



Report to Customer and Communities Committee

6 May 2015

Title: Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement 2015/16

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 8 May 2014 detailing the Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement for the period 2014/15. 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 Communities and Environment
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 2015/16 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 during 2013/14. 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, Communities and Environment and customers.

Customer Involvement in Monitoring Performance

9. 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.
10. 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 Communities and Environment. 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

11. 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.
12. Positively, Customers and Environment will continue to deliver the same level of service as agreed in the 2014/15 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 2015/16
 - There will be no spring or summer floral planting
 - Litter picking hotspots areas have been reviewed
 - Mechanical sweepers have been reduced however, the routes have been re-aligned to share across all areas
 - TGHC Fixed play equipment review and replacement programme
13. 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.
14. A performance management framework involving customers is in place to monitor the service provided and support the delivery of the service agreement.
15. 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.

Sustainable Communities Fund

16. Customer satisfaction has continued to fall across the estates and neighbourhoods over the last few years. We have successfully delivered a range of Neighbourhood Pride and Design out Crime schemes across the neighbourhoods.
17. Whilst these schemes have positively enabled us to tackle local issues and improve the appearance of estates, it was timely to review our approach. The

terms of reference for Neighbourhood Pride and Designing out crime were similar but by combining the two along with the budget, this will enable us to deliver more innovative and wider ranging schemes to tackle local issues, sustain estates and neighbourhoods and help improve customer satisfaction.

18. This will provide an overall budget of £270k, which includes £20K contribution from the Council's Communities and Environment service. The benefits of the combined fund are :
 - Local accountability to address issues that are important to customers
 - Regain a sense of pride in neighbourhoods and strengthen the sense of community and connection with the area, engaging with customers
 - Tackle environmental crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Improve access to services and facilities for all residents across each neighbourhood.
19. Going forward this year, we will be doing some joint work with the Council's Street Enforcement Team to raise public awareness and educate customers on environmental issues and encourage positive behaviour through local campaigns. This will also include closer working around enforcement issues and maximising the use of the new tools and powers under the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014
20. The new Terms of Reference for Sustainable Communities Fund is attached in Appendix 2.

Links to Values

21. This report relates to the following company values:
 - Customer focussed
 - Open and Honest
 - Inclusive and Valuing Diversity
 - Innovative
 - Accountable

Impact for customers

22. Expected outcomes from the 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.

23. 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. The measure of satisfaction is asked as part of an annual themed survey specifically focused on estate management and sent to a sample of 5,000 customers.

TGHC Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction	2011	2012	2013	2014
% satisfied with the appearance of their estate and how it is maintained	71.76%	64.7%	60.6%	57.9%
	549 Respondents	645 Respondents	308 Respondents	345 Respondents
% overall satisfied with their neighbourhood	81.06%	79.1%	74.2%	67.7%

24. Each tenant who expressed dissatisfaction as part of the 2014 survey is being contacted in order to address the issue raised. The outcomes from these follow up contacts will be captured as part of the monitoring meetings with Communities and Environment and form part of the service agreement monitoring meetings in each neighbourhood.
25. As can be seen from the headline results, the level of satisfaction continues to fall year on year and the number of respondents remains low, at 7% of those surveyed. 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.
26. The top three priorities that customers felt would improve their estates remain the same as last year which are: -
- Street Cleaning
 - Grass cutting
 - Removal of dog fouling
27. 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

28. 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.

29. Managing customer expectations alongside the performance management framework will be necessary during 2014/15 to minimise this potential impact.

Financial Implications

30. The Grounds Maintenance contract is funded by the Council's Housing Revenue Account and LES has confirmed the budget for 2015/16 of £1,480,000, which remains the same as for 2014/15. In addition the inspection of play areas and minor maintenance associated with play items are included in this budget.
31. This also includes for 2015/16 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.
32. 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.
33. The charges for pest control services remain the same as for 2014/15.

Equality and Diversity Implications

34. 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

35. 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

36. 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

37. 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

38. The committee is asked:-

- to approve the Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement for 2015/16
- if they are satisfied with the new approach developed for the Sustainable Communities Fund;
- receive a report in September 2015 on estate management activity under taken in 2014/15.



