

# Bridgewater Housing Association Ltd Policy

**Approved by  
committee on** 11 November 1998  
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**Estate Management**

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Association is committed to ensuring that Erskine remains a clean, pleasant, and safe place for residents to live. In order to achieve this, the Association requires to have an effective Estate Management Policy in place.
- 1.2 Many different areas of work are performed under 'Estate Management' – close and garden inspections; open space maintenance; dealing with unauthorised and inconsiderate parking; void property procedures and so on – and consequently cross-referencing with a range of other housing management and technical services policies is required.
- 1.3 It is important to remember that the Association cannot undertake estate management in isolation. While we have various responsibilities and obligations under law and in agreement with our tenants, tenants also have obligations under the terms of their Tenancy Agreement and owner occupiers under their Deed of Conditions. We also require to work in liaison with other service providers such as Renfrewshire Council environmental services and street lighting department, the Police, Social Work Department, and with our maintenance and landscape maintenance contractors whose work in the area influences our reputation with our customers.
- 1.4 Our approach to estate management therefore has a huge impact on resident satisfaction and on the desirability of Erskine as a place to stay or move to.
- 1.5 The Scottish Housing Regulator's Activity Standard AS1.10 on estate management requires us to demonstrate that:

*'We manage the environment around our properties and any common areas effectively, to ensure that the neighbourhood is an attractive, well maintained and safe place to live.'*

## **2.0 Prevention**

2.1 The Association will seek to minimise estate management problems by taking preventative action through tenant consultation and the promotion of our Policy. This will entail:

- i) detailing landlord and tenant responsibilities in relation to estate management in the Tenancy Agreement;
- ii) explaining landlord and tenant responsibilities to prospective tenants during accompanied viewings and to each new tenant at the signing-up interview;
- iii) reminding existing tenants of their obligations and responsibilities through face to face discussions with staff and promoting the policy in newsletters and other publications;
- iv) providing a separate leaflet on the Association's Estate Management Policy;
- v) summarising the Policy in the Tenant's Handbook; and
- vi) undertaking regular inspections of the area by relevant staff and prompt action being taken where problems have arisen.

In addition, Housing Officers will explore and pursue opportunities to consult with school children and young adults to encourage their participation in the upkeep of the area, and to minimise complaints about children playing on areas of open space. Housing Officers and the Housing Services Manager will also liaise with the Residents Forum and Community Groups such as the Community Council over specific estate management problems and will seek to obtain solutions for the wider community.

## **3.0 Estate Management Inspections**

3.1 Housing Officers will be responsible for undertaking regular inspections of gardens and common areas to ensure that tenants and owner occupiers abide by maintenance and cleaning arrangements.

Housing Officers will aim to check each property on a monthly basis to identify cases where gardens have not been maintained; close cleaning arrangements have been neglected; repairs are required to common areas or the outside of buildings; action is required by an external agency such as Environmental Services; and areas where vandalism may have occurred.

3.2 Tenant/Resident Led Inspections will be undertaken in conjunction with members of the Residents Forum on request. Members of the Forum will be encouraged to participate in inspections for each of the Association's management areas.

## **4.0 Estate Management Problems**

- 4.1 The voluntary co-operation of residents will be pursued in remedying any estate management problems which arise, with court action being pursued only as a last resort. Actions of Specific Implement may be pursued in preference to Repossession Actions as the Association's aim is for tenants to fulfil the obligations of their Tenancy Agreement and not to create homelessness.
- 4.2 Prompt action will be taken through letters, visits or interviews where either a problem has been identified during a visit, or reported by a neighbour or other third party. Progress will also be closely monitored in each case with the Housing Officer maintaining regular inspections until the situation has been resolved.
- 4.3 Housing Officers will liaise with the local Community Police and other third parties in cases where advice and assistance is required.
- 4.4 Formal complaints about shortfalls in service delivery will be dealt with in accordance with the Association's Complaints Policy.

## **5.0 Garden Maintenance**

- 5.1 Untidy and poorly maintained gardens can spoil the appearance of an area and be a source of friction between neighbours.

Where a tenancy is let with a garden, the tenant must take reasonable care to keep it from becoming overgrown, untidy or causing a nuisance (unless we have agreed to take care of it). It must also be kept free of litter. (Section 2.10 of our Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.) Similarly, owner occupiers are responsible for the upkeep of their own gardens.

