

Environmental Services Policy



Directorate: Property Services

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1. Introduction

1.1. This Policy aims to:

- Ensure that all grounds maintenance works are performed in accordance with all service standards.
- Provide clearly defined roles and responsibilities to identify and co-ordinate each activity.
- Provide a clear and robust policy for full accountability.
- To assist with the management of existing and any future tree resource through best technical practice with the objectives of landscape, biodiversity, conservation, ecology and physical environmental benefits
- To guide customers, staff, and contractors on the sustainable management principles of our tree stock
- Ensure that all our High rise, sheltered and low-rise communal areas are maintained to our service standards.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1. Salix Homes is committed to providing aesthetically pleasing internal and external communal areas, which enhance our properties and improve the living experience of our customers. We recognise the benefits of creating clean, safe and sustainable areas for our customers to enjoy, and are fully committed to providing a high quality, value for money service.
- 2.2. This policy is designed to provide a clear framework for Salix Homes' approach to managing its internal, external communal areas and tree's management.

3. Policy Detail

3.1. **Grass Cutting – High Rise and Sheltered Schemes**

During the growing season (predominantly April to October), the Environmental Services team will cut all communal grassed areas at least once every two weeks. The task will encompass a full litter pick of the area prior to cutting it.

3.2. **Grass Cutting – Neighbourhoods**

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During the growing season (predominantly April to October), the Environmental Services team will cut all communal grassed areas at least once every two weeks. The task will encompass a full litter pick of the area prior to cutting it.

Grass clippings will not be removed from site following the mowing however, where cuttings have spilled out onto pathways or other areas, these will be blown back onto the turf once the activity has been completed.

3.3. Hedge Maintenance

Hedges will be maintained twice per year by the Environmental Services Team. These visits will be carried out at the start and end of the growing season. This will however, take into consideration the current state of the hedge (e.g. hedge is still in flower). Hedge maintenance will be avoided between March and August as this period is the main breeding season for nesting birds.

The maintenance of hedges will include pruning and debris clearance along with weed control at the base. All clippings will be mulched and placed back into the soil at the base of the hedge. In doing this, key nutrients are re-introduced to the soil and the mulch provide a natural weed barrier, keeping the hedge aesthetically pleasing.

3.4. Shrub Bed Maintenance

Shrub beds will be maintained twice per year by the Environmental Services Team. The first visit will be carried out during the first months of the growing season and the second visit will commence at the end of the growing season however, this will take into consideration the current state of the shrubs (e.g. shrubs are still in flower).

The maintenance of shrub beds will include pruning and debris clearance along with weed control at the base. All clippings will be mulched and placed back into the shrub beds. In doing this, key nutrients are re-introduced to the soil and the mulch provide a natural weed barrier, keeping the shrub beds aesthetically pleasing.

Bedding plants within the shrub beds and communal planters will be replaced on a twice-yearly basis. This will be done at appropriate times during the year to ensure we get the maximum duration of flowering from the plants across both summer and winter seasons.

3.5. Weed Maintenance

Salix Homes uses different weed control methods, which vary depending on the species of weed, and site characteristics. We choose methods that have the least adverse effects on people and the environment. Current control methods are:

- Herbicide application

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- Manual control
- Organic control

Salix Homes applies herbicide application at site visits to control weeds and manage the borders between grassed and paved areas. This application acts as a suppressant to prevent weeds from emerging during the growing season.

In instances where non-native invasive species (i.e. Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam etc.) are reported and confirmed, Salix Homes will apply herbicide directly to the weed on a regular basis until the growth control has been managed and the weed has been destroyed.

3.6. Litter and Fly tipping

Salix Homes will carry out regular litter collection of grassed areas under its ownership prior to the commencement of grass cutting.

Salix Homes will remove any fly tipping on land owned by Salix Homes and dispose of it accordingly.

Salix Homes will report any fly tipping or dumping to other landowners as appropriate.

We will work with our customers to ensure that refuse is disposed of safely, tidily and in the correct containers. Salix Homes will work with partners to determine preventative measures to prevent fly tipping, encourage waste recycling, and our Housing Management team will take enforcement action as deemed appropriate.