APPENDIX 1

Service Agreement

Between

The Gateshead Housing Company

And

Gateshead Council
Communities and Environment

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 2015)

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 2015/16
Appendix 5	Three Weekly Zones – Timetable April to October 2015
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 2014/15 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 Communities and Environment employees are briefed on standards, in particular highlighting the changes within this year's agreement and the structured relationship between TGHC and Communities and Environment

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 **Communities and Environment** 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 2014/15 service agreement and specification
- The Audit Commission Inspection report 2009
- Delivering the service within the remit of relevant **Communities and Environment** Best Value indicators
- 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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, **Communities and Environment** will:

- 2.1. Continuously review the management of operations to demonstrate value for money and administrative processes across **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** and The Gateshead Housing Company.
- 4.6. Enquiries: **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** and those provided within The Gateshead Housing Company.

2. Responsibilities of Local Environmental services

The responsibilities of **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment**. 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 **Communities and Environment**.
- 2.4. To update and improve **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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. **Communities and Environment** 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. **Communities and Environment** 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, **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** .
- 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 **Communities and Environment**
- 3.4. Will comply with **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** Service Director of Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 2015 and will be reviewed by 31 March 2016.
- 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. **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** is unable to provide the required discretionary services; The Gateshead Housing Company with **Communities and Environment** 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. **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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. **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** to make good shall be carried out at Local Environmental Services own expense.

10. General behaviour

- 10.1 Employees from **Communities and Environment** and sub contractors contracted to work on behalf of **Communities and Environment** , 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** shall make good at its own expense. This will be to the satisfaction of The Gateshead Housing Company.

Signatures

On behalf of Communities and Environment **On behalf of TGHC**

Signature Signature.....

Name..... Name.....

Title..... Title.....

Date..... Date.....

SECTION 4

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE STANDARDS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Grass cutting

- 1.1. As part of budget savings **Communities and Environment** 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 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, **Communities and Environment** 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. 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 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** will edge all grassed areas on a three year rolling programme to maintain a satisfactory environmental appearance. The programme for each Neighbourhood area will be discussed and agreed between TGHC and **Communities and Environment**
- 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 **Communities and Environment**
- 2.3 The **Communities and Environment** edging programme will be monitored through the quarterly performance meetings held in each neighbourhood area.

3. Shrub Maintenance

- 3.1. 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.
- 3.2. Shrubs that need additional attention for any particular reason will be done so within an agreed timescale.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. Areas that have been identified for sustainable planting, (installed 2011), will receive the same maintenance as shrub beds but will not receive any pruning due to species used and will be left to grow to maturity.

4. Hedge Maintenance

- 4.1 **Communities and Environment** 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.
- 5.1. **Communities and Environment** shall be required to carry out hedge pruning operations in order to maintain hedges in a neat, tidy and pleasant appearance.
- 5.2. 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 **Communities and Environment** should use the following regulations as guidance.

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

The 'Bird Nesting Season' is officially from February until August (Natural England) but in reality the nesting period may start before this and extend beyond it, in some cases. The busiest time for nesting birds is from 1st March until 31st July and varies according to species, etc. It is recommended that vegetation works or site clearance should be done outside of the nesting season. 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.

- 5.3. TGHC will report to **Communities and Environment** when it is necessary to cut hedges outside the routine maintenance schedule.

6. Plant/Weed growth

- 6.1. **Communities and Environment** 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, gulleys and other problems identified.
- 6.4. **Communities and Environment** 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 April** and **September July** 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. **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** will be removed as required including main pathways, car parks and alleyways.

8.2. Where there is heavy leaf fall or wind blown leaves **Communities and Environment** 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.

11. Quality Checks

11.1. **Communities and Environment** 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. **Communities and Environment** will endeavour for routine street cleansing and grounds maintenance operations to minimise the conditions where moss can grow.
- 12.2. **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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.

2.13.3. The work undertaken as part of the Service Agreement will fall into two categories :

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

i) 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.

ii) Risk based inspections to be developed as part of the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy will support 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 **Communities and Environment** ,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, **Communities and Environment** 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 causing an obstruction** 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 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. **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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. **Communities and Environment** will be responsible for carrying out this maintenance using current industry best practice guidelines.