- 5.2 Where gardens are not maintained to a satisfactory standard, action will be taken in accordance with 4.1 and 4.2 above.
- 5.3 Gardening services will be provided to sheltered, elderly and disabled tenants (with no local family support) under the Landscape Maintenance Contract.
- 5.4 Where tenants are known to be experiencing financial difficulties, the Association may consider operating a tool hire scheme in conjunction with a residents group or community business.
- 5.5 An annual Garden Competition will be held to promote high standards in garden maintenance by tenants.

## **6.0 Fencing**

- 6.1 The Association is responsible only for boundary fencing adjacent to footpaths, pavements and roads (section 5.8 of the SST). This means that the tenant is responsible for the maintenance of garden divisional and boundary fencing, except where the boundary is adjacent to footpaths, pavements and roads.
- 6.2 The Tenancy Agreement states that if the tenant wants to erect a fence or gate, s/he must get our written permission first. We will not refuse permission unreasonably. Tenants should seek the agreement of their neighbours prior to submitting alteration to property forms to renew or replace divisional fences. Consent will not normally be withheld so long as the new fencing complies with the relevant building controls which currently permit fences up to 1.8 metres high.

## **7.0 Cleaning of Closets, Stairs and Backcourts**

- 7.1 Where tenants live in a block of flats, they are responsible with the other occupiers, for keeping the common parts clean and tidy. This is contained in sections 2.8 2.9 and 2.11 of the SST and refers to the cleaning of common parts within the block and the garden or backcourt. These areas should be cleaned regularly, that is on a weekly basis, or as required.
- 7.2 Where the occupiers in a block cannot agree on the arrangements for doing this or fail to do the work, the Association is entitled to decide on what should be done and when. Where cleaning arrangements are not being adhered to, letters will be issued by the Housing Officer in the first instance and cleaning rotas introduced and monitored if required. Close meetings may also be arranged to encourage discussions with residents.
- 7.3 In severe cases, advice and assistance will be sought from Renfrewshire Council Environmental Services.
- 7.4 Where difficulties persist (for example through age or infirmity) and consultation has taken place with residents, the Association may consider arranging close cleaning and levying a service charge on the residents concerned.

## **8.0 Good Neighbour Awards**

- 8.1 In promoting good relations amongst tenants, the Association will support an annual 'Good Neighbour Award' whereby tenants will be encouraged to nominate neighbours for either their services to individuals or to the wider community.

## **9.0 Abandoned Properties**

- 9.1 Where a property has been identified as having been abandoned, Housing Officers will follow the Association's procedures in order to repossess it without delay. (HM Procedure Note 4).
- 9.2 Residents will be encouraged to report any properties which are suspected to be abandoned to the Association's staff.

## **10.0 Pets**

- 10.1 Details of tenants' obligations in relation to the keeping of pets are contained within section 2.5 of the Tenancy Agreement. Further guidance is given in the Pets Policy and Procedure (policy reference HM12).
- 10.2 In general, tenants will be required to:
- i) take responsibility for the behaviour of their pets;
  - ii) supervise and keep all pets under control;
  - iii) ensure that their pets do not cause nuisance, annoyance or danger to others;
  - iv) ensure that their pets do not cause damage to Association property or their neighbours' property; and
  - v) clean up any waste left by their pets.
- 10.3 Housing Officers will liaise with other agencies such as any local Dog Warden, the Police or Environmental Services concerning any 'nuisance' dogs.

## **11.0 Drugs And Solvents Misuse**

- 11.1 The Tenancy Agreement (section 3.3) stipulates that the tenant, those living with the tenant and his/her visitors must not use the house, or allow it to be used for illegal or immoral purposes; or use or sell unlawful drugs or sell alcohol.
- 11.2 The Association will develop procedures for dealing with problems which arise from the misuse of drugs or solvents on Association property, in conjunction with external agencies such as the Police.
- 11.3 Staff will liaise with relevant agencies involved in drugs work and will, where appropriate, refer tenants on to such agencies.

## **12.0 Neighbour Disputes And Anti-Social Behaviour**

12.1 Section 3 of the Tenancy Agreement covers 'Respect for Others' and outlines the tenant's responsibilities. The Association will take positive and decisive action to deal with cases of anti-social behaviour which prove detrimental to our tenants' rights and the peaceful enjoyment of their homes. Such cases will be dealt with in accordance with Policy HMII on Neighbour Disputes and Anti-Social Behaviour and the new measures as introduced by the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004.

