Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

Good Neighbourhood Management Policy

Providing safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods in Babergh and Mid Suffolk

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Author	Head of Housing Management & Housing and Neighbourhood Lead

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX
Telephone: (0300) 1234 000
www.babergh.gov.uk www.midsuffolk.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction	4
Legislation	5
References	5
Our Approach- Good Neighbourhood Management	5
Community Housing Officers	6
How can we help	7
Tackling Nuisance on our estates	9
Local Cooperation and Partnership Working	10
Estate Management Services	10
Estate/Block Inspection	15
Estate Walkabout and Tenant Engagement	15
Tenant Satisfaction	16
Exceptions	16
Monitoring and Review	16
Complaints	16
Version Control	17

Introduction

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils want our tenants to live on neighbourhoods that are resilient, thriving, safe and well-maintained where anti-social behaviour is not tolerated. Where we refer to an estate, it may mean houses with shared communal areas or a block (or blocks) of flats or a mixture of both.

This policy will provide a clear framework for dealing sensitively and proportionally with behaviours, that are NOT Antisocial Behaviour (ASB), and some may or may not be a tenancy breach. These kinds of behaviours may require a different response from us as a landlord.

Where the behaviour is NOT ASB, and therefore, likely to not be a tenancy breach we will not seek to apportion blame, nor will we be likely to consider any of our legal tools which are available to use in ASB cases. For behaviours that are considered a breach of tenancy, we will explore available options to address this and often will work with other agencies to do so.

Although some behaviours are not ASB, they can still cause a great deal of upset and frustration to tenants, creating tensions between neighbours and wider communities. Whilst we may be limited in our responses, this policy is designed to lead to better outcomes and set out how we may be able to assist

Purpose

This policy provides information for tenants, colleagues and partners about how we approach neighbourhood issues which are not ASB but still require a landlord response. This includes how we manage our neighbourhoods to ensure they are maintained to a high standard.

Legislation

The relevant legislation/Regulatory frameworks applicable to this policy includes:

- Consumer Standards – Regulator of Social Housing
    - The Safety and Quality Homes Standard
    - The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
    - The Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Housing Act 1996
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2020
- Building Safety Act 2022

And based on the recommendations made in the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report 'Time to be Heard'.

References

Related Documents

- Tenancy Agreement, Leases
- Antisocial Behaviour Policy
- Antisocial Behaviour Procedure
- Noise App User Guidance
- Safeguarding Policy
- Allocations Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Tenant Engagement Strategy
- Repairs Policy
- Rent Policy
- Complaints and Compensation Policy

Our Approach - Good Neighbourhood Management

The definition of ASB is defined in the Crime and Policing Act 2014:

a. Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to any person.

b. Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises or,

c. Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

The definition of ASB is subjective based on how an experience makes a person feel. Every person has different tolerances, expectations and perceptions when deciding a behaviour is or is not appropriate. This means that some people will see certain behaviour as 'antisocial' even if the behaviour may be considered reasonable.

Some behaviour may impact a tenant but there is no intention by the other tenant to offend / cause harm or upset and therefore may not be considered as unreasonable.

Examples of behaviour which we do not consider to be ASB include but are not limited to:

- Parking disagreements (if the other driver is parking in accordance with all contractual/legal requirements)
- Cooking smells
- Cultural differences
- 'Dirty looks' or staring
- The positioning of refuse bins
- Personal dislikes
- Personal relationship breakdowns
- Children Playing
- Children falling out with each other
- Isolated incidents of loud music
- General household or living noise (babies crying, children playing, people talking and walking in their homes, closing doors, drawers and windows, vacuuming, taps running, toilets flushing, using white goods, DIY, working from home in a computer-based role) One off Parties
- Isolated incidents of loud shouting and arguing (but could consider Domestic Abuse)
- Motorbike/car engines starting/running

Community Housing Officers

We recognise the important role that Community Housing Officers play in promoting community cohesion. We want our Community Housing Officers to have sufficient time whilst out in the community to speak and engage with tenants and ensure that any issues or concerns are identified quickly to prevent them from escalating.

We will promote their role on the website and through social media, and via any internal notice boards in our communal spaces. They will meet prospective tenants, sign them up to their new tenancy and carry out new tenancy visits in the early weeks of their tenancy to

ensure they have settled into their new community, and to identify any referrals that may be required for additional support to ensure sustainment. New tenants will be provided with information on 'How to be a good Neighbour' in their welcome pack. Community Housing Officers will also support local community events or initiatives that contribute towards cohesive, strong neighbourly communities.

