



<b>Estate Management Policy</b>	
<b>Approved by Committee of Management</b>	November 2010
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## **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Cathcart & District Housing Association is a Registered Social Landlord and this policy has been prepared in line with statute, Performance Standards and other Guidance prepared by Communities Scotland.
- 1.2 The policy sets down the standards that apply where CDHA owns or directly manages housing stock on behalf of another landlord.
- 1.3 The Estate Management Policy has been agreed by CDHA's Management Committee (or designated sub committee) which will receive periodic reports on its operation. Responsibility for its implementation lies with the designated staff who are also responsible for reporting to the relevant committee as required.

## **2. PRINCIPLES, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 2.1 CDHA has a clear commitment to continuous improvement and to the exploration of new ideas in all areas of its work. The objectives of this policy are:
  - To enable all tenants and their households to live in well managed and maintained housing.
  - To ensure that tenants are able to live in a decent, secure, clean and tidy environment.
  - To ensure that tenants are made aware of, and accept, their responsibilities in relation to the upkeep of their property and the surrounding area.
  - To ensure that tenants are made aware of CDHA's responsibilities in relation to estate management.
  - To work with other agencies and statutory bodies with the aim of ensuring that communities are well looked after.

## **3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- 3.1 CDHA is committed to providing fair and equal treatment to all tenants, applicants and other service users. CDHA will not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, age, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family circumstances, employment status or physical ability.
- 3.2 This policy complies fully with CDHA's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 3.3 CDHA will check its estate management policy and associated procedures regularly for their equal opportunity implications, taking appropriate action to address inequalities likely to result or resulting from the implementation of the policy and procedures.

#### **4. POLICY DEFINITION AND RESPONSIBILITY**

- 4.1 For the purpose of clarity estate management within this policy is deemed to be concerned with maintaining the physical condition, cleanliness and safety of the overall housing environment both to preserve its fabric and to ensure that the community is a place where people wish to live. A dynamic approach towards area management combines attention to detail of routine management problems with the ability to manage housing areas strategically and with other agencies.
- 4.2 This policy cross-relates to the CDHA Neighbour Relations policy, as both are tenancy related in terms of performance standards and compliance with the tenancy agreement. Many housing areas require a multi-agency approach to area management particularly with a high profile for the Police. This policy places a strong emphasis on a proactive and supportive approach to estate management that focuses on creating sustainable and supported tenancies to enable the stability of areas, social inclusion and the prevention of homelessness.
- 4.3 For CDHA this means having the responsibility to inspect and to maintain its housing, the common areas of that housing, the surrounding environment within the curtilage of the buildings and any land or other buildings within its ownership. CDHA believes that it is essential to work with tenants to encourage everyone to participate in this process.
- 4.4 For tenants it means compliance with their responsibilities for maintaining in good order their surrounding environment, as well as their own individual property, and in doing so to respect the rights of their neighbours and the surrounding community, all as laid down in their Tenancy Agreement. The detailed terms of the Tenancy Agreement should be read in conjunction with this policy.
- 4.5 This policy therefore covers the following:
- The general requirements for estate management.
  - The Prevention of Problems and Sustaining Tenancies.
  - The regular and routine inspection of buildings, common areas and estates, including the systems and methods whereby buildings, common areas and estates are kept in good order.
  - The systems for responding to estate management problems.

#### **General Requirements**

- 4.6 CDHA will seek to;
- Ensure that estate management services are planned, effectively budgeted for and managed to a high standard

- Ensure that sufficient staff resources are provided for estate management services
- Ensure that the common areas for which CDHA have responsibility are regularly checked and maintained to the highest possible standard
- React promptly and act upon in relation to estate management problems including complaints from tenants, for example about service quality or neglect by tenants
- Maintain appropriate estate management records covering each house, common area and any other building or area of land in CDHA ownership or management.
- Co-operate wherever possible with other relevant organisations in order to maintain and enhance the quality of the local environment

