



Report to Customer and Communities Committee

8 May 2014

Title: Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement 2014/15

Report of: Director of Customers and Communities

Purpose of Report

1. To approve the revised service agreement between the housing company and the Council for the delivery of grounds maintenance services.

Background

2. The Committee received a report on 9 May 2013 detailing the Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement for the period 2013/14. The Service Agreement is reviewed and updated annually.
3. The provision of the grounds maintenance service does not form part of the Management Agreement between the Council and the Company however the development and subsequent review of the service agreement has continued, to ensure we enhance our role in influencing, specifying and monitoring the quality of grounds maintenance services provided by Local Environmental Service (LES)
4. The existence of the service agreement supports delivery of the customer priority of having a clean and well-maintained environment outside the home.
5. A copy of the updated service agreement 2014/15 is attached at Appendix 1 with the changes to areas of service delivery highlighted.
6. This report supports the objective to deliver efficient, high quality estate services to ensure safe and well maintained neighbourhoods working with partners and customers in line with Gateshead Councils vision 2030.

Consultation Carried Out

7. The Council carried out budget consultation for 2014/15 which included meetings and questionnaires. The results of the consultation were analysed and considered by the Councils cabinet on 27 February 2014 with the overall spending plans approved 28 February 2014.
8. The revised Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement has also been informed by the involvement and consultation with Customers through the quarterly performance meetings between TGHC, LES and customers.

9. A ward members briefing was circulated on 11 April 2014 to advise on the changes to LES services and is attached at appendix 2.

Customer Involvement in Monitoring Performance

10. Having estates that are clean and well maintained continues to be a priority for our customers. Ensuring we involve customers in developing and improving the way services are delivered enables us to demonstrate that we are focussed on their priorities and are accountable and meaningfully involving customers.
11. To ensure we are meeting with these requirements and that customers are fully engaged with the delivery of grounds maintenance services, we involve customers at local quarterly performance meetings held with LES. This has been a successful approach across neighbourhoods and is now generally well embedded with customers directly influencing service delivery in their area.

Summary Update

12. The updated service agreement incorporates the amendments, updates, and performance management framework, and contains a review timetable to ensure the agreement is updated annually with customer involvement.
13. Positively LES will continue to deliver the same level of service as agreed in the 2013/14 service level agreement, with charges for pest control also remaining the same. The key updates and amendments in this years' service agreement are:
 - New budget information 2014/15
 - Maintenance of rose beds has been removed
 - Charges will be levied for the repair of damaged grass verges
 - Criteria for the removal of trees has been added
 - TGHC Fixed play equipment review and replacement programme
14. Play areas are inspected to ensure they remain fit for purpose. As part of the service agreement review the estimated replacement dates for fixed play areas continue to be monitored. The inspections are aligned with capital budgets to ensure play areas are replaced when required. .
15. A performance management framework involving customers is in place to monitor the service provided and support the delivery of the service agreement.
16. An updated version of the Service Agreement, highlighting the changes this year will be published to our customers on TGHC`s website and the service standards will be published through TGHC`s newspaper

Link to values

16. This report relates to the following company values:
 - Being a listening and learning organisation
 - Being honest, accountable and transparent
 - Being customer focussed, innovative and professional

Impact for customers

17. Expected outcomes from the development and delivery of the grounds maintenance service agreement is as follows:
- Contributing to sustaining tenant satisfaction with the neighbourhood, and the appearance of estates and how they are maintained
 - Providing clear and concise service standards that both customers and employees fully understand
 - Ensuring the delivery of consistent grounds maintenance standards
 - Ensuring effective performance monitoring that includes customers through a performance management framework
 - Promoting partnership working and providing clear roles and responsibilities for each party
 - The service agreement review timetable allows the partnership to develop the service with customer involvement.
18. The table below shows results of customer's feedback from surveys undertaken, highlighting levels of satisfaction with their neighbourhood and the appearance of the estate and how it is maintained. Since 2011 the measure of satisfaction now being asked as part of an annual themed survey specifically focused on estate management and sent to a sample of 5,000 customers.

<u>TGHC Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
<u>% satisfied with the appearance of their estate and how it is maintained</u>	<u>71.76%</u> <u>549 Respondents</u>	<u>64.7%</u> <u>645 Respondents</u>	<u>60.6%</u> <u>308 Respondents</u>
<u>% overall satisfied with their neighbourhood</u>	<u>81.06%</u>	<u>79.1%</u>	<u>74.2%</u>

19. Each tenant who expressed dissatisfaction as part of the 2013 survey has been contacted in order to address the issue raised. The outcomes from these follow up contacts are captured as part of the monitoring meetings with LES and form part of the service agreement monitoring meetings in each neighbourhood.
20. As can be seen from the headline results, the level of satisfaction continues to fall year on year as does the number of respondents. The results of the survey have been evaluated and whilst there was no specific area or estate that was highlighted, customers felt overall that the cleanliness of estates has reduced.
21. The top three priorities that customers felt would improve their estates are
- Street Cleaning
 - Grass cutting
 - Removal of dog fouling

22. We have continued throughout the year to work with customers to develop schemes to improve the safety and sustainability of the estates in which they live. A range of work has been undertaken and the outcomes are detailed in Appendix 3 for each neighbourhood.

Risk Management Implications

23. Failure to respond to customer's priority of providing a clean and well maintained environment outside the home would impact on customer satisfaction. The delivery of the service agreement is supported by a performance management framework to minimise the risk of poor performance.
24. Managing customer expectations alongside the performance management framework will be necessary during 2014/15 to minimise this potential impact.

Financial Implications

25. The Grounds Maintenance contract is funded by the Council's Housing Revenue Account and LES has confirmed the budget for 2014/15 of £1,480,000, which remains the same as for 2013/14. In addition the inspection of play areas and minor maintenance associated with play items are included in this budget.
26. This also includes for 2014/15 a budget of £277,750 to enable LES to deliver tree maintenance on land managed by the company as well as any exceptional items of responsive maintenance identified by the partnership.
27. As part of this approach each Neighbourhood Services Manager has a local budget to tackle any exceptional items of responsive grounds maintenance required in their area. LES and the company jointly monitor this budget and performance as part of the quarterly review meetings held in each neighbourhood.
28. The charges for pest control services remain the same as for 2013/14.

Equality and Diversity Implications

29. As part of the review of grounds maintenance services we have considered the accessibility of the service to our customers, to ensure there are no adverse impacts to any particular customer groups. This also involves ensuring that we include, consult, and encourage participation and involvement from all residents through a range of methods suitable to them.

Value for Money Implications

30. The development of the service agreement is a direct response to our customer priority of having a clean and well-maintained environment outside the home. In reviewing the service agreement the company takes an active role in the influencing the specification and monitoring the quality of grounds maintenance on estates

Health Implications

31. There are no direct health implications arising from this report although the successful delivery of grounds maintenance services would have a positive impact on the health and well being of customers.

Environmental Implications

32. The delivery of the grounds maintenance service agreement in partnership with LES and customers will positively contribute to the external environment on and around our estates.

Recommendations

33. The Committee is asked to:-
- approve the Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement for 2014/15;
 - receive a report in September 2014 on estate management activity under taken in 2013/14.



APPENDIX 1

Service Agreement

Between

The Gateshead Housing Company

And

**Gateshead Council
Local Environmental Services**

For the: Supply of grounds maintenance to estates and areas around housing stock managed by The Gateshead Housing Company



SPECIFICATION FOR THE GATESHEAD HOUSING COMPANY – GROUNDS MAINTENANCE (APRIL 2014)

CONTENTS:

SECTION 1	CONTEXT
SECTION 2	SERVICE SUMMARIES AND RESPONSIBILITY
SECTION 3	FORM OF AGREEMENT
SECTION 4	GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE STANDARDS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1	Pest Control
Appendix 2	Meeting Schedule
Appendix 3	Quarterly Monitoring Report Template
Appendix 4	Neighbourhood Services – Frequency Changes for 2014/15
Appendix 5	Three Weekly Zones – Timetable April to October 2014
Appendix 6	Sheltered Schemes
Appendix 7	Fixed Play on TGHC land
Appendix 8	Fixed Play adjacent to TGHC land
Appendix 9	Fixed Play rolling programme

OTHER INITIATIVES:

Customer Involvement in Monitoring Grounds Maintenance standards

Making sure that estates are clean and well maintained is a priority for customers. Our partnership approach to managing estates is having a positive impact. During 2013/14 customers have continued to be involved in the performance management framework as well as estate grading. This has further enhanced the service ensuring improvements are driven by customers. Our focus is on accountability and meaningful customer involvement which enables customers to monitor and influence the services they receive.

Briefing employees on standards

TGHC and LES employees are briefed on standards, in particular highlighting the changes within this year’s agreement and the structured relationship between TGHC and LES.

Pest Control Service Agreement

The pest control service agreement and schedule of rates is attached in Appendix 1 Quarterly performance reports on pest control service standards will be produced by LES and shared with TGHC.

SECTION 1

CONTEXT

The Gateshead Housing Company is committed to ensuring that our customers are in receipt of a service that meets their aspirations with regards to grounds maintenance.

The contents of this Service Agreement are based on feed back from customers, best practice and The Gateshead Housing Company frontline employees following consultation on grounds maintenance service delivery and the current maintenance specification.

This specification is generic to all estates and areas surrounding housing stock managed by The Gateshead Housing Company. Although the details are designed to be specific they are probably not comprehensive and it is inevitable that they will not cover every aspect of the service. Within the spirit of the Service Agreement there is an implied understanding that any anomalies will be resolved by negotiation between both parties.

The specification will give an indication of what level of service is expected rather than the technical detail on how to carry out the work.

Variations from this agreement should not be undertaken without the prior approval of both parties and any cost implications arising have been resolved.

Background papers and activity used in the preparation of this Service Agreement:

- Consultation with tenants and the involvement of TGHC's Tenancy and Estate Management Service Improvement Group
- TGHC Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Annual Survey results
- Areas identified for improvement following the delivery of the 2013/14 service agreement and specification
- The Audit Commission Inspection report 2009
- Delivering the service within the remit of relevant LES Best Value indicators
- Audit Commission Estate Management key line of enquiries (KLOEs)
- Researching best practice and benchmarking carried out with regards to grounds maintenance
- Learning from the assessment work undertaken in neighbourhood south in achieving the Exemplar level Cleaner, Safer, Greener for Keep Britain Tidy quality

mark

- Tenant Services Authority (TSA) Service Standards/Local Offer

1. Aim and objectives

- 1.1. The aim of the agreement is to improve the quality of life of The Gateshead Housing Company customers through the delivery of high quality, cost effective environmental services that are responsive and flexible to the customers needs. The Company believes that a clean and well-maintained environment has a crucial role in creating vibrant communities. Most importantly The Gateshead Housing Company is committed to ensure customers' priority of a clean and well-maintained environment outside their home and estates is delivered to a high standard.
- 1.2. Customers will play an integral role in monitoring performance. Customer's views will continuously feed into the service agreement reviews and improvement plans.