13.19. At all times during operations, **Communities and Environment** 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 2015/16**. **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 ~~have developed~~ ~~are currently developing~~ a Corporate Tree Strategy to manage all trees across the borough which will include trees on land managed by TGHC. TGHC ~~have been~~ ~~will be~~ involved in the project group developing the strategy ~~which has undergone~~ ~~will undergo~~ consultation during **2014/15**. The service agreement for tree works has been reviewed to take into account any impact of the strategy.

Electronic Tree Maintenance Order System

13.24. An electronic tree maintenance order system is in place 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 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. **Communities and Environment** 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 **2015/16** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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. 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. **Communities and Environment will respond to larger accumulations and incidents causing significant nuisance. Other incidents of dog fouling will be cleared as part of the scheduled cleansing programme for that area.**

16. Abandoned Vehicles

- 16.1. **Communities and Environment, 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. **Communities and Environment** 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. **Communities and Environment will ensure that they respond to incidents of fly-tipping/illegal dumping within the Council's service standards of 7 working days for non-hazardous waste, this allows for full investigation and removal. Hazardous waste will be**

collected within 2 working days and this allows for full investigation and removal by the appropriate contractor.

- 17.4. **Communities and Environment** to ensure that when responding to incidents of fly tipping they should inform either TGHC or **Communities and Environment** 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, **Communities and Environment** 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, **Communities and Environment** 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, **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** 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
- HSW Act 1992 and Local Government Bylaws
- Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- RoSPA "Play Safety" guidelines.

18.8. **Communities and Environment** have changed working practices from April 2012 to ensure they continue to carry out the regular inspections of fixed play areas.

18.9 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** will maintain records of equipment installation dates, condition and lifespan projection

- 18.11 In addition to the routine inspections **Communities and Environment** will arrange Annual inspections of equipment.
- 18.12 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** will select and arrange for the purchase of new/replacement equipment in agreement with TGHC.
- 18.14 **Communities and Environment** 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, **Communities and Environment** for the investigation of insurance claims.
- 18.22 **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** will provide quarterly reports to TGHC on a borough wide 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. **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment** with repairs/costs/forward action planning agreeable between both parties.
- 18.27 TGHC will work with **Communities and Environment** 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 **Communities and Environment**, 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 **Communities and Environment** Fixed Play Officer will report any significant issues arising from any incident direct to the relevant TGHC Neighbourhood Services Manager.

Appendix 1.

**Communities and Environment 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

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

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 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 2015/16		
SERVICE	APPROVED CHARGE	ADMIN NOTE
INSECT CONTROL		
Council Houses Standard Treatment Special Treatment	£70.00 Covers visits up to 2 x 1 hour or equivalent Actual Cost - Where situation exceeds standard service criteria	FREE to tenant Invoice GHC
RODENT CONTROL		
Council Houses (RATS AND MICE) Standard Treatment Special Treatment	£70.00 Covers visits up to 3 x 1 hour or equivalent Actual Cost - Where situation exceeds standard service criteria	FREE to tenant Invoice GHC

All charges are inclusive of 20% VAT unless stated

Appendix 2

Review and Performance Monitoring Timetable

Activity	Date	Responsibility
Neighbourhood quarterly grounds maintenance monitoring meetings, including customer involvement	July 2015 October 2015 January 2016 April 2016	LES and Communities and Environment
Quarterly reports Service Agreement performance	July 2015 October 2015 January 2016 April 2016	Communities and Environment and TGHC
Service Agreement Review partnership meeting	October 2015 January 2016	Communities and Environment and TGHC
TGHC survey results 2015	October 2015	TGHC
Renewal of the Service Agreement	April 2016	TGHC and Communities and Environment

Appendix 3

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE AGREEMENT
QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING

NEIGHBOURHOOD

Example covering all quarters and cycles of activity		
KEY AREAS	COMMENTS	
GRASS CUTTING		
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		

--	--	--

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

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 **Communities and
Environment**

Customers in Attendance:

Appendix 4

LES Neighbourhood Services - Service Frequencies 2015/16

What:	Frequency – 2014/15	Frequency 2015/16	Notes:
Grass cutting Frequencies			
Estates and Open Spaces	15 day	15 days	No Change
Flail / Reform (banksides)	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 Parks	5 days 15 Days	5 days 15 days	No Change 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 Neighbourhood shopping areas.
Town Centre	Daily	Daily	No Change

