



# **Estates Management Strategy 2018-2021**

**[DRAFT]**

Housing Services

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# Introduction

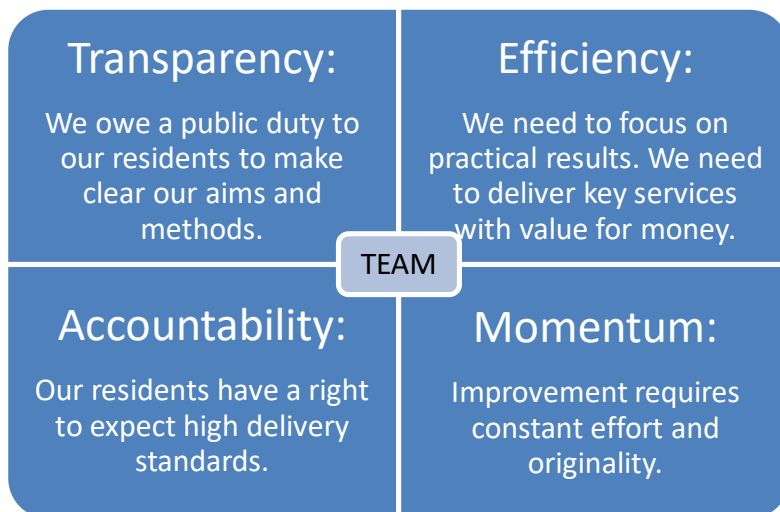
Brentwood Borough Council ('the Council') is committed, as a stock-holding Local Authority and social landlord, to ensuring the delivery of an effective and efficient estates management service. The estates management service consists of the management, maintenance and improvement of Housing Revenue ('HRA') estates, open spaces and communal areas.

The strategy focusses on the key objectives of the Council as landlord, as well as reinforcing the expectations and obligations of tenants and leaseholders. It is intended to strive towards excellence in tenancy and estate management for the benefit of our customers, stakeholders, partners and our credibility. The strategy is fluid and will be subject to ongoing change, as it is influenced by external factors, but the core commitment to high level service provision will remain our central focus.

**Mrs Angela Abbott**  
**Interim Head of Housing**

# Scope and Purpose

## Why have an Estates Management Strategy?



This strategy considers the key demands on the estates management service and outlines the Council's current and future commitments.

All customers should have information about how their estates are run, including what is part of the service and that which is not.

The estates management services is relevant, at different levels, to both leaseholders and tenants, with natural variance of service between households living in accommodation blocks and stand-alone accommodations.



All Councils and social landlords must operate viable businesses with adequate recourse to financial resources to meet current and future business and financial commitments.



The Council seeks to continue to provide good-quality housing services for residents and prospective residents. We must aim to deliver continuous improvements and value for money in our services. Service provision is subject to challenge and change. The wishes of residents and others must be balanced against available resources within a clear framework.

## What Guides our Service?

The Housing Strategy is the principle working document for Housing Services; it serves to provide the direction and vision for the delivery of services across the property; estates; sheltered and housing options teams. The Estates Management Strategy has been developed in accordance with our Housing Strategy and the following key documents:

Corporate Plan  
2016-2019

Focuses on the Council's top priorities, which include environment and housing management. The plan highlights the need for fresh thinking to support the very best service provision.

Housing Revenue  
Account Business  
Plan 2014-2044

Sets the overarching financial direction of the Service and details how the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is to be managed and the core priorities for expenditure.

Tenancy Strategy  
2017-2020

Presents and directs the relationship with Housing Associations (HAs) and other Registered Providers (RPs). The new Tenancy Strategy is contained within the Housing Strategy document.

Tenancy/Lease  
Agreements

Whether a resident holds a Fixed Term or Secure Tenancy, Licence or Leasehold the legal Agreement sets out the core obligations of both Council and customer.

Local Plan  
2013-2033

Sets out a long term vision for how the Borough should develop over the next fifteen years and the Council's strategies and policies for achieving it.

ASB Policy 2016

The Corporate ASB policy provides the framework for the identification and resolution of anti-social behaviour within the Borough, including on our estates.

Laying the  
Foundations: A  
Housing Strategy  
for England

Government's core housing document which directs Local Authorities in achieving the twin ambitions of driving local economies and job creation and to spread opportunity. A core component of this strategy is the provision of 'Affordable Housing' and improving social housing conditions.

