



Void Management and Standards Policy

Author: Angela Aldis Operations Manager

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Introduction

The document clarifies HHA's policy for the management of the void service. The policy will guide staff in ensuring that customers are aware of their repair responsibilities and end of tenancy obligations. A clear minimum standard of what customers can expect from the association in providing housing for its customers is set out within the policy. This ensures that HHA manages its resources in an efficient and effective way.

Aims and objectives

The overall aim of the void management and standards policy is to achieve high standards in the management of our empty homes and to provide new customers with affordable homes that are decent, safe and well maintained. The policy will contribute to the efficient and effective maintenance of HHA housing stock by maximising rental income by reducing void periods and provide homes that match the needs and aspirations of HHA's prospective customers.

The specific objectives of the policy are: -

- To ensure that all outgoing customers are fully aware of their responsibilities when moving out of a HHA property or transferring to another HHA property.
- To recognise the need to act swiftly on receipt of notice or when a void arises, acting efficiently and effectively, having regard to the need to let quality accommodation.
- To minimise rent loss through a property being empty.
- To ensure that a void property is brought to a lettable standard as quickly as possible without impacting on the quality of workmanship or on health and safety.
- To maintain HHA's housing stock and preserve its asset value.
- To comply with legal duties, regulatory requirements and good practice standards for void management.

Scope

The policy will cover all void properties and will include those customers who transfer and mutually exchange with the Associations stock.

Performance measures and monitoring

The policy has been written to improve the service provided to our customers, to ensure that HHA will deliver this we will monitor this policy by:-

- The void turnaround time against the performance target – improving our back to back lettings and reducing the average time taken to re let properties with major works.
- New customers will be contacted within 6 weeks of moving in to measure the quality and standards of the property when customers move in.
- Number of refusals and reasons for refusal.
- Average cost of void works
- Amount of decoration vouchers or incentives given to new customers.
- Percentage of voids let to internal transfers.

Performance against the targets will be monitored by the Operations Manager and will be reported to the Customer Liaison Committee at the liaison meeting if a void has been actioned in the time period between each meeting.

Notice of tenancy ending – start of the void process

All customers are required to give written notice that they intend to terminate their tenancy. The standard notice period is 4 weeks, commencing from the Monday after the notice is received. The last day will always be the Sunday. The keys for the property must be returned to HHA's office on or before noon on the Monday the tenancy ends. If the keys are returned after this then a week's rent may be charged.

Customers who are transferring are normally required to give 4 weeks' notice unless this would impact on the void property re let period.

If a customer returns the keys prior to the 4 week period, then HHA will accept this as surrender by mutual agreement. The void inspection and property works will commence to enable the property to be let as soon as possible.

There may be exceptional situations when HHA may accept a shorter notice period, such as when a customer moves into residential care. These will be authorised by the Operations Manager.

Process on ending a Tenancy

- Customers are expected to leave the property, garage and garden areas in a clean and tidy condition. On receipt of notice customers will receive a letter from HHA (appendix 1) this will remind them of their responsibilities in relation to ending their tenancy. This letter will also have an appointment for a pre termination inspection of the property.
- Staff are made aware of notice being received by email.
- Pre termination Inspection will include a property inspection (appendix 2) and the Neighbourhood Officer will also agree any improvements which are eligible for compensation (right to repair), identify any recharges including

payment of any outstanding amounts, rent arrears if applicable and a forwarding address.

- On completion of the pre termination inspection the customer will sign to say that they are clear about their responsibilities and agree the work that they will be responsible for carrying out prior to tenancy termination.
- A further visit date of around a week before the tenancy ends should be booked in with the customer at this time. The purpose of this will be to ensure that we
 - I. Identify if any repairs have been missed or hidden by the customers belongings at the first visit
 - II. Note meter readings and current utility suppliers.
 - III. Locks and keys are all available for the incoming customer – including window lock keys.
 - IV. Decorations are in an acceptable condition.
 - V. Log and order repairs that are HHA responsibility and not essential and can be completed after the new customer has moved in.
 - VI. Order safety checks to property with relevant contractors.
 - VII. Check if Right to Repair is relevant for the outgoing customer for improvements to the property (Repairs and Maintenance Policy 2015 updated 2024)
 - VIII. If relevant an up to date EPC certificate should be ordered.
 - IX.
- All associated paperwork will be available and accessible via Active H housing management system and logged against the relevant customer.

