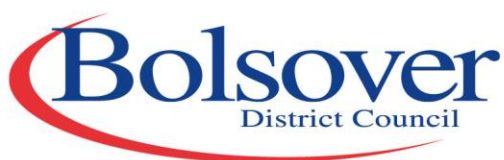


# Bolsover Tenants Challenge and Change Group



**Review of Grounds Maintenance  
on Council Estates  
June 2024-March 2025**



DRAGONFLY  
MANAGEMENT



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Background image of Bolsover Tenants Challenge and Change Group front cover showing a magnifying glass over a red house - includes the Bolsover Council logo, Dragonfly Management logo and Tenant Approved logo.

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## 1. Introduction

Bolsover Challenge and Change Group have discussed a number of areas for investigation. This review is of the Grounds Maintenance Service (provided by Streetscene). The review which has been undertaken by the Group has allowed tenants to examine how the Council is performing in this service area.

## 2. Reason for the review

Many of our council owned residential properties have communal gardens with trees, hedges and grassed areas. There are no specific targets or indicators within the Corporate Plan or service plans in relation to grounds maintenance/grass cutting. This is routine delivery by the Streetscene service. Tenants agreed that the quality of this service impacts on a neighbourhood's appearance.

Bolsover Challenge and Change Group have previously completed a review of the lettable standard. One of the standards is maintenance of the garden when a property is void. This review ties in with work from this earlier completed review.

The intention of this review was to gain a better understanding of the grounds maintenance/grass cutting service provided, issues of concern to tenants, to make recommendations for improvements, if and where applicable.

### Review Objectives

1. Clarification of responsibilities for both tenants and the Council.
2. Clarification of the current maintenance programme and potential factors which can impact planned works.
3. Evaluation of the quality of maintenance works and how this is assessed by the service.
4. Analysis of complaints related to grounds maintenance and action taken.

## 3. The Challenge and Change Working Group

The following tenants were involved in this review working group:

- Steven Bramley
- Angela Sharpe
- Heather Fretwell
- Kathleen Blair
- Doreen Potts
- Catherine Morley
- John Wright
- Tracey Wright
- Antoni McRae
- Elma McRae
- Jackie Taylor

The group were assisted by:

- Joanne Wilson, Housing Strategy and Development Officer
- Jane Calladine, Tenant Engagement Officer
- Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Manager, Richard Camps

## 4. The Investigation

### Documents reviewed

Document Title	How it was reviewed
Bolsover District Council Tenancy Agreement	Document discussed within meeting on 19.12.24 and provided hard copy with relevant clauses highlighted.
Annual Complaints report	Document discussed within meeting 18.06.24 and a hard copy was provided later.
Grounds Maintenance compliments, comments, complaints	April to July 24 summary of compliments, comments, complaints and MP enquiries given at meeting 06.08.24.  Further data covering complaints April-Dec 2024 received in January 2025 and added to analysis to check for trends/issues matching tenants findings.
Grounds Maintenance work schedules examples	Documents were given at the meeting 19.12.24

### Performance Data

Type of Data	How it was reviewed
Satisfaction Data	Verbal update, based on Officer knowledge of the service, was given at the meeting on 18.06.24. Contact Centre Manager advised of issues that feature regularly in complaints.

### Site Visits

The tenant group attended a full day tour, visiting a number of sites. The site visits covered several geographical areas looking at a range of properties including void properties.

## 5. The Review Process – Our evidence and questions to officers

### Service response to Tenant queries

The tenant group attended several meetings with officers and completed a day of site visits. The site visits included several external communal areas and two void properties.

The tenant group wanted clarification on the whole service from officers, so requested responses to a series of questions to fully understand what is provided on communal grounds, hedges, trees, and empty properties. This enabled tenants to get a better understanding of service provision. The table below summarises the range of questions either within a meeting, site visit or via email enquiries.

	<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Clarification of responsibilities for both tenants and the Council.</b>
	<b>Tenants Question</b>	<b>Councils Response</b>
1	Is there a Service Level Agreement between Housing Management and Streetscene?	There is no written Service Level Agreement.
2	What service is provided by Streetscene?	Regular cut of grass on both communal areas and grass verges on housing estates. Hedge trimming. There is no regular surveying or planned maintenance of trees, only responsive tree maintenance on a case-by-case basis. No pruning or weeding service is provided.
3	How are new tenants informed of their responsibilities to maintain their garden or that communal grounds maintenance is provided?	The Tenancy Agreement details tenant obligations for garden maintenance. At the sign-up appointment the Housing Assistant (Allocations) explains their tenancy obligations. Tenants are also shown their garden and any boundaries at this sign-up appointment. They are advised of communal grounds maintenance at their property. The Housing Assistant (Tenancy) visits them (2- 4 times in the first year of their tenancy) and checks the garden condition and reminds them of their tenancy obligations.
4	What garden maintenance is provided whilst a property is void?	An initial one-off cut then semi-regular cuts whilst void repair works are undertaken, with a final cut once the property is ready to let.

