

HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY PANEL	DATE 10 April 2025	ITEM NO 6
SUBJECT Grounds Maintenance and Refuse	WARD (S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Communities Environment and Central	CABINET MEMBER	
DECISION CLASSIFICATION Scrutiny Report	IS THE FINAL DECISION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT TO BE MADE AT THIS MEETING? There are no recommendations requiring decisions	

SECTION I

1. Recommendations to decision maker:

- 1.1 To consider this Grounds Maintenance and Refuse Report and make recommendations to the Executive, if necessary.
- 1.2 To agree that where appropriate, the report and any recommendations be submitted to the Chief Executive.
- 1.3 To note that where possible, the report and responses to the recommendations be presented at the next meeting of the Panel.

2. Links to Our Greenwich Missions

- 2.1 This report relates to the Council's agreed missions as follows:

Mission 6 - People in Greenwich have access to a safe and secure home that meets their needs

Mission 9 - Neighbourhoods are vibrant, safe and attractive with community services that meet the needs of local residents

Mission 10 – Greenwich plays an active role in tackling the climate crisis and improving environmental sustainability, in line with our commitment of being carbon neutral by 2030

3. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 3.1 This report was commissioned as part of the Housing and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel’s 2024-2025 work programme to receive an update on the Grounds Maintenance and Refuse.
- 3.2 The commissioned brief for the report was as follows:
- To provide an update on grounds maintenance and refuse, including Current situation, approach, challenges and initiatives.

SECTION 2

4. The Report

4.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on grounds maintenance and refuse collections on RBG Housing estates within the Borough, including the current situation and approach in terms of service provision, the challenges faced by the services and initiatives that are currently underway in an effort to address some of the challenges being experienced.

4.2 Grounds Maintenance – Background

4.2.1 The Parks, Estates and Open Spaces (PEOS), estates grounds maintenance teams, carry out the maintenance of the soft landscaping across RBG Housing Estates in the Borough. References within this report to “estates” and “tenants” relate to RBG Housing Estates in the Borough.

4.2.2 The grounds maintenance teams are organised across three geographic operational areas, East, West and South, and work between 7.30am and 3.30pm, Monday to Friday.

4.2.3 The teams carry out a range of works on each estate including, grass cutting, strimming, edging, shrub, hedge and rose bed maintenance and leaf clearing. Keeping the soft landscape areas clear of litter is

undertaken by colleagues in the caretaking teams but the grounds maintenance staff will clear litter from grass areas prior to them being cut.

4.2.4 The frequency of the works is as follows:

Task	Frequency	When
Grass cutting	Every 3 weeks	March – October
Strimming	Every 3 weeks	March – October
Shrub base maintenance	Twice per annum	January & August
Shrub cutting	Twice per annum	January & August
Hedge base maintenance	Twice per annum	January & August
Hedge cutting	Twice per annum	January & August
Rose bed maintenance	Twice per annum	January & August
Rose pruning	Twice per annum	January & August
Leaf clearance	Monthly	November - January