Estates	When in zone & on demand (3 weekly zones introduced and published)	When in zone & on demand (3 weekly zones introduced and published)	No Change
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 – Medium /Small	1 sweeper per area (2 in Central) to work with teams in line with grass cutting on a 3 week turnaround	4 medium sweepers and 1 small for town centre.	Medium/small sweepers reduced from 6 to 5 Sweeping routes re-aligned to share resource across all areas.
Mechanical Sweepers – Large	1 sweeper to be shared on a 2 week turnaround between 4 areas (2.5 days each) Central to retain one sweeper	1 large sweeper	Large sweepers reduced from 2 to 1. Sweeping routes re-aligned to share resource across all areas.
Fly tipping	No change	No change	No Change
Herbicide Treatment:			
Strimming	Once per year	Once per year	No Change. Obstacles 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
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. Maintenance inspection once every 3 months.

Weekly Zone Timetable – 30 March to 30 October 2015

Appendix 5

Note: For 2015, grass cutting and cleansing services in Deckham and Lobley Hill and Bensham Wards are managed by the East and Inner West teams respectively.

INNER WEST

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
30 March 2015	One	Teams, Dunston, Clasper Village, Marian Court, Bensham and Saltwell
6 April 2015	Two	Whickham, Swalwell, Lobbley Hill, Festival Park
13 April 2015	Three	Whickham, Sunnside, Marley Hill, Byermoor Windmill Hills (part) Bridges Area

WEST

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
30 March 2015	One	Blaydon, Winlaton
6 April 2015	Two	Winlaton Mill, Rowlands Gill, Highfield, Blackhall Mill, Chopwell, High Spen
13 April 2015	Three	Greenside, Crawcrook, Ryton, Blaydon Industrial

CENTRAL

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
30 March 2015	One	Bensham (part) and Saltwell areas, Ventnor Gardens, Gateshead Town centre, Sage and Baltic, Quayside
6 April 2015	Two	Sunderland Road,
13 April 2015	Three	Marian Court, Windmill Hills, Mulgrave Villas, Bridges area

EAST

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
30 March 2015	One	Felling, Old Fold, Nest Estate, Stoneygate, Leam Lane (west of Meresyde) Deckham, Carr Hill, Shipcote
6 April 2015	Two	Bill Quay, Pelaw, Wardley, Wardley Park Estate, Leam Lane (East of Cotemedede and

		Meresyde)
13 April 2015	Three	Windy Nook, Whitehills, Felling (East of Chillside Road) Leam Lane (west of Cotemed)

SOUTH

Week commencing Monday	Zone	Areas included
30 March 2015	One	Eighton Banks, Springwell, Seven Stars, Lyndhurst, Beacon Lough, Sheriff Hill
6 April 2015	Two	Allerdene, Harlow Green, Low Fell, Kells Lane, Dryden Road, Saltwell Road, Gleneagles Road
13 April 2015	Three	Birtley, Kibblesworth, Lamesley, Cowan Gardens

Please refer to Inner West Table for future zone dates

Sheltered Housing Units: (included)

Birtley Villas 1-25; 26-50
McErlane Square
Pleasant Place 1-23; 24-56
East Lea
Mulgrave Villas
West Park **to be removed once remaining tenants are rehoused**
Angel Court
Harrison 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
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
Byermoor	NE16 6PA	Toddler/junior/ball play
Pipebridge Estate	NE39 2JY	Junior/ball play
Argyle Street, Tyne View	NE8 3HW	Junior/muga
Carr Hill park	NE9 5PU	Junior/ball play
Fellinghouse Gardens	NE10 0HB	Junior/ball play
Brearley Way	NE10 9JL	5 a side
Birtley East	DH3 1NH	Junior/toddler
Rutland Square	DH3 1JB	Junior
Elisabethville	DH3 1JT	Junior
Portmeads Tots	DH3 2NJ	Toddler
Blackhill Crescent	NE9 7DN	Junior
Sundew Park	NE9 6EX	Junior/toddler
Ouselaw	NE11 0TL	Toddler unequipped (incl artwork sculpture)
Coltspool play area	NE11 0YS	Junior/toddler
Coltspool pony	NE11 0YS	Toddler unequipped (incl artwork sculpture)