	<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Clarification of responsibilities for both tenants and the Council.</b>
	<b>Tenants Question</b>	<b>Councils Response</b>
5	Why are grass cuttings not collected?	The service is cut and leave. Collecting cuttings would involve costs for transporting the cuttings and there are no means of disposing of/composting. Cuttings are blown back onto the grass to help feed the grass and keep any footpaths clear.
6	Would use of artificial turf be an option?	No. This is not an environmentally friendly option. Artificial turf would require cleaning, and the scale of installation would prove too costly.
7	When are hedges trimmed?	Due to nesting birds, and current resources limited hedge trimming takes place in the spring. In the spring/summer hedges are only trimmed on one side where they border footpaths. This is to keep footpaths clear for pedestrians. A full hedge cut is completed from October- March.
8	What height are hedges maintained at?	Most hedges are maintained to a height which they have been maintained at historically. This varies between sites, and we do occasionally carry out one off reduction to hedges to bring them back to a manageable height where it has become an issue and we have the resources.
9	How is the tree maintenance decided?	<p>Trees on housing land and within Bolsover District Councils wider district, are not part of a current planned programme of works. As such only responsive works are carried out as and when these are reported by a tenant/member of the public. The time window available for when tree maintenance can be carried out is restricted due to nesting birds in the spring/summer.</p> <p>There are currently more tree jobs needed on housing land, and within the whole district, than resources can support. This has resulted in a backlog of trees requiring work. Jobs are prioritised based on safety, damage, risk and impact on light.</p> <p>On occasion Streetscene do not have capacity to undertake specific tree work required to a large number of trees, in a specific geographical area at the same time. In this situation work has been carried out by contractors (at an agreed cost to the Housing Department).</p>



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	<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Clarification of responsibilities for both tenants and the Council.</b>
	<b>Tenants Question</b>	<b>Councils Response</b>
10	Should weed killer be used in areas around gutters?	Yes. In Feb/March, edges are sprayed, around posts and signs. Quad bike is used, 2 times per year. Spray applied to the front curb edges and back borders against pavements.

	<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Clarification of the current maintenance programme and potential factors which can impact planned works.</b>
	<b>Tenants Question</b>	<b>Councils Response</b>
1	Are Streetscene notified of new build housing schemes and planning requirements for planting/biodiversity?	Streetscene have not traditionally been consulted at planning stage on recent new build properties. However, from evidence gathered during the review, this appears to be changing. The service area has been consulted on the most recent development (Woburn House).
2	How do you assess what level of service is required/frequency of visits needed for future upkeep for new build schemes?	When a site is nearing completion there is usually a walkaround with Streetscene, Area Co-Ordinator and Dragonfly. An agreement is made which areas are communal and what grounds maintenance Streetscene will be responsible for. This is then added to the routes for the teams at the usual frequencies.
3	When is grass cutting season provided?	Grass cutting service takes place mid-March-October. This includes roadside verges, open spaces and communal open plan areas.
4	How frequently is the grass cut during grass cutting season?	Cutting should be every 2-3 weeks depending on speed of grass growth which is normally dictated by the weather.
5	Have there been any changes to resources since COVID?	<p>There has been an increase in resources since COVID. Service previously employed full time staff plus 7 seasonal workers (March-October). At the end of 2020 4 of the seasonal workers were retained full time. This has created extra resources during the winter months, same resources in summer months.</p> <p>Current staff: 2 Area Co-Ordinators, 20 grounds maintenance staff, with 3-5 seasonal staff (employed March- October).</p>



	<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Clarification of the current maintenance programme and potential factors which can impact planned works.</b>
	<b>Tenants Question</b>	<b>Councils Response</b>
		In 2024 service has faced several staffing shortages due to vacancies/staff sickness.
6	When land is too wet to cut following rainfall what work is carried out?	Some grass cutting will be done without the ride on mower, or the team will tend to one off cuts.
7	Self-set plants grow at different rates resulting in untidy hedges. Can self-set plants within hedges be removed?	Yes, they can be removed but if they are well-established it is difficult to remove stems from within the hedge. If Housing wish to fund extra work Streetscene could deal with these as one-off jobs.
8	Are arborists employed all year? How are they being utilised when tree cutting not being done?	Arborists are employed all year. Nesting bird season limits tree work they undertake. When they are not undertaking tree work they will complete other duties (grass cutting/hedge cutting/Assisted Gardening/voids).
9	Are there other reasons the grass might not be cut?	Dog mess on communal grass can lead to whole areas not being cut as scheduled. It is the dog owner/tenant responsibility to clear dog faeces. Streetscene staff are not expected to clear dog faeces or risk contact by cutting areas which are heavily soiled.
10	Can a remote-control mower be used on sloping ground?	A remote-control mower is an expensive piece of equipment. It is usually used where there are steep slopes making ride on/manual mowing difficult. We do not have many steep slopes that would warrant the cost of this equipment.
11	Is there a database of trees to use to draw up a programme for tree maintenance?	No, and this would require additional resources to create a database. Development Control hold the register of trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
12	Can a calendar plan be produced showing when grass	This would be difficult as the plan is fluid and can change depending on the weather.

