

**Tenants First Housing Co-operative**  
**Estate Management – Physical Environment Policy**

***Approved: January 2010    Next Review Date: January 2013***

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## **1. Policy Aims**

Tenants First Housing Co-operative (the Co-operative) clearly understands that the efficient management of its properties and the areas in which they are situated is crucial to the overall appearance of the estates that it owns, or part owns. The Co-operative also recognises the importance in taking prompt action to minimise situations that could lead to the deterioration of the surrounding environment, which if not acted on quickly, can have a detrimental effect on the ability to re-let houses. This in turn can affect the sustainability of the Co-operative and the wider community.

The overall aim of this Policy and the associated procedures is to provide guidelines that set out clear lines of responsibility, is transparent, understandable and easily accessible to staff, members and the public on all issues associated with the management of the Co-operative's properties and estates.

The following are the main aims identified to ensure the successful and efficient management of the Co-operative's estates:-

- To enable members to have quiet enjoyment of their home in an attractive, safe and secure environment
- To minimise the turnover of stock, and reduce incidents
- To have a transparent and easily accessible Policy for dealing with estate management issues in order to have a positive effect on member satisfaction
- To ensure all staff are alert to health and safety issues within the general environment
- To ensure Housing and Property Management Officers maintain a high profile in their respective area and motivate members to take more responsibility for issues that affect their general environment
- To ensure the Committee of Management and Sub Committee members understand their, and the Co-operative's, responsibilities in relation to estate management issues through appropriate training
- To ensure effective communication between staff and members by highlighting estate management issues in Co-operative publications such as newsletters, posters, organised estate meetings and sub-committees
- To liaise with appropriate agencies such as local authorities and Grampian Police with the aim of achieving a good quality physical environment in each of the Co-operative's geographical areas

- To ensure that communal cleaning standards and responsibilities are maintained by members
- To ensure that garden standards and responsibilities are maintained by members and that staff remain alert to those who require assistance in maintaining their garden
- To ensure that communal repairs to door entry systems, lighting, fencing, removal of graffiti etc. are carried out quickly and efficiently
- **To ensure that the development sites the Co-operative owns are kept safe and secure**
- To ensure that estate management services are planned, adequately resourced and effectively budgeted.
- To ensure that communal areas within developments are kept free from obstruction and unnecessary risks.
- To maximise the use of the Co-operative's IT systems to monitor and record all tasks in relation to the Policy and associated procedures

All matters relating to anti-social behaviour and harassment, racial harassment, including reports of graffiti and deliberate damage and issues concerning substance misuse are referred to in the Antisocial Behaviour and Harassment Policy.

## **2. Objectives**

The main objectives of the Policy supports the following objectives contained in the Co-operative's Internal Management Plan:-

1. To provide, manage and maintain top quality affordable housing
  - a) To deliver the service to clients satisfaction and expectations
  - e) To build and maintain properties to members satisfaction and expectations
  - f) To enhance and maintain the quality of environment, security and health of members
  - h) To ensure sustainability in provision, management and maintenance of the housing stock
3. To promote social inclusion and equality of opportunity for our members and their communities

- a) To encourage responsibility of members for their community

### **3. Estate Management Service**

The Scottish Government's publication 'Performance Standards' let members and other service users know what standards to expect from the Co-operative in relation to estate management. This Policy directly relates to the performance activity standard 'AS1.10 Estate Management' which states:-

***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.***

The Co-operative will ensure that the provision of the estate management service is appropriate and responsive to local needs. In meeting this objective the Co-operative will also ensure that, within normal staffing levels, there are sufficient front-line members of staff to provide an efficient estate management service.

When signing up for their home new members will be provided with information, advice and assistance about estate management matters, including:

- a copy of the Members Handbook
- an explanation of their obligations in relation to their Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) or Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST)

### **4. Estate Management Issues**

#### **4.1 Tenancy Matters – Permissions**

The Co-operative will fulfil its statutory and contractual obligations to members according to the terms of their SST and SSST agreement. In all cases permission will be subject to the Co-operative's written approval. Permissions include but are not limited to:-

- Members taking in lodgers providing that this does not cause the property to be statutorily overcrowded
- Members subletting their property which will not be unreasonably withheld
- The creation and closure of joint tenancies within the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Keeping of pet(s) which will not be unreasonably withheld but taking account of any external legal restrictions

- Assignment (transfer of tenancy ownership to another member) of a tenancy which will not be unreasonably withheld
- The succession of a tenancy within the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- The running of a business from the property occupied subject to the Co-operative's approval which will not be unreasonably withheld
- The installation of a television aerial, satellite dish or cable television which will not be unreasonably withheld

## **4.2 The Physical Environment**

### **Garden Maintenance**

It is a condition of the SST that all members who have access to a garden within the boundaries of the property allocated to them must keep their garden tidy and free from rubbish. All new members who are allocated a property, where there is either a private or shared garden area, will have their responsibilities in maintaining a garden to a reasonable standard explained to them in full. The Housing Officer/Assistant will regularly monitor the condition of gardens during the growing season (April to October), taking the necessary action to improve standards in situations where they have slipped.