Works to void properties

Void properties will be inspected on the same working day as the property becomes void. The Neighbourhood Officer will carry out the following process on voids: -

- Check the stock condition survey and any planned works programme to make the most cost effective use of resources.
- Complete a Property Inspection Form (appendix 3) and arrange for any necessary repairs to be ordered in line with this Void Standard for HHA. Some non- urgent/minor repairs may be completed after the new customer has moved in. The incoming customer will be advised of the outstanding work and access arrangements will be taken.
- The gas service will be ordered if the last service is due within 3months and a new service date is updated on the system. If the service has been done a new service will not be requested and a tenancy change will be requested.f and the date of the last electrical test will be checked and if due this will be ordered and confirmed when the property is void.
- In winter if conditions are severe then a drain down of the system will be ordered and if it is anticipated that the void will be empty for some time. At the re let stage if the property has been void for more than 14 days the water r supply should be run off from the taps in bathroom and kitchen (and toilets flushed) and the showers hose must be run through and cleaned prior to the next customer moving in.

- Decoration vouchers should only be considered where necessary to let a property.
- The Neighbourhood Officer will provide information for the new customer on whether asbestos has been identified in the property and issue a copy of Asbestos leaflet at sign up.
- Quality checks should be made following the void works to ensure that the property meets the required standard. Photographic evidence should be recorded of the standard of the property and filed on Active H property file.

Re let standard

HHA recognise that the quality and appearance of our homes is important to our customers, especially in terms of cleanliness and repair. The aim of this standard is to ensure that HHA present a property to our customers' that is something that they are encouraged to maintain to the same good standard as they have received it in as well as meeting our obligations under Health and Safety regulations on void properties. HHA will, where possible, achieve "back to back" lettings for its void properties, without compromise to any health and safety issues. It is recognised that some void properties are not able to be let in this way. For our voids the Neighbourhood Officer will take photographs at the stage prior to repairs commencing and at the point the void is to be relet having met the required basic standard. Some repairs to voids will be undertaken after a new customer has moved in. The table below sets out the minimum standards for re letting our void properties:

Element	Standard to be achieved
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All electrical and gas services to the property should be checked for faults and general integrity. All services to comply with legislative standards. - All taps and overflows will be securely fixed, free from blockages and in full working order.
Appliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Such as electric showers, electric fires (items that may have been provided by HHA or previous occupier and would be of benefit to the next occupier) will be tested to ensure that they are safe to use and compliant with current legislation. - Instruction leaflets will be provided where items are provided by HHA. - A decision on whether to remove an appliance fitted by a previous tenant will be made at void stage. - All smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors will be in full working order. These will be tested by engineers at the gas and electrical testing stage.
	All properties will be offered in a clean standard when void

Cleanliness	<p>work has been completed. The basic standard for voids will be:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All items of rubbish to be removed from the property, including loft areas, and where applicable, recharged to the former tenant. - All work surfaces will be disinfected with particular attention to kitchen and bathrooms including mould removal with an anti-fungal solution as appropriate. - Baths, basins and toilets should be cleaned and free from staining. - All kitchen units and shelving should be washed. - Fitted cooker and hobs will be cleaned. - Tiling in kitchens and bathrooms should be cleaned if stained. - Light switches and light fittings should be free from dirt. - All floors should be swept and cleaned - Any white goods to be gifted or provided through service charges should be clean and Pat tested to be safe and in working order. - Remove any nails; picture hooks blue tack etc. from walls. - Remove items of furniture/ belongings left by former tenant following storage requirements and rechargeable repairs policy. - All woodwork must be wiped down - Radiators to be wiped down - Ironmongery to be wiped down.
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External doors should be undamaged, be secure and have a clean and damage free appearance. - 2 sets of keys must be provided and should be a 5 lever mortice lock type for both back door and front door. - Window lock keys should be provided for all ground floor windows. - All window handles, catches and restrictors will be operational. - All opening windows will open freely. - Any security lights will be in working order.
Glazing/ Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All broken and cracked panes of glass will be replaced. - Any units that show signs of failure will be considered for replacement. Refer to Operations Manager. - All glazing indoors at low level must be laminated to the required safety standard or alternatively replaced with timber panels. - All ground floor windows should be lockable.
Roofs, drains and gutters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roof should be in a good state of repair with securely fixed tiles (this does not include garages or sheds) - Fascia boards and soffits should be in good condition. - Flashings should be secure and in a good condition. - Gutters and downspouts should be free from blockages

