

DRAFT: North Yorkshire Council Landlord Services – Grounds Maintenance Policy

Version	Development Stage	Description	Key Changes Implemented
1	Initial draft	Preliminary version developed by Landlord Services in line with Task and Finish Group findings.	Baseline content created outlining purpose, scope, standards and operational expectations.
1.1	Second Draft	Clarifications following a joint Task and Finish, Involved Tenant meeting.	Clarifications added to 6.1.4, 6.1.5, 9.1 and 9.5

1. Introduction

North Yorkshire Council Landlord Services maintains the external communal environments around its housing estates and supported housing schemes, ensuring they remain safe, clean and attractive for residents.

This policy sets out how grounds maintenance services are delivered, the standards that residents can expect, and how these services contribute to the wider aims of creating well-managed, pleasant and sustainable neighbourhoods.

It also explains how the Council monitors service delivery, engages with residents, and ensures that grounds maintenance represents value for money.

2. Policy Purpose and Scope**2.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to set out a clear, consistent and transparent framework for how North Yorkshire Council Landlord Services plans, delivers and oversees grounds maintenance across Council-managed housing land. It defines the service standards residents can expect, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and establishes the mechanisms for performance, compliance and continuous improvement so that communal external areas are maintained safely, professionally and in a way that supports attractive, accessible and sustainable neighbourhoods.

2.2 Scope

Landlord Services has maintenance responsibility for the following areas, including:

- Communal lawns and grassed areas
- Hedges, shrub beds and planted borders
- Hard-surface areas such as paths, steps and forecourts
- Shared external areas within housing schemes
- Trees situated on housing land managed by the Council
- Seasonal and reactive works

The policy does not apply to:

- Private gardens or outdoor areas within the tenant's sole responsibility
- Land managed by other Council departments or external agencies
- Commercial property

3. Policy Aims

The aims of this Grounds Maintenance Policy are to:

Deliver a consistent, compliant service:

- Apply clear, published service standards and specifications across all housing-managed land.
- Ensure delivery is safe and compliant with legal, regulatory and health & safety requirements.
- Embed consistent working practices for internal teams and contractors.

Manage work efficiently and proactively:

- Use planned, seasonal programmes to maintain quality throughout the year.
- Prioritise and complete reactive tasks using a risk-based approach and defined response times.
- Coordinate scheduling, information flow and performance monitoring to minimise avoidable repeat visits and delays.

Maintain safe, clean and accessible communal areas:

- Reduce hazards such as overgrown vegetation or obstructed pathways.
- Keep sightlines, entrances and footpaths clear to support safe movement around estates.
- Maintain hard surfaces and planted areas so they remain tidy, presentable and easy to navigate.

Strengthen communication, engagement and accountability:

- Provide residents with clear, accessible information on what the service includes and how to report issues.
- Involve residents through estate inspections, walkabouts and feedback where appropriate.
- Maintain transparent decision-making through documented review and monitoring processes.

Deliver value for money:

- Ensure grounds maintenance services are well-planned, efficient and cost-effective.
- Reduce unnecessary reactive work through effective scheduling and early intervention.
- Monitor performance to ensure reliable, good-quality service delivery.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

North Yorkshire Council's delivery of grounds maintenance services is shaped by a combination of statutory requirements, regulatory standards and internal policies. This framework ensures that communal areas are maintained safely, lawfully and in accordance with recognised good practice.

Grounds maintenance must be delivered in a way that protects residents, employees, contractors and the wider environment, while supporting the quality and condition of neighbourhoods.

4.1 Legislation

The Council must comply with all legislation relevant to the management and maintenance of communal outdoor spaces. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Health and safety legislation governing the safe use of equipment, machinery and vehicles, and requiring risk assessments and control measures for work carried out in public areas.
- Environmental protection and waste legislation covering issues such as responsible disposal of green waste, prevention of pollution, and the safe handling of potentially hazardous materials.
- Wildlife and habitat protection requirements, which ensure maintenance activities do not disturb protected species, active nests or important habitats.
- Regulations relating to the use of herbicides and pesticides, including storage, application and operator competency requirements.
- Highways and public space legislation, where relevant to paths, verges or areas accessible to the public.

