

Residents' Task and Finish Group (TFG)

Review of Saxon Weald's Neighbourhood Services September 2025

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1.0 Background and Introduction

- 1.1 Having clean, safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods is an important priority for residents. It helps create a sense of community and safety, and sends a positive message that Saxon Weald cares about its properties. The TFG believes that, in return, residents are more likely to look after and take pride in their homes and neighbourhoods.
- 1.2 There is also an increased regulatory focus on estate and neighbourhood management. Saxon Weald has extensive legal and regulatory obligations, particularly in respect of safety, managing anti-social behaviour, community engagement, and local partnership working.
- 1.3 In May 2025, a Task and Finish Group (TFG) of resident volunteers was established to provide a customer perspective on the performance and effectiveness of Saxon Weald's estate and neighbourhood management service. The TFG consisted of 13 residents and an Independent 'Tenants' Friend' who acted as the group's Chair. The timeframe for this review was four months, concluding in September.
- 1.4 The aim of this report is to present the findings of the review, along with the TFG's suggestions for how the service might be improved.

2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The review focused on neighbourhood management for Saxon Weald's general needs estates.
- 2.2 The TFG is satisfied that Saxon Weald has sufficient policies, procedures and plans in place. However, there is scope for improvement relating to transparency and sharing its plans with residents, so that they know what's happening and when. The group also felt residents should receive feedback on the outcomes of estate inspections.
- 2.3 From a performance perspective, the TFG is satisfied that Saxon Weald has sufficient arrangements in place for monitoring neighbourhood management performance. They felt residents are able to be involved in the quality of neighbourhood management as evidenced through this TFG, procurement activities, residents' surveys, the Green Team and Community Inspector initiatives.
- 2.4 Site visits identified some inconsistency in the delivery of neighbourhood services, with mixed feedback from the residents we spoke with.
- 2.5 The group were concerned by the timing and pace of the review. The timing did not consider that the review was run over the summer months when people tend to take their holidays. Also, the timescale allowed was too short. The group felt that the pace of this review was set to fit in with Saxon Weald's governance reporting arrangements, rather than a comfortable pace convenient to and led by the residents involved.
- 2.6 The TFG is pleased to conclude that this review did not highlight any significant issues or concerns with Saxon Weald's neighbourhood management service. The TFG rates the overall neighbourhood service as good, but with scope for improvement. Our suggestions are set out in this report.

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 Saxon Weald promoted the opportunity to be involved in this review via its website, emails, and on social media. This resulted in high levels of interest and 13 volunteers were recruited. The group met eight times between May and September. We also carried out site visits of six estates in Storrington, Broadbridge Heath and Horsham town.
- 3.2 To help us assess the different areas of the neighbourhood management service, we agreed a rating system.

	Good quality	Good performance	Well evidenced and/or documented	No shortfalls or concerns	Some or minimal scope improvement
	Acceptable quality	Acceptable performance	Some evidence and /or documentation	Some shortfalls or concerns	Plenty of scope for improvement
	Unacceptable quality	Unacceptable performance	No/limited evidence or documentation	Major concerns	Significant scope for improvement

4.0 The TFG's definition of an 'effective neighbourhood management service'

- 4.1 Our starting point was to establish what an "effective neighbourhood management service" looks and feels like. What matters most to tenants and what do they expect from the service?
- 4.2 The TFG's priorities and expectations are set out in *appendix 3*. In summary, TFG members expect the following:

"We want and expect well-maintained neighbourhoods and communal areas, which look like they're cared for and where residents feel safe, proud and happy to live!"

"We appreciate that neighbourhood management is a two-way thing and not just Saxon Weald's responsibility. Residents must also meet their responsibilities for keeping neighbourhoods and communal areas safe, clean and tidy!"

