



# **ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**Policy Reference: Policy/Housing Management/Estate Management Policy**

**Adopted By Management Committee: January 2006**

**Scheduled for Review by Management Committee: January 2008**

**The Scottish Housing Regulator Performance Standard Part AS1.10**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page No</b>
1.	Introduction	2
2.	Equal Opportunities	2
3.	Objectives	2
4.	Delegated Authority	3
5.	Scope of Policy	3
6.	Estate Management Standards	4
	6.1 Housing Stock	4
	6.2 Close and Stairs	4
	6.3 Backcourts, Gardens and Common Areas	5
	6.4 Pets	6
	6.5 Support Services for Tenants with Special Needs	6
	6.6 Controlled Entry Doors	6
	6.7 Vandalism/Graffiti	7
	6.8 Parking of Vehicles	7
	6.9 Abandoned Vehicles	7
	6.10 Ball Games	8
	6.11 Estates Team	8
	6.12 Empty Properties	8
7.	Neighbour Dispute	8
8.	Racial Harassment	9
9.	Contact with Tenants	10
10.	Publicity	10
11.	Policy Review	10

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Estate Management is a vital part of the Housing Management & Maintenance Service. While the Association's main aim is to provide good quality homes with affordable rents, it is recognised that residents' enjoyment can be affected by factors other than amenities. The Association's aims to do as much as possible to ensure that tenants enjoy a peaceful, clean and tidy environment. This can be achieved by having a pro-active and strategic approach to the management of our properties, estates and neighbourhoods.

Estate Management is not only about looking after the buildings and physical environment. It requires tenant involvement, and includes arranging advice and support where required.

## **2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

In line with the Association's commitment to equal opportunities, this policy can be made available free of charge in a variety of formats, including large print, translated into another language or on audio tape.

## **3. OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1 A primary objective is to protect the Association's investment by doing as much as possible to maintain the stock and its environment to the best possible standard.
- 3.2 To be caring and sensitive, fostering a good Landlord/Tenant/Owner relationship.
- 3.3 To encourage interest and involvement within the area for the continuing benefit of the Community.
- 3.4 To respond to all Housing Management enquiries and problems the same day of the initial enquiry/complaint.
- 3.5 To ensure tenants enjoy a clean and tidy environment in either new build, improved or unimproved property and are allowed maximum enjoyment of their home.

- 3.6 To ensure that no person is treated less favourably than any other person or group of persons on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability or marital status.

#### **4. DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

- 4.1 The Association has delegated the responsibility, monitoring and evaluation of the estate management service to the Housing Management & Maintenance Sub Committee (HMMSC). The Management Committee retains responsibility for approving amendments to the policy.

The day to day management of the service is delegated to the Depute Director, with assistance from the Housing Services Officers, Maintenance Officer and Estates Team.

- 4.2 The HMMSC will monitor the service provided by means of a monthly report, prepared by the Housing Services Officer, incorporating the following information: -
- Condition of Closes
  - Condition of Play Areas
  - Condition of Gardens
  - Any other estate management issues
  - Neighbour disputes log
  - Crime Statistics

#### **5. SCOPE OF POLICY**

Estate Management covers a diverse range of issues such as:

- **Clearly establishing the obligations of the landlord and tenant**  
Preventative measures such as pre-tenancy counselling, settling in visits and the provision of a tenants handbook can minimise problems.
- **Tenancy Matters**

This involves issues such as successions, abandonment and enforcing conditions of tenancy.

- **Inspection of Communal Areas**

This involves regular inspections of closes, gardens and open spaces.

- **Formal Liaison with other Agencies**

Foster close working relationships with other relevant organisations such as the police, West Dunbartonshire Council Assist Team, West Dunbartonshire Council Tenancy Support Team, Social Work Department, Cleansing Department etc.

- **Assistance with Individual Tenants**

This would range from liaising with external agencies to organise support to dealing with requests for bulk uplift.

## **6. ESTATE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS**

This section will examine the various activities, which the Association will tackle under the heading of Estate Management.

