



# Neighbourhood Management Policy

<b>Reference:</b>	<b>OP020</b>	<b>Version:</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Effective Date:</b>	<b>August 2017</b>	<b>Approval date:</b>	<b>July 2017</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Assistant Director Operations</b>	<b>Policy Owner:</b>	<b>Head of Experience</b>
<b>Policy reviewer:</b>	<b>Operations Partner</b>	<b>Review date:</b>	<b>August 2020</b>

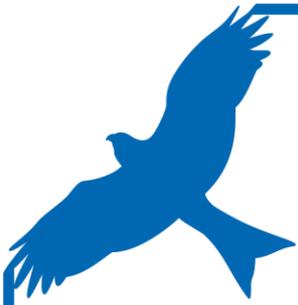


## 1 Purpose

- 1.1 This policy explains how we ensure that our neighbourhoods and communal areas are clean, safe, attractive and well managed. We strive to provide excellent services to our communities and we want our neighbourhoods to be places where our current and future tenants and leaseholders want to live. The way we manage our neighbourhoods directly affects the quality of life and environment enjoyed by our residents.
- 1.2 We will work in partnership with our tenants, leaseholders and local agencies and partners to provide safe environments, to prevent and manage anti-social behaviour and to promote community engagement to deliver sustainable communities.
- 1.3 Our homes are located throughout the Wycombe District in Buckinghamshire. The district contains a mixture of urban and rural locations in the Chiltern's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As a result many neighbourhoods have a large tree population and the topography is often undulating. Our policy addresses those aspects of neighbourhood management that are specific to the areas of the district in which we own homes.
- 1.4 Our neighbourhoods can be defined estates, groups of homes with shared external or internal areas, or ad hoc roads or pockets of land that we own. We recognise that our neighbourhoods are diverse and so our approach to neighbourhood management reflects the individual requirements of our homes, communal areas and associated land in a particular area.
- 1.5 Our neighbourhood management policy has been written having regard to our vision and values, relevant legislation and best practice.

## 2 Definitions

- 2.1 *Grounds maintenance* of communal areas can be described as the cutting and maintenance of grassed areas, the maintenance of shrubs, hedges, bushes and weed control of all hard and soft areas.
- 2.2 *Estate/block*: A block of flats or a collection of houses with shared internal and/or external areas.
- 2.3 *CCTV (closed circuit television)*: A television system used for surveillance and/or monitoring.



2.4 *Communal areas*: spaces shared by more than one home such as landings, hallways, gardens and garage blocks.

### **3 Responsibilities**

- 3.1 The Head of Experience is responsible for ensuring that our neighbourhoods are well managed and desirable places to live.
- 3.2 The Commercial Manager is responsible for ensuring that contractual services are delivered to meet the objectives of this policy.
- 3.3 All staff are responsible for identifying and resolving issues in our neighbourhoods so that the policy can be adhered to.
- 3.4 Tenants, leaseholders and other customers are responsible for looking after their neighbourhoods and reporting any concerns they have.
- 3.5 Wycombe District Council (WDC) has specific responsibilities including waste and recycling, planning and environmental health, all of which have a significant impact on our neighbourhoods. All our staff are expected to build and maintain positive and proactive relationships with external partners including WDC to help us to achieve well-maintained neighbourhoods.
- 3.6 This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Head of Experience and the Commercial Manager, unless there are changes in legislation or regulation or as a result of learning which materially affects the contents of this policy.

### **4 Legal Framework**

- 4.1 The Homes and Communities Agency's *Neighbourhood and Community Standard* (paragraph 2.1) requires registered providers, in consultation with their tenants, to publish a policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes.

### **5 Key Principles**

- 5.1 To have neighbourhoods that Red Kite, our customers and the community are proud of.
- 5.2 To ensure we have clear standards so that residents know what to expect from our service.
- 5.3 To ensure our services deliver value for money.



- 5.4 To maintain a regular, visible presence on our estates e.g. estate inspections.
- 5.5 To ensure we comply with all Health & Safety requirements.
- 5.6 To encourage residents to take responsibility for their environment/neighbourhood.
- 5.7 To take a robust approach to environmental crime which includes fly-tipping, abandoned cars and dog mess.