The Council will also comply with future legislative changes or statutory guidance relating to environmental management, safety standards or neighbourhood maintenance.

4.2 Regulatory Framework

As a registered social housing provider, North Yorkshire Council must comply with the regulatory standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The delivery of grounds maintenance directly supports compliance with:

- The Neighbourhood and Community Standard - requiring landlords to keep neighbourhoods and communal areas safe, clean and well-maintained, and to work with partners to ensure the local environment meets residents' needs.
- The Safety and Quality Standard - requiring landlords to ensure communal areas do not pose health and safety risks and are maintained in a safe condition.
- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard - requiring landlords to provide accessible, accurate information about communal services and enable residents to influence the management of their neighbourhoods.

These standards shape the design and delivery of the grounds maintenance service, ensuring that maintenance supports safe and well-managed housing environments.

4.3 Internal Policies and Corporate Responsibilities

All grounds maintenance activities must align with wider North Yorkshire Council policies and requirements, including:

- Corporate health and safety policies governing safe systems of work
- Environmental and sustainability commitments, including biodiversity considerations
- Climate-responsibility strategies where relevant to land management
- Waste disposal and recycling policies
- Procurement and contract management rules

These internal requirements help ensure that the service is consistent across the county, represents value for money and aligns with the Council's broader objectives for neighbourhood quality and environmental management.

4.4 Internal Service Delivery Framework

As the internal operational provider, Parks and Countryside is responsible for delivering all planned and reactive grounds maintenance across Council-managed housing land. Under this framework:

- Parks and Countryside must comply with all relevant legislation, regulatory standards and Council policies.
- Service specifications, quality standards and expectations are set by Landlord Services and implemented by Parks and Countryside.
- Performance is monitored through regular review meetings, estate inspections and routine reporting.
- Staff must operate safely, professionally and respectfully within residential areas.

This internal delivery model ensures a consistent, efficient and coordinated service that meets the expectations of both residents and the Council.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Clear roles and responsibilities help ensure that grounds maintenance is delivered consistently, safely and to the required standard. This section sets out the responsibilities of North Yorkshire Council Landlord Services, Parks and Countryside (as the service provider), residents, and other supporting teams.

5.1 North Yorkshire Council Landlord Services

North Yorkshire Council Landlord Services is the service owner and is responsible for commissioning, coordinating and overseeing the delivery of grounds maintenance across its housing estates.

Responsibilities include:

Service Oversight and Co-ordination

- Setting the overall service standards for grounds maintenance across housing land.
- Agreeing planned maintenance schedules and identifying priorities for reactive work based on safety, accessibility and resident need.

- Providing Parks and Countryside with clear specifications, site lists and any required updates.

Performance and Quality Management

- Monitoring the quality of work delivered by Parks and Countryside, through estate inspections, audits and resident walkabouts.
- Addressing issues where standards fall below expectations and working with Parks and Countryside to secure improvements.

Resident Communication and Engagement

- Publishing service information, seasonal schedules and updates.
- Ensuring residents can report issues easily and receive timely responses.
- Engaging with tenant panels, local groups and residents as part of wider neighbourhood management.

Safety, Compliance and Accountability

- Ensuring grounds maintenance operates in compliance with relevant health and safety and environmental legislation.
- Responding promptly to hazards or urgent issues reported by residents.
- Being accountable for overall service delivery and ensuring value for money.

5.2 Parks and Countryside (Internal Service Provider)

Parks and Countryside, as part of North Yorkshire Council, is the operational service provider for all grounds maintenance activities. Their responsibilities include:

Operational Delivery

- Delivering all planned and reactive grounds maintenance in accordance with the standards and specifications set by Landlord Services.
- Ensuring work is completed within agreed timescales and to the required quality.
- Coordinating and carrying out tasks in a safe, efficient and professional manner across all housing-managed land.

Workforce Competence and Professional Standards

- Ensuring staff are trained, competent and equipped with appropriate tools, machinery and PPE.
- Operating equipment safely and responsibly within residential environments.
- Maintaining a professional approach when working near residents' homes.