3.7. Caretaking

Salix Homes is committed to ensuring the communal areas in and around high-rise blocks are maintained to a high standard. As a minimum, the following tasks will be completed by the on-site caretaker:

- Sweep and mop the ground floor entrances, lifts and chute rooms every day.
- Sweep and mop stairs and landings and wipe down handrails every week.
- Remove litter from entrances, stairwells and lifts every day.
- Wipe down doors in communal areas and paint work to remove grime and dirt weekly.
- Remove racist or abusive graffiti/fly posting within one working day and remove other graffiti/fly posting within 5 working days of being identified.
- Remove bodily waste and drug litter within 1 working hour of being reported.
- Pick up litter to outside areas of the block daily and sweep any car parks of communal pathways weekly.
- Manage bin rooms and clean weekly ensuring that bins are rotated daily.

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- Reporting of communal repairs and monitoring health and safety matters within the block

3.8. Low Rise Blocks Cleaning

Salix Homes is committed to ensuring the communal areas in and around our low-rise blocks are maintained to a high standard. As a minimum, the following tasks will be completed by the Low-rise cleaning teams:

- Sweep and mop communal areas and sweep out bin stores weekly
- Wipe down communal doors and clean glass weekly
- Wipe down handrails weekly
- Pick up litter from outside areas once a week
- Remove bodily waste and drug paraphernalia & litter within 1 working hour of being identified.
- Remove racist or abusive graffiti/fly posting within one working day, and remove other graffiti/fly posting within 5 working days of being identified
- Reporting of communal repairs and health and safety issues within the block.

3.9. Sheltered Schemes Cleaning

Salix Homes is committed to ensuring the communal areas in and around our Sheltered accommodation are maintained to a high standard. As a minimum, the following tasks will be completed by the Low-rise cleaning teams:

- Remove Litter, sweep, mop, and Hoover all communal areas daily
- Clean and polish all communal areas daily
- Replenish all hand soaps, paper towels, and toilet rolls as required
- Clean all toilets, kitchens, and laundry rooms public rooms daily
- Remove all bodily waste and drug paraphernalia and litter within 1 working hour of being identified
- Remove racist or abusive graffiti/fly posting within one working day, and remove other graffiti/fly posting within 5 working days of being identified
- Reporting of communal repairs and health & safety issues within the block.

3.10. Graffiti

Damage to Salix Homes property or land caused by acts of vandalism will be repaired as quickly as possible.

Salix Homes Housing Management Team will fully investigate all acts of vandalism and graffiti to property in common areas. Appropriate enforcement action will be taken against all known perpetrators of vandalism to property and where possible we will recover the costs of any works necessary to make good the damage.

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Salix Homes will take a positive approach to working with other agencies to discourage acts of vandalism.

3.11. Snow & Ice

Where grit bins are provided, Salix Homes will ensure that these are checked weekly throughout the winter months (November to March) to ensure they are stocked and replenished where required.

Caretakers and Gardening team will ensure that grit or rock salt is spread on all pathways during the winter months at our high-rise blocks and sheltered schemes when weather forecasts predict icy conditions. Throughout the same period, any snow fall on pathways at high rise blocks and sheltered schemes will be removed and all pathways re gritted.

3.12. Recycling

Salix Homes will work with customers, the local community and partners to increase recycling within our communities. Salix Homes will look to facilitate the recycling of furniture and other household goods, which are in good and working condition, and provide these to other customers where they are needed.

3.13. Street Cleaning

Salix Homes mini sweeper will visit all areas on a 4 week basis, some areas will be visited more frequently due to areas of high footfall or areas identified as hot spots. When Salix clean an area, we use a combination of litter picking, manual sweeping and mechanical sweepers depending on the needs of an area. We do not always send all our resources to an area if they are not needed as this would be inefficient e.g if an area only requires litter picking, we will not send manual or mechanical sweeper.

3.14. Play areas

Salix homes carry out routine inspections of the play equipment and surrounding areas at dedicated play area sites, only suitably trained personnel will be allowed to perform Playground Inspections, routine inspections are completed on a fortnightly basis and an annual overall inspection of the play areas.

Salix Homes are responsible for the grounds maintenance of play areas, this includes litter bins and litter picking, grass cutting and ensuring the levels of play surfaces are safe.

