Neighbourhood Management Policy

Policy Statement

1.1 Keeping neighbourhoods safe and clean is essential to provide a better quality of life for our customers and can act as a deterrent to antisocial behaviour (ASB), neighbour nuisance, and crime.

1.2 This policy sets out our approach towards neighbourhood management in line with our strategic priority to provide happy and healthy communities. The policy outlines:

- How we will work with customers and stakeholders to ensure our neighbourhoods are safe and pleasant environments where our customers and their families can thrive.

- The services we provide and interventions we can take to encourage community cohesion and a neighbourly spirit. We aim to prevent avoidable escalation of issues and detrimental impact to our customers and their communities.

1.3 For the purposes of this policy 'customer' refers to all Stonewater tenants, leaseholders and shared owners and anyone living in a scheme managed by Stonewater.

Policy Scope and Objectives

1.4 Our vision is to ensure that we deliver high quality services that meet the various needs of our customers and enhance their community. We want to create vibrant and attractive places that people want to live in for now and the future and where they can thrive.

1.5 Our neighbourhoods are diverse and can be defined estates or schemes, blocks, singular or groups of homes with shared external or internal areas, pockets of land, and access roads. The scope includes all tenure types offered by Stonewater and also applies to neighbourhoods where there is a managing agent, or contractor acting on our behalf. Shared spaces are defined as any areas Stonewater are responsible for that do not fall under contract arrangements with a customer e.g. communal gardens, corridors, play areas and laundry facilities.

The aims of this policy, and supporting procedures, include:

Compliance: maintaining compliance with regulation, legislation, and best practice to support strong governance and protect the safety of our customers.

Commitment: ensuring colleagues are aware of our commitment to manage neighbourhoods effectively, with a proactive approach, and make sure customers are aware of their contractual responsibilities.

Quality: ensuring all neighbourhoods and shared spaces that we are responsible for are well maintained and monitored.

Partnership: encouraging engagement and cooperation between Stonewater, customers, and stakeholders to understand neighbourhood needs and support local initiatives that enhance communities.

Value for money: ensuring all neighbourhood management services we provide are procured and provided to our customers in a cost-efficient manner and demonstrate value for money.

1.6 This policy is associated with other Stonewater policies such as:

- Fire Safety Policy
- Play Parks and Public Realm Health and Safety Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Pest Management Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy
- Pet Policy
- Vulnerable Customer Policy

Compliance

1.7 Regulatory Standards – Stonewater are required to comply with the Regulator for Social Housing's regulatory standards and this policy demonstrates our commitment.

1.8 Key Legislation relevant to the Neighbourhood Management Policy:

- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Highways Act 1980
- Public Health Act 1936
- Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978
- Law of Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977*
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and associated legislation, such as Fire Safety Act 2021
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Building Safety Bill 2021
- Equality Act 2010

Commitment

1.9 We are committed to working in partnership with others to provide effective neighbourhood management and customers are at the heart of this. We expect customers to keep their gardens and communal areas tidy, report communal repairs quickly, and not to do anything that would adversely impact their neighbours.

1.10 We will always encourage a 'good neighbour' approach to promote community cohesion through encouraging customers to build good relationships with neighbours and discuss concerns directly where it is more productive to maintain harmony where they live.

1.11 Where there is a failure in the service provided by Stonewater, or our contractors, we are committed to putting this right as soon as possible.

1.12 Where we are not responsible for the neighbourhood concern as it relates to a private property/land, local authority, or is tenant responsibility, then we will advise accordingly.

Communal nuisance

1.13 We are aware that at times customers may experience issues within their neighbourhoods which cause them a nuisance. This could include issues such as:

- Noise and smells transferring from neighbouring homes
- Residents parking inconsiderately
- Customers, their households or visitors use of communal areas
- Pets within communal areas

(This list is not exhaustive)

1.14 Stonewater will triage reports of communal nuisance and where these issues amount to anti-social behaviour, we will deal with them in line with our anti-social behaviour policy available here https://www.stonewater.org/media/5405/anti-social-behaviour-policy.pdf

1.15 Where issues do not amount to anti-social behaviour we will encourage customers to speak to their neighbours to resolve these issues where it is appropriate. Where it is inappropriate or customers are unable to resolve issues with neighbours, Stonewater may:

- Offer guidance
- Signpost to other agencies who may be better placed to help

- Look to stop the issue through preventative measures, recognising the need to consult with residents where measures will have an impact on the wider community
- Offer mediation services to build relationships and resolve issues mutually
- Speak to neighbouring residents directly where it is beneficial to do so
- Consider the use of 'good neighbour agreements' where it is appropriate.
- Support the customer to gather evidence where we believe the issue could amount to anti-social behaviour if evidence was provided

Environmental concerns

1.16 **Waste, recycling and fly tipping** – All customers must make sure that their waste and refuse is disposed in line with their local authority guidance. Rubbish must not be kept in the communal area or disposed of over balconies or at a height. Customers are encouraged to make sure all rubbish is disposed of correctly within the provision provided and Stonewater will work with the local authority to make sure that there are appropriate facilities for the disposal and collection of waste and recycling.

1.17 If fly tipping is reported to us we will remove any items that pose a hazard or risk to health such as broken glass, sharps, and chemicals, by the end of 1 working day. Other items may take up to 7 days to clear.

1.18 **Graffiti** – we will work quickly to remove graffiti on our land or property, and by the end of 1 working day should the graffiti be offensive e.g. where it is hate-related, contains foul language or rude imagery.

1.19 **Vandalism** – we will respond quickly to make safe any damage to Stonewater property, such as broken windows, damaged doors, or fixtures and fittings.

1.20 Where there is clear evidence of who is responsible for fly tipping, graffiti or vandalism within our communities, working with partners and utilising the tools available to us as a Landlord, Stonewater will seek to take action to bring those responsible to account. Where these issues are repeated and those responsible unknown, Stonewater will consider whether they can be 'designed out' through preventative measures.

1.21 **Pest control** – We will proactively manage the risk of pests within areas of concerns through regular pest control in accordance with our Pest Policy.

1.22 **Grounds maintenance and trees** – Where Stonewater are responsible for the maintenance of grounds and trees in communal areas, we will ensure that there are effective maintenance contracts in place. We will inspect trees at least every 3 years, prioritising tree maintenance work where there are risks associated to health and safety or damage to property. Where customers contact us regarding trees we will carry out responsive works where there are risks associated to health and safety or damage to property.

1.23 Trees in a customer's personal gardens are the responsibility of the customer to maintain. Where customers are unable to carry out work themselves, Stonewater will seek to sign-post to organisations who may be able to help.

We recognise in exceptional circumstances such as where there are risks associated to health & safety or damage to property Stonewater may need to carry out the work. In these instances it will generally be on a re-chargeable basis.

1.24 We take our commitment to the environment seriously and tree felling will only be carried out where there is evidence that the tree is dead, diseased, or dangerous. We will commit to planting more trees than we have to fell.

1.25 **Communal Cleaning** - we will work quickly to remove contamination in communal areas, and by the end of 1 working day should this pose a significant health and safety concern e.g. bodily fluids and broken glass.

1.26 We are also able to arrange for the completion of deep cleans to areas of need through our contracted services

1.27 **Boundary fences** - Stonewater are responsible for the maintenance of boundary fences where the fence acts as a boundary between our property and a public space. Repairs to boundary fences will be repaired in line with our Repairs Policy. Most customers are responsible for the fencing between themselves and their neighbour. Leaseholder's boundaries and responsibilities are set out in their lease agreement. All customers must make sure that any repairs or changes made to their fences comply with the existing boundaries and seek advice if they are unsure.

1.28 **Storage of personal items** – Stonewater do not accept any liability for the loss, damage or theft of any personal items kept within communal areas as communal areas should be kept clear. We will work with customers to keep shared spaces we own in a safe condition clear of any rubbish or inappropriately stored personal items.

1.29 It is vital however that we manage our shared spaces in line with our Fire Safety Policy to prevent fuelling or starting fires, obstructing exits in an emergency, and being able to effectively manage our repair and maintenance responsibilities. In some schemes we have been able to provide dedicated storage areas for items such as mobility scooters, push bikes and gardening equipment to provide easier access for customers. We will continue to review the provision of storage where possible for customers, utilising our area improvement budget as we recognise the value this can add to households.

1.30 We may request that items are removed by the owner by speaking to the owner and/or serving a legal notice* to provide reasonable notice for them to seek an alternative solution. Items that pose an immediate health and safety hazard e.g. storing petrol-operated items inside a building, objects such as pushchairs or toys blocking fire routes, or unknown chemicals may be removed without notice if we are unable to speak to the owner/or the ownership is unclear. We will aim to move and make safe in the first instance but reserve the right to remove and dispose of items if deemed necessary.