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

Play Area Name	Post Code	Installation Date	Replacement Date	Approximate minimum capital cost to replace equipment like for like at 2015 prices	Comments
Elisabethville	DH3 1JT	2004	2015/16	£58,000	Equipment inspected December 2014 – safe but fair condition and can remain this year . Consultation has commenced with ward members and residents with regard to the future of the play area. Results expected May 2015
Brearley Way	NE10 9JL	2003	2016/17	£3,000	Football goals inspected December 2014 – safe condition. Can remain this year. Review again Dec 2015. Consider repaint or replace in 2016
Rutland Square	DH3 1JB	2006	2016/17	£30,000	Equipment inspected December 2014 - good condition replacement not required. Review again Dec 2016 for replacement and/or resurfacing in 2017.
Portmeads	DH3 2NJ	2006	2016/17	£18,000	Equipment inspected December 2014 – safe but fair condition and replacement required 2016. Check again Dec 2015. Consider clean and repaint in interim. Consultation with ward members and residents to be carried out during 2015
Byermoor	NE16 6PA	2006	2016/17	£30,000	Equipment inspected December 2014 – safe but fair condition. Replacement required 2016. Check again Dec 2015. Consider clean and repaint in interim. Consider requirement for facility. Consultation with ward members and residents to be carried during 2015
Argyle Estate	NE8 3HW	2007	2017/18	£60,000	
Fellinghouse	NE10 0HB	2007	2017/18	£40,000	
Blackhill Cres Toddlr	NE9 7DN	2008	2018/19	£50,000	
Sundew Park 1	NE9 6EX	2009	2019/20	£100,000	
Birtley East	DH13 1NJ	2010	2020/21	£60,000	
Blackhill Cres Junior	NE9 7DN	2011	2021/22	£100,000	
Carr Hill Park	NE9 5PU	2011	2021/22	£80,000	
Pipebridge Est	NE39 2JY	2012	2022/23	£80,000	
Sundew Park 2	NE9 6EX	2012	2022/23	£60,000	
Ouselaw	NE11	2014	2024/25	£25,000	
Coltspool play area	NE11	2014	2024/25	£60,000	
Coltspool pony	NE11	2014	2024/25	£30,000	

Sustainable Communities Fund (formerly Neighbourhood Pride & Designing Out Crime)

Aims

To provide innovative schemes that will help improve the sustainability of the estates and Neighbourhoods we manage and support community cohesion.

More specifically

- To improve pride in neighbourhoods by enhancing the local environment
- To tackle environmental crime and anti-social behaviour
- Improve access to services and facilities for all residents across each neighbourhood.
- Strengthen the sense of community and connection with the area.

Types of schemes

This is not a definitive list but a brief guide to the range of schemes that could be considered.

- Schemes that improve the physical appearance of the local environment including open spaces and communal areas of flats and older person's schemes.
- Support of national initiatives such as Keep Britain Tidy campaigns, Community payback, National Tree Week, Schools projects.
- Address security issues and assist with tackling of anti-social behaviour to individual properties, open spaces or communal areas of flats.
- Work with partners to support initiatives that promote healthy living, reduce health inequality and improve access and the use of recreation facilities within the neighbourhood.
- Support measures that seek to address fuel poverty and promote financial inclusion
- Initiatives that support and encourage digital inclusion providing access for all members of local communities.
- Promote cultural heritage and local history.

Schemes should:

- Involve members of the community to identify local issues and provide local solutions

- Involve ward members where they may have an impact on the wider community.
- Where appropriate involve partners including the Council and LES
- Not have ongoing revenue implications
- Demonstrate value for money.
- Be on or adjacent to, land managed by TGHC

The budget:

- Will be divided equally between the five neighbourhoods. Then sub divided between Housing Offices as agreed between NSM and HM
- Can be used to match fund with other budgets such as – Safer Neighbourhoods and LCF.
- Should not be used to **replace** existing mainstream capital or revenue budgets.
- Can be used to **enhance or complement** existing or proposed schemes.