Objectives of the service agreement

- 1.3. To ensure that residents and The Gateshead Housing Company receive quality, cost effective and timely services based on co-operation between the parties, whilst adopting a proactive and innovative approach to service provision.
- 1.4. To ensure that environmental services are designed and delivered whilst taking into account customers views through; customer involvement in setting standards and monitoring the delivery of services.
- 1.5. To ensure that the services provided by Local Environmental Services are reviewed on a six monthly basis and key issues highlighted in these reviews are fed into the service improvement plans.
- 1.6. To ensure the Gateshead Housing Company and Local Environmental Services work together to ensure improvement in management and delivery of environmental services.
- 1.7. To provide training to The Gateshead Housing Company, Board members and Local Environmental services employees as required.
- 1.8. To ensure that changes in legislation and regulation are monitored and the implications of the changes are taken into account.
- 1.9. To ensure that best practice is monitored and considered in the delivery of innovative environmental services.
- 1.10. To ensure that local variations in environmental standards are reflected in the

delivery of environmental services

- 1.11. The objectives are designed to reflect the three core aims of the partnership between The Gateshead Housing Company and Local Environmental services which are:
- Being customer focused. Innovative and professional - involving customers in what we do.
 - Locally sensitive
 - Achieve performance excellence
- 1.12 To ensure that customers are involved in the local quarterly performance management meetings to: monitor, scrutinise and influence service delivery

2. Underlying Principles

As part of the Service Agreement, Local Environmental Services will:

- 2.1. Continuously review the management of operations to demonstrate value for money and administrative processes across Local Environmental Services to improve service effectiveness.
- 2.2. Continue to improve strategic environmental service planning.
- 2.3. Promote better environmental risk management through improved information systems, more flexible procedural rules and the provision of high quality environmental services advice across the whole range of Council activity.
- 2.4. Continue to identify opportunities to improve Local Environmental Services by adopting best practice and sustaining improvements where we have made a difference.
- 2.5. Promote opportunities for customer involvement. This is to ensure that customers are a driving force at the heart of decision-making.

3. Service Provision Statement

Services provided under the terms of this Service Agreement will fall into one of the two categories.

- 3.1. Specified services, which will be provided at the level, set down within the Service Agreement.
- 3.2. Discretionary services, where The Gateshead Housing Company has discretion to negotiate over the level of service provision. The subsequent charge for that service is to be agreed between the two parties.

4. Communication

- 4.1. It is the responsibility of Local Environmental Services and The Gateshead Housing Company to communicate relevant information affecting the service provided to The Gateshead Housing Company.
- 4.2. Both parties will ensure that relevant information is passed on as required and is understood by both parties.
- 4.3. To communicate any identified trends in workload, or any intended changes in internal policy or procedures, that may affect the agreed services provided by either party.
- 4.4. To jointly take part in negotiations/decisions relating to non-routine issues, transactions or developments.
- 4.5. To advise each other of any developments in legislation, any changes which may impact upon the environmental services resulting from Members' decisions, or any other issues arising, which may affect both Local Environmental Services and The Gateshead Housing Company.
- 4.6. Enquiries: Local Environmental Services employees will be available to receive enquiries from The Gateshead Housing Company Monday to Friday between 8.45am and 4.45pm (excluding Bank Holidays) via the e-mail system or by telephone. If the enquiry cannot be dealt with immediately, then a return communication will be made within five working days of receipt to the client to provide either:
 - a) A full response
 - b) Notification of what is being done to provide the required information and indicating when a full response will be given.

SECTION 2

SERVICE SUMMARY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Purpose of the Statement

- 1.1. The purpose of this statement is to clarify the division of responsibilities between the services provided within Local Environment Services and those provided within The Gateshead Housing Company.

2. Responsibilities of Local Environmental services

The responsibilities of Local Environmental services will include;

- 2.1. To work jointly with The Gateshead Housing Company and provide advice on environmental services.
- 2.2. To exercise overall control of the Borough Council's environmental resources by setting standards, procedures, policies and guidelines as a framework within Local Environmental services. All relevant Information and advice will be provided to The Gateshead Housing Company and key partners.
- 2.3. To make available or provide training for, staff/ customers and Board members of The Gateshead Housing Company either as requested by The Gateshead Housing Company or initiated by Local Environmental services.
- 2.4. To update and improve Local Environmental Services processes and where necessary inform The Gateshead Housing Company employees.
- 2.5. To provide clear and specific instructions to The Gateshead Housing Company with regard to specified services.
- 2.6. To identify and explain to The Gateshead Housing Company potential discretionary services outlining available capacity, and agree the use of such services.
- 2.7. To advise The Gateshead Housing Company in a timely manner on any changes to instructions or guidance issued about specified services, which have arisen through changes either in legislation or in Council policy.
- 2.8. To notify The Gateshead Housing Company of any failures to comply with timescales and service standards associated with specified services, indicating what action is to be taken as a result, and advice on establishing systems to correct errors and ensure timetables and standards are achieved in future.
- 2.9. To provide advice and assistance on service delivery or any environmental issues to The Gateshead Housing Company in writing, by telephone or by attending meetings as required.

- 2.10. To provide accurate and appropriate advice regarding all environmental service matters relevant to a The Gateshead Housing Company.
- 2.11. To promptly notify The Gateshead Housing Company of all environmental service developments, which may impact upon policies or procedures / or may give rise to adverse publicity about the housing services.
- 2.12. Employees from Local Environmental Services will provide services and must have the experience to deal with the specific subject areas to a high level of expertise. In addition to the utilisation of existing staff, Local Environmental Services may employ consultants, professional advisors and other persons whose expertise may be considered appropriate with prior consent of The Gateshead Housing Company.
- 2.13. The Local Environmental Services will ensure that all their employees and other persons assigned or recruited to work upon any matters on behalf of The Gateshead Housing Company hold all relevant qualifications and have the necessary expertise. All operations shall be carried out in accordance with the Service Agreement to a high standard that meet both the expectations of Customers and The Gateshead Housing Company.
- 2.14. Local Environmental Services will also ensure that all the employees and other persons' for whom it is responsible, exercise the necessary duty of care, and skills required.
- 2.15. Where from time to time, Local Environmental Services identifies that it may have difficulties in dealing with the anticipated work load in a timely and effective manner, whether due to staff shortage, unexpected increases in workload, inclement weather or otherwise, The Gateshead Housing Company will be notified as soon as possible in order to agree on how the problem will be resolved. Ultimately Local Environmental Services will ensure that resources are in place to deliver the service in line with the standards as stipulated in the Service Agreement
- 2.16. Any additional costs and reasons necessitating the additional resources will form discussions at the following review meeting. Decisions regarding additional cost will be agreed through the nominated officers of this agreement.

3. Responsibilities of The Gateshead Housing Company

- 3.1. The Gateshead Housing Company will ensure joint working arrangements are in place with Local Environmental Services.
- 3.2. The Gateshead Housing Company will ensure customers are involved in the local joint quarterly performance meetings, and ensure feedback on performance is provided to customers.

- 3.3. Will meet the service information requirements of Local Environmental Services.
- 3.4. Will comply with Local Environmental Service requirements by adhering to time scales and deadlines.
- 3.5. Will respond to all reasonable requests for information to the deadlines and standards required as per the Service Agreement.
- 3.6. Will notify the Local Environmental Services Head of Service of any likely shortfalls in terms of time scale or quality of response to such requests as soon as they become apparent.
- 3.7. Will work jointly with Local Environmental Services with all reasonable requests for involvement. Both parties will negotiate time scales and resources as appropriate.
- 3.8. Will comply promptly with all reasonable requests for data, information and documentation required to enable Local Environmental Services perform the service to the deadlines and standards required as per the Service Agreement including: Policies, Guidelines and Standards.
- 3.9. The Gateshead Housing Company will ensure that all its environmental service and management processes comply with environmental service standards and regulations, guidelines and standard Council policy and procedures.
- 3.10. The Gateshead Housing Company will keep the Local Environmental Services Head of Service informed of all issues, which are of significance to the personnel of The Gateshead Housing Company and the Borough Council's, policies and procedures.

SECTION 3

FORM OF AGREEMENT

1. Preliminaries

Length of Agreement and Volume of Services

- 1.1. This Service Agreement shall commence with effect from **1 April 2014** and will be reviewed by **31 March 2015**.
- 1.2. Service delivery will be delivered within the remits for the Service Agreement. Both parties will negotiate any changes in demands within specific service areas once a need has been established.

Parties to the Agreement

- 1.3. Local Environmental Services and The Gateshead Housing Company are in agreement of activities, which are of mutual interest. Both parties will work together to fulfil the partnership's objectives guided by structured roles and responsibility established in the Service Agreement.

Contact Officers

- 1.4. The officers responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Service Level Agreement are the **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance from Local Environmental Services and The Director of Customers and Communities of The Gateshead Housing Company.

2. Policies and Legislation

- 2.1. It is in the interest of both parties to ensure that all relevant changes in legislation, statutory guidance and health and safety regulations are informed to the either party to ensure compliance. It may then be necessary to agree a timetable over which any changes can be made.
- 2.2. It will be the responsibility of Local Environmental Services to ensure that any relevant changes are implemented

3. Amendment

- 3.1. During the life span of the Service Agreement any shortfalls that are identified within the terms of the agreement, or in its implementation by one party, will be highlighted to the other party. Similarly, any additional service requirement or extra work on service provision, which falls within the specified service that is identified by the one party, will be brought to the attention of the other party.

- 3.2. The appropriate contact officer will in the first instance bring such matters to the attention of the other party. Initial contact will be made verbally, followed by written confirmation within 5 working days. Any issue, which requires immediate attention, will be the subject of a special meeting between the contact officers.
- 3.3. An interim amendment to the Service Agreement may be initiated by either party, but must be agreed by both the **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance and the Director of Customers and Communities of The Gateshead Housing Company prior to implementation. All such agreements should be documented, monitored, and evaluated at the next review meeting following implementation.
- 3.4. Where agreement has been reached regarding any additional service requirement or extra work on service provision within a specified service on a permanent basis, this will form part of the Service Agreement to meet the future needs of The Gateshead Housing Company.

4. Discretionary Services

- 4.1. The Director of Customers and Communities of the Gateshead Housing Company will contact The **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance for any discretionary services required.
- 4.2. If it has been confirmed that Local Environmental Services Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance is unable to provide the required discretionary services; The Gateshead Housing Company with Local Environmental Services will in the first instance negotiate an appropriate resolution and may require using an external contractor.

5. Performance

- 5.1. This document provides details of performance measures / indicators within each section of service. The Director of Customers and Communities of The Gateshead Housing Company warrants that any failure in the quality of service delivery will be rectified within a time scale highlighted in the Service Agreement.
- 5.2. Local Environmental Services Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance will be committed to provide the highest possible standards in delivering grounds maintenance services under the terms of the Service Agreement.
- 5.3. The **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance will be responsible for ensuring the provision of services using directly employed labour and equipment or contractors.

- 5.4. In the event of any deterioration in levels of service standards or a failure to provide any service as identified by The Gateshead Housing Company The Director of Customers and Communities will request the **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance to take remedial action in accordance with the timescales specified.
 - 5.5. The Director of Customer and Communities shall undertake to provide such information as may be from time to time required by the **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance to a standard that permits Local Environmental services to meet its performance measures, targets and deadlines. (In this instance, standard refers to information being in the correct form, submitted on time, complete and fully comprehensible).
 - 5.6. Matters in which The Director of Customers and Communities of the Gateshead Housing Company or the **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance are dissatisfied will in the first instance be brought to the attention of Local Environmental Services or The Gateshead Housing Company respectively. This will be done by the appropriate departmental contact. Initial contact will be made verbally, followed by written confirmation within 5 working days. Major failures within the terms of the Service Agreement, which require immediate attention, and will be the subject of an extraordinary meeting between the contact officers.
 - 5.7. Any investigation arising from an expression of dissatisfaction by The Gateshead Housing Company or Local Environmental Services must be documented fully. Comprehensive records will be retained and made freely available to the other party.
 - 5.8. Remedies to resolve any issue in dispute, including anticipated time scales, must be agreed by the **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance and the Director of Customers and Communities prior to implementation.
 - 5.9. Where an investigation highlights failures in procedures or working practices of either party, the remedy must be incorporated into future practices and procedures to prevent recurrences of the matter.
- 6. Service Agreement Monitoring and Review**
- 6.1. Meetings to review the Service Agreement will take place every 6 months. The agreement will run from April to March each financial year. The review of this Service Agreement will commence in September each year. Issues arising from the five joint action neighbourhood performance meetings and customer feedback will feed into the review. These meetings are scheduled to take place as shown in Appendix 2. Quarterly performance reports will be produced jointly for each neighbourhood to monitor performance in line with the service agreement. A copy of the performance template is shown in Appendix 3.

