



NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT POLICY

This Neighbourhood Management Policy sets out the Council's approach to the management and maintenance of its neighbourhoods.

2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Neighbourhood Management Policy ('the Policy') sets out Dartford Borough Council's ('the Council') approach to the management and maintenance of its neighbourhoods.
- 1.2. The Council is committed to providing neighbourhoods where residents can enjoy an environment that is clean and safe and where the communal spaces are maintained and managed to a high standard.
- 1.3. The Council is also committed to working in partnership with residents and other stakeholders to create and maintain neighbourhoods where people want to live and where they feel safe and secure.
- 1.4. This Policy will be delivered in compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Neighbourhood and Community Standard. Specifically, this standard includes a requirement that registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of shared spaces.
- 1.5. This Policy will also comply with the Regulator of Social Housing's Safety and Quality Standard, which includes a requirement that registered providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.
- 1.6. For the purpose of this Policy, neighbourhoods are defined as the Council's housing estates, including its shared spaces and communal areas. Shared spaces are areas used by tenants that are **not** the responsibility of the Council's Housing Service, for example, parks, playgrounds or community gardens within an estate. Communal areas are the direct responsibility of the Council's Housing Service, and include internal areas such as landings, entrance halls and stairwells, and external areas such as bin stores and garages.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1. The key aim of this Policy is to set out the Council's approach to the management and maintenance of its neighbourhoods. The Council aims to ensure all neighbourhoods are kept safe, clean and in good repair.
- 2.2. The key objectives of this Policy are to:
 - Ensure that all tenants are able to live in a safe and well maintained environment;
 - Raise awareness of landlord and tenant responsibilities in the maintenance of homes and the surrounding area;
 - Ensure any neighbourhood management issues are resolved as quickly as possible;

- Ensure responsive repairs to blocks and communal areas are carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimise any disruption to residents;
- Encourage resident involvement and offer opportunities to residents to contribute in the maintenance and improvement of neighbourhoods;
- Work in partnership with contractors, local agencies and landlords to ensure neighbourhoods are managed and maintained to a high standard.

3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1. This Policy and its delivery is intended to be compatible with the following Council policies and documents:

- Tenancy Agreement – a contract between a tenant and landlord setting out the legal terms and conditions of the tenancy.
- Lease Agreement – a contract between a leaseholder and landlord setting out the legal terms and conditions of the lease.
- [Repairs and Maintenance Policy](#) – sets out how the Council will provide a repairs service to tenants.
- [Anti-Social Behaviour Policy](#) – sets out the action the Council takes to tackle anti-social behaviour. This can be environmental anti-social behaviour, where it affects the wider environment such as public spaces, buildings or communal areas. It can include graffiti, vandalism, littering, fly-tipping, discarded drug paraphernalia, dog fouling etc.
- [Vulnerable Adults' Housing Policy](#) – sets out how vulnerable adults, who access the Housing Service, are supported, signposted and referred to other organisations, when they require additional support.
- [Policy on Keeping Pets and other Animals in Council Properties](#) – This Policy sets out the Council's approach to keeping pets in Council tenanted and leasehold properties.
- [Corporate Plan](#) – sets out the strategic direction the Council will take in relation to its powers, functions and responsibilities. The Plan includes a strategic ambition to 'provide a high quality and responsive housing service that's built on respect for aspiring and existing tenants. We want to be practical, honest and straightforward in all the information and advice we give'.
- [Equality and Diversity Document Framework](#) – sets out how the Council will meet the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.
- [Safeguarding Policy](#) – sets out the Council's commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults who come into contact with its services and activities.

3.2. This Policy and its delivery is also intended to be compatible with the Regulator of Social Housing's [Neighbourhood and Community Standard](#), and [Safety and Quality Standard](#).

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. The Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas. This includes undertaking a rigorous repairs regime on all its communal areas and estates.