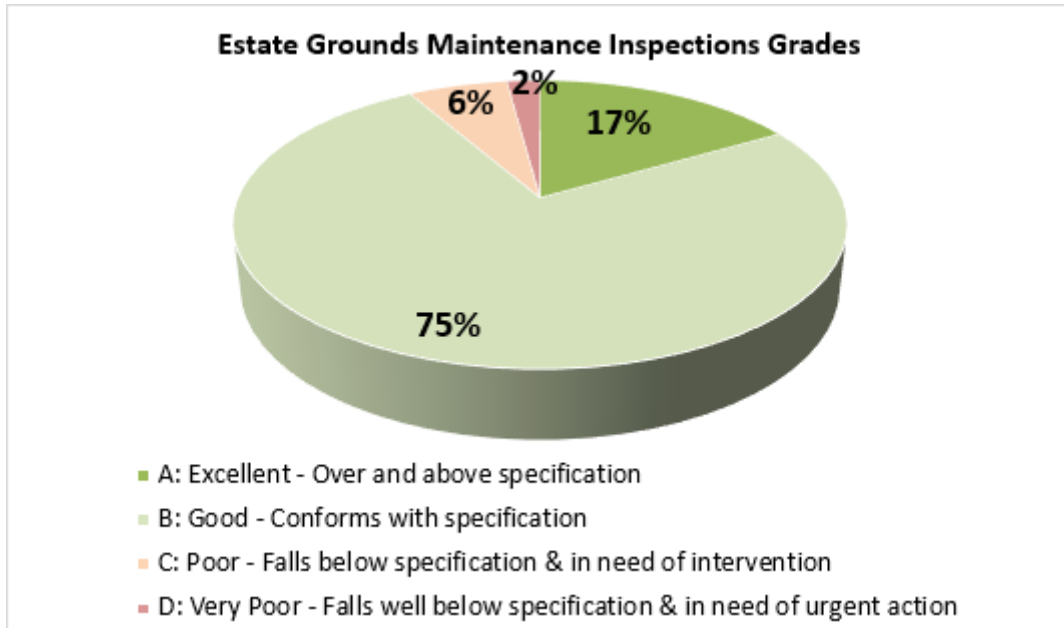
4.2.5 Occasionally, ad-hoc works are arranged outside the programme of work, for example an additional prune of a shrub area that may be obstructing a path or access point.

4.2.6 All works are risk assessed, and all substances used are assessed according to the Control of Substances Hazard to Health Regulations.

4.2.7 Appropriate PPE is issued to staff and staff wear corporate clothing, so they are identifiable as RBG workers when working on estates.

4.2.8 PEOS use the Good Parks for London Quality Inspection regime to check on the quality of work undertaken. Random quality checks are carried out on works undertaken and corrective action taken if needed.

4.2.9 The results of the work quality inspections are shown in the chart below for the period 01/03/24 to 28/02/25:



4.2.10 The PEOS vehicle fleet have Bronze Fleet Operators Recognition Scheme (FORS) accreditation, which confirms that we employ good practice and comply with the requirements laid out by the FORS Standard. This includes demonstrating dedication to driver and vehicle safety, combined with improving operating practices through effective monitoring of fuel and tyre usage.

4.2.11 Green Waste generated from grounds maintenance activities is taken to the PEOS Holbrooke Yard and is left to decompose and is then screened, shredded and used as mulch on Estates and Parks shrub beds.

4.3 Grounds Maintenance – Challenges

No.	Challenge	Impact	Actions Taken
1	Prolonged or heavy wet weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very wet or waterlogged ground conditions means areas can't be cut 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works rescheduled when grounds conditions have improved
2	Building maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaffolding can restrict or prevent areas being maintained Building materials/ equipment left on grass areas can damage mowers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works rescheduled when works complete Areas inspected before cutting/equipm

			ent repaired if damaged
3	Fly tipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fly tipping on areas can mean works can't be undertaken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to colleagues in caretaking for removal • Reschedule work
4	Staffing turnover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporarily reduced staffing levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recruited once authorised

4.4 Grounds Maintenance – Initiatives

No.	Initiative	Impact	Progress
1	Fleet renewal programme – 6 new ride-on mowers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain service standards • Improved fuel efficiency • Reduced emissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mowers purchased and delivered and will be in operational use early in the new mowing season
2	Review 2025/26 equipment budget to replace near end of life 2 stoke hand-held equipment with electric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the Council's Carbon Neutral Plan • No emissions at point of use • Reduced noise levels from electric machinery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned to be undertaken in the first half of 2025/26
3	Improved communication and joint working with caretaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinated service delivery leading to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going

		improved service for residents	
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4.5 Waste Collections - Background

4.5.1 Street Services carry out the waste and recycling collections to domestic properties and some business across the borough. This includes collections from around 25,000 properties comprising RBG Housing homes and leaseholder properties and approximately 3,150 communal bins.