- 6.2. It is the responsibility of The Gateshead Housing Company to ensure customers are involved in the joint quarterly performance meetings.
- 6.3. The purpose of the meetings is to identify both strengths and areas for improvement. Where service failure has been identified both Local Environmental Services and The Gateshead Housing Company will come to an agreement on how to resolve the issues identified. The review meetings are also aimed at strengthening the partnership arrangements, informing the Service Agreement and the service improvement plan. Quarterly performance reports provided jointly by The Gateshead Housing Company and Local Environmental Services from the five neighbourhoods will feed into the review meetings. The remit of these meetings will be as follows;
- a) The quality and standard of work being provided under the Service Agreement
 - b) Issues that are subject to amendment;
 - c) Charges and payments for work undertaken and additional services
 - d) Service improvement
 - e) Provision of requested monitoring information
 - f) The effectiveness of areas based planning meetings
 - g) Quarterly reports will be produced by Local Environmental Services in partnership with TGHC.
- 6.4. Appropriate officers as directed by The **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance and the Director of Customers and Communities of the Gateshead Housing Company will attend all Meetings.

7. Renewal

- 7.1. Initial negotiations for updating the Service Agreement will commence in September each year.
- 7.2. Prior to the update, customers will be consulted to evaluate the service. All feedback from customers will play an integral part to inform service improvement plans.
- 7.3. During the 12-month period following the signing of this Service Agreement the **Service Director** of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance will ensure quarterly reports on performance in line with the service agreement are provided for each of the five neighbourhood areas. Area managers of both parties will produce the quarterly reports jointly.

8. Loss or Damage

- 8.1. Local Environmental Services shall make good at its own expense, or reimburse

the Gateshead Housing Company the cost of making good any loss or damage to property caused by its work men or sub-contractors in course of carrying out operations and report any damage caused to the local Management representative of the Gateshead Housing Company.

9. Defective work

- 9.1. Local Environmental Services shall be responsible for making good any work, which does not meet the required standards within five working days.
- 9.2. On completion of rectifying defective work Local Environmental Services should inform The Gateshead Housing Company (Local Housing Offices) to inspect the remedial work carried out. Officers from both Local Environmental Services and The Gateshead Housing Company should be present to inspect the work carried out to ensure standards have been met.
- 9.3. Any additional work undertaken Local Environmental Services to make good shall be carried out at Local Environmental Services own expense.

10. General behaviour

- 10.1 Employees from Local Environmental Services and sub contractors contracted to work on behalf of Local Environmental Services, shall have due regard and consideration for residents whilst performing their duties.
- 10.2 At all times employees should project an image to high standards as agents of the Gateshead Housing Company.
- 10.3 All employees shall at all times be polite, helpful and courteous to residents during the course of their duties.
- 10.4 Employees should ensure all equipment used in operations do not pose a risk to residents nor be used in a negligent manner that is likely to cause nuisance, injury or damage to residents and property respectively.
- 10.5 The Local Environmental Services employees shall avoid where possible vehicle encroachment onto grass and other areas were it is deemed to be unreasonable to park or is likely to cause damage to the surface or grassed areas.
- 10.6 Damage caused to any such areas as a result of negligent parking Local Environmental Services shall make good at its own expense. This will be to the satisfaction of The Gateshead Housing Company.

Signatures

On behalf of LES

Signature

Name.....

Title.....

Date.....

On behalf of TGHC

Signature.....

Name.....

Title.....

Date.....

SECTION 4

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE STANDARDS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Grass cutting

- 1.1. As part of budget savings LES introduced new working arrangements during spring 2011; the arrangements have been tailored to ensure they have as little impact on residents as possible. A 'three weekly zone' working arrangement has been introduced; each neighbourhood services area is divided into three zones, and the team carry out open space grass cutting and litter clearance in one zone over a one week period before moving onto the next zone. It takes three weeks to complete the cycle before the first zone is revisited. Not all services are subject to the three weekly cycle and arrangements are in place to respond more rapidly to urgent requests such as clearance of broken glass, etc. Further details of the revised approach are included in Appendix 4 and 5
- 1.2. Grass cutting operations are undertaken every 15 working days (except in **extreme** inclement weather) between the months of April and October by a range of machinery that includes tractor gangs, ride-on mowers and pedestrian operated equipment.
- 1.3. During the grass maintenance period, LES will aim to produce an even grass finish that provides an attractive, neat and tidy appearance.
- 1.4. All areas around housing stock managed by The Gateshead Housing Company should be deemed as high amenity and as such should be kept to the same level of maintenance.
- 1.5. ~~The majority of~~ Grass cutting operations do not include the removal of cuttings. Frequent cutting of the grass removes the need for them to be collected. Grass clippings shall be allowed to lie where they fall, with the exception of hard areas and footpaths. Any cuttings that fall onto paths or other hard surfaces will be swept or blown onto adjacent grassed areas on the same week where weather permits. (Same day removal may not be achievable in wet conditions).
- 1.6. Sheltered housing - grass cuttings are not **normally** collected or removed from grassed areas due to environmental sustainability reasons. In circumstances where there are large accumulations of grass, for example, following a period of prolonged wet weather additional care will be taken to ensure the finish is tidy and that grass is not left in large piles or on footpaths. To maintain a tidy and safe appearance close attention will be paid to the quality of work during grass cutting operations within Sheltered Housing Units with cutting taking place on a five day cutting cycle. These properties are identified in Appendix 6 to the Service Agreement; however this does not include the sheltered bungalow schemes.
- 1.7. Grass around fixed items for example bollards, lampposts will be trimmed or weed killed to maintain a tidy and levelled appearance. Moveable obstructions shall be removed to facilitate cutting **where reasonable to do so**, and replaced in the exact same position on the same day. Should there be any health and safety concerns regarding temporary removal

of objects then these concerns should be raised with the relevant Area managers and agree an appropriate action to resolve the situation.

- 1.8 Any damage to the surface levels of the ground or divots created during grass cutting operations Local Environmental Services shall reinstate such damage to the satisfaction of The Gateshead Housing Company. All grassed areas cut should be levelled leaving no areas uncut between rows. The grass should be cut to an even height
- 1.9 Prior to grass cuttings, all areas should be inspected and employees will remove any items or obstruction that may cause damage or injury, or interfere with grass cutting. This may include rubbish, bottles and litter.
- 1.10 Local Environmental Services shall at all times ensure that machines are properly maintained and guarded so as to present no danger to the operator, persons in the vicinity and property.
- 1.11 All grass cutting operations are subject to favourable weather conditions. During wet weather or when the ground is waterlogged, grass cutting may have to be suspended to prevent soil compaction or to stop the grass cutting machinery causing damage by churning the ground. Grass maintenance programmes will be resumed when the ground conditions allow.
- 1.12 Operations shall resume within five working days unless during that period conditions do not permit. Housing Offices should be informed if target couldn't be met.
- 1.13 In certain areas where flowering bulbs have either been planted or have become naturalised, the position of which will be obvious at the first cut of the season. On such areas Local Environmental Services should not cut the grass for 6 to 8 weeks after the completion of flowering. If they are cut before that time, the plants are weakened, there will be fewer flowers the following year and they will eventually disappear. Similarly the areas shall not be left uncut for more than 8 weeks after flowering has finished, with the stipulation that such cutting shall be completed by the end of June.
- 1.14 Grass may continue to grow outside of the April to October maintenance period during unseasonably warm weather. This will be addressed as soon as grass-cutting operations recommence.
- 1.15 For the purpose of introducing efficiencies into grounds maintenance operations LES have introduced a new approach to the maintenance of a small number of grassed areas on land managed by TGHC with effect from 2009. Edging, litter collection, and fly-tipping be managed in the usual way as set out in this agreement. Any future changes to maintenance operations or use of grassed areas will be agreed and the details of such recorded in the quarterly monitoring performance report, Appendix 3. Responsibility for the general maintenance of any such areas will continue to lie with LES as required in this agreement.

2. Edging

- 2.1 Local Environmental Services will edge all grassed areas on a ~~four~~ **three** year rolling programme to maintain a satisfactory environmental appearance. The programme for each Neighbourhood area will be discussed and agreed between TGHC and LES.
- 2.2 Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance and TGHC aim to minimise the use of herbicides (weed killers) as part of our joint approach to protecting the environment. Safer products will be continuously sourced by Local Environmental Services.
- 2.3 The LES edging programme will be monitored through the quarterly performance meetings held in each neighbourhood area.

3. Maintenance of Horticultural Features and Sustainable Planting

Rose Beds

- ~~3.1. Local Environmental Services shall prune and remove dead, dying or diseased wood, when necessary throughout the growing season.~~
- ~~3.2. Appropriate pruning techniques will be adopted for roses. Pruning of roses should be undertaken in October to reduce by one third of the growth, then in March final pruning to promote new healthy flowering growth for the forth-coming season to maintain high standards.~~
- ~~3.3. After pruning Local Environmental Services shall clear beds of all pruning, litter, rubbish and weeds. Then cultivate the beds where necessary to leave a fine and level surface.~~
- ~~3.4. Local Environmental Services will visit all flower, shrub and rose beds when necessary, to ensure effective weed, leaf and litter control.~~
- ~~3.5. Local Environmental Services may also use residual herbicides at their discretion for controlling of weeds in these areas. Herbicides must not be as a substitute for grass cutting.~~
- 3.1** Local Environment Services have removed all rose beds from estates and have made good the areas with either bark mulch or grass. Where grassed this will be cut and maintained as per the agreed service standard for grass cutting on housing land.

4. Shrub Maintenance

- 4.1. Shrubs should be annually pruned at their correct time of year, depending on species to encourage the production of new wood, which will produce growth. Also all growth should be removed where it encroaches onto grassed areas, paths, road signs, windows, sight lines, lights, and any feature, which may be otherwise obstructed by the presence of vegetation growth.

- 4.2. Shrubs that need additional attention for any particular reason will be done so within an agreed timescale.
- 4.3. Un-mulched shrub beds should be cultivated between October and March. Paths adjacent to housing stock will be kept bark or mulch free. Mulched areas will have mulch topped up annually as necessary.
- 4.4. Areas that have been identified for sustainable planting, (installed 2011), will receive the same maintenance as shrub / rose beds but will not receive any pruning due to species used and will be left to grow to maturity.

5. Hedge Maintenance

- 5.1. Local Environmental Services will carry out cutting and routine maintenance to all appropriate hedges that are on open space around Housing Stock that is managed by the Gateshead Housing Company.
- 5.2. Local Environmental Services shall be required to carry out hedge pruning operations in order to maintain hedges in a neat, tidy and pleasant appearance.
- 5.3. Uncharacteristic, variegated or reverted growth shall be pruned out where it is inconsistent with the hedge variety.

The Gateshead Housing Company embraces the need for conservation. So as such Local Environmental Services should use the following regulations as guidance.

1. Wildlife and countryside Act 1981
2. The Hedgerow Regulation 1997

It should be noted that no hedge maintenance work will be undertaken during the bird nesting season. The 'Bird Nesting Season' is officially from 1st March until 31st July (Natural England) it is recommended that vegetation works or site clearance should be done outside of the nesting season, in reality the nesting period may start before this and extend beyond it, in many cases, depending of the seasonal climate.

We will aim to avoid impact to nesting birds and infringement of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and breaching the European Habitats Directive 1992/Nesting Birds Directive.

- 5.4. TGHC will report to Local Environmental Services when it is necessary to cut hedges outside the routine maintenance schedule.

