

North Yorkshire Council

Housing & Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10 June 2026

Review of Grounds Maintenance Policy – Final Report

1.0 BACKGROUND TO REVIEW

- 1.1 Prior to Local Government Reorganisation the stockholding authorities of Harrogate, Richmondshire and Selby each had their own portfolio of tenancy and property management policies, standards, and procedures (over 50 in total) defining their relationship as landlord with tenants and their approach to property management and maintenance. Those policies varied in their stipulations, meaning North Yorkshire tenants and leaseholders in different localities could have different service expectations. There are also gaps in policy where no agreement has been or where policy documents are outdated. It is also clear where policy has been developed in isolation or as a reaction to a particular event, resulting in a legacy HRA policy framework which is inconsistent and lacks alignment to core regulatory compliance standards.
- 1.2 Work is ongoing to harmonise policy across the Housing Revenue Account functions and transparency in decision making around that policy is central to the revised Consumer Standards, as data-based decision making is a critical tool in the Council's ability to demonstrate service improvement and delivery being driven by the specific needs and vulnerabilities of its tenants.
- 1.3 Elected Member involvement is therefore critical to good governance and demonstrating effective oversight of Landlord Services and Housing Standards policy, and good practice should include Overview and Scrutiny involvement in policy review both at its formative stages, for example via task and finish work and at pre-decision stage providing comment to the decision maker prior to adoption.
- 1.4 In September 2024 the Housing & Leisure Overview & Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider:
- The key drivers for policy development showing a clear commitment that the policy approach would be based upon the needs of customers and developed in consultation with tenants, and;
 - The proposed policy framework, which mapped out the core documents required to underpin the Council's service to tenants.
- 1.5 It was confirmed that work had already commenced to harmonise some high priority policies, and the Committee was asked to consider a list of the remaining policies, standards, and procedures (65 in total) prioritised on a high, medium, low basis based upon the requirements of the Consumer Standards, where there was currently no policy, or conflicting policy in place and the level of risk exposed by not having a harmonised policy in place.
- 1.6 The Committee recognised that in most cases it was about consolidating the existing documents of the legacy stockholding authorities and agreed to focus their review work on a small number of key standards and policies where member contribution via a task group review could add the most value. It was agreed that one of the policies suitable for scrutiny review would be the Grounds Maintenance Policy.

1.7 This draft final report focusses on the work of the Grounds Maintenance Review Task Group made up of the following members:

Councillor Kevin Foster
Councillor Kirsty Poskitt
Councillor Jack Proud

1.8 The agreed remit for the review was 'To identify an appropriate Grounds Maintenance Policy for North Yorkshire' with the aim of delivering:

- A robust, resilient and flexible Grounds Maintenance Service, focusing on creating a positive environment for residents across the Housing Revenue Account
- A service which performs to agreed schedules, frequencies and standards
- A service which delivers value for money within the approved budget
- A service that provides clear key performance indicators which can be tracked and robustly managed throughout the year
- A service which adopts an approach based on clear data and evidence and the principle of continuous improvement.
- A service that has the flexibility to respond to variations that arise at short notice.

1.9 The Task group agreed the scope of their review should include:

- Understanding and comparing the current level of service across the three legacy council areas
- Considering:
 - The type of council owned land that should fall within the scope of the policy (or green spaces with the potential to affect tenants' safety).
 - The optimum frequency for grass cuts, weeding, hedge cutting etc, taking into consideration the associated financial implications etc.
 - Any previous related complaints
 - Associated environmental issues e.g. biodiversity, use of pesticides etc.
 - Options around community led initiatives e.g. communal veg patches / wildflower meadows, allotments
- Benchmarking the legacy Harrogate Policy against other LA and Housing Association policies (see paragraphs 3.20 and 4.11 below).
- Commercial opportunities for providing a premium service i.e. were there opportunities to re-charge for some grounds maintenance works?
- Identifying a preferred delivery model i.e. the pros and cons of in-house delivery compared to external provision via procured contractor and their financial implications

1.10 For clarity, they also agreed the following were outside the scope of their review:

- Identifying and agreeing the green spaces currently included within the schedules for grounds maintenance works across the three housing stock holding legacy council areas.
- Identifying additional areas of council-owned green space to be added to the schedule of works
- Identifying how land is currently used or how it could be re-designated.

2.0 INTRODUCTION TO GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

2.1 Grounds maintenance involves the upkeep and management of communal and private outdoor spaces associated with the councils housing stock. The service ensures that these areas are safe, clean, and visually appealing for tenants. Some common tasks included in grounds maintenance:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weed control• Hedge cutting• Tree works including cutting / felling• Grass cutting• Shrubbery Pruning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Winter works• Summer works• Winter gritting• Hazardous Waste• Sharps and needles
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2.2 These services help create a pleasant living environment for residents and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

2.3 A grounds maintenance policy should outline the standards, procedures, and responsibilities for maintaining gardens and green space across communal and private outdoor spaces associated with the councils housing stock.

- i. Purpose, Scope and Objectives: Defines the areas covered by the policy and the goals, such as safety, appearance, and environmental sustainability.
- ii. Maintenance Schedule: Details the frequency and timing of various maintenance tasks, including routine tasks (e.g. grass cuts, hedge trimming, litter removal), seasonal tasks (e.g. leaf collection and snow removal) and special tasks (e.g. pest control, irrigation maintenance).
- iii. Responsibilities: Specifies who is responsible for different tasks, whether it's in-house staff or external contractors or tenants (e.g. routine garden care, reporting issues and adhering to guidelines).
- iv. Standards and Procedures: Outlines the quality standards and specific procedures for tasks like lawn care, pest control, and irrigation.
- v. Safety and Compliance: Includes guidelines to ensure safety for workers and visitors, and compliance with local regulations and environmental standards.
- vi. Inspection and Reporting: Describes the process for regular inspections and how to report and address issues.

2.4 There are a number of Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards associated with Grounds Maintenance:

The Safety and Quality Standard - To provide safe and good-quality homes for tenants, along with good-quality landlord services.

1.4.1 Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient, and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard - To engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes

1.1.1 Registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of shared spaces

1.2.1 Registered providers must co-operate with relevant partners to promote social, environmental, and economic wellbeing in the areas where they provide social housing.

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard - To be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that they can access services, raise complaints, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account

1.3.1 Registered providers must take tenants' views into account in their decision making about how landlord services are delivered and communicate how tenants' views have been considered.

