

Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy

Stevenage Borough Council

2025 - 2027

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For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

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1. Purpose

1.1 Purpose of the Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy

To provide a clear understanding of the Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods process and to inform staff and residents about the Council's commitments for managing communal areas around all the homes we own and how we deliver services across our estates

To comply with legislation, statutory guidance, and the Council's Equalities Policy.

1.2 The aim of the Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy

The aim of this policy is to:

- To improve standards whilst delivering value for money in the upkeep of clean, green and safe estates,
- Have estates that the Council and our residents are proud of,
- Ensure we have clear standards, that residents know what to expect from the estate management service, including obligations for both the Council and residents,
- Ensure our services deliver value for money and we are clear on what we are charging for,
- Maintain a regular, visible presence on estates,
- Ensure we comply with all Health & Safety requirements,
- Encourage residents to take responsibility for their environment/estate

2. Scope

This document applies to all officers and teams in the Council involved in the management of communal areas and the provision of services on our estates.

This policy also guides tenants and leaseholders living in housing managed by the Council, external organisations and our partners of their responsibilities.

2.1 Role and Responsibilities

The Resident Services Manager has overall responsibility for ensuring that decisions are managed appropriately and in accordance with this policy.

The Senior Housing Officers have responsibility for the day-to-day management of decisions including ensuring implementation of this policy.

The Housing Officers are responsible for the operational aspects regarding the management of communal areas and providing services on our estates.

It is the responsibility of all officers and teams across the Council to ensure the policy is being implemented.

Contract management, for grounds maintenance, repairs and caretaking are managed and monitored by service heads for these areas

3. Legal Framework

3.1 Relevant Legislation

The following legislation relates to the Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy, and we are committed to applying the terms within this document.

- The Fire Safety (England) Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- The Building Regulations 2000 Approved Document B (Fire Safety)
- Housing Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Building Regulations 2010
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Fire Safety in Specialised Housing – National Fire Chiefs Council Guidance
- Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats – Local Government Association
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, specifically the Neighbourhood and Community Standard and the Home Standard.

4. Equalities

4.1 Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council has a legal duty to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Through this duty and in the application of this policy, the Council will conduct its functions in a way that:

- a. Removes discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010)
- b. Promotes equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who do not.

- c. Encourages good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who do not.
- d. Equality impact assessment (EqiA) in appendix 2.

Further information on the Council's fulfilment of the Equality Act (2010) is set out in the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy (2022) and Reasonable Adjustment Policy (2024).

5. Data Protection

5.1 The Council regards respect for the privacy of individuals and the lawful and careful treatment of personal information as important to delivery of services.

5.2 The Council will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and proportionately as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018). For further information on the Council's approach to handling information please see Data Protection Act <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-Council/access-to-information/data-protection-act>

6. Policy

Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy

6.1 Keeping Communal Areas in a Safe Condition

Stevenage Borough Council will comply with the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, as set by the Regulator of Social Housing, alongside all relevant legislation. As part of our commitment to keeping neighbourhoods and communal areas safe and clean, we aspire to deliver services to high standards and work in partnership with residents and partners to drive continuous improvements.

Stevenage Borough Council are committed to ensuring that all communal areas in our blocks of flats are well-kept, meet all regulatory requirements and are a safe place for residents, staff and contractors.

Stevenage Borough Council defines communal areas as parts of a block of flats, street, or estate that tenants and or other residents have a right to use in common with other tenants and or other residents and for which we, as the landlord and

freeholder, are responsible. For the purpose of this policy external and internal communal areas will be defined as, but not limited to, the following:

- Entrances and communal landings
- Shared stairways and areas underneath
- Communal lounges in independent living schemes
- Communal cupboards i.e. utility cupboards
- Internal and external drying areas
 - Communal gardens
 - Accessible loft-spaces in communal areas

These areas must not be used for the storage of possessions by residents at any time and we will take a zero-tolerance approach to ensuring communal areas are kept safe and clear. We will be proactive in ensuring communal areas are clear and will take action against residents where necessary. Actions could result enforcement action against a tenancy.

If items are found in communal areas, Stevenage Borough Council will try to identify the owner. If we are unable to identify the owner or the owner refuses to remove the items a tort notice will be served.

A tort notice is a legal document that informs the owner to remove the items within a specific timeframe. If the items are not removed after the notice period, Stevenage Borough Council can remove and dispose of them.

Stevenage Borough Council can recharge the cost of removal and disposal to the owner of the items, or if the owner is not identified, the cost may be shared among the residents of the block in accordance with our Recharge Policy.

