

# Estate Inspection Procedure

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## Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure provides guidance on how South Cambridgeshire District Council will carry out Estate Inspections.
- 1.2 Estate Inspections are carried out regularly to ensure the areas surrounding our properties are in a good condition and can be enjoyed by our residents.

## Section 2: Grounds Maintenance

- 2.1 The term 'grounds maintenance' refers to any areas that SCDC are responsible for the upkeep of. These may include shared grassed areas, flower beds, hedges etc.
- 2.2 We have a programme set up with our grounds maintenance contractor, which includes the following:

### Grass cuts – 12 per year (most grassed communal land owned by the Council)

- Cut every 3 – 4 weeks during growing season (typical growing season mid-February through to mid-November – may vary due to weather conditions)
- Neat cut across whole grassed area
- Remove litter from grassed areas before mowing
- Strimming carried out only in areas inaccessible to mowers

### Rough Cuts – 4 per year (less populated / out of the way areas such as banks of ditches)

- Cut to longer length, but not overgrown appearance
- Trial Wildflower Meadows only maintained once or twice per year to encourage flowering

### Weed spray around Street Furniture – 1 per year

- Minimal brown areas, no more than 15cm circumference
- Not detrimental to appearance of overall grassed area

### Hedge Trim (Autumn / Winter) – 1 per year

- Sides to be trimmed so no encroachment onto footpaths
- Top cut to level off hedge – maximum height: boundary hedges 2m, all other hedges 1m
- Neat, tidy, managed appearance

### Welfare Cuts – 5 per year

- Cut to grassed area within curtilage of property

- 2.3 Gardens that fall within the boundaries of our properties are expected to be maintained by tenants as part of their tenancy agreement. Some residents may be eligible to join the 'Assisted Gardens' scheme, which provides help to those who may struggle to maintain their garden.
- 2.4 Leaf clearances and overgrown hedges will only be attended to if there are any health and safety risks present.
- 2.5 Due to budgetary constraints, requests received for reactive maintenance work should be prioritised and completed in that order.
- 2.6 Management may use their discretion, if necessary, in relation to any of the above.

### Section 3: Trees

- 3.1 Any trees on communal land that are noted as requiring attention during an estate inspection should be referred to the Council's 'Trees and Landscape Officer' or the Council's grounds maintenance contractor to assess the condition of the tree.
- 3.2 Trees should then be given a priority rating, based upon the condition advised by the relevant assessor. These may be:
  - Immediate work required
  - Work to be completed, depending upon funds available
  - To be re-visited at year end
- 3.3 Work to trees within the boundary of a tenant's property would only be considered if the tree is unmanageable, or there is a risk to health and safety, and the tenant is unable to deal with this due to incapacity.
- 3.4 Requests will be subject to criteria for trees in communal areas and considered on an individual basis.

### Section 4: Litter & Fly-Tipping

- 4.1 The housing department will endeavour to work with other areas of the Council to address any issues relating to litter and fly-tipping.
- 4.2 Generally, areas of substantial litter should be referred to the Council's refuse department, who can arrange for collection.
- 4.3 Where fly-tipping is found, the matter should be referred to the Environmental Services department who can arrange for clearance and all the necessary follow up.

## Section 5: Pest Control

- 5.1 The Council no longer offers an in-house pest control service for residents to use in their home.
- 5.2 The Council can however arrange for a pest control service to address issues in communal areas.
- 5.3 If pest issues are noted during estate inspections in communal areas (such as communal rooms, staircases etc.), then a job can be raised through the property services team.

## Section 6: Graffiti

- 6.1 Graffiti noted during estate inspections can be addressed by raising a job through our repairs contractor.
- 6.2 We will aim to clear any offensive graffiti within one working day of a job being raised, and to remove any other graffiti within 5 working days.

## Section 7: Communal Areas

- 7.1 The term 'communal areas' encapsulates the following;
  - Stairs in flat blocks
  - Landings in flat blocks
  - Parking areas
  - Garage sites
- 7.2 As part of the estate inspection process, it is expected that communal areas such as these will be assessed.
- 7.3 Fire Safety measures should be checked such as that Fire Exits are clearly marked, there is a fire plan displayed and is easy to read, fire doors are not being propped open and the fire brigade access is not obstructed.
- 7.4 Any personal items that are left in communal areas within flat blocks / schemes can pose health and safety issues, especially regarding fire and the blocking of escapes. Any items that are identified to be causing a health & safety issue should be issued with a 24-hour removal notice and followed up after 24 hours. If the item has not been removed after this time, then we will remove it and charge the responsible tenant.
- 7.5 This area of the estate inspection should be carried out in addition to the regular fire safety inspections that are completed by the repairs and maintenance department.

## Section 8: Parking and Abandoned Vehicles

- 8.1 The Council does not allocate spaces and all parking is on a first come first served basis.
- 8.2 Parking is not allowed on grassed areas or communal grassed areas, whether this be within the curtilage of a property or on the verge outside. Vehicles must be parked on hardstanding (a driveway or paved area that is intended for parking).
- 8.3 Lorries, coaches, HGV's, commercial vehicles, plants or vans over 25 cwt, caravans or motor homes must not be parked on the garden, driveway, paved or grassed area around a property or on any communal parking areas without the council's agreement in writing.
- 8.4 Other parking limitations include:
- Residents and visitors must not park anywhere that would obstruct emergency services.
  - No illegal, unroadworthy or untaxed vehicles should be parked or repaired upon the land around a property or on the road.
  - No hard standing should be made, or vehicular access created without the council's written permission. Planning Permission may also be required.
  - Vehicles must not be abandoned on council property.
- 8.5 Examples of where any of the above is not being followed should be noted on any estate inspections and followed up by the housing services officer.
- 8.6 Any vehicles that are thought to be abandoned should be referred to our Neighbourhood Services Team (NST). They will work with the relevant authorities / departments to establish if it has indeed been abandoned and address the matter.

## Section 9: Resident Involvement

- 9.1 Tenants and Leaseholders are encouraged to get involved in shaping the service that they receive from the council. We highly value the input that our residents provide us, and we will work alongside tenants and leaseholders as part of the estate inspections process.
- 9.2 We have a group of 'tenant inspectors' that donate some of their time to accompany our housing services officers during their estate inspections.
- 9.3 A tenant or leaseholder can become a tenant inspector by registering an interest either by speaking with a housing services officer or the Council's dedicated resident involvement team at [resident.involvement@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:resident.involvement@scambs.gov.uk). Tenants will receive appropriate training before carrying out inspections

## Section 10: Funding

10.1 Funding is available to use in communal areas to make improvements. Tenants should speak to their Housing Officer who will work with them to identify and arrange any work that needs to be done. This funding is only available for General Needs areas.

### 10.2 Tenant Sponsored Community Grants

If a tenant or leaseholder believes that there is something that all residents could benefit from on the estate, street or community, they can apply for a 'Tenant Sponsored Community Grant'. Generally, it is thought that these will be small projects (such as landscaping of communal areas, siting of a bench, artwork, children's activity area, communal vegetable garden etc.), as the maximum application value is £1,000. However, if the project is thought to exceed this value, we still encourage an application as we may be able to work with our main contractors.

For more information contact [Resident.Involvement@scamb.gov.uk](mailto:Resident.Involvement@scamb.gov.uk)

## Section 11: Complaints

11.1 Any complaints should be addressed in line with the Housing Department's 'Comments, compliments and complaints' procedure.

11.2 An overview of the procedure is available on the [website](#).

## Section 12: About this procedure

12.1 See the table below for information about this procedure:

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