

Gravesham Borough Council

# Estate Management Policy

2021 - 2023

# Estate Management Policy

*Accessible version*

<i>Document control</i>	<i>Details</i>
<i>Responsible department</i>	DSO Building Management/ Landlord Services
<i>Owner</i>	Service Delivery Manager (Housing Repairs)

## 1. Introduction

Gravesham Borough Council aims to ensure its communal areas and estates are well maintained, safe, attractive places that people can enjoy and take pride in (through the delivery of effective estate management).

Estate Management is a vital part of housing management and a particularly important service from a resident's viewpoint. The Chartered Institute of Housing uses the term in its widest sense to refer to property management and services to tenants and leaseholders (residents) which aim to enable them to have quiet enjoyment of their homes and a decent, safe and secure environment.

Estate Management therefore incorporates activities such as (but not exclusively):

- Caretaking
- Communal area maintenance
- Communal area cleaning
- Grounds maintenance
- Waste collection
- Removal of abandoned vehicles
- Removal of graffiti
- Management of garages, sheds and other estate buildings
- Estate inspections
- Dog fouling
- Infestations
- General aesthetics of the area
- Health and safety controls

## 2. Aims and objectives of this policy

The overall aim of Gravesham Borough Council's Estate Management Policy is to ensure services are provided to residents to enable them to have a quiet enjoyment of their homes in a safe and secure environment that they can take pride in.

The policy aims to ensure that standards on council managed estates become more focused and transparent.

The specific objectives of the Estate Management Policy are:

- Develop a pro-active approach to the management of our properties, estates and neighborhood.
- Manage the environment around our properties and communal areas effectively.
- Ensure that all residents are aware of their respective responsibilities.
  - Set appropriate estate management standards and to measure performance and tenant satisfaction.

- Deliver a service which is proactive, responsive and provides excellent value for money.

### 3. The Council's Commitment

A clean and tidy estate means a lot to residents and because of this it is important to have clear standards as to what they can expect. The Council is committed to making sure residents have estates that are clean and cared for, safe and secure and in a good state of repair.

To meet the objectives the Council will:

#### Clean and cared for

The estate will have regular cleaning and prompt clearance of rubbish, graffiti and fly tipping. To create an environment where residents have a strong sense of ownership over their estates, with high levels of respect for one another.

#### Safe & Secure

The estate will have very high standards of fire safety, where any anti-social behaviour is tackled, where estates are well lit, and where matters arising from health and safety issued are dealt with promptly

#### Good state of repair

Blocks will be maintained and repaired within the promised timescales. With residents being able to report and book a 'caretaker' job in the same way they would a repair.

### 4. The Caretaking Service

Caretakers are responsible for ensuring that all communal areas on council-managed estates are maintained and cleaned to an acceptable standard and ensure this by:

- Inspect and sweep all play areas
- Sweep and mop shared halls, porches, landings and stairs, and remove any graffiti or other marks
- Clean the inside windows on all shared doors, landings and staircases
- Clean, sweep and mop all lift floors, walls and doors inside and outside where possible, and remove any graffiti
- Check and clear blocked rubbish chutes
- Sweep all estate paths and parking areas
- Check grassed and shrubbed areas, removing litter and leaves
- Check estate lighting, change bulbs and clean low level light shades as necessary, and report faults to the Repairs Team
- Remove large items of rubbish from our estates where possible, or report them to the Waste Team
- Make sure that all of our caretakers are trained to British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICS) standards
- Train all our caretakers in how to carry out their duties safely and effectively
- Provide our caretakers with the proper tools, equipment and materials to carry out their duties to a high standard
- Arrange inspections every month to monitor and record the standards of service our caretakers provide

- Produce information about the number of inspections we have completed and the standards achieved, along with our resident's comments.

#### If we do not meet our commitments, the council will:

- Give our residents the relevant name and contact details if they want to comment on any areas of our estate service that they feel we are not meeting
- Reply to any comments as soon as possible, and bring our service back up to the expected standard within five working days where possible
- Investigate all complaints and reply in writing within 10 working days.
- Regularly review our systems and practices to make sure they meet our customers' needs.

The Council will implement detailed procedures and agreed practices uniformly across the service and will ensure that staff are given the necessary training to deliver estate management services.

A copy of the schedule of work including frequency can be found at Appendix 1.

