

KINGDOM HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the way in which we propose to manage the environment in and around our developments so that they are as pleasant and well maintained as they can be.
- 1.2 The activity of Estate Management is not easy to define, however we would define it as “Property Management and Services which aim to give residents quiet enjoyment of their homes in a safe and secure environment which they can take pride in”. Estate Management is not just about looking after buildings and communal areas. It is also about working with other agencies in the community and residents to achieve decent living conditions.
- 1.3 As part of our overall business strategy, we have adopted a Sustainability Policy. The principles of that policy will be applied to the implementation of this policy.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 Estate Management is an activity which crosses a number of areas covered by other policies and is an activity which is not solely within our control. In many instances we have to work with other agencies such as the police, environmental health, social work and the community wardens to provide effective estate management. We have identified the main objectives as being:
 - To maintain and sustain our houses and the developments in which they are located to an appropriate standard in line with our obligations under the tenancy agreement.
 - To enable residents to enjoy the environment in which they live.
 - To maintain an environment which is clean and tidy for residents.
 - To respond to complaints and enquiries within a reasonable timescale when common areas do not meet an acceptable standard.
 - To monitor the quality of the service provided by our gardening and cleaning contractors so that the service is efficient and represents value for money for residents.
 - To work closely with all other agencies to provide effective estate management.

3. The Broader Picture

3.1 Estate Management also involves:

- Providing advice and assistance on tenancy matters to help residents maintain their tenancies and the environment to the best of their abilities.
- Enforcing tenancy conditions where appropriate.
- Monitoring empty properties, gardens and surrounding areas so that our developments remain attractive and secure.
- Providing advice and assistance to residents including signposting them to services which enhance the local community such as initiatives to reduce crime, community projects and environmental improvements.

3.2 This policy is supported by detailed procedures outlining our day to day practice which will enable us to meet the aims and objectives of the policy. We aim to be consistent but we also aim to be flexible and proactive, meeting local needs and expectations when providing an estate management service.

4. Estate Inspections

4.1 All our staff have a duty in the course of their day to day work to pick up any repairs issues and estate management problems and report them to the Property Services section or the Housing Management section depending upon the nature of the problem. Responsibility for the condition of our developments is shared between Housing Services and Property Services. The Estates Services Supervisors will inspect cleaning and landscaping on a regular basis, reporting repairs and feeding back issues such as anti-social behaviour and vandalism to housing teams. In addition to this, quarterly inspections will normally be carried out by housing staff to look at the broader environment.

4.2 Property Services staff, the Senior Maintenance Officers and their Assistants normally inspect developments on a six monthly basis and arrange for any communal repairs which arise from these visits to be carried out. Where there are specific problems in developments which require more resources, inspections will be carried out more frequently as required.

4.3 Repairs required to common areas, fences, buildings and walls will be dealt with in line with our maintenance policies and procedures.

4.4 Where Estates Services Supervisors receive complaints and enquires from residents they will normally respond to these by contacting them either personally or by telephone within 3 working days.

5. Cleaning of Common Areas

- 5.1 We have contracted a cleaning service for the weekly cleaning of communal stairs and corridors in developments with flats to ensure that these meet an acceptable standard.
- 5.2 A detailed technical specification is available on request; however the main duties of the contractor are to:
- Carry out a weekly clean of the stairs and passages by sweeping them and mopping them with appropriate detergents.
 - Each month the stairs should receive a deep clean with a mechanical cleaner or a scrubbing brush.
 - As part of this service all bin areas, foot paths and drying areas which are communal should be swept and kept free from litter and bulky items which have been discarded.
 - The contractor will report any vandalism or defects they discover whilst cleaning.

6. Common Landscaping

- 6.1 We have employed a gardening contractor who is responsible for maintaining common landscaping within our developments to ensure they meet an acceptable standard. Although landscaping will vary in each development the following general standards will be maintained:
- Communal grass will be cut on a fortnightly basis fourteen times per year.
 - Shrubs and bushes will be pruned twice a year.
 - Shrub beds will be weeded and the earth grubbed four times per year.
 - There will be a litter pick on each occasion the contractor is in the development carrying out landscape maintenance.
 - Weed killing will be carried out once a year.
 - Ad hoc work such as tree maintenance will be carried out as required.
 - The contractor will report any vandalism, damage or the need to renew planting or fencing.
 - The contractor will produce an annual tree report on the condition of the trees.
 - The contractor will carry out 3 winter visits between October and March each year.

7. Housing Stock

- 7.1 We have a planned maintenance programme which ensures that the structural features of our houses are regularly surveyed and as a result, become part of a programme of works to keep them in good condition. We work with the police to ensure where possible our properties and the surrounding communal space meet "Secure by Design" standards. We also have challenging design standards. We expect contractors who tender for work to be able to meet the design standards which are set out, to use good quality materials to help ensure our developments reach the highest possible standards and are designed to be sustainable.
- 7.2 Residents from time to time apply to make alterations and improvements to their homes. Where we give our permission we will require that any work carried out is to the highest standard and that it complies with current building and planning regulations.

8. Private Gardens

- 8.1 Many of our houses have their own gardens. During quarterly inspections all housing staff will share responsibility for monitoring the condition of private gardens and encouraging residents to maintain them properly.
- 8.2 Where a resident fails to maintain their garden to an acceptable standard they will be contacted by a member of the housing team and reminded of their obligation in their tenancy agreement to look after their garden. A reasonable time will be given to bring gardens up to an acceptable level. Where a resident fails to do so, we will enforce tenancy conditions to bring about an improvement, however this is not always an appropriate approach. Where residents have health problems and are unable to look after their garden, we will try to help them access any concessionary or voluntary schemes which are available.