How we can help

We will ensure tenants have the information they need to manage neighbourhood issues (including their communication with their neighbours) and where required, know how to inform us regarding an escalation of the issue. This information is available on our website and in the form of a Neighbourhood Toolkit (Living Well Together).

Mediation - We will signpost to mediation services where communication has broken down between Tenants.

Work in Partnership - There may be times where we refer to and consult partner agencies, with permission, to share information and identify the best possible support and guidance.

Sensitive Lettings - We will also consider any available options relating to Sensitive Lettings to ensure well cohered and sustainable communities.

Triaging Reports - We will triage reports to ensure our team members, partners and tenants understand how a decision is reached about whether a matter should be dealt with under our Antisocial Behaviour Policy or the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy. This will ensure that low level issues causing neighbourhood friction are dealt with in line with the appropriate policy. We will consider the source of reports, whether complaints relating to noise are person or property related, and what the impact is on the reporter.

Recording – We will record all communications with both the reporter and subject of any noise reports. If the report is deemed to be the result of the property, and not the person, this will be recorded accordingly and in line with the causation.

Managing tenants' expectations - At an early stage we will manage any unreasonable expectations by making residents aware of actions we as a landlord are able to take, and those actions that we are not able to take and what options residents may have in those situations.

Terminology - This policy will not identify 'perpetrators' and 'victims', we may refer to the parties as 'Household 1' and 'Household 2', or 'Reporters' and 'Subject'. The purpose of our approach is to build relationships between tenants and communities.

Tenant co-operation - The purpose of this policy is to develop and strengthen relationships between Tenants who live near each other. Where tenants refuse a reasonable request, we

may not be able to assist any further. Where this is the case, it will be clearly communicated to the tenant concerned and any alternative options available to them.

Vulnerabilities and support needs - At all stages we will consider the support needs of the tenants involved. We also recognise that sometimes personal circumstances may affect a tenant's tolerance, perception or ability to cope with certain situations. When we recognise that this could be a contributory factor, we will work with our partners to identify suitable support.

Physical measures to reduce noise transference - We recognise that noise can transfer between properties due to poor sound insulation and thin walls and this may have a high impact on tenants. In these circumstances we will consider options for reducing the noise, including noise cancelling equipment, and in certain circumstances, consider if any remedial works/improvements are needed to the property.

Property inspections - We may inspect properties to establish whether any outstanding repair issues are contributing to noise transference. We are unable to commit to sound proofing properties built or converted before 2003 to Part E of the Building Regulations. However, we will consider funding measures to reduce noise transference when all other options have been exhausted and the harm being caused is extremely high.

Void Standard – We will not remove carpets unless they are in poor condition. We will usually remove hard and laminate flooring for particularly in flats above ground floor where there is a noticeable increase in noise reports.

Hard Flooring - All our tenancy conditions require tenants to request permission where they would like to make alterations including installation of hard flooring in their home-especially for properties on 1st floors and above.

New Builds - We will ensure that flats above the ground floor do not have hardwood or laminate flooring where possible.

To effectively manage our estates and neighbourhoods, we carry out estate/block inspections. In addition to estate inspections tenants may be invited to an 'Estate Walkabout/tour' where we seek feedback on the area that they live and seek to involve tenants on the scrutiny of communal areas, or estate improvement works.

To achieve consistent standards on our estates, it is essential that Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council work in collaboration and have positive relationships with tenants and partners.

We recognise the impact on communities where areas are left untidy, and rubbish/fly-tipping accumulates. Tenants have an important role to play in ensuring that the estate and surrounding communities are maintained to a good standard and must fulfil their obligations

that are set in their tenancy/lease agreement. This will include maintaining their own property, and if the use of communal areas applies, ensuring appropriate use of refuse bins and being responsible for disposal of bulky items. Tenants will be responsible for following any recycling and waste protocols that are set locally.

Tackling nuisance on our estates

We remain committed to tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and support the Community Safety Partnership to deliver on strategic priorities. We will continue to support the partnership and promote initiatives that both prevent and target anti-social behaviour and crime.

Our ASB Policy defines what we consider to be ASB, and indeed what we deem is not, and how it is dealt with in line with the policy. With regards to reports of noise nuisance, we will triage these incidents to assess the impact and decide if it falls within the ASB Policy.

This Good Neighbourhood Management Policy will also focus on tackling issues outside of our ASB policy. These will be investigated as tenancy management issues that also *may* have breached conditions of tenancy. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Nuisance from pets
- Untidy garden
- Condition of property / untidy property
- Misuse of communal areas
- Parking issues / vehicle nuisance
- One-off parties that are not considered excessive
- Everyday living noises such as opening/closing doors, walking around, noise from white goods etc

We will manage residents' expectations with regards to behaviour that is not considered to be anti-social nor a tenancy management issue. We promote our Living Well Together toolkit, which will help residents in identifying what is deemed anti-social behaviour that falls under our responsibility as a landlord to investigate.