	<p>and leaks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manhole covers should be in good condition and secure. - All roof spaces will be checked and cleared of former tenant belongings if appropriate - Roof spaces will have a minimum of 300mm insulation installed. - Tanks and pipes in loft spaces should be lagged if still in situ. Customer should be advised of the need to clean shower heads once a year as a minimum.
Walls/floors and doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where plasterwork is in a poor condition wall will be recommended for skimming, photos taken and discussed with Operational Manager. - All architraves and skirting boards will be securely fixed to the wall and free from nails and screws. - Holes to plaster works will be filled with suitable filler and sanded down, minor small holes and decorative cracks will not. - All previously fitted carpets/laminate will be assessed for the benefit for the next customer and will be signed for by the incoming customer as a gift from the Association. Any carpets/laminate in a poor or dirty condition will be removed. In flats laminate flooring will be considered for removal where there has been an issue with noise. - Floors will be even and free from trip hazards. - Repair/replace rotten or damaged floor boards - Flooring in kitchen and bathrooms if required will be fitted with non- slip vinyl flooring. - If replacement floor tiling is needed, the asbestos survey is to be checked and then repair or replace to the nearest likeness to be achieved. - Internal doors with minor damage will be repaired and decorated where appropriate. Ironmongery to doors will be secure and in working correctly. - All walls should be visually checked for signs of dampness and mould and where appropriate a DPC survey / extractor fan ordered.
Heating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All properties should have full operational heating as per the Decent Homes standard. - Gas fires will be removed and the area made good. - Customers to be advised that they can install an electric fire which will be at their expense and responsibility for repair and maintenance is with the customer. - Boiler instructions should be provided to the new customer. - Gas installation will be completed by a qualified engineer and a copy of the LGSR will be left in the property and the incoming customer to be advised on annual gas check procedure and anniversary date given as appropriate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All kitchens should be in a reasonable state of repair and

Kitchens	<p>comply with the Decent Homes standard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kitchens should have adequate number of units to meet the size of the property. - Units should be in good working order. - Cupboard doors and units should be secure, have secure shelving, bases and drawers. - Work surfaces should be free from chips, burns, deep scratches and be finished with edging strips A decision on whether to replace and recharge will be made at the discretion of the Neighbourhood Officer/Operations Manager. - Cooker points will be capped off and will be checked at electrical and gas check. - Electric fans should be checked if working correctly. - Cracked, damaged or missing tiling will be replaced with standard white fitting. - Sealant between tiles and work surface will be renewed if damaged. - Sink and associated plumbing will be checked for leaks. - Plumbing for washing machines will be provided. - Location of stop tap noted and tested to be in good working order and to advise new customer of location.
Bathrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All bathrooms should be in a reasonable state of repair and comply with the Decent Homes standard. - Bath will be free from chips and/or cracks and be in a clean condition. Taps should be secure and working properly and be supplied with a plug and chain. - Bath Panel should be securely fitted and in a good condition. - Tiling to the bath area should be adequately sealed. The tiling must be secure, clean and free from cracks. - WC should be securely fitted to the floor and be free from cracks and or chips. The toilet should be working correctly clean and be free from blockages. - Showers should be electrically tested if appropriate, checked that they are working correctly and that there is adequate tiling for the shower. - Shower curtain should be provided where a screen is absent. - Where grab rails are in situ these should be securely fastened. - Check extractor fan is working correctly - Any signs of damp and mould treated
Electrical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All sockets, lighting and their fittings should be in good condition and free from damage. - Appropriate electrical certificate to be updated when tested and provided to the customer. - For flats, with door entry the system this will be tested and be fully operational.