Any items left in communal areas should be reported to the Council by emailing resident.services@stevenage.gov.uk. If items are persistently left in the communal areas by the same resident after warnings are given, we will take action for breach of tenancy/ lease agreements, or the resident could face an immediate fine for fly tipping.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/environment/street-care-and-cleaning/fly-tipping>

We will ensure that repairs and cyclical and planned maintenance are conducted in communal areas promptly and with minimal inconvenience to residents.

We will take action against individuals who risk the health and safety of themselves or other people in communal areas.

We expect residents to take responsibility for keeping communal areas clear.

Stevenage Borough Council are committed to ensuring the health and safety of everyone who lives in, works in or visits any of our properties. As a landlord, we have a responsibility to ensure that internal/enclosed communal areas are kept clear and accessible so that residents can exit the building quickly and safely in the event of an emergency, as well as allowing emergency services easy and uninhibited access if required. To achieve this, we require our residents to keep internal/enclosed communal areas clear and take a zero-tolerance approach when enforcing this.

Our Tenancy and Leasehold Agreements state that communal areas do not form part of an individual's tenancy and that communal areas may not be used for additional storage. There is an expectation that anyone living in our properties is required to keep communal areas clear. This includes roof spaces and lofts as highlighted in the tenancy agreement terms and conditions.

Fire Safety in Communal Areas

Management of communal areas will ensure that fire safety is never compromised. In enclosed communal areas, all escape routes must be kept completely clear. Stevenage Borough Council enforces a zero-tolerance approach to items left in communal areas based on specific criteria, though some areas may have managed exceptions.

Communal areas will be regularly inspected through safety hazard assessments to identify and remove items such as furniture, buggies, mobility scooters, plant pots, drying facilities, rubbish, bicycles, electric bikes or scooters, mopeds, etc. (this list is not exhaustive).

This zero-tolerance approach is to prevent fire hazards, allow us to carry out essential repairs and maintenance, and help to keep our residents' homes safe and enjoyable places to live.

Repairs and Maintenance of Communal Areas

Stevenage Borough Council will:

- Ensure stairways, lifts, landings, and corridors are safe and well maintained.
- Conduct regular inspections and repairs, including play areas. Repairs reporting through our website <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/Council-housing/repairs/report-a-repair>

The Council is responsible for repairing and maintaining external structures it owns. A comprehensive communal repair programme is in place to address compliance,

component replacement, and major external renewals, alongside day-to-day repairs to prevent stock deterioration.

Stevenage Borough Council will:

- Maintain communal entrance doors.
- Ensure external areas are safe and well maintained.
- Conduct water quality risk assessments for communal water systems.
- Maintain sprinkler system.
- Regularly update annual programmes to improve and enhance properties and estates.

To complement reactive maintenance, Stevenage Borough Council runs an ongoing major works improvement programme not all items listed below are applicable in all cases.

- Fire door replacements.
- Landlord electrical system upgrades.
- Door entry and CCTV system installations.
- Lift replacements.
- Structural improvements to internal and external communal areas.
- Replacement of communal water tanks.

We will continue to collaborate closely with tenants and leaseholders to ensure charges (where applicable) related to fire safety, compliance, communal areas, and environmental improvements are fair and transparent.

External Structures

Residents must obtain written permission from the Council before making any alterations to external structures. This includes, but is not limited to, the types of alterations listed below.

- The only exception to this requirement is where adaptations are explicitly required by the Council and are made to homes or external areas for older or disabled tenants.
- Greenhouses or sheds.
- Garages.

- Driveways or parking spaces.
- TV aerials or satellite dishes.

If unauthorised changes are made, the Council may:

- Investigate the matter.
- Conduct restoration works and charge the resident for the costs, including any damages caused.
- In serious cases, apply for a court order to terminate the tenancy.
- Seek a court order requiring the resident to restore the property to its original state in extreme cases.

6.2 Measuring the Quality of Service

Stevenage Borough Council will measure service performance in line with its performance management framework. We will proactively report resident satisfaction in areas such as repairs, caretaking, cleaning, and grounds maintenance to enable residents to hold us accountable.

6.3 Working as One Organisation

Stevenage Borough Council will work collaboratively across departments and with partners to protect residents, improve outcomes, especially for vulnerable people, maintain assets and enhance neighbourhoods and the borough overall.

Caretaking

Caretaking services are provided according to a pre-determined cleaning schedule, which is based on the frequency historically agreed upon and paid for by each block. For example, a block with a quarterly cleaning schedule will receive four visits per year.