Scheme Approvals

- Completed Scheme Request forms should be submitted to the relevant Housing Manager for approval.
- Any scheme with a value of over £2,000 will require approval by the Neighbourhood Services Manager or the Housing Services Manager for schemes for the Older Persons Service. The completed SR form should be signed by the HM and forwarded to the NSM for approval.
- The NSM will monitor overall spend in their neighbourhoods.

Evaluation of schemes

- HM are responsible for producing an annual report outlining the schemes funded during the financial year and circulate amongst partners and ward members.

Grounds Maintenance Impacts and Outcomes for 2014-15

East

Bog House – Watermill Lane-Residents had complained about the condition of a particular grass verge on Watermill Lane that had been damaged by vehicles. Communities and Environment replaced the grass verge with 'GOLPA' – a solution designed to preserve the condition of the verge itself. The condition of the verge has improved with the knock on effect that the look of the local area has also improved.

McErlane Square-Residents asked for a seat to be provided and shrubs removed at the side of the sheltered scheme to enable them to be able to enjoy the nice weather by sitting outside. Neighbourhood Price funding was accessed and shrubs were removed and a seat provided to respond to the wishes of the residents.

Japanese Knotweed - Various Locations -A number of tenants had reported to us that they were suffering from Japanese Knotweed at their properties. Work was agreed with Communities and Environment to treat this issue in various locations. These works will be repeated over the next 2 years in order to fully alleviate the issues concerned.

Joyce Close-Some planting in order to allow residents to enjoy the benefit of sitting outside the scheme during the warm weather. The planting also provided a more welcoming feel and improved appearance at the entrance of the scheme.

Woodwynd, Leam Lane-There is a dense wooded/shrubbed area at the rear of Woodwynd which is frequently used by walkers and dog walkers. We had received reports of fly tipping and litter. Communities and Environment thinned out the area and cleared the litter. The outcome being that the area looks better and has also allayed fears from local residents regarding ASB.

Sheraton, Leam Lane-There is a dense wooded/shrubbed area at the rear of Sheraton which is frequently used by walkers and dog walkers. We had received reports of fly tipping and litter. Communities and Environment thinned out the area and cleared the litter. The outcome being that the area looks better and has also allayed fears from local residents regarding ASB.

St Edmunds Drive, Leam Lane-An area of no-man's land had become very overgrown which detracted from the overall appearance of the local area. Communities and Environment cleared the area, helping to improve the overall look within the locality.

South

Shopping Centre Garages, Beacon Lough Rd-This area at the back of the shops and garages was always littered and had become an eyesore with overgrown weeds and rubbish. Communities and Environment then cleared all rubbish and weeds from the area which greatly improved the look of this area. This area was then added to the contract for Communities and Environment to weed control in future.

Lyndhurst South- Planted areas at Lyndhurst South were overgrown and in poor condition. These were stripped back and tidied to make them more maintainable in future.

Whitehouse Cres, Springwell -Particular issue with strimming on fence lines in this street. This was then carried out within 6 weeks of being reported.

Dorset Avenue - Following an Anti-Social Behaviour complaint regarding this area being used as a hotspot for fly tipping and being generally untidy and overgrown. The hedge was cut down to 4 foot and for all brambles around the site were strimmed and the rubbish removed.

Norfolk Place-The area was prone to fly tipping and overgrown. Shrubs and tree stumps were removed and the area seeded.

Fell Close-Shrubs and roots were causing damage to a property and therefore removed.

Acomb Court Seating Area -A metal boundary fencing was altered to create a grassed seating area has been provided at the request of residents living in Acomb Court, so they can sit outside the block taking their own deck chair with them when the weather is nice.

Beacon Lough East-An old kick-rail fencing that had deteriorated over the years was presenting a tripping hazard for residents and causing a strimming issue for Communities and Environment. The fence was removed and has totally improved the safety and look of this area.

Inner West

Holmeside -An area of 'no man's land' between an Oak Avenue garage and boundary fence of a property was cleared of rubbish and unsightly shrubs were cut back.

Ivy on back wall of a property in Poplar Crescent was removed as it was encroaching on windows of leasehold property above.

