

# Customer Access Review – Full Assessment

<b>Assessment details</b>	
<b>Assessment area</b>	Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs
<b>Date of assessment</b>	January 2025
<b>Directorate and Service</b>	Housing and Public Protection, Housing Services
<b>Manager</b>	Tenancy Services Manager / Housing Maintenance Manager
<b>Officer conducting assessment</b>	Housing Policy & Performance Officer
<b>Step 1: Scoping the assessment</b>	
<b>1. What are the aims and objectives of the activity or proposal?</b>	<p>The Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs sets out the Council’s approach to managing trees within its housing grounds. For the purpose of the policy, housing grounds are defined as the external communal areas within an estate which are the direct responsibility of the Council’s Housing Service, as well as the private gardens which form part of a tenant or leaseholder property.</p> <p>The policy sets out the responsibilities of tenants, leaseholders and the Council with regards to the management and maintenance of trees, hedges and shrubs.</p> <p>The key objectives of this policy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a safe environment is provided for all residents to live in;</li> <li>• Raise awareness of landlord and tenant/leaseholder responsibilities in the maintenance of trees, hedges and shrubs;</li> <li>• Ensure any tree management issues are resolved in a timely manner with health and safety as a priority;</li> <li>• Work in partnership with contractors to carry out inspections or works to trees where required;</li> <li>• Ensure any required tree works are completed in line with health and safety requirements;</li> <li>• Ensure we carry out tasks in line with our green agenda, and sustain and protect our green spaces.</li> </ul> <p>Ultimately, the Council is committed to providing green, outdoor spaces where residents can enjoy the environment and feel safe, knowing it is also part of national incentives to mitigate climate change and biodiversity crises.</p>
<b>2. Who will be affected by the activity or proposal?</b>	The Policy will affect tenants and leaseholders of Dartford Borough Council, as well as residents and visitors to the borough.
<b>3. How does the activity or proposal contribute to:</b>	a) The Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs does not contribute to any key performance indicators.

# Customer Access Review – Full Assessment

Step 1: Scoping the assessment																	
<p>a) any key performance indicators?</p> <p>b) policies, values or objectives of Dartford Borough Council?</p>	<p>b) The Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs contributes to the Corporate Plan Environment objectives in the Corporate Plan 2024-2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing green spaces, habitats, and tree coverage will be protected and enhanced, and new provision will be made, to absorb carbon dioxide, support biodiversity and reduce surface water runoff.</li> <li>Protect good quality trees which contribute to the green environment and also absorb carbon dioxide and provide urban cooling and plant new trees and landscaping where appropriate and opportunities arise.</li> </ul>																
<p>4. Which aspects of the activity or proposal are dictated by legislation/regulation and where do we have discretion in how they are delivered?</p>	<p>The Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs and its delivery is intended to be compatible with the following relevant legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981</li> <li>Environment Act 2021</li> <li>Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024</li> <li>Town and Country Planning Act 1990</li> <li>Highways Act 1980</li> <li>High Hedges Act (Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)</li> <li>Health and Safety at Work Act 1974</li> <li>Occupiers Liability Act 1957 &amp; 1984</li> </ul>																
Step 2: Information collection																	
<p>5. What do you know about the groups of people who will be affected? (i.e. demographic information in relation to the protected characteristic groups of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership)</p>	<p><b>Tenant profile</b></p> <p>The Council owns and manages a housing stock of 4,207 properties. Information in relation to profile of Council tenants (Tenant 1 data) is captured by the Council's Housing Service, as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="3">Sex</td> <td>Male</td> <td>34.06%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>65.82%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unknown</td> <td>0.12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="4">Age</td> <td>25 and under</td> <td>34.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26-35</td> <td>15.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>36-45</td> <td>14.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>46-55</td> <td>11.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sex	Male	34.06%	Female	65.82%	Unknown	0.12%	Age	25 and under	34.00%	26-35	15.00%	36-45	14.00%	46-55	11.00%
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Step 2: Information collection																									
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6. What consultation has taken place with affected groups? Please describe who was consulted and the key findings	Internal consultation on the draft Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs has been carried out with Council officers.																								
7. Are there any gaps in information? If so, what additional research and/or consultation is needed to ensure that affected groups needs and views are taken into account?	<p>The Council is committed to ensuring the voice of its tenants is heard on matters that affect them. The Regulator of Social Housing places a requirement on social housing landlords to comply with the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard 2024, by ensuring that residents are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the formulation of their landlord’s housing-related policies and strategies. Consultation with Council tenants will be undertaken, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All Council tenants will be invited to comment on the draft Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs.</li> <li>2. The Dartford Tenants’ and Leaseholders’ Forum (DTLF) will be invited to comment on the draft Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs. The DTLF aims to ensure that the services delivered by the Council are accessible to all. The Forum works as a group to ensure that the views and housing needs of residents are recognised and addressed by the Council, and that those needs and views are placed at the centre of housing services delivery.</li> </ol>																								

