perform all aspects of their housing services:

- *Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services*

This outcome describes what all social landlords, by complying with equalities legislation, should achieve for all tenants and other customers regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. It includes landlords responsibility for finding ways of understanding the needs of different customers and delivering services that recognise and meet these needs.

Outcome 6: Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that:

- *Tenants and other customers live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe*

This outcome covers a range of actions that social landlords can take on their own and in partnership with others. It covers action to enforce tenancy conditions on estate management and neighbour nuisance, to resolve neighbour disputes, and to arrange or provide tenancy support where this is needed. It also covers the role of landlords in working with others to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Outcome 11: Tenancy sustainment

Social landlords ensure that:

- *tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.*

This outcome covers how landlords can help tenants who may need support to maintain their tenancy. This includes tenants who may be at risk of falling into arrears with their rent, and tenants who may need their home adapted to cope with age, disability, or caring responsibilities.

Outcome 13: Value for Money

Social landlords manage all aspects of their business so that:

- *tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges that they pay*

This **standard** covers the efficient and effective management of services. It includes minimising the time houses are empty; managing arrears and all resources effectively; controlling costs; getting value for money out of contracts; and giving better value for money by increasing the quality of services with minimum extra costs to tenant, owners and other customers.

- 5.3** The policy should be read in conjunction with the Association's policies and procedures in respect of Anti-Social Behaviour, Void Management, Allocation and Letting and Tenancy Sustainment as well the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement which outlines landlord/ tenant responsibilities in respect of care and maintenance of housing and estates.

6. The Prevention of Problems and Sustaining Tenancies

- 6.1** The prevention of estate management problems is one of the most effective ways of ensuring tenants can enjoy living in a well cared for environment.

Preventative measures include:

- A concise tenancy agreement
- A thorough sign-up interview
- A comprehensive tenants handbook
- New tenant visits
- Regular common property inspections
- Prompt response to complaints
- Appropriate design/construction of new homes
- Regular tenant satisfaction surveys

6.2 The Association will ensure that the tenancy agreement itself is clear and concise to ensure that all tenants fully understand and can adhere to the conditions laid down in the agreement.

6.3 The sign-up interview is extremely important as it ensures that at the beginning of the tenancy the new tenant is made fully aware and clearly understands the landlord and tenant roles and responsibilities as laid down in the tenancy agreement. Therefore, at the sign-up interview the Housing Officer will:

- Clearly define the rights and responsibilities of the tenant and the landlord as contained in the tenancy agreement
- Explain the tenants responsibilities with regards to estate management and the importance of reporting any problems immediately
- Issue the tenant with a tenant's handbook and go through the handbook with the tenant. The handbook is a comprehensive and permanent reference for tenants. It is designed to be clear and concise and will be a useful source of information to assist the tenant throughout their tenancy.
- Arrange for an interpreter to be available at the sign-up if required.
- Arrange for the tenancy agreement to have been made available in large print, Braille or in taped version if required

6.4 New tenant visits play a vital part in preventing problems arising or, where there are problems, ensuring that these are identified at an early stage in order that appropriate steps can be taken to assist the tenant in sustaining their tenancy. In relation to new tenant visits, which will generally be carried out by the Association's Tenancy Sustainment Officer, the following will apply:

- Carry-out a new tenant visit within 4-6 weeks of the tenant moving in, to ensure the tenant is settled-in and coping with the tenancy
- Complete a new tenant visit sheet with the tenant which will identify any problems
- Take the appropriate action to resolve any problems which are identified- monitor the situation to ensure the problem is resolved and/or that appropriate follow up action is taken
- File the visit sheet in the tenant's file
- Maintain the 'visit' spreadsheet which will identify all visits which have taken place, cases where no access has been gained, any action/follow up action taken, outstanding issues, etc

7. Management, Maintenance and Inspection of Properties and Common Areas

7.1 The Association recognises the important part planned maintenance plays in estate management and this issue is covered in the maintenance policies

7.2 The Association will maintain common backcourt areas and common open spaces in relation to grass cutting, shrub pruning and repairs. The Association also carries out a bulk uplift and backcourt cleaning service as well as a cleaning service to communal close, stairs and windows. A service charge will be included in the rent to cover the cost of these common services. Owner-occupiers will be invoiced for their share of the costs.

7.3 To ensure that the Association's properties and common areas are maintained to an appropriate standard regular inspections will be carried out of the following:

- Closes/Common areas

- Security doors
- Backcourts
- Gardens
- Close and back court lighting

7.4 The regularity of inspection to Association properties will vary in relation to their condition at last inspection, the assessment of condition being based on the general cleanliness, tidiness and state of repair of the common areas.

As stated, the regularity of inspection will vary dependant on the condition of the property and will take place within a timescale (e.g. weekly, monthly or quarterly) that is considered appropriate to effectively assess and monitor necessary improvements to common areas

All properties will be inspected at least twice per year.

7.5 In addition, any Association staff member who has reason to visit a property for whatever reason will effectively be inspecting it. Anything noted at such times will be recorded and appropriate action implemented.

7.6 A note of any properties which are identified as possible abandonments will be passed to the HO who will investigate and serve, if required, the necessary abandonment notices.

7.7 In relation to offensive or racial graffiti identified, it is the Association's policy to have this removed as an emergency.

