

# NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT POLICY

## HOUSING

Date of policy	Xx 2026
Date for review	Xx 2031
Policy author	Tom Harding, Neighbourhood Services Manager
Policy owner	Gill Butler, Chief Officer Housing
Approved by	Cabinet date xxx
Risk register rating	
Associated documents	

Revision history			
Version	Date	Revision description	Policy author

NEW POLICY / POLICY REVIEW	
New policy	X
Early review – change in legislation	
Early review – significant changes in practice	
Review due – significant changes	
Review due – cosmetic changes or unchanged	
Other reason	

Reason for new policy / summary of changes
New policy to replace sections of the existing Housing Management Policy

CONSULTATION

List of people/roles who have been consulted	Date
Grounds Maintenance Team	Jan 2026
All Housing Teams	Jan 2026
Strategic Tenants Advisory Panel	Dec 25
Independent Living Forum	Dec 25
All affected tenants	Jan-Feb 26
Housing Portfolio Holder	Feb 26

<b>EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b>	Completed	Date
	Completed to Stage 1	Feb 26

<b>DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b>	Completed	Date
	N/A – the policy does not deal with the storage or use of personal data	

<b>DISSEMINATION</b>		
Role	Awareness	Essential
To be completed on approval		

<b>TRAINING</b>		
Role	Trainer	Date completed
To be completed on approval		

<b>MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE</b>		
Method	Responsibility	Frequency
To be completed on approval		

## **1 Purpose of the Policy**

- 1.1** This policy sets out how the Housing Landlord service aims to manage its housing estates and communal areas to help ensure pleasant and safe neighbourhoods for our tenants, leaseholders and the wider community.
- 1.2** The Policy has been developed, and will be operated, in accordance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Neighbourhood & Community Standard.

## **2 Policy objectives and scope**

Our Policy Objectives are that:

- ✓ The Housing Service plays a pro-active role in keeping its estates and communal areas clean, safe and well maintained.
- ✓ We respond positively to reports of problems including, where necessary, enforcing the conditions of the tenancy or lease.
- ✓ We work in partnership with residents, contractors, other council teams, and stakeholders, to achieve our objectives.
- ✓ We encourage resident involvement and feedback in all areas of service delivery.

**2.1** This policy applies to:

- ✓ All internal and external communal areas on land managed by the Housing landlord service.
- ✓ All residents, and neighbours of Housing owned estates and land.
- ✓ All staff involved in the delivery of housing services to tenants and leaseholders.

### **3 Legal/Regulatory Framework**

**3.1** This policy and any associated procedures must operate within the relevant laws and regulations. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The Housing Act 1985 including any amendments
- The Council Tenancy Agreement
- Residential leases where the council is the freeholder
- Standards or requirements set by the Regulator of Social Housing
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR.

### **4 Responsibility**

**4.1** The Chief Officer, Housing, has overall responsibility for the operation and review of this policy.

**4.2** Housing Team Managers are responsible for the day-to-day operation of this policy.

### **5 Resident Consultation**

**5.1** The Landlord service is committed to ensuring that residents have the opportunity to comment on, and to shape, the services we provide.

**5.2** This Policy has been developed in consultation with residents, and residents will play an active role in its monitoring and review.

**5.3** We will seek feedback on the service overall, using the annual tenant satisfaction survey, and consult at a more local level on specific aspects of the service where appropriate.

### **6 The Policy**

**6.1** The areas covered by this policy are:

6.2 Cleaning

6.3 Grounds maintenance (gardening)

- 6.4 Trees
- 6.5 Snow and gritting
- 6.6 Inspections
- 6.7 Parking and vehicles
- 6.8 Garages
- 6.9 Items in communal areas
- 6.10 Mobility scooters
- 6.11 & 6.12 CCTV
- 6.13 Graffiti and vandalism
- 6.14 Communal Refuse arrangements
- 6.15 Fly-tip
- 6.16 Improvements
- 6.17 Anti-Social Behaviour
- 6.18 Domestic Abuse
- 6.19 Information for Residents
- 6.20 Protecting the Environment

## **6.2 Cleaning**

We will ensure that the communal areas of our blocks, estates and Independent Living schemes are maintained in a clean condition.

We employ external contractors to provide the communal cleaning service, and they work to a specification and to standards set out in the contract. The specification was developed in consultation with residents and will be reviewed in consultation with residents whenever the contract is renewed.

The frequency of attendance and the services provided will vary depending on the individual needs of particular sites.

We expect tenants and leaseholders – and their visitors – to play their part by taking care of the areas immediately outside their homes and in particular by disposing of refuse and large items responsibly.