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<b>Step 2: Information collection</b>	
	3. The Housing Advisory Board (HAB) will be invited to comment on the draft Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs. The HAB considers reports on proposed policy, strategy and performance in relation to housing issues and makes recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate. The HAB includes representation from Council officers, elected Members and DTLF members.

<b>Step 3: Assessing the equality impact</b>
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<p>8. Consider whether the activity or proposal has or will have any positive or negative equality impacts on the protected characteristic groups in relation to the following aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty:</p> <p>a) tackling unlawful discrimination  b) promoting equality of opportunity  c) promoting good relations</p> <p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Initial Screening will have identified which aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty are relevant to the activity or proposal for consideration</li> <li>• For existing activities, consider how they are working in practice for each relevant protected group</li> <li>• For new proposals, consider whether there is anything that could give rise to positive and negative equality impacts for each relevant protected group</li> <li>• If there is no identified equality impact, please tick the 'No Impact' box and explain why in question 9</li> <li>• If the equality impact is unclear, please tick the 'Unknown' box and explain why in question 9</li> </ul>
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<b>Step 3: Assessing the equality impact</b>
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PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC	POSITIVE IMPACTS	NEGATIVE IMPACTS	NO IMPACT	UNKNOWN
Age	<p><b>Maintenance works</b>  The Council recognises that some elderly tenants may be unable to carry out relevant maintenance works to trees, hedges or shrubs which are located on their private gardens. Tenants should contact the Council in the first instance should this be the case who will be able to advise.</p> <p><b>Health and wellbeing</b></p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Customer Access Review – Full Assessment

Step 3: Assessing the equality impact				
PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC	POSITIVE IMPACTS	NEGATIVE IMPACTS	NO IMPACT	UNKNOWN
	<p>Access to trees and green spaces provide health benefits to the environment and should be pronounced for children and older residents who may suffer from respiratory illnesses. Trees also offer shade and reduce the risk of flooding which will benefit children and older residents who suffer disproportionately from the impacts of climate change such as extreme heat and flooding.</p>			
<p><b>Disability</b></p>	<p><b>Maintenance works</b> The Council recognises that some disabled tenants may be unable to carry out relevant maintenance works to trees, hedges or shrubs which are located on their private gardens. Tenants should contact the Council in the first instance should this be the case who will be able to advise.</p> <p><b>Health and wellbeing</b> Access to trees and green spaces provide benefits to the environment and provide wellbeing benefits such as improving mental health.</p> <p><b>Communication needs</b> In accordance with the Council’s Equality &amp; Diversity Document Framework, the policy can be provided in alternative formats, including: Braille, audio tape and large print versions of documents. British Sign Language interpreting</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Customer Access Review – Full Assessment

Step 3: Assessing the equality impact				
PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC	POSITIVE IMPACTS	NEGATIVE IMPACTS	NO IMPACT	UNKNOWN
	services can also be provided upon request. Calls can also be received via Relay UK.			
<b>Sex</b>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Race</b>	<b>Alternative format and interpreting services</b> In accordance with the Council's Equality & Diversity Document Framework, the policy can be provided in alternative formats including documents translated into other languages. Telephone and face-to-face language interpreting services can also be provided upon request.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Religion/Belief</b>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Pregnancy/Maternity</b>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership*</b>	Not applicable as the Policy does not apply in the context of employment.	Not applicable as the Policy does not apply in the context of employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\* Regarding the protected characteristic of Marriage and Civil Partnership – public bodies need to comply with the first aim of the Public Sector Equality Duty and only in the context of employment.

