



# **Guildford Borough Council Housing Services Estate Management Policy**

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## Table of Contents

1.	Introduction .....	3
2.	Policy Statement and Aims of the Policy.....	4
3.	Legal Framework.....	5
4.	Estate Management.....	6
5.	Policy Outcomes.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
8.	Reviews and Complaints .....	10
9.	Equality and Diversity.....	10
10.	Data Protection and Retention of Information.....	10

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Guildford Borough Council (GBC) recognises that Estate Management is a vital part of our environmental management responsibilities as a landlord and an important service for tenants and residents. This policy demonstrates our commitment to maintaining a clean, safe and desirable local environment.
- 1.2. The local environment has a significant impact on residents' quality of life and their ability to live safely and comfortably in their homes. This policy outlines how we work with tenants, leaseholders, and property owners to maintain and enhance the housing estates and common areas we manage.
- 1.3. It addresses key concerns such as graffiti, litter, vandalism, and crime. Working with the police and other public services, we aim to prevent issues where possible and respond quickly and effectively when problems arise.
- 1.4. This Policy applies to all properties owned or managed by Guildford Borough Council.

## 2. Strategic Context

This Estate Management Policy contributes to the delivery of both Guildford Borough Council's **Corporate Strategy 2024–2034: A Greener, Fairer, Thriving Guildford** and the **Housing Strategy** vision that:

*"Everyone has a safe, high quality, sustainable home that meets their needs and that they can afford as part of a thriving and inclusive community."*

### **Contribution to the Corporate Strategy priorities:**

- **A more sustainable borough** – through proactive maintenance of green spaces, tree management, recycling, and support for biodiversity.
- **A more inclusive borough** – by fostering safer, cleaner, and more welcoming estates for people of all backgrounds and needs.
- **Decent and affordable homes** – by ensuring communal environments support the longevity and desirability of homes.
- **A resilient and well-managed council** – through visible, consistent service standards and effective resident engagement.

### **Contribution to Housing Strategy priorities:**

- **Deliver homes people need and can afford** – by maintaining estates that people are proud to live in, improving re-let times, and supporting long-term sustainability.
- **Improve the quality, standard, and safety of homes and services** – by ensuring communal areas are clean, safe, and well-maintained, with issues addressed promptly.
- **Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping** – by improving estate conditions to support tenancy sustainment and reduce neighbourhood disruption.
- **Improve housing options and choice** – by creating neighbourhoods where residents want to stay, move into, and contribute to shaping.
- This policy underpins the Council's broader vision of housing as more than bricks and mortar — it is about creating safe, connected, and well-cared-for communities.
- Tenant Engagement Strategy

Estate Management is a key pillar in ensuring homes and neighbourhoods remain desirable, resilient, and well-maintained, and that services reflect local priorities and resident needs.

### **3. Policy Statement and Aims of the Policy**

- 3.1.** Estate management refers to the management of properties, surrounding areas and related services to ensure that residents enjoy a decent, safe, and secure living environment.
- 3.2.** It covers a wide range of issues, including:
  - Tenancy advice and enforcement
  - Maintenance of communal areas
  - Management of the physical environment
  - Caretaking services
- 3.3.** The Council supports activities that enhance local communities, including those aimed at reducing crime and improving public spaces.
- 3.4.** Estate management tasks include, but are not limited to:
  - Caretaking
  - Cleaning and grounds maintenance
  - Litter collection
  - Removal of abandoned vehicles and graffiti
  - Garage and shed management
  - Estate inspections
  - Addressing dog fouling and pest infestations
  - Granting permissions
  - Maintaining aesthetics and safety
- 3.5.** Policy Aims:
  - Ensure estates are safe, clean, and well-maintained
  - Encourage residents to uphold their responsibilities
  - Clarify council responsibilities
  - Measure and improve satisfaction with services
  - Engage residents in inspections and decision-making
  - Reduce void property times by improving estate conditions
- 3.6.** To achieve these aims, we will:
  - Work closely with residents
  - Monitor contractor performance
  - Conduct service quality surveys
  - Encourage resident participation
  - Provide clear information and advice
  - Conduct regular inspections

- Maintain a visible staff presence
- Enforce tenancy conditions proactively
- Collaborate with partner agencies
- Promote community involvement
- Share feedback and performance data

## 4. Legal Framework

4.1. This policy complies with the following legislation and regulations:

- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
- Housing Act 1985
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- Localism Act 2011
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (2024)
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 [N.b. when the changes and repeals to the 2014 Act included in the Crime and Policing Bill 2024-25 come into force those provisions will be adopted in this policy]

