

# OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

## ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY NOV 2016



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## **1. Introduction**

The Offaly Local Authorities Mission Statement 2015 - 2019 is “To make Offaly the best place possible to live, work, visit and invest.”

Offaly County Council is committed to developing and implementing its Estate Management policy which sets out and clarifies the nature of the relationship between the Council and its tenants. The Councils objective is to ensure that residents receive a level of service which is efficient and professional and that as landlord, Offaly County Council fully implements the relevant policies of the organisation and fulfils its duty of care to our residents.

Estate Management is a process of partnership and co-operation between residents and the Council. It is about working together to exchange information and ideas and to generate a greater sense of involvement for residents and for their responsibility in the decision-making in their estates. It recognises that residents have a right to be consulted regarding decisions that affect their lives.

Section 1 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997 defines Estate Management as;

“(a) the securing or promotion of the interests of any tenants, lessees, owners or occupiers, whether individually or generally, in the enjoyment of any house, building, or land provided by a housing authority under the Housing Acts 1966 to 1997.

(b) the avoidance, prevention or abatement of anti-social behaviour in any housing estate in which is situated a house provided by a housing authority under the Housing Acts 1966 to 1997”.

This policy document sets out the policies and measures which the Council utilises in order to develop the estate management process within its housing stock.

The desired outcome of the Estate Management process includes:

- increased responsibility and participation for residents in the running of their estates – a form of partnership between residents and the Council.
- improved relationships between the council and tenants/residents.
- improved service delivery.

## **2. Aims and Objectives**

Offaly County Council is responsible for the management of approximately 1785 social housing tenancies which are spread throughout the county.

Housing is a key service for many households in County Offaly. The quality of their housing and the environment in which they live is very important to people and can have a major impact on their quality of life.

The term Estate Management describes a wide range of services relating to the management of housing areas. Any matter which can impact upon a residents quiet enjoyment of their home or the environment, in which they live, can be described as an Estate Management issue.

Offaly County Council recognises that managing housing is about more than bricks and mortar and that we must aim to deliver professional services based on the needs and aspirations of our service users which make best use of resources.

The Councils aim is to provide professional, efficient and high quality Estate Management services to all our tenants.

The objectives of the Estate Management Policy are to:-

- enable tenants and their household to live in well managed and well maintained housing with an environment that is attractive, safe and secure, free from nuisance, annoyance, intimidation and harassment in which people will want to live;
- contribute to developing sustainable communities which are well maintained;
- ensure tenants are aware of, and accept, their responsibilities regarding the upkeep of their homes and the surrounding area and to ensure any enforcement action is lawful, consistent with the Tenancy Agreement and in line with good practice;
- ensure that tenants are aware of Offaly County Councils commitment to and responsibility for good estate management via consultation and participation;
- promote excellent partnership working with all the appropriate external agencies to develop and sustain community pride and safety and to make all Offaly County Councils housing estates places where people want to live;
- comply with legislation and performance standards and ensure that Offaly County Council meets its obligations as a landlord;
- monitor maintenance of properties by inspecting up to 10% of our housing stock annually to ensure good maintenance and adherence to tenancy rules.

### **3. Tenant Participation**

The Offaly County Council Estate Management Policy extends over two areas, tenant participation, which relates to the relationship that exists between the Council and its residents generally; and tenancy management, that relates to issues which follow from the legal and statutory relationship between the Council and its individual tenants. Offaly County Council employs two Community Liaison Officers with the following functions.

- To promote tenant participation throughout the county
- Provide pre-tenancy information sessions for new tenants
- Promote good relations between tenants and the local authority
- Encourage and assist residents in setting up of residents associations/groups and in the management of their estates and encourage community activities
- Investigate complaints of anti-social behaviour and liaise with the Gardaí as required.

The aim of Tenant Participation is to increase community participation within social housing; maximise tenant involvement in estate development; and promote good community spirit.

### **3.1 Support for Residents Groups**

Offaly County Council encourages tenants to become involved in residents groups /associations in their area. Such groups/associations facilitate the promotion of their interests as residents, both individually and collectively and enable a two-way working relationship between the Council and residents.

### **3.2 Access to Grants & Funding Supports**

As a group, residents may meet on a regular basis and work with the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) to improve the social and physical environment of their housing estate. The Community Liaison Officer will advise on what assistance is available from the Council in the form of Estate Management Grants or Environmental Grants. Advice and support will also be given on how to fundraise locally for environmental or community projects.

The allocation and amount of Estate Management grants will be based on the level of funding available, the numbers applying and the number of households to benefit from the project. Proposed projects will be visited prior to works commencing and on completion of works to establish models of good practice.

### **3.3 Community Facilities**

Where resources permit Offaly County Council will seek to improve the provision of community facilities available in estates. Offaly County Council have provided community facilities at Errymill, Clara (Community House), Edenderry (Community Cabin), Grove Street Birr, (Community House), Puttaghaun, (Community Centre Tullamore), and Kilbrook (Community Centre), in Tullamore. Offaly County Council will maintain these community facilities in regard to their upkeep and utility costs.

### **3.4 Consultation**

The Council will consult widely and seek the involvement of all residents at all stages of environmental improvement projects carried out on estates. Projects which have the full support and involvement of the majority of residents provide greater value for money and are more sustainable. Active consultation will also be carried out with residents where estates are identified which are in need of extensive remedial or regeneration works.

### **3.5 Interagency Work**

The Council will also liaise with other statutory and voluntary agencies involved in the delivery of services which impact on housing generally, such as the HSE, Offaly Local Development Company and An Garda Síochana. Important examples of this are our involvement in the Offaly Joint Policing Committee and in the development of a pilot Interagency Steering Group for Grove Street, Crinkle and the Cloncollig area Tullamore. The Housing section will also liaise with the Public Participation Network to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting and developing all local authority estates.

## **4. Management of Tenancies**

Offaly County Council will try to ensure a strategic balance and mix of tenants, in so far as is practicable, to encourage social integration and minimise the potential for anti-social behaviour. All applicants for social housing are assessed in accordance

with the terms outlined in the Scheme of Letting Priorities which were revised by Offaly County Council in 2013.

Where the Council wishes to implement a refurbishment or regeneration scheme in an estate, it may be in the interest of good estate management to decant these dwellings and rehouse the tenants in suitable alternative accommodation. Such decanted properties may not be re-allocated by the Council until the proposed works are complete.

A variety of factors affect the health/sustainability of a housing estate. These include:

- Quality of the housing stock – good design, well maintained.
- Good estate layout – no blind spaces, unsupervised alleyways, adequate and appropriate green space.
- Existence of an active Resident Association – involvement of residents in appearance and maintenance of their estate.
- Local authority response to incidents of anti-social behavior needs to be effective.
- Community facilities/services – access by residents to community centre, affordable childcare, play facilities, schools, and shops.
- Mixed tenure in development – healthy estates benefit from a mixture of social, privately owned, private rented.
- Employment opportunities – access to convenient employment.
- Inspections of housing stock to encourage and ensure adherence to terms of tenancies, particularly with regard to waste.

The above list is not exhaustive. However, to increase sustainability in our housing stock it is important that these elements are considered for inclusion in new housing schemes proposed by Offaly County Council and where possible regeneration schemes will be developed in existing housing estates to try to achieve these aims.

#### **4.1 Pre Tenancy Information Sessions**

All tenants of social housing and licensees of residential caravan sites must complete a pre-tenancy information session, delivered by the Community Liaison Officer, prior to the allocation of their tenancy or license. The pre-tenancy session places particular emphasis on the tenant's obligations to their houses and to their community, on the need to respect their neighbours and their neighbours property and on tenants responsibility for the behaviour of their children and visitors. The pre - tenancy information encourages tenants to act in a positive manner in the community and highlights the need to prevent anti social behaviour.

#### **4.2 Tenancy Agreement**

All tenants are required to sign a tenancy agreement on foot of attending a pre tenancy information session which is a legal document binding them to all the rules and regulations of their tenancy with Offaly County Council.

#### **4.3 Tenants Handbook**

A Tenant Handbook is provided to all tenants of Offaly County Council. The booklet is an important tool in the sharing of information between the Council and the tenant which aims to assist tenants in accessing the services they may need from time to time from both the Local Authority and other state agencies operating in the county. It also answers some of the more common queries received on a day to day basis in relation to such matters as general tenancy conditions, repairs request

process and anti-social behaviour as well as outlining practical advice on safety in the home.

## **5. Anti Social Behaviour Strategy**

The principal objectives of the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy are set out in subsection 2 of the Housing Act 2009, and part 2 of the Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2014 and include:

- (a) The prevention and reduction of anti-social behaviour
- (b) The co-ordination of services within the housing authority that are directed at dealing with, preventing or reducing anti-social behaviour
- (c) The promotion of co-operation with other persons / bodies, including An Garda Síochána, in the performance of their respective functions in relation to preventing / reducing anti-social behaviour, in order to avoid or reduce duplication of effort between the housing authority and the other person / body in performing their functions; and
- (d) The promotion of good estate management (as defined by section 1 of the 1997 Act)

The local authority recognises and accepts that anti-social behaviour in local authority estates is unacceptable as it can have an adverse effect on the quality of life of both the victims in question and the other residents of the area. Accordingly it is the policy of Offaly Local Authorities that anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated and whatever means necessary to combat this issue will be fully utilised.

### **5.1 Vetting of Housing Applicants**

An important part of both the allocation and anti social behaviour process is the vetting of housing applicants. The Council will make enquiries in relation to anti-social behaviour by all housing applicants prior to allocation of housing in accordance with Section 15 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997. Such enquiries will normally be made to the local Gardaí in the area in which the person currently resides or has previously resided. Mutual Exchange applicants will also be vetted prior to the application being approved.

Under section 14 of the 1997 Housing Act, Offaly County Council may refuse or defer a letting of a dwelling, or refuse an application from a tenant to purchase a dwelling, where the applicant is or has been involved in anti-social behaviour or where the letting or sale would not be in the interest of good estate management.

The power to refuse lettings also extends to applicants who fail to provide required information to the Council. A housing authority may also refuse consent to the resale of a tenant purchase dwelling to a person involved in anti-social behaviour or on grounds of good estate management where the consent of the authority to the resale is required.

## **6. Offaly Joint Policing Committee**

Offaly Joint Policing Committee has been established, in accordance with Department of Justice guidelines and the following is a breakdown of the representation on the committee:

- 13 Elected Members of Offaly County Council;
- 5 Oireachtas Representatives;

- 2 Local Authority Officials (Chief Executive shall be an ex-officio member);
- 2 Senior Garda Officials;
- 6 community and voluntary sector representatives.

The main aim of Offaly's Joint Policing Committee (JPC) is to provide a forum where Offaly County Council and the senior Garda Officers responsible for the policing of Offaly, with the participation of the local Oireachtas members and community interests, can consult, discuss and make recommendations on matters affecting policing in the county.

In seeking to achieve the objectives of the Offaly JPC plan, the committee will help to ensure that County Offaly is developed in line with Offaly Local Authorities mission statement *'to make Offaly the best place possible to Live, Work, Visit and Invest'* and An Garda Síochána mission statement *'working with Communities to protect and serve'*.

## **7. Relevant Policies and Procedures**

- ASB Strategy 2016
- Corporate Plan 2015 - 2019
- Joint Policing Committee Strategic Plan 2015 - 2020
- Halting Site Management Plan 2014 - 2018
- Traveller Accommodation Plan 2014 -2018
- Caravan Retention Policy 2015
- Tenant Improvement Works Policy 2015 - 2019
- Housing Management & Maintenance Policy 2015 - 2019
- Scheme of letting priorities 2013
- Tenancy Agreement
- Tenant Handbook