	<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Clarification of the current maintenance programme and potential factors which can impact planned works.</b>
	<b>Tenants Question</b>	<b>Councils Response</b>
	cutting for each area is to be carried out?	
13	Is there a designated team that maintain the gardens when a property is void?	There are approximately 100+ void properties on the grounds maintenance list at any time. There is no dedicated team. The team who tend to void properties are also responsible for grounds maintenance at graveyards. On occasion the graveyards can take 3 weeks to cut which can lead to delays on void garden maintenance.
14	How are Streetscene notified of a void property that has a garden requiring maintenance?	Although there is this notice period before a tenancy ends Streetscene do not get any advance notice. When a tenant returns keys at the end of their tenancy Streetscene receive notification "Vacant House Garden Cut". This is added to the Void property list and triggers the initial one-off void cut. Streetscene have no indication/information on receiving this notification of the condition or size of the garden to plan this workload into their schedule. A site visit is required. With current resources it was noted that it would be help Streetscene plan the work if Repair Co-ordinators could take photographs of the garden when undertaking the void inspection and send this to Streetscene.
15	Can there be a rota published for Assisted Gardening like refuse collection?	No as the program for Assisted Gardening is fluid and can be changed depending on the weather. For example, if there has been a high volume of rainfall and the team cannot use ride on mowers they will move onto Assisted Gardening.
16	Do you notify tenants on Assisted Gardening when you are attending to avoid no access visits?	No, as the program is fluid. If no access is gained a duplicate missed visit card is left to notify the tenant.

It should be noted that the Assisted Gardening service was not initially included in the review. However, the review has evolved as it became evident that the Assisted Gardening service needed to be considered, as a number of those receiving the service were tenants.

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	<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Evaluation of the quality of maintenance works and how this is assessed by the service.</b>
	<b>Tenants Question</b>	<b>Councils Response</b>
1	Are any quality checks made of grounds maintenance completed work?	Yes, the Team Leader is responsible for the quality of the works and signs off the schedule for each site, on each visit.
2	Does the Streetscene Manager post inspect any communal grounds work?	The manager can do periodic inspections when out on site on other matters, but more regular inspections would require additional resources.
3	Is a quality check carried out on the standard of garden maintenance throughout the void period?	This is usually informal. When a Streetscene Area Co-ordinator is in an area carrying out their normal inspections they may stop and check the void properties in that area. For one off works, the Co-ordinator will often visit to specify the works, and then may follow-up during the works or after completion. The Team Leader is responsible for the quality of the works and signs off the paperwork.

	<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>Analysis of complaints related to ground maintenance and action taken</b>
	<b>Tenants Question</b>	<b>Councils Response</b>
1	What complaints are made on the grounds maintenance service?	<p>Tenants and residents do not have information available on what grounds maintenance is provided in their area, the frequency and standards. This can result in additional complaints.</p> <p>The following issues feature regularly in complaints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not clearing grass cuttings follow a cut</li> <li>• Seasonal tree cutting</li> <li>• Grass cutting</li> <li>• Leaves/detritus which may have led to a trip/fall</li> <li>• Maintenance of larger gardens in older person's properties</li> <li>• Weedkiller usage and the impact on the edge of grassed areas and nearby planting</li> <li>• Hedge maintenance</li> </ul>
2	How do Streetscene	RC stated this is informal. Presently Team Leader should pick up any issues. If several complaints or

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	<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>Analysis of complaints related to ground maintenance and action taken</b>
	<b>Tenants Question</b>	<b>Councils Response</b>
	evidence/record issues reported?	issues received for the same area, we would look at this to see why, were the team called off the area to cover an emergency, absence of staff for sick leave.

### Complaints Analysis Q1-Q3 2024-2025 (Tenants)

Time period	Number of Tenant Complaints	Reasons/Themes of Complaint	Action
Q1 Apr-Jun	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay in commencement of Assisted Gardening service.</li> <li>• Issues with vegetation around bungalow.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apology for delay in assessment, completed and added to rota.</li> <li>• Informed Assisted Gardening service does not include weeding but one-off works completed to improve situation and reduce potential impact on property – tenant to maintain moving forward.</li> </ul>
Q2 Jul-Sept	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of maintenance of border planting at side of property.</li> <li>• Delay in commencement of Assisted Gardening service</li> <li>• Customer not receiving visits for Assisted Gardening scheme as expected and garden overgrown.</li> <li>• Quality of hedge maintenance.</li> <li>• Quality of grass cutting</li> <li>• Behaviour of operative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area tended and added to maintenance list.</li> <li>• Works completed (delay due to demand on service for other works).</li> <li>• Apology, assessment completed and works commenced.</li> <li>• Customer had transferred property but new address not added to rota – tenancy sign up process amended.</li> <li>• Advised currently focussed on grass cutting season before commencing hedge cuts.</li> <li>• Clarified what areas are included in cutting.</li> <li>• Operative reminded of customer standards.</li> </ul>
Q3 Oct-Dec	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weeds encroaching from neighbouring land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works completed – site was BDC land that had been missed on routine works due to being fenced off.</li> </ul>

In comparison to the number of resident complaints there were 5 in Q1, 9 in Q2 and 0 in Q3.