Step 3: Assessing the equality impact	
<b>9. If 'no impact' or 'unknown' was selected, please explain</b>	There are no known circumstances where the policy will have relevance to or a disproportionate equality impact on the protected characteristic groups of sex, gender reassignment, religion/belief, sexual orientation and pregnancy/maternity. The Council will offer advice to older and disabled residents who may need assistance to carry out maintenance to trees, hedges or shrubs they have in their private garden. The Council also aim to preserve existing trees as they bring many benefits to people, particularly children and elderly residents.

# Customer Access Review – Full Assessment

<b>Step 3: Assessing the equality impact</b>	
<b>10. If Dartford Borough Council works with partners to deliver the activity or proposal, please describe any circumstances that could give rise to positive or negative equality impacts between different groups</b>	In some instances, the Council will instruct an arboriculture contractor to conduct an inspection of a reported tree. The Council may also seek advice from the contractor, or instruct the contractor to carry out any works to a tree where required.
<b>11. Any other comments</b>	No.

<b>Step 4: Action plan</b>	
<b>12. Based on the information in Steps 1 to 3, please list the actions that will be taken to address:</b>	
<b>a) any gaps in information and consultation</b> <b>b) how any negative impacts on equality will be mitigated or eradicated</b>	

**a) If additional information and/or consultation is required or the impact is still unclear, what actions will you put in place to gather the information you need?**

<b>Information needs</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Intended outcome</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>	<b>How this will be monitored</b>	<b>Responsible officer</b>
Views from all Council tenants and leaseholders	Invite comment and input on the draft policy from all Council tenants and leaseholders	Feedback will, at a formative stage, inform any further changes that may be required to the draft policy in advance of seeking approval for the policy	February 2025	Details of the consultation and amendments made to the draft policy as a result of the consultation will be included in the Cabinet report	Housing Policy & Performance Officer
Views from the Dartford Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum on the draft policy	Invite comment and input on the draft policy from the Dartford Tenants' and Leaseholder's Forum	Feedback will, at a formative stage, inform any further changes that may be required to the draft	February 2025	Details of the consultation and amendments made to the draft policy as a result of the	Housing Policy & Performance Officer

## Customer Access Review – Full Assessment

Information needs	Action	Intended outcome	Date for completion	How this will be monitored	Responsible officer
		policy in advance of seeking approval for the policy		consultation will be included in the Cabinet report	
Views from the Housing Advisory Board	Invite comment and input on the draft policy from the Housing Advisory Board	Feedback will, at a formative stage, inform any further changes that may be required to the draft policy in advance of seeking approval for the policy	April 2025	Details of the consultation and amendments made to the draft policy as a result of the consultation will be included in the Cabinet report	Housing Policy & Performance Officer

**b) If any negative impacts on equality were found, what actions will you put in place to mitigate or eradicate these impacts?**

Identified impacts (and who is affected)	Action	Intended outcome	Date for completion	How this will be monitored	Responsible officer

**Step 5: Decision making and future monitoring**

<b>13. Which decision making process does this Customer Access Review need to go through? i.e. who does this need to be approved by?</b>	Head of Legal Services and Director of Housing & Public Protection
<b>14. Is the subject of the Customer Access Review going to committee? If yes, include your findings in the committee report and attach this assessment to the report</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>15. How will you continue to monitor the activity or proposal on protected characteristic groups?</b>	The Council is committed to preserving existing trees and only in the occasional circumstance will trees be removed, or tree works completed. Whether tree works are completed is not determined by the protected characteristics of a resident, but is dependent on the quality of the tree



# Customer Access Review – Full Assessment

<b>Step 5: Decision making and future monitoring</b>	
	and whether it is a hazard or danger to people or property. Trees which are reported to the Council as a concern by any resident may be inspected and further action taken if required. The Housing Policy on the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrubs will be reviewed every three years or earlier to ensure it is fit for purpose and to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues.
<b>16. When will you review this Customer Access Review?</b>	New Customer Access Review assessments will be undertaken in conjunction with the review of the policy.
<b>Step 6: Final steps</b>	
<b>17. Once this Customer Access Review has been approved, send this assessment to the Policy &amp; Projects Officer</b>	
<b>18. Implement the actions identified from this Customer Access Review and ensure progress is monitored and recorded</b>	

**Reviewed by Legal Services:**

**J.Wenham – Solicitor**

**04.02.2025**

**Reviewed by Director of Housing & Public Protection:**



**30.01.2025.**