

External Services Strategy

2011-14

OUR MISSION

To deliver excellent, customer focused
and cost effective housing services
to all our residents



Please feel free to get in touch with us if:

- You feel this document is not as clear and easy to read as you would expect; or
- You believe that we aren't doing the things that this document says we will do; or
- You just want to talk to someone about this document

Whatever the reason, if you want to talk to us about this document you should contact:

Head of External Services on Freephone 0800 195 5552

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Introduction

- 1.1 SHP delivers a range of housing services directly to the tenants and leaseholders of Sutton Council.
- 1.2 The External Services team are responsible ensuring communal blocks and grounds are kept clean, tidy and safe and open spaces are well maintained through services that are efficient, effective and consistent and meet the aspirations of local residents. This strategy identifies the medium term approach to the delivery of these services and it has been informed by residents' views, particularly those contained in the 2010 Estate Services survey.
- 1.3 There are complementary service strategies for Asset Management, Community Cohesion, Income Management, Leasehold Services and Older People's Services. Together with the strategies for the support services and the strategic drivers, our strategies provide the focus for achieving our Priorities.

Where Are We Now?

- 2.1 The current state of the service is reflected in the following:
 - An annual report is produced that details the delivery and development of External Services;
 - The percentage of estate external areas inspected as good or excellent is high at 79.8% for 2009/10 compared to 73.9% for 2008-09 and 58.0% in 2007-08;

- We have obtained resident feedback from our estates survey 2009/10 broken down by estate to identify current and future service priority and direction;
- The staffing restructure in late 2008 has provided a more dynamic Estatecare operation supported by the use of mobile vehicles, equipment and modernised staff contract conditions. These changes have enabled our resources to respond quickly and efficiently to changing estate conditions. These changes have bedded in and are having a positive impact on service and customer satisfaction levels. During 2010, the flexibility afforded by our structure has enabled us to consult residents and implement minor revisions to service;
- We have a very good database of the components that make up the external environment of our properties (e.g. floor & wall type/condition, estate maps/layout, garage numbers, waste bin provision;) which facilitates our programmed improvements to the communal infrastructure;
- In a number of areas within our direct control, including bulk bin replacement, shrub stock renewal and tree maintenance, we have in place systems and programmes of work that are planned and provide greater efficiencies than delivering solutions on an ad hoc responsive basis;

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- Moving the External Services team in to the Properties directorate has provided an opportunity for closer partnership working with other teams. We have worked with the asset management programme delivery team to achieve more effective planning and specification of external decoration works and with the repairs team to ensure communal repairs are reported and fixed promptly;
 - Resident involvement in shaping the priorities for estate actions continues to improve. For example, our Estate Services survey 2009 provided useful feedback to enable us to evaluate the initiatives we carry out and indicate where areas of service need to improve. The Estate Action Plans which have been developed with significant customer involvement contain clear actions for the External Services team to pursue.

2.2 It was the view of the Audit Commission in their inspection of October 2009 that strengths outweigh weaknesses in estate management. They commented that “Estates are generally in good condition and the introduction of mobile teams has resulted in a more flexible and fast response. Garages and regeneration estates are being well managed and environmental issues are being addressed. However, many aspects of the service are expensive and resident involvement in inspections is inconsistent, information is not reported back to all residents and satisfaction levels are comparatively low.”

Where Do We Want To Be?

- 3.1** We want to see a service where our communal blocks and grounds are kept clean, tidy and safe on a more consistent and effective basis to the greater satisfaction of residents. In addition, we want to ensure our open spaces provide opportunities for residents to adapt and extend their living environment beyond their own home. To achieve these goals we need to ensure there is:
- Regular, detailed consultation with residents that makes customer choice foremost in determining the priorities for estate actions and service changes;
 - Trialling of new initiatives to ascertain the benefits of change and to assist in determining the future direction of our service provision;
 - Strong communication and joint working with other teams within the organisation and effective engagement with other partners;
 - Regular customer focused training & development opportunities for all staff that delivers service improvements.