6. Plant/Weed growth

- 6.1. LES will endeavour for routine street cleansing and grounds maintenance operations to minimise the conditions where weeds can grow.
- 6.2. Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance will provide the weed treatment.

- 6.3. The aim of the borough wide weed spraying services is to provide a cyclical spray of all The Gateshead Housing Company housing Estates, including un-adopted areas, gunnels and other problems identified.
- 6.4. Local Environmental Services will be responsible for effective weed control in shrub/rose beds, hedge bottoms and hard surfaces. They may use whichever herbicide they feel appropriate although it must conform to current health and safety legislation and industry best practice guidelines.
- ~~6.5. Hedgerow bottoms — the bottom of hedgerows will be treated with residual herbicides at least once a year, this will commence from March should weather and conditions permit.~~
- 6.6. Hard surface - all public highways around the estates managed by The Gateshead Housing Company shall be treated with a Glyphosate based herbicide at least twice per year between May and September or when necessary.
- 6.7. Areas with restricted access and/or hard standings that are the subject of weed growth that are not on the programme for regular maintenance will be identified by either party and will be addressed through a jointly agreed programme of works.
- 6.8. All self seeded plants, trees will be removed from all areas around the estates managed by The Gateshead Housing Company including open land surrounding housing stock, trees and shrub beds.
- 6.9. Communal land, drying areas and areas around garages, hard standing and parking bays will be subject to weed control.
- 6.10. To treat identified unsightly areas within the agreed timescales.
- 6.11. To ensure high standards are maintained when applying herbicides to avoid damaging vegetation/ areas that should not to be sprayed.
- 7. Repairing damaged grassed areas**
- 7.1. Local Environmental Services will repair grass verges that have been damaged by ~~vehicles or cars parking on housing land. A cost for the works will be agreed between Local Environmental Services and TGHC, unless the damage was caused by council vehicles, in which case work will be undertaken free of charge. .~~
- 7.2. If such problems recur Local Environmental Services will develop a joined up approach with TGHC to address the parking problems. This may include enforcement action or investigate alternative solutions to the parking problem.
- 8. Leaves on pathways, Car park and alleyways**
- 8.1. Leaves on areas currently maintained by Local Environmental Services will be removed as required including main pathways, car parks and alleyways.

8.2. Where there is heavy leaf fall or wind blown leaves Local Environmental Services will remove leaves including debris as required to meet acceptable standards.

9. Strips of land between paths and fences

9.1. Narrow areas between paths and fences will be maintained on a regular basis and operations carried out in such areas meet the standards depending on the operations required.

10. Service Agreement Photographs

10.1. An estate tour photo booklet was produced for estate grading which launched in April 2010. This booklet provides a guide for officers and customers to monitor how well services are being delivered against the standards. An updated version of the Service Agreement , highlighting the changes this year will be published to our customers on TGHC`s website

11. Quality Checks

11.1. Local Environmental Services and The Gateshead Housing Company will work together in carrying out quality checks to capture both good performance and service failure. Both parties will present reports on finds to feed into service improvement plans and the service agreement reviews.

12. Moss Control

12.1. LES will endeavour for routine street cleansing and grounds maintenance operations to minimise the conditions where moss can grow.

12.2. Local Environmental Services shall maintain and ensure all areas around housing stock and housing estates are free from moss either by cultural methods or an approved moss killer. Applications shall be at the manufacturers recommended rates as these products will only work under certain environmental conditions.

12.3. After the moss has been killed Local Environmental Services should remove it from the surface as required.

13. Tree work

13.1. Trees are amongst the most important and significant features in the landscape and contribute to making Gateshead an environmentally attractive and healthy place to live. Gateshead Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of trees. It is therefore appropriate that all maintenance activities seek to enhance tree appearance, increase public safety and reduce potential hazards that trees may create.

13.2. Arboriculture is a specialised field of expertise and as such only fully trained arboriculture staff will be allowed to undertake this work.

- 13.3. The work undertaken as part of the Service Agreement will fall into two categories:
1. The undertaking of reactive inspections, which will result in the pruning and also in, the removal trees where it is deemed necessary. Appropriate consultation and pre-notification to the local Housing Manager should always take place before tree removal. The Gateshead Housing Company shall decide who shall be consulted in such cases.
Work will only be undertaken with approval from the local Housing Manager.
 2. A planned work programme for future years.

Service Standards

- 13.4. A revised tree maintenance process has been developed. Trees outside the boundary of properties but on open land managed by TGHC will be maintained by Local Environmental Services, where a separate tree maintenance budget is in place.
- 13.5. Public Liability and/or Employers Liability Insurance covers all works carried out by the council and steps will be taken to ensure public safety and to protect property at all times.
- 13.6. Arboriculture teams are qualified National Training Proficiency Council (NPTC) standards and trained in the use of their equipment.
- 13.7. Works are carried out to the standards outlined within BS 3998:1989
- 13.8. Where trees are felled, they will be cut down to ground level. Where access and conditions permit, tree stumps in open space areas will be 'ground' and reduced to below ground level and the area reinstated **where appropriate.**
- 13.9. Where access and conditions permit and when requested by The Gateshead Housing Company, trees within gardens may also be 'ground' and reduced to below ground level.
- 13.10. All wood, branches and waste generated will be removed from site.
- 13.11. When a tree has to be removed, the Council and The Gateshead Housing Company will endeavour to arrange for a replacement tree to be planted.
- 13.12. When circumstances permit, LES will arrange for a replacement tree to be planted in open space areas at no extra cost to The Gateshead Housing Company.
- 13.13. Trees overhanging public footpaths will be trimmed back, if currently maintained by Gateshead Council in line with the tree maintenance process.
- 13.14. **It should be noted that there is no right to light under the law. Work will only be considered where trees block light during day time hours which means having to use artificial light in living room areas. The Estate Officer will carry out an initial home visit to assess the**

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request for works and whether it meets with the criteria for removal subject to further approval of the Housing Manager.

Trees and shrubs will be removed or pruned

- when the structure of the dwelling is affected.
- where there has been storm damage and the tree is potentially dangerous
- where trees/shrubs are poisonous and there are children in the household
- Where trees interfere with underground or overhead services.

If the request for the tree works is approved The Housing Manager will make a referral to the Arboricultural Officer to undertake the works.

- 13.15. It is not Gateshead Councils' policy to heavily prune or fell trees to improve television or satellite reception, which can be a particular problem when trees are in leaf and during windy or rainy weather. In most cases the situation can be significantly improved or solved by careful pruning or the relocation of the aerial or dish to a more appropriate location. Boosters are also available which can improve reception. LES and TGHC will agree what works need to be undertaken in each case.

The council will endeavour to ensure all hazardous trees that pose a significant threat will either be felled, or where appropriate instigate remedial works so that the risk of falling or have snapped branches as a result of storm damage etc. It may also include dead or diseased trees.

- 13.16. For arboriculture works the following standards apply:

1. All projects to be undertaken in accordance with a clearly written and agreed brief
2. All instructions or queries between The Gateshead Housing Company and Local Environmental services to be confirmed through electronic ordering system (see 13.23)
3. All enquiries to be responded to within 10 working days

- 13.17. If a tree is considered to be dangerous or a threat to public safety, it will be dealt with within 24 hours. An emergency tree management call out service will be provided 24 hours per day throughout the year.

- 13.18. Local Environmental Services will be responsible for carrying out this maintenance using current industry best practice guidelines.

- 13.19. At all times during operations, Local Environmental Services will ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to eliminate any risks of injury to the general public, buildings and property.

- 13.20. The budget set for the maintenance of trees on housing land and land within the curtilage of tenants' homes is **£277,750 for 2014/15**. Local Environmental Services will provide quarterly updates on performance and spend to each Housing Manager as part of the quarterly report for the area.

- 13.21. Borough-wide spend and performance monitoring of this service will be reported to the quarterly meetings between The Gateshead Housing Company and Local Environmental Services held to oversee the delivery of the service agreement.
- 13.22. All general and responsive maintenance works will be carried out within the agreed Housing Services Annual Arboricultural Budget, which will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 13.23. Gateshead Council are currently developing a Corporate Tree Strategy to manage all trees across the borough which will include trees on land managed by TGHC. TGHC will be involved in the project group developing the strategy **which will undergo consultation during 2014**. The service agreement for tree works **has been** reviewed to take into account any impact of the **draft** strategy.

Electronic Tree Maintenance Order System

- 13.24. An electronic tree maintenance order system has been introduced during April 2011 which permits housing managers to request and track progress on individual works requests, monitor budgets and to provide service related reports.
- 13.25. The responsible LES officer will ensure that the system is maintained up to date to ensure wherever possible continued access by authorised officers.
- 13.26. TGHC will identify and nominate appropriate officers to be granted access to the system to request works, interrogate the system and liaise with clients on progress of works as necessary.
- 13.27. Within 7 working days of receiving a request, an inspection will be carried by the Councils' Arboricultural **Officer Foremen** to assess the tree(s) and detail any necessary works that are required. Each application will be allocated a unique work order number.
- 13.28. Housing Manager's can track the progress of an order through the electronic tree maintenance system via its unique order number or address.
- 13.29. It will be the responsibility of the Housing Manager to ensure that requests that are made for works are only for trees within land managed by TGHC and within the agreed criteria. Local Environmental Services will also carry out their own checks on ownership.
- 13.30. Consultation will be the responsibility of the relevant Housing Manager prior to forwarding a GMO request. In the event that residents make a serious objection to proposed works, arboricultural staff will postpone works and contact the initiating Housing Manager to enable further consultation to take place.
- 13.31. A number of trees within land managed by TGHC may be legally protected by being within a Conservation Area or included within a Tree Preservation Order. Consent must be obtained from the Local Planning Authority to carry out work to these trees. It can take up to six weeks for permission to be granted.
- 13.32. Essential but non-dangerous works will be carried out within 3 months.

13.33. Due to seasonal variations or delays due to receiving consent for work, there may be rare occasions when it will take longer than three months to complete arboricultural works.

13.34. The initiating Housing Officer will be notified when arboricultural works cannot be carried out and be provided with necessary information to enable them to advise a tenant why it was considered inappropriate to carry out the work.

14. Responsive maintenance

14.1. For 2014/15 a £10,000 budget is available to each of the five neighbourhood areas to be used as a Responsive Maintenance Budget for use on grounds maintenance issues. In addition a contingency of £5,000 will be available for each neighbourhood. This will allow spend on responsive maintenance up to £15,000 on responsive activity in each neighbourhood but monies can be re-directed between neighbourhoods where this is needed. This reflects that different neighbourhoods have different demands. Any shift in monies between neighbourhoods will be agreed with the Head of Neighbourhood Services.

14.2. TGHC and LES area managers will agree the responsive activity in their respective neighbourhoods.

14.3. The Responsive Maintenance Budget can address work within the curtilage of the property or exceptional items of work on housing land. The schemes should not lead to further revenue spend and should not be used for work on highways or work traditionally coded to the Highways service. The responsive budget should not be used as a replacement for works that should be carried out under the Service Agreement.

14.4. Neighbourhood Services Managers within TGHC will discuss and agree the nature of any exceptional items to be undertaken with the relevant LES Area Manager. All proposals should be submitted using the electronic tree maintenance system.

14.5. Quarterly updates on responsive maintenance and tree spend will be provided by LES to the joint quarterly monitoring meetings.

15. Dog Fouling

15.1. Dog fouling not only poses a health hazard but also is an unpleasant reminder of the careless attitude of some dog owners; it is also a health hazard especially with young children.

15.2. The responsibility for the Council's Dog Warden service transferred to LES during 2010. LES and the Housing Company will actively work together to take action under the appropriate legislation, to address dog owners or those in charge of dogs who do not clear up after their pets.