# Objectives & Issues

## Overarching Objectives:

- **Supporting** and working with our customers and partners to create mixed sustainable communities.
- **Providing** healthy, safe and energy efficient homes and estates.
- **Tackling** crime and anti-social behaviour.
- **Maximising** resources and opportunities.
- **Protecting** and enhancing our reputation as landlord.
- **Improving** public perceptions of Council housing estates.
- **Building** and increasing customer satisfaction.
- **Reducing** costs whilst improving performance and delivery.
- **Involving** our tenants and leaseholder by creating opportunities for consultation and commitment.

## Potential Estate Issues:

- Fire Safety
- Unlawful sub-letting
- Cleaning of communal areas
- Maintenance of un-adopted paths and roads
- Abandoned properties & tenancy fraud
- Tree maintenance and damage caused by tree roots
- Contract monitoring
- Vandalism, damage wear and tear
- Graffiti and fly-posting
- Neglected areas for maintenance and improvement
- Litter, rubbish and fly-tipping
- Untidy Gardens
- Animal fouling
- Car parks/ garage sites/ open spaces
- Anti-Social Behaviour



# Objectives & Issues

## Anti-Social Behaviour:

The Council as landlord is responsible for ensuring that tenants and leaseholders are aware of their responsibilities and obligations outlined within their tenancy/leasehold agreement.

Housing Officers support the dedicated Corporate Enforcement Team who seek to resolve low level problems at the earliest opportunity, through established tenancy management processes, preventing unnecessary escalation.

Listed below are examples of issues that could reasonably be resolved through tenancy management processes through the provision of appropriate advice/instruction, partner liaison and potentially independent mediation.

- Noisy neighbours
- Damage to property
- Untidy gardens
- High hedges/over hanging trees/shrubs
- Uncontrolled animals/pets
- Dog fouling
- Inappropriate use of premises (car repairs etc)
- Abandoned cars
- Impeding access to communal areas

The focus for ASB is prevention and relief by mutual agreement and consent. If however a tenant/leaseholder does not rectify their unreasonable behaviour then the Council will engage in enforcement action, including evictions where necessary and using statutory powers, such as contained within the:

- The Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005
- Anti-Social behaviour Act 2003
- Housing Act 1996
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014



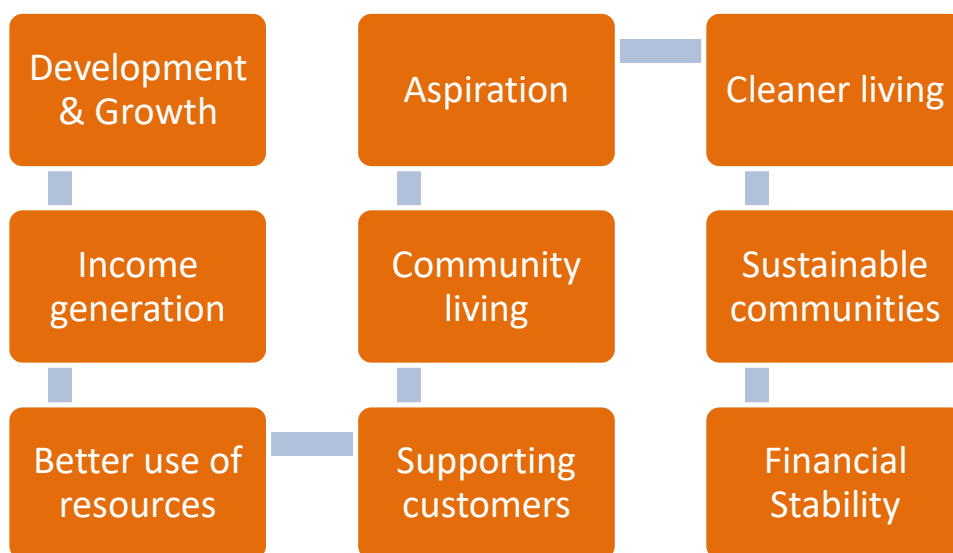
## Challenges & Opportunities:

The increased pressure to improve service delivery whilst at the same time reducing expenditure requires Authorities to work in a more collaborative and innovative manner. Partnership working has always been an important aspect of delivering the estates management service and the Housing Service will need to seek to identify new partnership opportunities to ensure that our vision of providing safe and attractive environments is met.

Brentwood Borough Council, like many other Local Authorities, faces extreme pressure on its budget and as a consequence will need to focus resources on frontline delivery of services. Concurrently there will be a review of enforcement and regulation policies to ensure that they are proportionate. This will undoubtedly have a bearing on the management of the Council housing estates.