Where blocks have external walkways, we do not clean these, and residents are expected to keep these areas clean and tidy.

The cleaning of communal windows is included as part of the cleaning service. We do not clean individual flats' windows; this is a responsibility of the tenant or leaseholder.

## **6.3 Grounds Maintenance (gardening)**

We will ensure that the communal grounds and gardens that the Landlord service is responsible for are well-maintained. Grass areas will be mown and bushes, hedges etc. will be maintained as necessary to prevent overgrowth and to maintain a pleasant appearance.

The communal grounds maintenance service is provided in-house by the council's Grounds Maintenance Team. The team work to a specification set

out in a Service Level Agreement. The frequency of attendance and the services provided will vary depending on the individual needs of particular sites.

The Housing Landlord service is keen to improve the appearance of our communal grounds and welcomes ideas or suggestions from residents. There is budgetary provision for modest improvements see section 6.15.

#### **6.4 Trees**

We will ensure that all trees in communal areas are managed and maintained through a risk-based approach. The tree management service is provided in-house by the council's arborist service.

Individual trees are inspected as and when faults are reported and/or concerns are raised. We aim to carry out a periodic inspection of all trees on housing communal areas, subject to resources being available. We aim to maintain our trees in a safe and sustainable manner, preserving or enhancing biodiversity where possible.

Trees will only be felled as a last resort and if deemed necessary by specialist staff for health and safety reasons, where damage is being caused to buildings, or other exceptional circumstances. We will not fell trees to:

- Deter birds from roosting or nesting
- Prevent wind-blown leaves, seeds, pollen etc.
- Prevent falling fruit, berries or sap
- Improve daylight (exceptions may apply where it is severely affecting light levels within the living room of a property), or views
- Deter insects or other arboreal wildlife
- Improve television reception to individual homes

We do not maintain trees in tenants' individual gardens. These remain the tenant's responsibility as set out in the Tenancy Agreement. In special circumstances, and at our discretion, we may agree to assist a tenant with tree work if they are not able to manage this themselves.

In line with the council's green objectives, there is an ambition to plant more trees on housing land, and we will work with residents and with the council's Grounds Maintenance team to identify potential locations for this. The ongoing maintenance of new trees – watering, in particular – is resource intensive and the planting of new trees is most likely to take place where resident volunteers are willing to assist.

#### **6.5 Snow clearance and gritting**

Gritting and/or clearance of snow from the public highway and pavements is the responsibility of Kent County Council. This section refers only to housing owned and controlled land.

The Housing Landlord service does not commit to carrying out any snow clearance or gritting services and cannot guarantee that footpaths or other communal areas will be free from snow or ice in winter. It is the responsibility

of everyone, including residents and their visitors, contractors and staff, to take extra care in snowy or icy conditions.

We do aim to clear snow and spread grit to key pathways on some prioritised schemes, but this is dependent on the resources available at the time, so is not guaranteed.

We will not clear snow or grit roadways, parking areas or footpaths serving individual homes. We will not grit as a precautionary measure.

## **6.6 Inspections**

All neighbourhoods with communal areas or facilities will be inspected no less than twice a year. At least one inspection will be during the summer months and will be a 'public' inspection to which tenants and leaseholders, councillors and other stakeholders will be invited to accompany the Neighbourhood Officer. The results of these inspections will be made available via the website, and actions arising from all inspections will be followed up.

Areas where the council landlord service has housing stock but does not have any communal land or services may not have regular inspection. However, they will be inspected as necessary.

General Needs blocks of flats will be inspected internally no less than 4 times per year. Independent Living schemes will be inspected weekly.

The inspections will follow a pre-determined format to ensure all key health and safety and customer service issues are included.

Other service-specific inspections, such as quality inspections of the cleaning or gardening service, will be carried out on an ad-hoc basis, or in response to concerns or complaints raised.

## **6.7 Parking and Vehicles**

Where housing sites or estates have parking, it is generally for the specific use of tenants of that site, and council staff or contractors visiting the site. Unless specifically marked, parking spaces are not allocated, and we cannot guarantee parking will be available.

The landlord service will not get involved in parking disputes, unless a there is clear breach of tenancy conditions.

The Tenancy Agreement has specific clauses related to parking and vehicles on communal car parks. This includes the prohibition of trailers and caravans, and a requirement that all vehicles must be taxed (SORN is not accepted) and roadworthy.

## **6.8 Garage Sites and paid for parking spaces**

The landlord service owns and manages a number of 'lock-up' garage sites across the district, where garages are available for rent to tenants and/or the general public. There are also a small number of 'paid for' parking spaces available to rent.