## Site Visits

The tenant group requested a site visit to look at several sites with communal ground maintenance and some void properties with gardens which the Council were happy to arrange.

The following is a summary of our visits on 17.09.24:

### New Build Schemes

We visited some new build schemes due to issues raised by residents over the type of planting used at new build schemes. Officer knowledge and tenants living on new build schemes indicate that Streetscene may not have been consulted in the design process.

New Build Schemes	Observations
<p>Willow Close, Langwith</p> <p>Reason for visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large overgrowth of brambles from adjacent land which is not in BDC ownership.</li> <li>• High weed growth among new shrubs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large communal shrub bed along boundary onto Poulter Country Park (PCP). PCP not being maintained by DCC. Severe bramble overgrowth coming through chain fence causing overgrowth that cannot be maintained regular enough to keep flower bed tidy.</li> <li>• Should there be a new boundary treatment to prevent growth through? Who owns boundary DCC or BDC?</li> <li>• Lots of weeds growing in new flowerbeds throughout the site. Weed removal is not provided by Streetscene.</li> </ul>
<p>The Paddock, Bolsover</p> <p>Reason for visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visited to look at hedge cutting</li> <li>• Buddleia high growth impeding visibility to car parking bays.</li> <li>• A communal lawn at rear of one block is not being maintained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedge cutting noted to be satisfactory at the rear of the block near the entrance to the road. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that tenants are maintaining the hedge rather than the Council service so potentially not a true reflection of service delivery at this site.</li> <li>• Overgrow of inappropriate fast-growing plants installed around car parking bays obstructing access. Planting needs to be appropriate, slow growing/hardy.</li> </ul>

New Build Schemes	Observations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established the rear lawn and shrubs had not been added to the schedule for this site.</li> </ul>
<p>Ashbourne Court (extension)</p> <p>Reason for visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weed growth in large flowerbed at side of new build extension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an untidy flower bed down the side of the new extension by the main road. This is not showing on council records as an area to be maintained by Streetscene. Can plants be removed and replace with grass?</li> <li>New flower bed in front of the communal room has dead foliage.</li> <li>Other flower beds are being planted twice a year with flowers which look nice, colourful and appear well looked after.</li> </ul>

The group noted that the type of plants is often inappropriate, growing quickly with a lot of weed growth. A number of the schemes look overgrown, and the current service does not include provision for weeding or pruning of plants. The tenant group concluded that there is a gap in the current planning and design process whereby there is insufficient input from Streetscene services on appropriate planting for each scheme and the required future ongoing maintenance.

Prior to hand over of completed new build council residential properties the grounds maintenance should have been agreed. Streetscene need to add the grounds maintenance requirements to schedules and onto Mymaps. It was established during the review, using maps printed from Mymaps, that these are not always updated. This results in areas not being maintained. The tenants concluded there needs to be a process prior to handover where Dragonfly, Streetscene and Housing Management all meet and agree communal grounds maintenance to be provided at each site and to add to the schedules and update Mymaps.



## Existing Properties

Tenants visited some existing estates due to issues raised by residents on hedge heights, and overgrown trees.

Existing properties	Observations
<p>Birks Close, Hodthorpe</p> <p>Reason for visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Untidy hedges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grass cutting appears well maintained.</li> <li>It appears that some residents may be cutting some of the communal lawn in-between cuts.</li> <li>Hedges - one hedge is being cut by two residents and looks well kept. Tenants expressed their concern that this is dependent on whose is residing in the adjoining properties and their ability/willingness to maintain.</li> <li>There is one pivot hedge with self-seeded plants growing within the hedge. These are growing at a different rate, making hedge look untidy and poorly maintained. Hedges need more than cutting, there is a need to remove self-set plants.</li> </ul>
<p>Hides Green, Bolsover</p> <p>Reason for visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overgrown decorative hedge</li> <li>Overgrown trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Throughout the site there are several overgrown trees blocking light, some touching the building</li> <li>Flowerbeds are no longer flower beds, shrubs are overgrown, so kerb/path edges are no longer visible. Children jumping in/over causing ASB issues.</li> <li>Weeds on path to private property with Rights of access needs maintaining.</li> <li>Former garage site- debris (leaves/twigs) can this be swept with road sweeper regularly?</li> </ul>

It was noted that grass cutting was generally good. On existing schemes there is an issue of hedging and trees being overgrown. Tenants had an extensive discussion for setting lower hedge heights across the District. Self-set plants grow at different rates and need to be reduced or removed.

## Void Properties

In 2024 the tenant group completed a review of the Void Process. The group's recommendations, for the garden condition during and on completion of a void, have been incorporated into the Lettable Standard. Tenants visited two void properties; one was ready to let, and one was void repair work in progress. The two visits provided an opportunity to monitor whether the new lettable standard relating to gardens is being met.