### **The Prevention of Problems and Sustaining Tenancies**

- 4.7 The prevention of estate management problems is one of the most effective ways of ensuring tenants can enjoy living in a well cared for environment. Preventative measures include elements of sustaining tenancies, design/construction, tenant and resident awareness and participation and management arrangements aimed at preventing or minimising problems.
- 4.8 The sustaining of tenancies involves ensuring each tenancy begins on a sound footing. At the accompanied viewing and at the sign-up interview the tenant should be fully briefed and should understand the landlord and tenant roles and responsibilities as covered by the tenancy agreement. This should be followed through with housing support where necessary.
- 4.9 At the sign-up stage the new tenant should be given a tenants handbook that includes comprehensive information with a summary of landlord and tenant responsibilities. This should be followed up by a 'new tenant' home visit within the first six weeks of the tenancy. More frequent visits should be planned where housing support is required.
- 4.10 Housing Officers should note and act upon problems and issues through actively listening to tenants' complaints and concerns about issues that affect the quality of life locally. The key approaches to effective estate management are housing led but also need input from other agencies such as the Police and Council service departments. These may include:
- The attention to detail with relatively minor problems that have the potential for escalation such as disputes over litter within a tenement close
  - Planning and providing housing and other support where required
  - Taking early action to address new problems such as with graffiti appearing for the first time

- Environmental Audit Reports with periodic monitoring statements
- The co-operation with partners including Community Policing on addressing crime related issues such as vandalism and car theft / car abandonment
- The use of Newsletters to highlight landlord and tenant roles and responsibilities, service standards and special initiatives
- Tenant satisfaction surveys and Environmental Suggestion schemes

4.11 When a tenancy has ended or been established to have been abandoned the Housing Officer will arrange to inspect the house and will arrange to charge the outgoing tenant for any repairs or removal of abandoned possessions for example left in garden areas.

## **5. TENANT AWARENESS OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

5.1 Outlining the responsibilities of both CDHA and tenants and the importance of effective estate management will form a key part of the Tenancy Sign Up and to subsequent settling in visits. This will be a key Housing Officer responsibility. Tenants will be made aware of their responsibilities, of the arrangements that are in place for the maintenance of common areas and of the procedures for reporting and dealing with problems should they arise. Tenants can also be made aware of more general activities and developments through newsletters and other communication routes.

5.2 The CDHA tenancy agreement specifies tenants' responsibilities including:

- The tenant, the person living with the tenant or visitors must take reasonable care to prevent damage to the house and neighbours' property, the neighbourhood/locality, lifts servicing the house or neighbours' houses and the common parts
- Taking all reasonable steps to prevent pets from causing a nuisance, annoyance or a detriment to health and safety or presenting a danger to anyone living with the tenant or the tenants' neighbours
- Unless services are provided, taking a turn of close cleaning and washing
- Appropriate storage of belongings and parking of vehicles and caravans etc.
- Ensuring that bikes and other large toys are stored within the tenants flat. The common area is not an appropriate place for these articles

- Careful and appropriate disposal of refuse including bulk refuse for uplifting
- 5.3 CDHA has developed procedures to be pursued in order that the above can be managed, for example in relation to action against occupiers of poorly maintained common areas.
- 5.4 The CDHA Repairs and Maintenance policy provides for rechargeable repairs where tenants can be charged for repairs resulting from wilful damage by them or members of their family or household to the house or within the common areas, for example to fencing, slabs, cladding or down-pipes.

### **Design and Construction:**

- 5.5 Both CDHA and GHA's investment programmes are aimed at improving the quality and attractiveness of the existing housing stock. In delivering that programme CDHA will seek to incorporate all (or as many as possible) Secure by Design features in its work. Specific attention will be given to the design and improvement of shared and common areas to provide residents with the maximum amount of clearly defined, defensible space and to minimise large and open access common areas.
- 5.6 CDHA will make provision to make the maximum use of CCTV (within guidelines on civil liberties) if necessary in order to serve as a deterrent, provide a monitoring facility and provide a sense of security in common access areas. Estate parking and traffic management arrangements should reflect anticipated car ownership, planning conditions and road safety issues for areas. Emergency services access routes and fire-paths should be clearly marked and kept access free.

## **6. RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORISATION**

- 6.1 A crucial part of the prevention of problems lies with providing tenants and others e.g. owners, with clarity on key issues of responsibility. What is permissible within Tenancy Agreements, Deeds of Condition and other agreements needs to be clearly explained and properly understood. Equally, the consequences of failure to adhere to such agreements must be equally clear. The following are examples of such issues:

- Satellite dishes
- Dirty houses
- Refuse disposal
- Pets
- Storage of bikes and large outdoor toys

CDHA may review its position on such matters from time to time. Such reviews can be independent of the general review of this policy.