5.0 Scrutiny - Our findings, observations and suggestions for improvement

5.1 Tenancy Agreement obligations

Our Findings and Observations	Suggested Improvement/s
SW Assured Tenancy Agreement (3.8.1- decorating the outside and common parts): The TFG is satisfied that Saxon Weald has cyclical maintenance plans in place. This is based on assurance provided by the Estates Services Manager.	Saxon Weald to consider how to address points raised from the site visits regarding the decoration of communal parts.
Meeting Tenancy Agreement obligations: The TFG is satisfied that Saxon Weald has sufficient policies, procedures and plans. The TFG has identified some scope for	TFG Assessment rating:

Our Findings and Observations	Suggested Improvement/s	
improvement relating to communicating these plans to residents, so that they know what's happening and when.		

5.2 Neighbourhood Management Policy

Our Findings and Observations	Suggested Improvement/s
Neighbourhood Management Policy: The policy introduction (1.1) states <i>'Saxon Weald is committed to providing well maintained, safe and clean environments.'</i> The TFG agreed that these are suitable criteria. However, there is no guidance on the minimum expected standard. This raised the question of how staff understand what's expected of them and how do residents know what to expect? It is felt that this lack of clarity can result in service inconsistency and different interpretations by staff and residents. The TFG felt that 'accessible' should be an additional criteria and has suggested minimum standards for this.	Work with residents to identify minimum standards and include in an updated Neighbourhood Management Policy. An example is set out in <i>appendix 2</i> of this report, by way of an additional criteria 'accessible' which the TFG would like Saxon Weald to adopt.
Policy purpose: The policy has a clearly explained purpose and identifies the relevant legislation and regulatory measures. However, some of the terminology was felt to be "corporate speak" and not user friendly to residents.	Engage with residents to review the policy to make it more user friendly.
Reference to other relevant policies and procedures: There is a new procedure for dealing with dumped items. The procedure does not include Saxon Weald's approach to the removal of dumped motor vehicles.	Amend the procedure to include arrangements for removing dumped motor vehicles.
Estate inspections (3.4.1): States <i>"The estate inspection schedule for each visit will be devised based on a risk-based approach, with a greater number of visits focused on higher-risk areas."</i> There is no explanation of what a "higher-risk area" is or the criteria for determining this. Without an explanation, this makes it sound like estates are categorised and that some are riskier to live on than others.	Review the Neighbourhood Management Policy to include a better explanation of how Saxon Weald prioritises its estate inspection programme.
Estate inspections (3.4.1): It doesn't say anything about providing residents with feedback on their findings and outcomes.	Consider suitable ways for giving residents feedback on the findings and outcomes of estate inspections.
Tree maintenance (3.4.9): States <i>"Customers are responsible for managing trees in their own gardens. However, we are committed to supporting customers who may be unable to</i>	Consider whether it remains appropriate to expect tenants with their own gardens to meet the cost of tree works.

Our Findings and Observations	Suggested Improvement/s
<i>manage trees by conducting inspections upon request and ordering subsequent work if required.”</i> The TFG questioned whether this is a reasonable expectation, considering the cost of tree works. It is unclear whether SW will meet the cost of any work required. There was also concern that tree works could be left unaddressed if tenants can't afford them, which could lead to other issues.	Clarify whether Saxon Weald will meet the cost of necessary tree works for tenants who are unable to afford it.
Fire safety (3.4.18): States “We have adopted a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to the storage of goods or items in communal areas. This means that no items can be stored in the communal areas of blocks, including mobility scooters and electric wheelchairs. The cost for the removal of these items will be recharged to customers.”	This message should be included on all communal noticeboards, as well as on SW's website, in the Tenants' Guide and regularly promoted in the Spotlight.
Equality and Diversity (and inclusion)(6.0): No examples were available to show how Saxon Weald uses customer feedback and data to tailor its neighbourhood services to meet the diverse needs of residents (e.g. help with maintaining gardens etc).	Record and promote examples of how Saxon Weald tailors its neighbourhood services to meet diverse needs.
General policy observations: There is no mention of arrangements for the following, which the TFG feels are an important part of neighbourhood management: • Management, maintenance and use of storage cupboards, sheds and garages • Management and maintenance of shared parking areas (including arrangements for people with disabilities) • Maintenance of boundary walls, fences and hedges • The action SW will take if tenants own gardens are left unkept or in a state of disrepair.	Consider including these arrangements in an updated Neighbourhood Management Policy.
Local cooperation arrangements: There was a lack of available evidence to demonstrate how Saxon Weald ‘cooperates’ with relevant partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where it provides housing. This is a requirement of the Regulator of Social Housing's Neighbourhood and Community Standard.	Saxon Weald could review and promote its local arrangements and how they help deliver social, environmental and economic wellbeing. The TFG recognises that Saxon Weald is part of multi-agency big picture – SW could make it clearer to residents that not everything is their responsibility.
Neighbourhood Management Policy: The TFG is satisfied that Saxon Weald has a clear and detailed policy. The TFG identified some scope for improving the policy and has made a number of suggestions for doing so.	TFG Assessment rating:

5.3 Other related policies and documents

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s
Neighbourhood inspection procedure: Residents are not notified of when estate inspections are to take place. This means residents are unable to give SW pre-inspection feedback (the 'heads-up' on things). There are also no arrangements for providing feedback to residents on the findings and outcomes of estate inspections.	Provide more information to residents on the timing of estate inspections, so they can become involved if they want to. Consider suitable ways for giving residents feedback on the findings and outcomes of estate inspections. Saxon Weald could co-produce an awareness video with residents to be used in staff training. This could emphasise the importance of estate inspections and what residents expect from the neighbourhood management service.
Neighbourhood inspection procedure: Neighbourhood inspections only cover blocks on estates for general needs housing (including garage blocks). There is no process for the inspection of street properties.	Consider including street properties in annual neighbourhood inspections
Estate Inspection Form 2025: There is no specific space to record the decorative state of buildings and communal spaces.	Review the form. Include checking noticeboards and the condition of communal washing lines.
Community Inspectors Guide and Survey: The Guide is clear and detailed. It was also felt that an example of the feedback given to a Community Inspector (who is also a member of the TFG) was helpful in identifying the actions to be taken. TFG agreed that CI's give meaningful feedback on things that matter most to residents.	Create a standard template for providing feedback to Community Inspectors. Consider sharing this on relevant block noticeboards, so that residents can see the effectiveness of Community Inspections. This approach could also be adopted for Green Team and estate inspection feedback. It is also suggested that Community Inspectors walk around their estates with their Housing Managers, once or twice a year.
Pest Control Procedure: Responsibilities for pest control in communal areas are set out clearly in Saxon Weald's Tenants' Guide. The removal of pigeons from balconies: The TFG felt that this should not be tenants' responsibility. They felt that pigeons are vermin and their presence and behaviours can affect residents' health and quality of life.	Consider the TFG's viewpoint on responsibilities for removing pigeons from balconies.
Tenants' Guide (P20 - 27): Doesn't explain what happens if tenants don't manage their gardens. Is the non-upkeep of gardens ASB if it's deliberate? Who decides? Who assesses the state of individual gardens?	Should SW define a 'basic standard' for individual gardens?

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s	
Supporting policies and related information: <i>The TFG is satisfied that Saxon Weald has relevant policies, procedures and guidelines. The TFG has identified minimal scope for improvement.</i>	TFG Assessment rating:	

5.4 Customer Strategy 2023 - 2026

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s	
Neighbourhood management – priorities for service improvement: <i>The Customer Strategy commits to:</i> • Carrying out more estate inspections • Well-maintained grass and landscaping • Clean and tidy estates	The TFG feels that Saxon Weald does not carry out enough estate inspections and that insufficient feedback is given to residents on their outcomes. The group also feels that Saxon Weald could do more to increase its presence in neighbourhoods.	
Customer Strategy – Neighbourhood service improvement arrangements: <i>The TFG has identified some scope for improvement.</i>	TFG Assessment rating:	

5.5 Neighbourhood management performance information

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s	
In 2024/25 Saxon Weald received a total of 306 complaints. Of these, 34 (11%) related to estate management. 24 (70.5%) were upheld in the customers' favour. No examples were provided to demonstrate how Saxon Weald has used neighbourhood management complaints to improve this service.	Share examples of how learning from complaints influences service improvement	
Neighbourhood management compliments: <i>There were nine neighbourhood management compliments received during the year.</i>	Encourage customers to submit compliments to help with performance monitoring.	
Performance management information: <i>The TFG is satisfied that Saxon Weald has sufficient arrangements in place for monitoring and managing performance.</i>	TFG Assessment rating:	
Learning and improvement: <i>The TFG identified scope for improvement regarding learning from complaints and being able to evidence this.</i>	TFG Assessment rating:	

