

POLICY TITLE	Pets Policy
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OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW	Brian Trodden

PETS POLICY

1 POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 This policy statement outlines Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing's approach to the keeping of pets by its residents. Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing recognise the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring. However, controls must be in place to prevent irresponsible pet ownership which can cause suffering to animals and a nuisance to neighbours.

1.2 This policy covers the following issues:

- Which pets can be kept and in what circumstances;
- How information on responsible pet ownership is communicated to residents;
- The actions Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing will take where pets are kept inappropriately or cause nuisance to neighbours.

2 REFERENCES

2.1 External

Legislation and regulation

- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976;
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Guidance

- RSPCA Community Animal Welfare Footprint;
- KLOE 6 – Tenancy and Estate Management.

2.2 Internal

Related documents:

- Tenancy Management Policy and Procedure.

3 DEFINITIONS

3.1 There are no definitions required for this policy.

4 POLICY CONTENT

4.1 Applicants for housing are asked to indicate on their application form if they intend to keep a pet. This will not prejudice their application unless they plan to keep a pet for which permission will not be granted. If this is the case, then this matter must be resolved before an offer of accommodation is made.

4.2 Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing's Tenancy Agreement sets out the basic rules regarding the keeping of animals and they are as follows:

- Residents must not keep a pet (for definition see section called "your responsibilities as a tenant") without prior consent from the landlord;
- Residents who live in a property with a shared entrance must get permission from their local housing office if they want to keep pets. However, dogs are not allowed in properties with shared entrances except for assistance dogs or animals, where evidence is provided;
- Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing may withdraw consent if a nuisance is caused or if it is considered that the number of animals should be restricted;
- Dogs should be exercised on a lead if in communal areas of the estate or scheme;
- If an animal fouls any area it should be cleared up immediately by the owner;
- Pets must not cause nuisance to neighbours, staff and visitors; this includes noise nuisance and animals which are allowed to stray;
- Pets must not cause damage to the property, and residents may be charged for any damage caused to Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing property;
- Residents cannot run a business from their home; this includes breeding animals for sale or boarding kennels.

4.3 Residents should seek permission to keep pets in all circumstances as this allows Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing to record on the house file what animals are being kept.

- 4.4 Permission will normally be for small domestic animals and birds. Permission will not be granted for the following:
- Farm animals – for example, sheep, goats, pigs, cattle, horses, chickens, ducks;
 - Animals registered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 – examples of animals registered under the Act are certain types of venomous snake, certain types of spider and various breeds of monkey;
 - Dogs specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991;
 - A dog or cat where the household already has two dogs or two cats or a dog or a cat.
- 4.5 Permission may not be granted where there is an ongoing problem with pet ownership in the household, or there has been a problem in the past.
- 4.6 When a resident is granted permission to keep a pet, they will be required to sign a formal agreement which will detail what is expected of the resident.
- 4.7 Pigeons
- 4.7.1 Tenants or members of their household wishing to keep pigeons within the garden or grounds of their property must submit a written application detailing:
- The number of birds they wish to keep;
 - The purpose of keeping the birds, e.g. racing/breeding;
 - The type and size of construction within which the birds will be kept;
 - Proposals for care, e.g. feeding and cleaning processes.
- 4.7.2 On receipt of this application, the Estate/Housing Officer will carry out a survey of neighbouring residents to ascertain whether there are any objections. The officer will make the decision about the number of neighbours who require to be surveyed in consultation with their manager, depending on the location of the proposed structure.
- 4.7.3 Where an objection is received from more than one neighbour, permission will be denied and a letter sent advising the applicant. Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing will retain the results of any survey undertaken for this purpose and will not disclose the names of any objector in the interest of minimising any neighbour dispute.
- 4.7.4 Where permission is likely to be granted, then the proposed plan for the pigeon loft will be passed to the Technical Team to approve the proposed construction.
- 4.7.5 Assuming this proposal meets the requirements of the Technical Team (and the Local Planning Authority, if appropriate), a letter of approval will be sent to the applicant.
- 4.7.6 If consent is refused, a letter will be sent to the applicant confirming the reasons for refusal and advising there is a right to appeal.

