



Estate Management Policy

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Govan Housing Association can provide this document on request, in different languages and formats, including Braille and audio formats.



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Govan Housing Association is committed to providing good quality affordable housing and to manage the properties owned and factored by the Association to the highest possible standard within the existing financial constraints.
- 1.2 Estate Management is a general term used to define Tenancy Management and Environmental Management.
- 1.3 Tenancy Management aims to encourage and support a tenant to keep the terms of their Tenancy Agreement. Where appropriate and necessary it will involve taking action to enforce compliance.
- 1.4 Environmental Management aims to create a well maintained neighbourhood in which tenants and other customers feel safe.
- 1.5 Estate Management therefore covers a diverse range of issues such as:
 - Providing advice and information on tenancy matters
 - Inspecting the condition of common areas
 - Enforcing tenancy conditions;
 - Monitoring empty and tenanted properties;
 - Providing advice and assistance to tenants and residents on services that enhance the local community,
 - Supporting initiatives to reduce crime
 - Environmental maintenance and improvements;
 - Maintenance of communal areas;
 - Co-operation with other agencies delivering services in the community
- 1.6 Estate Management is linked to, but separate from, the management of Anti-Social Behaviour. The Association's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy sets out how we deal with Anti-Social Behaviour. In some instances some Estate Management issues will evolve and escalate and will be dealt with under the guidelines of the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

2. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 Through the Scottish Social Housing Charter the Scottish Housing Regulator has identified a number of key indicators which will measure landlord performance in relation to Estate Management. They are:

Outcome 6 refers to Estate management, Anti-social behaviour, Neighbour nuisance and Tenancy disputes and requires 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

Outcome 11 refers to Tenancy sustainment and states that “Social Landlords must 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.

Outcome 13 relates to Value for money and requires that landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.

2.2 The Association is also required to comply with the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement (Scottish Secure Tenancy 5.4) outlined in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to:

- Carry out a reasonably diligent inspection of the common parts before the tenancy begins. We will take reasonable steps to remove any danger we find before you move into your house. We will repair any defect we find that will significantly affect your use of the common parts, or the house, within a reasonable period.
- Keep Boundary walls and fences (excluding dividing fences between gardens) in repair:
- Keep in good order any areas of common ground associated with your house such as common drying areas. You must not remove, destroy or chop down any bushes, hedges or trees in these areas without our written permission unless you planted them. The Association will recover the costs of maintaining any areas of common ground from rental income.

2.3 Tenants are required, through their responsibilities under the Scottish Secure Tenancy to ensure the following sections are adhered to:

a) Scottish Secure Tenancy (Section 2.3)

You (the tenant), those living with you, and your visitors must take reasonable care to prevent damage to the common parts

b) Scottish Secure Tenancy (Section 2.6)

You are not entitled to keep any domestic pet in the house or in common parts without prior consent in writing of the Association. Consent will not be withheld unreasonably.

c) Scottish Secure Tenancy (section 2.9)

Tenants must take their turn, with all other tenants and owner-occupiers sharing the common parts, in keeping them clean and tidy.

We will ensure the majority of our closes are kept to a reasonable standard of cleanliness by providing a stair cleaning service. We will aim to keep the cost of this service to tenants to a minimum whilst ensuring that the contractor meets our standards.

The costs of maintaining areas of common ground will be met from the Association's Rental Income.

d) Scottish Secure Tenancy (Section 2.10)

Tenants must comply with any local arrangements for the use and sharing of the common parts including drying greens and drying areas.

e) Scottish Secure Tenancy (section 2.11)

If you have exclusive use of a garden attached to the house, you must take reasonable care to keep it from becoming overgrown, untidy or causing a nuisance (unless we have agreed to take care of it).

You must not remove, destroy or chop down any bushes, hedges or trees in these areas without our written permission unless you planted them.

f) Scottish Secure Tenancy (section 2.12)

If you share a garden with others, you must take your turn with them to keep it from becoming overgrown, untidy or causing a nuisance (unless we have agreed to take care of it).

g) Scottish Secure Tenancy (section 2.13)

No property belonging to you or anyone residing with you, including bicycles, motorcycles or prams, should be stored in any of the common parts except in areas set aside for storage. You must not do anything that causes inconvenience or danger to anyone using the common parts.

h) Scottish Secure Tenancy (section 2.14)