1.4.1 Registered providers must communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account.

3.0 INFORMATION GATHERED

3.1 North Yorkshire Council - Current Position

It was acknowledged from the outset of the review that there were differences in the provision of grounds maintenance across Harrogate, Selby and Richmondshire, resulting in tenants receiving different levels of service and different standards across the county. Officer site visits to a range of locations since LGR had evidenced the ongoing poor quality of service and the substantial variances across the different areas and different types of sites maintained through the HRA e.g. single domestic dwellings, independent living sites, sheltered housing schemes, garage spaces and communal gardens.

3.2 The service provided in all three areas is being delivered in-house. Selby used to be delivered by an external contractor but had been brought in-house in 2024. The staff from the external contractor were TUPED over to NYC as part of the council's Parks & Countryside team, and they have continued to deliver the same service in that area. It appears there was no detailed assessment of their schedule of works undertaken at that time.

3.3 The service delivered by NYC's Parks & Countryside team is paid by the HRA. The costs charged to the HRA are funded by rents, and the HRA is currently in a healthy position. Council Tax income is not directly allocated to specific services or localities across North Yorkshire and only represents around 39% of total council funding, along with a number of other non-service specific grants and income sources which are 'pooled' to cover the cost of running Council Services. By apportioning costs relating to HRA estates, this reduces the service costs funded by Council Tax and ultimately by Council Tax payers.

3.4 The current charges between the General Fund and HRA for Grounds Maintenance are as follows:

<u>Locality</u>	<u>Annual Charge (£)</u>	<u>Cost per Property</u>
Harrogate (3977 properties)	£591,800	£ 148.80
Richmond (1461 properties)	£ 42,400	£29.02
Selby (3029 properties)	<u>£143,600</u>	£47.41
Total	£777,800	

3.5 There is limited historic information about how the charges were originally calculated for each of the legacy stock holding areas. For Harrogate, there is an old SLA which sets out the expected service standard (see paragraph 3.8 below). It is likely that at one point there was also an SLA for Richmondshire, but there is limited information on the legacy service standard for Richmondshire. The same charges are currently still being applied for both of those areas.

- 3.6 For Selby, there would not have been an SLA as the charges were based on contract details from when the service were provided by an external company. There is a schedule of the sites covered by that legacy contract and the charge relating to each site. However there are no workings to show how those charges were calculated. The contract included service standards, rather than a prescribed number of cuts per year. At the time of bringing the service in-house (following LGR), the service standard and the associated charges were not re-assessed, so the legacy arrangements remain in place.
- 3.7 Parks and Countryside recharge Housing Services for some works outside of the SLA. However anecdotally, it became clear that the good working relationships between housing estate managers and Parks & Countryside operatives was such that there were often instances where Parks & Countryside were informally being asked to carry out some one-off works when next in an area. For the formally requested works outside of the SLA, it was confirmed that a quote was provided, the cost agreed, works were completed, and a journal raised. It was also confirmed that the recharge rate had been increased post LGR in line with inflation.
- 3.8 In an effort to understand the differences in the current provision of grounds maintenance across the three areas, the Task Group considered the Harrogate Horticultural Local Standard (last reviewed June 2022), detailing their Parks and Environmental Services approach and direction to management of controlled green spaces across the Harrogate District, including communal grass, herbaceous beds, hedges, and trees on land associated with the council's housing stock. The legacy provision in Harrogate also included for:
- An Assisted Maintenance Service for elderly/disabled tenants unable to maintain their own gardens. It was confirmed that the provision of that service continued post LGR and that there was no formal record of the properties in Harrogate receiving that service.
 - A Winter Maintenance Service which included: winter gritting at named locations (e.g. Community Centres, Hostels, Sheltered Housing Schemes etc); winter gritting of communal paths on social housing estates (outside of those gritted by highways); and one-off winter works.
- 3.9 The council did not inherit legacy Standards for the Richmond and Selby areas. Housing Services confirmed that while the approach and direction to the management of controlled green spaces across the Richmondshire area was broadly aligned with Harrogate for such as grass cutting frequency and hedge maintenance timing, there were other notable differences in service scope. For example, Richmondshire did not include assisted maintenance works, or winter gritting (only grit bins are provided) or one-off winter works. Officers were less confident about what the current provision in the Selby area covered although a copy of a schedule of streets for grass cutting was provided. It was unclear when that schedule was created or if it was up to date, and the process for agreeing variations/revisions to that schedule of works was also unclear.
- 3.10 **Tenant Feedback**
Feedback on current tenant satisfaction levels from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Annual Report 2024-25 suggested the Council should.... 'focus on improvements to grounds maintenance - both scheduling and staff availability. Currently, tenants are dissatisfied with the frequency and quality of the service.'

Annual changes			Quarterly changes		
	2023-24	2024-25		Q3 2024-25	Q4 2024-25
Communal areas	61%	71%	Communal areas	74%	68% (-6%)

- 3.11 Comments/feedback on communal areas from the Tenant Satisfaction Annual Report stated:

- Gardening services are inconsistent and inadequate. For instance, grass cutting is often performed without proper clean-up, leaving clippings scattered and contributing to an untidy appearance. Additionally, there are reports of overgrown hedges and trees obstructing light and visibility, which further detracts from the communal environment.
- Accessibility issues are highlighted, particularly for disabled tenants who struggle with broken paths and inadequate lighting, making it difficult to navigate communal areas safely. The sentiment of neglect is pervasive, with numerous comments indicating that tenants feel overlooked and that their maintenance concerns have not been adequately addressed.
- Some tenants note that the situation has persisted for years, with little improvement despite repeated complaints. The overall impression is one of frustration and disappointment, as tenants feel that the communal areas are not being maintained to an acceptable standard. The lack of action from NYC and the reliance on tenants to manage upkeep have led to a sense of disillusionment, with many calling for a return to more regular and thorough maintenance practices.
- In summary, the survey highlights a critical need for improved maintenance and cleaning services in communal areas, as well as better communication and responsiveness from NYC to address tenants' concerns.

3.12 **Initial Consultation**

The Task Group were made aware of a newly formed Tenants Panel who had also expressed an interest in reviewing the Council's Grounds Maintenance Policy. The Task Group agreed it would be helpful to meet with the Panel members early in the review. They also agreed it would be helpful to undertake site visits in each legacy area to view the day to day working practices of the Parks & Countryside Team, to get a feel for the variations in delivery across the different areas, and to help identify some appropriate decision points for the scrutiny review. Members of the Tenants Panel were invited to participate in those site visits.