16. Abandoned Vehicles

16.1. Local Environmental Services Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance have made arrangements for Northumbria Police to manage all cases of abandoned vehicles on behalf of the Council. Specially trained contractors will carry out the service, which shall be supervised by Northumbria Police. Residents, officers and Gateshead Housing Company staff will need to report cases of abandoned vehicles to Gateshead Council's Customer Service Unit on 0191 433 7000.

17. Fly tipping

- 17.1. Fly tipping will be removed from open space areas currently maintained by Local Environmental Services.
- 17.2. LES will provide all the necessary equipment and operatives to undertake the removal of fly tipping/illegal dumping on appropriate areas applicable to The Gateshead Housing Company estates.
- 17.3. Local Environmental Services will ensure that they respond to incidents of fly-tipping/illegal dump within the council's service standards of 60 days, this allows for full investigation and removal. However in most circumstances fly tipping is usually removed within 15 days of it being reported.
- 17.4. Local Environmental Services to ensure that when responding to incidents of fly tipping they should inform either TGHC Neighbourhood Relations Team or Local Environmental Services local environmental enforcement officer who should use that information as intelligence and take appropriate action, e.g. enforcement and education.
- 17.5. The Gateshead Housing Company will ensure that it reports incidents of fly tipping promptly so that they can be responded to within the time scales set down.

Void Properties

- 17.6. In the event that any void property requires the removal of residual household waste left by tenants, LES will upon request by TGHC via the Council's Customer Service Unit, carry out a priority clearance within 48 hours and dispose of the waste. A separate charging arrangement applies for this service.
- 17.7. In the event that any void property requires replacement a wheelie bin prior to the new tenant moving in, LES will upon request by the relevant TGHC officer, via the Council's Customer Service Unit, deliver a replacement wheelie bin at a date and time specified. A separate charging arrangement applies for this service.
- 17.8. In respect of any other authorised requests for chargeable works, LES will provide an itemised summary of all such requests and approved works carried out on behalf of TGHC each calendar month.

18 Fixed Play

- 18.1. The Service Agreement incorporates the standards of maintenance, which will be carried out by LES to fixed play equipment that is located on land managed by The Gateshead Housing Company as set out in Appendix 7
- 18.2. Appendix 8 details play areas on land adjacent to TGHC managed estates.
- 18.3. The Service Agreement will also include a number of fixed play equipment sites that are located adjacent to TGHC managed land. These areas have been included because it is considered reasonable for TGHC customers and Estate Officers to consider the TGHC to be responsible for maintenance of these facilities.
- 18.4. Weekly Inspection Schedules will include: -
- A visual check of the site.
 - Sweeping the play area as necessary.
 - Emptying bins as necessary.
 - Removing all rubbish & debris from the play area
 - Arranging for cleaning of any unusual soiling
 - Reporting problems that can't be immediately remedied to Horticultural and Technical Services Manager for consideration.
 - Removing graffiti during visit, or report to LES graffiti squad if it cannot be removed. If any graffiti is racist or offensive it will be removed within 24 hours.
- 18.5. Monthly Operational Inspection Schedules will include:
- A thorough technical inspection of equipment, including safety surfaces, grass and tarmac of actual play area, 5 meters around or up to the relevant perimeter demarcation (as indicated on relevant maps).
 - When present, bark mulch or sand or any other loose fill materials should be evenly spread to no less than 300mm thickness, forked through as necessary to loosen and level surface, clearing out any foreign objects.
 - Sweeping the play area as necessary to remove any litter or debris present.
 - Emptying litterbins as necessary.
 - Undertaking minor repairs, including safety surface repairs up to 5m² in area.
 - Removal graffiti during visit, or report to LES graffiti squad if it cannot be removed. If any graffiti is racist or offensive it will be removed within 24 hours
 - Reporting all defects to Horticultural and Technical Services
 - Removing rubbish/debris from adjacent shrubberies.
 - Removing any dangerous snags in adjacent shrubberies
- 18.6. Annual Inspection Schedules will include a qualified, independent safety inspector to carry out a comprehensive annual safety inspection and risk assessment of all play areas.
- 18.7. All inspections are compliant with:
- BS EN1176: 1998 – Playground Equipment
 - BS EN 1177: 1997 – Impact Absorbing Playground Surfacing
 - BS PAS 30:1998 – Outdoor Recreation and Multi-Sport Equipment

- BS EN 14974: 2006 – Facilities for users of roller sports equipment -Safety requirements and test methods
- HSAW Act 1992 and Local Government Bylaws
- Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- RoSPA “Play Safety” guidelines.

- 18.8. LES have changed working practices from April 2012 to ensure they continue to carry out the regular inspections of fixed play areas.
- 18.9 Local Environmental Services will maintain a database of sites and play equipment with records of defects and repairs, using a defect reporting procedure that is compliant with European Standards EN1176
- 18.10 LES will maintain records of equipment installation dates, condition and lifespan projection
- 18.11 In addition to the routine inspections LES will arrange Annual Inspections of equipment.
- 18.12 LES will liaise with TGHC and provide a consultation service for the planning and development of new play areas and the improvement of existing facilities.
- 18.13 LES will select and arrange for the purchase of new/replacement equipment in agreement with TGHC.
- 18.14 LES will provide an audit service ensuring compliance with part 3 of the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act).
- 18.15 Defects will be identified through daily Inspections, operational inspections, annual inspections and quarterly performance reports.
- 18.16 If a repair can be undertaken from spares available to the Fixed Play Inspectors, they will be carried as soon as possible, with the Fixed Play Officer recording the defect and repairs undertaken.
- 18.17 If a repair cannot be undertaken from spares available to the Fixed Play Inspectors they will be carried-out as soon as practicable, with the Fixed Play Officer recording the defect and details of works carried out.
- 18.18 If a repair requires more extensive work, e.g. ordering parts, specialist contractors or plant hire, the Fixed Play Officer will liaise with the Estate Officer providing costs and an estimated time for completion.
- 18.19 Play equipment will always be left in a safe condition where possible.
- 18.20 Any work carried out by a contractor will be overseen to completion by the Fixed Play Officer.

- 18.21 Details of all reported defects and repairs are logged on to a database and kept for twenty-one years. If necessary, the database can be accessed by the Fixed Play Officer, LES for the investigation of insurance claims.
- 18.22 LES will provide TGHC with a rolling 5 year replacement programme, timetable and estimated costs by December 31 each Calendar Year. This document is contained in Appendix 9
- 18.23 LES will provide quarterly reports to TGHC on a **borough and** neighbourhood basis.
- 18.24 Following any incident of substantial vandalism of play equipment that is agreed to be over and above regular day-to-day maintenance, the facility will be made safe pending it being reviewed to consider the feasibility of replacement.
- 18.25 Changes in statutory or best practice guidance, which requires significant change to the design of fixed play equipment, could have a major impact on the future financing of the sites. LES and TGHC will jointly pursue means of financing the new specification requirements through Gateshead Council's annual budget growth.
- 18.26 Budget for the ongoing maintenance and minor repair of the existing fixed play sites will continue to be funded by the Council. Continuous abuse of play equipment should not come from this budget and should be discussed jointly between TGHC and LES with repairs/costs/forward action planning agreeable between both parties.
- 18.27 TGHC will work with LES to help secure appropriate "developers fee" maintenance funding from any new sites.
- 18.28 Response to complaints and insurance claims relating to residents' use of fixed play equipment will be managed and led by LES, who will deal with enquiries, complaints and insurance claims, adopting the same corporate procedures in place for the management of all play sites in the borough. The LES Fixed Play Officer will report any significant issues arising from any incident direct to the relevant TGHC Neighbourhood Services Manager.

Appendix 1.

**Local Environmental Services and the Gateshead Housing Company
Pest Control Service Agreement**

What service does the Pest Control Team provide?

The Pest Control Service will tackle pests considered to be a risk to public health including rats, house mice, bedbugs, cockroaches and fleas.

A service is also provided to control pests that may become a nuisance in houses such as a wide range of beetles, ants, and wasps.

The Pest Control Team aims to contact customers within two working days of the request being received.

The service is free to housing company tenants.

How can tenants and leaseholders report pests and infestations?

- Online on this website or through Gateshead Council's pest control service.
- E-mail: pestcontrol@gatesheadhousing.co.uk
- Call: Gateshead Council, Customer Service Unit on 0191 433 7000 (8.30am - 5pm, Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Fridays)
- Visit: Any housing office or at Gateshead Civic Centre
- ~~Emergencies: Call 0191 477 0844.~~

The service is free to housing company tenants.

Levels of response to pest problems

There are three levels of response by the Pest Control Team.

Level 1 - where pests are considered a major nuisance or serious health risk for example:

- Rats in houses
- Bed bugs
- ~~Wasps nest blocking only access into property~~
- ~~Honey bee swarms.~~

The Pest Control Team will begin investigations within two working days.

Level 2 - where pests are regarded as a serious nuisance or health risk but not an emergency including:

- Rats on land or in non-domestic buildings
- Mice

- Wasps nests blocking an entrance
- Fleas (Treatment is usually done in the morning to allow the property to dry out through the day)
- Cockroaches
- Flies (significant infestation of domestic dwellings).

The Pest Control Team will begin to investigate reports within five working days. With Rat and Mice infestations the Pest Control Team might require a number of visits to solve the problem.

Insect infestations can usually be dealt with in a single visit.

Level 3 - where pests are regarded as a nuisance, but are not a risk to health including:

- Ants in your home
- Beetles
- Grey Squirrels
- Wasps
- Silverfish

The Pest Control Team will begin to investigate reports within ten working days.

Some pests are not a danger to health but the Pest Control Team will provide advice and support to help solve the problem for example:

- Ants
- Bees
- Woodlice
- Slugs and snails
- Feral cats
- Spiders

Some species are protected by law and Gateshead Council cannot take action but will offer advice.

These include:

- Bats
- Badgers
- Honey bees
- Water voles
- Red squirrels
- Most bird species (including feral pigeons).

Some animals may cause nuisance to householders or residents but are not subject to regulation and the Pest Control Team will take no action, for example:

- Foxes and Moles
- Chickens: Where residents have concerns, the RSPCA will be called upon to assess the situation. Telephone 08705 555 999.
- Dogs: If abandoned or roaming the streets Gateshead Council's Dog Warden Service will attend.

If living at a tenanted property tenancy enforcement action will be considered.

Telephone 0191 433 7000 or e-mail dogwarden@gatesheadhousing.co.uk

The service is free to housing company tenants.

Pest control emergencies

~~If you have a pest control emergency, then you can contact Gateshead Council's Emergency Telephone Information Service on 0191 477 0844 and they will contact the Pest Control Officer.~~

~~Out of hours, the Pest Control Officers offer a voluntary service for emergencies and will help if they can.~~

~~Examples of Pest Control emergencies are:~~

- ~~• Rats in a habitable room of a house~~
- ~~• A wasp's nest in a habitable room of a house or preventing access to a house~~
- ~~• A honeybee swarm in a house.~~

~~In assessing the seriousness of an infestation the Pest Control Team will consider the impact of the infestation on the occupier and other residents nearby.~~

Pest Control Service Standards

The Gateshead Housing Company, working with Gateshead Council's Pest Control Team aim to:

- Deal sympathetically with all reports of pests and infestation
- Investigate reports regarding major nuisance or serious health risks within two working days
- Investigate reports regarding other serious nuisance reports within five working days
- Investigate all other reports within ten working days.

The service is paid for by TGHC free to housing company tenants.

