

Lifetime Maintenance

Overall Statement

The aim of Aberdeenshire Council's Lifetime Maintenance Policy is to ensure the provision of acceptable, modern, good quality housing, meeting the requirements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015 and the Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Strategy by 2016.

In delivering this objective we will ensure that due consideration is given to the "Aberdeenshire Council Housing Stock Energy Efficiency Commitment" which aims to promote and support improvements in energy efficiency and a reduction in the incidence of fuel poverty.

We will utilise a programme of sustained and planned investment based upon a comprehensive and robust stock condition database, regularly updated to enable identification of current and future lifetime maintenance priorities. The improvement programme will be developed in conjunction with Tenant Groups and the Council will utilise a performance management framework to ensure continuous improvement of the service.

An SHQS Delivery Plan has been developed to ensure that the Council's Housing Stock is:

- Compliant with the Tolerable Standard
- Free from serious disrepair
- Energy Efficient
- Fitted with modern facilities and services
- Healthy, safe and secure

The Council will implement detailed procedures and agreed practices uniformly across the service and staff will be supported by training to ensure that all are equipped to carry out the roles expected of them.

Policy Aims

1 Planning

- 1.1 We will ensure that the lifetime maintenance programme is informed by the information held within a database detailing 100% of the housing stock, which is regularly updated with information gathered from housing staff, regular surveys and other Services within Aberdeenshire Council, allowing planning and specification on an individual dwelling level. The database is subject to validation procedures to ensure accuracy at all times. The Stock Condition Database will be kept up to date in light of all lifetime maintenance activity, enabling current and future needs for investment in the stock to be identified.

- 1.2 The information held by the Council will clearly identify the gap between the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and the present stock condition and will allow the assessment of the effect of different long-term investment options.
- 1.3 We will utilise a component lifecycle replacement system that permits a flexible approach to un-expired life. This will be based upon information held within the Stock Condition Database, which will also be utilised to inform the Housing Business Plan and the SHQS Delivery Plan.
- 1.4 The Housing Business Plan is designed to evolve over time, allowing full flexibility so as to reflect changes in the operating environment. The Business Plan will be regularly updated to reflect changes in local and national policy as well as fluctuations in the local housing system.
- 1.5 In addition we will prepare a detailed, three year, Housing Stock Improvement Programme on an annual basis.
- 1.6 The Council will operate an annual review policy relating to the 'Schedule of Rates', used in the stock improvement database, whereby key housing and property professionals will agree the schedule based on trends from previous years capital programmes and any technological advances.
- 1.7 A 'Stock Improvement Specification' will determine the standard of components utilised within the programme and will be applied throughout the Aberdeenshire area. The standard specification will be reviewed on an annual basis and Tenant Groups will be consulted regarding the components utilised.
- 1.8 Tenants Groups will also be consulted in connection with the setting of priorities and service standards. In addition Tenants views will be sought in order to gain a greater understanding of expectations and requirements.
- 1.9 In developing the Lifetime Maintenance programme we will consider wider strategic issues as outlined in the Local Housing Strategy, in order to take account of risks, low demand, fuel poverty, accommodation requirements of Tenants in the future and Tenant preferences.
- 1.10 In preparing a fully costed and affordable long-term maintenance strategy, investment requirements and tenants needs and aspirations will be considered jointly.

2 Delivery

- 2.1 We will aim to achieve a high level of quality in relation to Lifetime Maintenance work undertaken to a Tenant's home. A Tenant Satisfaction Questionnaire will be provided in connection with all contracts and findings will be reported to Tenant and Management Groups with the aim of achieving continuous service improvement.
- 2.2 Findings from the Tenant Satisfaction Questionnaire will also be used to analyse individual Contractor performance. Data gathered will be reported to the Property Services in order that Tenant views can be reflected in the retention and future appointment of Contractors.
- 2.3 Tenants will be provided with choice in relation to improvement or planned maintenance as far as practicable
- 2.4 We will keep tenants informed of planned, cyclical and improvement works to their home and will ensure that clear channels of communication are in place prior to, during and following works.
- 2.5 The Councils Property Services section will manage the procurement of Contractors in connection with the Lifetime Maintenance of homes. The Council will develop partnership arrangements with Contractors with the aim of identifying common goals, improving the service to Tenants, reducing costs and developing an even workload for Contractors.
- 2.6 The Council will also aim to develop similar channels of communication with owner-occupiers prior to, during and following works. We will provide owner-occupiers with sufficient information regarding costs of works to common areas prior to commencement. The Aberdeenshire Council Factoring Policy will be developed to provide a comprehensive service to owner-occupiers.
- 2.7 We will ensure that principles of sustainability are incorporated within the procurement process and the lifetime maintenance of homes.
- 2.8 A Code of Conduct will be provided to Contractors, outlining the standards expected within a Tenants home. Tenants will be informed of the contents of the code on a regular basis and feedback monitored in terms of the Tenant Satisfaction Questionnaire.
- 2.9 Contracts will be managed effectively, ensuring that Contractors adhere to conditions and the Code of Conduct. Performance will be monitored to ensure that works are undertaken to a sufficient level of quality within the conditions and code of conduct set.
- 2.10 We will meet all legal obligations in respect of the Lifetime Maintenance of homes and will aim to develop robust safety procedures in respect of gas servicing and all other service contracts.

3 Monitoring and Review

- 3.1 The SHQS Delivery Plan will act as the key tool to allow the Council to monitor progress towards meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. The SHQS Steering Group will meet on a quarterly basis to review progress against the Action Plan. Briefings will be provided to staff involved in implementing the Housing Capital Programme. Annual reviews will also be provided to the Social Work and Housing Committee to ensure that members are kept informed of the progress.
- 3.2 The Stock Condition Database will be subject to a verification procedure and accuracy will also be monitored by means of an independent assessment.
- 3.3 The Council will implement performance measurement systems in relation to all aspects of the Lifetime Maintenance of homes and will monitor service improvement.
- 3.4 Tenant feedback will be considered central to the monitoring and review of this policy and the Lifetime Maintenance programme in general. Reporting structures will be implemented to ensure Tenants' views are reflected in service review.
- 3.5 We will deal fairly and effectively with anyone making an appeal against, or complaint about, any activities or decisions relating to the Lifetime Maintenance Policy through the Council's Standard Procedure. We will also make it clear that complaints can be referred to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

4 Equality and diversity

In all aspects of the maintenance of Tenants homes, we will:

- 4.1 Seek to combat discrimination and promote equal opportunities for tenants in all aspects of policy and procedures. This means the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds age, sex, race, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.
- 4.2 Comply with the European Convention on Human Rights at all stages of the Lifetime Maintenance of the Housing Stock.