1.31 **CCTV –** Stonewater will comply with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Guidance on video surveillance, ensuring compliance with data protection requirements in any use of CCTV within our communities. In respect of customers individual use of CCTV, we will only grant permission for customers to film their own direct property, ensuring no capture of shared

spaces. This is to limit nuisance, intrusion and invasion of privacy as well as ensuring Stonewater do not consent to a breach of law (recognising we would not be unable to ensure compliance with data protection requirements).

Quality

1.32 We will publish clear information regarding the standards customers should expect from us. Information concerning estate services standards and specification is available on Stonewater's website and on request. The specification will also be provided through other channels to ensure customers are aware of what is included within their service charge.

1.33 We will use customer feedback to enhance our neighbourhood management and gather insight through customer complaints, compliments, and satisfaction.

1.34 We will proactively monitor the quality of our neighbourhoods through regular inspections. The frequency of these inspections will be determined by risk profiling. We will carry out general risk assessments which will help inform the frequency needed and may use discretion to increase or decrease based upon the level of demand coming from the scheme for reported issues. We will carry out general risk assessments at our schemes at least every 12 months

1.35 Our inspections will include picking up any potential repairs, assessing contract standards for cleaning and grounds maintenance, and ensuring we address any health and safety concerns. Any repairs arising will be raised at the time or as soon after the inspection as practical and issues relating to grounds maintenance and cleaning will be fed back to the contracting partner directly and reported to contract managers to inform contract management meetings.

1.36 Where customers contact us about estate services issues we will triage the report to establish service failure, we may ask for photos to help us do this. Where there is a service failure, the issue will be reported directly to the contracting partner, encouraging the partner to rectify the issue with the customer directly. Service failures will be reported to contract managers to inform contract management meetings. Where the customer wishes or there is a significant or repeated service failure, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with our Complaints Policy. Any compensation for service failure will be dealt with in accordance with Stonewater's compensation policy.

Partnership

2.9 We will encourage customers to get involved in estate inspections by inviting them to block or estate walkabouts, where customers and colleagues jointly inspect the standards of the communal areas.

2.10 Stonewater also encourage customers to assist in the inspection of our schemes through the Community Champion programme. Community Champions will be trained and equipped to feedback on the quality of our external environments. Stonewater will act on this feedback and inform customers of the actions taken.

2.11 We welcome ideas on how we can improve our services. We will work with customers through customer forums, the Customer Scrutiny Panel, community projects, the Customer Hubb.

2.12 Through our area improvement budget we deliver community investment projects to positively impact customers that live on our schemes. Area Improvements will generally impact the wider community and therefore will be subject to full customer consultation.

2.13 We will be proactive in our relationship management with contractors, managing agents, local authorities and other agencies such as the police to ensure that our communities are safe and well maintained. We will attend local forums where Stonewater can add value such as community safety partnerships.

Value for money

2.14 Stonewater has robust procurement processes to ensure that contracts offer value for money and quality. Where contracts have an impact on customers, customer insight and feedback will be captured within the process

2.15 Through Stonewater's contracts we will seek to maximise our partners social return within our communities, working with partners to deliver community based initiatives and projects

2.16 We also measure the 'added value' of our services for our customers and the communities we work in through calculating a social return on investment (SROI)

2.17 Some services we provide such as estate services are service chargeable to our customers and where these apply we will ensure that customers are fully informed about the service provided and understand that we will not make a profit from these services

Monitoring

8.1 Stonewater will monitor the delivery of neighbourhood management through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures which will be reported through the organisation to Board. This will be supplemented through Rant and Rave feedback, complaints and other customer feedback.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

9.1 The Equality Act of 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on grounds of Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Marriage & Civil Partnership, Pregnancy & Maternity. Stonewater supports these principles and is committed to the values of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination.

9.2 As this policy may impact upon individuals in regard to one or more of these protected characteristics, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed.

9.3 We will support any vulnerable customers in line with our Vulnerable Customer Policy.

* A **torts** notice is a legal document alerting the owner of items that have been abandoned on private land or property. It is issued in accordance with the Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977.

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Next review date: 31.7.2029