Tenants must put all your household rubbish for collection in the bin store or other proper place allocated for it. You must take reasonable care to see that your rubbish is properly bagged.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 We recognise that Estate Management is a vital part of our housing management role as a landlord and a particularly important service for all our residents, therefore the key aims and objectives of this policy are:

- To provide a comprehensive and responsive customer service to the Association's tenants, sharing and factored owners
- To develop mutually beneficial good landlord/tenant/resident relationships
- Ensure the housing stock and surrounding environment is managed and maintained to a standard which reduces the duration and level of void properties
- To have in place a robust asset management and implementation strategy to ensure the long term maintenance of the Association's properties and ensure compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, EESH and any subsequent Government regulatory requirements.
- To ensure the Association satisfies all health, safety and environmental requirements and legislation
- To provide the Association's customers with advice and information services as a means of supporting sustainable tenancies

3.2 We recognise that Estate Management is not solely about looking after buildings and the physical environment. It is also providing or arranging necessary advice and support to tenants and residents. It also involves working with other agencies to achieve decent living and environmental conditions.

4.0 OUR ESTATE MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING OUR KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 Housing Stock

A planned maintenance programme will be put in place and regular works surveys carried out by the Maintenance Officers to ensure its effective implementation. In the course of their regular duties all members of our housing and maintenance staff will look for, and report on, any signs of deterioration to our properties.

4.2 Making Tenants Aware of Their Responsibilities

We will explain the Conditions of Tenancy before the tenant signs a tenancy agreement. We will give the tenant a copy of our Tenant's Handbook that explains the conditions of tenancy in a simple and straightforward manner.

Housing Staff will attempt to carry out New Tenancy visits within six weeks of the beginning of a new tenancy. Follow up visits will be programmed as necessary following that initial visit, where it is apparent that the tenant may require support to keep to the conditions of tenancy.

We will liaise with external support agencies where any tenant requires support to sustain their tenancy, and the support is of a type or extent that cannot be provided by our staff. The Association carries out a visit each two years to each tenancy. This will be an opportunity to identify and address Estate Management issues with tenants.

4.3 The Keeping and the Control of Pets

In terms of keeping and the control of pets, our Scottish Secure Tenancy requires that tenants must:

- Be responsible for the behaviour of any pets owned by you or anyone living with you
- Take all reasonable steps to supervise and keep such pets under control and shall not permit it to be unsupervised at any time within the common parts of the property

- Take all reasonable steps to prevent such pets causing nuisance annoyance or danger to your neighbours. This includes fouling or noise or smell from your domestic pet
- Take reasonable care to see that such pets cause damage to the house, your neighbour's property, anything belonging to us or anything we are responsible for, such as the common parts
- Be responsible for cleaning up any faeces from any pet you are responsible for
- Keep no livestock within the property or common parts

The definition of pets in terms of the legislation is dogs, cats, birds, reptiles and rodents.

We will also require all tenants to obtain permission in writing and in advance before keeping any domestic pet within the property or surrounding areas. We will normally only grant permission for one domestic pet per property. The Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement sets out the requirements.

The decision to allow a tenant to keep more than one pet will be made by the Customer Services Officer for the relevant Community Area.

4.4 Maintaining Common Areas to a High Standard

We will set out high standards in our specifications for the maintenance of common areas. Specifications will be set out and periodically reviewed for the following contracts to ensure a satisfactory standard is met:

- Landscape & Estates Maintenance
- Close Cleaning

Contract Estates and Landscaping staff will notify Association staff of any adhoc issues found whilst carrying out estate maintenance – e.g. untidy common areas.

Contract cleaners will notify Association staff of any adhoc issues found within a close whilst cleaning – e.g. sharps or graffiti

We will also:

- Carry out regular inspections to check on both condition and cleanliness;
- Maintain contact with tenants and residents to identify specific problem areas;

- Inform concerned tenants and residents in writing of action which we propose to take to remedy any such problems identified;
- Monitor on a continuing basis to ensure that required standards are achieved and maintained;
- Arrange for repairs to be carried out promptly once the need has been identified or reported;
- Arrange for graffiti removal to be carried out promptly once the need has been identified or reported; we will aim to remove offensive graffiti within 24 hours of it being reported;
- Periodically review resident satisfaction with stair cleaning and Landscape maintenance

4.5 We will take a proactive approach to Estate Management

Housing staff will regularly monitor matters affecting the general environmental conditions for our tenants and residents and, where necessary, we shall liaise with other agencies to ensure that action is taken to secure and maintain a desirable level of environmental amenity.