Void properties	Observations
14 Ridgeway Langwith Junction  Reason for visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>works in progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major void works- void date 19.05.24.</li> <li>Tenants were advised the garden was overgrown when property became void.</li> <li>Garden is not being maintained during void period. Grass was overgrown.</li> </ul>
102 Slant Lane Shirebrook  Reason for visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Void work completed; property is ready to let</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Void period 14.07.24- 17.09.24.</li> <li>Tenants were advised the garden was well maintained and tidy when the property became void.</li> <li>Tenants noted the lawns and hedges were maintained to a good standard. The garden condition met the relet standard.</li> </ul>

General Void comments
<p>Some properties have a rear garden via locked doors. Streetscene do not have keys to access rear gardens and can only maintain rear gardens if work operatives are on site when they visit.</p> <p>Tenants suggested at the termination inspection can Streetscene be updated with condition of the garden.</p> <p>Tenants queried whether Streetscene been provided with new relet standard?</p> <p>Streetscene note that they receive notification when a property is let and whether the grass/hedges need a final cut. Sometimes Streetscene experience difficulty in gaining access to rear gardens if new tenants are not in when they attend.</p>

Tenants viewed a good example of void garden maintenance and an example where garden maintenance is not as expected. It was noted that the standard of void garden maintenance can vary, often depending on the condition of the garden at the start of the void period. This raised the question of whether there is sufficient resource given for voids gardening where substantial gardening work is required. Tenants raised concern that long-term empty properties with untidy/unkept gardens have a negative impact on the neighbourhood.

## 6. Findings and recommendations

The following table summarises our findings and recommendations for improvement. The tenant group have not been given costings of service during the review. The group are aware that some of the recommendations require additional resources, which will have cost implications. The tenant group understand that these will need consideration from senior managers.

### Objective 1: Clarification of responsibilities for both tenants and the Council

	Recommendation	Reason	Officer Comments
1.1	Streetscene to create a data base of all trees throughout the district. Complete a full tree survey. Complete ongoing regular tree surveys.	Currently there is no database of trees. A database can be used to plan a survey of all trees in the district and draw up a maintenance schedule. This would change the approach of tree management from reactive to planned. Regular surveys will be required to keep the program up to date. There will be a cost implication to this recommendation.	<u>Grounds Maintenance Service:</u> At present there is insufficient officer or operative resources to create an inventory of all Council tree stock. Creation of a Tree Officer post could enable this, along with proactive inspections.  <u>Housing Management Service:</u> In support of this recommendation,
1.2	Consider contracting out tree maintenance or have a hybrid approach.	There is a backlog of tree work required and nesting birds limit the time available each year to complete the work. Contracting out some or all tree work would reduce the backlog of work. This could be considered on a larger scheme rather than individual trees. Clearing the back log of tree maintenance would allow a planned achievable program to be implemented. There will be a	<u>Grounds Maintenance Service:</u> Outsourcing of tree work would likely be more costly than an in-house service, with potential loss of control on how work is carried out. Larger-scale works have been

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	Recommendation	Reason	Officer Comments
		cost implication to this recommendation.	<p>contracted out with clearly defined specification, and funded by Housing.</p> <p>The outsourcing of services costs significantly more to the Council and restrictive contracts often result in additional costs with less control over service delivery. Resources within the tree maintenance team are also deployed across other service areas when they are unable to work on trees due to nesting/weather.</p> <p><u>Housing Management Service:</u> This but would depend on cost of contractors versus need.</p>

The tenant group suggested that at new tenants sign up appointments the council and tenants' obligations in relation to garden/communal grounds maintenance is fully explained. During the course of this review officers have established that tenants are informed at sign up. Additionally, tenants are given information on how to make a complaint at sign up.

**Objective 2: Clarification of the current maintenance programme and potential factors which can impact planned works**

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Officer Comments</b>
2.1	Streetscene to suggest planting schemes on new build council properties so that only self-maintaining, slow growing planting is provided.	Additional new build properties add to Streetscene workload with no additional resources given. Site visits revealed new planting schemes have substantial weed growth and overgrown shrubs. Current resources do not allow for weeding/pruning. Streetscene need to be able to maintain all new planting, so this needs to be self-maintaining/slow growing to reduce workload and will improve visual appearance on estates.	<p><u>Grounds Maintenance Service:</u> More input at planning stage could result in better long-term maintenance. Due to Planning requirements for biodiversity net gain more varied planting is included. More resources/equipment may also be required.</p> <p><u>Housing Management Service:</u> In agreement, Streetscene have been involved in the Woburn Development.</p>
2.2	Prior to handover of new build properties Streetscene to agree areas for grass/hedges that are to be maintained. Streetscene are to ensure this is added to Mymaps and work schedules.	The group have established that certain new build sites have had lack of service due to lack of planning /agreeing areas that need maintaining. Attending the site visits with plans from Mymaps it has been proven that grounds maintenance required at certain new build sites has not been recorded or added to the schedule. This resulted in areas not being maintained.	<p><u>Grounds Maintenance Service:</u> This is now happening on newer sites, and MyMaps can be updated to reflect.</p> <p><u>Housing Management Service:</u> In agreement, Streetscene have been involved in the Woburn Development but require clarification of who is responsible for updating Mymaps.</p>

	Recommendation	Reason	Officer Comments
2.3	Repair Co-Ordinators to take photographs of garden at void inspection and send to Streetscene Co-Ordinators.	This would enable Streetscene Co-Ordinators plan work required, to ensure the team that attend have the correct equipment and sufficient staff.	<u>Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd.:</u> This can be done as part of the void inspection which can then generate the instruction and photo's TM form that is emailed to Streetscene.