The communal areas of garage sites – the forecourt areas – will receive at least one Grounds Maintenance visit per year to deal with weeds and other growth. There will also be routine inspections throughout the year to check for damage or fly-tip etc.

Where a garage site is not currently in use, it will be made secure to prevent unauthorised access and will be inspected periodically.

## **6.9 Items in Communal Areas**

The landlord service has a duty to take fire safety in internal communal areas seriously and as such operates a 'zero tolerance' approach to items left or stored in communal areas. This includes landings, stairwells, under-stair areas, entrance areas and external walkways or balconies.

It is not permitted for residents to leave any belongings or rubbish in these areas at any time including on a temporary basis. Such items are liable to be removed by council staff, and either disposed of, or a fee payable for their return.

The Tenancy Agreement has specific clauses around the use of internal communal areas and persistent offenders may be subject to legal action.

External communal areas are for the enjoyment of all residents, and to enhance the external appearance of the area for everyone. Any requests for alterations or additions even temporary, such as the personal provision of flowerpots or a child's trampoline for example must be made in writing to the landlord service. Permission is discretionary and requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Tenants' own external structures such as sheds, porches or gazebos are generally not permitted in communal areas.

## **6.10 Mobility Scooters, electric scooters and e-bikes.**

In addition to section 6.9 above, mobility scooters and other small battery powered vehicles are expressly prohibited from internal communal areas or from external communal areas within 6 meters of any residential block, for parking, storage or charging. This is for fire safety reasons, as battery powered vehicles such as these have been known to cause serious fires.

Some of our sites – currently only some Independent Living schemes – have dedicated facilities for the storage and charging of mobility scooters that are available for rent to tenants.

The Tenancy Agreement has specific clauses around the storage and charging of small electric vehicles. If such items are seen in communal areas, they are liable to removal without notice and persistent offenders may be subject to legal action.

We recognise that mobility scooters are becoming increasingly popular, and their use and storage will be taken into account when we are considering estate or block improvements or planned works.

### **6.11 Resident Controlled CCTV including camera doorbells**

There is specific guidance around the use of externally facing CCTV systems, including camera doorbells available here ([link](#)). Key aspects that are relevant to this policy include:

- The landlord service does not grant or deny permission for tenants to use CCTV, but we do expect anyone using it to follow the guidance from the Information Commissioners Office.
- Permission will generally not be given to affix CCTV cameras to the external walls of blocks of flats, or other communal walls.
- Cameras should not cover communal areas, other than areas immediately connected to an individual home.

If it is considered that CCTV is being used in an unreasonable way to surveil others, or as an act of aggression or intimidation, this will be deemed to be an act of anti-social behaviour and will be dealt with in line with our anti-social behaviour policy and procedure.

### **6.12 Landlord Controlled CCTV**

The landlord service owns and operates CCTV at various housing sites, for the purposes of the prevention and detection of anti-social behaviour, and the protection of residents. Where CCTV is in operation there will always be clear signage advising of this.

CCTV footage is not actively monitored and will only be reviewed as necessary and in response to an incident. All recordings will be held securely and will be deleted after a maximum of 30 days, unless they are required as part of an ongoing investigation or action.

CCTV footage will not be shared with residents unless it is required as part of legal proceedings, or subject to a Subject Access Request.

### **6.13 Graffiti and vandalism**

We take both graffiti and vandalism to council property seriously because of their cost, and because of the negative impact they can have on a neighbourhood.

We aim to remove graffiti within five working days, and sooner if the graffiti is offensive. Acts of vandalism will be repaired within our usual repairs timescales according to the nature and location of the damage.

We will report serious incidents to the Police and work with them in any investigations. Where we are aware of the perpetrator, this will be deemed to be an act of anti-social behaviour and action will be taken in line with our anti-

social behaviour policy and procedure. This will include re-charging for the cost of removal.

#### **6.14 Communal Refuse Facilities**

Most housing sites that include flats have communal refuse facilities. We aim to keep these as clean and tidy as possible and we make use of the caretaking service and the contracted cleaning service to achieve this.

All communal bin areas should be swept once a week as a minimum, and communal bins are jet washed annually.

We will replace broken or missing communal bins when required, and we will work closely with the council's waste management team, and the refuse collection contractor to ensure any problems are rectified as quickly as possible.

Fly-tip and 'side-waste' (where refuse is left on the floor, not placed in the bins) will be dealt with as soon as possible where it is reported to us.