5.6 Contract management arrangements

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s
Communal cleaning contract specification and arrangements: Performance monitoring arrangements don't appear to be as robust as those of grounds maintenance.	The TFG further suggests that more could be done to promote the Green Team and Community Inspectors
Communal cleaning specification: Saxon Weald's Resident Community Inspectors provide opportunities for residents to give feedback on the standard of communal cleaning grounds maintenance where they live.	SW should consider producing summarised versions so that tenants know what to expect. These could be made available on the website.
Contract management: <i>The TFG is satisfied that Saxon Weald has sufficient arrangements in place for monitoring and managing the performance of its grounds maintenance and communal cleaning contractors. The estate visits helped the TFG assess the quality of contractor performance. These showed signs of inconsistency, although the TSM results demonstrate upper quartile satisfaction.</i>	TFG Assessment rating:

5.7 Access to neighbourhood management information on Saxon Weald's website

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s
Access: Some of the neighbourhood management information is difficult to find unless you're familiar with using the search function.	Consider introducing a neighbourhood management page with direct links to the related policies, standards and performance data etc. Involve residents in reviewing the data so it is user friendly.
Access to information on the website: <i>The TFG feels that information on the website isn't easily accessible.</i>	TFG Assessment rating:

5.8 Estate visits

5.8.1 TFG members visited six estates in Storrington (Ravenscroft and Meadowside), Broadbridge Heath (Sleets Road and Kilhams Close) and Horsham Town (Sussex Court). These estates consist of a mixture of general needs flats and houses.

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s
Health and safety: There was evidence of health and safety issues not being addressed. These included: • Broken/cracked drain inspection covers and surrounds • Dumped items (e.g. car parts, mattresses). • Broken garden furniture (Meadowside) • Boxes stacked on a communal landing (Sussex Court) • Broken windows in shed areas (Meadowside) • Cracked or broken floor tiles in communal hallways (Sussex Court) • Cracked and/or moss covered walkways affecting access routes (Ravenscroft)	Encourage residents to report health and safety hazards and respond to them as a matter of priority. Address the observations and issues raised from the estate visits and ensure these examples are picked up on in future estate inspections. Consider installing dog poo bins on estates with communal gardens. Regularly remind dog owners of their responsibilities.

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s
• Untidy and unkept bin stores • Dog mess on communal gardens	Consider how residents can be involved in testing the quality of estate inspections and holding Saxon Weald to account for any shortfalls in the standards promoted.
Grounds maintenance: Weed and moss growth on pathways and in clothes drying areas.	Ensure that the grounds maintenance specification for weed management is effective and that arrangements are in place to manage moss growth on communal paths.
Grounds maintenance: Some trees, bushes and brambles in urgent need of cutting back.	Be more proactive in identifying where overgrown trees, bushes, brambles and ivy could cause damage and take appropriate action.
Grounds maintenance: There was a vast difference between the appearance of some individual gardens and communal gardens maintained by Saxon Weald. This suggests that some residents are either unable or unwilling to maintain their own gardens.	Encourage residents and staff to report signs that someone may be having difficulties maintaining their garden. Promote the help Saxon Weald (and its partner agencies) can provide to residents who have difficulty maintaining their gardens. Saxon Weald to be more proactive in engaging with residents who don't maintain their gardens. This may include asking if they no longer want a garden and wish to move. Consider consulting residents in blocks with individual gardens that constantly appear unkept, to see if they would rather have a communal garden maintained by Saxon Weald. Ensure that, when offering and allocating properties with gardens, tenants are asked if they want and are able to manage them. Ensure that gardens are in a good state when properties are let, so that tenants have a good starting point for maintaining them. Consider introducing staff volunteering days (2 days per year) to help tenants maintain their gardens.
Grounds maintenance: Inconsistent standards of grass cutting. There were areas where the grass didn't appear to have been cut at all. Residents advised that this was usually because the contractor won't cut grass where there is dog mess or if children's toys are left out.	Give prior notice to residents of when the grass in their communal gardens is due to be cut, so that they can remove any items