Fire Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A minimum of 1 smoke detector and 1 CO detector should be provided in each property. Dates of the detector if visible checked if in date and tested. - All electrical sockets should be earthed in accordance with current requirements. Free from cracks or damage - For flats a copy of the evacuation procedure must be supplied to the new customer. - Fire doors checked that they close independently and are free from obstruction or damage. The intermescent strips have no paint over.
Decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where decorations are considered very poor a decoration allowance may be considered as an incentive to allocate the property. - The level of allowance will be dependent on the size of the room and will act as a contribution towards decorative costs. The Operations Manager will approve the level of allowance given.
Garden Areas/ Outside stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All garden areas should be free from rubbish. - Ponds will be filled in and made safe. - Uneven pathways, steps or loose paving will be re levelled and securely fastened. - Make safe steps that would cause a trip hazard. - Unsafe structures including greenhouses, sheds and garages to be demolished. Structures will be checked against the Asbestos survey for safe removal. - Any structures that will remain will be a gift to the incoming customer and gifting letter to be completed and signed by them.
Fencing , gates and boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Priority for replacement will depend on location of property near a health and safety issue (family housing facing a main road etc.). - Fencing repair and replacements identified at the void stage should be placed on fencing replacement programme.
Telephone/Satellite dishes/cable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satellite dishes and T.V. aerials that are unsafe will be removed, otherwise these will be left in situ. - Provision of a T.V aerial is a tenant responsibility where there is no provision of a communal area that is covered with a service charge and maintained by the HHA.

Value for money

The policy has been written to ensure that the void repairs service meets the objectives of HHA to deliver value for money and to continually develop the service to provide the most efficient and effective methods that will achieve this.

By creating the void standard HHA will achieve a quality product without expending additional resources. It aims to drive a smarter use of existing resources and a proactive management of the finances available. The standard will be reviewed annually to ensure that it delivers the drive in quality without increasing costs.

Appendix 1 Pre termination letter

Our ref PTL01

Date

Name

Address

Harrogate

Post Code

Dear XXXXXXXXXXXX

Re Receipt of Notice of termination of tenancy

Thank you for the notice of your intention to terminate your tenancy of the above address.

I can confirm that your tenancy will end on

Before your tenancy ends it is important that I meet with you and explain the conditions of your tenancy when leaving the property. I have therefore arranged an appointment to call at your home to go through this.

Please note your visit date below:-

Appointment time

Date

The visit will discuss actions that you need to do including:-

1. Ensure your rent account is clear. Your current balance isat.....
2. You must also clear any other debts owed to the association. These include recharges and /or court order costs.
3. Agree actions on repairs, decorations and non- standard fittings
4. Provide a forwarding address.
5. Notifying the relevant agencies which may be applicable to you, such as Housing Benefit, Department of Works and Pensions, Utility suppliers and post redirection.

If you are not available on the date of the appointment then please contact me to re arrange this.

Yours sincerely

Neighbourhood Officer
Appendix 2 Pre termination inspection

Name.....

Address.....

Contact Number.....Tenancy end date.....

Meter Readings as at.....

Gas..... Electric.....Water.....

Rent Account £.....as at

Recharges £.....as at

Court Costs £.....as at.....

Date of Inspection _____ Neighbourhood Officer _____

Area/Item	Action Agreed/Required (including cleanliness and decorations)	Customer to Resolve Y/N	By when
Hall/Stairs and Landing. Floor covering Non-Standard Fittings			
Downstairs WC Floor covering Non-Standard Fittings			

Area/Item	Action Agreed/Required (including cleanliness and decorations)	Customer to Resolve Y/N	By when
Lounge Gas / Electric Fire Doors Floor covering Non-Standard Fittings			
Dining Room Gas/Electric Fires Doors Floor coverings Non-Standard Fittings			
Area/Item	Action Agreed/Required (including cleanliness and decorations)	Customer to Resolve Y/N	By when
Kitchen			

