



West Highland Housing Association

ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Ref No PD0001

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1.0 PRINCIPLES

The Core Aims of our organisation are;

To provide high quality, well maintained, affordable housing that meets local needs and assist in supporting fragile communities within our area.

West Highland's ability to deliver good services for current and future customers is dependent on our ability to make the most of the homes we own, not only as good places to live, but as the assets on which the whole organisation is built. The customers' ability to afford the rents we charge is crucial to maintain this strategy and every effort should be made to ensure that this is sustained.

This strategy outlines the principles upon which we will achieve our aims through structured assessment of what we have, and application of good practice to achieve the correct result.

2.0 ORGANISATION

All Tenants, Service Users, The Board, Staff and Partners are responsible for getting the most out of homes as assets, and making the best use of the resources we have. We will continually enhance our understanding of the importance of asset management and will consult at each stage in the processes linked to this strategy.

3.0 KEY FACTORS

3.1 CUSTOMER KNOWLEDGE

An appreciation of who our customers are, and what their needs and aspirations are, now and in the future, are fundamental to good asset management. This will extend to all ages and circumstances so that we capture any trends and consider the amendment of plans to suit.

Being aware of changes in personal and housing market circumstances impacts on how we assess our assets. The changes we will monitor are in the demographics of an area, employment, housing development reputation, private renting sector rents and benefit system impacts.

We will monitor trends in the following and adapt our strategy to suit;

- *Tenant age profile*
- *Proposed new developments impacting on housing need*
- *Identification of frequently let areas*
- *Changes to housing benefit*
- *Changes to other Government and Council benefits*
- *Satisfaction and Data capture surveys*

3.2 STOCK CONDITION

We have comprehensive stock condition data which will be updated on a regular basis as

new works are done and components are replaced. The data will be used to update our Business Plan based on agreed and realistic life-cycle replacement timings and costs. Regular Estate Management processes will identify any less predictable investments which may be required and which may impact on the Business Plan.

The processes we will use to keep the stock condition information up-to-date are;

- *Carry out a programme of Stock Condition survey updates on a rolling programme*
- *Transfer data to Housing Management software to allow easier management of stock and components*
- *Continually update data for properties included in Improvement Works*
- *Continual re-assessment of replacement cycles for components*
- *Update based on tenant visits*

Reference – Stock Condition Survey Policy PD0012

3.3 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

Our properties will be maintained in three distinct ways with the costs of each included in the budgeting processes each year based on the Business Plan.

Reactive Repairs – providing a good quality and cost effective service to users is a priority for our organisation. We will clearly set out the responsibilities, categories of repairs and timescales on our website and publications which will be carried out by either a repairs Contractor appointed by the Association or by In-House personnel. We will monitor performance and report our findings to our users.

We intend to achieve our aims by;

- *Having a contract in place which is robust and has rigorous performance conditions attached*
- *Monitor performance regularly and report findings to the West Highland Board*
- *Monitor Tenant Satisfaction Surveys and amend the contract to suit*
- *Have more dedicated Tenant engagement following repairs to catch any issues and resolve them quickly*

Cyclical Works – We will carry out periodical maintenance of our assets to enhance the lifespan of the components or keep the look and value of the asset to an agreed acceptable standard. The work will be contracted to appropriate Contractors who either have the specialist skills necessary or have been successful in a tender.

We intend to achieve our aims by;

- *Having contracts in place with Contractors who have been successful in a competitive tender*
- *Engaging Contractors who are specialists in their field*
- *Carrying out works using our In-House Engineer*
- *Varying contracts based on Tenant Satisfaction feedback*

Planned Improvement Works – We will replace individual property components based on timescales and costs included within the Business Plan and updated through stock condition survey. The life-cycles of each component will be set depending on quality and reviewed regularly. This work will be carried out under a contract lasting between three and five years in duration to maximise value for money.

Improvement Works will be based on;

- Tenders issued through Public Contracts Scotland
- Constant review of replacement cycles based on surveys
- Continual monitoring of expenditure in relation to Business Plan projections

Reference – Property Maintenance Policy PD0013

Reference – Right to Repair Policy PD0007

3.4 NEW BUILD/DEVELOPMENT

All proposed development of new properties, either directly from landbank owned by the Association or offered as a Design & Build package, will be appraised and approved based on the principals contained within this strategy. Validation will include sound financial management based on agreed life-cycles, housing need, and tenant consultation.

The specification of all new build properties will be in accordance with a design brief which reflects the costs available, and the notional requirement to minimise the on-going maintenance of the external fabric over time.

- West Highland will follow the recommendations contained within the Link Group Design Guide 2012 and revisions, amended to suit the location of any proposed development.

3.5 ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Association will review the needs of our customers based on the external factors which affect their ability to pay for energy, and the energy efficiency of the properties they live in. The stresses of fuel poverty will be given a high priority when engaging with customers and energy advice will be provided to everyone who needs it.

Full consideration will be given to the use of different forms of heating, including renewables, and the decision to install will be based on sustainability and cost effective criteria.

West Highland will work towards achieving compliance with the Scottish Governments SHQS Standard and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.

To achieve our aims we will:

- Carry out Options Appraisals for all properties failing EESSH and instruct work accordingly
- Refer any energy related enquiries to a dedicated service provider such as AliEnergy

- Monitor energy efficiency funding offers to establish if any of our properties would benefit

3.6 LIFE-CYCLE COST ANALYSIS (SPEND-TO-SAVE)

Each decision made to either install products in new buildings, or as replacements of components in existing buildings, will be based on the comparison between the maintenance free aspects of some products in comparison with the cyclical maintenance required to others. The consequence of the decisions made will be reflected in the Business Plan.

Some of the main considerations will be;

- The use of non-maintained plastic rather than wood
- The guarantees offered on the material over time
- Any financial incentives which (such as RHI)
- Consideration of the exposure of the components based on location
- Tenant aspirations levelled against costs and possible impact on rents

3.7 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPERTIES

When our stock condition surveys and analysis of costs indicate that a property does not provide an acceptable level of performance or financial return on investment then the Board will be asked to consider the disposal of the property. A full and robust assessment process will be carried out and Tenants consulted at all stages in the process.

The main considerations in relation to disposal will be;

- If a property (or group) is costing a disproportionate amount to maintain
- If components require replacement sooner than anticipated
- Financial modelling exercise indicates that the West Highland Board should consider disposal as an option
- Whether there are any constraints on disposal because of covenants or loan restrictions
- Discuss with existing tenants all of the options before making a final decision

Reference – Stock Disposal Policy PD0016

3.8 MEDICAL ADAPTATIONS

The Association recognises that Tenants needs will change over time and that there may be health and safety issues which will need to be addressed to allow older and disabled persons to enjoy the use of their property or live independently. We will monitor these possibilities through regular engagement with Tenants and family, and have a close relationship with NHS and Council professionals who will be responsible for assessing the particular needs of the individual.

All medical adaptations will be assessed, costed, funded and carried out in accordance with the Associations policy.

We will use the following to achieve the best outcome;

- It is the Association's policy to provide over-bath showers in all properties within a reasonable timescale.
- Prospective tenants will be assessed in relation to the possibility of adaptations before properties are offered and alternative more suitable properties considered
- Specialist Contractors will be engaged to design and install equipment to suit the individual's needs
- Consider pro-active Housing Management of ground floor properties for either existing or prospective tenants

Reference – Adaptations Policy PD0002

3.9 NON-HOUSING PROPERTIES

Non-housing properties (offices/stores/energy centres, equipment etc) will be assessed and maintained in the same way as tenanted properties, costs included within the Business Plan and financial viability regularly assessed.

In carrying out these functions we will;

- Provide reactive, cyclical, and planned maintenance as above
- Consider the financial viability of each property on a regular basis
- Consider energy management measures (replace lighting etc) as required

3.10 ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT

All aspects of asbestos management of the work that is done on our properties by either our own staff, or contractors working at our properties on our behalf, is a key priority for the Association. The Association's policy will be updated on a regular basis and the Asbestos Register provided to all contractors and staff.

Reference – Asbestos Management Policy and Plan PD0003

3.11 REGULATION AND COMPLIANCE

There are many Government and Good Practice regulations and compliance standards which affect asset management. The Regulations and Standards set by the Government are generally monitored and reported on to the Scottish Housing Regulator through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

The Association will comply with all of the requirements made of it or provide an adequate detailed explanation of the reasons for not doing so.

What we report on in the ARC;

- SHQS compliance
- EESSH
- Gas Safety

- Health & Safety

3.12 PROCUREMENT

We will procure all of the services which are required to fulfil a good asset management service in accordance with the financial rules of the Association and in accordance with the Government and EU regulation. This will provide the Association with the ability to show that all of its procurement methods allow an open, equal, transparent, non-discriminatory and proportionate response to its needs.

Reference – Procurement Policy PD0008

3.13 CONSULTATION

Each aspect of Asset Management which the Association deals with is an integral part of their engagement with the customers we have. We will consult Tenants on major expenditure on their behalf and seek their views on whether the priorities being used are relevant to their needs and aspirations.

To achieve our aims we will;

- Carry out Tenant Satisfaction Surveys
- Carry out Pre-Start Surveys for Investment Works in each property to explain what is planned, agree a start date, and introduce the Contractor carrying out the work
- Carry out Investment works completion surveys
- Issue regular Newsletters

Reference – Tenant Engagement Policy and Plan (in preparation)

3.14 LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

There are many Financial and Housing Management policies in operation within the Association which are co-dependant with the operation of the asset management of its stock. Our aim is to endeavour to take all the different strands of policy and responsibility into account when making any decision in relation to assets.

4.0 REVIEW

This Strategy will be reviewed every three years by the Board. Each of the Factors (including policies and performance) forming the Asset Management Strategy will be reported to the Board at regular intervals and any recommendations for amendment to the Strategy discussed and recorded at the review.

Date policy approved	Review Due	Reviewed by	Approved by
December 2021	December 2024	Asset Management Officer	WHA Board