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s
External upkeep and appearance: Some of the guttering is in need of urgent cleaning and repair	Have an annual guttering clearance programme for blocks that are most likely to need it and as part of a cyclical maintenance plan for all blocks.
External upkeep and appearance: Signs of poor, broken, or non-existent exterior lighting, which can make access difficult and unsafe at night, particularly for people with disabilities.	The TFG recognises that external lighting issues might not be picked up through estate inspections. However adequate external lighting is key to providing a safe environment so these issues must be addressed.
External upkeep and appearance: Some storage sheds and garage blocks are in poor condition and appear neglected.	Carry out a condition survey of all sheds and garage blocks. Prioritise those in most need of repair.
External upkeep and appearance: Examples of broken gates and fences and a cracked boundary wall	These should be identified as part of estate inspections and addressed accordingly.
External upkeep and appearance: Some signage was found to be in poor condition and/or outdated (e.g. containing the old SW logo).	Outdated and poor condition signage should be identified as part of estate inspections and addressed accordingly.
External upkeep and appearance: Some blocks lack kerb appeal and appear neglected. This could lead to wider problems and increased spend if left unaddressed. This includes: • Damaged or dirty fascia boards • Water-stained external walls with moss growth • Brickwork in need of re-pointing • Dirty/grimy entrances	The TFG expects that these issues will be addressed under Saxon Weald's cyclical maintenance programme. Residents of affected blocks should be notified of when they can expect these issues to be addressed.
Internal upkeep and appearance: Prams, buggies, bikes and children's toys in some communal lobbies, which create potential fire safety hazards. This could be due to a lack of suitable storage facilities or that some residents are simply ignoring Saxon Weald's fire safety requirements.	Ensure that existing storage facilities are in good condition and fit for purpose, with keys provided to residents. Consider options for providing storage facilities where none currently exist. Be more proactive in engaging with residents who consistently ignore Saxon Weald's requests not to leave items in communal areas.
Internal upkeep and appearance: All blocks have noticeboards in their entrance lobbies. However, they were in different states of repair with inconsistent information. The TFG believes that noticeboards play an important part in keeping residents informed. They should send out a message that "This block is cared for and looked after" – If the noticeboard is shabby, with outdated information, what hope is there for the rest of the building and what impression does this create for residents and visitors?	Review the condition and use of all noticeboards, to ensure they're safe and used consistently to provide up-to-date information

Findings and observations	Suggested Improvement/s	
Internal upkeep and appearance: Examples of communal doors not closing properly.	Repairs should be addressed.	
Internal upkeep and appearance: Some hallways appeared drab and unloved. This sends out a message that blocks aren't cared for, which affects residents' pride in their neighbourhoods.	The TFG expects that this will be addressed under Saxon Weald's cyclical maintenance programme. Residents should be notified of when they can expect their communal areas to be redecorated.	
General upkeep: The TFG saw some good examples of well-kept communal gardens. There were no apparent signs of graffiti or abandoned vehicles on any of the estates visited, and a majority of communal landings were clear of residents' possessions and trip/fire hazards.	This is a credit to Saxon Weald and the residents who live on the estates visited.	
Residents we spoke with have mixed feelings about where they live. Some of the comments received were: "Saxon Weald just don't do what they're meant to - it takes ages to get things done!" "I keep my bit clean and tidy – wish others would do the same!" "We've got loads of issues here that aren't being sorted by Saxon Weald – just have a good look around and you'll see what I mean!" "Some of the HomeFix guys are lovely!" "Some blocks are better kept and look nicer than others!" "I haven't lived here long but it seems like the place is well looked after!"		
Estate visits: The TFG experienced inconsistency regarding the standard of neighbourhood services. There was mixed feedback from residents we spoke with. However, the current TSM scores indicate that a majority of residents are satisfied.	TFG Assessment rating:	
Resident engagement, involvement and influence: The TFG is satisfied that Saxon Weald actively encourages and supports resident involvement in neighbourhood services.	TFG Assessment rating:	

6.0 Our conclusions

- 6.1 This was the most in-depth review carried out to date, with a good deal of time and commitment from the TFG. We feel that our observations give a fair and honest tenant perspective of Saxon Weald's neighbourhood management service.
- 6.2 Information asked for by the TFG was forthcoming, timely and of good quality, as were the notes taken of all TFG meetings. There was good support, openness, transparency and collaboration from all Saxon Weald staff involved in this review.