Our Strategic Objectives

4.1 In order to achieve our desired service level we have prioritised a number of strategic objectives and identified the scope of each objective across the service. These strategic objectives are:

- **To ensure our Estatecare services seek and respond to residents' requirements [ES01]**

Covering caretaking, graffiti removal, window cleaning, tree maintenance, bulk waste clearance, shrub renewal

- **To make environmental improvements that encourage residents to take pride in their local areas [ES02]**

Covering grounds maintenance, playground provision, maintenance and re-development, older people's garden scheme

- **To work with others to minimise the negative impact of anti-social behaviour [ES03]**

Covering vandalism, nuisance, waste clearance

4.2 To measure our progress in meeting these objectives we will use quantitative and qualitative indicators including:

- Customer satisfaction with services;
- Graded inspections of communal areas and grounds by SHP staff and residents;
- Residents views on problems with rubbish, litter, vandalism and graffiti.

Our Drivers

5.1 In delivering our services we will seek to embed the organisation's strategic drivers:

- We will engage with **customers**, including under-represented groups, to enable them to meaningfully participate in the development and monitoring of our services and we will communicate with them in a more structured way to improve effectiveness and manage expectations.
- To ensure that the **diversity** of the local community is reflected in our services we will use the available resident profiling data to tailor our services and prioritise our resources. We will make our services accessible to, and appropriate for, all residents.
- We will seek to reduce the **risk** of individual benefit taking precedence over collective benefit in communal area and estate improvements. We will endeavour to work with contractors to ensure they are able to deliver to the required standard for the duration of contracts and we will seek to minimise the effects of staff non-performance through effective use of HR policies.
- We will take account of **sustainability** in the resourcing of our services by reviewing the necessity to deliver and seeking where necessary to do so, the most efficient means, for example, in terms of reducing carbon emissions and other unnecessary waste.

- We will measure the **value for money** benefits accruing from service improvements (e.g. cleaning frequency required to maintain blocks, quantities of materials used and reductions in accidents related to hazardous floor conditions). We will seek to agree targets for reducing a range of nuisance and quantify evidence of reductions in nuisance costs (e.g. fly tipping).

Issues To Consider

6.1 The issues which may impact on service delivery that we are aware of are:

- In 2010-11 we will be managing £75,000 capital works and consultation for playground investment on our housing sites procured by Public Realm funding from the Council. The playbuilder Government funding of £574,000 is subject to having its ring fence lifted which is likely to impact on other monies available for playgrounds as the Council re-determines what its capital priorities are;
 - The need to balance improvements in services with charge payers willingness and ability to pay, particularly in the current economic climate;
 - Dissatisfaction with change from staff or customers. For staff, we need to provide a working environment that stretches their capabilities through effective leadership and training, providing recognition for their achievements. For residents, our challenge is to communicate and involve
- to achieve better understanding of longer term collective benefits of our services and initiatives against immediate individual costs of improvement changes we introduce;
- A lack of funding for programmed works for external floors and walls has a direct impact on our ability to improve the standard of cleanliness in many blocks. We will work to provide co-ordinated solutions balancing the costs of ongoing maintenance and the impact on customer satisfaction against the efficiencies that would accrue from longer term investments;
 - A lack of day to day control over the vandalism and antisocial behaviour that increases the costs of maintaining estate environments. This requires a strengthening of our partnering arrangements with the Police and the Council and co-ordinated working with our colleagues responsible for tenancy management.
 - Planning permission to continue our vehicle store at Shanklin Village is being sought. Were this to be declined, we would need to relocate some of our operational base.
 - Parking space on estates remains in high demand with finite space. The pressures caused by displaced or unauthorised parking may be tackled by parking enforcement which could alleviate pressure and apply funding streams to reflect the utility derived from the land we manage and revenue from enforcement. This requires the

support of Council and residents to be effective.

- Our Grounds Contract was re-tendered in 2010-11. It is anticipated we may make modest savings on budget, but no significant variance is expected on the current budget.

Expected Impact

7.1 We expect, through the successful implementation of this strategy, to have the following impact:

- **Customers** will benefit from cleaner, tidier and safer communal areas delivered more consistently and effectively providing greater value for money for a diverse group of customers. They will also benefit from better maintained open spaces. There will be a greater sense of involvement in determining the delivery of services to meet their priorities.
- **SHP** will benefit from increased working across teams and, as a result of a greater understanding of its customers, will be able to provide high quality, accessible, inclusive and effective external services.

Resources Required

To successfully deliver this strategy we will require the appropriate level of resources, the implications of which are:

- We will continue to review how our staffs are deployed across our estates to contend with changing localised





need. The structure we have in place is flexible and adaptable enough to match changing priorities by re-aligning existing staff. Alternatively we will seek increased funding to expand our capabilities for delivering improvement. Where necessary, we will consider externalising services to achieve better value for money.