- 3.13 In addition, the Task Group agreed to undertake an initial Tenant Survey to gather insights into tenant priorities and perceptions, including their views on current service levels such as grass cutting and overall satisfaction with grounds maintenance provision. 347 responses were received (4.1% of tenants). The findings showed the top priorities were:

Grass cutting (70%)
 Weed control (58%)
 Tree maintenance (56%)
 Litter removal (54%)
 Hedge trimming (42%)

- 3.14 In regard to overall levels of satisfaction, the survey results showed responding residents were:

Very Dissatisfied: 12%
 Dissatisfied: 26%
 Neutral: 30%
 Satisfied: 25%
 Very Satisfied: 8%

- 3.15 Overall satisfaction levels across the different localities were similar, as follows:

<u>Harrogate:</u>	<u>Selby:</u>	<u>Richmondshire:</u>
36% Dissatisfied	35% Dissatisfied	42% Dissatisfied
32% Satisfied	34% Satisfied	34% Satisfied

3.16 In regard to the Council's communication and engagement, the survey results showed that 58% of the responding residents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with how well they were informed about maintenance schedules.

3.17 The Task Group agreed it would be necessary later in the review to survey all tenants and seek feedback from the Tenants Panel on any proposed revisions to the NYC Policy arising from the scrutiny review.

3.18 **Site Visits & Follow-up Meetings**

The Task Group carried out two area visits alongside members of the Tenants Panel. The first on 15 July 2025 in Selby and the second on 29 July 2025 in Harrogate. For each of those the following locations were visited:

Selby

D'Arcy Court

Kitchen Drive

Drove along Abbots Road (trees) to Charles Street & Faxley Road area

Cockret Court

St Wilfrid's Court sheltered scheme in Brayton

Harrogate

Dene Park

Slingsby Crescent

Fairfax Avenue

3.18 The detailed data gathered on both areas as a result of the site tours is shown at **Appendix A**.

3.19 After each site visit the Task Group held an informal meeting with the Tenant Panel members and supporting officers, to discuss their thoughts on:

- The current condition of the grounds and open spaces viewed on the site visit
- Issues identified with the existing maintenance regime (e.g., grass cutting, hedge trimming, litter removal, weed spraying etc.).
- Suggestions for improvement.
- Environmental considerations

3.20 **Benchmarking**

The Task Group considered the legacy Harrogate Standard as a starting position, alongside example standards from:

- Broadacres Housing Association (based in North Yorkshire and surrounding areas)
- Yorkshire Housing (biggest housing association based solely in Yorkshire)
- Women's Pioneer Housing (working across West London)
- Westward Housing (working across Devon and Cornwall)
- Thirteen Group (covering the North East, Yorkshire and Humber region)
- Together Housing Group (covering a large geographical area in the North of England)
- Jigsaw Homes (one of the largest housing groups in England with more than 37,500 homes across the North West and East Midlands)
- Platform Housing Group (one of the UK's largest housing associations, across the Midlands from Herefordshire in the West to the Lincolnshire coast in the East, and from the Derbyshire Dales in the North to the Cotswolds in the South)
- Canterbury City Council
- West Lothian Council
- Dudley Council

- 3.21 A summary comparison table of the grounds maintenance regime for the above organisations is shown at **Appendix B**.
- 3.22 The Task Group also considered Somerset Council's 'Neighbourhoods and Community Standard' as they are in a similar position to North Yorkshire Council in that they currently have some variations in different geographical parts of their county and are in the process of aligning their services from former District areas. They currently provide two standards for grass cutting:
- Cut and Fly - General needs areas will be cut to a cut and fly standard, where grass clippings are left on the ground to decompose and provide nutrients to the soil.
 - Cut and Collect - Sheltered housing uses the cut and collect method, where grass clippings are collected and removed. This service is paid for from higher service charges.

4.0 ANALYSIS

4.1 Initial Consultation & Tenant Panel Feedback

The Tenants Panel members reiterated much of the feedback arising from the latest Annual Tenants Satisfaction report (see paragraphs 3.10 and 3.11) and went on to highlight a range of other issues around grass cutting.

4.3 Site Visits - Issues Identified in Selby & Harrogate:

On the site visits members of the Task Group and Tenants Panel saw evidence of the annual spraying of weeds along paths and kerbs which were left in situ whilst dying off. There was much more evidence of this in the areas visited in Selby, suggesting there were more damaged paths and kerbs in the Selby area (weeds only grow where detritus has gathered in surface cracks etc). The Task Group and Tenant Panel members agreed the dying sprayed weeds were really unsightly, and negatively impactful on the general appearance of the housing estates.

- 4.4 In areas with communal green space, they saw many examples of where tenants were choosing to enhance the garden space immediately adjacent to their property with their own plant pots, garden furniture etc. They noted the difficulties this created for Parks & Countryside, preventing the full completion of grass cutting and maintenance works, with the potential for accidental damage caused by grass cutting machines, in turn leading to complaints from tenants. Other barriers identified to grass cutting / maintenance of communal areas included whirly-gig washing lines, garden furniture, bicycles, discarded household goods/furniture, wheelie bins etc.

- 4.6 There were minimal signs of tenants or groups of tenants maintaining their communal spaces, although the Task Group did receive feedback from the Tenant Panel members on their individual efforts to maintain the communal spaces around their council property for their neighbours. This drew attention to an instance where a tenant had received a written instruction from the Council to stop cutting a communal grass area adjacent to his property.

- 4.7 Members of the Task Group and Tenants Panel also noted the unsightly nature of grass cuttings left scattered across grassy areas and public footpaths, and queried why grass clippings were dropped and not collected, and why some areas were left uncut. This highlighted the following:
- Parks & Countryside do not have the appropriate grass cutting machines to collect cuttings. They currently use machines which cut and drop. If a decision were taken to collect cuttings, new machinery would be required. The approximate cost of a ride on mower is £30-40K, and the cost of a hand mower is £10-15K.

- Cut and drop appears to be the most common approach nationally, both from a cost perspective and being the most environmentally friendly.
- The extra staff time required to empty the collecting box on the machine once full into a waiting vehicle would result in the job taking three times longer.
- Extra vans/trailers would be needed to take away the clippings – its estimated approximately 10 vans/trailers @ £50K each
- Extra staff would need to be employed to transport the clippings from site to the disposal location - estimate 10 staff @ £45K each (including overheads). The anticipated tip would be York which would mean transporting clippings from sites located as far away as Masham in the Harrogate area.
- Extra fuel costs to drive more miles - anticipated 10 times more.
- The huge negative carbon footprint that would be created as a result of travelling from site to site 5 days a week, 26 weeks a year
- Areas with spring bulbs were left uncut for 6+ weeks following the flowers dying off, to ensure their sustainability for future years.