Residents may report concerns if a block becomes unclean between scheduled visits. In such instances, a reactive cleaning service can be arranged; however, this is considered a chargeable service.

Recycling

Residents will be strongly encouraged to participate in recycling household waste. Recycling services operate alongside the Council's waste collection services.

All Stevenage residents can use local 'Reuse and Recycling Centres' to dispose of a wide range of reusable and recyclable items free of charge.

Waste Collection

Stevenage Borough Council provides a comprehensive waste and recycling service, including fortnightly refuse collection and fortnightly recycling collections.

Residents can also use the Council's Recycling Centre for disposal of various household waste items, as well as access bulky item collections and clinical waste collections.

The Council has scheduled a programme of improvements to bin stores and refuse and re-cycling facilities at Council owned flat blocks and will consult with tenants where practicable to ensure they are educated on their responsibilities concerning responsible waste disposal and recycling opportunities.

Key aspects of the waste collection service:

Refuse Collection: Non-recyclable waste is collected weekly from residents' black bins.

Recycling Collection: Recycling containers (red, blue, brown, and black) are collected fortnightly.

Bulk Waste Collection: Large household items can be collected for a fee.

Clinical Waste Collection: A free service for residents needing to dispose of clinical waste.

Commercial Waste: Commercial businesses can utilize the Council's trade waste services for regular and one-off collections.

Recycling Centre: The Recycling Centre on Caxton Way provides a location for residents to dispose of various household waste items.

Additional Bin Capacity: Residents can request additional recycling bins for increased recycling capacity.

Flat Block Collections: Refuse is collected weekly and recycling fortnightly in flat blocks, with collection schedules varying by block.

Bin Placement: Bins should be placed on the property boundary by 7 am on collection day, but not before 7 pm the night before and should be returned to within the property boundary once they have been emptied.

Residents are expected to:

- Dispose of all domestic rubbish in designated bins or containers.

- Use local recycling points and reuse and recycling centres where possible to reduce landfill.
- Arrange and pay for removal of personal bulky refuse that cannot be recycled.

The Council regularly inspects for fly-tipping and relies on residents to report offenders. Identified offenders may face financial penalties, prosecution or tenancy action.

Parking Enforcement

Parking is restricted in some areas to marked bays, vehicles with valid permits, and those with up-to-date road tax.

The Council, working in partnership with East Herts Council and Apcoa, is responsible for the enforcement of parking restrictions in the town.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/parking/parking-fines/parking-enforcement>

The Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) shows the details of the alleged contravention, the date and time when it occurred plus the location where it happened. If you feel it was wrongly issued or that there are special circumstances, you should challenge your PCN online, or using one of the other methods printed on the ticket.

This may result in the PCN being cancelled, or your challenge being turned down, in which case you will be informed about your rights to take the matter further through the formal appeal process.

You should make your challenge promptly, as this will still provide the opportunity for you to pay at the reduced rate if it is turned down.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/parking/parking-fines/challenge-a-pcn>

Our aims are:

- to benefit pedestrians, cyclists, and bus passengers as well as all other drivers by reducing the amount of illegal and inconsiderate parking in the town.
- to improve road safety through enforcement action against drivers of illegally and dangerously parked vehicles.
- to improve the street environment for those who visit, live or work in the town.
- to reduce congestion by controlling the parking of vehicles on street.
- to ensure better availability and turnover of disabled and short-term parking spaces in the town centre, allowing more people to park.

Abandoned Vehicles

Our Resident Services Team will investigate vehicles deemed dangerous, abandoned, or a nuisance, referring cases to parking contractors for removal where appropriate.

It is a criminal offence to abandon a motor vehicle on any land in the open air, or on any other land forming part of the highway.

It is also an offence to have a vehicle on the road without tax, or to have a vehicle on the road which has a Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN).

We can begin the abandoned vehicle investigation process if the vehicle is not taxed and one of the following apply:

- It has no current registered keeper.
- It has been stationary for a significant amount of time.
- There is severe damage, it is run down, unroadworthy or burned out.
- It is lacking one or more of its number plates or contains waste.

However, there are also a number of situations where we have no statutory powers to act or enforce.

