



Rural Stirling

HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Estate Management Policy (Draft)

Rural Stirling Housing Association, Stirling Road, Doune, FK16 6AA. Registered as a Scottish Charity No. SC037849	
Date Policy approved by Management Committee	
Date Policy reviewed by Management Committee	
Review Period	
Review Due	

Rural Stirling Housing Association Estate Management Policy

1. Introduction and policy statement

1.1 Estate Management is a general term used to include tenancy management and environmental management. Estate Management is a vital part of the role of the landlord and viewed as an important service by tenants and other residents.

1.2 In terms of the Association's policy Estate Management refers to the management of the property and the surrounding areas. The aim of the policy is to allow our tenants and residents to enjoy their homes in a decent, safe and secure living environment'

1.3 Estate management encompasses a wide range of activities including, providing clear advice to tenants about their responsibilities in relation to the use of the property and common parts; enforcement of tenancy conditions; the management of communal areas and the physical environment in the Association's ownership.

1.4 The Estate management policy sets out what standards we expect of tenants, how we monitor these standards and what action we will take if tenants fail to adhere to these standards

2. Policy Aims and Objectives

2.1 The aims of the Association's Estate Management Policy are to ensure:

- all tenants live in well managed housing in a decent, safe, clean and tidy environment.
- tenants, are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to the upkeep of their property and surrounding environment
- tenants are made aware of the Association's responsibilities in relation to Estate Management,
- tenants, are satisfied with the Estate Management service provided by the Association,
- we provide opportunities for tenant's feedback in order to influence and participate in decision making relating to estate management,
- the housing stock and surrounding environment are managed and maintained to a high standard

2.2 To achieve the above objectives the Association will:

- Give clear information about tenant responsibilities at property viewings and as part of the sign up process.
- Provide good quality newsletter articles and customer service standards

- Ensure staff maintain a visible presence throughout the Association's housing developments,
- Ensure that staff act proactively and take appropriate and early action to enforce tenancy conditions where applicable,
- Carry out regular inspections of our housing developments,
- Closely monitor the performance of contractors in relation to the upkeep of all common areas,
- Carry out regular surveys on the quality of all estate management services,
- Work closely with other agencies and statutory bodies with the aim of ensuring that the Association's housing developments and surrounding environment are well looked after,
- Encourage tenants to contribute to estate management by participating in joint annual estate inspections,
- Encourage feedback on services and publish findings from surveys and visits.

3.0 Legislation & Regulatory Framework

The Estate Management Policy meets with legislative and good practice requirements including:

3.1 Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

This Act covers the statutory framework for Scottish Secure and Short Scottish Secure Tenancies and tenant consultation requirements

3.2 The Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST)

The SST sets out the rights and obligations of both tenants and landlords in relation to the use of the property and common parts. It is a legally binding document and by signing the SST at the beginning of a tenancy both parties agree to adhere to its conditions. This policy reinforces the obligations set down in the SST.

3.3 The Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Government, through the Social Housing Charter, sets the outcomes it expects social landlords achieve for their tenants. The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors landlords' performance against the Charter and lays an obligation on landlords to provide the relevant Charter standards and in relation to this policy are:

- *Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that tenants live in well maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe.*

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

4 Providing information

The Association must ensure that tenants are aware of their obligations in relation to use of the property and common parts prior to the commencement of the tenancy, at the beginning of their tenancy and throughout the period of the tenancy.

- A summary SST will be issued with the offer of housing, explaining the key rights and obligations of the tenancy and a full tenancy agreement issued at the start of a tenancy
- Housing officers will explain the tenants' responsibilities clearly when a prospective tenant views a property, at the sign-up interview and at the new tenant visit, 6 weeks after the commencement of the tenancy
- All tenants will be issued with a Tenants Handbook detailing their rights and responsibilities as well as the Association's obligations and the level of service they can expect in relation to estate management. This information will also be available on the Association's website.
- Regular features on aspects of the estate management service will feature in the Association's newsletter, Rural Matters.
- The Association will publish information on its performance in delivering an estate management service on its website and in Rural Matters

5 Use of the property and the common parts

The SST lays out responsibilities and obligations of the tenant in relation to the use of the house and common parts and forms the framework for this policy. This policy reiterates the conditions laid out in the SST and provides more detail on the Association's expectations.

