



**west
north
west**
homes leeds

Item 7.2
Appendix 1

Environmental and Estate Management Strategy 2009 - 2013

Putting Customers First



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1. Introduction and Summary

West North West homes Leeds first Environmental Estate Management Strategy was approved by the Board of Directors in June 2008.

The Strategy set out our approach to managing estates including the environment within those estates and how we proposed to develop our services over the two year period from 2008 to 2010.

The key business plan objective was “to set out clear and ambitious targets to improve the customers’ perception of the area they live in, through environmental service improvements and targeted investment. To measure perception through the eyes of the customers, including through joint inspections, estate walkabouts, involvement with local associations and in partnership with local groups and bodies.”

The aims of the strategy were to:

- Develop a performance management framework that pro-actively manages estate issues
- Involve our customers in the design and implementing of service changes and improvements
- Develop innovative new services to customers that offer value for money .
- Improve the provision of environmental services by working in partnership with the council, and other organisations.
- Contribute to environmental improvements and the reduction of anti-social behaviour in order to create safe, attractive places to live in.
- Ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to support those tenants who are vulnerable, elderly or disabled in the environmental maintenance of their tenancy.

The implementation of the Strategy achieved some positive outcomes for the ALMO and our customers. However, the Audit Commission Inspection of 2009, identified Estate Management as a service with a balance of strengths and weaknesses.

The range of strengths identified by the Audit Commission included:

- A systematic approach to estate inspections which involves residents.
- Multi-storey blocks are generally clean and well maintained.

Service areas identified by the Audit Commission as requiring improvement included:

- The lack of a systematic approach to estate inspections which involves residents.
- Empty properties are not always cleared or gardens maintained to the agreed standard.
- A poor quality grounds maintenance service and a contract which does not deliver value for money.
- The services provided by Leeds City Council have not been fully reviewed or market tested, and the Cleaning Service cannot show that it is delivering value for money.

This updated Environmental and Estate Management Strategy, therefore, seeks to build upon our existing achievements and strengthen those areas previously identified as a weakness by the Audit Commission.

The Strategy will, therefore, focus on the development of a range of robust processes to ensure effective customer focused outcomes and improvements which offer value for money.

The Strategy will be underpinned by a commitment to continuous improvement, incorporating the principles of customer involvement, equality and cohesion, access to services, value for money and partnership working. The Strategy will be supported by our Service Improvement Group and Customer Sounding Board, who will monitor and measure our performance against established local Performance Indicators and Service Standards, to ensure that we achieve our objectives.

2. Position Statement

West North West homes Leeds has reviewed our progress with the delivery of this Strategy during 2009/10 as follows:

We have delivered the following objectives:

- Developed a local performance management framework for the monitoring of environmental estate management issues.
- Developed a strong and popular customer Sounding Board, including leaseholders, ensuring our customers are fully involved in all aspects of service development and provision.
- Established a system of regular estate inspections and walkabouts involving customers.

- Established a system of in-house graffiti removal across the West North West homes Leeds area.
- Developed the ALMO's in-house multi-storey chute clearing team.
- Developed our partnership with Groundwork to deliver community and youth engagement and environmental improvements.
- Introduced the HUB Case Management and Mapping Systems, to improve the recording and monitoring of environmental estate management activity, including anti-social behaviour.

These following objectives are still in progress:

- The review of the multi-storey caretaking and cleaning service.
- The review and re-tendering of the Grounds Maintenance Contract.
- Review of the Service Level Agreements with Leeds City Council providers, ie, cleaning services and tree management.
- The review/re-tendering of the Window Cleaning Contract.
- Utilisation of customer profiling data to target resources, eg, vulnerable persons' gardening scheme.
- Development of monitoring of customer satisfaction in respect of all estate services.

The following are new objectives for 2009/11:

- Develop and utilise estate gradings from inspections/walkabouts to target resources in regard to estate improvements, to the areas of greatest need.
- Develop closer links with Leeds City Council's Area Management teams and Streetscene services to improve environmental cleanliness, through joint working.
- Develop closer links with Leeds City Council's Environmental Enforcement Teams, to resolve issues of environmental anti-social behaviour.
- Develop performance monitoring of estate inspections, to establish service standards for estate conditions in consultation with our customers.