Schedule of Rates

PEST CONTROL SERVICE CHARGES 2014/15		
SERVICE	APPROVED CHARGE	ADMIN NOTE
INSECT CONTROL		
Council Houses Standard Treatment Special Treatment	£64.07 Covers visits up to 2 x 1 hour or equivalent Actual Cost - Where situation exceeds standard service criteria	FREE to tenant Invoice GHC
Social Landlords Standard Treatment Special Treatment	£70.80 Covers visits up to 2 x 1 hour or equivalent Actual Cost - Where situation exceeds standard service criteria	INVOICE if requested
Private Houses Standard Treatment Special Treatment	£70.80 Covers visits up to 2 x 1 hour or equivalent Actual Cost - Where situation exceeds standard service criteria	
LA Properties Standard Treatment Special Treatment	£60.70 - Covers visits up to 2 x 1 hour or equivalent Actual Cost - Where situation exceeds standard service criteria No VAT	RECHARGE – Agresso code needed
Business Premises Standard Treatment Special Treatment	£139.94 Covers visits up to 2 x 1 hour or equivalent Actual Cost - Where situation exceeds standard service criteria	INVOICE if requested
RODENT CONTROL		
Council Houses (RATS AND MICE) Standard Treatment Special Treatment	£64.07 Covers visits up to 3 x 1 hour or equivalent Actual Cost - Where situation exceeds standard service criteria	FREE to tenant Invoice GHC
Social Landlords (RATS AND MICE) Standard Treatment Special Treatment	£70.80 Covers visits up to 3 x 1 hour or equivalent Actual Cost - Where situation exceeds standard service criteria	INVOICE if requested

All charges are inclusive of 17.5% VAT unless stated

Appendix 2

Review and Performance Monitoring Timetable

Activity	Date	Responsibility
Neighbourhood quarterly grounds maintenance monitoring meetings, including customer involvement	July 2014 October 2014 January 2015 April 2015	LES and TGHC
Quarterly reports Service Agreement performance	July 2014 October 2014 January 2015 April 2015	LES and TGHC
Service Agreement Review partnership meeting	October 2014 January 2015	LES and TGHC
TGHC survey results 2012	October 2014	TGHC
Renewal of the Service Agreement	April 2015	TGHC and LES

Appendix 3

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE AGREEMENT
QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING

NEIGHBOURHOOD

Example covering all quarters and cycles of activity		
KEY AREAS	COMMENTS	
GRASS CUTTING		
SEASONAL PLANTING COMPLETE		
REMOVAL OF SEEDED TREES/PLANTS		
WEED CONTROL ON HARD STANDINGS		
MOSS TREATMENT ON FOOTPATHS		
MAINTENANCE OF PLANTED AREAS		
BARK MULCHED AREAS		
GRASS VERGE REPAIRS		
FENCE LINES MAINTAINED		
TREE MAINTENANCE		
GRASS EDGING		
REMOVAL OF LEAF FALL		

Estate Grading Section: Area performance		
Grades	Number of Estates	Comments
Gold		
Silver		

Bronze		
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Estate Grading Performance			
Criteria/Theme	Performance Issue (Grade)	Estate/Area	Comments

Estate Grading: Areas of best practice			
Criteria/Theme	Performance (Grade)	Estate/Area	Comments

LES and customer Estate Tour attendance		
Number of tours conducted in reporting period	Number & % that had LES attendance	Number & % that had customer attendance

NEIGHRHOBOUOD PRIDE		
Project Title	Progress	Comments

BIG TIDY UP		
Date	Location	Comments

KEY COMPLIMENTS		
Location	What have we done well	Can we share this as best practice?

KEY COMPLAINTS		
Location	Issue	What are we doing to address this?

FIXED PLAY KEY ISSUES (ongoing maintenance issues)		
Location	Issue	What are we doing to address this?

SHELTERED HOUSING KEY ISSUES		
Location	Issue	What are we doing to address this?

RESIDENTS OTHER KEY ISSUES

Location	Issue	What are we doing to address this?

ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Targeted Action	Offence Committed	FPNs Issued

Total TGHC residents issued FPNs:

PCS

Category	Target	Actual

Signed by _____ Neighbourhood Services Manager on behalf of TGHC

Signed by _____ Area Manager on Behalf of LES

Customers in Attendance:

Appendix 4

LES Neighbourhood Services - Service Frequencies 2014/15

What:	Frequency – 2013/14	Frequency 2014/15	Notes:
Grass cutting Frequencies			
Estates and Open Spaces	15 day	15 days	No Change
Flail / Reform (backsides)	1 week per area	1 week per area	No Change
Trimax / Tractor	1 week per area	1 week per area	No Change
Grass cutting Hotspots			
Sheltered Schemes	5 days	5 days	No Change
Quayside	5 days	5 days	No Change
Town Centre	5 days	5 days	No Change
Parks	15 Days	15 days	No Change
Saltwell Park	No change	No Change	No Change
Sport Pitches / Bowling Greens	5 days	5 days	No Change
Street Cleansing			
Neighbourhood Shopping Areas	Daily – mech brush	Daily - mech brush	No Change - daily routes devised for N/hood shopping areas.

Town Centre	Daily	Daily	No Change
Estates	When in zone & on demand	When in zone & on demand	3 weekly zones introduced and published
Commercial Contracts	As per contract	As per contract	No Change
Litter Bins - Shops	3 out of 7 days	3 out of 7 days	No Change
Litter Bins - All other areas	Weekly	Weekly	No Change
Litter Picking Hotspots	5 out of 7 days	5 out of 7 days	No Change – areas reviewed
Mechanical Sweepers - Small	1 sweeper per area (2 in Central) to work with teams in line with grass cutting on a 3 week turnaround	1 sweeper per area (2 in Central) to work with teams in line with grass cutting on a 3 week turnaround	Under review early 2014/15
Mechanical Sweepers - Big	1 sweeper to be shared on a 2 week turnaround between 4 areas (2.5 days each) Central to retain one sweeper	1 sweeper to be shared on a 2 week turnaround between 4 areas (2.5 days each) Central to retain one sweeper.	Under review early 2014/15
Fly tipping	No change	No change	No Change
Herbicide Treatment:			
Strimming	Once per year	Once per year	No Change. Fence lines etc to be treated March before start of season.
Street Herbicide	2 times per year	2 times per year	No Change
Shrub beds	None	None	Review of existing beds and bark mulching programme rolled out

Rose beds	None	None	Review of existing beds and transfer to sustainable bedding programme rolled out
Other:			
Floral bedding - Summer and Spring	Spring bedding to remain, no summer planting	No spring or summer bedding	Floral bedding removed
Containers	Spring bedding to remain, no summer planting	No spring or summer containers	Containers all removed
Graffiti	Removed as per policy	Removed as per policy	No Change
Visual Play Area Inspections	Once per week	Once per week	No Change

3 Weekly Zone Timetable - April to October 2014

Appendix 5

INNER WEST

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
31 st March	Two	Whickham, Broadway, Sunnyside, Marley Hill, Byermoor
7th April	Three	Teams, Eslington, Clasper Village, Dunston, Holmeside
14 th April	One	Dunston, Whickham, Swalwell
21 st April	Two	
28 th April	Three	
5 th May	One	
12 th May	Two	
19 th May	Three	
26 th May	One	
2 nd June	Two	
9 th June	Three	
16 th June	One	
23 rd June	Two	
30 th June	Three	
7 th July	One	
14 th July	Two	
21 st July	Three	
28 th July	One	
4 th August	Two	
11 th August	Three	
18 th August	One	
25 th August	Two	
1 st September	Three	
8 th September	One	
15 th September	Two	
22 nd September	Three	
29 th September	One	
6 th October	Two	
13 th October	Three	
20 th October	One	
27 th October	Two	

WEST

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
31 st March	Two	Winlaton Mill, Rowlands Gill, Highfield, Blackhall Mill, Chopwell, High Spen
7th April	Three	Greenside, Crawcrook, Ryton, Blaydon Industrial
14 th April	One	Blaydon, Winlaton

Please refer to Inner West Table for future zone dates

CENTRAL

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
31 st March	Two	Sunderland Road, Deckham, Carr Hill, Shipcote
7th April	Three	Lobley Hill, Festival Park, Marian Court, Windmill Hills, Mulgrave Villas, Bridges area
14th April	One	Bensham and Saltwell areas, Ventnor Gardens, Gateshead Town centre, Sage and Baltic, Quayside

Please refer to Inner West Table for future zone dates

EAST

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
31 st March	Two	Bill Quay, Pelaw, Wardley, Wardley Park Estate, Leam Lane (East of Cotemedede and Meresyde)
7th April	Three	Windy Nook, Whitehills, Felling (East of Chillside Road) Leam Lane (west of Cotemedede)
14th April	One	Felling, Old Fold, Nest Estate, Stoneygate, Leam Lane (west of Meresyde)

Please refer to Inner West Table for future zone dates

SOUTH

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
31 st March	Two	Allerdene, Harlow Green, Low Fell, Kells Lane, Dryden Road, Saltwell Road, Gleneagles Road
7th April	Three	Birtley, Kibblesworth, Lamesley, Cowan Gardens
14th April	One	Eighton Banks, Springwell, Seven Stars, Lyndhurst, Beacon Lough, Sheriff Hill

Please refer to Inner West Table for future zone dates

Appendix 6

Sheltered Housing Units: (included)

Birtley Villas 1-25; 26-50
 McErlane Square
 Pleasant Place 1-23; 24-56
 Derwentside (to be removed during 2014-15)
 East Lea
 Mulgrave Villas
 Sunhill (removed during 2013-.14)
 Victoria House (removed 2013-14)
 West Park
 Angel Court

Sheltered Bungalow Schemes: (not included)

Cheshire Avenue
 Croftside
 Easington Avenue
 Joyce Close
 Kateregina
 Kays Cottages
 Lansbury Drive
 Leyburn Place
 Rectory Road
 Woodsgreen
 Milvain Close
 Rectory Hall
 Ross Avenue

South Lea
 West Acres
 Yetholm Road
 AJ Cooks
 Bolton Bungalows
 Broomfield
 Burnside Road
 Conifer Close
 Crocus Close
 Denton View (including New Hallgarth bungalows)
 Emmaville
 Greenfields
 Kellsway
 Mosspool
 Rydal Crescent
 Southwood
 Whinney Close
 Bensham Court

Fixed Play Maintenance

Appendix 7

Under this agreement the service provided by LES will include the following play areas located directly on housing estates managed by TGHC:

Play Area Name	Post Code	Description	Area
Byermoor	NE16 6PA	Toddler/junior/ball play	West
Pipebridge Estate	NE39 2JY	Junior/ball play	West
Argyle Street, Tyne View	NE8 3HW	Junior/muga	Central
Carr Hill park	NE9 5PU	Junior/ball play	Central
Fellinghouse Gardens	NE10 0HB	Junior/ball play	East
Brearley Way	NE10 9JL	5 a side	East
Birtley East	DH3 1NH	Junior/toddler	South
Rutland Square	DH3 1JB	Junior	South
Elisabethville	DH3 1JT	Junior	South
Portmeads Tots	DH3 2NJ	Toddler	South
Blackhill Crescent	NE9 7DN	Junior	South
Sundew Park	NE9 6EX	Junior/toddler	South

List of sites close to land managed by TGHC

Appendix 8

Play Area Name	Post Code	Description	Approximate Location	Neighbourhood Area
South Terrace	NE17 7EW	Junior/toddler	Next to 29	West
Blackhall Mill	NE17 7TR	Junior/toddler	Mill Road	West
Bleach Green	NE215B	Junior/Toddler and MUGA	Greengates Park	West
Fountain View	NE8 4XS	5 a side	Rear of Armstrong Street	Inner West
Eslington Park	NE8 2TQ	Junior/toddler/wheeled sport	Off Bolam Street	Inner West
Kent Avenue	NE11 9BP	Junior	Rear of Linden Grove and Ravensworth Road	Inner West
Flower show Field	NE10 0HS	Junior	Rear of Easten Gardens	East
Portmeads MUGA	DH3 2NQ	MUGA	Entrance to Portmeads Rd	South
Surrey Terrace	DH3 2EA	Toddler/junior	Middle of Terrace	South
Leam Head	NE9 7AJ	Junior/ball play	Nr Lanchester Avenue	South
Stoneygate	NE10 6LY	Toddler/junior/muga/wheeled sport	Stoneygate lane, felling	East