## 5. Resident Responsibilities

To achieve consistently high standards on an estate, it is essential that there is close co-operation between residents and the Council.

Residents have their own part to play in ensuring the estate is kept at its best and have to comply with their responsibilities for maintaining in good order their surrounding environment, as well as their own individual property. In doing so, residents must respect the rights of their neighbours and surrounding community, as laid down in their tenancy agreement.

In simple terms residents must help keep communal areas clean and well maintained though appropriate use of bins and following procedures for bulk term collection; responsible dog ownership; not causing damage to, or littering in, communal areas and being a good neighbour.

## 6. Estate Inspections- Rate My Estate

To ensure that council-managed properties and estates are kept clean and in good condition, inspections are carried out once a month to assess caretaking standards. These are carried out by nominated officers within the service and take into account all areas within a block or within a specified inspection area. The scoring system is based on a traffic light system, green is the standard we aim for, amber means satisfactory and red means poor.

The Rate My Estate guide (Appendix 2) describes caretaking standards using a combination of text and visuals. These descriptions form a clear framework, against which caretaking standards can be fairly assessed and any area of improvement can be managed.

The traffic light system allows the Council to easily monitor where areas of improvement are required and put plans in place to improve any areas falling below standard. The below table outlines what the grading means in general sense:

**Table 1. Rating standards and breakdown**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Standard breakdown</b>
Green	All clear – the standard we aim for. It should look like this after the area has been cleaned	<p>An area with a score of green will not be completely free of dirt, litter and detritus. However, the extent to which it is present is unlikely to be noticed by most people walking through or past the area or be regarded as having a significant adverse effect on the quality of the local environment.</p> <p>We aim that no area should fall below this standard in between cleaning cycles. An area graded green will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• look clean and in good condition</li> <li>• have few signs of litter, detritus or visible removable marks and stains</li> <li>• look like cleaning is taking place regularly</li> </ul>
Amber	Satisfactory condition	<p>An amber area will have only a small amount of dirt, marks, stains, litter or detritus present to such an extent that it may be noticeable to most people passing through the area.</p> <p>An area amber area will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have some visible marks and signs of litter and detritus</li> <li>• look like cleaning has taken place but maybe could do with an extra clean</li> <li>• look like it requires some attention to bring it up to a 'green' standard</li> </ul>
Red	Poor condition	<p>A red area typically has marks, stains, litter, detritus and dirt present to such an extent that it is highly visible and has a serious negative impact on the surrounding environment.</p> <p>The build-up may possibly present a health and safety issue. This grade also applies to some tasks where a fundamental component of the task has visibly not been completed, e.g. where a security door has been left open or unsecured. An area graded red will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• display no sign that cleaning is/has taken place</li> <li>• have excessive rubbish/ fouling/ marks and stains; and/or</li> <li>• present health and safety hazards, such as broken glass, faeces, needles or other sharp objects</li> </ul>

## 7. Estate Inspections- Housing Officers

In addition to the monthly caretaking inspections, each estate will receive an estate inspection carried out by the Housing Officer. An estate inspection is an inspection of the exterior and communal parts, facilities and grounds of an estate comprising blocks of flats

or a mixture of flats and houses built on land owned and managed by Gravesham Borough Council.

The purpose of these inspections is to review the management of the whole estate in line with the elements set out within this policy. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Health and Safety Issues
- Tenancy Issues – neglected homes and gardens
- Condition of hard landscaping (ie. fencing, walls and pavements)
- Condition of soft landscaping (ie. trees, grass, shrubs)
- Litter and flytipping
- Dog fouling
- Vandalism
- Graffiti
- Hot spots for anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- Pest control
- Illegally parked vehicles
- Abandoned vehicles
- Highway Maintenance and street lighting

Estate inspection frequency will be determined by Gravesham Borough Council and will either be monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly depending on the size of your estate. The frequency of estate inspections is as follows:

<b>Size of Estate</b>	<b>Frequency of Inspections</b>
Less than 20 properties	Quarterly
Between 20 – 50 properties	Bi-monthly
Over 50 properties	Monthly

If multiple problems with tenancy, repair, grounds maintenance or other neighbourhood issues are identified during the inspections Gravesham Borough Council reserves the right to increase the inspections to effectively manage and monitor the issues. This may mean that inspections take place weekly or even daily if required. Frequency of inspections may change in line with problems identified or other reasons as determined by Gravesham Borough Council.

