

Customer Feedback on Draft Tree Policy and Procedure

The Wrekin
Housing Group

Information and data, including
summary of method and themes of
customer feedback for draft Tree Policy
and Procedure.

Completed July 2023

Method

We used a mixture of email and printed copies to a large group of Involved Customers directly as well as advertise the opportunity to feedback on this policy via Closed Group on Facebook and a Wrekin Voices email. This ensured we used multiple methods to suit a diverse customer base and improved opportunities for customers.

Method	Number of customers who had sight of Policy
Direct Email to Involved Customers	80
Printed copies	3
Wrekin Voices Email Newsletter (mix of involved customers, staff and customers who are staff)	196

Questions

Q3 - Does the Policy make sense to you?

Q4 - Does any part of the Policy need to be made clearer? If so which part?

Q5 - Is the Procedure clear to you?

Q6 - Would you add anything into the Procedure? if so what would that be?

Q7 - What would you change about the policy?

Q8 - Do you think the policy is inclusive to everyone?

Q9 - Do you think we could be more inclusive to any groups of people?

Q10 - Any other Comments?

Feedback response

15 survey responses completed via a mix of phone, email and digital

Summary of Feedback

3. Does the Policy make sense to you?

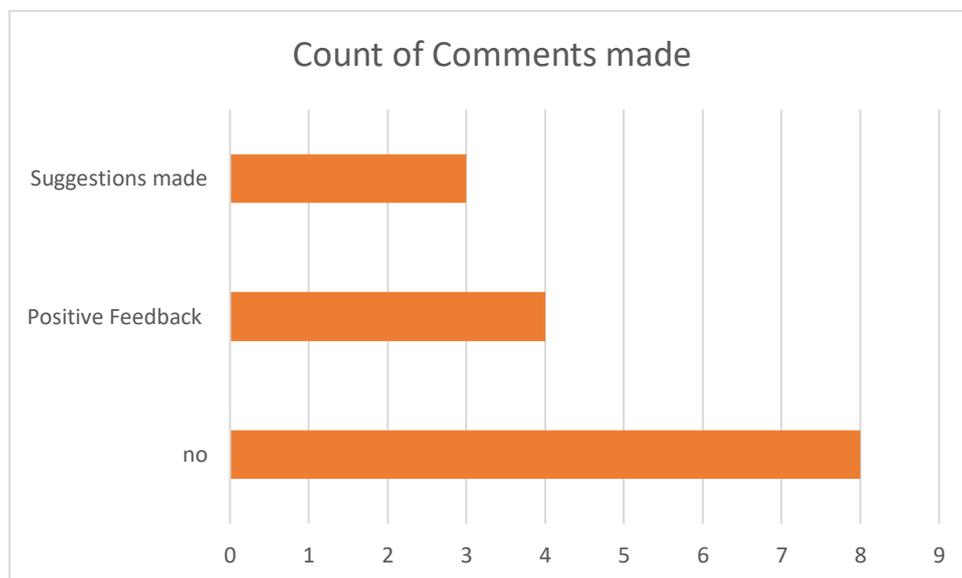
[More Details](#)

