

**Mid Devon District Council**

**Neighbourhood Management Policy**

Policy Number: HSG{number}

{HSG – Housing & Property Services}

**September 2018**

## Version Control Sheet

*Title:* Neighbourhood Management Policy

*Purpose:* To identify how we manage our neighbourhoods and how this work contributes towards a proactive housing management service.

*Owner:* Group Manager for Housing  
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*Status:* DRAFT

*Review Frequency:* **Every 4 years or sooner if required and in accordance with relevant statutory and regulatory frameworks and/ or good practice.**

*Next review date:* **September 2022**

*Consultation* **This document was sent out for consultation to the following:**  
Cabinet Member

## Document History

This document obtained the following approvals.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Version Approved</b>
Leadership Team*	28 August 2018	V3
Tenants Together	By email	V3
PDG*	11 September 2018	V3
Cabinet*	27 September 2018	V3

\*- Delete if not applicable

## 1. Introduction

Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) understands the importance of ensuring that tenants have quiet enjoyment of their homes, which are in a safe, clean and secure environment that they can take pride in.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to our estates and sets out how the Housing Service will work with tenants and other residents to keep them as clean and tidy as possible.

## 3. Related Documents

- 3.1. MDDC tenancy agreements
- 3.2. Housing service recharges policy
- 3.3. Housing service garage management policy
- 3.4. Housing service fire risks in communal areas policy
- 3.5. Housing service car parking management policy
- 3.6. Housing service improvements to Council properties policy
- 3.7. Housing Service tenant involvement strategy
- 3.8. Housing Service tenant involvement policy
- 3.9. Housing Service leasehold management policy

## 4. Responsibilities

In implementing this policy, the Council's overall objectives are to:

- Identify areas in need of attention or improvement and undertake measures to resolve them
- Enable tenants to get involved with neighbourhood management by them suggesting improvements and initiatives to prevent anti-social behaviour
- Ensure tenants and private occupiers are made aware of, and accept, their responsibilities regarding estate management.

In this policy, the term "tenant" is used to describe both tenants and leaseholders.

Tenants must seek permission if they wish to install hanging structures such as hanging baskets or bird feeders in communal areas, especially those in blocks of flats; these must be positioned in such a way as to avoid damage to the structure of the building. If they are to be installed in blocks of flats, other tenants living on lower levels should be consulted, where possible, and there should be evidence of this before permission will be given. Tenants must be mindful of the impact of such items on other people living within the scheme. Tenants will need to take account of the conditions of their tenancy or lease agreement when seeking permission and if, at any time, the neighbourhood officer identifies a breach of tenancy relating to the cultivation of plants in hanging baskets, then permission will be withdrawn.

The housing service is committed to the provision of a safe and secure environment for our tenants. Additional keys for main entry doors to tenants resident in blocks of flats will not be provided although replacement keys may be available in appropriate circumstances. If replacement keys are required, any costs relating to this will be recharged to the tenant. This is to ensure that security is maintained. For the same reason, communal key codes in blocks where there is a door entry system will only be given to employees and contractors to enable them to carry out their duties.

Grassed areas located on communal land on an estate are provided as an amenity for the benefit of all tenants. Therefore, tenants should seek permission regarding the use of external communal areas; this is particularly important if there is a proposal to establish a gardening club, or to create a wildlife garden, or to run a community social event, for example. It should be noted that public liability insurance may be required in relation to a community social event if it is organised by private individuals and not the housing service. The Council cannot be held liable for any damage or injuries which may occur at such an event which has been organised by private individuals. Anyone planning such an event is advised to seek advice from their neighbourhood officer before requesting permission.

The housing service may consider allowing a charity to hold an event on communal land but a written agreement will be required indemnifying the Council in the event of any claims. Decisions made regarding such events will take account of all relevant factors and the housing service will require sight of all relevant insurance and other documents in these circumstances.

Barbecues are allowed in communal gardens provided they are not placed directly on the ground (a stand should be used). They must not prevent the use of the garden by other tenants. They must be located a safe distance away from the property and its boundaries during use and other residents will need to be consulted so as not to cause a nuisance or annoyance. If the Council considers any items have been used which pose a hazard, permission for the use of barbecues in the garden will be withdrawn. Nothing else which may pose a fire risk or is combustible is allowed in communal gardens and this includes external Christmas decorations.