APPENDIX 9

TGHC Play Equipment Replacement Programme 2014-15

Play Area Name	Post Code	Installation Date	Estimated Replacement Date	Approximate minimum capital cost to replace equipment like for like at 2012 prices	Approximate annual revenue inspection & maintenance cost for off the van repairs	Assessment
Brearley Way	NE10 9JL	2003	2014/15	£2,000	£1,242	Inspected & replacement not required. Reassess in 12 months
Elisabethville	DH3 1JT	2004	2014/15	£40,000	£2,049	Under review along with other play facilities in the area, considering use of S106 monies
Rutland Squire	DH3 1JB	2006	2015/16	£25,000	£934	
Portmeads	DH3 2NJ	2006	2015/16	£15,000	£654	
Byermoor	NE16 6PA	2006	2015/16	£30,000	£1,242	
Argyle Estate	NE8 3HW	2007	2017/18	£60,000	£2,275	
Fellinghouse	NE10 0HB	2007	2017/18	£40,000	£2,339	
Blackhill Crec Toddler	NE9 7DN	2008	2018/19	£50,000	£1,242	
Sundew Park 1	NE9 6EX	2009	2019/20	£100,000	£4,306	
Birtley East	DH13 1NJ	2010	2020/21	£60,000	£2,271	
Blackhill Crec Junior	NE9 7DN	2011	2021/22	£100,000	£8,423	
Carr Hill Park	NE9 5PU	2011	2021/22	£80,000	£3,312	
Pipebridge Est	NE39 2JY	2012	2022/23	£80,000	£5,407	
Sundew Park 2	NE9 6EX	2012	2022/23	£60,000	£4,140	
Coltspool play area	NE11 0YS	2013	2023/24	New play area installed as part of development	Awaiting assessment	
Coltspool Pony	NE11 0YS	2013	2023/24	Installed as part of development	Awaiting assessment	

Appendix 2**Members' Briefing Note
Savings Proposals Implications and
Service Developments for 2014/15**

Savings proposals and the corresponding impact on each service are described below along with details of key service changes and developments for 2014/15.

Reduced mechanical sweeping

Savings proposal LES1 Reduction in cleansing standards across the borough

Mechanical brush sweeping on footpaths, roads and car parks will be reduced to help maintain a focus on higher profile areas such as shops and tourist locations.

Seasonal services such as the removal of leaf and blossom fall prioritised for aged persons' dwellings, steps and other high risk areas.

Work is ongoing to reschedule mechanical sweeper rounds and all effort will be made to try and reduce the impact of this service reduction.

Litter bin emptying will remain at current frequencies.

Grass cutting

Cutting frequencies on open spaces will remain the same and at 2013/14 levels (subject to weather conditions) although work is ongoing to revise working practices with the aim of reducing cutting frequencies where possible.

No further areas will be identified to be left uncut.

LES8 Reduction in maintenance standards for bowling greens and non-operational cemeteries. Carry out a formal review of the maintenance of football pitches across the borough. Reduce grounds maintenance in Parks to open space standards (3 week cycle).

Grass cutting frequencies in parks will be reduced to open space standards.

Stopped/reduced flower beds, hanging baskets and barrier baskets

Savings proposal LES19 Remove all flower beds from public areas with the exception of parks.

Floral bedding outside of Saltwell park and cemeteries and crematoria has been stopped and areas grassed over and planters removed.

Support will continue for community groups and volunteers who wish to provide and maintain floral bedding in parks and open spaces.

There will be a repeat of wildflower planting in appropriate areas including WW1 centenary poppy planting.

Shrub bed and hedge maintenance – no change

The overall number of rose and shrub beds has been decreased although there are no plans to reduce this further in 2014/15.

Weed control

There are no plans to reduce the current frequencies as below. A new contractor has been employed to undertake paths and highways herbicide applications in 2014/15.

We can only treat weeds once they have appeared due to the type of herbicide we are legally allowed to use on roads and paths. It can take several weeks for the herbicide to act fully and for the weed to die back.

- Strimming - once per year.
- Herbicide applications on roads and paths - 2 times per year although this arrangement and frequency is monitored throughout the year.
- Preventative weed control (around trees, obstacles, along walls and on shrub beds) -1 application.

Bowls and Sports Pitch Management

LES8 Reduction in maintenance standards for bowling greens and non-operational cemeteries. Carry out a formal review of the maintenance of football pitches across the borough. Reduce grounds maintenance in Parks to open space standards (3 week cycle).

We will endeavour to maintain standards at or around the same level as 2013/14.

Work continues with bowls and sports clubs to encourage and develop self-support and management models and a number of initiatives are ongoing.

Fees have been increased for 2014/15 and in general accepted by the service users.

Allotments

There has been no increase in fees for 2014/15.

Management of the allotment service transferred on 1 April 2014 from WS&GM to Development & Enterprise Property Services. WS&GM continue to support the transition.

Refuse and Recycling Collections

Refuse and blue bin recycling collections will continue to be carried out on an alternating weekly basis.

Garden waste collections will continue to be a fortnightly collection but have been aligned with the resources required for winter maintenance. This year collections commenced 1 April 2014 and will run through until 24 October 2014. Collections will be suspended for the winter period and will commence again in April 2015.

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)

The Campground HWRC is temporarily closed for refurbishment and an alternative facility has been provided at Albany Road, Gateshead.

The Campground HWRC is due to re-open on 1 July 2014 along with the subsequent closure of the Albany Road facility on the evening of 30 June 2014.

There will be a full information campaign in advance of the changes to make sure our residents and service users are aware.

Moving Forward – How we're doing things differently

Whilst responding to budgetary pressures by reducing or stopping services, there has been significant change in the way we provide and operate services, many of which have had a positive outcome.

Some of the ways we are doing things differently and planning for the future include:

Community Initiatives

D&E11 New method of delivery for the delivery of the Countryside Volunteers programme. (Integration with mainstream activities in LES).

There is a growing network of community support across the borough from 'Friends of' and community voluntary groups which support us in maintaining flower beds and public open spaces. Work will continue in 2014 to further develop this network and the range of tasks the groups can undertake and utilising the Council's new volunteering framework.

The Countryside Management team has been consolidated into WS&GM which brings with them around 100 active countryside ranger volunteers. The new team will complement and support current efforts to promote and develop volunteering opportunities for environmental initiatives.

New Working Structures & Arrangements

Savings proposal LES6 Review of Working Practices - Annualised Hours and Reductions in Overtime from working patterns.

Service teams have been re-aligned into a new interim structure including combined area working and zonal working for front line staff. These improvements have led to more efficient ways of delivering our services with reduced resources.

Work is ongoing to introduce 'annualised' hours to assist in meeting peak service demands during the growing season.

Depots Review

Work is ongoing to identify alternative facilities and uses for our sub depots at Chase Park Whickham, Hallgarth Winlaton, Heddon View Ryton, Felling depot and Follingsby salt store.

It is proposed to relocate services to other larger central depots and identify alternative options for the sub depots. Members will be kept updated as this proposal develops.

Review of grass cutting equipment

Trials are ongoing to use larger 'cylinder' grass cutting equipment which may offer improved cutting efficiency and speed over current rotary 'deck' mowers. The trial is necessary to identify whether the larger equipment can access all areas and whether they do result in more efficient grass cutting.

Selling our Services

Savings proposal LES20 Trade to the general public - floristry service. Bouquets, Weddings and Funeral packages etc.

Work continues on promoting our services to the commercial sector or public to generate income and offset the cost of the service e.g. developing a floristry service including wreaths and trees for Christmas.

Communications and Managing Customer Expectations

We continue to use of a number of standard letters and website and media messages to respond to the more common complaint types which ensures that a consistent formal response which reduces the likelihood for repeat and escalated complaints.

Significantly increased use of social media such as Facebook to help update our residents and explain changes and adverse effects on services. We will continue to use Council News, internal publications, Team Briefings and the media to help get messages across to our residents and visitors.

**Colin Huntington
Service Director
Waste Services &
Grounds Maintenance**

Outcomes and Impacts 2013/14

As a result of the local monitoring arrangements we have improved outcomes for Customers: -

- Issues are identified in the joint quarterly reports and meetings and actions agreed
- Effective partnership working is improving responses to local issues
- Due to good working relationships we are able to act on short notice to issues that come to light, addressing them in a timely manner.
- Customers are involved in the monitoring of the service agreement through the quarterly performance meetings with LES, estate tours and the annual survey
- Delivered a range of effective environmental community projects working in partnership with schools and local residents, for example Clean Up campaigns and involving school children in litter campaigns
- A range of Neighbourhood Pride schemes has been delivered across each of the five neighbourhood areas

Below are details of the work undertaken within the neighbourhoods.

South Neighbourhood

Kateregina Estate – a row of brambles which used to form a boundary on the estate was no longer required for this purpose. The brambles were a litter trap and residents felt it made the area look untidy. The brambles were removed, the area levelled and seeded and will be incorporated in the future grass cutting process.

Leyburn Place – shrubbed areas that were not on the maintenance programme were overgrown and blocking the elderly tenants windows and access paths. The shrubs were removed and the areas seeded so that they can be easily maintained in the future.

Elisabeth Avenue – a tenant who had health problems had been unable to manage the hedges to the property and they were overhanging an alleyway causing a security risk to those using the alley. LES cut back the hedges to a manageable level so that the family of the tenant could help support the tenant to maintain the hedges.

Easedale Gardens – a tree in a resident's garden was growing in an awkward angle and had started to push a neighbours fence over. The tree was removed by LES to prevent further damage to the fence.

Malone Gardens - a new tenant could not maintain the hedges in the garden as they had grown so tall prior to them moving in. Les cut down the hedges to a manageable level so that the tenant could maintain the hedges in the future.

Mount Road – A grassed area around the flats on Mount Road had become overgrown. The estate officer liaised with Local Environmental Services and the area was cut back and tidied as part of the Service Level Agreement.

Lansbury Drive & Birtley Villas – Neighbourhood Pride Funding was used to fit new seats to the sheltered schemes, which enabled residents to enjoy their surroundings during the finer weather.

Pleasant Place – LES fitted new handrails and a new seat at this sheltered scheme via Neighbourhood Pride which improved the access to and from the scheme for elderly residents and enabled them to enjoy their surroundings during finer weather.

Highlaws Gardens- Shrub beds that could not be maintained were removed and grass seed applied. The areas are now maintained within the grass cutting programme.

Mardale Gardens- Shrub beds were overgrown and in poor condition. These were stripped back and tidied to make them more maintainable in future.

Harlow Green- A hedge behind St Anne's school which was overgrowing onto the pavement area was cut back in the autumn.

Allerdene- LES have removed a large amount of the planting from planters/ beds they no longer have the resources to maintain. This has helped improve the look of the estate.

Harlow Green – Using Neighbourhood Pride Funding various handrails have been installed on external sets of stairs on five locations on the estate to make it easier for all residents to safely use these stairs.

Harlow Green- Pickering Green - A communal fence which was old, damaged and looked unsightly was replaced with new fencing using Neighbourhood Pride funding. The new replacement fence will improve the appearance of the area and will benefit all of the residents who live and look onto this area.

Allerdene- Issues with cars hitting parking bay walls on Allerdene estate resulting in large numbers of repairs to the walls in three parking areas on Trafford and Woodford. Using Neighbourhood Pride funding two raised curbs and two high visibility bollards were installed to each parking bay entrance to prevent this damage.

Springwell - Three trees were planted on Aycliffe Crescent. Paid for by Neighbourhood Pride to brighten up the street. The Community were involved with the planting of the trees.