## **13.0 Vandalism**

13.1 Under the terms of the Tenancy Agreement (section 3.3) the tenant, those living with the tenant, and the tenant's visitors must not vandalise or damage our property or any part of the common parts of the neighbourhood. Where damage occurs within the home, the Association's view is that the tenant is responsible for reporting such acts to the Police within 24 hours of becoming aware of the damage. Where such instances are not reported, the Association reserves the right to charge the tenant for any subsequent repairs and at the discretion of the Housing Services Manager/Director will require the tenant to pay at least 50% of the estimated cost of the work 'up front' before continuing the repair.

13.2 Where instances of vandalism can be corroborated, and the perpetrator is one of the above, the costs of repairs will be charged to the tenant and pursued for payment.

Where the perpetrator is not one of the above, the Association will take firm action to recoup associated repair costs.

13.3 Housing Officers and the Housing Services Manager will aim to develop a close working relationship with the local Police, schools, youth groups and any other relevant agencies to minimise vandalism in the area.

13.4 Housing Officers will aim to protect empty properties from vandalism as far as is practicable.

13.5 Graffiti which is racist or offensive in any way will be dealt with as an emergency under our Repairs Policy.

## **14.0 Void Property Management**

14.1 In order to minimise opportunities for vandalism and detract from the appearance of the area, void property procedures will be implemented in accordance with the Association's Void Management Policy HM8.

## **15.0 Disposal Of Household Refuse And Litter**

15.1 Housing Officers will liaise with Renfrewshire Council Environmental Services concerning the collection of household refuse, garden waste and disposal of household goods.

15.2 Tenants' responsibilities for the disposal of household rubbish is contained within section 2.13 of the SST. Additional guidance and information will be passed to tenants as required. Advice on recycling will be made available, where appropriate.

15.3 Where tenants fail to comply with arrangements for the uplift of refuse and household goods, Housing Officers will deal with the problem in accordance with 4.2 above.

15.4 All tenants will be provided with one dustbin and one lid, or one wheely-bin.

15.5 Litter will be regularly uplifted from areas of open space under the Association's Landscape Maintenance Contract.

15.6 In conjunction with other agencies, the Association will develop and publicise clear procedures for the handling of discarded needles and syringes.

## **16.0 Vermin and Pest Control**

16.1 The Association will respond to cases of vermin and pest infestation within its housing stock in a prompt and appropriate manner and in accordance with repairs target times.

16.2 The Association will ensure that appropriate health and safety precautions are taken in the use of associated treatments.

16.3 Where pests/vermin cannot easily be eradicated, a tenant will be temporarily rehoused until the necessary work is completed.

## **17.0 Satellite Dishes**

17.1 Tenants should seek permission from the Association in writing before installing such an aerial.

- 17.2 The Association will permit tenants to fix their own satellite dish to their home provided that it is installed safely in accordance with planning regulations/building control and without damaging or spoiling the condition or appearance of the property.
- 17.3 Permission may be refused where a property has undergone external refurbishment and the Association considers that an aerial would damage the property.

## **18.0 Security**

- 18.1 The Association aims to work in partnership with residents, the Police and other relevant agencies to devise a strategy to achieve safety and security in both its properties and the wider community. The strategy may include security and crime prevention initiatives to combat crime and reduce the fear of crime.

Housing Officers will liaise with the local Crime Prevention Panel over particular issues of concern.

- 18.2 The Association will provide tenants with general advice on home security and will encourage all tenants to take out home contents insurance.
- 18.3 All final exit doors to buildings will be fitted with locks that comply with British Standards.
- 18.4 The Association may consider providing additional safety measures (such as window locks, letter boxes) for the homes of tenants who are victims of racial, sexual or other forms of harassment. Where tenants have been victims of crime, referrals may be made to the local Crime Prevention Officer on their behalf and lock changes will be arranged as a matter of urgency where break-ins have occurred. We will also continue to participate in initiatives such as the Home Security Projects with our partners to enable our customers to feel safer in their homes.
- 18.5 Staff will liaise with Renfrewshire Council to ensure that street and communal lighting is maintained in good working order.