Lower Teams - Residents at Yetholm Road complained that a "flower bed" had 4 foot high thistles/nettles and that grass and weeds were growing out of the walls and paths of bungalows. Communities and Environment did a general tidy of the area. The gardens of a long term empty property, on Upton Street were overgrown and being used to dump rubbish. Communities and Environment strimmed the gardens and removed all the rubbish

Ravenworth Road - A Ward Member raised an issue that land adjacent to the demolition site had become overgrown and was bringing the look of the area down. Communities and Environment strimmed back the grass and did a general tidy.

Swalwell-An area of land located to the rear of a garden in Valley Drive had become overgrown and was growing into neighbouring gardens. The resident was unable to maintain the area therefore Communities and Environment removed all vegetation, turned the soil over and grass seeded. The area of land was incorporated into the garden service once the job was completed.

Byermoor -A property on Gibside Crescent had vegetation growing in the path around the building which was contributing to a dampness issue. Communities and Environment removed the vegetation and added some herbicidal treatment to reduce the risk of it growing back.

Dunston Park- Communities and Environment worked with residents of Beech Drive to prepare flower beds which will be maintained in the future by the residents. Neighbourhood Pride funding was used to do this work and to provide plants for the residents to install.

Eslington Court-It was noticed on an estate tour that metal fencing around the grassed area was, broken, twisted and rusting in places and generally did not serve a purpose. The fence was removed, which improved the look of the area and made the maintenance of the area easier.

Swallowwell-A hedge on the corner of a block of flats in Morris Road was so overgrown it had become unmanageable for the residents. The layout of the gardens made it difficult for residents to maintain the hedge therefore the hedge was removed by the Communities and Environment arbor team and replaced by a fence. This greatly improved the look of the area, gave improved access to LES to maintain the adjacent communal land and improved visibility for drivers using garages located at the rear of the gardens.

Victoria-A raised flower bed in Queens Court had become overgrown with weeds, the shrubs had come to the end of their life and it was used as a dumping ground for litter. Communities and Environment removed the planter altogether and used tarmac to level the land and incorporate into the existing pathways.

West

East Lea – Residents had complained about the lack of floral display to the main entrance of their communal area. Work was carried out by Communities and Environment to install a raised flower beds with planting to the main entrance of the building. Local residents now maintain the planted areas which have improved the appearance to the entrance of the communal lounge.

Lower Rowlands Gill – Communities and Environment have removed large overgrown bushes and self seeders to the front communal entrances to a block of flats on **Burnopfield Road**, which were restricting access to resident's properties.

High Spen – A large bush on open planned landed adjacent to a junction on **Bute Road South** was overgrown and causing an obstruction to vehicle users. The bush was removed which resolved the issue and improved the overall appearance of the estate.

Parkhead Estate – A number of properties on **Parkhead Square** had overgrown and unsightly ivy growth removed by Communities and Environment to prevent further growth into properties.

Ryton Central – A large number of shrubs surrounded the communal room at **Greenfields**, these were difficult to maintain by Communities and Environment and looked unsightly. Working with local residents and Communities and Environment, these shrubs were removed and a slate boarder installed with raised planters, which local residents maintain.

Bleach Green - Working with local residents who remain on the estate it was agreed that a number of gardens which were empty on the estate were overgrown on **Birch and Elm Road**. A number of gardens, shrubs and trees were cut back to maintain a high standard of cleanliness and grounds maintenance on the estate.

Lakes Estate – local residents had raised issues of inadequate external seating within the sheltered scheme at **Rydal Crescent**. Working with residents, Communities and Environment installed a new patio area and raised planting area.

Ryton Central – Local residents informed us of overgrown shrubs and debris between two properties at **Greenfields**. The shrubs and debris were removed which meant Communities and Environment could access and maintain the grassed area.

Hallgarth – There was a large overgrown shrub to the gable end of a bungalow at **Mount Pleasant**, which attracted youth disorder and litter. Communities and Environment removed the large shrubs and a wall has been erected to secure the boundary line to the side of the bungalow,

Crookhill – A large tree line to the rear of Tyne Gardens were causing obstructions to the highway at **Parkinson's Cottages**. Communities and Environment pruned and cut back the tree line which has made the highway more accessible to the public.

Low Crowthorn – A large hedge line which was obstructing residents living in the bungalows at **Garden House Estate** was cut back and reduced in height, this improved access for local residents to use their washing areas to the rear of the property.