The success of communal bin areas relies on how they are used by residents. Where there are problems with this, we will use a combination of education, advice, and enforcement where necessary.

Where opportunities arise, we will work with residents and with other Council teams to enable, encourage and promote recycling.

#### **6.15 Bulky refuse and fly-tipping**

The Housing Landlord service does not offer a bulky refuse collection service and residents with any bulky refuse must make their own arrangements for its removal. The council's Waste team offer a bulky waste collection service for a fee; this can be arranged online via the Council website. [\(insert link here, in online version\)](#)

Fly-tipped refuse will be removed as quickly as possible because of its negative impact on the environment and on the appearance of estates.

Where fly-tipped refuse can be traced back to its owner, we will take enforcement action whenever possible to ensure the responsible person removes the waste themselves or is charged the cost of removal.

The cost of removing unidentified fly-tip will be charged back to the residents of the relevant estate or block, via the service charge.

#### **6.16 Improvements to the estate**

The Housing Landlord service is keen to engage with residents over improvements to communal areas. These could include improvements to planting or landscaped areas, new trees, or the installation of benches etc.

Residents are encouraged to make suggestions for modest improvements to their area, especially during neighbourhood inspections. A small annual budget will be set aside for this type of improvement. All suggestions for improvements

will be considered by Officers and affected residents will be consulted where appropriate. We will consider any requests from residents who wish to work together to use communal areas for small community projects (a gardening project, for example) and will respond positively where we can.

### **6.17 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

The Housing Landlord service has a separate policy for responding to reports of ASB, which includes ASB committed in external or communal areas. The policy is available on the F&HDC website (insert link in online version). Reports of ASB are treated separately from complaints and service requests.

As well as responding to reports of ASB, the landlord service will work pro-actively to try to prevent ASB or the opportunity for it. This could include measures such as the installation of CCTV or additional lighting on estates or aiming to 'design out' potential ASB hotspots such as alleyways.

Where there are local neighbourhood-based problems with ASB (youth loitering for example), we will work with the residents and other agencies such as the Police, the Community Safety Unit and youth services, to try and find the most appropriate solution. Tenancy enforcement action will be a last resort but will be considered where necessary.

[\(insert link to ASB Policy\)](#)

### **6.18 Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse generally affects individual households rather than the neighbourhood. It can affect a neighbourhood however, for example in terms of noise, violence or aggression in communal or public areas, that may be reported as ASB.

Such reports will be investigated broadly in line with the ASB policy, but special care will be taken to ensure the protection of any potential survivor of domestic abuse regardless of who has made the initial report.

We recognise that some forms of ASB such as noise can be an indicator of domestic abuse, and we will be alert to these potential indicators and consider this in our investigations.

[\(Insert link to DA Policy\)](#)

### **6.19 Information for Residents**

We will aim to keep residents informed about services that affect them in a variety of accessible ways, including:

- The use of block noticeboards
- General or area specific newsletters or individual letters
- The council website
- Local or group specific forums such as the Independent Living forum

[\(Insert link to resident engagement section of website\)](#)

## **6.20 Protecting the Environment**

The Housing service is committed to ensuring that our activities have as little negative impact on the environment as possible and we aim to enhance the environment where we can. The ways we do this includes:

- We ensure that external contractors have robust environmental policies, as part of the contract procurement process.
- We operate within the council's corporate Carbon Strategy.
- We promote recycling and food waste and where possible will provide the facilities to enable this.
- We aim to increase the tree canopy cover on our land, including through joint working with tenants where possible
- We currently manage some greenspaces with no or minimal intervention, to assist with biodiversity, and we are looking to increase this approach where suitable.

## **7 Key controls and reporting**

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy is with the Chief Officer for Housing. This policy covers various service areas so day to day responsibility rests with the relevant service manager including the Neighbourhood Services Manager and the Repairs Manager.

The effectiveness of this policy will be measured in various ways including:

- ✓ Ongoing monitoring via feedback from residents, complaints, estate inspections.
- ✓ The annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey
- ✓ Local surveys when required
- ✓ An overall review of the policy every 3 years including seeking feedback from resident and residents' groups.

## **8 Equality and Diversity**

**8.1** F&HDC is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and to eliminating unlawful discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristic or any other difference that could lead to discrimination or unfair treatment considering the principles of the Equality Act 2010.

**8.2** The provisions set out within this policy aim to make a positive impact to all tenants including vulnerable tenants, and those who have one or more protected characteristics.

**8.3** An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of the development of this policy and is available to view here ([link](#)). *To be completed following resident consultation*

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