4.8 The Task Group agreed it would be helpful to share information with tenants on the barriers to full grass cuts and why grass cuttings are not removed etc, as part of a welcome pack for new tenants (the introduction of which was previously recommended as part of the scrutiny review of the council's Lettable Standard).

4.9 The Task Group saw examples of overgrown hedges creating a barrier to using public footpaths and therefore a health and safety concern. They also saw overgrown ginnels and some unmanaged gardens. It was confirmed that if reported, Housing Services write to a tenant to enforce the tenant agreement around garden maintenance. If no action is taken by that tenant, Housing Services then submit a service request to Parks & Countryside to carry out the necessary work. It was confirmed, the charge for this is not passed on the tenant, and the Task Group questioned whether that approach would be appropriate.

4.10 In Harrogate the Task Group viewed some council flats over shadowed by overgrown trees growing on non-council owned land, and were made aware of an associated tenant complaint about the lack of natural light in their flat as a result. The Task Group recognised the Council could do nothing about trees growing on non-council owned land, but agreed perhaps more could be done to raise awareness of such issues associated with a specific council property, again as part of a welcome pack given to a new tenant.

4.11 The Task Group noted that Harrogate Borough Council had for a continuous period invested in the landscaping of its social housing estates. Whereas it was clear from the site visit this had not been the case in Selby. They agreed that both Selby and Richmondshire would benefit from some ongoing annual funding to improve and long term invest in the appearance of its social housing estates. They therefore discussed the provision of an annual investment fund and what it might be best spent on (see paragraphs 5.38 – 5.40 below).

4.12 The Task Group were keen to understand how variations/revisions to the programme of works for each housing stock area were identified and agreed. It became clear that the council had not inherited a formal work programme for each of the three legacy housing stock areas, and it was confirmed that the current day to day operations were instead based on the area knowledge of the Parks & Countryside teams. It was therefore unclear how those day to day operations were kept up to date and when that last occurred. For example, in the Harrogate area where the legacy Borough Council had provided assisted maintenance works for its vulnerable tenants, there was no clear record of which properties were receiving that service and why. Furthermore, assurance could not be given that the same tenants were still living in those properties and therefore that those properties should still be included on the programme of works for that area. The Task Group agreed that the

provision of an up to date programme of works for each area should be prioritised, as without them it would be difficult to monitor performance or provide an informed response to service requests from tenants.

4.13 Overall, the Task Group and Tenants Panel members agreed that visually the communal green spaces across housing estates in Harrogate appeared maintained to a higher standard, which they believed helped to generate a sense of pride and encouraged community ownership for residents.

4.14 **Benchmarking**

In comparing North Yorkshire Council's current practices with those of other registered providers and Councils the Task Group noted the following:

- Most providers cut grass every 2 - 3 weeks (e.g. Broadacres: 16 cuts/year; Together Housing: 14 cuts/year) – They agreed that Harrogate's schedule aligned with sector norms.
- Some providers treated weeds twice annually (e.g. Dudley Council, Together Housing), while others used spot treatments or eco-friendly alternatives
- Most providers cut hedges twice annually – The Task Group noted this was in line with Harrogate's Standard.
- Tree maintenance varied widely, some inspect regularly (e.g. Dudley Council), others on a 3–5-year cycle in line with Harrogate's approach.
- Some providers used online maps, reporting tools, and/or estate inspections – The Task Group agreed the Council should explore this further.
- Garden competitions and community grants were used by some providers (e.g. Dudley Council, Yorkshire Housing).
- The Task Group found no examples of local authorities outsourcing their grounds maintenance works.

4.15 **Tenant Service Requests and Complaints – lack of data**

The Task Group were keen to consider examples of previous service requests and complaints, but it proved very difficult to draw out the data. They noted there had been similar issues when undertaking the recently completed scrutiny review of the Lettable Standard. The Task Group therefore agreed that measures needed to be put in place to make it easier to draw out that data for future monitoring purposes. They suggested that housing related complaints may benefit from being categorized when recorded to enable future analysis and that to do this a number of appropriate categories would need to be identified (some relating to grounds maintenance, others related to council properties etc).

4.16 **Potential Way Forward**

Having considered all of the information provided on the current delivery of grounds maintenance works across the three legacy stock holding areas, and having carried out the site visits and compared the quality of provision across those areas. As well as comparing the Harrogate Standard to that of other Councils and Housing Associations, the Task Group agreed that ideally they would like to see the current Harrogate standard applied across all areas as summarised below:

- 14 x grass cuts per year (mid Mar –mid Oct)
- Clippings left, except paths / hardstanding areas (blow/sweep)
- Bulb areas –left until leaves are brown -then cut and remove
- 2 x hedge cuts per year, remove arisings
- Shrub and rose beds i.e. 6 x weekly summer prune and winter tidy, remove arisings, dig / mulch
- 1 x leaf clearance each Autumn (blow/sweep paths etc. only)
- 2 x herbicide treatments per year

- Tree inspections on a 3-yearly cycle

4.16 However, they noted the difference in the cost to the Council of the current provision across the three areas (see breakdown at paragraph 3.4 above). They recognised that if the legacy Harrogate Standard were applied across all three areas, using the cost per property currently being applied for properties in Harrogate, then the cost to the council would be substantially more than what was currently being paid i.e. £777,800:

3977 Housing stock properties in Harrogate area x £148.08 =	£ 588,914.16
1461 Housing stock properties in Richmond area x £148.08 =	£ 216,344.88
3029 Housing stock properties in Selby area x £148.08 =	<u>£ 448,534.32</u>
Total	£1,253,793.36

4.17 Furthermore, the Task Group recognised that the cost per property in Harrogate of £148.08 was based on outdated pricing and that if the cost per property were calculated using today's actual costs, the overall cost to the Council to deliver to the Harrogate standard across all North Yorkshire Council social housing estates may be significantly higher than shown above.

4.18 The Task Group noted that a significant piece of work would need to be undertaken by the Parks & Grounds team to calculate the actual cost of the grounds maintenance work to the Harrogate Standard at today's prices.