A vehicle is not necessarily considered to be abandoned if it is:

- Nuisance parking outside your house or on your street.
- Illegally/dangerously/badly parked.
- Recently crashed or broken down.
- Obstructing vehicle access.
- Obstructing utilities.
- Untaxed but being used.
- Uninsured/has no MOT.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/environment/street-care-and-cleaning/abandoned-vehicles>

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Stevenage Borough Council takes a zero-tolerance stance on ASB, including noise, vandalism, graffiti, and harassment. We are committed to early intervention and a victim-focused approach. Residents are responsible for the conduct of household members, visitors, and pets.

In line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, we expect residents using communal areas to:

- Show consideration for their neighbours and keep noise disturbance to a minimum, particularly at unsocial hours.
- Use of barbeques and building of campfires are not permitted in communal areas.
- Smoking and/or vaping is not allowed within any internal communal areas or within 10 metres of any doors or windows.
- Residents cannot store or charge any electrical appliance or vehicle (including mobility scooters and e-scooters) within communal areas or within four metres of the building.

As a landlord, we will tackle unacceptable behaviour in communal areas by acting against any breaches of tenancy or leases. In more severe cases, we may inform the emergency services.

Enforcement actions will be taken in line with the Council's ASB Policy and tenancy or leasehold agreements.

We have a designated Anti-Social Behaviour Team that leads on these cases.

The Council also works with partners, including Police and Fire Services, through the Safer Stevenage Partnership to address ASB impacts.

Trees and Gardens

Residents are responsible for maintaining gardens associated with their homes, including grass and hedges, ensuring no nuisance is caused.

Tenancy and lease agreements set out responsibilities for trees. Residents must seek written permission before altering, removing, or planting trees.

Shared garden trees causing damage will be inspected and managed by the Council.

Support services are available for vulnerable tenants under the Vulnerability Policy.

Grass cutting in the communal areas of flat blocks are carried on a four-weekly cycle, as part of a scheduled rotation across the town. During periods of extreme heat or drought, grass cutting may be temporarily suspended due to burn-off, as cutting under such conditions can damage the grass and is not effective.

Pruning of shrubs and other communal planting is undertaken twice annually. This completed once in the summer and once in the winter they are subject to suitable weather conditions.

6.4 Provision of Services on Estates

To protect residents effectively, Stevenage Borough Council coordinates services through dedicated teams and offers the following on estates:

Service Standards & Schedules

Our service standards outline the expected level and quality of service that residents can anticipate from Stevenage Borough Council. They establish clear measurable criteria for the delivery of services such as caretaking, grounds maintenance, repairs and waste and recycling this includes response times, frequency and scope of work.

These standards ensure consistency, accountability, transparency and help to maintain safe, clean and well-managed communal environments. Additionally, they serve as benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating performance, supporting continuous improvement and ensuring that residents receive reliable and responsive services.

Please see below links for schedules and service standards.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/Council-housing/flat-blocks/caretaking-services>

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/housing-policies-and-strategies/tenants-responsive-repairs-and-maintenance-policy>

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/your-bin-collections>

Recycling on Estates

Large communal recycling bins are provided in bin chambers. Residents should:

- Check bins and remove non-recyclable items.
- Place recyclable items (paper, glass, plastics) directly into bins without bags or sacks.
- Avoid leaving items around bins.

In line with our Recharge Policy, a charge may be issued for any item removed from a communal area where the owner can be identified. Stevenage Borough Council cannot be held responsible for the damage, loss or theft of items left in communal areas.

Parking on Estates

Residents on estates with Traffic Management Orders (TMOs) must meet permit criteria to obtain parking permits.

All vehicles parked on Stevenage Borough Council managed land must have valid road tax. Vehicles with a Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN) must not be parked in public or communal areas unless prior written permission has been granted by Stevenage Borough Council.

Parking controls ensure:

- Fair access for residents and visitors with permits.
- Prevention of misuse by non-residents or businesses.
- Clear access to service roads, garages, rubbish chutes, and chambers.
- Removal of vehicles that are unused, nuisances, abandoned, or pose public danger.

Permit refusals may occur if the Council has taken legal action against a resident for nuisance or if rent/service charge arrears exist and financial assistance is required (Appendices 1).

Caretaking on Estates

Our Caretaking Team and Building Safety Team perform vital estate services including physical checks, minor repairs, daily cleaning, and reporting.

To ensure that communal areas can be used safely by anyone accessing them, we will ensure that regular repairs and maintenance are carried out as required. This includes a scheduled cleaning service.

The majority of our communal areas are cleaned on a periodic basis. In the case of window cleaning, the Council are only responsible for windows in communal areas.