### **Inspection and Maintenance**

6.2 CDHA housing areas will be regularly inspected with services provided by various contractors.

6.3 Responsibility for the regular and routine inspection of common areas, and any attendant fixtures e.g. fencing, lighting, include the following:

- Common stairs Maintenance/Housing officer
- Common Backcourts Maintenance/Housing officer
- Common land Maintenance/Housing officer

6.4 CDHA shall set down the timing and scope for such inspections and will have regard to any contracts or Service Level Agreements with other agencies. The purpose of such inspections shall include both the appraisal of work that has been done and the identification of work that may be required.

6.5 CDHA will have output specifications with for example close cleaning services for the de-littering of backcourt areas and arrangements for bulk refuse uplifts. CDHA will also have output specifications for seasonal communal backcourt maintenance including weed control and grass cutting. Audit arrangements will be in place for constant monitoring of these services

6.6 Where the upkeep of an area is the responsibility of the tenant it shall be the responsibility of Housing Officers to enforce the conditions of tenancy.

6.7 Monitoring the condition of private gardens (front) shall be the responsibility of Housing Officers/Maintenance Officers and shall be on the basis of a cycle of programmed inspections. Such inspections shall be to establish whether in the judgement of the officer, the condition of the garden falls below the standard required in the Tenancy Agreement. Where appropriate tenants can be included within a garden maintenance scheme and void houses with gardens are also included within a garden maintenance programme.

## **7. RESPONSE**

7.1 CDHA will ensure that prompt and appropriate action will be taken to deal with estate management problems arising either from regular staff inspections or from tenant complaints.

7.2 All tenants who wish to make a complaint:

- Will be given information detailing how to make a complaint concerning estate management whether it is about a tenant, a contractor or CDHA or CDHA's service.
- All complaints will be recorded and dealt with in accordance with the Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- Where one tenant is complaining about another, the Neighbour Relations policy will be used.

7.3 CDHA will avoid the use of legal action in relation to estate management as far as possible but will be prepared to take such action where a tenant is in breach of their tenancy agreement and all other action has been tried and has failed to remedy the situation.

7.4 The decision to initiate legal action will be taken by the Director of CDHA. All legal action will be reported to the relevant Committee and it will be this committee that decides whether or not to proceed with enforcement of any decree or decision handed down by the courts.

7.5 Legal action may include action for eviction but CDHA may seek lesser or different sanctions depending on the nature of the problem and the legal remedies open to the landlord.

7.6 Where complaints relate to the performance or failure of a contractor to properly maintain an area e.g. common ground, to the standard agreed as part of their contract, CDHA will:

- Establish the extent of the failure.
- Where appropriate provide the contractor with an opportunity to make good the failure.
- If necessary enforce the clauses within the contract relating to performance failure.

7.7 The above is a summary of the steps to be taken by staff in addressing contract failure. Individual contracts and agreements will include separate and detailed clauses relating to performance and sanctions for performance failure and staff will follow the agreed procedures to seek resolution of contractor failure.

## **8. PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

8.1 CDHA has developed a Performance Monitoring Framework aimed at both establishing those measures, which are key to the successful delivery of the Business Plan, and developing the mechanisms whereby such measures can be monitored.

8.2 CDHA will include performance-monitoring statements (including reviews of performance) within its IMP and will develop monitoring mechanisms, which facilitate such statements. The monitoring of external contractor

performance will follow the detailed terms of each contract and will be included within the IMP.

## **9. EXTERNAL AGENCIES**

9.1 Many estate management issues essentially involve a number of different agencies with overlapping jurisdictions. Examples of this include:

- Police: dealing with vandalism, drugs, anti social behaviour.
- Environmental Health: nuisance pets, noise, health hazards.
- Social Work: Anti social behaviour, vulnerable families.

9.2 Joint working is regarded as crucial to the resolution of many estate management issues and to this end CDHA is developing joint protocols with the above agencies to achieve:

- Clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Processes for agency involvement at key stages in dealing with estate management problems.

9.3 These protocols will be made available to tenants and the public as part of this policy and reference to them will be included in the Tenants Handbook.

### **Policy Review**

9.4 This overall policy will be subject to review at least every three years. Any review will follow the requirements of Section 54 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 in relation to consulting tenants about any proposed changes which may have significantly impact on tenants. Any such consultation will include both registered tenants organisations and individual tenants. This will also apply to any proposed changes to matters dealt with in any of the appendices.

## **10. COMPLAINTS**

10.1 Complaints against the operation of this policy will be dealt with under the terms of CDHAs Complaints Policy and Procedure.