Tenant/Leaseholder Involvement – it is not possible to meet the aims and objectives of the service without fully engaging with our customers. ‘Tenant Talkback’ comprises of tenants and leaseholders who review, challenge and scrutinise Council policies and practices. This forum has been used to review the Estates Management Strategy.

## What do we hope to achieve?





# Service Delivery

## Grounds Maintenance

- ❖ We currently provide a grounds maintenance programme via a Service Level Agreement ('SLA') with the Council's Streetscene & Environment department.
- ❖ Current provision includes maintenance of grass cutting, shrub beds, play facilities and the management of tree works and inspections.
- ❖ We are shortly due to undertake a full review of the current SLA to make efficiency savings and to improve service provision across our estates.
- ❖ We will ensure that we have adequate budgets in place to deliver the defined standards of service (reactive works) and for improvement and enhancement (planned maintenance).

## The Estate Caretaking Service

A dedicated team of estate caretakers undertake duties across our Council estates. The purpose of providing caretakers is principally to maintain our communal areas, not to act as refuse disposal operatives for tenants. The Council urges all tenants and leaseholders to dispose of all rubbish, waste and bulky items in a reasonable, safe and considerate manner.

The main duties of our caretakers include:

- ✓ Regular litter picking
- ✓ Cleaning of communal areas in blocks
- ✓ Internal cleaning and low-level maintenance
- ✓ Notifying external problems
- ✓ Removal of syringes and drugs paraphernalia
- ✓ Notifying depot of fly tipping
- ✓ Referring problem graffiti to contractors for removal
- ✓ Reporting of vandalism, abandoned cars, etc to the Estates Management Team
- ✓ Assisting at sheltered housing sites as required
- ✓ Monitoring communal refuse bins

# Service Delivery

## Estate Inspections

The Council conducts estates inspections every 8 weeks to ensure that communal areas are clean and safe. The inspections include a review of:

- Pathways\*\*:** Potholes, unevenness, weeds, cracks, manhole covers
- Car Park/Garage areas\*\*:** As above and including abandoned cars
- Play Areas:** Equipment conditions, gates & fencing, floor covering, broken glass & debris
- Communal bin areas:** Cleanliness, doors & locks, odour
- External Building:** Guttering, brickwork, fascia boards, drains, signage, gates, satellite dishes
- External gardens:** Grass cutting, weeds, tree, hedges, fencing & walls
- Trees:** Fallen branches, dangerous trees, blocking light, touching buildings, dangerous roots
- Lighting and CCTV:** Bulbs, coverings, CCTV damage, times lights illuminate

Any defects are referred to the relevant department or contractor with relevant actions to be taken. Those items marked with a double asterisk above have a scoring matrix applied to enable categorisation and focus (see Appendix 2).

## CCTV

The Council utilises CCTV on our estates, including at our high and low-rise communal block accommodations. The CCTV and fob management facilities contribute towards the safety and security of block residents, their visitors and other people who live and work in the area.

CCTV is currently maintained by our existing contractors and will be reviewed as part of new contract provision from 2019 onwards.



# Service Delivery

## Car Parking

The Council aims to provide on our estates (subject to resources and practicality) car parking facilities for our residents. The Council aims to mark parking bays clearly to encourage the efficient use of spaces. We will also provide a limited number of marked spaces for disabled badge holders.

We will consider and support the provision of car parking permit schemes in areas of high demand or where there are other identified problems. Currently permit schemes operate at Gibraltar House, Mayflower House and The Keys. Car permit schemes are monitored and reviewed to ensure effectiveness and fairness for residents.

## Garages

The Council has a number of existing garage sites which include garages for rent. It has been identified that certain sites are under-used and have become 'hot spots' for ASB.

The Council has undertaken the redevelopment of two former garage sites for the provision of affordable housing. A second phase is currently engaged with potential for further affordable housing provisioning on similar sites. Any future plans for redevelopment will be subject to extensive consultation and customer engagement.



# Service Funding

Estates services funding includes routine, capital, general repairs and maintenance and minor works budgets. Following Committee approval certain estate services will also be funded via specific service charging.

Service charging is directed by the Council's *Service Charge Strategy 2017*. The *Service Charge Policy 2017* outlines the implementation structure and specific charging regime. Both documents are publicly available both at the Town Hall and online at [www.brentwood.gov.uk](http://www.brentwood.gov.uk).