**Objective 3: Evaluation of the quality of maintenance works and how this is assessed by the service**

	Recommendation	Reason	Officer Comments
3.1	Implement 10% quality checks are completed by Streetscene Area Co-ordinator within 1 week of work being completed.	The only quality checks are currently carried by the Team Leader who is not impartial. The timescale is necessary to assess grass cutting standard before regrowth.	<u>Grounds Maintenance Service:</u> Informal quality checks are carried out by Co-ordinators on site visits, but this is not recorded. Comments or complaints from tenants are investigated.
3.2	Spot checks by Tenancy Management Officer, Housing Assistant (Tenancy) without the team knowing when and where checks are to take place.	This would allow for an impartial check on the standard of work by the Housing Department. This would allow monitoring of the service and whether the service is delivered to a satisfactory standard.	<u>Housing Management Service:</u> The team workload is currently too high to incorporate this but we could ask the team to report back if they see anything of concern whilst they are

	Recommendation	Reason	Officer Comments
			out on visits in the district.
3.3	Set up a dedicated team within Streetscene to work solely on void properties/Assisted Gardening.	There are currently delays in maintaining void gardens due to other commitments, for example to cut graveyards. This results in overgrown, untidy gardens at void properties which can have a detrimental effect on the neighbourhood. A dedicated team would ensure void properties are given the required level of priority alongside wider service requirements.	<u>Grounds Maintenance Service:</u> The Voids team also work on closed churchyards, and the difference in standard of the garden at tenancy surrender means some properties need far more work to bring them to an acceptable standard.  <u>Housing Management Service:</u> We would need to do further work to understand the costs vs the benefits e.g. turning voids around quicker

**Objective 4: Analysis of complaints related to grounds maintenance and action taken**

	Recommendation	Reason	Officer Comments
4.1	Streetscene to analyse complaints data.	At the meeting on 24.03.25 it was confirmed there is no analysis undertaken of complaints on the grounds	<u>Grounds Maintenance Service:</u>



	Recommendation	Reason	Officer Comments
		maintenance service. Analysing complaints will establish trends which can lead to customer influenced improvements.	Themes of complaints are discussed at Contact Centre meetings
4.2	Streetscene to publish via social media, contact centre/town centre boards & Use email/text service to notify tenants on Assisted Gardening that they will be visiting within a date range.	On attending an Assisted Gardening, if there is dog faeces in the lawn, they will not cut the grass. On occasion Assisted Gardening tenants are not in when the team attend. These missed visits and dog faeces issues result in gardens being overgrown, impacting on the appearance of the local area. Prior notification may result in less missed visits due to no access and provide the tenant an opportunity to clear up dog faeces.	<u>Grounds Maintenance Service:</u> This could be implemented for assisted gardens using the GovNotify text service (if tenants sign up), but may still be subject to change at short notice due to weather, breakdowns or staffing issues.
4.3	Housing Assistants (Tenancy) to obtain feedback from new tenants at New Tenancy visits on standard of communal gardening/Assisted Gardening.	Officers are in contact with new tenants up to 4 times a year. Officers can use this opportunity to capture tenant feedback on standard of garden when property let and ongoing communal maintenance.	<u>Housing Management Service:</u> We can capture tenant feedback by adding a question to the New Tenant Visit form. We can consider adding a question to the New Letting Satisfaction survey about condition of the garden when the property was let.
4.4	Streetscene to consider publishing when they are working in an area via of Bolsover District Council website, Contact Centre/town centre boards, text	There is limited information available for tenants to know what service is provided by Streetscene and how often. This can lead to additional complaints. For example, grass cuttings not collected, when are they attending? This could	<u>Grounds Maintenance Service:</u> This could be done, but possibly less detailed (e.g. "we are starting

	Recommendation	Reason	Officer Comments
	service/emails/social media posts.	result in greater customer satisfaction, reduced calls to contact centres, less complaints.	mowing from next week” or “teams are out gritting Council areas this morning, so normal works may be impacted.” Other general posts could be considered (concerning dog fouling, collection of grass cuttings)

## 7. Next Steps

The Challenge and Change Group welcome consideration of this report by senior management and Scrutiny Councillors. The report includes recommendations and an outline action plan which can be developed further in order to implement the recommendations. We welcome further discussion with Housing Liaison Board once this report has been considered.

## **Appendix 1: Tenancy Agreement**

The following clauses in the Tenancy Agreement relate to grounds maintenance.

### **Condition Of the Property**

Clause 4.14 Defines condition tenants need to keep their property.

### **Communal Areas**

Clause 4.22 and 4.23 defines what can/cannot be kept on communal land.

### **Gardens and Boundaries**

Clause 4.35 - defines expected garden condition, garden boundaries, use of garden, tenant alterations, boundary maintenance.

### **Pets and Animals**

Clause 4.51 defines no dog fouling in communal gardens, keeping gardens clear of dog waste.

### **Vehicles and Parking**

Clause 4.55 stipulates no parking on communal areas, gardens or land used for amenity purposes.