 Insights

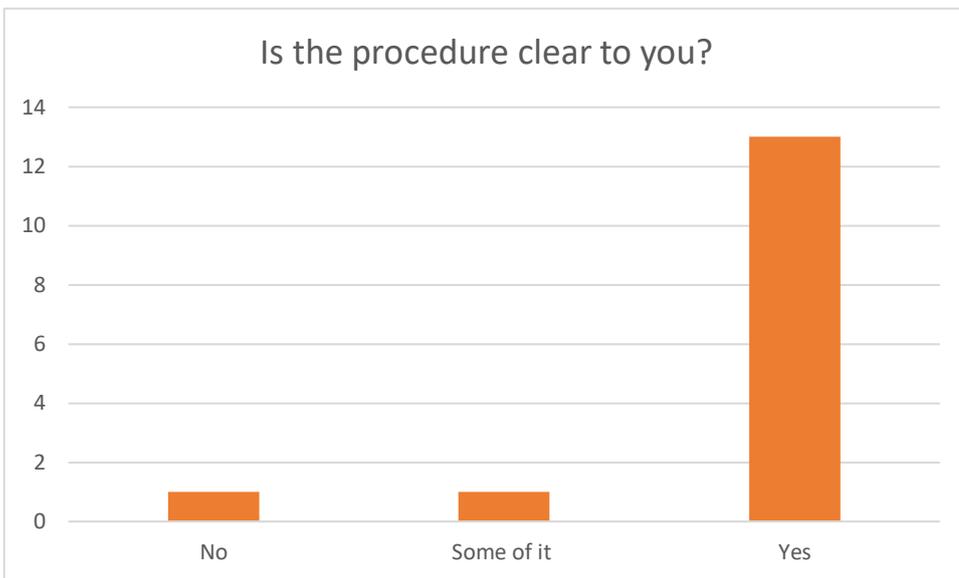
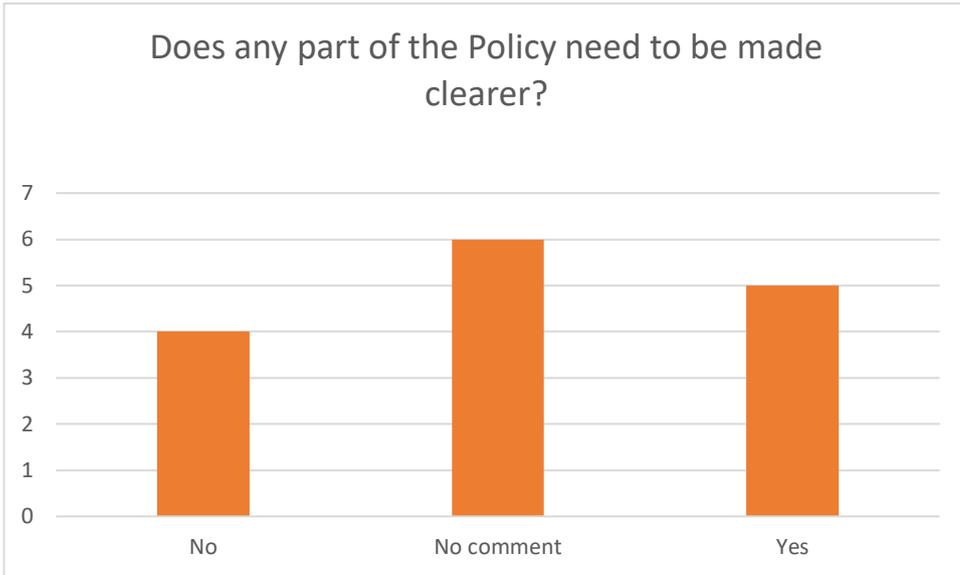
 Yes	13
 No	1
 Some of it	1



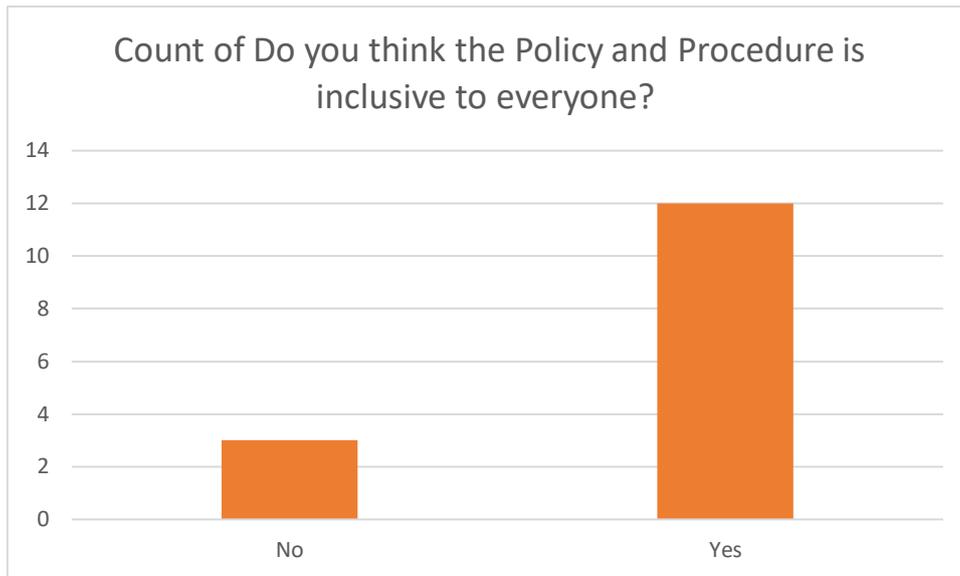
Majority of customers who responded agreed that the policy made sense to them. We followed this up with questions on how we could improve it and suggestions were made



Customers have made some good suggestions and asked some questions which will be followed up with.



We encouraged customers to think in different ways about how they felt about the policy and some great suggestions came through.



Majority of customers have told us that the policy feels inclusive however we asked for how it could be more inclusive and the following comments have been made.