All repairs which are identified as causing or likely to cause a health and safety problem will be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

- 4.2. The Council will work co-operatively with tenants and leaseholders to assist in resolving issues affecting the upkeep and safety of the shared spaces associated with their homes.
- 4.3. Tenants and leaseholders should ensure they contribute to the maintenance of neighbourhoods. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Keeping communal areas clean and tidy
 - Not storing any items in communal areas
 - Not causing damage to communal areas, as well as their individual property
 - Not littering in communal areas
 - Responsible pet ownership
 - Appropriate use of bin stores where provided
- 4.4. The Council will provide assistance to vulnerable tenants who are unable to meet their responsibilities, due to, for example, age or disability, and where it is having a detrimental impact on the neighbourhood and communal areas. Examples of this include where a tenant may hoard or where there is a pest infestation. The Council follows the [Safeguarding Policy](#) and makes referrals to specialist support where necessary.

5. ESTATE INSPECTIONS

- 5.1. Estate inspections aim to identify where improvements to the environment can be made, improve safety for tenants and leaseholders, and identify any repairs issues. Inspections also provide an opportunity to look at where future improvements of the neighbourhood can be made which bring benefits to the community.
- 5.2. Estate inspections are carried out jointly by officers from the Tenancy Services and Maintenance teams. Estate inspections may also be attended by the Council's Estate Handyperson, Estate Grounds Maintenance Operative, cleaning contractor, repairs partner and horticultural contractor. Estate inspections are also open to tenants, leaseholders and Councillors to attend. Tenants and leaseholders should contact the Council by emailing HEM@dartford.gov.uk to find out when their local estate inspection is, should they wish to attend.
- 5.3. Inspections are carried out on all of the Council's communal flatted estates. The exterior of the building and all communal areas are inspected as well as the facilities and grounds within an estate. Estate inspections are carried out by the Council at least three times a year in each location.
- 5.4. There are three priority areas which are targeted during inspections. These are:
 - **Repairs** – Involves checking items are in good condition and working order, including (but not limited to) the roof, door entry systems, communal

lighting, and bin stores. Routine asbestos checks and checks to mitigate the risk of a fire are also carried out.

- **Grounds Maintenance** – Involves checking areas are tidy and that plant life is cut to an appropriate height. More information on grounds maintenance can be found in section 7.
- **General Inspection** – Involves inspecting the area to check there is no fly tipping, general rubbish or graffiti and that cleaning has been carried out.

5.5. Estates are graded by a Tenancy Services Officer using an online system whilst carrying out the inspection to assess cleanliness, grounds maintenance and the general appearance of the estate. A Maintenance Officer will also use the system to assess whether there are any repairs or improvement works to be carried out. The Council will work to rectify any issues which are found.

5.6. For residents who live in a block of flats, the Council will carry out repairs for the following:

- Door entry systems
- Hallways and communal areas (including housing scheme laundries where provided by the Council)
- Lifts (housing schemes only) and staircases, stairwells
- Bin areas
- Clothes lines
- Paths, fences and grassed areas around the estate
- Communal TV aerials
- Communal lighting
- Communal heating (in housing schemes)
- Communal fire doors
- Roofs
- Balconies
- Communal sheds
- Parking areas

5.7. The Council will also regularly inspect facilities in communal areas to ensure they are well maintained, safe and secure. This includes:

- Completing all compliance testing, including electrical and emergency lighting. A three hour emergency light test is carried out annually by our alarm contractor.
- Testing the communal lighting monthly in general needs and housing scheme blocks. Any faulty lights are replaced.
- Servicing fire alarm detection systems in all general needs and housing scheme blocks where these are located twice a year by our alarm contractor.
- Servicing passenger lifts where these are located in our housing schemes quarterly. This is carried out by a contractor.
- Carrying out Legionella risk assessments on communal cold water storage tanks in blocks. This is carried out by a contractor.

6. CLEANING

- 6.1. The Council seeks to maintain a high quality of cleaning and uses a contractor for the cleaning of all internal communal areas for general needs and leasehold occupied blocks. The Council will clean and maintain all shared entrances, halls, stairways, lighting and other common parts in flats owned by the Council.
- 6.2. External communal area cleaning is also carried out by our contractor and comprises of primarily litter collection and sweeping to estates. External cleaning is extended to our housing schemes for older people.
- 6.3. Tenants should play their part in keeping their neighbourhoods clean and tidy, and have the responsibility of keeping all communal areas clear. No items should be placed in communal areas due to health and safety and fire risk issues; the Council takes a zero tolerance approach toward this.

7. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

- 7.1. The Council recognises the importance of keeping Council green spaces and areas around neighbourhoods well maintained.
- 7.2. The maintenance of green spaces owned by the Council involves works such as grass cutting and pruning shrubs. The Council will also ensure that shared areas remain litter free.
- 7.3. The grass cutting and gardening contractual arrangements are managed by the Council's Parks and Open Spaces team.

8. TREES

- 8.1. Tenants with trees or shrubs in the gardens of their property are responsible for their maintenance. This includes ensuring the tree or shrub is not overhanging or encroaching the boundary of another resident's property or garden. Tenants are also responsible for cutting the grass in the garden of their property.
- 8.2. Tenants should obtain permission from the Council in writing before planting any tree, in line with their Tenancy Agreement.
- 8.3. Tenants are not permitted to remove trees, even if the tree is in their garden, and should seek permission from the Council if they wish to do so.
- 8.4. Invasive plants such as Japanese knotweed are not permitted on any Council owned land. If a tenant suspects an invasive plant, they should contact the Council with a clear picture and description, along with the location in order for further investigation to be carried out if required. A full list of invasive plants is listed in [Section 14, Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#).
- 8.5. If a tenant is unable to carry out the normal inspection and relevant maintenance of trees, plants and grass on their property, then they should contact the Council.

9. HOUSING AMENITY LAND

- 9.1. Housing amenity land is defined as the parcels of land which are not covered by buildings or included in the curtilage of a building or forming part of a highway.
- 9.2. The Council has a number of Byelaws in place outlining what residents should **not** do in a housing amenity area. This includes:
- Damaging or interfering with the grass or other surface of the land including anything growing or planted on the land;
 - Driving or parking on the amenity area;
 - Riding bicycles, skateboards or any motorised wheeled vehicle;
 - Playing any ball games or other games, unless permitted by a notice displayed in the amenity area;
 - Allowing dogs or any other pets to foul in an amenity area.

10. FLY TIPPING

- 10.1. Fly tipping is the illegal dumping of rubbish in areas such as quiet lanes, amenity land, parking areas or busy streets, rather than disposing of it properly at Civic Amenity (licenced waste and recycling sites) or landfill sites. The Council takes this environmental crime extremely seriously.
- 10.2. The Council aims to remove fly tipping within 5 working days, but can only remove dumped rubbish from public land. **Rubbish dumped on private land is the responsibility of the landowner.**
- 10.3. If residents see anyone dumping rubbish, they should report this to the Council's Housing Service ASB team by emailing ASBHousing@dartford.gov.uk.

11. PARKING

- 11.1. In some neighbourhoods, the Council provides parking spaces designated for specific use of tenants, their visitors and Council staff. Parking bays should be used where provided, as long as they are not allocated for other uses. There may also be disabled parking bays.
- 11.2. Any vehicle parked in or on Council owned land must be in a roadworthy condition and should not cause, or be likely to cause, a hazard or a nuisance.
- 11.3. Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN) vehicles must not be parked/stored within Council owned car parks or areas managed by the Council.
- 11.4. Vehicles such as trailers or caravans must not be parked on any part of the estate that is not their own drive with a dropped kerb.

- 11.5. Parking provided by the Council is usually on a first come, first served basis in bays that are designated for tenant and leaseholder use.
- 11.6. Residents should report any instances where parking regulations are not adhered to the Council.

12. ABANDONED VEHICLES

- 12.1. The Council has the authority to remove suspected abandoned vehicles on public highway and Council owned land.
- 12.2. Any vehicle that is correctly reported to the Council as abandoned is targeted for an inspection within 24 hours to ascertain its condition, whether its location is dangerous and whether it is taxed. Vehicles are inspected by the Council's Waste and Recycling service.
- 12.3. The Council will complete checks with the DVLA (this may take a number of weeks) to find out whether it has a registered keeper. If the owner can be found, they will be written to asking them to confirm if they still own the vehicle within 7 days.
- 12.4. The Council will also check with the Police as to whether the vehicle has been stolen or involved in an accident. If it has the Council are not able to remove it.
- 12.5. Once removal has been authorised by both the DVLA and Police, the Council will place a removal notice on the car and remove and either store or crush it when the notice expires.
- 12.6. If a resident suspects a vehicle has been abandoned, they can report it to the Council using this [online form](#).

