

Neighbourhood Management Policy

1.0 SCOPE

Purpose

- 1.1. This document sets out whg's Policy towards the effective management of the neighbourhood environment and whg communal areas creating and sustaining great homes and neighbourhoods for local communities.
- 1.2. It explains our approach to managing neighbourhoods including our approach to encouraging customers to take responsibility for making their neighbourhoods work, pulling together to solve problems and strengthen communities. We involve customers and use customer insight to maintain and improve neighbourhoods as well as working in partnership with other agencies concerned with the safety, security and appearance of the neighbourhood environment.
- 1.3. This includes the planning, monitoring, management and delivery of services relating to but not limited to:
 - Communal open spaces including gardens and grassed areas
 - Communal pathways, access ways and parking areas
 - Communal bin stores and drying areas
 - Playgrounds and other communal facilities
 - Communal stairs, hallways, landings and lifts
 - Communal services to flats e.g. cleaning, caretaking, lighting, fire alarm systems, TV aerials, CCTV equipment.

Legal and regulatory framework

- 1.4. The key legislation relevant to the neighbourhood environment is:
 - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
 - Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990
 - Highways Act 1980

- The Occupiers' Liability Act 1957
 - The Occupiers' Liability Act 1984
 - Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978
 - Law of Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977
 - Public Health Act 1936
 - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
 - Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
 - Equality Act 2010
- 1.5. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Neighbourhood and Community Standard states "Registered providers shall consult with tenants in developing a published policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes."
- 1.6. whg's Fire Risk Assessment Policy sets out our commitment to keep our customers and others safe, by ensuring we meet our legal and regulatory obligations to carry out appropriate Fire Risk Assessments.
- 1.7. whg's Communal Tree Policy sets out our commitment to managing the legal responsibilities placed on employers and land occupiers to manage the risks posed by trees.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1. whg is a housing association that provides homes and services to over 20,000 households across the Midlands. To improve and maintain high standards on our estates we consider neighbourhood management as a partnership between whg, local customers and other partners working or operating in neighbourhoods.
- 2.1.1 Effective customer engagement is fundamental to a positive relationship with our customers and meets the requirements for co-regulation and co-design of services, set out by our Regulator in its Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and the Neighbourhood and Community Standard. whg's Customer Voice Strategy focuses on:
- An influential customer voice
 - Engagement with a purpose
 - A modern offer
- 2.1.2 whg analyses customer diversity data against whg service provision. We monitor access to our services and where under-representation is found, we will investigate possible causes and take appropriate action to address any adverse trend. whg will seek to ensure compliance with its statutory

obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in both the delivery and nature of its services.

- 2.1.3 While whg aims to deliver high quality estate services, having the support and co-operation of local customers is critical to our success. Many environmental problems such as fly tipping, dog fouling and graffiti are costly to tackle and yet are often caused by a minority of people within the community.
- 2.1.4 To maintain neighbourhood standards we promote the involvement and support of local customers to act responsibly. whg customers pay for services through their rent or service charge, so where we believe that customer actions are the cause of problems, we will try to identify the perpetrators and may take tenancy enforcement action against them. This may include taking possession action to end their tenancy. We can engage other options to assist regardless of whether the perpetrator is a whg customer or not. This includes charging them for the costs we have incurred to clear up problems or seeking injunctions that require them to clear up problems or desist from causing problems. We will also work with other agencies where it is appropriate to do so.
- 2.1.5 Customer local knowledge and involvement in the estate inspection process and neighbourhood improvement plans will lead to a more sustained improvement in services and the local neighbourhood environment.
- 2.1.6 We will work with local customers, other agencies and interested parties to identify and plan preventative measures to tackle the root causes of environmental Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).
- 2.1.7 We expect customers to keep their property including gardens tidy, report communal repairs quickly and not to do anything that would adversely affect the environment that everyone shares and wants to enjoy.
- 2.1.8 We will:
 - Conduct regular, scheduled inspections of communal blocks and areas ensuring they are well maintained, tidy and free from graffiti.
 - Deliver a robust Grounds Maintenance programme which includes the maintenance of communal grassed areas, hedges and flowerbeds.
 - Deliver a communal tree maintenance programme in line with our Communal Tree Policy.
 - Work closely with local Police and other services to help keep our estates free from ASB, harassment and hate crime.

- Conduct fire risk assessments in blocks of flats to identify and address fire risks.
- Regularly check and maintain shared facilities such as lifts and play areas to make sure they are safe and fit for purpose.
- Continue to work with local customers to develop neighbourhood plans that identify and address local priorities.
- Work closely with local customer groups and partners to develop local resident engagement, community facilities, activities and events to support and develop active, vibrant communities.

Policy Objectives

- 2.2. Our Corporate Plan states our strategic aim is to 'Deliver high quality homes and services for our customers.'
- 2.2.1 We will maintain our properties and neighbourhoods to our Great Homes and Neighbourhoods Standard which incorporates and exceeds the Government's Decent Homes Standard.
- 2.2.2 This Policy aims to:
- Set out a proactive approach to neighbourhood management
 - Ensure the grounds and communal facilities we own and manage are well maintained
 - Involve customers and other parties with a shared interest in achieving greater customer satisfaction with their neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood Services

- 2.3. whg will provide a range of services either directly or through contractors.
- 2.3.1 whg owns homes on recently developed sites where the maintenance and management of all the Public Open Spaces are not adopted by the Local Authority. These areas are managed by a third party management company appointed by the private development company. In a few cases, whg directly manages the Public Open Spaces.
- 2.3.2 whg will work with local service providers and contractors to ensure a satisfactory level of service delivery is maintained.