Q - Do you think we could be more inclusive to any groups of people?

Customer comment	Wrekin comment
Maybe providing a condensed version that is simpler to read for customers that may struggle with large amounts of text or the complexities of it. This could be covered by offering a telephone contact number if any customer requires help with the policy.	We will look at creating an infographic for a slim downed version of policy on a dedicated page on our group website.
Yes, must include those who are home owners.	This policy has been created to detail how the group intends to manage Trees in communal areas only. Home Owners, Leaseholders and Tenants have responsibility for trees within their gardens as is detailed in their Tenancy Agreement. Customers are advised to check their tenancy agreements and speak to their housing exec for further information on managing trees in their own gardens.
"Yes, Elderly, disabled, low waged.	Again, this policy has been created to detail how the group intends to manage Trees in communal areas only. Home Owners, Leaseholders and Tenants have responsibility for trees within their gardens as is detailed in their Tenancy Agreement. Customers are advised to check their tenancy agreements and speak to their housing exec for further

	information on managing trees in their own gardens.
Where trees over hang old peoples gardens or means of entry.	Going into detail for every eventuality is not possible as our Policies need to be precise and concise. We will look to create a specific section on our website to guide people to information on how to report trees causing issues and advice on what they can do themselves.
I strongly feel that people with disabilities are not heard regarding their needs, they are just expected to be like anyone able to cut and prune. Leaves also cause mobility issues for disabled people.	<p>Again, this policy has been created to detail how the group intends to manage Trees in communal areas only. Home Owners, Leaseholders and Tenants have responsibility for trees within their gardens as is detailed in their Tenancy Agreement. Customers are advised to check their tenancy agreements and speak to their housing exec for further information on managing trees in their own gardens. Housing Execs may be able to discuss any support or guidance on how people with disabilities or any other needs can address issues with trees within their own gardens.</p> <p>Leaf collection on our estates is carried out in the winter a minimum of twice, but if leaves are causing issues that falls within the Grounds Maintenance teams' remit, as pruning or removing a single tree will not always resolve the issue – thus it is handled via grounds Maintenance remit and not within this policy.</p>

Customer Suggestions

Maybe the inclusion of a paragraph explaining the importance of trees for the root structures and assisting in being a natural soakaway, helping with flash flooding. This paragraph could also help to explain the importance of food sources for wildlife. Although this isn't a procedure to follow, it may help to justify the need for trees within residential areas.	<p>The group recognises the importance of trees and considers them a natural asset our commitment to them is implied by creating this policy and procedure and therefore we do not feel it necessary to refer to this recognition in the policy itself.</p> <p>Policies need to be precise and concise and our policies follow the same format and are kept to a maximum of 3 pages and this policy follows that standard format.</p>
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<p>"I think a mention of what procedures are in place for the cases of emergencies, if a tree is affected by bad weather (lightning strikes, severe winds etc), and it becomes a danger to a tenant or others.</p> <p>Also, a commitment to uphold Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's), as few people are aware of their existence and it could be a criminal offence to ignore one"</p>	<p>Again, to go into heavy detail inside a policy is difficult, so a section on adverse weather won't be part of policy, but will be part of the specific section on our website to correctly signpost people for how to report issues.</p> <p>The group is legally bound to uphold TPOs, we wouldn't use a policy to simply state we intend uphold TPOs.</p> <p>However, we will place an explanation of TPOs on the specific section on our website so people can gain some understanding.</p>
<p>Sources and advice for tree management that isn't covered by the policy</p>	<p>Some targeted signposting on our website will be provided with sources of information for tree management.</p>
<p>What about neighbours' trees that are causing damage to tenants' property whether private or not</p>	<p>There will be some information about steps to resolve branches causing damage on the specific area on our website. If the neighbour is a Group tenant, there may be steps we can help to achieve by opening up communications about the issue and as always, your housing exec will be able to assist with on tenancy related queries.</p> <p>The policy states what we will do if communal trees are causing damage.</p>
<p>parts of it need to be made clearer and there needs to be more 'flow' as i found i was having to jump from one area to another to get the answers i needed.</p>	<p>The policy follows a standard template and needs to be precise and concise, so creating 'flow' can be slightly difficult.</p> <p>However, the website area should be more user friendly and easier to navigate.</p>
<p>Where the pollen causes medical problems, the tree would be looked at.</p>	<p>The group would not unilaterally look at this as a reason to act on a tree and therefore we won't include it in our policy, however, resident should contact their housing officer to discuss if they are having issues due to pollen from trees and this can be looked into.</p>