5.1 Care of the property

- The SST makes clear that tenants are expected to take reasonable care to prevent damage to:
 - The house
 - Decoration
 - Fixtures and fittings (i.e. kitchen units, bathroom suite)
 - The common parts
 - Neighbouring properties

It also makes clear tenants are responsible for making sure everyone living with them, and anyone visiting them must take equal care and that the **tenant** is ultimately responsible for any damage.

- If damage occurs the Association will expect the tenant to carry out remedial action to an adequate standard or the Association will carry out work and recharge the cost to the tenant.
- Tenants are expected to heat and ventilate the property adequately to ensure that it is not affected by condensation and dampness. The Association will provide information on how to do this.
- Tenants are not allowed to use heaters fired by liquid petroleum gas (i.e. Calor gas) or paraffin in the house, or store any LPG or paraffin cylinders in the house, garage or shed.

5.2 Fire Safety

The Association will:

- Fit smoke alarms in all properties in compliance with building regulations.
- Ensure smoke alarms are tested annually and replaced where required.
- Ensure all communal stairs have emergency lighting with appropriate signage to show emergency exits.
- Carry out monthly inspections on all communal corridors to ensure access routes are clear and free from personal belongings.
- Carry out monthly inspections of fire doors to ensure they are being used correctly and fully operational.
- Make referrals for fire safety home visits by the fire service where required.
- Remind tenants on a regular basis about fire safety in the home.

Tenants are required to:

- Test smoke alarms regularly to ensure they are in working order, change batteries where required and contact the Association if they are not working.
- Ensure communal corridors are not obstructed and are free from personal belongings and household waste at all times.
- Ensure fire doors are not propped open.
- Do not store flammable materials in cupboards with electric circuits.
- Dispose all household waste in refuse bins provided and all bins are kept within the bin stores provided.

5.3 Keeping pets

- Tenants may have one dog, cat, or caged bird. Tenants must seek written permission to keep any more than one pet, and any other animal. **Permission for additional pets may be declined in properties where the design and layout would make this unsuitable.**
- Tenants must be granted permission to keep poultry.

- Tenants, under no circumstances, will be permitted to keep any dog classed as dangerous under the Dangerous Dog Act 1991 or any other law
- Tenants are responsible for the behaviour of their pets and for those of any visitor. They must ensure they take all reasonable steps to prevent their pets causing nuisance, annoyance or danger. Tenants are responsible for any damage caused by their pet- or that of a visitor to the Association's property,
- Dogs should be kept on the leash outside the home and should not be permitted to roam freely within the development.
- Tenants are responsible for cleaning up dog waste within the development and within their own garden.
- The Association is entitled to ask a tenant to remove a pet from their home within two weeks if the tenant does not keep to the conditions laid out in the tenancy agreement in relation to keeping pets.

5.4 Vermin and other infestations

The Association will deal with any infestations (i.e. rats, mice, wasps etc) which occur in communal areas. The tenant is responsible for any infestations within the property unless the infestation has occurred because of a defect in the building.

If an infestation has occurred, in the home or in the communal area, because of the tenant's lifestyle or habits the Housing Officer will take action to ensure compliance with the tenancy agreement.

5.5 Feeding birds

Feeding birds in gardens and in communal areas is only appropriate using bird seed feeders or tables- ground feeding is not permitted.

5.6 Individual gardens

- Where tenants has exclusive use of a garden (including any driveway or paths), it must be kept tidy, free from weeds, litter and dog dirt.
- Grass should be cut frequently, and hedges / bushes kept trimmed to 1m where they are in motorist's sight line, and 2m elsewhere.
- The Association will provide an Assisted garden scheme, at a reasonable cost, for those who are elderly or disabled and unable to maintain their garden.
- The Association will, wherever possible, give permission to tenants to carry out minor alterations and additions to external areas or gardens. These will be restricted in scale and nature to protect the interests of

other tenants, the Association and the general amenity of a particular area.