7.8 As well as inspecting and taking action in respect of Association properties and common areas, routine inspection will also be used to identify other aspects of the local environment, which require to dealt with, and the appropriate agencies contacted. For example, any cars which appear abandoned will be reported to Glasgow City Council for removal and graffiti on electrical junction boxes reported to the Scottish Power.

8. Response to Complaints

8.1 The WSHA tenancy agreement specifies tenants' responsibilities including:

- You, those living with you, and your visitors must take reasonable care to

prevent damage to the house, decoration, our furniture, the fixtures and fittings, the common parts and your neighbours property

- You must take responsibility, with all other tenants and owner-occupiers sharing the common parts, in keeping them clean and tidy.
- You must put all household rubbish for collection in the bin store. You must take reasonable care to see that your rubbish is properly bagged
- No property belonging to you, anyone residing with you or anyone visiting you, including bicycles, motorcycles or prams, should be stored in any of the common parts
- You must take all reasonable steps to supervise and keep your pet under control

8.2 The Association will take prompt action to deal with estate management problems which represent breaches in the tenancy agreement whether they are identified as a result of regular inspections or from neighbour complaints.

8.3 When a complaint is received in relation to a breach of the tenancy agreement it should be recorded with a file note and initially investigated by a Housing Assistant who will:

- Visit the property to confirm the exact nature of/validity of the complaint
- Speak to the tenants involved if/as appropriate
- Letter tenants/residents as required either by the use of standard letters or individual letters
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, arrange a close meeting if considered appropriate
- Liaise with other external agencies as required, for example, the police, GCC Environmental Protection Services or Community Safety Glasgow

8.4 The Association will avoid the use of legal action in relation to estate management as far as possible but will be prepared to take such action where a tenant is in breach of their tenancy agreement and all other action has been tried but has failed to resolve the situation. Refer to the Association's Policy in respect of Antisocial Behaviour for further detail.

8.5 Where complaints relate to the performance or failure of a contractor, or

where this has been identified by staff following inspection, the Housing Assistant for that address will establish the specific problem and contact the contractor asking that they rectify the problem. If problems with performance persist the Housing Assistant will pass the issue to the Projects Officer responsible for the contract concerned in order that he/she can pursue the matter with the contractor.

9. Pets

- 9.1 All tenants are required to obtain the Association's permission in writing if they wish to keep a household pet. This permission will not be withheld unreasonably.
- 9.2 Permission will be granted based on the terms of the tenancy agreement. If the tenant does not comply with these conditions, permission may be withdrawn.
- 9.3 In the case of exotic or potentially dangerous animals, the Association will seek advice from expert sources, such as the SSPCA, and will grant or withhold permission on the basis of such advice.
- 9.4 Where permission to keep a pet has not been granted or permission has been withdrawn because conditions have not been observed, and the tenant fails to make other arrangements for the care of the pet, then legal action for breach of tenancy conditions will be considered.

10. Liaising with other agencies

- 10.1 The Housing Association recognises the importance of establishing and maintaining good working relationships with other agencies.
- 10.2 Accordingly, In order to resolve certain estate management issues which arise it will be necessary to work jointly with external agencies such as:
 - GCC Environmental Protection Services
 - Social Work Department
 - Community Safety Glasgow (CSG)
 - Police

- Association Contractors' involved in cleaning and/or maintaining common areas
- 10.3 Association staff will liaise with and, when considered appropriate, meet with one or more external agencies on an ongoing basis to discuss service levels and/or current issues/problems affecting the local environment in order to clarify roles and responsibilities in dealing with them.

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

The Association operates an **Equality and Diversity Policy** under which it is committed to promoting an environment of respect and understanding that aims to eliminate discrimination by and towards members of the public, Committee Members, contractors and staff.

The Association will at all times endeavour to ensure that in all its activities, primarily the provision of services, the principles of the **Equality & Diversity Policy** will be fully applied.

In accordance with the Association's Equality & Diversity Policy, the Estate Management Policy has been consciously considered to judge whether there is any likelihood that its presentation or operation could in any way lead, no matter how inadvertently, to discrimination. The conclusion of this exercise is that it is believed that the Estate Management Policy should operate in a non-discriminatory way.

12. Performance Monitoring and Reporting

- 12.1 In order to monitor performance the Association will carry out regular Tenant Satisfaction Surveys and, if considered appropriate, take action to address concerns raised. Survey responses and any action taken as a result will be reported to Committee on a quarterly basis, in line with the ongoing programme of surveys which the Association carries out.
- 12.2 An Estate Management report will be presented to the Committee on a quarterly basis and will be 'by exception' only. Accordingly, it will not generally provide detailed outcomes of routine inspections but will instead highlight specific issues or problems and advise Committee of any remedial action which is proposed (or has been taken) to deal with them.

- 12.3 Committee will also be provided with an annual summary report on inspection outcomes for the year. The Annual Summary Report will enable Committee to identify any trends in terms of improvement/deterioration in the condition of closes and common areas throughout the Association's stock and also to have an input to proposals aimed at resolving problems which have been identified.

13. Policy Review

- 13.1 The Estate Management Policy will be reviewed and submitted to Committee for approval every five years or sooner if necessary due to changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidance.