

RUTHERGLEN & CAMBUSLANG HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Policy Name	End of Tenancy / Void Management
Policy Category :	Housing Management
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END OF TENANCY / VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction

All tenants of the Association are required to provide 28 Days written notice of terminating their tenancy, in accordance with section 6.1 of the Associations Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement:- “You, together with any joint tenant, give us at least twenty-eight days written notice. You must tell us at the same time if you are married or if you live in the house with another person as husband and wife. If you do, their agreement may also be required”.

The Association aims to review this policy every three years, or as necessary, to accommodate any changes required to Policy or Practice in void management.

Tenants Responsibilities

Section 6.10 of the Tenancy Agreement details the following responsibilities before a tenant moves out of a house:

- leave the house in a clean and tidy condition;
- remove all your belongings; (* **See below**)
- make sure any lodgers or sub-tenants leave with you;
- allow us access to your house before you move out, at reasonable times, to show new tenants round;
- hand in your keys to the housing office;
- remove any fixtures and fittings you have installed without our written permission and put right any damage caused. This does not affect your obligations under paragraph 5.21 above;
- check with us to make sure that you have paid all payments due to us;
- apply for any compensation you may be entitled to under clause 5.22 above;
- leave the house in good decorative order;
- do the repairs you are obliged to do;
- give us a forwarding address unless there is good reason for not doing so.
- take meter readings for gas and electricity services and inform the relevant suppliers of your forwarding address.

The tenant should be aware that upon receipt of notice to terminate a tenancy an arrangement should be made for access in order that a joint housing management & maintenance inspection can be carried out at the earliest opportunity (within 7 days at the latest). The purpose of the inspection is to establish the condition, size and style of house, with a view to having it re-let as soon as possible after the tenancy terminating. Responsibilities to clear rent arrears will also be discussed at this visit, including agreement of a suitable arrangement.

Any repairs or tenant damage will be noted by the maintenance staff and these will be processed in line with set procedures. An end of Tenancy check list will be issued(See Appendix 1), detailing key responsibilities which tenants are expected to adhere to before handing keys back to the Association. The tenant will also be issued with an end of tenancy questionnaire, to be returned to the Association.

The Housing Officer will liaise with the tenant regarding the leaving date, and on the agreed date the Housing Officer will arrange to meet the tenant at the property to carry out an empty property inspection and obtain all house keys. It is acknowledged that this may not always be practical, but is necessary to ensure that the house has been cleared and cleaned to the Association's satisfaction.

If the tenant is not prepared to clear the flat then a contractor will be instructed and the tenant billed accordingly. The Association employ a Tracing /Debt Recovery Agent and their services will be used where tenants do not co-operate with Housing Management staff regarding rechargeable invoices or outstanding rent. This action can lead to implications for the persons credit rating in the future, causing problems if they try to take out a loan etc.

Gas and electricity meter readings should be taken by the tenant and it is the tenant's responsibility to pass these on to the appropriate departments. South Lanarkshire Council should be notified by the tenant of the change of address in terms of any Housing Benefit and Council Tax entitlement, while mail redirection should be arranged by the tenant via the Post Office.

All available keys for the property must be returned to the office. If there are not at least two full sets the tenant may be billed for the cost of any subsequent key cutting costs.

Termination of the tenancy will only be concluded when the Association has received the required written notification along with keys for the property. In situations where written notification / no keys have been received or vice versa, the Association may be forced to serve an abandonment notice on the property (where the tenant cannot be contacted) leading to the tenant being made accountable for the extra rent charge this will incur. This process is necessary to prevent any misunderstanding and to ensure that termination of the tenancy has been fully authorised by the outgoing tenant.

Void Management

The Association operate an open waiting list and have a demand for properties which vastly outweighs the supply, due to the limited numbers of void properties each year. The Associations Policy is always to try to minimise or eliminate the rent loss period with every void property.

Allocations are made in accordance with the Associations Allocation s Policy, based on Housing Need. This process involves analysis of quota groups and the waiting list to identify a prospective tenant within 48 hours of the void notification.

Tenanted viewings are arranged whenever possible to speed up the lettings process and this requirement of the outgoing tenant is contained under section 6.10 of the tenancy agreement.

During the joint Housing Management and Maintenance inspection major repairs may be identified which cannot be carried out whilst the property is still occupied. If this is the case, the security of the property will be the responsibility of the maintenance section until the property becomes lettable. A vacant property which is lettable but has not been allocated, will be locked, but no further security measures will be taken unless it is felt that the property is vulnerable.

Keys for void properties are booked in, tagged and placed in the key cabinet. Use by staff and contractors is recorded within the appropriate key book at reception.

The Association is required to arrange an assessment of all empty properties and provide the incoming tenant with an energy performance certificate that is completed during this process. Maintenance staff will arrange the appropriate inspection once the property has been identified and the certificate will be provided to the new tenant prior to their moving into the property.

The Allocations Policy contains the following text relating to those properties defined as Difficult to let:- “These properties will include a small number of properties defined at the beginning of each year as historically “DTL” or those properties where staff have encountered 3 or more refusals during the allocation process – In this situation staff will use discretion to allocate according to demand to speed up the allocation process to limit unnecessary rent loss”.

Responsibility to decorate a void property lies with the incoming new tenant - The Association do not issue a decoration allowance in this situation.

Appeal Procedure

Any applicant who feels aggrieved by their treatment under the End of Tenancy/Void management policy has the right of appeal to a Senior Housing Officer, and thereafter, to the Association’s Housing Management Sub-Committee.

Appeals should be made in writing within 10 working days of the notification, and should be responded to within a further 10 working days. The Associations Complaints Policy can be referred to for further guidance on this issue - a copy of the Complaints Policy is available on request from the office.

Reporting

Detailed reporting on Void properties will be made to the Housing Management Sub Committee monthly. The report will detail the address of all void properties on a

quarterly basis and provide information on the void period, void loss and reason for the void period to enable trends in terms of difficult to let areas etc to be identified to Committee.

Performance Monitoring

A range of statistics are provided to allow the Committee to carry out effective monitoring of void properties and reletting performance. Reporting to the Housing Management Committee on performance issues includes:-

- Relets for the month/year to date, including numbers per quota group. Monthly figures include a breakdown of relets per ethnic group
- Details of all other lets and changes of tenancy, including Mutual Exchanges, Succession, Assignment, Sub Lets, Permission to Reside and Joint Tenancies.
- Allocation quota targets for the year and monthly figures achieved against quotas.
- Breakdown of relets to date showing void house apartment sizes.
- Breakdown of reasons for void notification during the year.
- Void properties in the year, showing rent loss.