Balmlaw- Beacon Lough East- Shrubs and bushes were overgrown and attracting litter to side of entrance to Allotments. As a result the areas was often subjected to fly tipping. LES cleared the area and cut the trees and bushes right back and bark chipped to totally improve the look of this area.

Beacon Lough East- Whinlaw- One of the motorcycle barriers in the gunnel alleyway area of Whinlaw was removed to allow wheel chair access. This was paid for by Neighbourhood Pride.

Ripley, Willerby, Beacon, Fell, and Lough Courts- To brighten up the front of the buildings two oak tubs for each block with compost were supplied with

Neighbourhood Pride funding and planted with spring bedding plants. The Caretakers of each block will maintain the plants although residents have been invited to get involved if they are interested in doing so.

Beacon Lough East Childrens Park- Two additional picnic benches were installed with wheelchair access and paid for through Neighbourhood Pride and Ward Councillors LCF funding to give enough picnic areas for families to use who visit the very popular park.

Beacon Lough East Park- Four large planters which had become overgrown and unkempt have been completely tidied and the soil was replenished and planted with a wildflower seed mix so that the containers are an attraction to park users and local residents. Neighbourhood Pride Funding was used to fund these works.

East Neighbourhood

Bill Quay – Wood Green – There has been an ongoing problem picked up through estate tours and the residents at Wood Green Sheltered Scheme with the grass being churned by cars and vans. Neighbourhood Pride funding supported the removal part of the grass on the narrow road to create a wider entrance for the vehicles.

Windy Nook – Kays Cottages – Neighbourhood Pride funding was used to plant low maintenance shrubs in the beds which the residents have agreed to maintain themselves together with chairs in the garden. This has improved the appearance of the estate and encourages residents to stay active in the community.

Windy Nook – Kays Cottages – The Residents Association at Kays Cottages Sheltered Scheme have secured a plot at a local Allotment. Neighbourhood Pride was used to erect a new shed to the allotment and fix up the existing green house door and shelves to make it safe for residents to use. Further funding was secured through Local Community Fund to provide a skip to help clear the area free from rubbish and the Community Pay Back scheme was used to erect a fence which was provided through the Handyman Team from one of our demolished estates. This partnership working has achieved great outcomes for the residents of Kays Cottages to help them maintain a healthy lifestyle to grow crops and vegetables for the residents and encouraged our elderly residents to keep healthy and active in a safe setting.

Windy Nook - Garvey Villas – A large overgrown hedge in Garvey Villas was unable to be maintained by the elderly tenant as it had grown over 5 foot and was impinging in the neighbour's garden who took pride in a clean tidy garden. The Responsive Grounds Maintenance budget was used to cut the hedge back which has improved the overall appearance of both gardens.

Redemmarsh/Rickgarth – Woodwynd – An additional litter bin has been fitted on a heavily used path adjacent to both Redemmarsh and Rickgarth estates. This has been funded through Neighbourhood Pride and is in response to issues raised by local

residents, specifically dog walkers who use the path on a regular basis. The bin will help to alleviate issues around dog fouling and litter.

Grange Crescent – Fallowfeld – An access path at the rear of Fallowfeld has been ‘opened up’ by removing overgrown hedges/shrubs and a fence in disrepair, both of which were exacerbating ASB/Youth Disorder issues in the area.

High Lanes – St Edmunds Drive – Overgrown hedge/shrubbed area has been removed in a back lane area which had been causing a blind spot and lending itself to ASB and Litter.

Boghouse – Rear of Drivecote - Overgrown hedge/shrubbed area has been removed in a back lane area which had been causing a blind spot and lending itself to ASB and Litter.

Inner West Neighbourhood

Eslington Park Estate – involving the residents at **Morris Street**, difficult to maintain shrubs were removed and the area grass seeded. This has reduced the amount of litter in the area, which has improved the entrance of the estate.

Rose Milling Estate –local residents reported damaged fencing around the communal bin enclosure at a block of flats at **Rose Street**. LES removed the fence and opened up the bin area which has made it more accessible to customers.

Victoria – following complaints from a new resident at **Queens Court**, LES cut back and removed rubbish and reseeded the grass area of the communal garden area which allowed the residents to carry on with the up keep of the area.

Eslington and Redheugh Court – during estate tours of the area, it was noted that cars were parking inappropriately on grass verges, birds -mouth fencing was erected on the grass verges and LES carried out grass verge repairs to enhance the appearance of both blocks.

Watergate – An elderly resident’s fence line collapsed onto a right of way on **Southfield Road**, due to the weight of ivy growing on it. LES removed the ivy growth so that the fence could be made safe and the path made accessible to members of the public.

Clasper Village – 5 raised shrub planters were becoming overgrown attracting rubbish and fly tipping throughout clasper village. To improve the appearance of the estate, the shrub beds were removed and bark mulched over.

Holmeside – Unsightly bramble bushes on the communal grass area to the front of the properties at **Oak Avenue** were removed and grassed to improve the appearance of the area.

Dunston Road Estate – following complaints from residents during an estate tour at **Meadow Lane**, LES cut back and removed shrubs in the communal garden..

Dunston Road Estate – overgrown and unsightly ivy was removed from the external walls of **Meadow Lane** to prevent further growth into Bin room areas.

Swalwell – Vegetation from a mixture of residents gardens and open planned land at **South View Terrace** were overgrown and blocking access onto the footpath areas, LES removed the vegetation to improve access

Derwentwater Road – dense overgrown shrubs near **Charlton Walk** was attracting litter and fly tipping from pedestrians using the nearby subway. Youths also gathered in the area using the shrubs as natural cover. The shrubs were cut back to resolve these issues and improve the overall appearance of the area

Rectory Hall – local residents had raised issues of inadequate external seating area within the sheltered scheme. Working with the residents, LES installed a new patio area and seats including raised planting areas.

Dunston Park –local residents had complained about overgrown shrubs which had damaged boundary fence lines at **Lister Avenue**, Les removed the shrubs so that a new fence line could be installed to increase security for the local residents

Victoria Road – local residents complained of inappropriate car parking to grass verges on Victoria Road, birds -mouth fencing was erected on the grass verges and LES carried out grass verge repairs to the enhance the appearance of the estate.

West Neighbourhood

Shibdon Bank - Rear of Linden Road Children's Home

A disused, fenced off area behind the Children's home which is adjacent to Greengates play park had become a magnet for youths to hang out, causing damage and anti-social behaviour. The area was covered in large shrubs which were being used as dens and areas for hiding out. The Police had become concerned about the level of nuisance this was causing so we involved LES to carry out an intensive clearance of the area to improve visibility and deter youths.

Hallgarth - Heddon View/Hallgarth cut

Litter and broken glass have been gathering in conifer trees around the cut and behind the fencing of a neighbouring property. The issue was raised at TASKING and as a result additional litter sweeps were carried out to try to improve the area but unfortunately the issue continued. LES have removed the conifers and cleared all the rubbish which has made a dramatic difference to the area, reducing the opportunity for fly tipping, making the area look more attractive and safer.

Pipebridge - communal areas on Leazes View

Bushes and shrubs in the communal garden to the rear of Leazes View had become very bushy over the years and were so thick that they were encroaching onto the grassed area. This was making the garden look unsightly. LES removed these to open up the area and approve the appearance for the residents who use the area.

Emmaville Estate - Emmaville

Tenants had complained that cars were being parked over dropped kerbs and access paths making progressing around the scheme difficult. Neighbourhood Pride funded bollards to these areas restricting the parking and allowing full access.

Snook Hill/St Pauls - Whinney Close

The tenants had expressed an interest in starting a gardening club. Through the use of Responsive Grounds Maintenance budgets the area was tidied up and a gravel bed was laid to allow an area for tenants to sit and socialise during the warmer months. A greenhouse was also purchased through the Tenant Led Budget to help with the tenant becoming self-sufficient with plants for the coming years.

Bagnall Grange - Mosspool

The tenants were concerned about an area of unused ground to the rear of the communal lounge. They had expressed an interest in starting a garden club that all abilities could participate in. Through joint working with the local Councillor, the Friends of Blaydon garden group and LES, Neighbourhood Pride funded the creation of a raised garden area, high enough for all to access the planting areas with a gravel paths to maintain a clean area.

Rowlands Gill - Kells Way

Tenants had complained about the lack of light in their properties via a tree in the rear gardens. As the criteria had changed regarding tree pruning and felling for light disturbance the Arbour budget was used to have the tree removed following neighbour consultation.

Lower Rowlands Gill - Burnopfield Road

An area of shrubbery in the car park had become massively overgrown and was reducing visibility for residents using the area, causing it to become a hazard. LES removed all of the bushes, levelling it out to improve safety for both drivers and pedestrians whilst also improving the appearance of the area.

Emmaville Estate - Emmaville – Tenants had complained that cars were being parked over dropped kerbs and access paths making progressing around the scheme difficult. Neighbourhood Pride funded bollards to these areas restricting the parking and allowing full access.

Central Neighbourhood

Mulgrave Villas - residents complained about an area of land outside the block which was unsightly and in need of attention. Two new planters were installed and new planting introduced to improve the appearance for residents and their visitors.

Moorfoot Gardens - planters were in disrepair and had very little planting in them. Planters were refurbished and residents were consulted to agree the type of plants that were to be used. Residents also assisted with the planting of these. This complimented the work residents have already carried out, introducing their own hanging baskets and pots outside of their homes. In addition to this LES have also carried out a number of improvements to remove existing, overgrown shrubs and introduce new planting and bark mulch in the area.

Browning Square - following the recent demolition of a toilet block that left an area of land in need of attention fruit trees have been introduced within the grassed area and planters have been tidied and new planting introduced. Future maintenance of the planters is to be carried out by the caretakers of Newbolt/Tennyson Court.

Warwick Court - environmental works have been carried out to remove unsightly shrubs and trees within the grounds of Warwick Court. These have been

replaced with new planting to improve the appearance of the area for residents and their visitors. Residents also got involved tidying the planter areas with assistance from LES and the caretaker.

Regent Court – residents felt that the area leading up to the front entrances of the block was overgrown and untidy. To address this, existing shrubs were removed from the area and replaced with dwarf fruit trees and attractive purple slate.

Ventnor Crescent – steps leading to Saltwell Road were very dark due to overhanging trees and land either side was overgrown and encroaching onto the steps. Residents felt that the steps were dangerous and they were reluctant to use them, especially when it was dark. The area either side of the steps was strimmed back and tidied and trees cut back making the area lighter and easier to access.

East Street flats – shrubs at the front of the three blocks were attracting rats and trapping litter. These shrubs were removed and the area seeded to address the situation, while improving the appearance of the area

Grampian Gardens – the drying area next to the properties was overgrown and full of weeds. Improvements were carried out to carry out treatment to remove the weeds and trim the area surrounding area.

Argyle Estate - Area was untidy and a flowerbed was overgrown. The area has been tidied and the flower bed removed and seeded. .

Mendip Gardens – Tenants complained that bushes outside their windows were attracting a lot of litter and bees. LES attended and removed the bushes and seeded the area. This resolved the problem while improving the appearance of the area.

Tribune Place – Residents complained of a build-up of weeds and moss at the rear of the bungalows which was unsightly and dangerous. LES attended and tidied the area and carried out treatment in the area.

Rear of Carr Hill shops – This area at the rear of the shops was untidy and overgrown. A general tidy up was carried out to improve the appearance of the area.

St James Village – Residents have complained that there are a number of unsightly bushes throughout the estate and these are attracting rats, litter and needles have also been found. These areas were identified by working with residents and bushes were removed and the areas seeded.

Pilgimsway – A ‘no mans’ land’ area was identified following complaints from residents as being overgrown and unsightly. LES attended and cleared the area to the satisfaction of local residents.