### **Repairs and Maintenance**

Clause 5.2 defines criteria where fencing, gates and path are tenant responsibility.

Clause 5.4 stipulates tenants are to take care of the property, including external space and communal areas.

## Appendix 2: Sample work schedules

SouthWinter									
	Town	Ht.	Description	Top M²	Side M²	Work SMs	Total SMs	Comp	
		1.5	Assisted	16.0	40.0	72.8	352.7		
		2	Adjacent	7.4	24.6	36.5	412.2		
		1.4	Adjacent	6.4	14.9	27.7	439.9		
		2	Adjacent Motorway bridge	80.8	269.2	650.9	1000.7		6/11
		1.5	Junction with Hilltop Road	12.4	31.1	59.6	1147.3		
		1.5	Open space, junction with Aitherton Road	33.0	62.6	150.3	1297.6		
	South Normanton	1	Verge, Front 5-12	4.7	7.9	16.4	1414.6		
Day 22	South Normanton	2	The Spider - rear of No. 7 - 9 Larkspur Close	40.0	135.2	322.0	365.9		
		1.5	Open space, opposite Stormont Close	70.7	176.8	321.8	707.6		7/11
		1.5	Assisted	26.9	64.8	117.9	825.6		
		1.5	Assisted	68.8	222.0	404.0	1339.4		
Day 23	South Normanton	1.5	Assisted	47.2	118.0	214.8	194.2		
		1.5	Assisted	30.4	76.0	136.3	332.5		
		1	Rear 45	12.3	29.8	42.8	375.3		
		1.5	Adjacent	6.6	16.5	30.1	405.3		11/11
		1.5	Assisted	12.0	30.0	64.6	459.9		
		1.2	Rear 2	6.8	13.3	26.3	486.3		
		1	Between 11/13	17.3	28.8	60.0	548.2		
		1	Side/Rear 8	13.0	21.7	45.1	591.4		
		2	Adjacent 27	19.7	66.8	199.0	750.4		
		1.4	Open space adjacent 1	7.8	16.3	33.9	764.3		
		1.5	Assisted	5.6	14.0	25.5	809.8		
		1.5	Assisted	73.6	184.0	334.9	1144.7		
		1.5	Rear 27-33	27.0	87.5	122.9	1308.4		25/11
Day 24	South Normanton	1.5	Assisted	74.4	186.0	338.5	355.9		
		1.8	Open space, rear 2	20.2	53.8	137.5	493.4		
	FLAIL	2	Recreation Ground, Rear Coronation Drive Properties	43.8	146.0	353.0	846.4		
		1.5	Assisted	17.6	44.0	80.1	926.5		
		1.5	Assisted	43.2	106.0	196.6	1123.0		
		1.5	Assisted	14.8	37.0	67.3	1190.4		
		1.5	Assisted	24.0	59.9	108.0	1298.4		
		1.5	Assisted	14.0	35.0	63.7	1463.9		26/11
Day 25	South Normanton	1.5	Assisted	23.8	59.0	107.4	220.3		
		1.3	Adjacent 45	6.1	13.3	25.2	245.9		
		1.3	Rear 39-43	18.1	36.2	74.4	319.9		
		1.3	Rear 35/37	15.2	32.9	62.5	362.4		
		1.3	Rear 35	3.7	9.2	16.7	396.1		27/11
		1.75	Rear 66/68	36.6	89.3	223.1	432.2		
		1	St Michael's Church, Southern Boundary	55.5	92.5	192.3	814.5		
	FLAIL	1.5	St Michael's Church	34.8	87.6	158.4	972.9		
		1.5	St Michael's Church	16.9	42.2	78.7	1049.6		27/11
		2	Side of 185 South Road	11.4	38.0	91.9	1242.3		
Day 26	South Normanton	1.5	Open Space Between 169/171	99.0	247.5	450.5	341.7		
		2	Between 10/12	17.4	58.0	140.2	482.0		
		2	Between 10/12	26.0	66.6	209.4	691.4		2/12
		1.5	Path to Newlyn Drive	32.4	81.0	147.4	639.6		
		2	Adjacent Motorway Bridge	45.4	151.4	366.1	1305.7		
Day 27	South Normanton	2	Adjacent Motorway Bridge	37.6	126.0	304.7	299.4		