Safety and Operational Responsibilities

- Implementing safe systems of work in line with Council health and safety requirements,
- Disposing of all green waste and other arisings in accordance with Council procedures.
- Identifying and reporting any hazards to Landlord Services.

Reporting and Communication

- Keeping accurate records of completed works, site visits and issues identified.
- Communicating access issues, site constraints or operational concerns promptly to Landlord Services.
- Working collaboratively with Landlord Services to review performance and address service improvements.

Parks and Countryside will work in partnership with Landlord Services to ensure a coordinated, efficient and seamless service for residents.

5.3 Residents

Residents contribute to maintaining safe, pleasant neighbourhoods by:

Use of Communal Areas

- Respecting communal land and not leaving items that obstruct maintenance work.
- Ensuring household waste and items are disposed of correctly and not left in communal outdoor areas.

Prompt Reporting

- Reporting issues and informing the Council of access difficulties or recurring problems to help prioritise local need.

Private Garden Responsibilities

- Maintaining private gardens where these form part of their tenancy.
- Ensuring vegetation from private gardens does not encroach onto communal land or create hazards.

A resident's responsibilities for private gardens and communal areas should be read alongside the terms of their tenancy agreement.

5.4 Other Council Services and Partners

Some grounds-related or environmental issues may involve other services within the Council. These teams may support Landlord Services and Parks and Countryside through:

Highways and Transportation

- Maintaining adopted highways, verges and paths outside the scope of Landlord Services responsibility.
- Addressing issues such as highway trees, drainage or verge management where responsibility sits outside housing land.

Environmental Services

- Clearing fly-tipping reported on housing land.
- Supporting waste management and litter issues not covered by routine grounds maintenance.

Community Safety and Locality Teams

- Working with Landlord Services where environmental concerns relate to antisocial behaviour, vandalism or repeated dumping.
- Supporting joint inspections and coordinated neighbourhood responses.

6. Grounds Maintenance Service Delivery Standards

North Yorkshire Council Landlord Services is committed to providing a consistent, high-quality grounds maintenance service across all housing-managed land. This section sets out the core standards that Parks and Countryside will deliver, how work will be prioritised, and what residents can expect throughout the year.

The service standards below apply to all communal external areas maintained by the Council. These standards are supported by the operational detail contained in Appendix A – Grounds Maintenance Specification.

6.1 Planned Grounds Maintenance Activities

Planned grounds maintenance forms the core of the service delivered by Parks and Countryside. These activities are scheduled throughout the year and include:

6.1.1 Grass Cutting

The Council will provide a minimum of ten grass cuts during each growing season, typically between March and October, although this may vary depending on weather and ground conditions. Grassed areas will be cut to achieve a tidy and even appearance, with edges maintained and clippings removed from paths and other hard surfaces.

6.1.2 Hedge Maintenance

One programmed hedge cut will be undertaken each year, normally between October and March (outside the bird nesting season). The purpose of the annual cut is to maintain shape, prevent obstruction, and support visibility and safety. In addition to this scheduled work, a responsive service will operate to deal with urgent issues where hedges or other vegetation obstruct paths, entrances, parking areas or sight lines.

6.1.3 Shrub Bed and Planted Area Maintenance

Shrub beds and planted areas will be maintained to retain healthy growth and to prevent shrubs from overhanging footpaths or creating obstructions. Any damaged, diseased or hazardous shrubs will be pruned or removed when required.

6.1.4 Leaf Clearance

One planned leaf clearance will take place in late Autumn each year on footpaths across all areas. Additional reactive clearance will be carried out where leaf accumulation creates a slip hazard, blocks drains or otherwise obstructs access.

6.1.5 Weed and Moss Control

Weed control will be carried out twice each year, normally in April and September. Sprayed weeds will be removed to improve appearance and reduce concerns raised by residents. Moss will be scraped and cleared wherever it creates a slip risk, particularly on paths and steps.

6.1.6 Tree Maintenance

Trees on communal land will be surveyed, pro-actively, based upon risk.

A reactive service will be available to respond to requests for tree works, where a health and safety risk is present.

This is in line with the North Yorkshire Council Tree Management Policy and does not apply to trees within gardens, which remain the tenant's responsibility under tenancy agreements.