This will cover such matters as litter, street cleaning, cleansing services, lighting, abandoned cars, parking of caravans and other large vehicles/craft, conditions of footpaths, etc. and notify or liaise with other agencies that may be able to assist in resolving any issues.

Other agencies include:

Police

It will be appropriate to contact the police where there is reason to believe that a tenant or household member is involved in some form of illegal activity.

Social Work

The Social Work Department has a major role to play in a number of situations which might also include a breach of tenancy. Social Work may be able to provide critical support to an individual in order to enable a person to sustain their tenancy.

Health Board

Community Health workers may be able to provide information on specific health problems being faced by families which may impact on their ability to sustain their tenancy.

Environmental Health

The Environmental Health Department may be able to assist or support the Association in various matters, such examples being pest control, excessive noise etc. and has powers to take action.

Voluntary Organisations

There are a wide range of voluntary organisations working within the Association's area of operation and many offer services which could be relevant to difficulties which may come to the attention of the Association and assist with Estate Management issues.

Glasgow City Council Community Safety

We will work in partnership with GCC Community Safety in terms of all Estate Management issues such as excessive noise, dog fouling and any other issues that have a detrimental impact on the Association's properties. Association Staff will communicate regularly with GCC Neighbourhood Co-ordinator and Enforcement Officers in order to resolve any complaints/issues reported.

We will have regular estate management walkabouts carried out by the Customer Service Officers/Customer Service Advisors which may sometimes involve residents, tenant and owners groups within their neighbourhood. As part of our objective of encouraging good tenant/landlord relationships we will encourage tenants and residents to take an active interest and participate in issues that affect the community and the work of the Association.

We will aim to achieve this through our Customer Feedback and Complaints Procedure in compliance the Scottish Housing Charter. In particular, we will

- Have periodical communication with individual tenants through personal letters, newsletters, home visits and information sheets;
- Hold meetings with any organised tenant and resident groups;
- The involvement of tenants and residents at a local level to improve their community through public consultation over environmental improvements, artworks etc.

4.6 Common Stairways

The Association will offer a close stair cleaning service to all residents. For owners, the costs will be recovered through an addition to the management charge.

The Association will inspect common stairs and closes on a regular and recorded basis. The frequency of such inspections will be assessed by the Association on the basis on the condition of stairs and closes.

The condition of common stairs will be assessed with relation to:

- Presence of any material in the close or stair that would present a fire hazard or obstruction to clear exit route in the event of a fire;
- Presence of any refuse or dumping in the stair or close;
- Presence of graffiti or evidence of vandalism in the stair;
- Presence of any tripping hazard in the stair and close and the physical condition of the stair and close floor, walls and ceilings;
- Cleanliness of the stair and close, walls and windows. These inspections will usually be done directly after the stair cleaners have cleaned the close.

Where items are found within the stair that are considered to be a fire hazard or obstruction, the Association will try to identify the person(s) responsible and require that the item be removed as soon as possible. The Association will remove the items if the owner cannot be identified or if the owner does not remove the items as required within the period of notice. If the person responsible is identified but has not removed the items within the period of notice they will be recharged for removal and disposal costs.

Where sharps are identified in a common stair, a job will be raised and completed within 24 hours.

Should a persistent issue continue to re-occur within a common stair and the person responsible cannot be identified, the Association may recharge the entire close or refer to Community Engagement Officer to gauge if there is interest for a close residents group.

4.7 Disposing of waste appropriately & common bin areas

Adequate storage for rubbish will be provided by means of wheelie and recycling bins. Where recycling bins are continually contaminated, these will be removed in order that they do not pose an environmental health risk.

Tenants will be signposted to the Glasgow City Council website at the start of their tenancy to obtain what day(s) the bins will be emptied.

Tenants must take their turn, with all other tenants and owner-occupiers sharing the common parts, including common bin areas, in keeping them clean, tidy and free from litter.

Reasonable steps will be taken to identify any tenants who do not dispose of rubbish/ household items appropriately including house visits. The Association may recharge a tenant for the cost of disposing any rubbish/household items where the tenant has failed to do so correctly.

The Association will produce educational materials in the appropriate format(s) where it is identified there is a lack of knowledge in any street/area on appropriate refuse disposal.