3.15. Duty Of Care

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A principle of English Common and statute Law is that land / tree owners have a duty of care to visitors, residents, passers-by and indeed trespassers when on their land.

3.16. Safe Highways

Salix Homes have a duty to maintain a safe highway, which may include pruning, or removing trees for the following reasons:

- Obstruction by trees, i.e. low hanging branches
- Irreparable damage to highway trees by passing vehicles
- Dangerous trees near roads and footpaths.

This applies to all highways in which Salix Homes have adopted as part of the transfer in 2015.

4. Active Tree Management

4.1. Value of Trees

Trees provide many benefits to our lives; they help filter harmful air borne pollutants, absorb Carbon Dioxide, reduce Noise levels in urban environments, and provide shade. Trees help to relieve stress, encourage outdoor activities to individuals and community groups, encourage birds and wildlife into urban areas, and improve people's attitudes, health and general wellbeing.

Trees enhance our communities, add value to our homes and businesses and create places where people want to live; in short trees are a huge asset to be encouraged and appreciated.

4.2. The Ownership Of Tree's

Trees belong to the owner of the land upon which they are growing.

If a tree is growing exactly on the boundary between two properties, it is normally considered to be the joint property of the two owners concerned.

If the tree branches or roots have been allowed to grow or encroach over the boundary between two properties, the owner of the adjoining land may cut them back up to the line of the boundary providing that the tree is not subject Tree Preservation Orders or conservation regulations.

However, it must be noted, that any actions of abatement, either by the landowner or his appointed agent that results in the trees death, decline or failure, makes them liable for their actions.

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Trees will be felled by Salix Homes if the trees are:

- Dead – The tree has no, or minimal live growth present within the crown.
- Diseased or dying - The tree is in the process of irreversible decline
- Dangerous – Trees that are causing damage, or likely to cause damage.

4.3. Inspection of Trees

Salix Homes and its contractors have a cyclical programme / schedule of works in place to proactively maintain and inspect all trees which are on our land. All tree's have been inspected and given a risk rating and set of recommendations.

Green Space Team and Gardening Team report any dangerous trees, along with any signs of fungal growth. Salix Homes also encourage customers to report instances where they feel that a tree is dead, dying / diseased or dangerous in line with the definitions above.

Trees which are reported as being dangerous by a customer will be inspected within one working day, however, where an inspection finds the tree to be in a safe state, no further action will be taken.

Where appropriate work is identified, instructions will be issued to our contractor to maintain the trees in a safe condition and address only the actions identified during the inspection.

4.4. Tree Request Exemptions

Salix Homes would not consider the following to be a legal nuisance, and therefore **would not be inspected or pruned** are:

- Loss of light / reduced light to properties
- Effects on TV or mobile phone reception
- Obstruction of views
- Interference with private vegetation
- Obstruction of utility cables (these are the responsibility of the statutory provider or cable owner)
- Overhanging onto a neighbouring property unless there is a particular risk associated with the overhanging branches.
- Other minor or seasonal issues such as:
 - Honeydew (dripping sap)
 - Bird Droppings
 - Squirrels gaining access to properties from trees
 - Leaf, fruit, or flower fall
 - Smells generated by trees

5. Monitoring / Performance / Targets

5.1. Communal Areas – External

- All communal grassed areas will be cut a minimum of every two weeks during growing season. (normally April – October)
- All hedges and shrub beds will be maintained twice per year.
- All bedding plants will be changed and rotated twice per year.
- Weed control will be applied at each site visit (if required) to suppress growth.
- All litter will be removed from communal grassed areas at each site visit before cutting.
- Dangerous fly tipping will be removed within one working day.
- All other fly-tipping and rubbish will be removed within a maximum of five working days.
- Offensive graffiti will be removed within one working day.
- All other graffiti will be removed within a maximum of five working days

5.2. Trees

- Salix homes will inspect all trees where they have been reported to dangerous (within the definitions of this policy) within 1 day.
- All customers will be updated where a report has been made and advised of any action, if required that needs to be taken.

5.3. Caretaking / Sheltered / Low rise

- All caretaking and cleaning tasks on high-rise, low-rise, and sheltered blocks will be completed in accordance with the relevant schedule set out above in this policy.