6.2 Reactive Grounds Maintenance

In addition to planned work, Parks and Countryside will respond to unplanned or urgent issues reported by residents or identified during routine inspections. Reactive tasks include:

- Cutting back overgrown hedges obstructing entrances, footpaths, parking areas or sight lines
- Clearing heavy leaf accumulation blocking drains or creating access issues

Response times may vary depending on urgency, weather conditions and operational resources, but the Council will prioritise issues presenting safety concerns.

6.3 Winter Maintenance

Parks and Countryside will provide winter maintenance only on supported housing schemes where vulnerable residents may be disproportionately affected by icy or snowy conditions.

Winter maintenance activities include:

- Gritting key pedestrian pathways, access routes and steps during freezing weather
- Clearing snow from priority walkways to enable safe access to communal facilities and essential services
- Reporting areas of repeated freezing or hazardous surface conditions to Landlord Services

Winter maintenance is not provided on general needs housing schemes.

Gritting does not guarantee surfaces will remain ice-free and residents are advised to take appropriate care during severe weather

7. Communication and Resident Engagement

Effective communication and meaningful resident engagement are central to delivering a high-quality grounds maintenance service. North Yorkshire Council Landlord Services is

committed to ensuring that residents are informed, listened to, and able to influence how communal environments are maintained.

This section sets out how the Council will communicate service information, respond to enquiries, and involve residents in shaping the service.

7.1 Communication with Residents

Clear, accessible and timely communication helps residents understand what to expect from the grounds maintenance service. Landlord Services will work with Parks and Countryside to ensure information is shared consistently and in a way that supports resident confidence in the service.

7.1.1 Publication of Service Information

- Annual grounds maintenance schedules are published on the Council's website in advance of each season.
- Scheme-specific or estate-level variations are communicated where relevant.
- Information is written in clear, plain language and kept up to date throughout the year.

7.1.2 Regular Service Updates

- Grounds maintenance features will be included in tenant newsletters, including reminders about seasonal activities (grass cutting, leaf clearance, etc).
- Residents will receive autumn and spring updates explaining upcoming seasonal changes.

7.1.3 New Tenancy Information

Information about grounds maintenance services will be included in tenant welcome packs, ensuring new residents understand:

- What the Council maintains,
- How frequently work is carried out,
- How to report issues, and
- What is expected from residents.

7.2 Reporting, Enquiries and Service Requests

Residents are encouraged to report issues or raise enquiries relating to grounds maintenance.

Where Parks and Countryside staff identify issues during routine work, such as access challenges, or urgent safety concerns, they will report these promptly to Landlord Services.

To report issues or raise enquiries, please use our standard contact routes via the contact us web page, by phone, or in person at any Council office.

7.3 Engagement with Residents and Communities

Resident engagement helps ensure services meet local needs and supports community pride.

7.3.1 Estate Walkabouts and Inspections

Residents, tenant representatives and community groups will be invited to take part in estate walkabouts. These will be used to:

- identify environmental issues
- discuss potential improvements
- assess the quality of grounds maintenance work

7.3.2 Feedback and Service Improvement

Landlord Services will use resident feedback, including complaints, satisfaction data and information gathered during walkabouts, to guide service improvement. Learning from complaints will be shared with Parks and Countryside to support continuous improvement.

Residents will be invited to participate in consultation where significant changes to service delivery are proposed.

7.3.3 Support for Community Initiatives

Landlord Services will encourage community-led environmental projects where appropriate. These may include:

- community gardening or planting schemes
- litter-picking activities
- biodiversity initiatives
- small-scale estate improvements

7.4 Standards for Communication and Conduct

North Yorkshire Council will ensure that communication regarding grounds maintenance is:

- Transparent - providing clear explanations of what the service includes and excludes.
- Consistent - ensuring residents receive aligned and accurate information from Landlord Services and Parks and Countryside.
- Timely - sharing relevant updates before or as changes occur.
- Accessible - offering information in alternative formats where required in accordance with the Council's accessibility commitments.
- Respectful - recognising the diverse needs of residents across housing estates and supported schemes.

Staff from both Landlord Services and Parks and Countryside are expected to behave professionally and courteously when interacting with residents.