4.8 Vermin and Pest Control in Common Areas

Where evidence of vermin or pests occurs, the Association will assist and encourage residents to report this to Glasgow City Council to deal with the problem in accordance with environmental health guidelines.

4.9 Garden Maintenance

Tenants must ensure individual and shared gardens are kept clean and tidy and do not become overgrown, unless the Association has agreed to take care of the garden.

We will have regular estate management walkabouts carried out by the Customer Service Officers/Customer Service Advisors and if an untidy garden is identified, the tenant will be given a timescale to rectify this.

The Association may instruct work to tidy the garden if the tenant does not do so to an acceptable standard as required within the period of notice. The tenant will be recharged for this.

Persistent failure to maintain a shared or individual garden may result in tenancy action.

4.10 Unoccupied properties

The Association may secure a void property while it is unoccupied, this may include the use of shutters on any ground floor property, if required. At regular estate management visits, Housing Officers/Housing Assistants will externally inspect empty properties for signs of forced entry or unauthorised occupation, and will advise Maintenance staff if it appears that an empty property is not secure.

4.11 Abandoned property

The Association will take action to promptly investigate and where necessary, recover possession of an abandoned property in accordance with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and any other relevant legislation which is set out in the Association's abandonment procedures.

4.12 Owner Occupiers and other residents

We will seek the involvement and support of owner-occupiers and other residents in our efforts to achieve our estate management objectives.

4.13 Satellite Dishes

The Association has provided a communal satellite TV system in some areas of our housing stock e.g. tenemental stock and new build. Tenants and residents and proprietors of commercial premises will not be permitted to erect individual dishes where the communal system covers their property. Residents and commercial proprietors who have dishes erected without permission will be requested to remove them. Where they are not removed after due notice, the Association will remove them. The Association will recover, where possible, the costs of removal from the resident or proprietor.

5.0 ENFORCING CONDITIONS OF TENANCY AND/OR TAKING LEGAL ACTION

5.1 The Association's general approach to dealing with breaches of conditions of tenancy will be as follows:

5.2 Contact will be made with the affected residents and, where appropriate, their neighbours to clarify the issues, and explain the tenants' responsibilities. The objective at this stage will be to reach mutual agreement between those concerned on the action which should be taken. However, if mediation is inappropriate or ineffective, enforcing conditions of tenancy may involve contact with other agencies. Agreements on action will be confirmed in writing to the individual(s) concerned.

5.3 If there is persistent or serious breach of the conditions of tenancy the Association will consider legal action. These cases must be approved by the Housing Manager/Director and the action may involve:

- Action for damages, for example in cases of damage to property;
- Action for specific implement or Interdict;
- Anti-Social Behaviour Order, where the behaviour is defined as Anti-Social Behaviour;

- Eviction. This will only be used in the most extreme circumstances and where the breach of tenancy is very serious. This must be done on approval by the Housing Manager/Director

6.0 STAFF TRAINING

- 6.1 The Customer Services Manager will ensure that all staff has the appropriate training and knowledge to perform their job effectively and to carry out the key aims and objectives of the Estate Management Policy. We will achieve this by employing staff with relevant qualifications and/or experience and through encouraging the take-up of suitable training opportunities.

7.0 COMPLAINTS

- 7.1 Anyone who feels aggrieved by the service they have received from staff in carrying out their responsibilities in relation to this policy and its associated procedures can make an informal or formal complaint to the Association.
- 7.2 All complaints will be fully investigated in accordance with the Association's Complaints Procedure. A written guide on the complaints process is readily available to customers on request and is on display in the reception area of the office.
- 7.3 Any tenant making a complaint will be advised of their right to complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

8.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 8.1 The Association will seek to ensure that in implementing this policy and its associated procedures, no group, organisation or individual will receive less favourable treatment or be discriminated against regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age or other grounds.
- 8.2 On request the Association will provide translations of all our documents, policies and procedures in various languages and other formats large print, Braille etc. and these can be obtained by contacting the Association's offices.

9.0 POLICY REPORTING

9.1 We will report on the achievement of service objectives described in this policy to the Operations Sub-Committee on a regular basis. This will include such items as

- Checking that the service is effective;
- Seeking tenants' views on the service;
- Reviewing policies, practices and performance at regular intervals.

10.0 POLICY REVIEW

10.1 This policy will be reviewed on a 3 yearly basis or earlier if the legislation changes to ensure that its aims are being met.