5.4. Performance Measures:

- % of customers satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live
- Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained
- Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

6. Roles / Responsibility

6.1. Environments & Void Manager

- Overall responsibility for the Policy and owner of the document.

6.2. Grounds Maintenance Manager

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- Responsible for implementing the Environmental Services including Tree Management Policy.
- Responsible for ensuring all health and safety measures are in place and that the team have suitable resources to deliver the service.
- Responsibility for the management of the Environmental Services Team.
- Responsible for ensuring work is completed to a high standard.
- Responsible for ensuring the guiding principles of this policy are followed.
- Responsible for monitoring performance and motivating the team to deliver an excellent service.
- Responsible for ensuring the required resources are adequate, and are available to the team, and relevant schedules are updated.
- Responsible for arranging suitable training for the team in order to effectively carry out the role.
- Responsible for ensuring the team carry out all health and safety tasks as directed.
- Responsible for adjusting schedules on a day-to-day basis to ensure the team complete tasks according the schedules provided.
- Responsible for inspecting play areas and resolving any defects.
- Responsible for monitoring the progression of tree works and ensuring this is completed within service standards.
- Responsible for ensuring all tree works are completed to an excellent standard.

6.3. Environmental Support Officer

- Responsible for assigning responsive work to operatives.
- Responsible for recording and collating all health and safety tasks associated with the service.
- Responsible for the management of inbox on CRM and outlook.
- Responsible for collating / actioning removal of flytipping.
- Responsible for co-ordinating collections and deliveries of furniture.
- Responsible for recording the completion of tasks and the administration of health and safety related activity and monitoring.
- Responsible for evaluating the need for a tree to be inspected following contact from customers.
- Responsible for raising tree inspections where required within the definition of this policy.

6.4. Housing Manager – High Rise & Sheltered

- Overall responsibility for the provision of the low rise / high rise / sheltered cleaning service as set out in this policy.

6.5. Caretaking & Cleaning Manager

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- Responsible for implementing the Environmental Services including caretaking and cleaning service as set out in this policy.
- Responsible for ensuring all health and safety measures are in place and that the team have suitable resources to deliver the service.
- Responsibility for the management of the Caretaking and Cleaning Team.
- Responsible for ensuring work is completed to a high standard.
- Responsible for ensuring the guiding principles of this policy are followed.
- Responsible for monitoring performance and motivating the team to deliver an excellent service.
- Responsible for ensuring the required resources are adequate, and are available to the team, and relevant schedules are updated.
- Responsible for arranging suitable training for the team in order to effectively carry out the role.
- Responsible for ensuring the team carry out all health and safety tasks as directed.
- Responsible for adjusting schedules on a day-to-day basis to ensure the team completes tasks according to the schedules provided.
- Responsible for responding to enquiries regarding the block standard of caretaking and cleaning.
- Responsible for ensuring all caretaking and cleaning works are completed to an excellent standard

6.6. Housing Officers

- Responsible for carrying out monthly block inspections on low rise / high rise and sheltered scheme, actioning any health and safety issues identified and raising repairs.

6.7. Housing Assistants

- Raising repairs on behalf caretakers.

7. Legal / Regulatory Links

- 7.1. Salix Homes is required to comply with statutory requirements, rules and guidance issued by the government.
- 7.2. Whilst the following is not exhaustive, the requirements laid out have been taken into account when formulating this policy:
 - The Health & safety at work act (1974)
 - The Health & Safety at work regulation (1999)
 - Occupiers Liability Act (1957 and 1984)
 - The Countryside Act and Wildlife act (1981)
 - Highways Act (1980)

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- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act)

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

8.1. Salix Homes is committed to promoting and embedding a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within our workplaces and the communities we serve.

- Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.
- Diversity is recognising difference and responding positively to those differences.
- Inclusion is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all.

8.2. We are committed to meeting our obligations and duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to promoting equal opportunities both in the provision of services and in our employment practices. We will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity

8.3. We also recognise that Socio-economic background is an area where inequalities exist and commit to addressing this disadvantage and inequality in our communities where able to do so.

8.4. We are also mindful of our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.5. Where reasonable to do so, Salix Homes will make any reasonable adjustment to ensure compliance with the Act.

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9. Related Documents

- Communities Strategy
- Anti-social behaviour Policy & Procedure
- Pest Control Policy