## **6 Policy Statement**

### **6.1 Grounds maintenance**

- a. We will work alongside tenants and leaseholders to design a specification that delivers a grounds maintenance service to an agreed standard at all times. Our contract will ensure that borders and shrub areas are looked after according to the plant species and are weed and litter free, that grassed areas are cut as appropriate during the different seasons and hard landscaped areas are free of debris.
- b. We will publish a leaflet with pictures of the contractual standards so that all customers know the standard they should expect. Our contracts will be procured following a recommendation by the Procurement Group.
- c. We encourage tenants and leaseholders to play an active role in monitoring the quality of service delivered. Tenant and leasehold representatives will assist us to manage our contractual relationship by attending meetings with our suppliers.

### **6.2 Trees**

- a. We will actively manage our existing tree population, ensuring that sector best practice guidelines and legislation are followed at all times.
- b. We will hold a register of all trees owned in communal areas and have a planned tree management programme in place. A risk management approach will inform the frequency of inspection and surveys.
- c. Where we identify that a tree is dead, diseased or dangerous, we will carry out work to ensure that it poses no risk to the general public or property. We aim to maintain a healthy tree population so we will not carry out work for aesthetic or light restriction reasons only.



- d. On occasions we may have to remove an established tree but we will not do this unnecessarily. We will try to replace the tree so our tree management approach is sustainable.
- e. We may inspect and undertake works to trees in tenant's gardens where they pose a possible health and safety risk or are damaging the property. Generally, the maintenance of trees in tenants' gardens is the responsibility of the tenant and this is normally specified in the tenancy agreement.

### 6.3 Cleaning

- a. We will ensure that the communal areas of our sheltered schemes, blocks, estates and neighbourhoods are clean and safe. We also expect our tenants, leaseholders and other customers to play their part in keeping their neighbourhoods clean by disposing of unwanted items responsibly.
- b. Cleaning can be described as keeping internal and external communal areas swept, mopped and free from litter and graffiti. Where our sheltered housing schemes have communal facilities such as kitchen, laundry rooms and lounges we will ensure that they are kept to a reasonable standard.
- c. We often use a contractor to deliver a cleaning service for us but in some neighbourhoods tenants and leaseholders have told us that they wish to deliver the service themselves. We will work with communities who chose to deliver the service themselves and consult before introducing a contractual service. However, there may be times where we choose to impose such a service even if the majority are not in favour, for instance if the standard is regularly below agreed expectations.
- d. Where a cleaning contract is in place, we will work alongside tenants and leaseholders to design a specification that delivers a service to an agreed standard at all times. We will publish a leaflet with pictures of the contractual standards so that all customers know the standard they should expect. Our contracts will be procured following a recommendation by the Procurement Group.
- e. We will encourage tenants and leaseholders to play an active role in monitoring the quality of service delivered. Procurement Group members will assist us to manage our contractual relationship by attending meetings with our suppliers.



- f. We expect dog owners to act responsibly by taking dog waste home or placing it in dog waste bins if provided. We will ensure that dog waste bins that we own are emptied regularly.

#### 6.4 Environmental crime including fly tipping

- a. We take a robust approach to environmental crime, and we will work in partnership with local enforcement agencies, which could include legal action against those committing such crimes on our land, for example fly tipping. We take such issues seriously and will ensure these are dealt with quickly. Such items spoil the environment for other residents and can be dangerous as well as unsightly.
- b. The cost of removing such items increases our business costs and ultimately will be paid for by tenants and leaseholders. If we are able to establish who is responsible, the person will be asked to remove the items. If they do not do so within the timescale we have given them, we will arrange for the removal of the items and recharge those concerned for the whole cost of this service. Where these recharges are not paid, the customer concerned will be pursued for the costs. We will also take legal action where appropriate. This will apply to Red Kite land.

#### 6.5 Play areas

- a. Where we own play areas we will ensure that they are safe to use, properly inspected and fit for purpose.
- b. Our play areas and equipment are designed and installed in compliance with statutory requirements, legislation and design standards.
- c. We will carry out or nominate an independent suitably qualified body to regularly inspect and risk-assess play areas and equipment that we own according to the relevant legislation.
- d. We will ensure that all play area equipment is maintained in the appropriate condition using a combination of planned preventive maintenance and responsive repairs.