## Service Charges (Leaseholders)

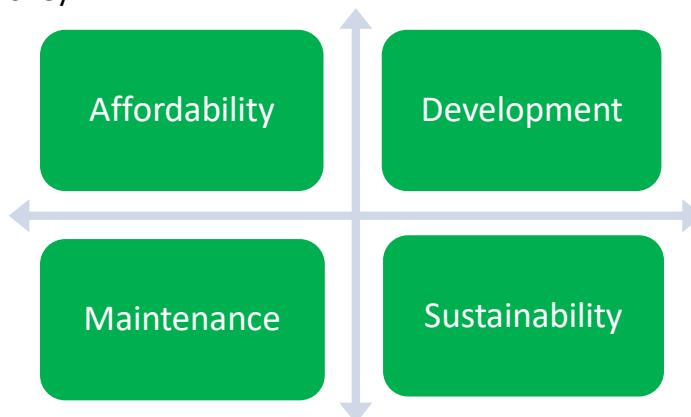
The Council will adhere to the requirements of the statutory consultation for any major works or improvements if the contribution for any one leaseholder exceeds £250. The relevant statutory consultation procedure will be applied.

## Service Charges (Tenants)

The introduction of stand-alone service charging for tenants is a new approach to rent setting for Brentwood Borough Council. Previously any 'service charge' has been included in the global rent amount. Moving forwards the two charges, rent and service, will be separated, with adjustments made where relevant to ensure affordability.

The Council will ensure that each tenant affected receives a 'Schedule of Services'. For new tenants this will be included as an annex to the Tenancy Agreement.

The level of service charge will depend on specific services provided to tenants, rather than a generic costing. The approach will mean tenants are more easily able to see what the charge is paid for and to ultimately be able to hold the Council to account if estate services are not value for money.



## Appendix 1: Estate Inspection Report Template (Example)

Name of Estate:	Time:
Inspected By:	Frequency of Inspection:
Inspection date	
With Resident/Tenant Rep/:	Date of Last Inspection:
With Other:	Weather conditions

<b>All Pathways</b> Potholes, Unevenness, Weeds/Moss, Cracks, Manhole Covers				<b>Car Park/Garage Areas</b> Potholes, Unevenness, Weeds/Moss, Cracks, Blocked Garages, Manhole Covers, Abandoned Cars			
			Score				Score
Action:				Action:			
Reported to:				Reported to:			
Date:				Date:			

## Estate Inspection Scoring Matrix (Example)

<b>Estate Inspection Scoring Guidelines</b>				
	<b>4 Very Good</b>	<b>3 Good</b>	<b>2 Average</b>	<b>1 Poor</b>
<b>All Pathways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-No uneven surfaces</li> <li>-No moss or weeds</li> <li>-All floor coverings match</li> <li>-No damaged to signage or bollards</li> <li>-No cracked slabs</li> <li>-Aesthetically pleasing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minor uneven surfaces unlikely to cause a danger</li> <li>- Moss in cracks</li> <li>- Mis-match/lower quality floor coverings</li> <li>- Functional but damaged signage or bollards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous uneven surface requiring repair</li> <li>- Moss on pathways</li> <li>- Weeds present</li> <li>- Damaged floor coverings EG. Small potholes</li> <li>- Numerous damaged or missing signage and bollards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dangerous uneven surfaces requiring immediate repair</li> <li>- Moss covering whole pathway</li> <li>- Numerous weeds causing damage</li> <li>-Unightly floor coverings</li> <li>- Large potholes requiring immediate attention</li> </ul>
<b>Car park/Garage Areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-No uneven surfaces</li> <li>-No damaged to signage or bollards</li> <li>- Clear paintwork for bays, entrances and hatch markings</li> <li>- No damage visible on doors or locking posts</li> <li>- No litter or fly tipping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minor uneven surfaces unlikely to cause a danger</li> <li>- Functional but damaged signage or bollards</li> <li>- Faded paintwork for bays, entrances and hatch markings</li> <li>- Dented or chipped doors or brickwork</li> <li>- Minor litter no fly tipping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous uneven surface requiring repair</li> <li>- Numerous damaged or missing signage and bollards</li> <li>- Barely visible paintwork for bays, entrances and hatch markings</li> <li>- Visibly broken doors or locking posts</li> <li>- Brickwork chipped or cracked</li> <li>- Major litter and less than 2 bulk items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dangerous uneven surfaces requiring immediate repair</li> <li>- Large potholes requiring immediate attention</li> <li>- Missing paintwork for bays, entrances and hatch markings</li> <li>- Missing doors or locking posts</li> <li>- More than 2 bulk items and litter present</li> </ul>
<b>Play Areas/Equipment</b>				
<b>Bin Areas</b>				
<b>External Buildings</b>				
<b>External Gardens</b>				
<b>Trees</b>				
<b>Lighting and CCTV Indoor and Out</b>				
<b>Internal Buildings</b>				
<b>Fire Safety</b>				

