



KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL Estate Management Strategy

May 2024

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1. Introduction

Kildare County Council (the council) manages tenancies located in all areas of the county. The council aims to develop estates and neighbourhoods where people wish to live by creating peaceful, clean and pleasant environments. This Estate Management Strategy sets out how the Housing Department will take the lead in delivering high quality management of its tenancies and estates. The key to achieving our aim is the development of strong relationships between the council, tenants, and other key stakeholders.

1.1 Legislative and Policy Context

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997 describes estate management as ‘securing or promoting the interest of any occupiers, individually or generally in the enjoyment of any house, building or land provided by a housing authority under the housing acts’.

This strategy has been developed within the context of existing legislation and housing policies that underpin social housing provision in the State. The council complies with policy direction and guidelines issued by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The strategy takes account of and complements existing local strategies and policies relating to the provision of housing services, such as the adopted Allocation Scheme for Social Housing and the Anti-social Behaviour Strategy.

The development of this strategy has been prioritised by the council’s Housing Strategic Policy Committee.

The council’s Corporate Plan guides the strategic actions of the council and commits to making County Kildare a leading, inclusive, and sustainable community.

1.2 Public Sector Duty

Local authorities have a wide and significant influence on human rights and equality by virtue of their role in planning, housing, transport, services/utilities, and community development. Decisions on settlement planning, transport infrastructure, housing/accommodation, among many other functions of local government, are factors in the creation of conditions that either enhance or diminish human rights and equality.

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 imposes a statutory obligation on public bodies in performing these functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights of people availing of their services.

The Public Sector Duty is a mechanism to ensure a positive contribution to the human rights obligations and equality objectives of the State. A review and analysis of data and policy development identified the following key human rights and equality issues within County Kildare:

- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Lone parents
- Member of the Traveller and Roma communities
- Black and Asian people
- Women
- People with disabilities

The council recognises that our tenants may be at particular risk of experiencing exclusion across any or all these issues identified. While housing policy is determined at central government level there is considerable scope through housing policy to influence outputs and outcomes across the issues identified. Embedding the public sector duty into these policies mitigates against the risk of the creation of or reinforcement of such exclusions.

The council is committed to the ongoing monitoring and assessment of this strategy under the Public Sector Duty, and to progressively developing and expanding policy responses to ensure the protection of human rights and the achievement of greater equality.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Estate Management Strategy

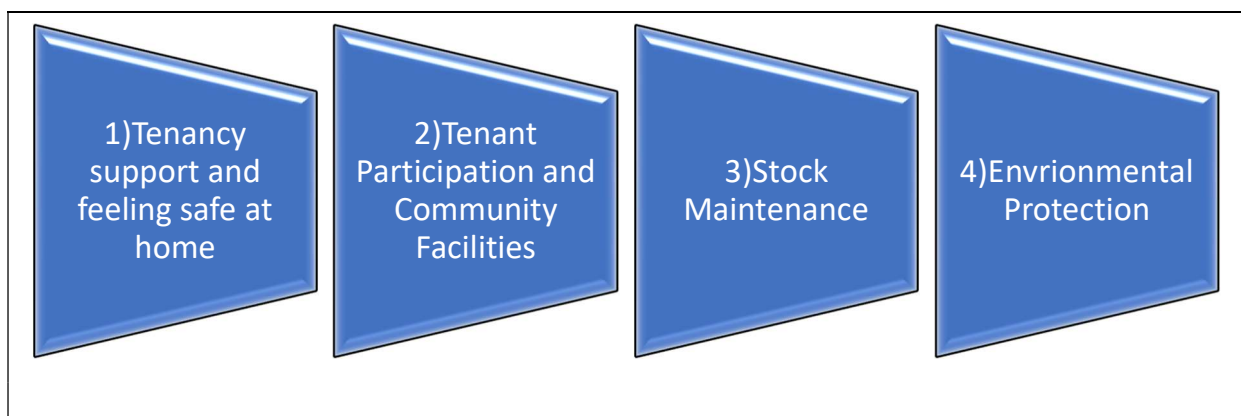
The aim of this strategy is to develop estates and neighbourhoods where people wish to live by creating peaceful, clean and pleasant environments. The council will take the lead in fulfilling this aim through the delivery of high-quality housing and management services. The council will strive to achieve the following aims and objectives:

