Estate Management Policy

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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 We are committed to the principles of good corporate governance and sustainability and will endeavour to develop fair and consistent, policies, procedures and practices.

1.3 In line with our commitment to equality and diversity, this policy can be made available in a variety of formats including large print, translated into another language or other media. We will make any reasonable adjustments to assist you if you have a disability.

1.4 We recognise that the environmental management and maintenance of our developments are integral parts of both the Housing Management and the Property Services functions. We have adopted this policy to ensure a common and consistent approach to these key activities. We realise, due to the mixed tenure of some of our developments, or where some are factored and some are non-factored that there may from time to time be limitations on our management. We will try to liaise with all residents and parties to maintain high standards of estate management.

1.5 The management of tenancies and estate management are linked activities; however activities such as the management of neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour are covered by our Neighbour Disputes Policy, and our Drug statement which is available on our Website.

1.6 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 crosses a number of areas covered by other policies and covers issues which may not be 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 properties and the developments in which they are located to an appropriate standard in line with our legal obligations and those obligations contained within our Tenancy Agreement.

- To enable residents to live in a safe environment.
- To maintain an environment which is clean and tidy.
- To respond to complaints and enquiries within a reasonable timescale.
- To monitor the quality of the service provided by our gardening and cleaning contractors to check it is efficient and represents good value for money.
- To work closely with all other agencies to provide effective estate management.
- To ensure that those residents who are not our tenants but for whom we act as Factor get good value for money.

3. **How We Will Achieve our Aims and Objectives**

3.1 We will

- Provide advice and assistance on tenancy matters to help residents maintain their tenancies and the environment to the best of their abilities.
- Enforce tenancy conditions, using legal action where appropriate.
- Monitor empty properties, gardens and surrounding areas so that our developments remain attractive and secure.
- Provide advice and assistance to both our tenants and owners occupiers in developments, including signposting them to services which help them look after their property.

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 note any repairs and issues which pose a threat to health and safety and report them to Property Services. Responsibility for the condition and maintenance of our developments is shared between Housing Services and Property Services. On a monthly basis the Estate Services Supervisor will inspect cleaning and landscaping in those developments which have these services provided. Developments without such services will be inspected by Housing Management staff every six months.

4.2 Property Services staff normally inspects all developments on a six monthly basis and arrange for any communal repairs noted at these visits to be carried out within a reasonable timescale thereafter.
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 The Estates Services Supervisor will respond to complaints and enquiries personally, by email or by telephone, from residents within 3 working days of receiving the complaint.

5. **Cleaning of Common Areas**

5.1 We have a contracted cleaning service for the weekly cleaning of communal stairs and corridors in all developments containing flats to ensure that these areas meet an acceptable standard.

5.2 A detailed specification is available on request; however the main duties of the contractor are to:

- Carry out a weekly clean of the communal stairs and passages by sweeping and mopping them with appropriate detergents
- Carry out a monthly deep clean of the communal stairs with a mechanical cleaner or a scrubbing brush.
- Clean communal windows in flatted blocks every two months
- Clean communal windows in flatted blocks every two months
- Sweep and keep free from litter all bin areas, foot paths and drying areas which are communal as required
- Sweep car parks on a weekly basis
- Report any vandalism or defects they discover whilst cleaning to the Estate Services Supervisor.

6. **Common Landscaping**

6.1 We have employed a gardening contractor who is responsible for maintaining common landscaping within our developments to ensure these areas meet an acceptable standard. Although the terms of the landscaping services provided will vary in each development the following general standards will be maintained:

- communal grass will be cut on a fortnightly basis fourteen times each year between the months of April and October
- shrubs and bushes will be pruned as and when necessary between April and October.
- shrub beds will be weeded and grubbed 6 times between April and October.
• 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.

• work such as tree maintenance will be carried out as required.

• any vandalism, damage or the need to renew planting or fencing will be reported to the Estate Services Supervisor.

• grass edges will be reformed once per year at the start of the growing season.

• between the start of February and the end of March each year there will be two visits to clear shrub beds of litter and dead vegetation as required.

• between the start of February and the end of March each year there will be one visit to prune shrubs as required.

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 and compliant with the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS).

7.2 We work with the Police to ensure where possible our properties and the surrounding communal spaces meet “Secure by Design” standards.

7.3 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.

7.4 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. In line with the terms of our Tenancy Agreement, we expect tenants to maintain these gardens to an acceptable standard by cutting any grass regularly and pruning any trees, shrubs and bushes as required. Housing staff are responsible for monitoring the condition of private gardens by visiting each development at 6 monthly intervals and encouraging tenants to maintain the gardens properly.
8.2 Where tenants fail to maintain their gardens 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 and maintain it to an acceptable standard. A reasonable timescale will be given to a tenant to bring their garden up to an acceptable level, with directions given as to certain works required to be carried out, where appropriate. Where tenants fail to do so, we may engage our contractors to carry out work to private gardens to bring them up to an acceptable standard. This will be a rechargeable cost which the tenant will be required to pay.

