

Parks & Green Spaces Service Promises 2009



The Parks & Street Cleansing Team
Helping make your neighbourhood a Greener, Cleaner
and Safer place to live.

We know that having a clean and attractive neighbourhood is important to you. That is why we are working hard to give you a quality service, and to ensure that we keep your local green spaces looking cared for, clean and tidy.

These Service Promises have been developed to let you know the range of services that we provide and the standards that we aim to achieve.

The Parks & Street Cleansing Team also aims to work with the local community to enable local people to participate directly in the development and maintenance of their own living environment, and this guide also provides information on how you and your neighbours can get involved.

If you want to put forward a suggestion or report a problem with any aspect of green space maintenance in your neighbourhood, including grass cutting, shrub bed maintenance or hedge cutting, damaged signs, seats and bins, graffiti, litter and litter bin emptying, then please let us know by calling freephone Actionline on 0800 5 19 19 19 (8.00am to 5.00pm) and leave your ideas or information with us. We will work to respond to your idea, report or query as quickly as possible.

Keeping your Neighbourhood Clean

We aim to keep the green spaces in your neighbourhood clear of litter, fouling, and other debris. The Environmental Protection Act (EPA) specifies that people's living spaces should be maintained to a high (Grade A) or acceptable (Grade B) standard of cleanliness. Our target is that on inspection 97% or more of the streets and open spaces in your neighbourhood should be maintained in this condition and that where this standard is not achieved, the District Team will respond to rectify the situation within one working day of report.



We know that there are places in your neighbourhood in which litter tends to build up very quickly, for instance around local shopping parades and along 'school runs'. Our area teams target these 'hot spots' as their first priority on a daily basis. All other areas will be visited and cleaned to EPA standards on an at least monthly programme. Alongside our routine cleaning programme, we will also work in partnership with Neighbourhood Wardens to carry out reactive work in areas that become badly littered and may not yet be due for their regular visit.

We also aim to keep shrub beds, car parks, and designated areas of hard standing, including drying areas and block paving at least 95% free of unsightly weed growth throughout the year. However, the safe and environmentally friendly chemicals currently available to us are only effective when applied to active green growth – some evidence of weeds in these areas is therefore unavoidable, particularly just prior to our spring and late summer spraying programmes.

You can help us keep your neighbourhood clean by letting us know if there are specific areas that clearly require more regular attention than they currently receive. We can then assess the problem and consider solutions such as adjusting the frequency of our routine visits, increasing the current bin provision, or working with our City Patrol colleagues to resolve the root cause of the littering through additional enforcement measures if necessary.

Grass Cutting

We will cut the grass as often as necessary to keep all grass within your local neighbourhood open spaces below a height of 75mm (3") in the summer and 100mm (4") in the spring when the grass is growing at its quickest.

Some areas are maintained to promote a more natural wildlife habitat and further information on these can be obtained from the Hawthorns Centre (023 8067 1921). We continue to work with residents to develop new sites to encourage biodiversity within the urban landscape.



We aim to provide clean and tidy green spaces, and to achieve this we litter pick the site before cutting and after each grass cutting visit we will leave an area:-

- With **all** grass cut to an even length (except following bulb flowering when we leave clumps for around 6 weeks before cutting)
- Free of shredded litter
- With paths and surrounding areas free of cuttings
- With grass around trees, poles and other obstructions evenly trimmed (this 'follow up' work is completed by a second team and will be completed within 24 hours of the initial cut).

We will also collect and remove grass cuttings from older persons' accommodation and some agreed other areas where this approach is cost-effective and will benefit residents.

Shrub Beds

We aim to keep all of the shrub beds within your neighbourhood tidy and weed free. Shrubs should be pruned to stop them obstructing paths, roads or signs but at the same time making sure the plant can flower at the right time. We aim to carry out monthly visits to our shrub beds and will do what is needed at that visit to keep the beds up to standard.

Following visits beds should meet the following standards:-

- No more than 5% weed cover
- No vegetation causing an obstruction
- Bed tidy and litter free
- Grass edges trimmed.

We will also work with the local community to ensure shrub beds are maintained in such a way that they contribute to people's feelings of security in their neighbourhood, and do not provide a shelter for criminal or anti-social behaviour.

Shrubs and hedges provide a valuable 'breathing space' for nature in the urban landscape. Our work is therefore carried out with care and consideration for the welfare of the wildlife these features might support, for instance by pruning to maximise attractive and nutritious seasonal flowers and berries, and taking care not to disturb nesting birds. Leaves and leaf mould provide a valuable habitat for insect life, and will only be removed if contaminated with litter. Where possible, shrub prunings are chipped directly back into the bed to form a mulch against weeds, retain moisture, and enrich the soil.



Hedge Cutting

We aim to keep all of the hedges within the local neighbourhood area tidily trimmed, but plan our work to make sure that we cause the minimum disturbance to nesting birds and other wildlife. We visit hedges as often as is necessary to meet our standards, how often and when we cut depends on the species of plant.

Following visits hedges should meet the following standards:-

- Weed and litter free at the base of the hedge
- The sides and top of the hedge tidily trimmed to prevent obstruction, all trimmings removed from the area, or chipped back onto hedge base to suppress weeds, retain moisture, and enrich the soil
- Hedge cut with the right equipment to prevent damage to larger leafed plants.



Hedges serve a number of very useful purposes within the local landscape. For example, they can provide natural boundaries or barriers, attractive visual features, visual or acoustic screens from eyesores and traffic noise, and refuges and food sources for wildlife. We will work with the local community to ensure hedges are maintained at a height and size appropriate to their primary purpose at each particular location.