Our overall rating of the neighbourhood management service:	<i>The TFG is pleased to conclude that this review did not highlight any significant issues or concerns. The TFG rates the overall neighbourhood service as good, but with scope for improvement.</i>	
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7.0 The next steps

- 7.1 The TFG would welcome the opportunity to meet with the project sponsor and senior staff responsible for neighbourhood services to discuss the report and receive Saxon Weald's formal response. It should also agree arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the progress of the action plan.



Appendix I – TFG expectations for effective neighbourhood management

priorities and

TFG expectations
<i>“We want and expect well-maintained neighbourhoods and communal areas, which look like they’re cared for and where residents feel safe, proud and happy to live!”</i> <i>“We appreciate that neighbourhood management is a two-way thing and not just Saxon Weald’s responsibility. Residents must also meet their responsibilities for keeping neighbourhoods and communal areas safe, clean and tidy!”</i>
• Proactive staff and contractors who take pride in what they do and take ownership and responsibility for the service • Maintenance issues are picked up on and fixed early, so they don’t get worse and cost more later • Bright, fresh and welcoming internal areas • Residents don’t have to chase things up to get things done.
• SW is in touch with and interested in what’s happening in its neighbourhoods • Regular engagement with residents by SW staff – get out and about more to build relationships with residents and their communities • A service based on the needs, aspirations and expectations of residents - Residents have a say in the service and feel listened to and understood • Don’t leave out street properties and those without shared areas. It’s equally important that SW pays attention to these and ensures they’re being looked after too!

• SW does what it's meant to, when it's meant to • Sufficient and well-managed parking arrangements (especially for people with disabilities) • Sufficient storage arrangements for things like prams, buggies and bikes • Properly managed contractors • Good policies and procedures that are understood and applied consistently • Residents understand their responsibilities and SW takes action when people don't meet them • Things get done and done well - an efficient, responsive and consistently good service - a decent service is recognisable & evident.
• Staff are visible and easy to contact (with visible named points of contact on noticeboards and SW website) • Regular estate inspections with feedback to residents on findings and actions to be taken • Residents are kept informed and updated on what's happening, when and why.
• Clear about what residents can expect from the service and what to do if dissatisfied • Clarity of service charges and evidence of value for money • Good, clear, relevant and up-to-date information, which is accessible to all residents in a variety of formats (access isn't just about services and buildings – information needs to be accessible too, in ways that meet the specific needs of individuals) • Don't take it for granted that all residents have similar levels of understanding – take time to explain things when explanations are needed.
• A quick, reliable and effective response to ASB and other neighbourhood issues • Nip ASB in the bud - pre-empt situations where possible and prevent them from escalating • No graffiti, dumped items or abandoned vehicles
• Easy to report communal repairs, and neighbourhood issues or concerns • Easy to find and understand information about the service
• Help and support available to residents who need it (e.g. with maintaining gardens) • A joined-up approach, where SW works with residents, local services and other organisations to create safe neighbourhoods and a sense of community.

Appendix 2 – Neighbourhood Management criteria and suggested minimum standards

Safe	•
Clean	•
Well-maintained	•
Accessible	• Information on the service, how to access it and what residents can expect is readily available, and easy to access in a variety of ways and formats that meet the reasonable and diverse needs of customers. • Routes and pathways to buildings (including storage sheds and garages) are free from obstructions and trip hazards and provide easy access for people with sight and/or mobility issues. • Staff are available and easy to contact, with support offered and available for customers with communication challenges. • Saxon Weald holds community events to engage with residents, helping to bring people together and create a sense of community. • Details of partner organisations that Saxon Weald works with in the management, upkeep and safety of its estates are widely promoted and easy to access.