4.19 Recognising that it may not be financially sustainable to apply the current Harrogate Standard across the whole county, the Task Group chose to breakdown that Standard into four categories of work and to seek new costings for each of those categories as follows:

- i. Ground Maintenance Works i.e. grass and hedge cutting, weeding etc
- ii. Winter Maintenance i.e. gritting and snow clearance
- iii. Annual Investment Fund for tree planting, shrubs and bulbs etc
- iv. Assisted Grounds Maintenance Works i.e. for individual properties where the tenant is unable to maintain their own garden

4.20 They agreed that with that information, they would be in a better position to identify which categories of the legacy grounds maintenance work would be affordable to the Council going forward and therefore which to recommend for inclusion in a new Service Level Agreement between Housing Services and Parks & Countryside Service.

5.0 SPECIFICATION PROPOSALS FOR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE WORKS

5.1 At a meeting in October 2025, the Task Group met with the Head of Parks & Grounds and Housing Officers to consider what a new specification should include. In respect of Category (i) - Grounds Maintenance Works, based on all of the information gathered, the Task Group identified a range of potential policy decision points (PDPs) for inclusion in a revised Grounds Maintenance Policy, and went on to consider all of the options associated with each of those PDPs, as detailed below.

5.2 Based on the Task Group's preferred options for each PDP and for Categories (ii) – (iv), the Parks & Countryside Service were tasked with undertaking some exploratory work to develop a cost model based on their proposals.

5.3 Given the breadth of housing types and the spread of those properties across various locations in the county, and the scale of work it would require for the Parks & Countryside Service to go out and measure all sites, the Service chose to restrict their measuring work to a sample of nine sites across each of the three housing areas. A follow up desktop exercise was then undertaken using key data to identify proxy unit costs informed by the

team's data collection, expertise and experience, cross referenced with industry standards.
– as detailed in **Appendix C**.

- 5.4 The Task Group met again on 10 February 2026 to consider the information provided by the Parks & Countryside Service and the associated costs (as shown in Appendix C) and based on their discussions at that meeting, the Task Group identified recommendations for each PDP and the other categories (as detailed below):
- 5.4 PDP 1 – Hedge Maintenance
Harrogate Standard – Hedge maintenance is limited to two cuts per year on the highway-facing side only, outside of bird nesting season (March-Sept). Full responsibility for entire hedges applies only in specific contexts like sheltered housing schemes. Tenant Feedback – Overgrowth blocks paths, reduces visibility, and causes safety issues
- 5.5 Options considered:
- Maintain current schedule of 2 x per year (Harrogate Standard) and apply this consistently across all areas
 - Decrease frequency of maintenance to less than 2 x per year
 - Responsive service for urgent cases, allowing reactive hedge maintenance
- 5.6 The Task Group agreed with feedback from tenants that overgrowth blocks paths, reduces visibility, and causes safety issues. They therefore agreed the frequency of hedge maintenance should be a minimum of once a year (option c) with the provision of a responsive service for urgent cases (option b).
- 5.7 In response to the Parks & Countryside Service feedback and costings in Appendix C, the Task Group agreed to recommend:
- Options (b) & (c) – based on 1.3 cuts per year, assuming hedges are 2m, max height 4m, with the removal of clippings / arisings.
- 5.8 PDP 2 - Weed and Moss Control
Harrogate Standard – Twice yearly Apr and Sept
- 5.9 Options considered:
- Maintain current approach of twice yearly (Harrogate Standard) and apply this consistently across all areas
 - Increase frequency of treatment based on a risk-based assessment (e.g. areas with high footfall or recurring issues)
 - Decrease frequency of treatment to less than 2 x per year
 - Trial non-chemical or eco-friendly alternatives with the potential for a higher frequency
 - Provide a responsive service for tenant-reported weed and moss issues, allowing reactive treatment where necessary
 - Include physical weed removal alongside chemical spraying to improve outcomes and address tenant concerns
- 5.10 The Task Group recognised that weeds only grew on defective paths and kerbs, and that both weeds and moss under washing lines were a safety hazard. They noted that in February 2025, Full Council considered the use of glyphosates and neocotinoids in operational services, and due to the alternatives being of limited efficacy and more costly, agreed it was unable to adopt a more environmentally-friendly method of control. The Task Group accepted this decision would not be revisited / changed in the near term which ruled out option d above. Having considered the remaining options, the Task Group agreed they would like to see the current Harrogate approach being applied across all areas (option a). They also agreed they would prefer to see sprayed weeds removed as they were unsightly thereby damaging to the overall appearance of housing estates (option f).

- 5.11 In response to the Parks & Countryside Service feedback and costings in Appendix C the Task Group agreed to recommend Option (a). Whilst it was confirmed that the costings provided did not include for option (f) – the physical removal of weeds after treatment. The Task Group agreed to also recommend that option.
- 5.12 PDP 3 - Leaf Clearance
Harrogate Standard - Leaves cleared once per year, from paths only
- 5.13 Options considered:
- a. Maintain current approach of leaves only being cleared from paths once a year (Harrogate Standard) and apply this consistently across all areas
 - b. Extend clearance to all communal areas
 - c. Target specific, higher risk areas for more frequent clearance based on a risk-based assessment (e.g. sheltered schemes)
 - d. Provide a responsive service for tenant-reported leaf hazards, allowing reactive clearance where necessary
- 5.14 The Task Group agreed that fallen leaves left on paths created slip hazards. They therefore agreed the current approach should be maintained and applied across all areas (option a). They considered options for the use of collected fallen leaves, but none proved financially viable or practical. The Task Group also agreed a responsive service allowing reactive clearance where a health and safety concern was reported would be the best way forward (option d).
- 5.16 Having considered the feedback and costings provided by the Parks & Countryside Service shown in Appendix C:, the Task Group agreed to recommend Options (a) & (d).
- 5.17 PDP 4 - Grass Cutting Frequency
Harrogate Standard - Every 2 weeks (April–October)
- 5.18 Options considered:
- a. Maintain fortnightly cuts (Harrogate standard) and apply this consistently across all areas
 - b. Adjust frequency based on seasonal weather conditions and grass growth rates
 - c. Increase frequency to more than fortnightly
 - d. Decrease frequency to less than fortnightly
 - e. Introduce site-specific schedules tailored to location type, usage and tenant needs
- 5.19 Noting the mixed feedback from tenants (some felt it was too frequent in dry weather; others said it was not enough), the Task Group agreed that as grass growth rates were subject to seasonal weather conditions it would be better to set a minimum number of cuts required per year rather than maintaining fortnightly cuts.
- 5.20 Following consideration of the feedback and costings from the Parks & Countryside Service shown in Appendix C, the Task Group agreed to recommend a minimum number of cuts per year of 10, with clippings left where they fall and paths/hard surfaces cleared.
- 5.21 PDP 5 - Resident Communication
Harrogate Standard - No formal communication mechanism outlined
- 5.23 Options considered:
- a. No formal communication
 - b. Publish service schedules online via website
 - c. Publish service schedules in tenant newsletters
 - d. Host resident engagement events
 - e. Install signage in communal areas e.g. wildflower zones to explain maintenance practices