### **6.1 Housing Stock**

The Association has a Planned Maintenance Policy and will undertake planned maintenance surveys of the stock on a predetermined basis. The Association's Housing Services Officer and Maintenance Officer, will request remedial actions where deterioration in the properties is discovered during routine visits.

### **6.2 Closes and Stairs**

It is the responsibility of the tenant to clean their stairs etc. on a regular basis in rotation with their neighbours.

The common close should be swept down then cleaned. Residents on upper floors should clean their landing and the stairs down to the landing below. Ground floor residents are responsible for cleaning the close entrance. Windows, tiles and banisters should be cleaned at the same time.

The Housing Services Officer will inspect these areas at least once a month. However it is likely to be more frequent as the Housing Services Officer is usually carrying out daily visits in the area, for reasons other than estate management inspections. Failure to adhere to the above will result in a breach of tenancy letter being sent to tenants. Where a tenant continues to breach the terms and conditions of tenancy, the Association will consider using legal remedies.

### **6.3 Backcourts, Gardens and Common Areas**

The Association provides a ground maintenance service to all common areas. Under normal circumstances, tenants who have exclusive use of a garden will be expected to maintain it to a reasonable standard. The Association operates a Care of Garden Maintenance Scheme for elderly and infirm residents, where there are no other adults in the household, under the age of 60. The Depute Director has discretion to allow tenants acceptance onto the scheme, if they are under 60 and has a medical condition, which would permit them from maintaining their garden. The maximum amount of numbers who can join the list is limited to 40.

Tenants wishing to dispose of bulk items (such as beds or cookers) should either contact the office or contact West Dunbartonshire Council directly to arrange a convenient uplift time. Unwanted household items should not be left in backcourts and closes pending uplift.

Tenants are expected to come to an arrangement for the use and sharing of the drying areas in the backcourt. All household rubbish for collection should be properly bagged and placed in the bin store/wheelie bin provided.

Tenants are not permitted to store bicycles, motorcycles, prams etc in the closes or do anything, which causes inconvenience or danger to anyone using the common parts.

These areas will be inspected on a weekly basis by the Estates Assistant and at least once a month by the Housing Services Officer. However it is likely to be more frequent as the Housing Services Officer is usually carrying

out daily visits in the area, for reasons other than estate management inspections.

#### **6.4 Pets**

All domestic birds, rodents, etc. must be kept in cages. On no account will the Association tolerate the keeping of domestic birds that are not caged. Pigeons and other such species of birds shall only be kept with the express permission of the Association, having first considered the views of tenants in adjoining properties.

Any dog which is classed a “dangerous dog” shall be registered as such and muzzled on all occasions when it is in the common parts of the Association’s housing stock.

Where tenants allow their pets to cause a nuisance (e.g. dog fouling) the Association will make every effort to enforce the Conditions of Tenancy by requesting that the dog is brought under control.

Where this fails, or where a private owner is involved, a report will be made to the Housing Management & Maintenance Sub-Committee, with a view to taking action under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

#### **6.5 Support Services for Tenants with Special Needs**

The Association will liaise with the Social Work Department, Health Authority, West Dunbartonshire Tenancy Support Team, West Dunbartonshire Occupational Therapy Department and any other relevant agencies to assist in the formulation of assistance plans for tenants with specific needs.

Housing Management staff will attempt to identify any special needs or vulnerabilities of tenants. For example, a close cleaning service or garden maintenance will be provided where a tenant (living on their own) is frail or infirm.

#### **6.6 Controlled Entry Doors**

The aim of the controlled entry door system is to increase security and privacy.

It is important that residents do not jam the doors open. Apart from removing the benefit of security, this can cause damage to the door mechanism.

Tenants who misuse or abuse the controlled entry doors will be recharged for any damage and receive a formal written warning regarding their conduct.