Units			
Doors			
Floor Covering			
Non-Standard Fittings			
Built-in appliances/white goods			
Bedroom 1			
Floor covering			
Non-Standard Fittings			
Area/Item	Action Agreed/Required (including cleanliness and decorations)	Customer to Resolve Y/N	By when
Bedroom 2			
Floor covering			

Non-Standard Fittings			
Bedroom 3			
Floor covering			
Non-Standard Fittings			
Bathroom/Wet room			
Floor Covering			
Non-Standard Fittings			
Garden Area			
Sheds			
Garages			
Ponds			
Lawn Area			
Pathways			
Adaptations			
Area/Item	Action Agreed/Required (including cleanliness and decorations)	Customer to Resolve Y/N	By when
Any Information Other			

I agree to rectify/ repair or replace the items indicated on the above list that are my responsibility and I will carry out any necessary works as requested

Signed (Tenant)/ (Joint Tenant)

Dated

Appendix 3 Void property inspection form

Property Address.....

Property Type

Keys received.....Date.....

Window Lock Keys (number)Neighbourhood Officer.....

Utility	Reading	Provider	Location
Gas Meter			
Electric Meter			
Water Meter			
		Location	
Smoke Detector			
Carbon Monoxide Detector			
Stop Tap			
Boiler Type			
EPC		Date	
Health and Safety		Date/ Location	
LGSR			
Asbestos			
Water supply /Legionella – run off			
Housing Management		Date/ Location	
Photographic evidence			
Active H updated			
Items to be gifted			

EXTERNAL WALLS

Area/Item	Comments	Stock Survey	Recharge Repair
Brickwork/Mortar			Yes/No*
Rainwater pipes/ Waste pipes			Yes/No*

ROOF

Area/Item	Comments	Stock Survey	Recharge Repair
Slates/Tiles			Yes/No*
Chimney stack			Yes/No*
Guttering			Yes/No*
Fascia/Soffits			

External

Area/Item	Comments	Stock Survey	Recharge Repair
Front Door			Yes/No*
Back Door			Yes/No*

GARDEN

Area/Item	Comments	Stock Survey	Recharge Repair
Path			Yes/No*
Boundary fence			Yes/No*
Gate			Yes/No*
Sheds / Structures			Yes/No*
Ponds			Yes/No*

Hall Stairway/Landing

Area/Item	Comments	Repair	Recharge Repair
Windows			
Doors			
Stairs			
Light fittings			
Light switches			
Wall sockets			
Flooring			
Loft			
Decorations /Cleanliness			

Lounge

Area/Item	Comments	Repair Order	Recharge Repair
Walls			
Windows			
Doors			
Flooring			
Light fittings			
Light switches			
Wall sockets			
Decorations/ Cleanliness			

Dining Room

Area/Item	Comments	Repair Order	Recharge Repair
Walls			
Windows			
Doors			
Flooring			
Light fittings			
Light switches			
Wall sockets			
Decorations/ Cleanliness			*

Kitchen

Area/Item	Comments	Repair Order	Recharge Repair
Windows			
Doors			
Flooring			
Light fittings			
Light switches			
Cooker Point			
Wall sockets			
Wall units			
Base Units			
Work surfaces			
Decoration/ Cleanliness			

Downstairs W.C.

Area/Item	Comments	Repair Order	Recharge Repair
Walls			
Windows			
Doors			
Flooring			
Light fittings			
Tiles & Sealant			
W.C			
WHB and taps			
Decorations /Cleanliness			

Bedroom 1

Area/Item	Comments	Repair Order	Recharge Repair
Walls			
Windows			
Doors			
Flooring			
Light fittings			
Light switches			
Wall sockets			
Decorations/ Cleanliness			

Bedroom 2

Area/Item	Comments	Repair Order	Recharge Repair
Walls			
Windows			
Doors			
Flooring			
Light fittings			
Light switches			
Wall sockets			
Decorations/ Cleanliness			

Bedroom 3

Area/Item	Comments	Repair Order	Recharge Repair
Walls			
Windows			
Doors			
Flooring			
Light fittings			
Light switches			
Wall sockets			
Decorations/ Cleanliness			