In situations where a member(s) fails to maintain their garden ground, whether shared or private, the Co-operative has the authority to decide exactly what work needs to be done to bring the garden up to standard. This will be done in consultation with the member(s) concerned. If the agreed work is not completed the Co-operative may do the work and recharge the member for the cost incurred.

Advice and practical assistance will be offered to members who are for example, infirm or disabled, and who may be eligible for inclusion in the Co-operative's free garden maintenance scheme. This scheme arranges for members' grass, and any hedges they have, to be cut only. Sheltered Housing complexes are not included in this scheme as the maintenance work required for communal areas is managed through a separate contract.

### **Common Area Landscaping**

The Co-operative understands its members' rights and aspirations to live in a home that is in an attractive, safe and secure area. To provide this environment to its members, the Co-operative is committed to providing a high standard of common landscaped ground, including play areas and paths, of which it owns or part owns. This will be maintained by, a minimum of, annual joint environmental area inspections with staff and committee members.

Reported incidents of graffiti, faulty/damaged communal lighting and door entry systems, fencing or other similar issues will be repaired or removed quickly. Any vandalism or damage found to be deliberate will be re-charged, if relevant, to the member(s) concerned.

Further information on common area landscaping can be found in the Property Management Policy.

### **Communal Areas**

The Co-operative recognises that keeping flatted properties clean and tidy are important to its aim in the provision of attractive, safe and secure estates.

The Co-operative also recognises that many Members view communal landings as extensions of their own home, often by hanging pictures, setting out small plants and flowers, etc. This brightens these areas and adds to their attractiveness. So, the Co-operative encourages Members to do this at their own risk. But, in doing so, the Co-operative also reserves the right to insist that the Members remove or tone down these embellishments where they present a health and safety, fire, trip or other risk to any other resident.

All new members allocated a flatted property where there is a common entrance, shared lobby, walkway and/or stairs will have their obligations and responsibilities in keeping the common areas clean and tidy fully explained to them.

The Housing Officer/Assistant will monitor the cleanliness of all flatted communal areas on a regular basis. In situations where members cannot agree on the arrangements for keeping the common areas clean and tidy, or fail to do the work, the Co-operative can decide what work needs to be done to bring the communal areas up to standard. This will be done in consultation with the member(s) concerned. If the agreed work is not completed the Co-operative may make arrangements to do the work and will recharge the member for the costs incurred.

In newer flatted properties the Co-operative provides a cleaning service for the communal areas. Where this service is provided a service charge is added to the rent and paid by the member to cover the cost for the work done.

The health and safety of members is important. To minimise accidents and potential injuries to members the Co-operative strictly prohibits the keeping of items, such as bikes and prams, in the common parts other than in areas set aside specifically for storage.

Where the Co-operative provides communal laundry and drying facilities staff will provide rotas for members to use where needed

The Co-operative does not provide a caretaking service for any of its properties.

### **Door Entry Systems**

Some of the Co-operative's flatted properties have a shared entrance door. In these properties the entrance door will be fitted with a door entry system to prevent unauthorised access to the building. These systems are also a useful deterrent against any damage that can happen within the communal areas of building.

When damage or faults occur, to ensure that safety of its members is maintained the Co-operative will quickly repair door entry systems. Any deliberate damage, deliberate disabling of the door entry system or vandalism caused to door entry systems will be re-charged where relevant to the member(s) concerned.

### **Parking and Abandoned Vehicles**

Because of the general shortage of parking and the effect that indiscriminate parking can have to both the surrounding environment and the people who live there, staff will react quickly, and use the powers available to them to ensure that parking does not cause a nuisance or disturbance to its members.

The Co-operative does accept applications from members who are disabled and who request a disabled parking space and these will be considered on individual merit.

It is a condition of a member's SST that no vehicle, trailer or caravan belonging to them, or anyone living with them may be parked on the Co-operative's land unless the land is set aside for such parking or permission has been given by the Co-operative to park in designated areas.

Abandoned vehicles, trailers and caravans will be reported to the relevant local authority for uplift and, if appropriate, disposal. Where an abandoned vehicle is identified as being a danger, the details will be passed to the Police for action.

### **Disability Scooters & Mobility Aids.**

The Co-operative recognises that members may require additional equipment to retain their independence, especially in sheltered housing.