## South Mowing Route

	STREET/TOWN	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	AREA M <sup>2</sup>	WORK SMs	TOTAL SMs	DATE COMP.
		OS	Front 2-8	231.28	8.41	1710.88	
		OS	Adjacent path to Denwerl Drive	67.29	2.45	1713.33	
		Verges		116.87	5.22	1718.54	
	West Brook Lane	OS	Turning head, adjacent pumping station	155.21	5.64	1724.19	
		OS	Opposite 7/9	58.24	2.06	1726.23	
		OS	Opposite 2-6, adjacent Denwerl Drive	1310.02	47.55	1773.88	
		OS	Play Area	226.91	8.25	1782.13	
	Peveril Road	Verges		811.09	36.20	1818.33	
	Monsal Crescent	OS	Front 7-12	436.08	15.95	1834.19	27/8
		Enc	Path to track (Church Lane)	141.40	15.35	1849.54	
		OS	Adjacent path to Back Lane	260.10	9.46	1859.00	
		Verges		45.76	2.09	1861.09	
	Harrison Lane	Verges		80.05	2.58	1863.77	
	Back Lane	OP	Outside 37	58.91	2.90	1866.67	
		OP	Outside 35/37	43.01	2.12	1868.78	
		OP	Outside 33/35	62.77	3.09	1871.87	
		OP	Between 33/35	2.46	0.12	1871.99	
		OP	Outside 31/33	31.26	1.54	1873.53	
		OP	Between 29/31	1.75	0.09	1873.62	
		OP	Outside 29/31	67.07	3.30	1876.91	
		OP	Outside 29	10.01	0.49	1877.41	
		OP	Outside 27/29	18.64	0.92	1878.32	
		OP	Outside 27	41.57	2.04	1880.37	
		Verges		237.59	10.50	1890.97	
	High Street	OS	Outside Village Hall	95.04	3.45	1894.43	
		OS	Adjacent access to Village Hall/Garage	16.15	0.59	1895.01	
		OS	Front 106	4.73	0.17	1895.19	
		OS	Front 104/106	29.07	1.05	1896.24	28/8
		OS	Front 104	25.71	0.94	1897.18	
		OS	Access to Church	62.63	2.28	1899.46	
Day 7.		OP	Outside 61-65	167.41	8.23	3.13	
		OP	Outside 61-65	22.62	1.11	4.24	
		OP	Outside 55-59	22.62	1.11	5.35	
		OP	Outside 55-59	137.21	6.75	100.90	
		OS	Outside 102	29.80	1.08	190.78	
		Enc	Adjacent path between school/Waverley Street	77.11	8.37	199.16	
		OS	Site of Old Plate	2895.97	98.05	297.21	
		Verges		387.91	17.31	314.52	
	Hardwick Street	OP	Outside 5a	24.27	1.19	315.71	
		OP	Outside 5a/5b	73.49	3.61	319.33	
		OP	Outside 5b/5c	68.61	3.37	322.70	
		OP	Outside 5c/5d	81.56	4.01	326.71	
		OP	Outside 5a/5f	84.54	4.16	330.87	
		OP	Outside 5f/5g	77.99	3.84	334.71	
		OP	Adjacent 5g	6.60	0.32	335.03	
	Kedleston Court	Verges		141.44	6.31	341.34	
	Haddon Street	Verges		88.95	3.97	345.31	
	Babbington Street	OS	Opposite 26-50	187.42	6.82	352.13	
	Brooke Street	OP	Outside 36	184.20	9.06	361.19	
		OP	Outside 36	16.42	0.81	362.00	
		OP	Outside 40	43.39	2.13	364.13	
		OP	Adjacent 40	13.08	0.64	364.77	
	Lincoln Close	OS	End of road, outside 13/17 and 22/24	267.02	9.71	374.48	
	Lincoln Street	OP	Outside 5	11.94	0.59	375.07	
		OP	Outside 5	16.95	0.83	375.91	
		OS	Between 3/4	421.48	15.33	391.23	
		OP	Adjacent 7	4.55	0.22	391.45	
		OP	Outside 7/5	58.73	2.89	394.35	

### Appendix 3: Sample Notification of Void Property

Originator: Bolsover District Council Job: (CRM Ref: )

<b>Service Type:</b>	Vacant House Garden Cut
<b>Requested Date:</b>	16/12/2024
<b>Scheduled Date:</b>	17/12/2024
<b>Completion Date:</b>	
<b>Completion Target:</b>	30/12/2024
<b>Status:</b>	Raised - Assigned
<b>Resource:</b>	
<b>Comment:</b>	
<b>Customer:</b>	
<b>Home Tel:</b>	
<b>Work Tel:</b>	
<b>Mobile Tel:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	

#### Service Detail

<b>Start grass cut at this property</b>	16/12/2024
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## Appendix 4: Photos of site visits

### New Build Schemes

#### Willow Close, Langwith

Images showing overgrown shrubs and weeds within borders. Overgrown trees not on Bolsover District Council land but overhanging onto communal area





The Paddock, Bolsover

Image showing maintained communal grass



Image showing an overgrown shrub on edge of the car park.



Images showing overgrown shrubs around car parking, impacting on visibility for vehicles and the appearance of the neighbourhood.



## Existing Properties

### Birks Close, Hodthorpe



Image showing an untidy hedge with self-set trees growing at different heights.

The hedge is maintained on the side adjacent to the pavement in summer months as per service standards.



Image showing two hedges owned by Bolsover District Council which tenants have chosen to maintain themselves.



Hides Green, Bolsover



Image showing an overgrown tree where the height of the tree is above the roof of the flats.



Image showing a hedge with weeds growing through.



Void Property Photographs

Ridgeway, Langwith Junction

Images showing the grass in the front garden is overgrown and not being maintained.



Images showing the grass and hedges in the back garden are overgrown and not being maintained.





Slant Lane, Shirebrook



Image showing the back garden has cut grass and is well maintained.