## **19.0 Parking**

- 19.1 Abandoned vehicles, unauthorised and inconsiderate parking and the use of parking areas to undertake vehicle repairs can cause significant estate management problems. The Association has a separate Policy on the use of communal car parking bays, which stipulates the vehicles which are permitted and prohibited from being parked within parking bays owned by the Association. (Policy reference HM6).

19.2 Housing Officers will regularly inspect parking areas to ensure that they are free of litter, access difficulties, unauthorised parking and abandoned/untaxed vehicles. Staff will liaise with the Police and highways authority over the removal of abandoned and untaxed vehicles.

## **20.0 Common Charges**

20.1 The Association will ensure that owners are charged their share for estate management services provided to common areas. Accounts will list the basis for the charges.

20.2 Further information is provided on the policy on Factoring.

## **21.0 Management Transfers**

21.1 The Association acknowledges that from time to time serious management issues may arise which necessitate a tenant being transferred to another Association property. Such circumstances will be rare and require to be dealt out with the Allocations Policy. Examples of where a management transfer may be considered could be where a tenant is the victim of serious anti social behaviour and requires to be moved for reasons of safety while the perpetrator is dealt with through our policy on Neighbour Disputes and Anti Social Behaviour. Other examples may include where a child is at risk because of the proximity of a sex offender.

21.2 In circumstances where a transfer on management grounds is considered to be appropriate, the Housing Officer will report the matter to the Housing Services Manager, who in conjunction with the Director will determine whether such a move is appropriate. Where this is deemed to be the case, the tenant will be granted a transfer as soon as an appropriate property becomes available.

## **22.0 Equality and Diversity**

22.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places an overarching duty on Registered Social Landlords to exercise the functions conferred on them by the Act in a manner which encourages equality of opportunity and observes equal opportunity requirements laid down in other legislation and regulations.

22.2 The Association's Equality and Diversity Policy covers a range of issues such as access to housing, disability and age, and has the overarching aim of mainstreaming equality in all that we do. The Estate Management Policy should also reflect the principles of the Equality and Diversity Policy.

## **23.0 Tenant Participation**

- 23.1 The Association is keen to promote, encourage and support the participation of our tenants and other customers in the delivery of our services. Our Tenant Participation Strategy contains an Action Plan, compiled by the Residents Forum, which lists a number of issues to be addressed under the umbrella of estate management.
- 23.2 The Forum meets quarterly and will monitor the progress of the action plan and review the content as considered appropriate. Outcomes will be highlighted in issues of 'Bridgewater News' and membership of the Forum will be encouraged.
- 23.3 Members of the Forum will be encouraged to participate in estate based activities/initiatives such as tenant/resident led inspections as noted at 3.2 above. They will be supported in this role by the Housing Officers and Housing Services Manager.

## **24.0 Customer Satisfaction**

- 24.1 The Association undertakes comprehensive customer satisfaction surveys every three years in order to gain constructive feedback on the services we provide, and to direct future service delivery. Feedback has generally been very positive about the standard of services provided. Tenants are advised of the outcome of the surveys through our annual Conference and 'Bridgewater News'. Action plans are compiled to deal with areas of service improvement.
- 24.2 In addition, the Association will undertake smaller surveys on specific areas of service delivery to obtain feedback on levels of customer satisfaction. We recognise the importance of giving tenants feedback so that they know how their opinions and contributions have helped shape policy and service delivery.

## **25.0 Service Standards**

- 25.1 We recognise the importance of having service standards and targets for the management of our estates. We will consult with our tenants and Residents Forum to compile a list of standards which can be developed and also consider appropriate targets to be put in place. These standards will then be publicised so that our customers know what to expect from our service.
- 25.2 Standards may include, but not be restricted to:
- Close inspections
  - Garden inspections
  - Inspections of common areas

- Maintenance of our areas of open space – litter collection, grass cutting, tree maintenance, annual winter maintenance and so on
- Joint estate inspections between Housing Officers and tenant representatives.

## **26.0 Staff and Committee Responsibilities**

- 26.1 The Management Committee will have overall responsibility for estate management, with responsibilities for implementing the Policy being delegated to staff.
- 26.2 Names and addresses of individual tenants who are in breach of their Tenancy Agreement will not be divulged to the Committee, and where Committee approval is being sought to evict, reports will be provided on a confidential basis.

## **27.0 Policy Review**

- 27.1 The policy will be reviewed in 3 years time and tenants and the Residents Forum will be consulted on any significant changes to the policy.