For issues that are not considered to be our responsibility to investigate, the toolkit will provide self-help remedies for residents to maintain positive relationships with each other and promote community cohesion, without the need to involve their landlord. Our aim is to empower residents to resolve issues between themselves.

Local Cooperation and Partnership working

We will work with a range of partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing for residents. Our Tenancy Sustainment team will continue to work more intensively with residents whose tenancy is at risk, to offer support and link them with local services.

We will refer to other specialist services to meet health, financial and social needs. Our Community Housing Officers and ASB (Communities) team will work closely with local policing teams to tackle and deter ASB, using local data to support any need for intervention.

We will work collaboratively with partner organisations, to influence neighbourhood services that fall outside of our control, to ensure a positive contribution is made to maintaining neighbourhoods that are clean and safe. This will include our participation in community initiatives, such as the Great British Spring Clean or Suffolk Police Days of Action. Our aim is to continue to have a wider positive impact to neighbourhoods and enabling communities to thrive across both Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts.

Estate Management Services

Our contracted colleagues, Public Realm team, and Community Housing Officers will ensure these standards are maintained by inspecting periodically.

Communal Cleaning	We will maintain the cleanliness of internal communal areas in buildings that we own or manage in line with BMDSC specification (for those where there is already a cleaning contract in place).
Window Cleaning	We will carry out window cleaning internally and externally to communal windows in line with BMSDC specification standards (where there is already a Window Cleaning Contract in place). In areas where there is no window cleaning contract, this is the shared responsibility of the tenants.
Provision of Drying Facilities	We aim to provide adequate drying facilities for tenants living in blocks of flats through the provision of drying areas and adequate supply of clothes dryers. This helps to reduce condensation, damp and mould in homes.
Communal Lighting	We support the provision of low energy communal LED lighting in communal areas, including the communal entrances to all our blocks of flats.

Grounds Maintenance	We will maintain all hard and soft environmental and landscaped areas, including roads, car parks and play areas within our ownership or responsibility in line with BMSDC specification standards. It is not our responsibility to maintain private (including leased) and tenanted individual gardens, hedges, or paths and accessways to individual or groups of properties. This will be the responsibility of the tenants as detailed in their Tenancy Agreement and Lease where relevant. Where private (leased) or individual gardens have not been maintained by our Tenants/Lease holders, the necessary steps will be taken as per the terms of the agreement/lease.

Tree Management	**Trees in tenants' gardens** will be tenant's responsibility to maintain. We will support residents in the management of trees which require specialist tree surgery to maintain them in safe condition and will support where trees are dangerous or likely to be a danger to person or property. We will support in the management of any tree in your garden which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order. Tenants are responsible in ensuring any tree in their garden does not obstruct a shared access or public highway. We ask tenants not to plant trees in their gardens or communal spaces without prior approval from Tenancy Management/Community Housing Officer. **Trees in communal areas** will not normally be pruned or felled due to problems with shade, falling leaves or fruit, pollen, bird droppings or obstruction of views. However, if the tree poses a health and safety risk, we will investigate and carry out any works deemed to be essential. Leaves may be collected when the grounds maintenance contractors attend depending on the contract in place. They will try to collect as much as reasonably possible each time that they visit. Should leaves fall in-between visits, no additional visits will be made for further collections. All trees in communal areas are professionally surveyed, and any work needed to maintain them will be scheduled in.
Refuse	**Communal Bins** We will ensure appropriate facilities for the disposal of refuse are provided, and that these facilities are properly maintained. Tenants are responsible for ensuring that their rubbish is disposed of safely, tidily, and securely wrapped, and for making arrangement for the disposal of large items and garden refuse.

	Tenants are responsible for following any recycling protocols that are in place. **Fly tipping** Any items left in internal or external communal areas causing a fire and/or health and safety risk will be removed following a TORT notice being issued. We will consider any re-charges where applicable. We will investigate cases of fly tipping and act on inappropriate disposal of bulky items and/or the dumping of rubbish and/or litter. In instances where fly tipping is removed and the culprits have not been identified, BMSDC will recover the cost of providing this service via service charges.
Pest Control	Tenants have a responsibility to keep their property in a good and clean condition to prevent infestation of pests and vermin such as rodents and insects etc. We will respond promptly to reports of pest and vermin infestations in our communal areas of buildings and land within BMSDC ownership. We will offer advice and assistance (where necessary) to identify access and egress points (points of entry). However, where pests are as the result of behaviours from within the home, we will recharge for any services necessary where infestations affect others/communities.