<p>Wrekin Housing do not communicate effectively with their tenants regarding boundary trees. It would be better if they could explain the reasons as to why they will not prune or cut down trees that cause a nuisance to its residents especially if they have disabilities.</p>	<p>Again, to cover every detail is not possible within a policy as it needs to be concise and precise, our policy lays out our intent in how we manage communal trees and there will be lots of case by case instances where we may decide to take action that goes against our own policy.</p> <p>Boundary trees between neighbours are a tenancy item and as such are dealt with in tenancy agreements and should be discussed with your housing exec.</p>
<p>Well written and good to see the group caring for nature as well as listening to the concerns of customers regarding overhanging branches or sap and blossom.</p>	<p>Thank you 😊</p>
<p>Only perhaps if a mention was made, for tenants and the public at large, to keep their distance and to comply with instructions from the workforce, when dangerous tree works are in progress</p>	<p>A good point, but this type of instruction doesn't sit with in policy, it will sit within our Health and Safety risk assessments.</p> <p>The group and contractors risk assessments will always ensure work areas are kept safe with clear signage for people in the immediate area.</p>
<p>If any new issues come up then you do review</p>	<p>We will review this policy every 3 years unless any change in regulation forces a review.</p>
<p>Yes, I do think WHG is biased against the elderly of disabled living in General Needs. The literature given out by WHG does not reflect this, but the reality is, Elderly and disabled residents living in General Needs get a tough deal. They're more often than not told to do it themselves which is not possible.</p>	<p>Again, this policy is for communal trees only and not trees in tenants' gardens. Trees in tenants' gardens are handled via the tenancy management agreement and any issues should be directed to your housing exec.</p>
<p>We have trees that are directly over an older peoples parking area, the trees scratch the cars parking nearest to and under the trees. The pollen is deposited upon the vehicles to the point that you can write your name in the residue. The trees new growth grows out and scratches cars paintwork, plus the leaves that fall are not cleaned up, being both a mess and a hazard. Finally several residents suffer with Asthma, the pollen has an effect upon their breathing. Tree people were bought out a couple of years ago to trim and shape the</p>	<p>Tree nuisances can be difficult to manage, we do detail many circumstances in this procedure document for which we wont deal with trees (such as pollen, leaf fall etc) however if trees branches are damaging property (vehicles included) we would look at completing works to reduce the risk.</p> <p>All our trees are surveyed at a minimum of every 4 years, if a tree as been highlighted as having an issue meaning it needs removal, the survey will tell us this and we will action</p>

<p>tree, at that time talking to them they stated that one of the three trees needed removing, to date nothing has happened, in actual fact it has worsened.</p>	<p>the work based on risk – we deal with the riskiest trees first.</p>
<p>"Item 4.21 the regular pollarding of suitable species can promote longevity and prevent larger limb loss, branch rip causing rot. It's also true that the regrowth is only around 40% as strong.</p> <p>Also, as your newer housing stock has a lot of smaller gardens, I think that there should be some provision to regulation or intervention in the planting of larger trees in small spaces as they are very likely to cause damage and nuisance to your stock and tenants. 30ft is recognised by most insurers within 10m of buildings as a problem, I know that it's very dependent on soil type, but an approved list of have a finished height less than 30ft would give clear guidance."</p>	<p>Tree works are based on the health of the tree, our surveyor will inform us of any works that may be required to improve tree health.</p> <p>We are comfortable with the current wording.</p> <p>We feed back to development director regularly over "right tree, right location" however Local Planning officers via the local authority usually steer how much tree planting and accepted species – so sometimes we are tied into those stipulations.</p>
<p>As for blocking out natural light, everyone is entitled to light. If the trees become an issue then people should be able to get natural light either in their home or garden, it shouldn't be down to the Tennant to get branches over hanging or bushes pushing through people's fences, where they are responsible to maintain the fencing.</p>	<p>Right to light is always a sensitive subject and one that requires a balanced view.</p> <p>Right to light is directly linked to the High Hedges and not single trees and the group will always prune trees if requested to under an enforcement. However the vast majority of case studies will show that most trees allow dappled light into gardens, most trees are deciduous and therefore can't be considered under right to light and pruning trees will only give temporary relief meaning its not cost effective and doesn't provide an answer to the issue.</p> <p>The sheer amount of work that would be created if all tree owners completed work based on light into gardens alone would mean steep rises in costs, which would ultimately lead to higher rents or service charges for customers – something the group wish to avoid based on tree maintenance.</p> <p>As with previous comments, we can look at Individual issues to see if any action can be taken to improve the situation and your housing exec should be your first point of contact.</p>

