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## **Environmental Maintenance and Management Policy**

**SER-POL-37**

**Version 1.0**

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**Date approved: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

**Approved by: People and Places Committee**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Southway Housing Trust (Southway) is located in part of Manchester with the highest levels of open space and tree cover in the City<sup>1</sup>. As a major stakeholder and landowner in the area, we recognise our role in maintaining a safe, clean and well managed public realm green space environment and the role that open spaces play in the zero-carbon agenda This Policy sets out how Southway intends to fulfil this role.
- 1.2 The Policy principally concerns Southway's public realm green spaces, but it also addresses issues regarding tenants' homes and garden spaces and managing issues that may limit enjoyment of open spaces.
- 1.3 Southway's Inspired By Communities consultation identified that for 75% of tenants green spaces had become more important to them during 2021 and a third would use them more if offered events, projects and activities.

## **2. Public Realm Green Spaces**

- 2.1 Southway's objectives for open spaces are described in pages 4-6 of the Green Space Strategy, in summary these are to;
- Provide public realm green spaces that are welcoming and safe
  - Use green spaces to engage with local residents and encourage community cohesion.
  - Ensure that public green spaces are well maintained, and that inappropriate behaviour is tackled
  - Manage green spaces in ways that are sustainable and promote conservation and biodiversity, and
  - Work with partners and stakeholders to maximise outcomes
- 2.2 Maintenance of Green spaces is normally carried out under a grounds maintenance contract. The Environment and Sustainability Manager has a monthly meeting with Greenfingers' Contract Manager to oversee operational matters and there is a quarterly review meeting with Greenfingers' Director of Operations to monitor contract performance.

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<sup>1</sup> Figs 3&4 Manchester's Great Outdoors, Manchester City Council, 2015

- 2.3 There are 157 public open spaces managed by Southway, each space has a plan identifying its features and dimensions and there is a corresponding maintenance specification for each. For example, grass is normally cut once a fortnight during the period 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> October although some areas containing wildflowers or bulbs will be left uncut to allow for flowering and/or setting seed. The site is litter picked during each visit.
- 2.4 Public open space sites are regularly inspected by Urban Rangers and volunteer Green Inspectors. The Rangers also deal with damage to open spaces, safety issues and fly-tipping. The environment team maintain operational procedures for site inspections and the Fly tipping procedure was updated in 2021.
- 2.5 The Environment Team and local resident groups arrange a programme of community activities to encourage use and enjoyment of public open spaces and foster interest in and concern for the local environment.
- 2.6 The Environment Team will work with other teams providing advice on open spaces not managed by them, including new development sites.

### **3. Trees**

- 3.1 Southway will conduct a regular tree survey and maintain a database of the tree stock for which it is responsible. We will ensure that maintenance is prioritised in accordance with the recommendations of the tree survey.
- 3.2 The felling of trees will only be undertaken where a tree is clearly diseased or unstable, where there is evidence of it causing damage to property, or where future problems can be avoided by early intervention (e.g. removal of self-sown trees that will out-grow their location)

Where a tree is felled, consideration will be given to replacement planting on the site or on a suitable location nearby.

- 3.3 Work will not normally be undertaken to trees where they are claimed to be blocking light, dropping leaves, affecting television or telephone reception.

### **4. Invasive Species**

- 4.1 Southway is aware of problems associated with the spread of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed in parts of South Manchester, and this

plant has been found in the gardens of some of our properties and our open spaces.

- 4.2 When Japanese Knotweed-is identified on land for which Southway is responsible, we will take responsibility for eradication on our land though annual treatment by a specialist contractor. This includes the gardens of tenanted properties. A record of treatment will be maintained by the Environmental & Sustainability Manager.

## **5. Tenants' garden space**

- 5.1 Southway is committed to increasing tenants' enjoyment of their garden spaces and will encourage and support tenants to utilise and care for their gardens.

- 5.2 This work will include:

- Partnership working with, resident groups, Groundwork, the Wildlife Trust, Manchester City Council and others
- Offering training and support to tenants that would benefit from help, this will include advice and, if possible, access to tools
- Offering a concessionary gardening service to tenants that need support; a separate policy sets out the criteria for this service
- Maintaining a workable approach to enforcement where gardens are kept in a poor state, causing a nuisance to neighbours or obstructing pavements
- Developing and implementing a void garden process
- Developing guidance notes for staff and tenants on issues such as Japanese Knotweed identification, promoting garden biodiversity, and how to obtain advice and support where tenants may struggle to maintain their garden.

## **6. Boundary Vegetation**

- 6.1 Much of Southway's housing stock has front, rear and/or side boundaries which comprise privet hedges rather than fences. It is recognised that these hedged boundaries add to the green character of South Manchester.
- 6.2 Southway will maintain hedged boundaries wherever possible and seek to avoid hedge work during the nesting season.

- 6.3 Where hedged boundaries are shared Southway will liaise with neighbours before undertaking work to those hedges

## **7. Management of issues affecting open spaces and tenant enjoyment of the local environment**

- 7.1 Southway's tenants and the wider community should not have to endure the effects of Environmental Anti-Social Behaviour.