- At the outset of a tenancy ensure that tenants are aware of their obligations and responsibilities which are outlined in their tenancy agreement, including their ongoing obligation to maintain their property and surrounding environment throughout their tenancy as outlined in the Tenant Handbook.
- Provision of a Tenant Liaison Service to assist tenants.
- Provide a Tenancy Sustainment and Social Work Service to assist tenants who may be vulnerable to homelessness to maintain their tenancy.
- Ensure that the provisions of the anti-social behaviour strategy are implemented.
- Fulfil the council's maintenance obligation to tenants as detailed in the Tenant Handbook.
- Maintain council stock to a high standard through planned, response and pre-let repairs.
- Maintain demand for council properties by ensuring high quality homes are made available and by minimising vacancies.
- Roll out of the Energy Retrofit Programme to upgrade properties and improve properties prior to re-letting.
- Facilitate and promote excellence in architectural design to support sustainable and quality-built environments.
- The provision of Disabled Persons Grants to ensure that properties suit the needs of persons with a disability.

- When possible and required provide dedicated community facility buildings.
- The provision of a Community Work Team to assist and empower tenants to participate in estate management.
- The provision of grants for estate improvements.
- Work with external agencies to ensure that there is an integrated approach to estate management.

2. Estate Management Services

The council provides a range of services and supports which underpin and support the aim and objectives of this strategy:



2.1 Tenancy Support and Feeling Safe at Home

At the outset of a tenancy and throughout the lifetime of a tenancy the council supports tenants to understand their obligations and responsibilities as outlined below:

2.1.1 Tenancy Agreement

The council's tenancy agreement clearly describes both the tenants and the council's obligations. At the outset of a tenancy, each tenant is obliged to attend the council offices. The terms of the tenancy agreement will be explained to each prospective tenant prior to them signing the agreement, they will be advised of the rent amount to be paid and the methods for payment. Each tenant will be provided with a Tenant handbook.

2.1.2 Tenant Liaison Officer

The council employs Tenant Liaison Officers who are available to meet tenants in their homes, at community facilities or at Aras Chill Dara. Tenant Liaison Officers play a key role in ensuring compliance with the provisions of the tenancy agreement.

2.1.3 Anti-social Behaviour

The council is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour to ensure that tenants have a safe secure place to live. It recognises that most tenants wish to enjoy peaceful occupation of their units and that only a small number of tenants are engaged in anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated, and the council will use all means within its power to seek to prevent incidences of anti-social behaviour. Local authorities are required to have an anti-social behaviour strategy and the council's Anti-social Behaviour Strategy is underpinned by the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. There is an obligation on tenants to adhere to their Tenancy Agreement and where breaches of this agreement occur the council will enforce the terms of the agreement. The Tenant Liaison Officer will take steps as appropriate to address this behaviour.

The Tenant Liaison Officer will engage with complainants and tenants engaged in anti-social behaviour. Serious breaches of the tenancy agreement and anti-social behaviour will result in enforcement action including the issuing of a tenancy warning and potentially the seeking of a repossession order. The investigation of complaints may require engagement with statutory agencies such as An Garda Siochana.

2.1.4 Social Work Team

The council provides a Housing Social Work service delivered by two professionally qualified Social Workers. The Social Work service can assist with accommodation related social issues. This referral-based service is open to tenants, members of the Traveller Community and applicants accommodated in Homeless services. This service is guided by the principles of advocacy, empowerment, and anti-discriminatory practice.

2.1.5 The Allocation Scheme for Social Housing

Council properties are allocated to tenants in accordance with the provisions of the Allocation Scheme for Social Housing. When making an allocation the council will take account of the need to create balanced communities. All adult members of a household

who are being considered for the allocation of a social house will undergo Garda vetting. Based on the outcome of this process the council may refuse to let or defer the letting of a social house where a household member has been engaged in anti-social behaviour and an allocation would not be in the interests of good estate management.