- There will be a continued need for training at current levels.
- Overall spending may require modest increases to contend with specific improvements demanded by our customers. Increasing mobility may require some investment in vehicles and equipment replacement but this is expected to be funded by shifting resources between current budgets.





Strategy Delivery





9.1 The actions required to implement this strategy in its first year are contained in the appended External Services Service Plan 2011-12.





Service Plan Key

Reference	Service Improvement Plan reference	Summary of action	Responsible Officer	Start date	End date	Evidence of action having been completed
		Expected impact on customer focus (access, care or involvement)				 Expected impact on risk
		Expected impact on equality & diversity				 Expected impact on value for money





















Improvement Actions

ES.IA.II.01	SIP11.02	Identify how Estate Services can be delivered to other service users/partners	DP	Jul-11	Sep-11	<i>Report and recommendations for business development</i>
		Customers will see the benefits of improved value for money and more efficient services				 Reduces the risk that individual services and the organisation as a whole will not remain viable in the medium term
		Services will be delivered to provide the best value for money to all diversity strands				 Additional sources of income will be identified and existing services will be provided more efficiently

ES.IA.II.02	SIP11.03	Reorganise the Estatecare service to best match customer expectations within the available budget	DP	Sep-11	Dec-11	<i>Report with recommendations</i>
		Service delivery will be better tailored to reflect the range of needs of customers				 Reduces the risk that the range and delivery of services do not reflect the profile of our customers
		By taking more account of the customer profile, services will be better tailored to the needs of all customers				 Ensuring that service delivery matches the needs of customers makes delivery more efficient and effective

ES.IA.II.03	SIP11.05	Implement improvements to the window cleaning service that provide better value to customers	ST	Nov-11	Jan-12	<i>Report and action plan</i>
		Levels of customer satisfaction are increased in specific service areas				 Reduces the risk that service performance issues are not identified and effectively addressed
		Service delivery is focussed on ensuring the diverse needs of all our customers are met				 Improves the value for money of those services where value for money has been identified as requiring improvement

Operational Actions

ES.OA.01	Strip out all exterior shrubbery at Elm Grove to replace with grass to deal with regular litter issues	RM	Apr-11	May-11	Photographic stored on I Drive under archive Comms folder; Boroughwide pics. Also to go on covalent resident feedback to consultation
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Project follows requests from residents through Survey feedback. All in block surveyed and supported project prior to action taken. Contributes to customer involvement and VFM as less ongoing maintenance.			
ES.OA.02	Remove redundant concrete drying green at Ockley Court, re-landscape to grass and introduce rotary driers	RM/GK	Jun-11	Jul-11	Evidence to go on Covalent, and pic evidence
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Residents consulted and supportive of project introduction. Replanting will also take place. Contributes to effective customer involvement, meeting community need and reduced ongoing maintenance			
ES.OA.03	Review operational rounds on bulk waste and identify any efficiency savings and scope to avoid waste going to landfill	TV	Dec-11	Feb-12	Evidence on covalent; one2ones, team notes
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	 ✓	Will align collection days/times closer to customer needs given that LBS Refuse Services are changing their domestic collection arrangements so we want to dovetail. Less waste means less tax on dumping getting better VFM.			
ES.OA.04	Efficiently deliver a range of small projects that add amenity to estates, principally through the GPW Team	GK	May-11	Feb-12	Evidence covalent; one2ones, EMIS project list; annual report
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Translating survey data to action (eg put in dog bins, re-sign areas, enhance defensible space) Makes use of survey data; reduces risk caused by identified hazards; responds to special needs (eg better access to open areas); reduces administration costs of ongoing complaints			
ES.OA.05	Deliver improved operational safety based on a review of 5* Audit and improvements identified within team meetings	DP; RM; TV; GK	Jun-11	Dec-12	Covalent; one2ones; Team minutes; Action Plan checklist; independent visits to Shanklin and on site/vehicle spot-checks
	 ✓	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		This will reduce operation risks, potential accidents, administration costs that goes with claims and management time investigating accidents and loss			







Putting Customers First
Making Services Accessible To All
Achieving Value For Money
Providing Quality Homes
Creating Safe, Welcoming Neighbourhoods