Grounds Maintenance

Our Street Grounds Team are responsible for maintaining communal open spaces including grass, hedges, flower beds, and naturalised areas. They collaborate with residents and stakeholders to increase biodiversity.

Their service is monitored through service level agreements by our Resident Services Team.

Trees

Trees are regularly inspected for health and safety risks by our Arboriculture and Conservation Team. Those causing damage outside scheduled inspections will be assessed and managed appropriately.

Estate Safety

Lighting, fences, and additional measures enhance security, including:

- Safer road layouts and traffic management on estates.
- Community Liaison Officer services supporting nuisance, ASB, vandalism, and crime reporting.
- CCTV monitoring to deter ASB and manage high risk buildings. This may be mobile or permanent. We will ensure that impact assessments are completed but reserve the rights to enact CCTV wherever it is deemed necessary to ensure the safety of residents.
- Enhanced tenancy management on some blocks (including high rise blocks) that require it.
- Secure doors and windows to improve home security.

6.5 Resident Participation

Stevenage Borough Council places residents at the heart of neighbourhood management and policymaking through active involvement and consultation.

We have consulted residents in developing this policy and will continue to:

- Communicate inclusively and transparently.
- Engage residents and community organisations by listening and responding to their views.
- Ensure services meet the diverse needs of all residents.
- Provide accessible information via newsletters, emails, websites, and estate noticeboards.

The Council will work in partnership with residents, stakeholders, and external organisations to:

- Manage neighbourhoods effectively.
- Deliver environmental improvements that deter crime and ASB.
- Enhance communal and green spaces for wellbeing and biodiversity this is subject to funding.
- Develop Estate Action Plans (EAPs) collaboratively, using available funds.

Organised Estate Inspections

Regular estate 'walkabouts' will be conducted with Councillors, resident groups, and relevant staff to identify and address issues, complementing routine estate inspections.

Walkabouts provide a platform to raise concerns affecting groups of residents for coordinated resolution and will be scheduled and advertised to local residents to increase participation.

We will share feedback on actions progressed from estate walkabouts with local residents to show actions have been completed and to demonstrate the Council's commitments to improving neighbourhoods.

6.6 Collaborating with External Stakeholders

Stevenage Borough Council works closely with other housing providers in the town to share good practices and coordinate services. The Council has agreements in place with other key social housing providers in Stevenage.

The Council focuses on improving neighbourhoods, community safety, and residents' health and wellbeing. It supports projects that help vulnerable people and make the community safer.

Stevenage Borough Council also collaborates with partners like police, health services, and community organisations to provide strategic support for residents while advancing the shared vision and strategic priorities of the borough.

6.7 Contact

All officers from Stevenage Borough Council will report repairs that they identify in communal areas. Tenants and Leaseholders are also responsible for reporting communal area repairs via our website or by calling 01438 242666 and in case of an emergency 01438 314963. These repairs will then be carried out within the timescales set out in our Responsive [Repairs and Maintenance Policy](#).

7. Consultation

This policy has been developed in consultation with key staff within the Council. Government has directed the legal perspective of the policy, but key related stakeholders have also influenced how the Council intends to implement and manage the policy.

The Policy will also be consulted on with residents prior to being adopted.

8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed by the relevant Business Unit's Head of Service or Service Manager every 2 years (see page 1 for details of Business Unit) or earlier if there is a change in legislation. Where more than 10% of the policy content is changed the Assistant Director and appropriate Portfolio Holder will be required to decide if the policy needs to be formally reconsidered by the Cabinet or appropriate decision-making body.
- 8.2 Where there is a request for the content of the policy to be reviewed in response to a complaint, the relevant Business Unit's Assistant Director will be notified. If the Assistant Director agrees that a review of policy is required, this will be discussed with the appropriate Portfolio Holder. The Head of Service or Service Manager will be responsible for implementing a subsequent policy review.

9. References and Resources

- Allocations Scheme
- Tenancy Agreement
- Leaseholder Leases
- Housing Asset Management Strategy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Housing Income Policy
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan
- Recharge Policy

10. Abbreviations and Definitions

EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SBC	Stevenage Brough Council

11. Appendices

None.

12. Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
June 2025	Transferred onto new template	Ryan Jefferies - Senior Housing Officer
June 2025	Resident Services Manager	Amanda Rogers
June 2025	Head of Housing Operations	Simon Kiff
September 2025	Made relevant changes following policy being reviewed.	Ryan Jefferies – Senior Housing Officer
October 2025	Made relevant changes and checked for accuracy	Kerry Clifford, AD Housing & Neighbourhoods