### **6.7 Vandalism/Graffiti**

The removal of graffiti will be considered an emergency repair for the Association, particularly if the graffiti is one of a racial or malicious nature. It also prevents “copy-cat” graffiti, which can occur rapidly if a surface is defaced. Secondly is that some paints, glues and inks dry out over time and can become increasingly difficult to remove. Details of the graffiti will be recorded, photographs taken and the Police informed. If the person who causes the graffiti is identified, then further action will be taken by the Association. The form of action taken will depend on the nature of the graffiti, for example it could be legal action taken against a tenant or household member, which could lead to the tenancy being repossessed or it could be advising the Police to press charges and arrange for the costs to be recharged via the Courts. The above also applies to incidences of vandalism to the Association’s properties.

### **6.8 Parking of vehicles**

No vehicle, caravan or trailer belonging to a resident or anyone living with or visiting the tenant may be parked on the Association’s land unless: -

- the land is set aside for parking
- we have given you written permission
- it is a public road

and in every case it does not cause a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours.

### **6.9 Abandoned Vehicles**

As soon as an abandoned vehicle is reported to the Association's office, the Housing Services Officer will immediately telephone the local Police office, to arrange for the necessary action to be taken. If the vehicle is close to neighbouring properties, a letter will be sent to all occupiers, advising them that the Association has notified the Police.

#### **6.10 Ball Games**

The Association does not permit ball games being played in non-designated open spaces, such as car parks and adjacent to any buildings or lock ups. People who wish to play football should be advised to play in designated areas for this activity.

#### **6.11 Estates Team**

The Association currently has an Estates Team, which consists of an Estates Supervisor and two trainees. This team work closely with the Housing Services Officer and Maintenance Officer, to ensure that the estate is maintained to a high standard. The advantage of having this team is that they can respond quickly to estate management issues. Their main duty is to ensure that the Association's common areas are maintained to the high standard expected by the tenants and owners.

#### **6.12 Empty Properties**

The Association has a very low turnover in relets. Where the Association does have a property to relet, the Maintenance Officer will determine whether the property is vulnerable and whether to fit security screens, doors etc. The management of relets is covered in the Association's Void Policy & Procedures.

### **7. NEIGHBOUR DISPUTES**

The Association has a Policy, which deals specifically with neighbour disputes and recognises that dealing with complaints from tenants can be both time consuming and difficult.

In an attempt to avoid potential disputes between neighbours, the Association's Allocations system allows for 'sensitive letting'.

This means that discretion is given to staff to by-pass applicants on the waiting list where it seems likely that an allocation will result in a clash of lifestyle.

Complaints can be classified into three broad categories:

**Category one** – very serious anti-social behaviour e.g. physical assault, drug dealing etc.

**Category two** – serious anti-social behaviour e.g. excessive and persistent noise, harassment, verbal abuse etc.

**Category three** – breach of tenancy complaints e.g. stair cleaning, rubbish dumping, occasional noise nuisance etc.

Further examples of breaches neighbour complaints are contained within the tenancy agreement.

Procedures for the investigation and documentation of each type of dispute have been implemented.

As a general guideline, tenants should seek to resolve disputes amicably themselves. Where this proves impossible, or the nature of the complaint is serious, the complaint should be made in writing to the Association on the appropriate form. The Association can provide assistance to tenants in completing this form.

## **8. RACIAL HARASSMENT**

The Association is committed to dealing effectively with racial harassment suffered by its tenants or prospective tenants.

No residents should live in fear of racial harassment, either physical or verbal. As part of a comprehensive fair housing policy, we will take firm action to eradicate any form of racial harassment. Racial harassment is considered a serious breach of tenancy, which can lead to eviction.

The Association will pursue all legal remedies against the perpetrators of racial harassment including eviction, interdict and prosecution for criminal damages.

## **9. CONTACT WITH TENANTS**

The Association has a Participation Strategy and as part of the wider objective of fostering a good relationship with tenants/owners, all residents will be encouraged to take an active role in the upkeep of the area. This will be achieved through:

- *consultation e.g. review of Estate Management Policy*
- *participation*
- *involvement*
- *control*
- *resident feedback*

This should ensure that tenants get the best use and value for money for the housing management service they pay for.

## **10. PUBLICITY**

The Association will publicise the Association's Estate Management Performance and Standards, via Estate Management Flyers, Newsletters, Annual Report etc.

## **11. POLICY REVIEW**

This Policy will be reviewed every three years.