CCTV	CCTV may be used on occasion to aid investigations of anti-social behaviour and/or criminal behaviour. The use of CCTV evidence in such circumstances will be in line with legislation and regulation.
Communal Repairs	As part of an estate inspection, we will raise any required repairs for assets that are attributed to HRA land. Tenants should also report repairs as and when these are identified. BMSDC will complete repairs in line with the repairs policy.
Car Parking and Garages	We are responsible for the maintenance of communal parking areas and the external maintenance of garages and garage sites in our ownership. If tenants have their own approved parking space (with a drive or hardstanding for example), they are responsible for maintaining it and keeping it in a clean, tidy and safe condition in line with their Tenancy Terms and Conditions. Parking areas and spaces should not be used for extensive car maintenance. If tenants have one of our garages, they are responsible for its internal maintenance. Our written permission is required before commercial vehicles (Specifically in areas where there are restrictive covenants), trailers, caravans or boats can be parked in parking spaces, or on any area of our properties Abandoned, untaxed and vehicles (including vehicles with no MOT or that are SORN) on BMSDC land will be investigated and removed where appropriate using the relevant enforcement toolkits available to us.

Fire Safety	Community Housing Officers carry out quarterly inspections of all blocks of flats within the ownership of BMSDC and will resolve any health and safety issues that are discovered in communal areas (internal and external). An external contractor carries out periodic fire risk assessments for all blocks of flats within the ownership of BMSDC, and relevant 'fire risk assessment' (FRA) actions are assigned to Community Housing Officers to resolve within a target timeframe. For further information refer to the Fire Safety Policy.

Estate/ Block Inspections

Community Housing Officers will carry out estate inspections using a risk-based, intelligence-led approach rather than fixed frequencies alone.
Routine estate inspections are undertaken every quarter to identify emerging issues, environmental conditions, tenant feedback and compliance requirements.

Any concerns raised or identified will be actioned appropriately.

This enables a more responsive service, with increased visit frequency where concerns are identified. Following each inspection, colleagues will record findings and satisfaction measures across key aspects of the estate, to ensure resources are directed to where they are most needed and to drive continuous improvement.

Our independent living, extra care for older people schemes (sheltered housing schemes) will be inspected weekly by a Sheltered Housing Officer, and a quarterly estate inspection will also be carried out. (This will be more frequent if significant issues are identified).

Estate Walkabouts and Tenant Engagement

We are committed to providing opportunities for our tenants to work alongside us to improve tenant satisfaction in relation to estate services, and to provide feedback regarding their neighbourhood. We will engage with our tenants in accordance with our Tenant Engagement Policy. Estate walkabouts are considered to be a form of grass roots engagement.

We will endeavour to invite tenants to a minimum of one estate walkabout per year. Tenants will be informed of when estate walkabouts are taking place and will be invited accordingly.

We will capture and record tenant and colleague feedback regarding the neighbourhood and use it to determine whether any follow up action is required.

Feedback from the actions and themes picked up from estate walkabouts will be shared with the tenants in that community, telling them what we found and heard and what he have done to address these concerns or issues

Tenant Satisfaction

We will collect and record feedback from tenants regarding estate services and use it to determine whether any follow up action is required.

We will monitor, review and learn from relevant compliments and complaints and Tenant Satisfaction Measures through the 'You Said, We Did' practice and satisfaction levels from the surveys.

We will record and publish service improvements and changes that result from tenant involvement relating to estate management. If, in the rare event our tenants are not happy with the service provided, they can raise this via our complaints process

Exceptions

There may be certain circumstances under which the terms of this policy may be reconsidered. Colleagues should be mindful of tenant vulnerabilities and their specific needs. Extenuating circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and exceptions

may be applied that require empathy and flexibility, to ensure that tenants are treated fairly, compassionately and with respect.

Monitoring and Review

We are committed to continually reviewing the service we provide so that we can identify and share best practice and make necessary service improvements.

This policy will be implemented through our procedures and other associated policies and procedures.

We will undertake periodic reviews of this policy and update or amend as appropriate. This will include taking account of feedback, working with service users and any legislative changes. We aim to undertake a full review of this policy every 3 years.

Complaints

We are committed to providing high quality services and support for all our tenants and residents. We value all feedback as it allows us to make improvements to our services.

The Council has a complaints policy which should be the first point of call for people that are dissatisfied with the service they receive. More information about the Council's complaints procedure can be found on the Council's complaints webpage here.

Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Summary Changes
1.0	11th August 2026	Head of Housing Management & Housing and Neighbourhood Lead	Approve Policy