3. Aims

The key aims of the Strategy for 2009/11 have been identified as being:

- To review the specification for the Grounds Maintenance Contract, to improve quality and value for money.
- To review the Service Level Agreement for Cleaning Services, to enhance customer satisfaction and value for money.
- To complete the review of the Multi-Storey Caretaking Service, to resolve pay and grading inequalities and raise the profile of the post.
- To complete, in consultation with other stakeholders, the procurement of the Window Cleaning Contract.
- To review the ALMO's arrangements for the tree management, through the Service Level Agreement with Leeds City Council's Forestry Division, and market test the service.
- To develop the Groundwork partnership, to achieve outcomes from consultation with stakeholders, and improve value for money.
- To improve the monitoring of estate conditions through a comprehensive system of state grading and utilise the information to target resources to the areas of greatest needs.
- To improve communication with partners in Leeds City Council to ensure that the ALMO's Strategy reflects the Council's strategic aims for a "Cleaner, Greener Leeds."
- To improve the level of customer satisfaction with all aspects of estate services.

4. West North West homes Leeds' Core Values

Our values are clear in everything we do, and how we operate. We expect our Board and employees to follow our core values; these serve as guidelines for our conduct and behaviour as we work toward our vision. WNWhL will ensure that all our customers, stakeholders and partners are aware of our core values so that they can judge our performance against them. Our core values are:

Values	How
Putting the customer first	We will ensure we understand our customers, tailor our services to meet expectations and gather intelligence to help us get a better understanding of their wants and needs
Integrity	We will be professional, open, honest and transparent and deliver on our promises.
To be excellent	We will place our customers, leaseholders, employees and partners at the centre of everything we do. In doing so, we will strive to listen and be accountable for everything we do.
Get it right first time	A total quality management approach will be taken to delivery of service.
Learning organisation	By responding to internal and external pressures, our experiences will help us to evolve. We will learn from feedback and celebrate success.
Embrace Equality and Diversity	Our strength is rooted in the diverse contributions from our Board Directors, staff and customers. These will define who we are.
To be innovative	We will inspire our staff to continually seek new and sustainable ways to grow our business. We will operate a 'no blame' culture. We will challenge ideas and concepts and strive to be leaders of change rather than followers.
Socially responsible and accountable	We will seek to provide (amongst other things), local employment opportunities for the community we serve, through partnership working. We will be accountable to our Stakeholders.
To be a good employer	We will seek to be an employer of first choice, providing a safe and happy working environment with a healthy work life balance.

We will apply our values consistently to our services so that every communication or encounter with our customers, stakeholders and partners is the best it can be. WNWhL will ensure that customers remain at the heart of its services and ethos.

West North West homes Leeds' Vision Statement is to, "Excel in delivering homes and services which are relevant to our customers, meet their aspirations, and enhance communities."

West North West homes Leeds' Mission Statement is, "Putting Customers First" and we will work to this principle to ensure that services are developed through comprehensive consultation with customers and stakeholders, and in support of our organisation's core values.

This Strategy supports the following Strategic Objectives:

- **Customers**
We will demonstrate our commitment to customers by striving to get things "right first time" and by increasing customer satisfaction. We will tailor our services to meet the individual needs of customers, delivering excellence in service delivery to meet customers agreed expectations.
- **Communities and Neighbourhoods**
We will become recognised as an organisation that drives and enables the creating of safe, clean, attractive, successful, sustainable and cohesive communities and neighbourhoods that work.
- **Business and People**
We will become an effective, efficient, economic and enterprising organisation, providing professional and expert advice and service and we will inspire staff to seek new and innovative ways to develop our business.
- **Homes**
We will become recognised as a provider of quality homes in neighbourhoods that people want to live in, meeting and exceeding basic decency levels. We will become a housing provider of choice.

Environmental and Estate Management, therefore, is fundamental to the majority of our policies and strategies and there are strong links in particular to, Customer Satisfaction, Cohesion and Diversity and Community Safety (Respect Agenda).

5. Background

This strategy has been reviewed to further develop West North West homes Leeds' estate and environmental management services in consultation with our customers.

The strategy takes into account the following key drivers:

- Customer consultation
- Audit Commission Report 2009
- Performance against service standards and indicators 2008/9
- Value for money evaluation
- Research into good practice
- Legislation
- Leeds City Council's Strategic Aims and Objectives.

Policy Context

The Audit Commission Inspection Report 2008, identified that litter was evident in a number of places and our estates are not kept in a reasonable condition and do not look well maintained.

Section 89, of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, imposes a duty on local areas and duty bodies to keep specified land clear from litter and refuse. This legislation is accompanied by the Code of Practice, Litter and Refuse 2006.

Research undertaken by ENCAMS, and environmental company, reported an estimated cost to local authorities of £547 million, during 2005/6 to clean and clear estates of litter and refuse. More recently in March 2009, the joint report of the independent think tank, Policy Exchange and the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), states that since the 1960s, the amount of litter dropped in the UK has increased by approximately 500%.