## 5. Policy Outcomes

- 5.1. Successful implementation will ensure residents can enjoy a clean, safe, and peaceful home environment.
- 5.2. This policy supports regulatory compliance with the Consumer Standards and underpins our delivery of safe, well-managed neighbourhoods and communal areas, as required by the Neighbourhood and Community and Safety and Quality Standards

## 6. Compliance with the Consumer Standards

This policy supports compliance with the **Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards (2024)**, specifically:

### ◊ *Neighbourhood and Community Standard*

We ensure neighbourhoods and communal areas are clean, safe, and well-maintained by:

- Delivering a planned programme of estate inspections and cleaning
- Taking action to address fly-tipping, graffiti, vandalism, and anti-social behaviour
- Monitoring the condition of communal areas and addressing hazards
- Encouraging resident engagement in local decision-making

### ◊ *Safety and Quality Standard*

We contribute to building and estate safety by:

- Monitoring and resolving environmental health and safety risks (e.g. vermin, needles, overgrown gardens)
- Enforcing rules around scooter storage and fire safety in communal areas

- Inspecting estates and public areas regularly to address disrepair and hazards
- Maintaining trees, play areas and shared spaces in a safe condition

All services are delivered with a clear commitment to **fairness, accessibility, and resident satisfaction**, and performance is monitored through **Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)** and key performance indicators.

We will review this policy regularly to ensure continued compliance with changing regulatory expectations.

## **7. Estate Management**

### **7.1. Information and Advice**

We will provide accessible information at sign-ups, through home visits, written communications, online resources, and newsletters.

### **7.2. Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff are responsible for reporting concerns. Estate, Housing, and Technical Officers take the lead in resolving estate issues, supported by other staff as needed.

### **7.3. Safeguarding and Lone Working**

Staff will report safeguarding concerns per Council policy. Lone workers follow risk assessment and communication protocols to ensure safety.

### **7.4. Estate Inspections / Visits and Resident Meetings**

Staff will regularly visit estates to carry out home visits and scheduled estate inspections with resident participation encouraged. Meetings will be arranged when issues arise. Relevant partner agencies may be invited.

### **7.5. New Tenant visits**

All new tenants will be visited within two months of starting their tenancy to ensure tenancy conditions are understood and being followed.

### **7.6. House inspections**

We will inspect homes as needed, particularly where tenancy breaches and disrepair are reported.

### **7.7. Monitoring Standards**

Cleaning, landscaping, and maintenance contracts will be monitored by the Estates Team to ensure performance and resolve issues promptly.

Performance against the Consumer Standards and TSMs will be regularly reviewed by housing management and reported to the Tenant Engagement Group and Housing Operations Board

### **7.8. Garden Maintenance**

Residents are responsible for their gardens. If necessary, the council may clear neglected gardens and recharge tenants for the costs.

### **7.9. Tree Maintenance**

The council maintains trees on its land, with due regard for conservation areas and Tree Preservation Orders. Vulnerable tenants may receive assistance.

### **7.10. Keeping Pets**

Pets are only allowed with permission and must comply with tenancy conditions. Offences may result in Fixed Penalty Notices.

#### **7.11. Car Parking**

Unallocated parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis unless designated by a permit. Disabled parking may be arranged if space and agreement allow.

#### **7.12. Garages**

Garages are let under separate tenancy agreements. Tenants are responsible for clearing contents at the end of tenancies.

#### **7.13. Abandoned vehicles**

Reported vehicles will be investigated and, where the Council has the legal power to do so, removed if necessary and appropriate action.

#### **7.14. Vermin and other infestations**

We will address infestations in communal areas and take appropriate action in cases caused by poor living conditions.

#### **7.15. Feeding birds**

This is strictly prohibited, and ground feeding is not allowed.

#### **7.16. Bin Stores**

Residents must keep bin areas clean. The council will clean communal stores when needed and investigate misuse.

#### **7.17. Bulk Waste**

We will remove dumped items and recharge the tenant involved or apply block-level costs if the responsible party is unknown.

#### **7.18. Fly Tipping**

Dumping of items is strictly prohibited unless pre-notified and with agreement to pay costs of removal being chargeable and a warning that any unauthorised dumping of items or other property will be removed and if the person involved is traced prosecution may follow.

#### **7.19. Graffiti**

Offensive graffiti will be removed within 24 hours wherever reasonably possible.

#### **7.20. Hazardous Materials**

Hazardous waste, such as needles, will be removed by specialist contractors.

#### **7.21. E-Bikes/Mobility scooters or buggies**

E-Bikes/Mobility Scooters or buggies must not be stored in communal areas under any circumstances.

