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## 1. Purpose

This policy is designed to ensure the green spaces that Lewisham Council's Housing Service manages, as part of the estate environment, promote residents' health and wellbeing; are environmentally and financially sustainable; and help promote biodiversity.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 This policy contributes to the implementation of the Mayor's Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan (CESAP). While much of the plan is concerned with the major contributors to Lewisham's CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions such as domestic heating and transport, it also states:

*'The climate crisis is part of a wider ecological crisis, with biodiversity and habitats under huge pressure, and action on climate change should be integrated with policies and programmes across all environmental issues. This is true internationally and nationally, but is particularly meaningful at a local level.'*

It includes a specific objective to 'increase climate change resilience through improvements to local green infrastructure and other adaptive measures.'

- 2.2 The residential buildings we manage have a substantial impact on CO<sub>2</sub>e, but how we manage our green spaces – effectively estate parks - is also important. This policy is therefore part of our strategic response to Climate Emergency and the CESAP.
- 2.3 Estate green spaces form a significant proportion of Lewisham's green infrastructure. Our Housing Service looks after 68 hectares of green space, 54 of which are grass. In total, that's more than 5 times the size of Mountsfield Park in Catford, and equal to around 100 football pitches. The grass alone stores around 540 tonnes of carbon per year. However, conventional grounds maintenance also generates substantial CO<sub>2</sub>e. Each gallon of fuel used to power the machinery we use produces 8Kg of carbon, and green waste produces a range of greenhouse gases.



2.4 This policy commits us to the following approach for our Green Services:

- Identifying a CO<sub>2</sub>e baseline and engaging with residents on a green services strategy for moving towards net zero and increasing biodiversity in Green Services by 2030, including:
  - Involving residents, communities and partners in developing sustainable green spaces plans for their neighbourhoods
  - More meadow areas, 're-wilding' where appropriate
  - Reducing pesticide use on beds
  - Reducing cutting frequencies where appropriate
  - Developing a sustainable approach to green waste
  - Continuing our improvements programme with sustainable planting such as perennials, bulbs and seeds
  - Replacing petrol-driven plant with electric machinery where practicable
  - Ensuring our green spaces are accessible and include something for all residents
- Delivering accredited training for Green Services staff to deliver high quality and sustainable services appropriate to each neighbourhood community.
- Engaging residents and partners in our strategy and delivery in order to spread understanding, support and participation.
- As well as taking positive steps to promote biodiversity and carbon capture, sustainable green services involve *ceasing* to do some traditional grounds maintenance, or at least *doing less of them*. These changes will both increase carbon capture and reduce emissions. Among the activities we will reduce are:
  - Collection and disposal of grass cuttings – we will instead mulch in situ using adapted mowers if necessary, but may continue to collect from some sheltered blocks
  - Frequency of grass cutting in areas designated for meadow or re-wilding
  - The use of chemicals for weed control – we will increasingly rely on mulching and manual control
- We will stop non-sustainable planting. For instance, we will no longer carry out 'summer planting' such as pansies, geraniums and other species which die off in the winter.

### 3. Developing a strategic approach

#### Identifying a CO<sub>2</sub>e baseline and engaging residents on a Green Services strategy for moving towards net zero and increasing biodiversity by 2030

3.1 We have previously engaged with residents<sup>1</sup> prior to in-sourcing grounds maintenance in 2015. Since then, we have invested new planting and more maintenance, including a fortnightly maintenance cycle. As a result, resident satisfaction has tended to increase.

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<sup>1</sup> As Lewisham Homes who were wholly owned by Lewisham Council



- 3.2 There has been a general aspiration to use sustainable approaches, and Green Services managers work closely with partners in pursuit of more sustainable ways of working. However, reducing CO<sub>2</sub>e and promoting biodiversity have not been specific objectives and have not been measured. Consequently, the service had continued to operate in a fairly traditional way, and dialogue with residents focussed on the frequency, quality, and financial cost of the service. There has not been an assessment of the carbon impact of our green spaces and the way we manage them. As a result, there have been no sustainability targets or any clear strategy for linking grounds maintenance work to the CESAP.
- 3.3 We recognise a need for a Green Services strategic approach for sustainable communal gardens and estate parks. This will involve learning from good practice within and outside the sector, and co-creation with residents and partners. Although service quality and value for money will remain key drivers, the focus on sustainability will mean that quality looks different. We aim to work with residents and partners to develop this further.

## 4. Staff training

### **Delivering accredited training for Green Services staff to deliver high quality and sustainable services appropriate to each neighbourhood community**

- 4.1 Accredited training will be mandatory for all Green Services staff and will include sustainable approaches as summarised in this policy.
- 4.2 Green Services managers will be leaders in their field at promoting sustainable grounds maintenance.
- 4.3 We will use our accredited easy to use 'Professional Gardening Standards' Manual to ensure all staff are professionally trained and equipped to achieve the high standards we have agreed with residents.
- 4.4 There will be an accredited basic professional training programme alongside the guide, setting the standard on how the team maintains our green spaces.

## 5. Resident Engagement

- 5.1 This policy has been based on residents' feedback, through a Residents' Engagement panel, as well as dialogue with individual customers and stakeholders.
- 5.2 We recognise that previously the dominant mind-set for communal spaces on estates has stressed 'tidiness', whereas our policy aims to balance this with 'rewilding' in order to promote biodiversity, and reduce CO<sub>2</sub>e. We will do this in a managed way and ensure our more sustainable green spaces are also attractive.
- 5.3 These spaces are our residents' gardens – often their only directly accessible green space. That means it is essential not only to consult but to involve residents in our planning and to co-create where possible. For example, we will 'frame' re-wilded and meadow areas with a mown border, and cut clear paths through them as appropriate. We will also erect interpretation boards at suitable locations to explain our approach and what to look out for.



### 6. Monitoring and controls

6.1 We will establish a CO2e baseline and ways of measuring our progress towards net zero. We will monitor this alongside existing measures such as residents' satisfaction and financial sustainability.

### 7. Equality, diversity, and inclusion

- 7.1 This policy commits us to working with residents, and providing increased access to nature and opportunities for participation for all. This is designed to benefit all residents regardless of any protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- 7.2 We recognise that access to green spaces has beneficial effects on physical and mental wellbeing.

### 8. Communication and consultation

- 8.1 This policy will be available on our website, briefed to the TRA Chairs, and our approach communicated through residents' open days.
- 8.2 We work in partnership with external stakeholders such as RHS, National Trust, and Street Trees for Living.
- 8.3 This policy is designed to provide us with further opportunities to connect and engage with residents. These include but are not limited to:
  - Promotion of re-wilding areas through 'Interpretation Boards'
  - Creation of walking activities around the estates and promoting these for Mental Health awareness week
  - Co-creation of community gardens and orchard gardens.
- 8.4 We will signpost to other useful sources of information. For example on request, we can provide residents with a copy of the housing providers 'Bio-diversity toolkit' funded by Natural Environmental Research Council.

<b>Replaces:</b> Sustainable Green Services policy 2021 (Lewisham Homes) Minor updates to reflect the return of landlord services previously managed by Lewisham Homes to Lewisham Council	
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