Parkfield Tower Gardens - Shrub land that runs alongside **Balgonie Cottages** fence line has been attracting litter and had become overgrown, Communities and Environment cleared the litter and cut back the hedge line, this has improved the appearance at the front of the bungalows.

South Sherburn Estate – An overgrown area of “no mans” land which was fenced off was an attraction for fly tipping and youth congregation. Communities and Environment removed the fence line and rubbish. The land was flattened and reseeded so that Communities and Environment could maintain the area more effectively. This has improved the appearance of the land and reduced fly tipping and youth congregation.

Lower Chopwell – Six raised shrub beds at **Valley Dene** which could not be maintained by Communities and Environment have been removed. This has helped improve the appearance of the estate and reduce youth congregation and ongoing maintenance of the raised beds.

Central

Park Court - residents complained about an area of land at the rear of the block which was unsightly and offering harbourage to rats. All bushes were removed which greatly improved the appearance of the area for residents and also helped to address the problem with rats.

Wardill Gardens – Japanese knotweed was identified in this area and treatment was carried out to tackle this. Annual treatments are now ongoing to address this.

Warwick Court – Bark mulch was introduced to the flower beds in the patio area of Warwick Court. This compliments the recent planting carried out and has greatly improved the appearance of the area.

Highcliffe Gardens – residents complained that an area of land was overgrown and attracting fly-tipping in the area. TGHC worked with Communities and Environment to clear all bushes and seed the area. To compliment this work new fencing and gates have also been installed to the satisfaction of local residents.

Milvain Close – weeds were removed from the area and new planting and purple slate introduced within the existing planters. This has greatly improved the appearance of the area which is situated around the communal lounge.

Cheviot Gardens – Residents told us that they would like the appearance of the area to the front of their block to be improved. Brickwork was repaired and coping stones replaced to 2 planters. The planters were then tidied and purple slate and sustainable planting introduced to the satisfaction of residents.

Moorfoot Gardens pottage garden – The housing company were approached by residents from Moorfoot Gardens who has a keen interest in gardening and requested a raised bed to be installed in the communal gardens at the rear of the block. Residents in this block have previously maintained other areas around the block and are keen to improve the appearance even further. A raised bed was installed and a path created around it.

Mulgrave Villas – residents told us that that they would like a patio area outside of the block that they could use. A patio area was introduced and raised flower beds installed. Residents are now enjoying the areas and also get involved with planting and will carry out future maintenance of the area.

Multi storey hanging baskets - Residents have told us that the entrances to the blocks are bland and have no colour. 29 hanging baskets were installed to entrances of all multi storey blocks within the Central Neighbourhood, to improve their appearance. Future maintenance is to be carried out by the caretakers. This scheme compliments the existing grounds maintenance works carried by Communities and Environment and Caretakers around the blocks.

Lavender gardens, Newbolt and Tennyson Court - Lavender is a versatile plant used for its fragrance and good for the environment, attracting species of butterflies, bees and ladybirds which are efficient in pollinating plants and killing pest insects. Plants have been introduced to planters outside the blocks along with purple phormium plants which are used as a focal point. For future use, lavender can be grown and the flower buds harvested to create fragrance for the home. At present some caretakers are using lavender to create fragrance in communal areas of blocks and this scheme would further encourage this in the future.

Crossway Villas – A small area next to the bungalows was tidied and plum slate and new planting introduced. Residents feel this improved the appearance of the area.

Carr Hill shops – Complaints were received that the area at the rear of the blocks is untidy. Communities and Environment attended and cleared the area of weeds and moss and also removed all rubbish in the area. Residents were satisfied with this and felt this had greatly improved the appearance of the area.

Tribune Place – To cut back bushes and remove weeds to both back yards at the rear of the bungalows at Tribune Place. Residents feel the area is much tidier now and encourages them to sit outside.

Melbourne Court – Shrubs have been removed from a planter at the rear of the block. This area was attracting rats and litter. This has been replaced with purple slate and new sustainable planting improving the appearance of the area which is located near to the entrance to the block.

Barns Close – Bushes have been removed from around all four blocks. This area was attracting litter and also rats, offering them harbourage. Carrying out this work has greatly improved the situation and led to positive comments from residents who feel the appearance of the area has greatly improved.