Bathroom

Area/Item	Comments	Repair Order	Recharge Repair
Walls			
Windows			
Doors			
Flooring			
Light fittings			
Light switches			
Tiles & Sealant			
Bath WC Sink Taps			
Extractor Fan			
Shower and Curtain			
Decorations/ Cleanliness			

ADDITIONAL

Non Standard Items	Location	Remove/ Gift

Adaptations	Location	Remove/ Gift

Appendix 4 Gifting Letter

Our Ref GFLT

Name
Address
Harrogate
Postcode
Date

Dear Mr XXXX

GIFTING AGREEMENT

Following the allocation of the above property to you on.....
certain item/s remains in the property that Harrogate Housing
Association has offered to you as a gift.

In accepting the item/s as a gift you understand that Harrogate Housing
Association takes no responsibility to repair, maintain or replace them.

Gifted Item/s on tenancy commencement are:-

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX• XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Location XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXLocation XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX |
|---|---|

You agree, by signing this agreement, that:-

- 1) It will be your responsibility to carry out any necessary repair, maintenance, replacement or disposal of the item/s and at your own expense.
- 2) If you leave the property the fitted items can be left but must be in a working and safe condition.
- 3) Make good any damage or repair to the Association's property, at your own expense as a result of repairing, maintaining or disposing of the item/s.

- 4) If you terminate your tenancy it will be your responsibility to dispose of the item/s and make good any damage or repair to the Association's property at your own expense.
- 5) Item/s can only be left in situ on your termination of tenancy with the Association's written agreement.

I/We understand that the above item/s have been left in the property as a gift, I/We have accepted them as a gift and I/We take full responsibility for these item/s in the terms set out above.

Signed

(Tenant).....Dated.....

Print Name..... Of

Signed

(Joint Tenant)..... Dated.....

Print Name..... Of.....

On Behalf of Harrogate Housing Association


Signed.....

Print name.....




Job Title.....

Dated.....

Appendix 5 Asbestos Leaflet



A Tenant's Guide to Asbestos



Warning Asbestos **Do not disturb** **Report accidental damage immediately**

Remember:
Asbestos materials that are in good condition and undamaged are not dangerous

What is asbestos?
Asbestos is the name given to six natural minerals that have been used as insulation, reinforcement of building materials and fire protection. It was used extensively in the building industry in the 1950's and is highly likely to be found in any house built up to 1999.

What are we doing?
Harrogate Families Housing Association has carried out asbestos management surveys on all its properties. An independent consultant has surveyed every property and taken a sample of anywhere they believed could contain asbestos. This is how we have identified it in your property.

What happens next?
Any asbestos in your house is allocated a risk level. The asbestos in your house is considered low risk because it is contained in material that is intact and unlikely to be damaged. This asbestos will be monitored, but it is safe to leave it in place while it is a low level risk. If the area containing asbestos is damaged YOU MUST CONTACT THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY. This allows us to reassess the risk and take action if necessary. Asbestos will only be removed where there is no other option or the material is likely to be disturbed.

What if I want to carry out work to my home?
You must always contact the office to ensure you have permission to carry out any work. The danger comes from drilling, cutting, sanding or disturbing materials made from asbestos and breathing in the fibres released. You can also be given the survey report so you can be sure any work you do will not affect the level of risk caused by the asbestos that is present.

Asbestos had been identified in your house in the:
Front Porch cloaking
This is low level risk

What are the health risks of asbestos?
Asbestos containing materials are safe and will not harm you as long as they are kept intact and have not been damaged or tampered with in any way. If the asbestos has been damaged or work has been carried out on it, then asbestos dust fibres may have been produced. It is these fibres that may cause health problems, such as cancer, if inhaled. Such fibres are usually more concentrated in lagging for boilers/pipe work and insulating boards. The removal of asbestos needs to be carried out by a professional asbestos removal contractor.

Appendix 6 Associated Policies, Strategies and Procedures

- Recharges Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Gas Policy and Procedures
- Aids and Adaptations
- Allocations and Lettings Policy.