

ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Version Number	2
Date Revision Complete	April 2015
Policy Owner	Housing Services
Author	Ray Chambers, Housing Officer
Reason for Revision	Previous policy out of date. Also reviewed to incorporate recommendations from Team Blackwood's scrutiny review of Outcome 6.
Data Protection	N/A
Equalities Impact Assessment Is it required? Yes/No	This policy ensures that all estate management issues are dealt with fairly and equally
Proof Read	Yes
Date Approved	2 nd June 2015
Approved by	Housing & Care Committee
Next Review Due	June 2018
Audience – Training and Awareness Method	This will be briefed out to Housing Teams in 2015.
Effective Date	June 2015
Internal References	See section 1.5
External References	Included at section 2.2.2
Comments	

ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY

1 POLICY STATEMENT

This policy will ensure that Blackwood achieves the key Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) outcomes which relate to Estate Management:

This Policy will also contribute to attaining our Asset Management Strategy objectives:

- Understanding the condition and profile of our assets.
- Establishing our customers' priorities now and over the long term.
- Understanding the suitability of our assets to meet demand in a national and regional context now and in the future.
- Meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) and subsequent Energy Efficiency Standards (EESH).
- Establishing the investment required over thirty years to maintain our assets.
- Establishing a framework to manage the investment.
- Determining the affordability of the investment and the economic viability of our assets.
- Establishing a delivery framework across Blackwood.

1.1 Blackwood aims to provide estate management service to tenants, residents and sharing owners in our housing developments and care homes, which allows everyone to have quiet enjoyment of their homes in a safe and secure environment, where they feel proud to live. This policy details the Blackwood approach to managing the external and communal environments in our developments. The success of the policy determines how our estates are perceived and valued, both by our customers and by the wider neighbouring communities in which we work.

1.2 Blackwood believes that its customers should be provided with the very highest standards of service in estate management. These standards should be transparent, open to review and regularly monitored.

1.3 Blackwood will ensure that the Estate Management Policy complies with current legislation, promotes good practice and ensures that all customers clearly understand and uphold their own responsibilities, their neighbours' responsibilities, Blackwood's responsibilities, and the responsibilities of partners (for example local authorities). Good estate management relies on shared responsibility, with everyone meeting their obligations in relation to their property and the surrounding area.

1.4 Blackwood will 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. Blackwood will adopt a “zero tolerance” approach to poor estate management, especially in relation to graffiti and fly-tipping.

1.5 Links to Other Blackwood Policies, Procedures & Guidance

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following Blackwood Policies, Procedures and Guidance:

- Abandoned Vehicles
- Abandonments
- Allocations
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Harassment
- Pets
- Garden Alterations and Improvements
- Succession of Tenancy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Tenants Participation
- Tenants Handbook
- Volunteering

2. RESPONSIBILITY

2.1 The Board are responsible for approving this policy and monitoring its outcomes and areas of improvement.

2.2 Blackwood employees will be responsible for policy implementation and the development of clear and consistent procedures to support this.

3. PRINCIPLES AND SCOPE OF POLICY

3.1 The Estate Management Policy is concerned with the physical upkeep of the communal areas and surrounding environment of Blackwood’s properties. This includes managing (where appropriate):

- Gardens, grass, trees and landscaped areas (including communal and individual gardens)
- Parking Areas
- Communal stairs and entrances
- Drying areas
- Bin stores, recycling and bins
- Roads, mono-block, slabbing and pathways
- External lighting and security
- CCTV
- Litter and fly-tipping
- Sheds and other structures / fixtures

- Graffiti and vandalism
- Fencing, hedges and walls
- Dog fouling
- Guttering
- Painting of communal and external areas.

It is acknowledged that there are a range of other management issues which are relevant to estate management, e.g. Customer Participation, Anti Social Behaviour, Tenancy Sustainment, Empty Homes, and Harassment. These are dealt with under separate policies and procedures.

- 3.2 The Policy will contribute to Blackwood's ambition to develop sustainable communities where people choose to live.
- 3.4 Blackwood will work with customers across all our developments and care homes to deliver existing estate management Service Standards, to measure performance delivery and to measure customer satisfaction against published targets. We will develop new standards as required.
- 3.5 Blackwood will aim to achieve continuous improvement in its performance and in the standards of service provided to all our customers.
- 3.6 Blackwood will look to develop relationships with external agencies, statutory bodies and new and existing Tenants' Groups to ensure that the aims of the Policy are met.
- 3.7 Blackwood will ensure that estate management services are planned, effectively budgeted for and managed to a high standard. Customers will be involved in this, and in scrutinising Blackwood's performance, including monitoring how well our contractors perform.
- 3.8 Blackwood will provide good quality information and advice about its estate management services to our tenants and will seek to receive regular feedback from tenants about our service delivery.
- 3.9 Blackwood aims to provide a fair and equal estate management service to all of its tenants and seeks to ensure that the Policy does not discriminate on grounds of age, disability, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. Blackwood is committed to embracing and valuing diversity amongst the communities in which it works.
- 3.10 Blackwood will annually set aside a budgeted sum for environmental improvements e.g. signage, and will provide the maximum opportunity for tenants to participate and influence the decision making process in relation to how this money is spent.
- 3.11 Where improvements are carried out at the request of tenants, Blackwood will consider any future liability and determine whether additional charges are necessary in line with the rent and service charge setting policy. Tenants will be consulted in advance of commissioning any such works, and if the majority agree then the works will go ahead.

4. OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Estate Management Visits

4.1.1 Blackwood will aim to prevent Estate Management problems emerging through a regular programme of inspections and planned & cyclical maintenance work.

Blackwood will do this in two main ways:

Estate Inspections – these will focus primarily on issues relating to Health and Safety hazards and minimising the risk of accidents which could result in injury or insurance claims. These will be undertaken by Blackwood employees or contractors and will be recorded on a fixed checklist (see **Appendix 1**). Estate Inspections will be undertaken in each development on a regular basis, at least quarterly.

Estate Tours – these will focus primarily on improving the environment of each development. Estate Tours will be undertaken by Blackwood employees and all customers living on the development will be invited to participate. This will help ensure that any works undertaken meet customers' priorities wherever possible. Estate Tours will be undertaken at least annually.

Annual Estate Inspections (involving employees and/or contractors) will allow Blackwood to develop an Estate Management Plan for each development. Customers will be advised of what work they can expect to take place in their development and the likely timescales for this.

4.1.2 All Blackwood employees will take responsibility for identifying and reporting any estate management issues whenever they are visiting developments, including when they are undertaking the Annual Visit to each tenant. Blackwood will also ask our approved contractors and agents to be proactive and notify us of any estate management issues that are evident when they are visiting our developments.

4.1.3 Inspections and Estate Tours will cover all common areas, both externally and internally, and common land adjoining Blackwood properties.

4.1.4 The purpose of Estate Inspections and Estate Tours will be to:

- Ensure our estates remain a pleasant environment for our tenants and visitors to enjoy
- Assess the quality of work undertaken on Blackwood's behalf by contractors
- Identify any maintenance works required
- Identify and mitigate any Health and Safety risks
- Identify any breaches of tenancy
- Identify broader issues which may require the involvement of external agencies, e.g., Community Police, local authorities – for example Cleansing, Environmental Health or Roads departments
- Increasingly provide a more proactive estate management service
- Identify areas for improvements and ensure these are fed back for future consideration, in planning and budget setting.

- 4.1.5 Blackwood will respond in line with agreed standards to any reports of estate management problems.
- 4.1.6 Blackwood will establish a register of adopted roads and pathways which will be shared with customers so that there is a clearer understanding of where responsibility lies.
- 4.1.7 Blackwood will encourage and support volunteer Ambassadors where they have been identified across developments. Ambassadors may cover a number of estate management functions:
- **Gardening Ambassadors** – will scrutinise, monitor and report on the work of gardening contractors, together with encouraging neighbours to improve the gardens and grounds in the development
 - **Cleaning Ambassadors** – will scrutinise, monitor and report on the work of cleaning contractors, together with encouraging neighbours to improve the cleanliness of the communal areas in the development
 - **Welcome Ambassadors** – will welcome new customers, introducing them to their neighbours and helping them to feel “at home”
 - **Flood Ambassadors** - will act as a “good neighbour” in developments in periods of bad weather, by checking on neighbours’ well-being, bringing in essential shopping etc.
 - **Social Ambassadors** – will arrange social activities in developments.

4.2 Preventing Estate Management Issues

- 4.2.1 Blackwood will seek to involve all customers, including established tenants’ groups in the estate management service. Blackwood will help to establish new groups where none exist, and will support tenants who wish to take full responsibility for their gardening. This will include providing all customers with information on what they can expect from Blackwood contractors in relation to estate management, including a monthly schedule of gardening works.
- 4.2.2 Blackwood will provide all tenants with information about how to make a compliment, suggestions or complaint about the estate management service and will deal with all complaints effectively in line with the Complaints Policy.
- 4.2.3 Blackwood will carry out inspections of empty homes promptly and ensure that any re-let works are carried out in line with the standards detailed in the Empty Homes Policy. Blackwood will aim to pre allocate all vacant properties to minimise empty periods. If a property is empty for a period of time, Blackwood will ensure the garden is maintained.
- 4.2.5 Blackwood employees will carry out a settling in visit for all new tenants within 4 weeks of them moving in to ensure that there are no problems or concerns.
- 4.2.6 Blackwood will deal promptly with requests from tenants for ‘permissions’, e.g. alteration to their home, permission to keep a pet, running a business from home

and will detail the conditions that must be adhered to if permission is granted for the request.

- 4.2.7 Blackwood will adopt 'Secure by Design' principles where appropriate, for new developments.
- 4.2.8 Any new developments will have a scheme review by a panel of employees with skills in housing management, maintenance and development. The aim will be to minimise estate management issues at planning stage.
- 4.2.9 Blackwood will seek feedback from tenants on their services both for existing and new build stock, including on how their environment impacts on their quality of life. The results will be considered when planning future developments and estates.

4.3 Monitoring

- 4.3.1 The Housing & Care Director will provide information on agreed measures and targets to Audit Committee on a regular basis to enable monitoring of performance and to highlight to the Committee any areas of concern.
- 4.3.2 Key performance indicators will include targets on frequency of estate inspections and tours, levels of satisfaction with the services and new targets that will encourage tenants to take a more active role in the delivery of this service.
- 4.3.3 Customer satisfaction with estate management will be assessed and evaluated in a number of ways, including:
 - Blackwood-wide customer satisfaction surveys
 - Development level customer satisfaction surveys
 - Estate Tours
 - Ambassador feedback
 - Regional scrutiny