- 5.24 The Task Group noted the feedback from tenants that some felt uninformed about work schedules and responsibilities. They agreed there was a need for improved communications with tenants and for a robust reporting system. They agreed it would be helpful to publicise service schedules on the council's website and in tenant newsletters, provide Q&As on the council's website and signposting for assisted gardening etc.
- 5.25 In response to the Parks & Countryside Service feedback and costings in Appendix C, the Task Group agreed to Recommend options (b) & (c).
- 5.26 They also agreed to recommend that:
- Service schedules and works specification be provided and maintained as part of a new SLA between Housing Services and the Parks & Countryside Service;
 - Information on those schedules and maintenance practices be included in a welcome pack given to new tenants;
- 5.27 PDP 6 - Biodiversity and Wildflower Areas
Harrogate Standard - Not included
Tenant Feedback - Strong support for biodiversity, but concerns about appearance and maintenance.
- 5.28 Options considered:
- a. Do not introduce biodiversity or wildflower areas as part of the service
 - b. Trial wildflower areas in selected locations as pilot schemes to assess feasibility and tenant response
 - c. Introduce seasonal wildflower planting
 - d. Establish permanent wildflower zones in suitable locations
 - e. Support resident led wildflower initiatives through guidance and the designation of suitable spaces
 - f. Create wildflower corridors
 - g. Introduce designated low-mow zones
 - h. Explore opportunities for tree planting in areas where properties have been removed
 - i. Consider maintenance of becks and watercourses as part of wider biodiversity efforts
- 5.28 The Task Group initially agreed that trialling wildflower areas in selected locations to assess feasibility and tenant response would be a good way forward (option b), and could be funded via an annual planting investment fund (see paragraph 4.11 above).
- 5.29 However, following consideration of the Parks & Countryside Service feedback and costings in Appendix C, the Task Group accepted that the provision of wildflower areas would prove too costly and too difficult to achieve and maintain. They therefore agreed not to recommend option (b), and instead agreed to recommend option (e) - Supporting resident led wildflower initiatives through guidance, and the provision of designated spaces.
- 5.30 PDP 7 - Community Involvement
Harrogate Standard - No formal community involvement
- 5.31 Options considered:
- a. Maintain current approach with no formal community involvement
 - b. Encourage resident/community-led projects with council support, such as gardening initiatives
 - c. Offer small grants or incentives in partnership with parish councils or localities team to support community-led improvements
 - d. Focus on areas with existing interest
 - e. Run seasonal community events
 - f. Enable one-off community or partner led initiatives

- 5.32 The Task Group noted the Council did little currently to encourage community involvement. They discussed how tenant associations and community groups might be encouraged to participate, and the potential for these to be funded through a local Councillor's locality budget. They also agreed it would be helpful to highlight successful projects/events via the council's website and tenants newsletters, as a way of encouraging more to be undertaken.
- 5.33 In response to the Parks & Countryside Service feedback in Appendix C, the Task Group agreed it would be good to encourage resident-led projects and seasonal community events and therefore agreed to recommend option (b). They also agreed to recommend that these be promoted through tenant newsletters etc.
- 5.34 Category ii – Winter Maintenance
The Task Group noted that the Harrogate Standard included for gritting being undertaken on footways based on a priority list dictated by Housing Services e.g. sheltered schemes were considered high priority. They went on to consider the following options in relation to winter gritting and snow clearance:
- a. Maintain current approach of gritting based on a priority list (Harrogate Standard) and apply this consistently across all areas
 - b. Provide a response gritting request system to address tenant-reported hazards to communal areas during winter conditions
 - c. Withdraw gritting service from housing-managed areas, with clear communication to tenants and consideration of alternative support options for vulnerable tenants
- 5.35 The Task Group took account of the feedback from tenants that suggested gritting was inconsistent or absent in some vulnerable areas, and agreed that ideally the current approach of gritting based on a priority list (as per the Harrogate Standard) should be applied consistently across all areas (option a). However, recognising that approach may prove too costly, they recognised that the alternative would be to provide grit bins as currently happens in Richmondshire. In considering that option, they accepted that the use of grit bins would not be suitable for all areas such as around sheltered housing schemes etc. They agreed to seek an understanding of the cost of applying both approaches across all legacy housing stock areas.
- 5.36 The Task Group noted the costings for option (a) were based on one round of gritting treatment and restricting treatment to priority areas only i.e. around Sheltered Housing Schemes, Community Centres, Hostels, and Common Rooms. They also noted
- The costings for the alternative approach of providing grit bins across all three housing stock areas was based on the number of grit bins required and the cost per refill.
 - The costings for both approaches did not include for the cost of additional grit.
- 5.37 The Task Group noted that both approaches were similar in cost (see Appendix C). They also discussed other ways in which the provision of grit bins could be funded e.g. by Parish Councils or through funding from individual Members' locality funding. Taking account of the costs and the feedback from the Parks & Countryside Service, the Task Group agreed to recommend option a - the gritting of priority areas only (as listed in paragraph 5.36 above).
- 5.38 Category iii – Annual Investment Fund
The Task Group compared the current state of the three legacy housing stock areas and in particular, the visible benefits resulting from the investment funding that had been previously provided in the Harrogate legacy stock holding area.
- 5.39 It was noted that Harrogate Borough Council had historically maintained a strong, well-resourced proactive tree care programme, including full front and back garden inspections, supported by a clear tree policy and higher protection standards. In 2021, they adopted the VALID tree risk-benefit methodology, improving efficiency by enabling wider staff

groups to identify and report potential issues. They also maintained a comprehensive GIS-based tree inventory, invested in tree planting, and used both inhouse teams and framework contractors for maintenance.