4.5.2 Street Services provides weekly collections for recycling and garden & food waste from houses and fortnightly general waste, including houses on estates. Recycling collections take place in the morning and general waste collections in the afternoon. Communal blocks receive a weekly collection of recycling and a minimum of one general waste collection per week, depending on the size of the block and the bin storage space.

4.5.3 House to house waste collections are scheduled in geographical areas, as follows:-

- Monday – Greenwich, Charlton (parts)
- Tuesday – Blackheath, Kidbrooke
- Wednesday – Eltham, New Eltham
- Thursday – Plumstead (parts, Woolwich, Charlton (parts))
- Friday – Abbey Wood, Thamesmead, Plumstead (parts)

Communal collections are scheduled according to area and frequency of collections required.

4.5.4 Street Services does not collect Housing-specific performance data as communal collection rounds contain both Housing and private blocks. The same applies to house-to-house collections. However, missed collection data remains consistently low. The service KPI for missed collections is 0.058% (58 uncollected bins per 100,000 collections). The service carries out over 860,000 collections per month and reported missed collections since April 2024 have ranged on average between 250-350 (0.025-0.035%) which is positively below the KPI.

4.5.5 In respect of communal missed collections, Caretaking Services has recorded the number of missed collections reported to Street Services for the past 3 years:-

- 2022/23 - 1366
- 2023/24 - 1363
- 2024/25 - 910 (As of 13th March 2025)

The trend shows an improvement year on year, and this is as a result of the partnership working between the operational teams in both services.

4.5.6 Street Services carried out around 3,800 bulky collections from Council houses in 2024. Unlike residents in private houses, housing tenants do not pay directly for the bulky collections, so the cost is covered in the service charge. Bulky collections from communal blocks are carried out by Caretaking Services.

4.5.7 A small team of Waste & Streets Advisors engage with residents across the borough, including on Council estates to encourage recycling and to help maximise the benefits of the waste and recycling services available to them. This includes door-knocking, attending residents' meetings and providing advice and support on waste related issues to other Council services, including Caretaking.

4.5.8 A small team of Enviro-Crime Enforcement Officers also provide support in dealing with incidents of fly-tipping on RBG housing estates where the perpetrators normally drive onto the estate to dump their waste illegally. There are a number of CCTV cameras that have been sited on Council estates in an effort to catch the offenders. This provides a good source of evidence when it comes to taking enforcement action.

4.5.9 From April 2026 as part of the Government's 'Simpler Recycling' changes, all properties in Royal Greenwich will need to receive separate food waste collections. This will mean that the c.25,000 Council estate properties will need to have food waste bins installed. This is anticipated to be challenging due to the layout and bins storage on estates not being built to cater for waste separation.

4.6 **Waste Collections – Challenges**

Street Services faces a number of challenges generally in terms of waste collections and encouraging separation for recycling and positive behaviours in terms of waste management generally, including on Council estates.

The team works closely with colleagues in Tenancy Services and Caretaking in particular, in an effort to address these and ensure that service provision is maintained and disruption to residents kept to a minimum.

No.	Challenge	Impact	Actions Taken
1	Low resident engagement in recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low recycling rate • Contaminated bins • High cost of residual waste disposal • Reduced accessibility to communal recycling facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of some bin infrastructure (e.g. comms, padlocks) • In person engagement from Waste Advisor • Reviewed bin infrastructure on Barnfield Estate
2	Contaminated communal recycling bins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower recycling rate • Bins removed if contamination is persistently high (clear sacks offered to those who want to continue to recycle) • Resident disenfranchisement with recycling • Missed collections • Impact on local community • Reputation of service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High security level padlock for communal recycling bins • Waste Advisor engagement • Plan for update to EMS

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in casework/complaints 	
3	Access issues (eg; inconsiderately parked vehicles, bin store blocked by fly-tipping)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed collections • Inefficient waste collection service • Impact on local community • Reputation of service • Increase in casework • Environmental impact due to additional vehicle having to return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles in Talk Housing • Windscreen notice cards for crews to leave on offending vehicles • Closer liaison with Housing Tenancy, Highways around yellow lines, CPZ's • Improved partnership working between Caretaking & Enviro-Crime Team to investigate and remove fly-tips
4	Stolen communal bins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconvenience to residents through reduced capacity for waste disposal whilst waiting for replacement bins to be provided • Negative impact to the public realm due to uncontained dumped waste • Additional cost to Housing for replacement bin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidents reported to Police • Caretakers stencilling bins with RBG ownership markings