- Tenants will require to apply in writing for authorisation and the request must contain sufficient detail to allow the Association to carry out an adequate assessment of the consequences of the work.
- All requests will be acknowledged within 5 working days and a decision made within 28 days unless further investigations are required
- Tenants may be permitted to erect standard size sheds and decking at the rear of the property providing the work is carried out within a specification agreed by the Association and that any structures are removed at the end of the tenancy and the garden reinstated appropriately, if so required by the Association.
- Tenants may be permitted under certain circumstances to erect additional fencing but this must be the same size/type as the existing fence. Tenants will not be permitted to erect fences in developments with open plan fronts as this would go against original planning permission.
- Tenants will not normally be permitted to create ponds in their garden
- Garden drainage – the Association will endeavour to ensure tenants have the best possible opportunity to enjoy the use of their garden through development design and adequate drainage. However, there will be circumstances where the layout of the development will not allow for each house to have a flat, well drained garden. Planning Permission and building warrants govern the design and drainage of new developments.
The Association will assess any garden drainage and conclude whether affordable remedial actions can be carried out. However, the Association recognises that some gardens will be more onerous than others to maintain. Prospective tenants will be made aware of this and be encouraged to take this into consideration before accepting the property.

5.7 Communal landscaping

- Communal landscaped areas and communal gardens around flats are normally maintained by the Association through a competitively tendered contract. The cost of this work is reflected within the rent charged by the Association. The specification detailing what is expected of landscaping contractors is publicised on the website, in Rural Matters or can be obtained by contacting the Associations offices.
- No alterations are permitted in communal areas.

- Pots/planters and garden furniture are permitted but tenants are responsible for ensuring that they are moved to allow landscaping work to be carried out.
- Subdivision of communal gardens is not permitted other than in exceptional circumstances and where all tenants concerned are in agreement.
- Tenants may be permitted to maintain communal areas if agreement is reached with the Association.

5.8 Household refuse disposal and litter

- All refuse and recycling bins will be provided by Stirling Council.
- Tenants are required to dispose of all waste and recycling as set out by Stirling Council guidelines.
- All refuse and recycling bins should be stored in the bin stores provided at all times, other than on the day waste/recycling is due to be collected by Stirling Council.
- Bin stores must be kept tidy & free of any items other than waste bins and recycling bins.
- We can provide assistance with applications to Stirling Council for the assisted collection /pull out service.
- Tenants must make arrangements with Stirling Council for the uplift of bulky items.

5.9 Closes

- Close cleaning is the responsibility of all tenant's living in a close. However, cleaning is normally arranged by the Association and tenants are charged a service charge. Tenants will be made aware of the service specification and be encouraged to inform the Association if the service provided fails to meet specification agreed.
- Storage of any items, in particular any combustible materials buggies/cycles/furniture /white goods, is not permitted in landings to ensure fire escape routes are kept clear.
- Tenants must close and lock communal entrance doors and not allow access into the common areas to anyone they do not know.

5.10 Parking

- Communal car parking facilities do not have designated parking spaces, with the exception of two developments where parking is designated.
- All vehicles parked on roads or in communal parking areas must have current road tax and car insurance.
- **No vehicle, caravan, boat, or motorcycle may be parked or stored on RSHA land unless the land is set aside for parking AND we give written permission AND it does not cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours.**

Permission will only be granted if

- it can be parked without obstructing doors and windows
 - it does not overhang on to the pavement or footpath
 - it is a meter away from the building
- **Vehicle repairs** - running a business is prohibited but tenants are permitted to carry out small scale repairs on one vehicle as long as the work is carried out at times that don't cause nuisance. Tenants are responsible for cleaning any oil spills occurring during repairs and must dispose of any hazardous substances appropriately.

5.11 Graffiti

Where walls, doors and other communal areas are defaced by graffiti, the Association will arrange to have this removed within 3 working days. Graffiti of an offensive or racist nature will be removed within one working day.

5.12 Vandalism

Incidents of vandalism are rare but they do happen. Tenants are encouraged, if they witness someone vandalising the Association's property, to call the Police on 101 and the Association. If the vandalism is caused by a RSHA tenant (or someone living with them, or visiting them) the Association may take legal action against them.