8. Equalities and Accessibility

North Yorkshire Council is committed to delivering grounds maintenance services in a way that is fair, inclusive and accessible to all residents.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out for this policy. The assessment concluded that...

The Council will ensure that:

- Services are delivered consistently and fairly across all housing areas.
- Individual needs, vulnerabilities or accessibility requirements are taken into account when planning and delivering work.
- Information about grounds maintenance is available in alternative formats on request.
- Safety and accessibility are prioritised in communal areas, particularly where residents may be more vulnerable.

The Council recognises that each neighbourhood and resident group may have different needs and will consider these appropriately within the scope of the service.

9. Performance Monitoring

North Yorkshire Council is committed to ensuring that grounds maintenance services are delivered to the required standard. Performance will be monitored regularly to support consistency, quality and continuous improvement.

9.1 Monitoring and Inspections

Landlord Services will carry out routine checks of communal areas, including estate inspections and walkabouts, to review the quality of grounds maintenance delivered by Parks and Countryside. Issues identified will be logged and followed up quarterly with Parks and Countryside and Housing Review meetings.

9.2 Service Review with Parks and Countryside

Performance will be reviewed through **quarterly review meetings between Landlord Services and Parks and Countryside**. These discussions will focus on programme delivery, quality concerns, seasonal pressures and any required improvements.

9.3 Resident Feedback

Resident feedback, comments, complaints and reports of environmental issues will be used to help monitor service performance and identify areas requiring improvement.

9.4 Complaints Management

Complaints relating to grounds maintenance will be handled through the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. Outcomes will be reviewed to support learning and improvement.

9.5 Areas of Focus

Performance will be assessed using clear measures, including:

- Completion of scheduled work
- Quality of workmanship
- Responsiveness to urgent issues
- Resident satisfaction
- Value for Money

These measures form part of the wider Housing performance framework.

10. Policy Review

This policy will undergo an initial review after **one year**, followed by a review **every three years** by the Service Improvement Team to ensure alignment with legislative, regulatory, and best practice developments. Where necessary, interim updates may be made outside of the scheduled review cycle to maintain the policy's relevance, fairness, and effectiveness, particularly in response to new legislation or regulatory changes.

Last updated: **X**

Approved: **X**

Review date: **X**

11. Contact

For enquiries, comments or complaints about a service, please use our standard contact routes via the contact us web page, by phone, or in person at any Council office.

Appendix A - Operational Grounds Maintenance Specification

This appendix sets out the operational standards that Parks and Countryside must follow when delivering grounds maintenance services on behalf of North Yorkshire Council Landlord Services. The specification supports clear, consistent and safe delivery across all maintained housing areas.

Service Area	Standard / Planned Activity	Reactive Activity	Notes / Exclusions
Grass Cutting	<p>Minimum 10 cuts per growing season (approx. March–October).</p> <p>Finished to an even, tidy standard</p>		<p>Weather and ground conditions may require adjustments to sequencing.</p> <p>Clippings will remain on grassed areas.</p>
Hedge Maintenance	<p>1 full hedge cut per year between October and March (to avoid nesting season).</p> <p>Hedges maintained to prevent obstruction of footpaths and ensure safe visibility.</p>	<p>Reactive cutting where hedges obstruct entrances, footpaths, parking areas, windows, lighting columns or vehicle sight lines.</p>	<p>Clippings will be removed</p>
Shrub Beds & Planted Areas	<p>Seasonal pruning and trimming</p> <p>Routine weeding.</p> <p>Removal of dead/diseased material.</p>		
Weed & Moss Control	<p>Two herbicide treatments per year (April and September).</p>		

	Removal of sprayed weeds to improve appearance.		
Leaf Clearance	One planned clearance per year, primarily focusing on footpaths (typically November).	Reactive service to remove leaf accumulation where a health and safety issue exists.	
Winter Maintenance	<p>Snow clearance <u>and</u> <u>gritting of key pedestrian routes, access paths and steps during freezing conditions, in priority areas only i.e. around community centres, hostels, sheltered housing schemes and common rooms.</u></p> <p>Gritting of key pedestrian routes, access paths and steps during freezing conditions.</p>		No winter maintenance provided on general needs schemes.