8.3 Where tenants have health problems or disabilities and are unable to look after their garden, we will try to help them access our private gardening scheme which is subsidised at the rate of 30% of cost, or any other schemes for elderly and disabled tenants which are available in our areas of operation.

8.4 Able bodied tenants may use our private gardening contractor if they wish to do so; however those tenants will be required to pay the full cost of the service provided.

9. Car Parks and Paved Areas

9.1 Communal areas also include 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 investigate any problems they find in relation to issues such as 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. Staff will also ensure that they identify problems such as bird roosting where it is damaging the environment or any buildings. With some exceptions, parking is available on a first come first served basis in most of our developments. Any issues identified by our staff will be reported back to the Estates Service Supervisor who will instruct any necessary works.

9.3 Where vehicles are untaxed, abandoned and not subject to a DVLA SORN, we will take such legal action as is necessary and available to us in order to have such vehicles removed from our developments. Where problem and abandoned vehicles are adjacent to our developments but not on our land, we will encourage customers to contact the Police and other agencies to deal with the problem in the first instance. We will not normally intervene in parking disputes between residents unless someone is in breach of their tenancy due to the way they are using parking facilities, the way they are behaving towards other residents (i.e. where their actions are serious enough as to cause alarm and distress to others) or they are abusing facilities due to multiple vehicle ownership.
10. **Grit Bins**

10.1 Where appropriate in a development, we will provide bins containing grit and salt for use in the winter. The exception will be when our houses are on an adopted road and the service is provided by the local authority. In the winter, grit bins will be replenished as required subject to our contractor’s ability to visit sites in severe weather. We do not clear snow in mainstream developments as this is the responsibility of the residents. We will however clear snow in developments for those with particular needs if at all possible. Grit bins will normally be locked after the danger of snow has passed, until the next winter.

11. **Bulk Uplifts**

11.1 No items should be left in any of the common areas. We are spending an increasing amount of time and financial resources on removing unwanted items from the common areas of our developments. Such items spoil the environment for other residents and can be dangerous as well as unsightly. The cost of bulk uplifts of such items is covered in the service charges paid by tenants. The arrangements are different where we are the Factor for the development. We are finding increasingly that we are exceeding budgets for this work therefore we will respond as per Clause 11.2 below.

11.2 In those developments where we are the Factor and bulky items and refuse have been dumped in a communal area, we will contact all residents to try to find out the person responsible. If we are able to establish who is to blame, the person will be asked to remove the items. If they do not do so within the timescale we have given them, we will arrange for the removal of the items and recharge those concerned for the whole cost of this service. Where these recharges are not paid, the customer concerned will be pursued for the costs.

11.3 Items dumped in public areas not under our ownership will be reported to the Local Authority.

12. **Pets**

12.1 Permission for keeping domestic pets in a property and the rules concerning this are covered in our Pet policy. Animals may be the subject of complaints and the cause of neighbour nuisance.

12.2 Where a pet is the subject of a complaint and where damage or nuisance is attributable to the keeping of pets, tenancy conditions will be enforced as a means of addressing the problem.

12.3 Where damage is caused to property by a resident’s pet, or where cleaning is required due to a pet fouling within common areas, the owner responsible for the animal will be held liable for the costs incurred for any repair or cleaning required.

12.4 Other agencies such as the animal welfare agencies or the dog warden may be notified if this is appropriate.
13. **Vermin and Pest Control**

13.1 Where cases are reported to us of infestations of vermin or pests in tenants’ homes, our maintenance staff will respond to these by signposting residents to environmental health services.

14. **Play Parks**

14.1 Within our developments we have a number of play parks which are owned by us. In some instances they may be adopted by the local council. In cases where they are in our ownership, they shall be insured and maintained by us and inspected on a regular basis. Where the play parks are owned by us, any issues identified as regards the condition or repair of such areas should be reported to our Estate Service Supervisor. Where the play park is not owned by us, any issues should be reported to the Local Authority.

15. **Neighbourhood Watch Schemes**

15.1 Where neighbourhood watch schemes are in operation in our developments or in the surrounding community we will work with them where appropriate and respond promptly to any safety concerns expressed by residents, where necessary.

16. **Lighting**

16.1 If the lighting we provide within a development becomes defective or dangerous, we will repair it as soon as possible within the terms and response times detailed in our maintenance policies. Where street lighting is defective in adopted areas we will report this to the Local Authority where we are made aware of it and we encourage residents to do the same.

17. **Hazards**

17.1 Where we are aware of hazards such as hypodermic syringes, faeces, blood or other bodily fluids within our developments, we have our own procedures for dealing with these promptly to minimise risks to health and safety. In areas outwith our jurisdiction, where we are made aware of such issues, we will report them to the local authority promptly.

17.2 We will do the same where hazardous materials or noxious chemicals are found within our development and will put arrangements in place for their swift removal. If they are out with, but in proximity to our houses, we will notify the local authority.
18. **Signage**

18.1 In some sites facilities such as parking, bin stores and landscaping features require specific signage for the benefit of residents and visitors. Such signs are provided at the development stage when a site is completed. Replacements will be arranged by Property Services as required. Additional signage will be at the discretion of Housing Management. Such signage will also be replaced by Property Services.