2.1.6 Tenancy Sustainment Service

The council provides a tenancy support and sustainment service. The objective of this service is to provide support to households who are at risk of becoming homeless and to assist households or individuals who have exited homelessness to sustain tenancies.

2.1.7 Tenancy Training

The council recognises that the provision of tenancy training is integral to and a prerequisite for good estate management. Tenants may be required to attend pre-tenancy training; this is an opportunity for tenants to meet with the Tenant Liaison Officer and they will receive a briefing from the Finance Department. Tenants will be provided with a copy of the Tenant Handbook which is a useful resource for tenants and assists tenants in managing their tenancy and household, information is provided on:

- Tenant and council responsibilities
- Repairs
- Prevention of condensation
- Alterations to properties
- Household security
- Transfers and terminations
- Useful contacts

2.1.8 Use of Heating Systems

Where new heating technologies are provided in houses tenants will be provided with on-site overview of the operation of the heating system.

2.2 Tenancy Participation and Community Facilities

The council employs Community Workers to promote and encourages tenant participation to achieve good estate management. Certain local authority estates will be identified for intensive work and intervention, designation of such estates will be made using Pobal Deprivation indices, local knowledge, and inter-agency collaborative work.

The Community Workers assist in ensuring tenant participation in estate development and enhancement with a view to minimizing anti-social behaviour in line with the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. The Community Work team proactively engage with the Tenant Liaison Officers and encourage residents to take pride in their estates and their wider community. The development of local community groups and resident's associations is actively encouraged, the Community Worker will assist such groups to set up and assistance and training is provided in the following areas: committee skills, the establishment of a constitution, assistance with applying for grants.

Where identified a community building/facility can be used as a hub to build capacity and operate essential activities, examples include capacity building, education and training, wellbeing, social supports, Health related supports and youth services etc. A caretaker agreement will be signed between the group and the council, in some cases a lease agreement is drawn up with a service provider such as a youth service who has a remit to work intensively in that area. The council provides community facilities at the locations listed below.

2.2.1 Community Facilities

Ashgrove, Derrinturn
Anne Street, Prosperous
Community House, Athy
Castlefen, Sallins
Bishopsland, Kildare Town
Loughnamona, Leixlip
Rosconnell, Newbridge

2.2.2 Grants

The council provides a range of grants to community groups and for resident's associations, as follows:

Community Grant Scheme: The Community Grants Scheme is open to all not-for-profit groups engaged in activities or projects which encourage community participation, volunteerism and benefit local communities in County Kildare.

Festival Grant Scheme: The Festival Grants Scheme is open to all not-for-profit groups which organise and run key festival events in County Kildare, such as community fun days, historical re-enactments, drama/musical/food festivals, intercultural days or annual parades.

Residents' Associations Grants: This scheme is for all established and recognised residents' associations in either local authority or privately developed estates.

Further details of the grant schemes are contained in appendix 1.

2.3. Housing Stock

Well maintained housing stock enhances the quality of life of tenants. In advance of letting a property, the council will carry out all necessary upgrade works to the property. It is the responsibility of the tenant to maintain their home in a clean condition and a good state of

repair. The tenancy handbooks provide guidance to tenants on the management of their home and outlines the maintenance responsibilities of both the tenant and the council.

2.3.1 Response Maintenance

Tenants can inform the council of general maintenance problems with their property by phone or email. The most common repair requests relate to heating, plumbing, chimneys, electrical issues and windows and doors. Repairs which are deemed the responsibility of the council will be carried out subject to the availability of resources, from time to time it will be necessary to prioritise repair requests.

2.3.2 Preventative and Pre-let Repairs

Preventative maintenance and pre-let repair involves the replacement of major items throughout the life cycle of the houses, items include windows and doors, heating systems, water and wastewater treatment systems. Properties which become vacant are made available for letting in as short a period as possible.

2.3.3 Tenant Deposit Scheme

At the outset of a tenancy, tenants will be required to lodge a tenant deposit with the council. Subject to the property being maintained in good condition this deposit will be returned to the tenant at the cessation of tenancy. An inspection of the property will be carried out prior to the deposit being returned.