13. GARAGES

- 13.1. The Council's garages are managed by a specialist garage management company. The management company are responsible for managing and maintaining garages on the Council's behalf.
- 13.2. All garages attached to general needs properties must be used for the purpose for which they are designed.
- 13.3. More information on garages and how to get in touch with the garage management company can be found in the [garage fact sheet](#).

14. FIRE SAFETY

- 14.1. The Council takes the health and safety of its residents extremely seriously to ensure that anyone living within its housing estates and any visitors are safe. This includes ensuring the risk of fire is prevented or minimised as far as possible.

- 14.2. The Council is responsible for the management of fire protection and safety systems and equipment within its buildings and communal areas. The Council also has a number of fire prevention measures in place to reduce fire hazards.
- 14.3. Regular fire risk assessments of internal communal areas are arranged by the Council. Assessments cover areas including stairwells, corridors, landings and entrance lobbies. Any fire risks identified during an assessment or on any other visit, such as an estate inspection or ad-hoc visit, will be noted and rectified by the Council.
- 14.4. The Council has a zero tolerance policy towards items placed in communal areas. Any items found will be removed by the Council without notice and disposed of.
- 14.5. Tenants have a responsibility to reduce the risk of fire. This includes:
- Ensuring that no items are placed in communal areas, including communal balconies.
 - Reporting any items that are found in communal areas or shared spaces to the Council.
 - Keeping all exit routes and landings clear.
 - Keeping cupboards for gas and/or electric clear. They must not be used for storage.
- 14.6. More information on how the Council manages fire safety can be found in the [Fire Safety Policy](#).

15. ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT

- 15.1. The Council is responsible for the management of asbestos in all Council owned and maintained properties. This includes ensuring the risk of asbestos and any asbestos containing materials (ACMs) is safely managed.
- 15.2. The Council has a legal duty to identify and record the location and condition of asbestos and presumed ACMs, assess the risks from such materials and formulate a management plan to reduce those risks.
- 15.3. If a tenant or leaseholder suspects that asbestos is present, they should contact the Council as soon as possible. The Council will investigate and take action if asbestos is detected to ensure there is no risk.
- 15.4. The Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of anyone who may visit or occupy a Council owned property. More information on how the Council manages asbestos can be found in the [Asbestos Management Policy and Plan](#).

16. PEST CONTROL

- 16.1. The Council aims to ensure that all properties and communal areas do not contain any pests or vermin.
- 16.2. Tenants have a responsibility to eradicate any pests or vermin in their homes, unless they are found in communal areas. The Council's Environmental Health team provide a chargeable [pest control service](#) for the eradication of infestations of rats and mice in domestic properties, and wasps that are located below gutter height of a normal two storey property.
- 16.3. Any pests or vermin found in a communal area should be reported to the Council's Housing Service, who will advise on how it will be dealt with.

17. PETS

- 17.1. Tenants living in flats and maisonettes, and tenants living in open housing schemes (Meadowside bungalows and The Homestead), may request permission to keep one dog or one cat in compliance with the Policy on Keeping Pets and other Animals in Council Properties. Outdoor pets, such as rabbits, guinea pigs, ferrets, aviary birds, chickens, ducks or pigeons, are not permitted where residents live in flats, maisonettes and housing schemes. Tenants do not need permission to keep small indoor animals, such as budgerigars and hamsters.
- 17.2. When keeping pets, tenants have the responsibility to ensure that they do not allow any pet to cause a nuisance to anyone in the local area, or allow any pet to damage any property. Pets are not allowed to be kept on balconies or in communal areas, nor should residents allow their pets to foul the inside of the property or any balconies or communal areas. Tenants are responsible for ensuring the conditions in which their pets live are safe and in accordance with RSPCA guidelines.
- 17.3. More information on tenant responsibilities with regard to pet ownership can be found in the [Policy on Keeping Pets and other Animals in Council Properties](#).

18. CCTV AND DOORBELLS

- 18.1. To ensure residents live in a safe environment, the Council uses closed-circuit television (CCTV) in various locations across the borough. There are visible signs which show that CCTV is in operation. CCTV also ensures those who visit or work in the borough are kept safe.
- 18.2. Residents may also wish to install their own domestic CCTV, including video doorbells. Due to the increase of domestic CCTV systems being installed, it is not practical for the Council to require residents to request permission to install these systems.