19. **Tenancy Matters**

19.1 When a property is allocated, staff will go over a summary of the tenancy conditions to help ensure that the incoming tenant has an understanding of both their rights and their obligations. Every new tenant, under the terms of our Neighbour Disputes Policy will be required to sign a Good Neighbour Agreement which will reiterate the standards of behaviour which we expect. Every tenant will also be given a copy of our calendar which explains various tenancy related matters. Sometimes tenants need additional support and advice to help them to keep to their tenancy conditions.

19.2 Where Housing Management staff are aware that incoming tenants are vulnerable, especially where there is no support in place from other sources, they will carry out a visit approximately one month into the new tenancy to assess how the new tenant has settled in. This will be extended informally for up to six months if the tenant needs ad hoc advice and support. Alternatively tenants may be referred to an appropriate agency or source of support if more formalised support is required.

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

20. **Support**

20.1 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.

21. **Customer Care and Consultation**

21.1 We wish to foster the best possible relationships with our residents and other customers. We will encourage all of our residents to take an active interest in and participate in matters concerning their housing environment and also input to the larger debate on our housing policies and procedures.

21.2 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. Part of this commitment has been covered at paragraph 25 of this document under the provisions of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.
21.2 We will achieve this by:

- communicating regularly with our customers through The Resident and the Policy Digest
- organising focus groups
- carrying out home visits
- meeting with any Registered Tenants Organisations in our area
- encouraging interaction through our website and other social media
- customer surveys
- Regular supplementary surveys of stair cleaning and landscaping.

22. Neighbour Disputes and Complaints

22.1 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.

23. The Role of the Housing Department

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

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

23.3 Housing staff will develop working procedures to accompany this policy.

24. The Role of the Property Services Team

24.1 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.

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

25. The Measurement of our Performance – Scottish Social Housing Charter

25.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets standards and outcomes that describe the results that tenants and others who use their services can expect from social landlords. The relevant standards and outcomes for the activity of estate management are listed below. We will use these to measure our performance and also to be accountable to our customers.
25.2 Charter Outcome 1: Equalities

Social landlords perform in all aspects of their housing services so that:

- 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.

We will achieve this objective by processing any complaints and comments about our estate management services individually. We will get back to the complainant and ask them what outcome they are looking for as a resolution. This way we will take into consideration their individual needs. We have customer care policies and procedures and staff training to ensure that staff understand the importance of and can put in to practice skills that let customers know our aim is to treat them fairly and with respect. Our staff are also made aware of current equalities legislation and good practice so that they behave fairly to our customers.

25.3 Charter Outcome 2: Communication

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

We will use one to one conversations, telephone, email, our website, Facebook, translators, interpreters and advocates where the customer wants this to ensure that everyone finds it easy to communicate with us using their chosen mode of communication. Similarly any information which is appropriate to be made available to customers can be provided in a variety of formats to meet particular needs. Customers will be able to access us through the customer services team if they need information and wish to ask us about how and why we reach decision and the services we provide.

25.4 Charter Outcome 3: Participation

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

We will use the communication methods outlined above to enable our customers to participate in and influence our decisions. As well as this we will use focus groups and surveys and will work with residents groups in order for people to be able to influence our decisions.
25.5 Charter 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.

Where appropriate we will work with other agencies such as the Scottish Police, social work, SACRO and housing investigations to tackle issues which are of concern to our residents so that as far as possible they live in well maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe.

25.6 Charter Outcome 11: Tenancy Sustainment

Social landlords make sure 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.

We will offer advice and assistance to residents to help them maintain their tenancy by referring them to appropriate agencies or by organising support by us or other support services.

26. Monitoring and Review

26.1 All estate management complaints will be recorded on our IT systems. Quarterly reports will be submitted to senior staff and the Committee of Management as part of our performance reporting. These reports shall include Information on the number and volume of estate management and neighbour disputes and their breakdown by type, e.g. waste disposal, fly-tipping, noise nuisance.

27. Complaints

27.1 Customers who are unhappy with the way, in which estate management complaints have been dealt with should, in the first instance, contact the member of staff who has been dealing with their enquiry.

27.2 Customers who remain unhappy can appeal a decision in accordance with our Complaints, Comments and Compensation Policy

27.3 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.
28. **Policy Review**

28.1 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.
Policy drawn up with reference to:

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

Reference made to the following sources and other guidance:

The Estate Management Policies of

The Dunedin Canmore Group

Fife Housing Association
Ore Valley housing Association

Glen Housing Association

Prepared by: Alex McLaren

Current Policy Review Date

Presented to SMT for Discussion

Policy audited T.C Young October 2013

Sub Committee Review of Policy on 11 February 2014

Presented for approval to Committee of Management on 17 February 2014

Policy Approved: Yes

Next review date: February 2019