A copy of the Estate Inspection Report template can be found in Appendix 3.

## **8. Fire Safety**

The Council will arrange for the required Fire Risk Assessments to be carried out by a competent person (Fire Risk Assessor). Assessments will be provided for all communal areas and shared facilities within blocks and sheltered housing.

All communal fire alarm systems within high-rise are monitored 24/7 by the Council's alarm monitoring service provider who will contact the Duty Caretaker and/or the Fire & Rescue Services in the event of an activation. All fire alarm activations will be investigated, and this will be carried out by the Police in cases of suspected arson.

Servicing and maintenance of communal alarm systems are undertaken by the council's specialist fire alarm contractor; six monthly for Low-Rise and Sheltered Housing, and quarterly for High-Rise. Fire alarms are also tested weekly by Caretakers and Sheltered Scheme officers.

Residents are required to:

- Ensure that all means of egress are not obstructed by storing refuse, mobility scooters, bicycles or other possessions in communal areas.
- Ensure fire doors are never propped open or designated fire exits obstructed.
- Report all damage to their flat entrance door, including defective self-closing devices, letter boxes, hinges and smoke seals.
- Ensure fire detection equipment, emergency lighting, alarms and signage provided is not interfered with.
- Ensure combustible gas canisters are not stored on the premises

## 9. Gravesham Aware Stickers

When a member of staff has identified an issue on an estate but is unable to immediately rectify it, they will mark it with a 'Gravesham Aware' sticker. This lets Residents know that there has been a member of staff on site and that the issue will be addressed soon. These have the name and contact details of the officer addressing the situation.

## 10. Gardens and Grounds Maintenance

The Council will ensure that work is undertaken on a routine basis to ensure that communal grounds on housing estates are maintained to a good standard. Grounds maintenance will take place between March and October weather permitting with the inclusion of strimming, shrub pruning, weed control, litter picking and footpath clearance.

- Communal grass will be cut 8 times each year between the months of March and November – this approximates to 1 cut a month during the growing season. This operation will include a litter pick, grass cut, strim round the obstacles and clearance of cut grass from paths and footways.
- All communal shrubbed areas will be cut back and cleared of litter once a year during the winter months. During the spring and summer months, shrubs will be pruned back off paths and below windows on an ad-hoc basis as required.
- Weed killing /application of herbicide will be kept to a minimum and only used when necessary. When herbicide is used, weeds are spot treated rather than blanket sprayed to reduce the amount of glyphosate used.
- Tree maintenance works will be carried out as required generally during the winter months outside of the bird nesting season. Tree works that can't be done in-house will be sub-contracted out although works will only take place if trees are dead, dying, diseased or dangerous.

Communal gardens are for the enjoyment of all residents who have a right to access these. There must be no fences, barriers, locks or obstructions put in communal gardens that stop residents accessing the area. Residents must not use the communal gardens for their own use (i.e. – planting shrubs and beds) unless agreement is given in writing.

Play areas owned by the Council will be maintained and regularly inspected to ensure they are safe to use and this will consist of:

- A weekly inspection to check and remove litter and dangerous items etc. This involves an examination of equipment's basic condition, especially faults due to recent vandalism etc. This is recorded by way of a diary note made by the Park Rangers who carry out these checks.
- A quarterly Operational Inspection - this examines in more detail at the equipment, identifying any issues resulting from wear or vandalism. This is carried out by our own in-house RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International) qualified operational inspectors.
- An annual Independent Inspection by an RPII accredited inspector. This is a thorough independent check of all the equipment, and it is assessed in accordance with BS EN 1176, 2008 and November 2017.

From time-to-time assessments will take place to establish the demand of the play areas; if the result of any assessment identifies a redundant play area, the Council will consult with the affected residents and take the appropriate action.

## 11. Bulky and Personal items

We want our estates to be safe and items within communal areas can cause both fire hazards and restrict escape routes.

Communal areas must be kept free of bulky items, and nothing should be stored in communal areas, this includes cupboards with shared access. The Council retains the right to remove such items as detailed in items in a communal area. Any items left in internal or external communal areas that are damaged or causing a fire/health & safety risk will be removed immediately and re-charges made where applicable.

## 12. Refuse Disposal and Litter

The Council will ensure that appropriate and well-sited facilities are provided for refuse disposal and recycling.