#### 6.6 Parking

- a. Many of our homes are located in areas where demand for parking spaces is now greater than the supply. Our approach is to encourage responsible



parking so that as many people can benefit from this scarce resource as possible.

- b. Our tenancy agreements have specific clauses related to parking which tenants must adhere to.
- c. All vehicles on our land must be taxed, insured and have a MOT. We consider vehicles parked on our land that do not meet these requirements to be causing a nuisance. We will take action to remove them in accordance with our procedures, and permit other authorised bodies such as the police or DVLA to do likewise. We do not permit SORN to apply to vehicles that are untaxed or not insured and on our land, including car parks. This does not apply to a driveway which is part of an individual home. Cars in gardens that are eyesores or appear abandoned are not permitted and we will take further action as appropriate if this occurs.
- d. We have some areas where we have installed barriers, gates or bollards to restrict parking. Although we recognise that for some individuals this can make access more difficult, for example if they have several visitors during the day or have mobility difficulties, we will balance the needs of the individual against those of the wider community.
- e. We will consult before introducing any parking service that will involve additional charges for residents. However, there may be times where we choose to impose such a service even if the majority are not in favour, for instance if the parking is a safety issue, if our facilities are being regularly abused and we need to secure them, or the resources we are using to manage the complaints and issues mean it is a financial/resource drain on us.
- f. Value for money is an essential consideration for us, and expenditure on parking facilities is not a key priority although we appreciate the benefits it can bring in terms of convenience for our customers.
- g. We do not designate communal parking spaces to individual residents; all our communal spaces are available to all our tenants and their visitors, although those marked for blue badge holders are only available for those who are eligible.
- h. We will not normally intervene in parking disputes between residents unless someone is in breach of their tenancy due to the way they are using parking facilities, the way they are behaving towards other residents (e.g. where their actions are serious enough as to cause alarm and distress to others) or they



are abusing facilities due to multiple vehicle ownership. In these instances we will encourage residents to use mediation.

#### 6.7 Communal repairs including lighting

- a. All our staff have a duty in the course of their day to day work when they are out and about in our neighbourhoods to note any communal repairs and issues, particularly those which pose a threat to health and safety, and report them promptly.
- b. We are responsible for lamp-posts, security lighting and other external lighting on some of our estates, while on others the local authority is responsible. We will maintain the lighting we are responsible for and will replace bulbs and fixtures as appropriate. We will report defective lighting on our estates to the relevant authority where we are not responsible.
- c. Our neighbourhoods include a variety of features including service roads, footpaths, river banks and two bridges. When our staff are in these areas they will investigate any problems they find in relation to issues such as fly-tipping, abandoned cars and the parking of caravans, boats and trailers without permission. Their condition will be examined to determine whether they are safe, stable and in good repair.

#### 6.8 External Structures including satellite dishes

- a. Tenants should seek the prior consent from us before erecting any garages, greenhouses, sheds, kennels, satellite dishes, CCTV cameras or any other external structure. All requests must comply with planning or other statutory regulations applicable.
- b. We will not unreasonably withhold permission to erect any structures, but will take into account the appearance of the area and how neighbours will be affected.

#### 6.9 Signage

- a. We will ensure that signage on our estates is clear, necessary, appropriate and well maintained.
- b. We will ensure that health and safety and other mandatory signage is present where required.



- c. We will avoid unnecessary signage and will remove outdated and obsolete signage. We will generally not put up signage such as 'no ball games' as this is not enforceable and we support outdoor activities for young people.

#### 6.10 Snow/leaf clearance

- a. In winter months we are unable to prevent a build-up of leaves but will look to ensure that any build-up does not pose a slip hazard on pathways.
- b. We are generally unable to grit and clear snowfalls/ice from our neighbourhoods as this would not be practical nor affordable. Residents are responsible for gritting or clearing snow on any sole or shared pavements to their homes. We will prioritise snow clearance and gritting of our sheltered housing schemes above other estates and neighbourhoods.
- c. We will ensure that grit bins on our estates are replenished so that grit is available for our tenants and leaseholders to use.
- d. We will work with the local authority to encourage regular replenishment of grit bins on the public highway in neighbourhoods where we own houses.