9. Car Parks and Paved Areas

- 9.1 Communal areas also cover car parks and areas of hard landscaping which can be subject to estate management problems.
- 9.2 When our staff are in these areas they will normally investigate problems with site lighting, abandoned cars and the parking of caravans, boats and trailers without permission. The condition of footpaths will normally be examined to determine whether they are safe, stable and free from weed growth. They will also ensure that they identify problems such as bird roosting where it is damaging the environment.

10. Pets

10.1 Permissions and the rules concerning the keeping of domestic pets are covered in our Pet Policy. However, housing staff will be aware when dealing with estate management issues that animals may be the subject of complaints and the cause of neighbour nuisance. Where a pet is the subject of a complaint and where damage or nuisance is attributable to the keeping of pets then tenancy conditions will be enforced as a means of addressing the problem. Other agencies such as the animal welfare agencies or the dog warden may be notified if this is appropriate.

11. Vermin and Pest Control

11.1 Where cases are reported to us of infestations of vermin or pests in tenants' homes our maintenance staff will arrange an appropriate response to deal with the problem in accordance with environmental health guidelines.

12. Tenancy Matters

12.1 When a property is allocated Housing Management staff will go over a summary of the tenancy conditions with the tenant to help ensure that the incoming tenant has an understanding of both their rights and their obligations. Every tenant will also be given a copy of the tenant's handbook which explains this in a straight forward way. Sometimes tenants need additional support and advice to help them to keep to their tenancy conditions. Where Housing Management staff are aware that incoming tenants are vulnerable, especially where there is no support from other sources, they will carry out a visit approximately one month into the new tenancy to see how the new tenant has settled in. If necessary this will be extended informally if the tenant needs ad hoc advice and support. Alternatively they may be referred to an appropriate agency or source of support if more formalised support is required.

12.2 General advice and assistance in all aspects of the tenancy and maintenance matters is available from our Customer Services Team.

13. Support

13.1 Our staff will develop professional relationships with staff in support and care agencies including our own Support and Care team with the aim of helping our tenants with particular needs to sustain their tenancy.

14. Customer Care and Consultation

14.1 We wish to foster the best possible landlord/customer relationships. We will encourage all of our customers to take an active interest and participate in matters concerning their housing development and also to the larger debate on our housing policies and procedures. We have a statutory duty under Section 54 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to consult with tenants and Registered Tenants Organisations in

relation to proposals concerning housing management policies and repairs and maintenance policies.

14.2 We will achieve this by:

- Communicating regularly with our customers through “The Resident” and the “Policy Digest”
- Focus groups
- Home visits

15. Neighbour Disputes and Complaints

15.1 Our aims and objectives and the way in which our neighbour complaints are dealt with are covered in our Neighbour Dispute Policy. Our staff appreciate the complexities of such problems and the sensitive handling which is required when these situations arise. Where appropriate we will seek the assistance of specialist staff in the Housing Investigation teams to try and resolve these problems.

16. The Role of the Housing Services Department

16.1 The recording of neighbour disputes, anti social behaviour and complaints concerning estate management and the condition of developments is the responsibility of the Customer Services Team. Subsequent investigation is the responsibility of the appropriate Housing Officers, Housing Assistants and Estates Services Supervisors.

16.2 Any senior member of the Customer Service Team will be prepared to provide interpretation and advice on this policy. If a formal appointment is required in order to discuss a policy, prior notice will be required with a senior member of Housing Management staff.

16.3 The Customer Service team and Housing Management teams will develop working procedures to accompany this policy.

17. The Role of the Property Services Team

17.1 The Property Services team will primarily be responsible for the technical inspection of developments and the ordering of appropriate maintenance and remedial works in order to support this aspect of the policy.

17.2 The Property Services team will develop appropriate working procedures to accompany this policy.

18. Monitoring and Review

18.1 All Estate Management complaints will be recorded on our Estate Management database when reported. Repairs issues will be recorded on our Arc house computer system. Regular reports will be submitted to senior staff as part of our performance reporting.

19. Complaints

- 19.1 Customers who are unhappy with the way in which Estate Management complaints have been dealt with should, in the first instance, contact the officer who has been dealing with their enquiry. If they remain unhappy after this they should write to the Housing Manager who will make investigations and respond in writing. Complaints in relation to repairs issues are initially dealt with by the officer concerned and thereafter by the Property Services Manager. The response times for responding to complaints are set out in our Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- 19.2 Customers who remain unhappy can appeal a decision in accordance with our Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure. If the complainant is not happy following this they can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
- 19.3 Copies of this policy are available at any of our offices on request and can be downloaded from our website at www.kingdomhousing.org.uk. In addition we have arrangements in place to have this policy translated into other languages if required. The policy can also be made available on tape or in Braille if requested.

20. Policy Review

- 20.1 This policy will be reviewed on a 5 yearly basis from the date of implementation which will be the date the policy is approved by the Committee of Management or earlier if deemed appropriate.

KINGDOM HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY (DRAFT)

Policy drawn up with reference to:

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

Reference made to the following sources and other guidance:

The Estate Management Policies of

Ochil view Housing Association

Muirhouse Housing Association

Hillcrest Housing Association

SFHA Raising Standards in Housing

The Housing regulator

Self Assessment AS10 Estate Management

Prepared by: Alex McLaren

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Draft 1 Managers Review/Discussion 31st October 2008

Policy audited T.C Young 6th October 2008

Draft 2 Communication and consultation with JCG - (not applicable)

Sub Committee Review of Policy 3rd March 2009

Presented for approval to Committee of Management on 16th March 2009

Policy Approved Yes

Next review date: March 2014