Tenants will be advised at the start of their tenancy of arrangements and appropriate days for the collection of refuse and recycling.

All residents are responsible for ensuring that their refuse and recyclable material is disposed of safely and tidily and to comply with collection arrangements.

## 13. Infestations

The Council aims to ensure all properties in its ownership are free of vermin, pest and insect infestation. Residents have a responsibility to report all infestation of a property to the Housing Service, who will advise on how it will be dealt with.

Where an infestation can be directly attributed to someone's living conditions or habits the Housing Service will advise the resident on how best to rectify the situation and ensure it doesn't re-occur. The Housing Service will further advise that they are responsible for the cost of pest control.



## 14. Fly-tipping

Fly-tipping is a serious criminal offence, which can have a harmful effect on the community.

Fly-tipping is the illegal dumping of waste in areas which are not designated for rubbish collection. From pavements to corridors, fly-tipping can include anything from a bag of rubbish to bulky unwanted or broken household items and even waste dumped from vehicles on to road areas.

The Council will endeavour to remove fly tipping within 7 working days. Action taken to remove any hazardous waste will be more immediate.

The Housing Service will not tolerate fly-tipping on the estates and will work together with Community Safety to detect problems as they arise, share information, and will prosecute where a case can be proven.

## 15. Removal of Abandoned Vehicles

An abandoned vehicle is a vehicle which doesn't have a known owner. If a vehicle is road legal, is parked on the public highway and the owner tells us that it's not abandoned, we have no power to remove this vehicle.

We will only investigate a vehicle as abandoned when it meets certain criteria. An officer will inspect the vehicle within 5 working days and if deemed as abandoned, depending on its condition, we can issue three types of notices of removal:

- 24-hour notice
- 7-day notice
- 15-day notice

These notices will give the owner of the vehicle the specified period to remove it. If it's not removed by the expiry date/time of the notice the vehicle will be removed.

## 16. Car Parks

Car parks are designed for residents' use only. Where there is provision then visitors' spaces will be allowed. All vehicles parking within our car park must have current valid road tax and be roadworthy. Where practical, controlled car parking schemes will be introduced across estates to minimise non-resident parking.

The parking of lorries is not permitted without first obtaining written permission from the Council.

## 17. Tenant Involvement and Monitoring

The Council will work closely with residents to improve the look, feel and living experience of our estates.

The Council will note and act upon problems and issue through actively listening to resident's complaints and concerns about issues that affect the quality of life locally.

Tenants will be invited to attend the estate inspections carried out by their Housing Officers. The inspection dates will be available on the Council's website and copies of the Estate Inspection will also be available upon request.

The Council will monitor the following:

- Level of resident satisfaction with the estate (identified by periodic resident surveys)
- Number of estate management related complaints each year and the reasons behind the complaint.
- Annual expenditure on repairs and maintenance arising from criminal damage on each estate.
- Common themes arising from Rate My Estate inspections.

## 18. Equality and Diversity

This policy has been fully assessed and confirms that the council's approach to Estate Management does not adversely affect any individual or group.

## 19. Appendices

### 1. Caretaking task frequency schedule

Task	Frequency	Inspection sheet reference number
Sweep all car parks/parking areas	Weekly	CK1
Sweep all pathways and paved areas Sweep and clean roadways	Weekly	CK2
Inspect play areas and seating areas for hazards such as broken glass, sharps and faulty or damaged equipment and sweep	Weekly	CK3
Remove litter and leaves from grass areas and shrub beds	Daily	CK4
Report and/or remove graffiti from communal areas	Daily	CK5
Check security of tank rooms	Daily	CK6
Check any faults with security of door-entry systems and other secure areas	Daily	CK7
Check chutes for blockages clear/report as necessary	Daily	CK8
Wash external parts of hopper and surrounding wall and flooring	Weekly	CK9
Clean all communal windows on doors/landings and staircases, internal and low level external faces only	Monthly	CK10
Wash all ledges including internal window sills	Daily	CK11
Check estate lighting replacing bulbs/tubes where necessary wipe clean shade and fitting before replacing	Weekly	CK12

