

Castlehill Housing Association

ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES



Approval Date June 2016
Next Policy Review Date June 2019

1. Policy

1.1 Aims

Our Estate Management Policy aims to achieve a high level of performance and quality in Estate Management in line with the Outcomes and Standards detailed in the Scottish Social Housing Charter

The primary charter outcome is Outcome 6: Estate Management, Anti Social Behaviour, Neighbour Nuisance and tenancy disputes which states that:

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

Other relevant outcomes from the Charter are:

Outcome 2: Communication

Outcome 3: Participation

Outcome 13: Value for Money

The Estate Management Policy aims to complement other policies and procedures including:

- Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment Policy
- Reactive and Planned Maintenance Policies
- Relevant Health & Safety Policies
- Void Management Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Tenant Participation Policy

These complementary policies are documented separately.

1.2 Objectives

- To ensure that both the Association and tenants meet relevant obligations in relation to estate management issues contained in the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.
- To maintain high standards in common areas such as stairs, entrances, bin stores, drying areas, gardens and car parks and ensure that Health and Safety obligations are met.
- To ensure that housing stock and common areas are regularly inspected by staff and, that visits are documented and any arising issues are dealt with effectively.
- To ensure that repairs to common areas reported are prioritised correctly and carried out within target and to a high standard.
- To minimise vandalism and damage.
- To provide a service which has a positive impact on tenant satisfaction with their environment and local community.

- To encourage tenant involvement in maintaining the common areas of their homes to a good standard.
- To ensure Housing Management and Maintenance staff maintain a “high profile” and that mutually beneficial good landlord/tenant relationships develop.
- To ensure the upkeep of the housing stock and surrounding environment is managed to a standard which contributes to reduction in void property times.
- To ensure effective liaison with appropriate agencies such as Local Authority Departments, Community Wardens or Police in relation to environment issues such as street lighting, refuse collection, vandalism or abandoned vehicles.

Maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction is the overall objective of Estate Management Policy.

1.3 Monitoring and Reporting

Reports on any relevant Estate Management issues will be included in each Housing Management Report to the quarterly Housing Management Sub Committee. Large scale Tenants Satisfaction Surveys or smaller scheme specific surveys will assess satisfaction ratings by asking the relevant satisfaction question and this will be reported through the submission of the Annual Return on Charter to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The appropriate Housing Manager will monitor implementation of policy and procedures on an ongoing basis and ensure performance information is correctly documented. Further detail on this is contained within the procedures in Section 2 below.

Targets for Frequency of Inspections are as follows:

General Inspection of All Common Areas	- Minimum 2x per annum
Communal Cleaning	- Minimum 2x per annum
Garden Areas	- Minimum 2x per annum
Play Equipment Provided by Castlehill	- Minimum 2x per year
Sheltered Housing Scheme Inspections	- Minimum 3x per annum
Caretaker Meetings	- Minimum 2x per annum

2. Procedures

2.1 Estate Inspections & Visits

Prior to the inspections, Housing Officers will use the standard letter to write to all the tenants in the scheme and invite them to participate in the inspection. Tenant involvement in the inspections ensures that tenant concerns about scheme issues are addressed.

Joint inspections will be carried out by the relevant Housing and Maintenance Officers. They will ensure that all common areas of the designated stock which they manage are inspected a minimum of twice per year. Where possible this inspection can normally be carried out when staff are visiting the property in relation to other matters. Such visits are formally recorded in the 'General File' for the scheme detailing date of visit, any issues noted and follow up action taken.

Estate inspections will consider the condition of the fabric and environment including cellars and bike stores and check the working order of installations such as door entry systems or stair lighting, for example. The Housing and Maintenance Officers will take all necessary follow up action to ensure the objective of maintaining these areas to a good standard is achieved. Actions may involve liaison with tenants, maintenance or technical staff or other agencies such as Environmental Services, as appropriate.