Wherever possible, the Co-operative will grant permission to Members who require such aids, but will limit permission to those applicants who can demonstrate that their aid or scooter can be stored where it does not present a health and safety, fire, trip or other risk to any other resident

Additionally, only one scooter will be allowed per landing, on a first come, first served basis.

### **Refuse Disposal/Recycling/Fly Tipping**

To prevent unsanitary conditions happening it is important that the removal of household refuse is done so properly. Members are expected to put all refuse for collection and recycling in the allocated place and that the allocated place is kept clean and free from vermin. In addition to this, that such refuse/recycling be properly bagged and any bins storing such refuse also kept clean. Each local authority is responsible for, and has its own policy on, the uplift of large and heavy items for disposal. A charge for this service is normally applied.

### **Recycling**

The Co-operative recognises that every Member has a duty to maximise their recycling of refuse. We will work with local authorities to provide suitable recycling facilities in, or close by our developments wherever possible.

The storage of refuse containers are prohibited within enclosed communal areas unless set aside for that purpose.

In circumstances where fly-tipping occurs on the Co-operative's land these items will be reported to the relevant local authority for removal who will charge the Co-operative a small fee for the work carried out.

### **Dog Fouling**

The Co-operative is happy to provide permission to its members to keep pets. There is no limit on the number of pets a member can keep, but good judgment will prevail when permission is given. For example, staff would not agree to a member keeping three dogs when they rent a one-bedroom flat.

To ensure the health and safety of its members and others, members are issued very clear conditions and guidelines on pet responsibilities when pet permission is granted. A member's permission to keep a pet may be withdrawn if they breach any of the conditions and in circumstances where the pet is known to generally cause a nuisance or disturbance to other members or members of the public

It is against the law for dog owners to fail to clean up after their dog on public land and could result in a fixed fine under the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003. Members who allow their dogs to foul areas of public ground, parks, pathways etc. will also be reported to the relevant local authority section dealing with health and environmental issues, and/or the local Dog Warden. In addition to these actions, authorised staff of Aberdeenshire and Angus Councils, and Police Officers, have the authority to issue on-the-spot fines against people who do not clean up after their dogs.

### **Development Sites**

The Co-operative owns a number of development sites on which it plans to build affordable housing. Often these sites are bought in advance for future house build and so may lie unused for months or years. Whilst in the C-

operative's ownership it is crucial, and a condition of the insurance cover, that the land is kept secure and regularly inspected to avoid vandalism and wilful damage. This also applies to sites where building has commenced. Staff carry out regular inspections of the land and sites to minimise any such risk happening.

## 5. Equal Opportunities

The Co-operative will ensure that in implementing its Estate Management Physical Environment Policy it will not unfairly discriminate against any individual, household or group on the grounds of gender or gender identity, marital status, on race grounds or on the grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

## 6. Monitoring & Reporting

### Performance Targets

Detailed in the table below are the performance areas which are monitored and reported on quarterly throughout the year to the Management Team and Housing Management Sub Committee. To ensure that this Policy and its procedures are relevant to the service the Co-operative provides analysis of the performance and targets set is carried out annually, or more frequently if required, and any changes to the Policy or procedures reported on for recommendation. This information may also be used to formulate local strategies to tackle identified estate management issues.

### Inspections

| Area  | Frequency of checks | Target for Numbers checked |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Gardens   | April to September  | 100%                       |
| Communal Cleaning                                   | Quarterly           | 100%                       |
| *Joint state inspection                             | Annually            | 100%                       |
| Play areas (Pitmedden Crescent, Arbroath & Portsoy) | Weekly              | 100%                       |

## 7. Review

Unless recommended through analysis of performance or there is a change in the Scottish Government's and the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's best practice, guidance or changes in legislation the Policy will be reviewed every three years.

## **8. Legal Framework**

In approving this Policy, the Co-operative aims to fully comply with the following legislation:-

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001  
Anti social Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004  
Data Protection Act 1998  
Disability Discrimination Act 1995  
Race Relations Act 1976  
Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000  
Sex Discrimination Act 1975  
Human Rights Act 1998

It is also the Co-operative's duty to enforce the terms of the SST and where relevant the SSST.

## **9. References**

- Housing Management Standards Manual - Chartered Institute of Housing
- Performance Standards – the Scottish Government

## **10. Related Policies/Documents**

Antisocial Behaviour and Harassment Policy  
Anti Social Behaviour Order Policy  
Property Management Policy  
Rechargeable Repairs Policy  
Health and Safety Policy  
Participation Strategy  
Fact Sheet 10 – Estate Management  
Internal Management Plan  
Short/Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement

Environmental Protection Act 1990  
Dog Fouling Act (Scotland) Act 2003