- 5.40 Whereas the legacy Richmond and Selby District Council areas previously relied on a reactive approach, with limited or no tree survey data, no proactive surveying, and inconsistent practices leading to unnecessary works and a depleted tree asset. They also had no dedicated budgets or service-level agreements for surveys or maintenance works across their housing stock areas.
- 5.41 The Task Group accepted that the introduction of proactive surveying across all three stock holding areas would lead to an increase in identified maintenance, although Selby's smaller tree population would limit the projected rise. It was confirmed that any identified lower-level works could be handled by the Council's Parks & Countryside Service (in conjunction with the Tree & Woodland Service), with any larger technical work delivered through framework contractors. The Task Group also recognised that over time, the introduction of a proactive cyclical programme would typically stabilise costs, allowing a planned shift toward replanting and long-term asset enhancement.
- 5.42 The Task Group noted that a fixed cost for pro-active tree care by the Tree & Woodland service described above had been included in the cost model detailed in Appendix C. Outside of that fixed cost, they considered the proposals for an annual investment fund suggested by the Parks & Countryside Service (as detailed in Appendix C) and agreed to recommend:
- The provision of an annual £50k investment fund for the first five years, with a focus on the Selby and Richmond areas for the first two years of that period.
 - The funding should be used for the provision of bulbs, perennial shrubs and single stem trees and for tree planting/maintenance (not wildflower meadows).
 - At the end of the five year period, consideration should be given to whether the provision of an investment fund should continue, and if it were to, how that funding should be distributed and what it should be spent on.
- 5.43 Category iv – Assisted Grounds Maintenance Works
The Task Group noted that since LGR and the formation of one unified Housing Service, Parks and Countryside had continued to provide assisted maintenance works at individual properties in Harrogate (see paragraph 3.8). The feedback from the Parks & Countryside Service suggested that the data held on which properties were receiving the service was inadequate to properly assess the levels of current provision across Harrogate. It was also not possible to confirm whether the tenants in those properties had changed since the service was first provided. They noted that the cost of providing that additional service was still based on legacy costings rather than the actual cost for delivery at today's prices. They therefore requested a breakdown of what the average cost per property would be at today's prices.
- 5.44 The Task Group noted that it had not been possible for the Parks & Countryside Service to review the validity of the minimal data they held and therefore they were unable to confidently clarify how many properties were receiving the service or whether those tenants currently receiving the service were still entitled to it under the old Harrogate Borough Council arrangements. They recognised it would require additional work to gather and analyse the appropriate data to fully understand the current level of provision.
- 5.45 Task Group found only a small number of other local authorities nationally who were providing such a service. Given the imbalance in the council's approach to internal and external maintenance i.e. all tenants are responsible for the internal maintenance of their homes (outside of repairs), but in the Harrogate area only, external maintenance was being

provided to some tenants based on their perceived inability to maintain it themselves, the Task Group debated the justification for continuing the provision of that service.

5.46 They noted that extending the provision of assisted maintenance to all housing stock areas could prove costly given the potential increase in applicants for the service once it was properly publicised.

5.47 With all of their considerations in mind, the Task Group agreed to recommend that:

- The provision of Assisted Maintenance be removed from the Ground Maintenance Policy.
- The Council explore the provision of a separate assisted maintenance service within the first year of the implementation of the new Grounds Maintenance Policy.
- During that year:
 - The current recipients to continue to receive their Assisted Maintenance Service;
 - No promotion of the Service to take place
 - No new recipients to be accepted (except for those found to be unable to maintain their gardens, thereby causing a nuisance through a build-up of detritus attracting vermin etc)
 - Other applicants to be signposted to local external grounds maintenance providers.

6.0 REVIEW CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Taking account of all of the information provided and feedback from officers, the Tenants Panel and residents the Task Group concluded:

- The Council's Grounds Maintenance Policy would need to be amended if the Council wanted to achieve becoming an exemplar Authority (in line with its previous Housing Strategy commitment).
- An updated schedule of works for each stockholding area was required (see paragraph 4.12), in support of a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Housing Services and Parks & Countryside, and that those schedules should be made available to view on the Council's website. They also agreed that any new SLA should detail:
 - The process for agreeing schedule of works variations / additions
 - An agreed Complaints response time and appropriate rectification period
 - A list of one-off works not included within the SLA e.g. ginnel clearance, and state the agreed re-charge rate for such works.
- Once the Grounds Maintenance Policy and schedule of works had been updated, consideration should be given to putting the contract for Ground Maintenance Works out for procurement in order to evaluate whether savings could be achieved, and ensure best value for the council. For example, if the contract were split across one or more local contractors delivering the service in each legacy stock holding area.
- Grounds Maintenance service schedules and timetables should be kept updated and made available on the Council's website (see paragraphs 3.16 and 5.25).
- Consideration should be given to enforcing the Council tenant agreement in relation to garden maintenance, by recharging for any works required by Parks & Countryside following an agreed period of inaction by a tenant (see paragraph 4.9), either by introducing a set fee or based on the specific works undertaken.
- The tenant experience would benefit from improvements to tenant online reporting mechanisms. They suggested further consideration should be given to the use of online maps and online reporting tools for tenants use (see paragraph 4.15).
- Housing Services related service requests/complaints would both benefit from being categorised at the point of their submission so that they could be effectively monitored

and tracked going forward in order to help support service improvement and future policy reviews (see paragraph 4.15). They therefore suggested a set of suitable categories be introduced (to be identified by Housing Services).

- It would be beneficial if call centre staff were given training or a fact sheet on the new SLA e.g. why grass cuttings are not collected, so that they are able to respond to inquiries as they arose.
- A number of issues could be addressed through the provision of useful information for new tenants, within the new tenant welcome pack recently introduced (as a result of a recommendation arising from a previously completed scrutiny review of the Lettable Standard). For example, this should include information on the barriers to full grass cuts and why grass cuttings are not removed etc (see paragraphs 4.4 & 4.8); a list of any specific issues associated with a council property (see paragraph 4.10); maintenance timetables and maintenance practices (see PDP 5 - Resident Communication above).

6.0 ALL TENANTS CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Based on the Task Group's review conclusions and proposed recommendations, a new Grounds Maintenance Policy was drafted and circulated to all tenants for comment – see finalised draft Policy at **Appendix D**.
- 6.2 The public consultation ran between 7 April and 19 May 2026 and a total of 457 responses were received. This represents approximately 5% of North Yorkshire Council tenancies. While this does not fully represent the whole population and some demographic groups may be underrepresented, this is a significant response rate, with a large enough sample size for meaningful statistical analysis.
- 6.3 The consultation feedback (**see Appendix E**) demonstrated overall support for the proposed service standards set out in the draft Grounds Maintenance Policy. Across all survey questions, a majority of respondents agreed with the proposals, including each individual service standard and the communication and reporting approach.
- 6.4 However, the findings also highlighted a clear gap between support for the policy in principle and confidence in its delivery. The feedback consistently demonstrated that residents' views are strongly influenced by their experience of the current service. Concerns about declining standards, inconsistent delivery and a lack of responsiveness was indicated through scepticism about whether the proposed improvements would be realised in practice.
- 6.5 Importantly, many negative comments were not directed at the policy itself, but at current performance and operational delivery. This suggests that the proposed policy framework is broadly acceptable to residents, but that successful implementation will be critical to building trust and achieving the intended outcomes.
- 6.6 Overall, the consultation feedback indicated that the draft Policy provided a strong foundation for a consistent, county-wide service, but that its success would depend on visible, reliable delivery and improved engagement with residents. With all of that in mind, the Task Group identified some additional recommendations relating to future performance monitoring and policy review, and evaluation of achieving best value - see recommendations (v) – (xi) below.