#### **7.22. Partnership with Other Agencies**

We will work with external agencies, including police and environmental health, where appropriate.

#### **7.23. Play Areas**

Play and recreation areas will be regularly maintained and inspected.

#### **7.24. Supporting Vulnerable Residents**

We recognise that some residents may need additional support to maintain their home or engage with estate management services. Where appropriate, we will:

- Make reasonable adjustments or tailored communication
- Work with carers and support agencies
- Use flexible approaches for vulnerable tenants struggling with responsibilities.

#### **7.25. Breaches of Estate Conditions and Enforcement**

We are committed to working supportively with residents but will take action when estate conditions are breached. This includes:

- Written warnings
- Rechargeable works
- Referrals to tenancy enforcement teams
- Legal action where appropriate

Repeated or serious breaches (e.g. persistent misuse of communal areas, dumping waste, neglect of gardens) will lead to formal enforcement action in line with the Tenancy and Anti-Social Behaviour Policies.

#### **7.26. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

Where ASB is reported or identified by estates officers, appropriate and effective action will be taken promptly in accordance with the councils' ASB Policy and the relevant ASB legislation.

#### **7.27. Digital Access and Reporting**

We encourage residents to report estate issues using our digital channels, including:

- Online forms via the council website
- QR code signage in blocks (where implemented)

We will ensure information is available in accessible formats, both online and in print, and will support digitally excluded residents with alternative methods of engagement.

## **8. Resident Engagement**

**8.1.** As part of our commitment to tenant involvement and transparency, we will:

- Involve residents in estate walkabouts and improvement consultations
- Use feedback to shape services
- Monitor and publish performance against the **Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)**, including:
  - Satisfaction with communal areas
  - Satisfaction with how the landlord listens and acts on views
- Share data with tenant panels and publish key results.

Resident engagement in estate walkabouts and feedback mechanisms supports compliance with the Regulator's expectations for resident influence under the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.

**8.2. Resident-Led Improvements and Coproduction**

We aim to go beyond consultation and support residents to co-design local improvements. Where possible, we will:

- Involve tenants in shaping estate priorities

- Support resident groups to develop improvement proposals
- Provide small grants or resources to support community-led initiatives (e.g. murals, gardening days)
- Ensure decisions reflect the needs of diverse and underrepresented voices

## 9. Monitoring and Review

9.1. We will monitor the policy using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as:

- Frequency of inspections completed
- Tenant satisfaction with communal areas and local environment (TSM)

9.2. The policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if tenancy standards regulations change.

9.3. The Tenant Engagement Group will be consulted before any major changes.

9.4. Key statistics will be shared annually.

### Feedback and Continuous Improvement

We value all forms of feedback. In addition to complaints, we welcome suggestions, compliments and resident ideas.

We will:

- Collect feedback from estate inspections and walkabouts
- Monitor informal comments and compliments
- Review customer satisfaction surveys
- Use insight to improve services and guide priorities

Trends in feedback and learning from complaints will be discussed quarterly by management and shared with the Tenant Engagement Group.

### 9.5 Service Standards and Response Times

We aim to deliver consistent, high-quality estate services. Our service standards include:

Service Area	Standard	Response Time / Frequency (best endeavours)
Graffiti (offensive)	Removal	Within 24 hours (wherever reasonably possible)
Graffiti (non-offensive)	Removal	Within 5 working days
Fly-tipping (hazardous)	Removal	Within 24 hours
Fly-tipping (non-hazardous)	Removal	Within 5 working days
Communal area cleaning	Frequency	Weekly (or as per contract)
Grounds maintenance	Frequency	Fortnightly during growing season
Estate inspections	Rota	At least quarterly
Resident walkabouts	Participation	Minimum twice yearly per area
Garden neglect enforcement	Initial inspection	Within 10 working days of report

## **10.Reviews and Complaints**

**10.1.** Complaints will be handled under the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

**10.2.** We commit to:

- Informing tenants of complaint procedures
- Responding fairly and promptly
- Using complaints to improve services
- Regularly reviewing our complaint handling

## **11.Equality and Diversity**

**11.1.** GBC is committed treating everyone fairly, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy/maternity, or marital status.

**11.2.** We aim to provide accessible services tailored to residents' needs.

**11.3.** Staff will comply with the Council's Equalities and Human Rights Policy.

**11.4.** In order to comply with the Equality Act 2010, an equality impact analysis (EIA) was completed, and the Public Sector Equality Duty was carried out. Upon completing the EIA, it was felt that the implementation of the policy was equality compliant and would help to achieve the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **12.Data Protection and Retention of Information**

**12.1.** All personal data will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and GBC's internal policies on data handling and retention.