The Community Partnership Agreements developed by West North West homes Leeds, in consultation with customers have also identified estate cleanliness and in particular, litter as a priority area.

The new social housing regulator, the Tenant Services Authority aims to champion the needs and aspirations of tenants and is expecting housing organisations to equip tenants to be able to scrutinise and challenge the landlord's performance.

The successful implementation of this strategy is, therefore, vital if West North West North West homes Leeds is to meet its legislative responsibilities and customer expectations.

6. Who Are Our Customers?

West North West homes Leeds manages estates across a wide geographical area to the North and West of Leeds, with a diversity of communities, cultures and environmental candidates.

Key features about the West North West homes Leeds are are:

- There are a number of district, town and village centres, including Otley, Pool-in-Wharfedale, Bramhope, Guiseley, Yeadon, Cookridge, Holt Park, Tinshill, Kirkstall, Rawdon, Horsforth, Armley, Bramley, Pudsey, Wortley, Farnley, New Farnley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse.
- The largest concentration of BME communities are to be found in the Hyde Park, Woodhouse and Wortley electoral wards and in particular, the Little London and Armley neighbourhoods.
- The Little London area is the most ethnically diverse with 59% being White British, with Kirkstall and Horsforth being 89% White British.
- The Government's index of deprivation identifies large parts of Armley, Bramley, Wortley and Little London as amongst the most deprived in the country.
- Crime levels are the highest in the Bramley and Woodhouse/Hyde Park areas.

This strategy, therefore, seeks to be inclusive of all our customers and not just those who communicate and interact with us. The Environmental and Estate Management Strategy will, therefore, cover the following group of people:

- West North West homes Leeds tenants
- Other family or household members
- Leaseholders
- Members of the Leeds Housing Register
- Other residents or visitors to our estates.

West North West homes Leeds recognises that people who use our services come from diverse backgrounds, with different experiences and needs. This strategy aims to ensure, that no one receives less favourable treatment because of race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, cultural background, gender, sexuality, disability, domestic circumstances, age, employment status, membership or non-membership of trade unions or political beliefs.

West North West homes Leeds will treat all complaints and feedback seriously and use this information to ensure services and communication methods are improved. We will also carry out regular satisfaction surveys to discover and understand what customers think of our services.

We will seek to develop the quality and quantity of information used to profile our customers, in order to tailor our services to the individual needs of customers, where ever possible. We are also committed to consulting with our customers and others on whether our service and this strategy may have an impact, in order to ensure that our services are relevant and accessible.

7. Key Objectives for 2009/11

Review of the Caretaking and Cleaning Service

The 2008 Environmental and Estate Management Strategy identified the need to review the existing caretaking and cleaning service and this was reported to the Board of West North West homes Leeds in August 2008. The report highlighted a number of issues, including:

- Freezing of existing caretaker vacancies
- Standardising of cleaning frequencies
- Finalise a new SLA with Property Maintenance Cleaning and improve monitoring arrangements
- Undertake market testing of the Building Cleaning Services to assess value for money
- Appraise long-term options for the delivery of service.

Caretaking and cleaning is a key service to customers and a significant area of expenditure to the organisation. The risk of not providing a high quality service which provides value for money is, therefore, high. Customer satisfaction with the existing service is currently at around 70%.

The Audit Commission Inspection of September 2008, identified that there was an acceptable standard of service in high rise flats, with flats being clean and well maintained, thereby giving a positive impression to tenants living in, or moving into the area. The inspection did, however, indicate that the Cleaning Service could not evidence value for money and this issue has, therefore, been examined in the period since inspection.

West North West homes Leeds has discussed a variety of cleaning methodologies with our provider, Property Maintenance Cleaning (PMC), which identified mobile cleaning as a method to maintain and improve standards whilst achieving enhancements in value for money, varying from 10% to 30%.

The Strategy for the Caretaking and Cleaning service will, therefore, cover the following main elements:

- Confirmed freezing of vacant caretaker posts.
- Phased roll out of mobile cleaning services through PMC to all blocks covered by the Service Level Agreement.
- Negotiation with staff and Unions, regarding the future of the caretaking service and terms and conditions.
- Expand monitoring of cleaning service to include all sites.

- Develop benchmarking data for the caretaking and cleaning service.

Review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract

The provision of a high quality grounds maintenance service delivering value for money is seen as a key service for customers. However, the Audit Commission Inspection of September 2008 indicated that the quality of the service was poor and the contract did not deliver value for money.