7.0 REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Based on the review findings, consultation feedback, and review conclusions the Task Group recommends:

- i) The following amendments/additions to the Grounds Maintenance Policy:
- To decrease frequency of hedge maintenance (PDP1) to less than 2 x per year with the removal of clippings / arisings.
 - In addition, provide a responsive/reactive hedge maintenance (PDP1) service for urgent cases
 - Twice yearly weed & moss control (PDP2) (in line with the Harrogate Standard) to be applied consistently across all areas.
 - The physical removal of weeds after treatment (PDP2).
 - Maintain current approach of clearing leaves from paths once a year (PDP3) (in line with Harrogate Standard) to be applied consistently across all areas
 - In addition, provide a responsive leaf clearance service where a health and safety concern is reported (PDP3)
 - Provide a minimum number of grass cuts per year of 10, with clippings left where they fall and paths/hard surfaces cleared (PDP4).
 - Publish service schedules and timetables online via council website and in tenant newsletters (PDP5) [see recommendation (iv) below].
 - Include service schedules, timetables and maintenance practices in the welcome pack given to new tenants (PDP5) [see recommendation (viii) below].
 - Supporting resident led wildflower initiatives through guidance and the provision of designated spaces (PDP6) & (PDP7).
 - Encourage resident-led projects and seasonal community events and promote these through tenant newsletters etc (PDP7).
- ii) In regard to Category (ii) - Winter Maintenance, the Task Group recommends that:
- Winter gritting treatment be restricted to priority areas only around Community Centre, Hostels, Sheltered Housing Schemes and Common Rooms (Category (ii) - Winter Maintenance).
- iii) In regard to Category (iii) - Annual Investment Fund the Task Group recommends that:
- An annual investment fund of £50K be provided for the first five years, with a focus on the Selby and Richmond areas for the first two years of that period
 - The Annual Investment Fund be used for the provision of bulbs, perennial shrubs and single stem trees (not wildflower meadows)
 - At the end of the five year period, consideration be given to whether the provision of an investment fund should continue, and if it were to, how that funding should be distributed and what it should be spent on.
- iv) In regard to Category (iii) – Assisted Maintenance, the Task Group recommends that:
- Assisted Maintenance be removed from the Ground Maintenance Policy .
 - The Council explore the provision of a separate assisted maintenance service within the first year of the implementation of the new Grounds Maintenance Policy.
 - During that year:
 - The current recipients to continue to receive their Assisted Maintenance Service;
 - No promotion of the Service to take place
 - No new recipients to be accepted (except for those found to be unable to maintain their gardens, thereby causing a nuisance through a build-up of detritus attracting vermin etc)
 - Other applicants to be signposted to local external grounds maintenance providers.

7.2 The Task Group also recommends that:

- v) The revised Grounds Maintenance Policy be reviewed in a year to assess its effectiveness and to understand the actual costs to the HRA associated with implementing the new Policy.
- vi) Once the Grounds Maintenance Policy has been approved, give consideration to putting the contract for Ground Maintenance Works out for procurement in order to evaluate whether savings can be achieved, and achieving best value for the council.
- vii) Parks & Countryside to produce and maintain new service schedules for all housing stock areas, and Housing Services to make them available on the Council's website.
- viii) Introduce a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Housing Services and Parks & Countryside taking account of the revised Grounds Maintenance Policy and new service schedules, to enable robust performance monitoring.
- ix) The new SLA should include:
 - The process for agreeing service schedule variations / additions
 - An agreed Complaints response time and appropriate rectification period
 - A list of one-off works not covered by the SLA e.g. ginnel clearance, and state the agreed re-charge rate for such works.
- x) Provide North Yorkshire Council call centre staff guidance to aid in responding to tenant inquiries/service requests.
- xi) Measures be introduced to enable data on tenant service requests and complaints to be easily drawn out for future performance monitoring purposes (see paragraph 4.15).

8.0 RISKS & IMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Financial

The financial implications associated with the recommendations listed in paragraph 6.1(i) are detailed in Appendix C.

8.2 Legal

The draft Policy at Appendix D contains sections which set out the legislation and regulatory framework relevant to the policy. This framework forms the legal implications associated with the review recommendations set out in section seven of this report. The main risk associated with the policy is that any failure to comply with the Council's obligations opens the Council up to legal/enforcement action, possible financial penalties, and reputational risk. This is mitigated however, by the performance monitoring measures and review mechanism which are built into the policy, as well as the new Service Level Agreement which will be introduced.

8.3 Equalities

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is being carried out internally to assess the proposed Policy and Operational Grounds Maintenance Specification (**see Appendix F**), and will be included in this report alongside the draft Policy, when it is presented to the Executive Member in July 2026 for approval.

8.4 Ongoing monitoring will be conducted through analysis of complaints data to help identify any emerging issues or unintended consequences affecting specific groups; to enable timely adjustments to the policy or its implementation if necessary. This data will be used to inform continuous improvement and uphold fairness and accessibility.

8.5 Other Implications

Feedback on any other implications associated with the recommendations arising from the review will be considered at the Task Group's final meeting in May 2026.

8.6 Associated Risks

The cost model developed in support of this review took account of a number of assumptions, exclusions and risks as detailed in Appendix C.

9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 9.1 Delivers on the Housing Strategy commitment - To ensure that our council housing stock remains decent and continues to improve, with an ambition to become an exemplar social landlord. It also supports a priority within the Council Plan around keeping people safe / free from harm.

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Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A: Detailed feedback on site visits

Appendix B: Summary Comparison Table of other grounds maintenance regimes

Appendix C: Parks & Countryside Feedback & Associated Costings

Appendix D: Draft Grounds Maintenance Policy & Operational Grounds Maintenance Specification

Appendix E: All-Tenants Consultation Feedback & Analysis

Appendix F: Draft Equalities Impact Assessment (to follow)