- 7.2 This section of the policy covers the following areas:

### **l) Inconsiderate Parking**

Parking is a problematic issue for some residents in South Manchester. Southway has made a significant financial investment in providing parking amenities for residents, but despite this some residents still encounter parking problems.

Southway's approach is that parking issues are usually best resolved through residents speaking to each other, directly or through mediation. Where these approaches fail, there may be cause for enforcement action by Southway or its partners.

#### Tenant Responsibilities

Southway's Tenancy Agreements contain clauses concerning vehicles and parking. The majority of these clauses relate to parking on areas owned by Southway. These clauses include;

- If a vehicle is parked on a drive or garden it must be parked on a hardstanding (a driveway or paved area designated for parking).
- A tenant is not allowed to drive or park over or on kerbs which have not been lowered.
- A tenant is not allowed to drive over or park on any grassed areas.

#### **Parking or driving on public realm green spaces owned by Southway**

Southway's green spaces are well maintained and are inspected by Southway's Environment Team.

To prevent the improper use of vehicles on or damage to these green spaces, Southway will first give warnings and then if necessary take enforcement action, through the procedures supporting this policy.

## **II) Dog Fouling**

People enjoy keeping dogs and the majority of owners are responsible.

Southway's Tenancy Agreements place obligations on tenants, along with members of their household and visitors, to keep and exercise dogs appropriately and not cause nuisance to others. When exercising their animal on open green spaces owned by Southway, if their animal does foul in this area the Southway expects dog owners to clean up waste immediately and hygienically. Tenants failing to uphold these conditions of tenancy will face warnings and enforcement sanctions.

## **III) Fly Tipping**

The Environment Team respond to fly tipping incidents in line with a Fly tipping process updated in 2021.

## **IV) Garden Condition**

Southway's Tenancy Agreements state that the tenant must keep their garden areas neat and tidy and free from rubbish, lawns must be cut and hedges trimmed. The responsibility for garden maintenance is clearly explained to every new tenant at the commencement of their tenancy.

This part of the policy will be used to consider any Environmental Anti-Social Behaviour being caused from within a tenant's garden. this may include:

- (a) Unkempt and overgrown vegetation to the extent that it causes a nuisance to others or obstructs pavements or footways
- (b) Not cleaning up after pets.

The Trust recognises that a large garden requires considerable time and effort to maintain, and will always be reasonable in its requests to residents. The Trust will actively consider what support it can offer to a resident before taking enforcement action.

## **8. Monitoring and Evaluation**

8.1 Southway will ensure consistency in contractor performance through regular meetings to ensure contract standards are maintained. It is recognised that both parties will have common objectives to:

- Ensure a pleasant and safe environment for the users and visitors to our green spaces and gardens

- Ensure that the environment is safe and contributes to a sustainable community
  - Achieve value for money whilst delivering works to the required standard
- 8.2 We will record customer satisfaction with its performance on the maintenance and upkeep of green space, and report this detail to the Executive Management Team through KPI production.
- 8.3 We will report performance regularly to tenant and resident groups.

## **9. Staff Training and Procedures**

- 9.1 Urban Rangers will maintain appropriate training for highway, playground and outdoor exercise area inspections and maintain accurate records of all inspections.
- 9.2 Southway will have sufficient staff in place to be able to respond effectively to reports of Environmental Anti-Social Behaviour. We will have a clear structure identifying the staff members who have responsibilities for responding to reports of Anti-Social Behaviour and for management of the service.
- 9.3 The Trust will ensure that all relevant staff members receive induction and refresher training on how to respond to incidents of Environmental Anti-Social Behaviour. On-going training will also be in place, to ensure employees have knowledge of any changes in law and best practice.

## **10. Equality and Diversity**

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the, parent, Green Spaces Strategy in 2021 to ensure that all appropriate actions are put in place to support those tenants who have protected characteristics. An EIA Action Plan has been developed and will be monitored.

## **11. Related Policy Documents**

- Tenancy Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

- Single Equalities Scheme
- Green Spaces Strategy
- Fly tipping process
- Site inspection procedure

## 12. Policy Review

12.1 The policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if a change in legislation means this is required.

<b>POLICY REVIEW HISTORY</b>	
<i>To be completed during each review</i>	
<b>Previous versions</b> Green Spaces Maintenance Policy v2 – November 2019 Environmental Enforcement Policy v1 – December 2016	
<b>Date of last EIA:</b>	July 2021- Green Spaces Strategy
<b>Review lead by:</b>	Peter Jordan
<b>Main points or amendments made and reasons</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Merger of Environmental Maintenance and Enforcement policies for simplification and to avoid repetition of material covered in the Green Space Strategy July 2021.</li> <li>2. Text updated in line with changes in practice and advice and to provide consistency between the two former policies.</li> </ol>	
<b>Next review due:</b>	<b>Q2 2024/25</b>
<b>Approval level:</b>	<b>People and Places Committee</b>