The contract is due to be re-tendered from March 2011, and this strategy, therefore, seeks to outline the methodology adopted by West North West homes Leeds, to shape the future grounds maintenance service to the satisfaction of our customers.

The Board of West North West homes Leeds considered future options for the service in July 2008, and favoured a contract which would increase the control of the ALMO in regard to contract management, enabling ALMO staff to work more closely with the contractor than the present arrangement allows.

The contract administrator, Leeds City Council, have however, favoured a city-wide contract to enable a consistency of service to all parts of Leeds, including the West North West homes Leeds area. Discussions have been held with the staff of Leeds City Council, the three ALMOs and other stakeholders including customers at regular customer Sounding Board Meetings, to identify future options for the contract specification. These have identified the following issues:

- The length of cut presently at 2" but suggested this be reduced to 1" (58% consider the current length acceptable).
- The quality of the grass cutting (only 54% currently satisfied).
- The quality of shrub bed maintenance (44% satisfied at present).
- The frequency of grass cutting (68% currently satisfied).
- The frequency of shrub bed maintenance (51% satisfied).
- The clearance of grass clippings (44% satisfied).
- The standardisation of grass cutting across all sites, ie, the possible renewal of the enhanced specification of sheltered complexes.

Our strategy will, therefore, focus on working with partners in Leeds City Council, and the contractor, to ensure that the current service is delivered in a manner that offers improved quality and higher levels of customer satisfaction.

Develop and utilise estate gradings to affect estate improvements:

The improvements of estate conditions was identified as a key area of the first Environmental and Estate Management Strategy, and the creation of safe, clean, attractive, sustainable and cohesive communities and neighbourhoods, is a strategic objective of the organisation.

We have identified through consultation with customers and stakeholders, how estate improvements may be more effectively managed through comprehensive system of estate inspections and gradings, which will enable resources to be targeted to these areas most in need of improvement.

A sample of an estate grading is shown below:

	Fly tipping	Excess rubbish in Gardens	Overgrown Communal Areas	Overgrown Hedges	Excessive Weeds	Litter	Dog fowling	Graffiti	Vandalism	Street Cleansing	Grass Cutting	Poor Condition Communal Fencing	Communal Fencing Painting	Paved Areas (ALMO Responsibility)	Highways & Pavements
Holtdale Place	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hotldale Gardens	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Holtdale Road	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Holtdale View	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Holtdale Lawn	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holtdale Way	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Holtdale Garth	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Holtdale Avenue	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Holtdale Fold	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Holtdale Green	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Holtdale Grove	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holtdale Croft	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holtdale Close	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Holtdale Drive	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Farrar Lane	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0

Key	
0	Excellent
1	Good
2	Fair
3	Poor

The need to improve estate cleanliness has also been highlighted by a recent Leeds City Council Scrutiny Board Inquiry, and this issue is also seen as a priority for our customers as identified in the consultation for the Community Partnership Agreements, and it is, therefore, vital that the resources of the ALMO are targeted to those areas of main concern for our customers and partners.

This strategy, therefore, proposes to shift towards a greater emphasis on planned environmental estate work, utilising the information obtained from estate inspections to enable the formulation of estate action plans that will achieve satisfactory outcomes for our customers.

8. Consultation

The activities identified in this strategy are the result of comprehensive consultation with staff and customers, through regular meetings of our Service Improvement Groups, Customer Sounding Boards and Area Panel Meetings.

We will continue to use these consultation mechanisms to monitor the progress of the strategy and to provide feedback to our customers and stakeholders.

9. Monitoring and Review

The West North West homes Leeds Environmental Estate Management Strategy will reinforce the organisation's commitment of "putting customers first" and the key objective for creating safe, clean, attractive and sustainable communities and neighbourhoods.

The strategy will be reviewed annually to reflect any changing patterns or priorities and, therefore, will continue to provide a platform for service delivery and improvement. Performance will be monitored through monthly reports to staff, managers and the Senior Management Team (SMT), and progress in terms of the implementation of this strategy will be monitored through monthly meetings of the Service Improvement Group, Customer Sounding Board and SMT. In consultation, regular performance reports will also be submitted to the meetings of the Area Panels, and Estate and Tenancy Management KLOE Board (KLOE 6).

10. Action Plan

See attached Action Plan overleaf.

