

TENANT PANEL REVIEW OF GARDEN MAINTENANCE SCHEME

Report of Derby Homes' Tenant Panel

1. SUMMARY

This report is to show the findings of the Tenant Panel's review of the service provided in relation to the Garden Maintenance Scheme. It also presents the Panel's recommendations for improvement.

2. RECOMMENDATION

To note and comment on the information as detailed in appendix 1 and approve the recommendations.

3. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 As part of the Tenant Panel's continuing voluntary work, the most recent review looked at the Derby Homes' Garden Maintenance Scheme.
- 3.2 The review was carried out over a 3 month period September 2015 – December 2015. The purpose of this review was to look at and understand how the Garden Maintenance Scheme currently works and to see if improvements could be made in any areas to help both Tenants and Staff.
- 3.3 **Scheme Criteria:**
The cost of the scheme is currently £4.60 per week.

Criteria:

1. Have reached state retirement age
2. Are disabled and there are no able bodied people over 18 living in the property

Currently the service provides:

1. Grass cutting
2. Border maintenance
3. Hedge cutting
4. Rose pruning
5. Weed killing

- 3.4 Over the course of the 3 months we:

- Met with Managers of the scheme
- Met with Operatives

- Carried out a phone survey with customers who are currently on the Garden Maintenance Scheme
- Visited Streetpride Depot on Stores Road
- Took sample photographs of gardens on the scheme
- Looked at current letters related to the administration of the scheme.

Whilst talking to the above groups, we made it clear that the objective was to understand how the scheme works and to make recommendations for improvement, in no way to criticise the work ethic or employees. Full details of the discussions can be found in appendix 1.

Met with Managers of the scheme

There are approximately 430 people on scheme, with 15-20 people waiting to join.

3 teams carry out the work across the City. The number of gardens are divided into areas, to give the teams an equivalent workload.

The cutting season runs March to October each year, dependant on weather conditions. This year the team encountered adverse weather in the first part of the season, affecting scheduled cuts. This has resulted in the team playing catch up achieving 10 cuts instead of the expected 15.

We also enquired what the current recorded satisfaction levels currently are for the service:

We don't currently record satisfaction, unlike the communal cleaning audits – which are captured by the traffic light system and the local housing officer. The housing officer will inform us of additional issues found on their estate inspections. We receive weekly updates from DCC Streetpride and at that point carry out audits around the city on both Garden Maintenance & Ground Maintenance sites, by our dedicated staff.

Operatives

The operatives we spoke to were very positive, honest and straightforward. They explained that they have targets of 15 visits per day and get 30mins per garden. Whilst not complaining, the operatives said they would prefer to have an additional 10 minutes per garden, especially if they have hedges to be trimmed to make the best job possible for Tenants and themselves.

Telephone Survey

We contacted 49 tenants who are currently on the scheme, the general consensus of opinion was that the scheme runs well and is supported by the satisfaction figures gathered.

Questions asked were:

Are you happy with the fortnightly visits?	84% were satisfied.
Are you happy with the quality of the work?	86% were satisfied.
Do you think it's value for money?	86% said yes.
Are you happy with the attitude of the workers?	96% said yes.

From comments made by the 49 tenants surveyed, it appears the main problem lies with hedges, (15 people, 31%). Many have been allowed to double in width

which causes issues with light to windows. We acknowledge there has been a valid problem with the cutting of hedges this year, but many are now of such a height they really need attention.

Full details can be found in appendix 2.

Visited Streetpride Depot on Stores Road

Whilst there we learned about the benefits of the new equipment which has been purchased. All equipment is now maintained in house and fully serviced in the winter months, with detailed maintenance schedules in place. Repairs can be carried out quickly and with little disruption to the service.

Photographs of gardens on the scheme

We visited a number of gardens to see for ourselves their condition. We were satisfied that gardens we saw are being maintained to a reasonable standard, but did notice there was a problem with a number of hedges being either too high, too wide or both. Photographs can be found in appendix 1.

Letters

We reviewed letters currently in use and felt that they could be written in a clearer manner. For suggested changes see appendix 2.

3.5 Recommendations

The panel have made four recommendations where we feel improvements could be made. As part of our processes, we have included the Service Manager's responses to these recommendations as part of this report.

1. Gardeners to be able to report back on any gardens which would benefit from having borders removed to enable maintenance to be easier for both tenant and staff.
2. Investigate the possibility of providing some sort of ramp or lifting gear to vans for heavy equipment.
3. Introduce a method of collecting satisfaction information from tenants which will be assessed and reported to the Operational Board on a 6 monthly basis.
4. If a tenant has a particular problem with their garden, (not covered by the scheme), operative to report issues to their manager. Suggest these are then passed to LHO for investigation and resolution.

3.6 Managers Comments

1. Gardeners to be able to report back on any gardens which would benefit from having borders removed to enable maintenance to be easier for both tenant and staff.

Once we start in the cutting season, it can be difficult, often unproductive to deviate from the run lists to carry out additional works. At the moment we will put additional works on a winter list, or if they are urgent use the voids team or offer overtime. This

would be a nice to have but would incur additional resources and costs.

2. Investigate the possibility of providing some sort of ramp or lifting gear to vans for heavy equipment.

Streetpride staff are supported with training on how to handle items. We will always look to make any task easier and will pass on the request.

3. Introduce a method of collecting satisfaction information from tenants which will be assessed and reported to the Operational Board on a 6 monthly basis.

We are looking to introduce a text survey similar to that used by Day to Day repairs to record satisfaction, this would be carried out once a year at the end of the scheme.

4. If a tenant has a particular problem with their garden, (not covered by the scheme), operative to report issues to their manager. Suggest these are then passed to LHO for investigation and resolution.

We have close contact with all the local housing offices, and talk on a number of issues around the city. If an issue is reported, it is looked at and a decision made on urgency/need. We do not receive many requests for additional work, but where we do, we will try to accommodate at the end of the season, however, we must always bear in mind any additional costs.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report:

Consultation
Financial and Business Plan
Legal and Confidentiality
Council
Personnel
Environmental
Equalities Impact Assessment
Health & Safety
Risk
Policy Review

If Board Members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact:

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Background Information: None
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