## Equality, Diversity and Well-Being

❖ Brentwood Borough Council actively works to ensure that its tenants and leaseholders receive the services that are appropriate to them. The Council also strives to ensure that additional services can be provided to enable customers to access services which may be beneficial to their wellbeing and quality of life.

## Publicising the Strategy

❖ The strategy will be available at the Town Hall in hard copy. The strategy will also be made available online at [www.brentwood.gov.uk](http://www.brentwood.gov.uk).

## Address for Service: (Service Charges)

❖ As per sections 47 and 48 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 a demand for rent or service charges must contain the name and address of the landlord. For the sake of certainty this is:

**Brentwood Borough Council**  
**Town Hall, Ingrave Road, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 8AY**

# Glossary

<b>ASB</b>	Anti-social behaviour.
<b>General Fund</b>	The Council's primary account or fund which records all assets and liabilities that are not assigned to a special purpose fund, such as the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
<b>Housing Benefit</b>	A government benefit, currently administered by Local Authorities, which pays all or part of the rent and service charge for a property.
<b>Housing Revenue Account ('HRA')</b>	The account which Council rents and service charges are paid into. It is kept separate from other Council accounts, such as the General Fund. There are rules and restrictions on how money in the account can be spent and on how much the Council can borrow against it.
<b>Leaseholder</b>	Named person(s) who hold a legal interest in land, mostly flats, for a set period of time. Ownership of the property returns to the freeholder (landlord) when the lease come to the end. The freeholder may be a private owner or the Council.
<b>Local Authority</b>	A county, county borough, district or London borough council <i>et al</i> established by Part IV of the Local Government Act 1985.
<b>Major Repairs Works</b>	Works, other than improvements or cyclical maintenance, to a dwelling owned by a provider in order to ensure the continued habitability of the dwelling. Part of the Miscellaneous Works category.



# Glossary

<b>Restructure Rents</b>	From April 2002 rents are calculated according to a formula based on relative property values, local earnings and property size. Restructured rents are calculating using the formula and data set out in the DCLG’s <i>Guide to Social Rent Reforms</i> .
<b>Schedule of Services</b>	A financial statement outlining the services provided and relevant costs required from the tenant/leaseholder.
<b>Service Charges</b>	A financial charge to tenants and leaseholders for specific services to blocks/schemes. These might include cleaning of communal areas, or in the case of leaseholders, repairs to communal areas or equipment
<b>Social Rent</b>	Social housing available for rent at or close to target rents on the basis of the Rent Influencing Regime Guidance.
<b>Tenant</b>	Named person(s) who hold a legal tenancy with the Council, which includes requirements to occupy the dwelling and to pay rent and service charges. Tenants do not own the property in which they reside.
<b>The Council</b>	Brentwood Borough Council
<b>Universal Credit</b>	Is a social security benefit introduced in the United Kingdom in 2013 to replace six-means tested benefits and tax credits: Income-Based Jobseekers’ Allowance, Housing Benefit; Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Income-Based Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support.

## Version Control

Item	Reason for Change	Version	Author	Date

Last Review Date: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Next Review Date: 31st January 2021

<b>Scope</b>	<b>All General Needs, Community Housing and Supported Housing Tenants and Leaseholders</b>
Effective date	TBC (pending Committee approval).
Review date	31st January 2021
Signed Off	Interim Head of Housing – Angela Abbott
Author	Interim Housing Policy Manager – Stuart Morris
Strategy Owner	Housing Services
Legislation	Housing Act 1985; Housing Act 1996; Housing Act 2004 Part VI, Rent Act 1977 Localism Act 2011 The Social Housing Rents (Exceptions and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2016 & 2017 Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended) Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 (as amended) Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 The Environmental Protection Act 1990 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 Anti-Social behaviour Act 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
Consultation	General - Tenant Talkback. Service charge consultations as per statutory requirements.

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# Contact

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