2.3.4 Disabled Persons Grants

The council administers the Disabled Persons Grant. The scheme is jointly funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Kildare County Council. The scheme involves the carrying out of adaptation works to make houses more suitable for a person with a medical or mobility issue. The allocation is based on the medical need of the tenant and the length of time an application has been received. Typical works include grab rails, access ramps, level access showers, stairlifts and extensions.

2.4 Environmental Protection

Local Authorities have been conferred a leadership role in the delivery of climate action, at a local level, in support of our national climate targets and the Just Transition process. This will be achieved by climate proofing and providing mitigation and adaptation measures, where appropriate, across all the functional areas and services provided by Local Government. From the perspective of Housing, the council can have a direct influence on over 5,000 houses and apartments, across every town in the county and is actively embracing this challenge.

2.4.1 New Housing Units

All new housing units provided by the council are in full compliance with the NZEB (Near Zero Energy Rating) building regulations and as such are constructed to A level energy rating. This means that on average, new homes provided by the council are approximately 70% more energy efficient and will emit 70% less carbon dioxide than those constructed in

the mid-2000s. New developments also comply with requirements for the provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure which will support the transition away from fossil fuel vehicular transport.

2.4.2 Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme (EERP):

The current EERP was launched in 2021 and further updated in respect of commitments contained within the most recent Programme for Government. The council is committed to the delivery of EERP which involves the retrofitting of council stock

2.4.3 Unit Management:

The Housing Maintenance Team actively promote climate action measures in their day-to-day operations in both response maintenance and pre-letting maintenance. Issues addressed in properties include ensuring the requirement for BER certification is met when properties are re-let and where possible the replacement of oil-fired heating units with air to water heat pumps. The council also has a significant programme of window and door replacements which will increase the energy rating of properties and work is ongoing to align such action with the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme.

2.4.5 Estate Management

The Housing Section works closely with the Parks Department to ensure that estate management and landscaping practices are in keeping with the council's requirements and are currently partaking in the ongoing project to examine alternative maintenance practices with a view to moving away from the use of pesticides in the management of public spaces.

2.4.6 Climate Change Adaptation

The council actively ensures that the risks associated with climate change, particularly flood risk, are avoided in the provision of new local authority housing schemes. It is also active in addressing current risks and the Kildare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, 2019-2024 addresses potential issues.

3. Housing Policies and Procedures

The council has a suite of policies and procedures in place to provide responsive and supportive services for our tenants. The following are those which are relevant to estate management, details of these schemes are contained in appendix 2.

3.1 Allocation Scheme for Social Housing

Allocations to council owned properties are made in accordance with the Allocation Scheme for Social Housing. Applications will be considered on a 'time on the list basis', priority may be afforded to applicants living in unsafe premises, persons displaced because of an act by the council, families experiencing homelessness, persons evicted through no fault of their own, exceptional medical grounds, persons aged 65 or over. The Allocation Scheme provides that applicants being considered for the allocation of a council property will be Garda checked, applicants involved in anti-social behaviour will not be considered for inclusion on the housing list for a period of one year. In accordance with the Allocation Scheme, the council may refuse to offer accommodation to an applicant who refuses or fails to disclose information which is required for good estate management purposes.

The Allocation Scheme for Social Housing outlines the council's policy in relation to transfer of tenancies. It is the policy of the council to ensure that stock is used to its optimum capacity. Tenants may apply for a transfer in the following circumstances:

- Overcrowding.
- Downsizing.
- Medical/compassionate grounds.
- On grounds of anti-social behaviour where the Tenant Liaison Officer and Garda Superintendent support the application.

3.2 Anti-social Behaviour Strategy

The Anti-social Behaviour Strategy outlines the council's commitment to eliminating anti-social behaviour and the adoption of a positive approach to developing communities. The strategy defines anti-social behaviour and provides an overview of possible actions arising from complaints of anti-social behaviour to the council ranging from mediation to eviction. It provides information on the process for making a complaint. The strategy outlines the council's overall aim to seek a strategic mix of tenants to encourage social integration and to minimise the potential for anti-social behaviour.