Large toys such as trampolines or slides may not be kept by residents in communal gardens but those with children may bring small toys into these areas provided they supervise the use of such items. This is in order to minimise the risk of injury arising due to inappropriate use. The Council cannot be held liable for any injuries arising from the use of such toys which may include (but is not limited to) small paddling pools, small tricycles, scooters and wheeled items. These items must be removed at the end of the day as failure to do so could prevent our contractor from undertaking necessary grounds maintenance work in the garden.

Children playing in communal gardens must be supervised by an adult at all times.

Individual tenants will not be permitted to erect their own sheds in communal areas. Should storage be an issue, tenants should seek advice from the neighbourhood team.

Those responsible for any damage which arises in communal areas whether or not it was accidental or deliberate, will be liable for the costs of making good this damage and recharged.

The housing service is required to consult all residents affected regarding a major change in the use of the communal area. We will make the final decision if there is any dispute regarding the use of communal space where agreement cannot be reached locally. Any such decisions will take into account legal obligations, policy, local feedback and any other considerations which may be relevant.

## **5. Gardens**

In accordance with their contractual obligations, tenants with gardens associated with their tenancy are responsible for maintaining those gardens in a clean and tidy condition.

In particular, they must ensure that plants, trees, boundary hedges or large shrubs do not become dangerous or overgrown, cause nuisance to neighbours or damage to any property. If a tenant fails to comply with their conditions of tenancy or leasehold agreement, the housing service may undertake work to rectify the tenancy breach and recharge the full cost of this to the tenant.

## **6. Neighbourhood Areas**

The housing service has neighbourhood officers who are responsible for estate management on specific geographical areas within the District's boundaries. Information regarding neighbourhood areas is available on our website, which can be found at <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/housing/council-housing/your-neighbourhood/>

Where tenants do not have internet access, they are able to contact the neighbourhood team for more information by telephoning 01884 255255.

Any queries regarding the neighbourhood management of our estates should be directed to the neighbourhood officer for that particular geographical area.

## **7. Neighbourhood Walkabouts**

Tenants, councillors (both district and parish) and other agencies such as the police are welcome to join neighbourhood officers when an estate in their area is inspected to raise any concerns and share ideas for improvement. A schedule of neighbourhood walkabouts is available on our website.

Neighbourhood walkabouts enable neighbourhood officers to identify issues surrounding the following:

- Breaches of tenancy
- Grounds maintenance issues, including hedges, trees and boundaries, grassed/planted areas
- Repairs
- Any health and safety issues; for example, any deterioration to pathways that could be trip hazards
- Communal areas – internal and external
- Car parks and garages
- Security issues, including fencing/ boundaries, security doors
- Tenancy issues, including property condition, property improvements, untidy gardens, pets
- Anti-social behaviour, including graffiti/vandalism, drugs, abandoned cars, fly-tipping

This is not an exhaustive list.

Where concerns are identified, the tenant(s) to which the issue relates will be contacted and, if applicable, will be advised to remedy the issue. If necessary, other agencies will also be contacted.

In addition to ad hoc visits undertaken by neighbourhood officers, neighbourhood walkabouts are undertaken at a minimum of every six months.

## **8. Communal Inspections**

In addition to neighbourhood walkabouts, inspections of communal areas are undertaken on a monthly basis by neighbourhood officers where any issues are identified and acted upon.

As stated in the fire risk in communal areas policy, the housing caretaker also inspects communal areas and fire risk assessments are completed on a regular basis.

Checklists are completed in order to identify if there are any areas of concern for both internal and external communal areas in order for these to be followed up. This includes communal areas being free from items which are not permitted to be there and identifying slip, trip and fire hazards.

## **9. Environmental Budget**

The housing service has an allocated annual environmental improvement fund to help improve the security and general appearance of our estates.

Tenants are encouraged to offer suggestions to the housing service for ideas of work/projects to be carried out and for which this fund can be used.