

Appendix 1



Brighton & Hove City Council

HOUSING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICIES

COUNCIL HOUSING - GROUNDS MAINTENANCE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Social Housing Regulatory Framework has set National Standards for Social Landlords to have policies that outline how neighbourhoods will be looked after. The Grounds Maintenance Policy is one of a range of policies that will sit beneath the Housing and Social Inclusion Neighbourhood policy.
- 1.2 The Grounds Maintenance Policy has been developed using the key themes that residents raised in the pilot areas about how the grounds maintenance service should be delivered. This policy is one of a range of Neighbourhood Policies which set out how Housing and Social Inclusion seeks to work with residents to look after our housing estates and land which is the responsibility of the Housing Revenue Account
- 1.3 Grounds Maintenance Contract is undertaken by CityParks on Housing Land. The contract includes basic maintenance of grass, shrubs and hedges. Alterations to the grounds of housing sites are made in consultation with Housing Officers and residents. Addition of new features or replanting of beds is separately funded by housing or residents.
- 1.4 In some situations partners or residents are able to enhance the service provided. By improving joint working with our key partners we have been able to facilitate improvements to housing sites. Our partners include Sussex Wildlife Trust, Community Payback Team and Harvest. Although residents chose not to use Harvest in the pilots they are available to give support to residents interested in growing their own food.
- 1.5 The Ground Maintenance Policy has been developed in line with Tenant Services Authority guidelines. Resident involvement has been crucial in the development of this policy.
- 1.6 Council officers including staff from CityParks, CityClean, Estate Services and Tenancy Management staff will all work together to provide a suitable environment for residents to live in.

2. Grounds Maintenance Service

- 2.1 Resident Involvement
Through a rolling programme we aim to consult residents on the grounds maintenance service they receive. We have done this successfully on five pilot housing areas across the City. The level of resident interest will vary and where there is clear consensus of what residents' want we will aim to provide this where practicably possible
- 2.2 Service Charges
We will ensure that services charges reflect the service that residents actually receive. Neighbourhood teams are responsible for ensuring that any changes to Housing site plans are recorded on the electronic database. The information will be provided to residents in an

easily understandable format so they can understand what they are paying for. We aim to make this information available to all residents via our website as soon as is practicably possible

2.3 Flexibility

We will endeavour to be as flexible and responsive as possible and work with residents to resolve any issues or concerns. As far as possible we will facilitate residents who wish to maintain their own grounds but only where a full consultation has been carried out with all residents potentially affected.

2.4 Diversity

We recognise that our estates are diverse and that no 'one size fits all'. To ensure we improve our services we will listen to residents to get the local picture; and we will work with partners to prioritise work in response to local need.

2.5 Environmental & Sustainability

The Grounds Maintenance Service will minimise any adverse environmental effects. The environmental effect of removing shrubs or scrub areas will always be considered along side other factors, prior to an agreement to remove them. It is recognised that scrub banks are good for wildlife and need to be preserved to encourage bio-diversity for wildlife. We will encourage residents to give added environmental value to where they live. And will either directly assist them or put them in contact with partner organisations.

We will minimise the use of pesticides and encourage organic methods of gardening as far as is practicably possible.

2.6 Service Standards

We aim to make it clear what grounds maintenance service each site will receive and who to contact to report problems. This could be achieved in two ways by having the Housing Officer as the point of contact and providing residents with more information about the grounds maintenance service where they live. The Neighbourhood Policy document will encompass grounds maintenance and highlight any significant standard failings.

2.7 Health & Safety

Operative working on site will work within to Health & Safety procedures to ensure the well being of residents and operatives alike. Some sites have steep banks and gradients that cannot be maintained due to health & safety considerations.

2.8 Economic

Housing aim to provide a value for money service through better integration with CityParks and Estate Service Teams. If residents want to spend more money and give 'additionality' to an area where they live we will work with partners to meet that local need.

2.9 Bio-sphere

The grounds maintenance service will adopt a 'green approach' to make Brighton & Hove the 'greenest city in Britain'. Conservation and wildflower planting will be encouraged where it occurs naturally, such as on chalky banks

2.10 Food Growing projects

Where residents wish to participate in a food growing project we will aim to facilitate this. Although interest among residents for food growing projects is limited at the moment, we will continue highlight this as an option for residents to work with our food growing partners.

3. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

- 3.1 This policy aims to identify the appropriate actions that will be taken by Housing when consulting and reviewing grounds maintenance services.
- 3.2 The council is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty. The council will ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Equalities Legislation and Human Rights legislation. Staff and others with whom we work, will adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).

4. This Policy should be read in conjunction with

- Housing and Social Inclusion Neighbourhood policy.
- Housing and Social Inclusion Business Continuity Plans
- Equality Impact Assessment

5. Reviews

- 5.1 The Business Improvement Manager Tenancy Management will review the policy every three years (from the date of approval) to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness or as required by the introduction of new legislation or regulation that impacts on the obligations of the council, changes to council business practices or in the light of management system audits.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 This policy has been subject to an EIA screening and was carried out by the Projects Officer who reviewed the Grounds Maintenance Service. This is to achieve a grounds maintenance service that offers value for money, allowing residents to have a greater say on what the grounds maintenance service is and where they want it to be to meet their aspirations. Further data will be collected upon implementation of this policy, and a further screening will take place after twelve months of operation.