4.8 Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing produce a standard leaflet on responsible pet ownership, which is available at any time. This advises tenants of the following:

- In what circumstances permission will be granted;
- Legal requirements and responsibilities of pet owners;
- What Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing would consider as 'nuisance behaviour';
- General advice on pet ownership; neutering, vaccinations, insurance, etc;
- What tenants should do if a neighbour's pet is causing problems;
- What action Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing can take in the case of cruelty or neglect;
- Useful contacts for advice and assistance.

4.9 A range of behaviours can cause nuisance to neighbours. The following will be considered as nuisance behaviour, however, this is not an exhaustive list:

- Roaming and unattended animals;
- Pets fouling in communal areas and in owners' gardens, and this not being cleared immediately;
- Pets fouling in neighbours gardens;
- Excessive noise;
- Over-population of animals within a household;
- Unpleasant odours from pets;
- Aggressive animals.

4.10 In the majority of cases, Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing will aim to resolve the situation informally and by agreement. However, in some instances this is not possible and the following actions will be considered. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list:

- Arranging for a professional mediator (UNITE) to become involved;
- Withdrawing permission to keep an animal;
- Restricting the number of animals;
- Making responsible pet ownership part of an Acceptable Behaviour Contract;
- Involving statutory organisations such as the Police or the Local Authority;
- Involving voluntary organisations such as the RSPCA;
- Serving an injunction to oblige the owner to start or stop undertaking certain actions or to remove the animal;
- Terminating the tenancy where tenancy conditions are breached.

4.11 Where a member of staff witnesses cruelty or neglect, they will report this to the RSPCA. Where cruelty or neglect is reported to Erimus Housing or Tees Valley Housing by a third party, staff will also report this to the RSPCA, making it clear that they have not witnessed this themselves. The person reporting this to Erimus Housing or Tees Valley Housing will also be encouraged to contact the RSPCA.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 5.1 Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing recognises that it operates in a community within which there is wide social diversity, and are committed to providing equal opportunities and valuing diversity. With particular regard to assistance dogs or animals, each individual case will be examined to ensure that the animal is registered and is providing needed assistance to the resident. This also applies to properties with communal entrances where, under usual circumstances, dogs would not be allowed.
- 5.2 Through the management of our tenancies, we aim to treat all customers fairly and with respect and professionalism, regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.
- 5.3 To enable all residents to have clear information and equal access to our properties, Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing publish clear information in a range of appropriate languages and formats and through a range of media. Feedback is also accepted through a variety of different routes to reflect individual customer preferences or needs.

6 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 6.1 This joint policy has been awarded the Gold Housing Footprint by the RSPCA, recognising our achievement in raising animal welfare issues with residents, providing support to residents where necessary, and being in a position to take action where non-compliance is identified.
- 6.2 Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing recognises the importance of working in partnership with our customers to develop and continuously improve our services and raise standards.
- 6.3 Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing actively involves all customers at the beginning of decision-making processes, and ensures tenants are empowered to play a part in wider consultation and involvement structures, as detailed in full in our Resident Involvement Strategy.
- 6.4 To demonstrate this commitment, this policy:
- Will be reviewed in consultation with service users and customers through our range of panels;
 - Involves customers in the monitoring and testing of service delivery standards laid out in this policy and relevant procedures;
 - Will be developed and reviewed in light of any customer feedback received relating to this policy.

7 POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW

7.1 Monitoring

7.1.1 The monitoring of outcomes is essential for Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing to track the impact of our approach to managing application for the request to keep pets.

7.1.2 As part of the annual tenancy visits/checks, records will be checked on the number and type of pets kept in a household. Also, as part of the anti-social behaviour (ASB) information, details of any nuisance caused by pets will be monitored.

7.2 Review

7.2.1 Monitoring results will be used by Erimus Housing and Tees Valley Housing to inform future policy review in this area. All reviews will consider whether:

- The current policy adheres to legislative and regulatory requirements, and if it reflects current good practice;
- The aims and objectives of the policy are being met;
- The current policy outcomes meet the needs and aspirations of our diverse customer base;
- Service users are aware of and understand the policy and believe it to be consistent and fair;
- The policy provides sufficient choice for customers;
- Partnership arrangements are working effectively.

7.2.3 Following this review, the policy will be reviewed on a three yearly basis or in-line with legislative or regulatory changes.

8 RESPONSIBILITY

8.1 The Group Chief Executive retains the overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

8.2 The Group Director of Operations is responsible for the operational delivery of the policy and the associated procedures. This includes responsibility for monitoring and review, staff awareness and training, policy development and communication to customers.