Where significant issues are noted all tenants will be informed in writing of any action we intend to take to remedy problems using the relevant standard letter

2.2 Sheltered/Very Sheltered Housing

The Housing Manager (Sheltered) will ensure that Scheme Managers regularly inspect the condition of common areas and report back on any Estate Management issues arising in order that appropriate action can be taken. Any concerns will be addressed at the scheme meetings between Scheme Managers, Sheltered Housing Manager and Maintenance Officers which take place 3 times annually.

2.3 Caretakers

In larger General Needs/Amenity schemes, a Caretaker service may be provided. In addition to common area cleaning responsibilities, the Caretaker will ensure that facilities and equipment in these areas are supervised and will report appropriately to Housing Management or Maintenance staff where action is required. Liaison meetings between the Caretaker, Housing Officer and Maintenance Officer will take place at minimum twice per annum.

2.4 Cleaning of Common Areas

It is Association policy, in relation to common area cleaning, to employ a cleaner or cleaning contractor to provide this service, with the exception of certain small schemes and tenement properties where this would not be cost effective.

Housing Officers (or Scheme Managers as appropriate) are responsible for supervising the work of cleaners or cleaning contractors (including window cleaners). This work will be formally inspected a minimum of two times per annum at each scheme. If staff are visiting the scheme for other purposes and note a concern, appropriate action should be taken to remedy the issue. In addition, staff will liaise with tenants as required to ensure that inappropriate use of the common areas does not hinder the cleaning process eg storage of prams, bikes etc.

Cleaners are required to meet standards specified in their job descriptions or contracts in respect of quality of work and health and safety compliance.

Cleaners will be responsible for collection of litter in common areas other than those covered by gardeners or where a Caretaker is employed.

2.5 Refuse Disposal/Bin Stores

The Association will ensure that each of our properties has adequate facilities for refuse and recycling prior to uplift by the Local Authority. Tenants are advised of their responsibilities in relation to refuse disposal and use of binstores in the tenancy agreement and tenant handbook and Housing Officers and Scheme Managers have responsibility for ensuring these conditions are met.

The Association will provide regular information on procedures for uplift of large refuse items through the tenants' newsletter.

Where refuse or other items are left in inappropriate common areas without permission, Housing Officers will make necessary enquiries to identify the tenants responsible. Such tenants will be given a deadline for removal of the items and will be advised that failure to comply will result in the Association arranging removal and re-charging all associated costs. If no responsible tenant can be identified the costs of removing will be charged to common services at the scheme.

Where communal bins are provided at a scheme, the Association will arrange cleaning of these as required. Housing Officers will encourage appropriate use of bin stores and/or communal bins to ensure additional cleaning requirements are minimised.

2.6 Security and Crime Prevention

Housing Management staff will liaise with Development staff on appropriate security considerations to be taken into account in new build schemes.

The Housing and Maintenance Officers will ensure that security features such as controlled entry systems, main door locks and security lights are checked during estate inspections and that all defects are properly attended to.

Use of CCTV will be considered where this is most appropriate as a detection or deterrent tool and where all legal requirements regarding use of such equipment can be met.

Association staff will seek to work closely with Police, Community Wardens and tenants groups to prevent or reduce incidents of crime and vandalism in schemes.

2.7 Car Parks and Abandoned Vehicles

All car parking facilities provided by the Association will be included in inspections of common areas to ensure they are being maintained and used properly. Any inappropriate use will be actioned by Housing Officers as required. Housing Officers will ensure that conditions of the tenancy agreement in relation to parking of cars by tenants or visitors are adhered to eg removal of un-roadworthy vehicles.

Where schemes have limited parking facilities, secure parking may be provided and tenants who wish to make use of this may rent a specific parking space. Priority in allocation of these spaces will be given to tenants with mobility or health problems who have particular needs for an easily accessible car parking space.

Housing Officers will encourage tenants to ensure that security car park barriers are used properly and any damage to equipment is reported to maintenance staff.