Refuse and Recycling

- 2.4. whg will work closely with local authorities to ensure that our properties have the appropriate facilities for disposing of rubbish and recycling.

- 2.4.1 We will take action, wherever possible, against those found to be dumping rubbish or fly tipping on whg land, including tenancy enforcement or recharging for costs incurred.

Vehicles and Parking

- 2.5. whg will work with customers and external agencies to reduce irresponsible parking, parking-related disputes, and abandoned vehicles.
 - 2.5.1 We may include the use of barriers, bollards or gates to manage and control the use of parking areas.
 - 2.5.2 We will work with the Drivers and Vehicle Licensing Agency to identify owners of suspected abandoned vehicles and arrange for the vehicle to be removed, stored and disposed of if the owner does not respond after giving the required notice. Where the owner is identified we may re-charge the costs for the removal, storage and disposal of the vehicle.

Public Open Spaces

- 2.6. Where whg owns play or outdoor gym equipment, we will ensure that it is safe to use, properly inspected and fit for purpose. We will undertake regular inspections of equipment as part of our inspection regime and assess whether the equipment is safe and structurally sound. whg will respond to government and statutory guidance which may include the closure of public open spaces during periods of risk to public health such as Covid-19.
 - 2.6.1 We also apply this principle to Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems such as balancing ponds that we are responsible for. Regular inspections of these facilities are carried out throughout the year.
 - 2.6.2 We have a Communal Tree Policy that sets out whg's commitment to the environment and maintaining healthy and safe trees on communal land.

Neighbourhood Improvements

- 2.7. Neighbourhood improvements are planned works to the communal areas of estates intended to enhance the local environment. Before making a decision about spending budgets on significant improvements we will work with local customers that live on the estate to consider their priorities. Meaningful projects that address community health and safety issues as a priority will enhance customers immediate environment. Our investment plans reduce unnecessary costs and waste at the planning and design phases.

- 2.7.1 Our Asset Management Strategy acknowledges that housing management problems, if not dealt with quickly, can affect the desirability of our properties. We will continue to manage our tenancies and neighbourhoods effectively; taking action quickly and working in partnership with statutory agencies.
- 2.7.2 Our Great Homes and Neighbourhoods Standard keeps customers at the heart of our delivery plan. Key elements include:
- Inclusion of appropriate neighbourhood group
 - Analysis of customer needs
 - Creating plans that consider the profile and demographics of our customers appropriate to their neighbourhoods
 - Creating customer partnership opportunities to improve neighbourhoods
 - Maximising engagement and creating opportunities with key stakeholders such as Walsall Council, West Midlands Fire Service, Health Service, schools and local businesses
 - Creating a strategic partnership with suppliers and contractors to create a sustainable approach to the seven year investment and procurement plan

Other Agencies' Responsibilities

- 2.8. Where neighbourhood issues are identified or reported on that are not the responsibility of whg, they will be noted and customers will be advised to report the issue directly to the relevant organisation; for example, to the Police, Environmental Health or the local authority highways agency.

Customer Insight

- 2.9. The content of this Policy was shaped by whg customer insight and involvement data where customer priorities and activities are incorporated. Data sources include:
- Neighbourhood satisfaction
 - HouseMark surveys
 - Complaints
 - Customer involvement (Spotlight scrutiny group)
 - Drop-in sessions at blocks / neighbourhoods
 - Councillor/MP enquiries
 - Customer inspections
 - Neighbourhood Impact Officer surveys
 - Contact centre Indices of Deprivation data

- Partnership working
- Social Media / Digital engagement

3.0 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Neighbourhood Inspections

- 3.1. whg's Neighbourhood Inspection schedule covers communal areas including our low and high rise blocks and Wellbeing Schemes. This is one of the ways we ensure that local neighbourhoods are being maintained and to identify issues that need to be addressed.
- 3.2. The frequency of the inspections is mainly determined by the property type and local factors such as ASB.
- 3.3. All neighbourhoods with communal areas or facilities will be inspected no less than twice a year. High rise blocks are visited daily Monday to Friday. Low rise blocks receive a minimum of one visit per month.
- 3.4. Neighbourhoods where whg owns no communal land or facilities will not have regular inspections but may still be inspected for management purposes.
- 3.5. Where a neighbourhood is assessed as unsatisfactory we will take a planned approach with specific actions for improvement.
- 3.6. We offer a wide range of performance measures including Customer Insight data to improve services. This includes neighbourhood satisfaction, customer inspections and social media / digital engagement.

4.0 TRAINING AND DISSEMINATION

- 4.1. This Policy will be published in compliance with the RSH Neighbourhood and Community Standard

5.0 MONITOR AND REVIEW

- 5.1 This Policy will be monitored by the Director of Housing and reviewed every three years by the Policy Group and approved by the Customer Experience Committee.

6.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 6.1
 - whg Asset Management Strategy
 - whg Great Homes and Neighbourhood Standard
 - whg Customer Voice Strategy

- whg Fire Risk Assessment Policy
- whg Communal Tree Policy
- whg Housing Strategy
- whg Safeguarding Policy

Document author	Steve McGregor
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Equality Assessment	22 April 2020
Key changes made	This is a new policy