#### 6.11 Neighbourhood improvements

- a. We have an amount set aside for neighbourhood and environmental improvements. Tenants, leaseholders and the wider community are encouraged to submit proposals for consideration to our Environmental Improvement Group.
- b. Tenants and leaseholders will be encouraged to participate in our Environmental Improvement Group. The group will consider whether each proposal meets tenant and leaseholder priorities, addresses potential health and safety and security concerns and has consideration of and provides for on-going operating and maintenance costs and also whether it fits with our strategic vision and plans.

#### 6.12 Estate inspections

- a. Our team of Experience Specialists work within our neighbourhoods. In addition to their routine visits we will have a programme of robust neighbourhood inspections in place.
- b. We will publish our programme of inspections and encourage tenants, leaseholders and other local stakeholders to attend and participate.



- c. We will also visit each of our blocks regularly on a risk assessed basis to identify and resolve any health and safety issues so that our neighbourhoods are a safe place to live.
- d. Tenants and leaseholders are not allowed to store any item in a communal area unless they have our written permission. We will try to identify the owner of any item left in a communal area without permission, but will remove the item ourselves if the owner cannot be found and the item is a safety concern. We will re-charge the tenant or leaseholder where we know it was a specific household. These areas are regularly inspected.

#### 6.13 Security and Anti-social behaviour

- a. We will work with residents to reduce crime, nuisance and anti-social behaviour on our estates. We will do this through improving physical security, supporting and promoting local initiatives, and taking enforcement or prosecution action where appropriate.
- b. We will work closely with local police safer neighbourhood teams, the fire service and other partners. Where there are high incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour we may install CCTV on estates – on a temporary or permanent basis – to combat disorder, gather evidence, reduce fear and bolster a sense of safety and accountability among affected residents. Our ASB policy and our CCTV policy have more details regarding our approach to safety and security in our neighbourhoods.

#### 6.14 Tenant and leaseholder involvement

- a. As a tenant led, charitable housing organisation, tenants and leaseholders inspire and influence everything we do. We work alongside them to define standards, they select who delivers the service, they assist in monitoring and managing contractor performance and they drive future improvements in our neighbourhoods.
- b. We have consulted our involved tenants and leaseholders on this neighbourhood management policy and will involve them in any reviews and future policy development.
- c. We will operate a champion's initiative to encourage tenants and leaseholders to provide us with monthly feedback about the quality of services provided to the neighbourhood.



- d. We will consult a sample of our customers regularly on the quality of the services we provide in the neighbourhood as part of our customer satisfaction survey. Satisfaction information will be reported to senior management.
- e. Members of our Procurement Group are central to appointing suppliers which deliver services to our neighbourhoods and they are involved in ongoing contract management.

#### 6.15 Partnership working

- a. We recognise that high quality sustainable neighbourhoods can only be achieved if organisations work together. We are committed to developing positive working relationships with agencies such as local authorities, neighbourhood police and other housing providers so that we can realise the aspirations of our neighbourhoods.
- b. Unauthorised use of our land under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994: Section 61 would allow the Police to move Travellers or trespassers off our land immediately.
- c. We will expect our tenants and leaseholders to take responsibility for working with us in ensuring that the standards on our estates and communal areas remain high, for instance by keeping their own gardens clear and tidy, protecting the local environment, removing their rubbish, not causing nuisance with fire, keeping their pets under control, being respectful of others, not causing noise nuisance or anti-social behaviour, not storing belongings inappropriately etc.
- d. We will take the opportunity when it arises through development and regeneration to ensure good design so we can design-out problems where appropriate, in consultation with partners, tenants and leaseholders and the wider community.

## 7 References

- 7.1 The Homes and Communities Agency's *Neighbourhood and Community Standard*.
- 7.2 Our internal policies and procedures, see section 8 for more details.

## 8 Related Policies & Procedures

- Anti-social Behaviour Policy and procedure



- Tenancy Agreements
- Asset Management Strategy
- Items in communal areas procedure
- Mobility scooters Policy and procedure
- Feedback Policy
- People Strategy
- Repairs Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Tenant Service Charge Policy
- CCTV Policy
- Unauthorised use of our land procedure
- Recharge Policy
- Untidy Gardens Procedure