- 18.3. Permission to install a domestic CCTV system(s) or video doorbell will however be required where the installation involves physical works to the property, such as drilling holes or fixing brackets to a wall.
- 18.4. Where the installation requires equipment including wiring to be fixed to an area which is not within the boundary of the resident's property, permission is likely to be refused. This includes communal areas and external walls to blocks of flats. Permission may be granted in certain circumstances where there is an identified need for CCTV, for example, to protect a survivor of domestic abuse.
- 18.5. If any damage to the property is caused by the installation of CCTV, it is the tenant's responsibility to remedy the damage. Should the Council need to carry out any works, the cost will be rechargeable to the tenant.
- 18.6. Residents should be aware that there are legal implications should they choose to install their own domestic CCTV system and should follow the guidance issued by the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) on data protection.
- 18.7. The installation of CCTV at a resident's property may be viewed by other residents as an intrusion of their privacy. Residents may also view it as an act of anti-social behaviour. The Council will respond to any complaints received on domestic CCTV systems and will intervene dependent on the circumstances and if it is appropriate to do so. All complaints will be initially treated as a report of anti-social behaviour, and will be investigated in compliance with the [Anti-Social Behaviour Policy](#).

19. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IN NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

- 19.1. Where neighbourhood improvements are required, the Council is committed to delivering improvements which are shaped and identified by residents. A number of resident involvement opportunities are available to actively participate in, to ensure the needs of residents are met.
- 19.2. Some of the opportunities available to residents include:
 - The creation of Block Monitors within neighbourhoods to provide a voice for each area and offer an opportunity for residents to regularly feedback on services;
 - Opportunities to apply for community funding such as the Community Grant and Community Initiative fund. Funding can be used towards activities such as training, or organising trips and events, or improvements such as planting raised flowerbeds in our shared spaces;
 - Shaping Neighbourhood Improvement plans jointly with the Council and other stakeholders.
- 19.3. More information on involvement opportunities can be found in the [Tenants and Leaseholders Engagement Strategy](#).

20. COMPLAINTS

- 20.1. If residents are not satisfied with the service they have received, the Council's [Corporate Complaints Procedure](#) can be followed. Complaints leaflets are also available from the Council offices.
- 20.2. The [Housing Ombudsman](#) can be contacted if further advice and support is needed on making a complaint to the Council.

21. DATA PROTECTION

- 21.1. The UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 regulate the processing of information relating to individuals, which includes the obtaining, holding, using or disclosing of such information.
- 21.2. The Council needs to collect and use certain types of information about its service users in order to carry out its everyday business and to fulfil its objectives and its statutory functions.
- 21.3. The Council's:
 - [Data Protection Policy](#) sets out how it will protect special category and criminal convictions personal data;
 - [Housing Services \(Landlord and Tenant\) Privacy Notice](#) explains that the Council collects personal information to administer its housing (landlord and tenant) services.

22. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 22.1. The Council is committed to welcoming and valuing diversity, promoting equality of opportunity and tackling unlawful discrimination in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The Council, in delivering this Policy, will have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and ensure that no individual is discriminated against based on their sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, race, religion, belief, disability or age.
- 22.2. The Public Sector Equality Duty is a duty on the Council and that responsibility cannot be delegated to a contractor/service provider and is a continuing duty.
- 22.3. This Neighbourhood Management Policy has been subject to a [Customer Access Review](#), to assess the impact it will have on equality. The review concluded that the Policy will have an overall positive impact as it provides a transparent, proportionate, fair and consistent approach to ensuring that neighbourhoods are well managed and maintained.

23. MONITORING AND REVIEW

23.1. The Council will continue to monitor how neighbourhood management services are delivered, and the scale of improvements and repair works required within its neighbourhoods.

23.2. The Council also collect and monitor tenant satisfaction measures, set by the Regulator of Social Housing. The measures relevant to this Policy are:

- TP10 – Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained
- TP11 – Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

23.3. This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner, in the event of major legislative or operational changes.

If you or anybody you know requires this or any other council information in another language, please contact us and we will do our best to provide this for you. Braille, Audio tape and large print versions of this document are available upon request.



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