Note: where hedges form part of a Council tenant's boundary, these should not exceed 1.8m (6') in height, and it is the responsibility of the tenant to ensure the inside face of the hedge is regularly trimmed. Failure to do this can mean the top of the hedge becomes too wide for the District Team to safely cut.

Flower Beds and Borders

We aim to ensure that the flower beds, borders and containers displayed in your local parks and open spaces provide vibrant, colourful and appreciated features through all the seasons of the year.

Bedding features will be well designed and evenly planted, and use only healthy plant stock that is true to type.



Beds will be maintained weekly, or more frequently if required (for instance during a period of drought). Following visits beds should meet the following standards:-

- 100% free of weeds, litter and other debris
- Dead and diseased material removed
- Irrigated when necessary to ensure strong and healthy plant growth
- Bed and edge borders cleanly formed and defined.

Tree Care and Maintenance

Trees are a valued aspect of the Southampton's streetscene and need to be preserved. They are important for the quality of the urban landscape, nature conservation, and protecting against the effects of climate change. As a matter of policy, the city's urban tree canopy tree is maintained to at least current levels through an annual programme of new and replacement plantings.

The city's trees are maintained by the District Teams and specialist tree surgeons as appropriate, with basal growth (or 'suckering') routinely removed, and tree branches kept clear of public paths and access points.

Southampton's Tree Operational Risk Management System, or STORMS, is the City Council's proactive system for inspecting and managing the risk of trees causing injury or damage as a result of their failure. Under STORMS the City Council's Open Spaces Team will regularly inspect trees on Council owned land and remedial health & safety works will be prioritised and acted upon.



In situations where trees are in adjacent land they are the responsibility of the landowner/householder. When as a result of our safety inspections or following public complaints the landowner's tree is identified as placing the safety of the highway user in jeopardy, the City Council will request that the necessary work is carried out to remove the danger.

Council tenants should inform Action Line (0800 5 19 19 19) or their Local Housing Office if they consider a tree in their own garden or on neighbouring land is dead, dying or dangerous, or adversely affecting the well-being of themselves or their property. A technical inspection and report by a Tree Inspector can then be promptly arranged.

Caring for your local Streetscene

In the course of their routine maintenance operations, our District Teams routinely look out for the condition of the street furniture, fences, gates, paths etc within your neighbourhood. Damage or defects are immediately reported to the Team Co-ordinator, who will assess priorities for repair, cleaning or renovation where the installation is owned or maintained by the Parks Team. Where the installation is the property and responsibility of colleagues in another team, such as Housing Management or Highways Services, full details of the defect will be immediately passed onto that agency for the appropriate remedial actions to be undertaken.



Dangerous equipment or features will be immediately isolated or made safe until more permanent repairs can be arranged. Racist or offensive graffiti will be removed within one working day of report.

If you spot a problem in your local neighbourhood that needs our attention, then please let us know by calling Actionline on 0800 5 19 19 19.

Play Areas

The Play Maintenance Teams will regularly visit all play areas to inspect play surfaces and equipment, and ensure they are safe, hygienic and fit for use.

As part of the inspection any litter present will be removed but the team prioritises work with safety implications, for instance removing broken glass, clearing dog fouling, and ensuring the safety of damaged equipment. Any undesirable graffiti will be removed if possible, or reported for specialist treatment, with offensive or racist graffiti removed within one working day of report.



In the course of our routine maintenance visits, litter and debris will be removed from hard surfaces, with a thorough brush sweep of the entire area taking place on an at least monthly basis.

If you have a comment about your local play area, something to report, or would like to get involved in helping keep the area a safe and welcoming place for children's play, then please call the Play Services Team on 023 8083 2699.

Working with Local Communities

A key aspect of the role of your local District Team is to work with the community to identify, develop and put in place new ideas or projects that improve the local living environment.

These projects will vary in their scope from a couple of hour work by the District Team acting on a local improvement idea to significant development works involving substantial planning and resource inputs.

The Parks & Street Cleansing Team will fully involve local communities and other agencies who are interested in improving the local environment in its planning processes, and is committed to developing the interest and abilities of local people to enable them to play as full a part as possible in the management and maintenance of their own living environment.



This local involvement can mean anything from putting forward improvement ideas for action by the open spaces team, to spending a little time working alongside us in carrying out the work on the ground. Partners can benefit from their work with us by inputting

directly into the condition of their local environment, enjoying the benefits of working as part of a committed team, and receiving useful vocational experience and training.

Recently, the Open Spaces Service has also been successfully developing 'HELP' agreements with residents who wish to adopt a plot of their local open space and maintain it individually or with a group of neighbours. The Open Spaces Team fully supports the greater involvement of local people in helping achieve better neighbourhoods, and is ready to help by supplying tools and technical advice, and ensuring the necessary legal and insurance provisions are properly undertaken.

The Open Spaces Team will be pleased to hear from local residents or community groups with ideas on improving the local environment, and from people who want to find out more about how they can gain by working with us 'on the ground.' Helping look after your local area can be fun!



We can be contacted through Gateway in the civic centre, on freephone Actionline (0800 5 19 19 19), or through our mailbox parks@southampton.gov.uk. Just leave your name, contact details and a brief outline of what you would like to improve, and your local District Team will make contact with you.

The Parks & Street Cleansing Team is committed to providing the best quality local open spaces possible with the resources available and we need your help to achieve this. We look forward to working with you to help make your local neighbourhood a cleaner, safer and more attractive place to enjoy living



The Park & Street Cleansing Team hope that you have found these Service Promises helpful and informative. If you have any comments, ideas or issues about our Promises, then please do not hesitate to contact us.