5.13 Snow clearing

With the exception of a small number of paths and car park areas, all roads and pavements in the Association's developments have been adopted by Stirling Council. Stirling Council is responsible for clearing snow and ice and for filling grit bins. The Association is not responsible for ensuring the safety of walkways or roads in extreme weather conditions. However, the Association may assist communities if extreme conditions are prolonged by providing snow shovels and grit to allow tenants to help themselves and their less able neighbours, and in exceptional circumstances assist in clearing access roads to our estates.

The Association actively encourages tenants from each development to become Weather Watchers, who will help their neighbours to clear snow and contact the Association to advise of the conditions / ask for assistance.

6 Ensuring that standards are met

We will ensure that our estates are well maintained and tenants adhere to their responsibilities by taking a proactive approach:

- In the course of duties ALL staff will look out for, and report, any signs of deterioration of properties and common areas and ensure appropriate action is taken.
- The Associations Housing Officers and Technical Officer will undertake house and property inspections in response to reports that tenancy conditions are not being maintained. In addition, staff will observe compliance with tenancy conditions when undertaking ad hoc visits to tenants' houses.
- Housing Officers carry out regular estate management visits to ensure all developments are being maintained to appropriate standards.

Records of these visits will be maintained which show;

- all areas checked and found to be without risk
- actions in relation to tenancy enforcement (i.e. untidy gardens)
- repairs required and actioned.
- Standards of landscaping – being maintained or action required.
- Closes are clear of combustible materials and tenant's belongings to ensure fire exit routes are unobstructed.
- Closes are being cleaned to the required standard.

Estate inspections are carried out monthly apart from in very rural locations with only one or two properties, where inspections are carried out quarterly.

- Tenants will be advised in advance and invited to participate in estate inspections. Issues arising and actions to be taken in response will be publicised. Tenants will be surveyed to provide feedback on their satisfaction with the estate management of the scheme.
- We operate a 'landscape reps' scheme – we encourage tenants in each development to act as the Association's 'eyes and ears' and provide feedback on the performance of the contractor delivering the Association's grounds maintenance contract.

7 Dealing with non- compliance

7.1 Tenants have a legal responsibility to adhere to the terms of their SST. If they fail to do so the Association can ultimately take legal action against them. The Association views legal action as a last resort. To ensure legal action is kept to a minimum in relation to estate management the following preventative measures

- Advising new tenants of responsibilities at accompanied viewings and sign ups and new tenant visits
- Providing clear info on the responsibilities of being a RSHA tenant – in tenant info pack; regular newsletters and website
- Regular estate inspections
- Follow up visits in set timescales to ensure issues are dealt with

7.2 The SST makes clear that if tenants do not meet their obligation i.e. maintaining their garden; the Association may do it for them and seek to recharge them. However there are difficulties and costs to the Association in seeking recovery of costs and it may be that legal action is the only option available.

Legal action can involve

- Action for specific implement (to make the tenant do something) or interdict (to prevent them from doing something).
- Action for damages (i.e. if the property has been damaged)
- Eviction action- If breach is very serious and in extreme circumstances.

8 Equal Opportunities Implications

8.1 The Association will ensure the promotion of equal opportunities by publishing information in different community languages and other formats such as large print, tape and Braille, as required.

8.2 The Association will ensure that no individual is discriminated against on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other personal attributes, including beliefs, or opinions, such as religious or political beliefs.

8.3 All communication with tenants or other customers will be in 'plain language' and it will be made clear who the most appropriate person is to contact in the event of a query. The Association will make appropriate arrangements for communicating with tenants and other customers who have special needs such as people with sight, hearing or learning difficulties, for example by using signers.

9. Complaints Procedure

9.1 Any tenant, may submit a complaint, using the Association's complaints procedure if it is felt that the Association has not correctly applied the Estate Management policy.

10. Performance Monitoring

10.1 The Housing Services Manager will have overall responsibility for monitoring the standards covering this policy. The Association will have regard for feedback provided at annual estate inspections, estate visits and via complaints.

10.2 The Association will also conduct regular surveys of residents in receipt of our estates management services and will develop performance monitoring systems to report to the Scottish Housing Regulator on the following Social Housing Charter performance indicator:

Indicator 17: Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in.

11. Policy Review

The Association will carry out a further review of the Estate Management Policy in three years. Amendments may be made as required following consultation with service users and other agencies.