If a vehicle parked on Association property is suspected as abandoned, the following procedure should be followed:

- All tenants in the vicinity should be written to by the Housing Officer giving a deadline for responses on ownership of the vehicle.
- If no response is received Housing Officers should use the DVLA website to check who owns the vehicle and if it is taxed.
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- Housing Officers should then write directly to the owner advising them that the Association are aware of their ownership of the vehicle and stating the actions required to remedy the issue.

2.8 Gardens and Landscaped Areas

The Maintenance Manager is responsible for supervision of gardening services for communal areas and will ensure that quality of work and condition of garden areas are inspected by Maintenance Officers on a minimum of two occasions per annum. In the course of normal duties, staff should make the Maintenance Manager aware of any concerns about the standard of the gardening service.

In Sheltered Housing Schemes, contractors are asked to report that they are on site so that the visits can be recorded and any concerns can be reported back to the Maintenance Manager.

In housing stock where tenants are responsible for maintaining their own garden areas, Housing Officers will include these areas in Estate Inspections and liaise with tenants to ensure that they are meeting their tenancy obligations with regard to their gardens.

2.9 Play Areas and Equipment

On a monthly basis, Housing Officers will inspect play areas and check the condition of equipment provided by us.

Play areas will be inspected at the 6 monthly scheme inspections and any concerns or actions should be raised as a result

Where play equipment is found to be damaged and is a potential danger to users, prompt action will be taken to have equipment repaired or removed.

The Association will install safety surfaces in our play areas and ensure equipment complies with current safety standards.

Housing Management staff will encourage the involvement of local residents in the maintenance and monitoring of play areas, to discourage vandalism and ensure facilities remain fit for purpose.

Annually a qualified assessor from Aberdeen City Council will inspect the Play Areas and provide the Association with a report noting any repairs or redesign issues. Any large spend items will be considered at the Asset Management Group (AMG).

2.10 Snow and Ice Clearing

2.10.1 Sheltered Housing

In icy or snowy conditions the Association will seek, where reasonably practical, to ensure that one access path to the public footpath and to the common facilities (where applicable) is cleared and treated with a sand/salt mixture.

Clearance will be carried out by the Scheme Manager or the Relief Scheme Manager on duty at the time and will take place once during the day as weather conditions dictate. The Maintenance Officer for the scheme will ensure that appropriate equipment and sand/salt supplies are available.

Car Parks or individual parking spaces will not be cleared or treated by the Association and tenants or visitors use these facilities at their own risk.

In particularly extreme conditions where clearance is beyond the capability of scheme staff, the Association may instruct a local contractor to assist. Out of office hours, the Scheme Manager may instruct a local contractor directly.

2.10.2 Amenity Schemes

The Association will ensure that adequate supplies of sand/salt are left in an appropriate location for use by tenants/sharing owners.

In particularly extreme conditions, the Association will instruct a contractor to assist with clearance of pathways, where practical.

Additional local arrangements can be put in place at individual shared ownership developments where sharing owners wish to provide for this through the service charge.

2.10.3 Schemes with a Caretaker

Where the Association employs a Caretaker, they will ensure, as reasonably practical, that tenants have access to a public footpath and to any essential common facilities in the scheme. No additional provision will be made for periods when the caretaker is off duty.

2.10.4 General Needs Schemes

In schemes where there are access paths (not tenement buildings with direct access to the public footpath) the Association will ensure that there are adequate supplies of

sand/salt for use by tenants. Sand/ salt will also be supplied for tenements with access by external stairs.

Where the scheme has parking, the Association makes no provision for clearance of car parks or individual parking spaces and tenants, sharing owners or visitors use these facilities at their own risk.

2.10.5 Office Premises

The Association will ensure that there are adequate supplies of sand/salt and appropriate equipment to allow office staff to clear an access to the building for both staff and visitors.

Office car parks will not be cleared and staff use these facilities at their own risk. If car parks are inaccessible due to snow or ice, staff should make alternative parking arrangements.