3.3 The Differential Rent Scheme

The council operates a differential rent scheme, whereby rents are based on household income. Tenants are required to notify the council if there is a change in household income. Details of rents charged are outlined in the differential rent scheme. Tenants are encouraged to sign up to the An Post Household Budget deduction scheme for the payment of their rent. The Finance Department monitors rent payments and will intervene where arrears arise. The use of Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is available to tenants who are experiencing financial difficulties. Nonpayment or withholding of rent cannot be justified in cases where estate management, or anti-social behaviour has been reported or where a tenant is awaiting maintenance works.

4. Working in Partnership

A key element of the Estate Management Strategy is the fostering of strong working relationships between the council, our tenants, and key statutory partners in all areas of estate management, from tenancy support to enforcement actions. The council will:

- Liaise with other sections of the council to support and develop estates.
- Work in partnership with the Gardai to reduce anti-social behaviour on our estates.
- Work to make each estate a safe place to live.
- Meet regularly with local tenants and resident's associations or community organisations to identify and address issues.
- Work with agencies to support the needs of our tenants.
- Maintain an open and cooperative relationship with agencies such as the Health Service Executive, MABS, the joint policing committee and other agencies involved in community development.

5. Keeping of Pets

The various forms of council tenancy agreements outlines tenant obligations in relation to the keeping of pets and animals. The relevant legislation in this area is the Control of Dogs Act 1986 as amended and the Control of Horses Act 1986 as amended. Any person who keeps a dog must have a dog licence. Fines may be issued to people who do not have a licence for their dog. Horses are prohibited in our tenancies. Complaints relating to stray dogs and horses in public spaces will be investigated and we will liaise with council's dog warden and An Garda Siochana where necessary. The warden enforces the relevant legislation with regard to the control of dogs.

6. Communication

The council recognises that the provision of information and open communication is vital in achieving good estate management, between the staff working in the council and across different departments, with tenants, and with other agencies. The council's website and social media sites are an important source of information for tenants.

Appendix 1

Grants Available

Purpose of Grants:

The community and festival grants schemes are designed to provide financial assistance to voluntary community groups engaged in the planning, organisation and roll-out of activities, events or projects which encourage local community participation and development in County Kildare.

For residents' associations, the grants represent a contribution towards open space annual maintenance costs.

Who Can Apply:

Community Grant Scheme

The Community Grants Scheme is open to all not-for-profit groups engaged in activities or projects which encourage community participation, volunteerism and benefit local communities in County Kildare.

Festival Grant Scheme

The Festival Grants Scheme is open to all not-for-profit groups which organise and run key festival events in County Kildare, such as community fun days, historical re-enactments, drama/musical/food festivals, intercultural days or annual parades.

Residents' Associations Grants

This scheme is for all established and recognised residents' associations in either local authority or privately developed estates.

Grants Application Process:

These grants schemes will be publicised in January each year with a closing date in March. The publicity campaign will consist of local newspaper advertisements, information on the council's website and its social media platforms. Direct notifications will be sent to groups registered with the County Kildare Public Participation Network.

Applications must be submitted via the online grants application system on the council's website which is located at: <http://kildare.ie/CountyCouncil/AllServices/Community/CommunityGrants/>

Community section staff will be available to assist anyone who needs help in completing the online form (by email at grants@kildarecoco.ie or by telephone 045 980538 or in person at Grants Administration Team, Economic Community & Cultural Development Department, Level 7, Áras Chill Dara, Naas, Co Kildare).

Value of grants which may be awarded:

The maximum grants that may be awarded are as follows:

Community Grants Scheme	€3,000
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Festival Grants Scheme €2,000

Residents' Associations Grants

Local Authority Estates €1,200

Private Estates No set maximum, but a cap may be applied where the number of applications in a category causes significant variation with average grants values.

There is no guarantee that the maximum (or any) grant will be awarded.

Appendix 2

Policies and Procedures

Following is a list of housing policy documents and details of the differential rent scheme, please note that these documents may be updated from time to time:

Kildare County Council Allocation Scheme for Social Housing

Kildare County Council Anti-social Behaviour Strategy 2024

Kildare County Council Differential Rent Scheme