Environmental and Estate Management

Action Plan

2009 – 2013



Environmental and Estate Management Strategy Action Plan 2009 - 2013

<u>ACTION</u>	<u>MILESTONE EVENT</u>	<u>OUTCOME</u>	<u>LEAD OFFICER</u>	<u>TARGET DATE</u>	<u>PROGRESS TO DATE</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop estate grading through hub caseworks targeting resources where required 	Targeted working during August 2009	Creates clean, safe estates and sustainable communities (CSS) through directing resources where needed	R Britten	December 2009	HUB caseworks grading currently being tested December 09
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review specification for grounds maintenance contract and develop proposals and procure new contract improving VFM and monitoring arrangements 	Procurement timetable 06/01/10 26/01/10 12/05/10 16/06/10 01/03/11	Cleaner and attractive estate. Sustainable communities	R Britten	March 2011	Cross ALMO/LCC Working Group developed proposals and reported to GM Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Service Level Agreement for building cleaning and develop proposals to improve value for money. 	SLA reviewed in June/July 2009	Clean and safe environment to live in. sustainable communities	R Britten	March 2010	Proposal developed for Efficiencies and phase 1 roll out begun
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Review of the Caretaking Service to determine the future role of the post. 	Agree new job description with staff/unions	Clean and safe environment to live in. sustainable communities	R Britten	November 2009	Initial discussion with workforce commenced. Report to board on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake market testing of the Cleaning Service 	Procurement timetable produced	Clean and safe environment to live in. sustainable communities	R Britten	March 2011	No Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Window Cleaning Contract and determine new form of contract. 	Agree format of contract and submit proposals to LCC July 2009	Clean and safe environment to live. Creating sustainable communities	R Britten	July 2010	Sounding Board consulted May 2009. Report to SMT July 2009.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Forestry Management SLA and explore market testing. 	SMT Report June 2009	Improved performance and VFM	R. Britten	March 2011	Cross ALMO consultation taking place. Agreement for market testing with Aire Valley Homes, subject to costs (June 2009).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use new hub caseworks system to improve reporting and monitoring of estate management issues to customers and staff. 	Testing of system August/September 2009	Enhanced monitoring of environmental conditions improving overall estate appearance . (CSS)	R Britten	Testing of system August/September 2009	Procedures being developed to enable training of staff, subject to successful operation of system when tested.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop closer links with LCC Streetscene Services, Community payback and Area Management to improve estate cleanliness 	Arrange meeting to align plans including LCC and ALMO staff.	Clean and safe environment to live. Creating sustainable communities	R Britten	July 2010	Already attend NW Street Scene sub group. Need to formalise meetings across the ALMO. Also ongoing street scene scrutiny enquiry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review service standards for estate conditions/cleanliness in consultation with customers, and link to the LPI Framework. 	Review at SIG and Sounding Board	Greater understanding of services for customers and improved monitoring	R. Britten	December 2009	Services standards already in place, currently being reviewed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and develop options for a Gardening service to provide support for customers 	Proposals developed and report to sub group	Enhanced Tenancy support , Clean and safe environment to live. Creating sustainable communities	R Britten	March 2011	No Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop closer links with LCC enforcement to resolve issues of environmental ASB 	Improved monitoring of outcomes of referrals and environmental crime	Reduced environmental ASB and crime. (CSS)	L Hamshaw	July 2010	No Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop tree planting 	Developed	Reduces the	R Britten	March 2013	Recycling facilities developed in

schemes, recycling and partnership initiatives to be proactive in managing the environment and design out environmental crime.	recycling facilities. Staff Training and awareness. Investigate composting. Tree planting scheme	business impact on the environment. (CSS)			little London for residents and innovative recycling scheme fully operational at Clayton Grange MSF and long standing external facilities at most MSFs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the website and marketing for Environmental & Estate Management and investigate new methods of communication 	Up to date website with modern and innovative communication methods.	Improved communication and access to services and awareness standards	R Britten	July 2009	Estate walkabouts updated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To audit and map all areas of land within the boundaries of our estates and ensure management arrangements with partners are specified to deliver a cohesive grounds maintenance service 	March 2010 new grassing season	Improved Ground Maintenance service for customers-reduced complaints for WNWHL	R Britten	March 2010	Ongoing work to update maps and variations nearly complete work completed in conjunction with Glendale and picked up through monitoring.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve our benchmarking arrangements both regionally and nationally. 	April 2010 new benchmarking data to be input into housemark system	Enables us compare services and VFM whilst picking up good practice to improve services for customers	R Britten	July 2010	Already part of Housemark Estate Services group and have been active in joining the peer review with Hull CC.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and develop the Groundwork partnership, to achieve outcomes from consultation with stakeholders, and improve value for money. 	Annual review meeting	Delivering outcomes that meet the needs of customers and that demonstrate VFM	R Britten	March 2010	