5	Rubble fly-tipped within communal bins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caretakers and collection crews unable to move bins • Inconvenience to residents as bin capacity is reduced for a period of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist vehicle required to remove entire bin and contents - at additional cost to the Council
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4.7 Waste Collections - Initiatives

Street Services continues to work with Caretaking and Tenancy Services on a number of issues to improve waste management on Council housing estates and to address other wider issues that impact on our crews' ability to carry out the collections efficiently as well as the wider cleanliness of the local community.

No.	Initiative	Impact	Progress
1	Partnership working with Caretaking colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in the capture of fly-tipping offenders on estates • Joined up approach to dealing with and resolving missed communal collections on Council housing estates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV cameras located on Housing estates with successful prosecutions • Close liaison between waste and caretaking teams has improved communication and the efficiency in dealing with communal collection issues on Council housing estates
2	Need for behavioural change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved local environment for residents with 	

		<p>reduction in fly-tipping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved participation in and quality of recycling material which will contribute positively to the Council's recycling performance • Creation of a sense of civic pride 	
3	<p>Statutory services changes imposed by central Government – separate food waste collections for residents in flats (implementation around November 2025)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional communal bins will need to be provided on estates to collect separated food waste where space for bin storage can be limited • Levels of contamination are expected to be high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early engagement with Tenancy and Caretaking colleagues to discuss impact and ways to accommodate • Early engagement to let them know of the imminent service change and to be prepared

5. **Consultation**

5.1 There is no requirement to consult on the issues raised in this report and none has been undertaken.

6. **Next Steps**

6.1 The Chair will set out closing remarks and make recommendations to the relevant decision maker as required at the meeting and these will be

published as an appendix. The Relevant decision maker will respond to the recommendations in a separate published appendix and both will be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee/Panel.

7. Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications

<p>Legal including Human Rights Act</p>	<p>The Scrutiny Panel is requested to note the contents of this report which provides an update on grounds maintenance and refuse collections on Council housing estates within the Borough.</p> <p>There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.</p>	<p>Eleanor Penn, Assistant Head of Legal Services (Planning & Procurement), 21st March 2025</p>
<p>Finance and other resources</p>	<p><i>This report makes the following recommendations to the Housing & Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To consider the Grounds Maintenance and Refuse Report and make recommendations to the Executive, if necessary.</i> • <i>To agree that where appropriate, the report and any recommendations be submitted to the Chief Executive.</i> • <i>To note that where possible, the report and responses to the recommendations be presented at the next meeting of the Panel.</i> 	<p>Joanne Stark Head of Accounting & Business Change 17/03/2025</p>
<p>Equalities</p>	<p>The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the</p>	<p>Jo Oliver, Head of Street</p>

	<p>Equality Act. There is no apparent equality impact on end users.</p> <p>This report does not make a contribution to the Council's Equality and Equity Charter and the Council's Equality Objectives 2020-2024.</p>	<p>Services, 12/03/2025</p>
Climate change	<p>This report makes a small contribution to the Greenwich Carbon Neutral Plan agreed by Cabinet on 18 November 2020 through transition from two-stroke handheld grounds maintenance machinery to electric.</p>	<p>Jo Oliver, Head of Street Services, 12/03/2025</p>
Community Engagement	<p>No community engagement has taken place in relation to this report, which provides an update to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel on Grounds Maintenance and Refuse.</p>	<p>Jo Oliver, Head of Street Services, 12/03/2025</p>

8 . **Report Appendices**

8.1 Appendices:-

- None.

8.2 The following documents will be published after the meeting:-

- *Appendix (): Recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee*
- *Appendix (): Response to the recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee*

9. **Background Papers**

There are no background papers.

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