Clean/dust light fitting external surfaces including shades/covers	Weekly	CK13
Sweep and wash stairs, landings	Daily	CK14
Sweep and wash entrance halls, porch ways and corridors	Daily	CK15
Clean handrails and ledges and banister rails	Weekly	CK16
Check security of roof access	Daily	CK17
Sweep and wash lift floors and where necessary lower parts of walls	Daily	CK18
Clean lift doors (internal). Clean lift car door panels and frames on all floors (external)	Weekly	CK19
Remove scuffmarks and all other marks on doors landings and staircases and internal walls(internal and low level external surfaces only)	Weekly	CK20
Clean/tidy dust chutes and bin chambers	Daily	CK21
Sweep and wash bin chambers with disinfectant	Monthly	CK22
Remove lumber from all internal and external areas to a safe storage point as necessary	Daily	CK23

## 2. Rate My Estate Guide

### Introduction

This guide has been produced to help Gravesham Borough Council provide improved estates and a better-quality caretaking service for those who live there. The guide aims to make caretaking standards on council-managed estates more focused and transparent. To do this, the guide describes caretaking standards using a combination of text and visuals. These descriptions form a clear framework, against which caretaking standards can be fairly assessed and any area of improvement can be managed.

The guide is aimed at residents and council employees, for instance caretakers and housing officers.

### Caretaking inspections

To ensure that council-managed properties and estates are kept clean and in good condition inspections are carried out once a month to assess caretaking standards. These are carried out by nominated officers within the service and consider all areas within a block or within a specified inspection area. The scoring system is a traffic light RAG rating-based system with green being good and red poor.

Because there are differences across all council-managed properties in terms of the fabric of the buildings and green space outside, the photographic examples given are not absolute and should only be used as an example of what each score may look like.

The manual provides a photo to represent each score for each caretaking task. There is also a text description of each score per task alongside this.

When making an assessment of caretaking standards there are a number of factors that should be considered in order for the assessment to be fair and accurate.

#### The condition of the building

It is important to bear in mind the condition of the building when making an assessment of caretaking standards. Factors to consider include:

- ingrained dirt, stains or burn marks
- the general wear and tear of the building and furnishings
- areas that require major repair work
- irreparable damage

These may be beyond the control of the caretaker and the remit of their work. As such these factors should be considered when making assessments of cleanliness.

#### Unforeseen circumstances

There are sometimes unforeseen circumstances that the cleaning frequency plan cannot legislate for, such as:

- extreme weather conditions
- acts of anti-social behaviour, including graffiti
- the adverse effects of Planned Works programmes or other building work

These instances may have an adverse effect on the cleanliness and/or quality of an area and mean that scores fall below a certain grade. We will always act to rectify such a situation, but the occurrence may be something that we cannot prevent.

### Caretaking grading system explained

The council use a traffic light RAG rating scoring system to rate caretaking standards. This page aims to explain what these scores mean in a general sense. Within this guide Inspections grades are awarded as a reflection of the block, rather than a specific area within any block or inspected area.

Rating	Standard	Standard breakdown
Green	All clear – the standard we aim for. It should look like this after the area has been cleaned	<p>An area with a score of green will not be completely free of dirt, litter and detritus. However, the extent to which it is present is unlikely to be noticed by most people walking through or past the area or be regarded as having a significant adverse effect on the quality of the local environment.</p> <p>We aim that no area should fall below this standard in between cleaning cycles. An area graded green will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• look clean and in good condition</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have few signs of litter, detritus or visible removable marks and stains</li> <li>• look like cleaning is taking place regularly</li> </ul>
Amber	Satisfactory condition	<p>An amber area will have only a small amount of dirt, marks, stains, litter or detritus present to such an extent that it may be noticeable to most people passing through the area.</p> <p>An area amber area will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have some visible marks and signs of litter and detritus</li> <li>• look like cleaning has taken place but maybe could do with an extra clean</li> <li>• look like it requires some attention to bring it up to a 'green' standard</li> </ul>
Red	Poor condition	<p>A red area typically has marks, stains, litter, detritus and dirt present to such an extent that it is highly visible and has a serious negative impact on the surrounding environment.</p> <p>The build-up may possibly present a health and safety issue. This grade also applies to some tasks where a fundamental component of the task has visibly not been completed, e.g. where a security door has been left open or unsecured. An area graded red will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• display no sign that cleaning is/has taken place</li> <li>• have excessive rubbish/ fouling/ marks and stains; and/or</li> <li>• present health and safety hazards, such as broken glass, faeces, needles or other sharp objects</li> </ul>