



Proposed changes to services consultation

Customer observations

We were pleased to hear from over 300 customers during the consultation. Thank you for taking the time to share your feedback! All responses were reviewed and considered decisions were made. We've grouped your observations and our responses in the below Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) below.

General

Charges:

Q1: Do you already charge for the new services you are looking to introduce?

A: For those customers being consulted with, the new services are not currently charged for under any other service charge item. Some customers do currently contribute to these services.

Q2: I don't feel like these are new services.

A: You're right that some of these services already happen! We've carried out work to help to keep customers safe, like managing trees, pest problems in communal spaces and removing fly tipping. Until now, the costs haven't always been covered by all customers through service charges. To make sure we can keep providing these services, this consultation is about officially adding them and the costs when they come up.

Q3: How will my charge be calculated?

A: We'll charge service charges based on the estimated costs of each service - this will vary between the different services:

- **Tree surgery:** For 2026/27, the charge is based on the number of trees on your scheme and the cost of detailed tree surveys. In future years, it'll reflect the amount spent or expected to be spent on tree surgery works to ensure funds are available.

- **Refuse disposal:** This'll be charged based upon the average amount spent on the scheme over the last three years.
- **Pest control:** This'll be charged based upon the average amount spent on the scheme over the last three years.

For variable service charge customers, estimates are set the same way, but the final charge may be more or less, depending on the actual costs at the end of the year. More information on your charges will be included in your Rent Review letter (for fixed charge customers) or shared with you later in the year following account reviews (for variable charge customers).

Q4: When will you share with customers the exact cost of the services?

A: For fixed service charge customers, the cost will be included in your Rent Review letter due to be sent at the end of February 2026. For customers who pay a variable service charge, the cost will be in your estimates after your account is reviewed later in the year. All customers will contribute for 2026/27.

Q5: Our previous housing association provided these services at no charge, why is Stonewater charging?

A: We are a not-for-profit organisation, so we're unable to cover these costs ourselves. While your previous housing provider may have paid for some services occasionally, we now need to make sure the service is affordable and sustainable in the long term.

Q6: All three services are the responsibility of the person who owns the land, not us as customers.

A: We're responsible for providing these services, however, the costs need to be paid by those that benefit from them, whether you rent or own your home. Charging for these services is in line with National Housing Federation guidance.

Q7: Are you only introducing this so you can increase your profit?

A: No - we're a not-for-profit organisation and don't make any profit from service charges. The charges only cover the actual cost of providing services to your homes.

Q8: Are service charges specific to my home or shared across other sites, or both?

A: Service charges are specific to your home and scheme, and cover services that directly affect you. Charges are not shared between schemes. You can find out more

about how service charges are calculated

here: www.stonewater.org/customers/manage-your-home/service-charges/

Q9: How will costs be apportioned?

A: The cost of the delivery of all services proposed will be shared across all customers who benefit from them.

Q10: We have a management company on our scheme. Will you work with them?

A: If your scheme is managed by a management company, they handle things like tree maintenance, pest control and rubbish disposal in communal spaces. You pay for these through your service charge 'Management Company Costs'. You'll only pay for the new services if they're needed on land managed by us.

Q11: Please can you explain individual service charge items that I pay for?

A: Yes, we can! As this isn't directly part of the consultation, we'll deal with any individual questions about service charges directly. You can also contact us by emailing servicecharges@stonewater.org

Q12: The costs for pest control and refuse disposal should be treated as one off's, not an ongoing charge.

A: You will only pay a service charge for these when a cost has happened - this means you might pay in one year and not the next. The charge reflects the actual cost and is spread over the year to make it more manageable.

Q13: Please can you provide the clause in my tenancy agreement which allows you to change the services to my scheme?

A: The following is contained within customer agreements to allow Stonewater to add and remove services to make sure that your community is well maintained.

Services

1. We shall provide the services set out above.
2. We may, after consulting the tenants affected, increase, add to, remove, reduce, or vary the services provided or introduce new services for which there may be a new charge.

Q14: Stonewater need to conduct a ballot of all customers on my scheme before they can introduce new services.

A: This isn't correct. We've actively consulted with all customers - however there's no requirement to hold a ballot at each individual scheme.

Q15: I want the service charges to decrease because I'm surviving as a single parent on a low income.

A: We understand that any increase in costs can be worrying. If you're on a low income and receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, you can apply to have these costs covered. We can also help with budgeting, money management, and training or employment support. Please just reach out, we're here to help. Visit: bit.ly/SW_Money

No internet access? Don't worry, just get in touch with us by giving us a call at 01202 319 119.

Q16: I'm on Universal Credit, and these costs won't be covered, so I would not like to take part in the scheme.

A: The cost of new services can be covered by Universal Credit or Housing Benefit, and we can help you apply. You won't be able to individually opt out of the services.

Q17: Kirklees have frozen the housing benefit limit, and I'm worried that new charges will mean these costs won't be covered.

A: We're always here to help if you're worried about money or affording service charges. If you're having trouble with Housing Benefit or just feel unsure about money, please get in touch! We're happy to talk to Kirklees Housing Benefit for you and make sure you can access any support available.

Q18: How do the new charges meet the requirement for reasonableness?

A: We're introducing these new services based on the needs of each scheme to help keep our customers safe. The cost will reflect only what we spend, with no profit made, making sure the charges are fair and reasonable under the law.

Q19: My letter only stated you were looking to introduce two of the services which I have read are part of the consultation, why?

A: Some services may already be in place for certain customers or schemes. Your consultation letter will only include the new services to you or your scheme. We want to

make sure all customers are treated fairly, with the same approach across all schemes, so everyone can contribute and benefit from these services equally.

Q20: My home is a standalone house situated on a public street and is the only housing association property in the area. It doesn't form part of an estate, block, or development with communal land or shared facilities. As such, the proposed services are neither required nor applicable to my property.

A: We'll only apply these new services where they're needed. If your property is not part of a wider scheme that requires them, you'll not be charged.

Q21: If you introduce these charges I simply won't pay.

A: We're sorry to hear you feel this way. Under your tenancy agreement, you're required to contribute to service charges in the same way as rent. If you're worried about money, we're here for you – just get in touch.

Q22: I didn't agree with increases in service charges last year and don't want any changes now.

A: We're sorry to hear this. We understand that any increase in costs can be worrying, and we're here to support you if you do have any concerns around paying rent, household bills or service charges. You can find out more about the help available here: www.stonewater.org/customers/get-support/money-matters/

We're committed to delivering value for money in the services we provide, and are pleased to confirm that more than 5,000 fixed service charge customers will see their charges reduce from April 2026.

Q23: As you've requested observations, I really do hope you actually do think about this and not just go ahead and add the charges anyway.

A: We want to assure you that your feedback is incredibly valued by us. We're pleased to have received over 300 responses and have carefully considered all feedback before making decisions.

Q24: We've never had issues of fly tipping or pest control in the 13 years we have lived here.

A: That's great to hear! If no fly tipping or pest control work has been needed on your scheme in the past three years, you won't have a charge in 2026/27. You'll only be

charged when work needs to be done.

Consultation:

Q25: Who is impacted by the consultation?

A: All rented customers nationwide who don't currently receive these services or contribute to these costs have been consulted. Customers who already receive and contribute to these services were not included in the consultation.

Q26: Are there any other services you are considering varying or adding?

A: No. Currently, these are the only areas which we've identified as gaps in our services to help keep customers safe and secure in your homes.

Q27: Why was consultation done in December?

A: We review fixed service charges every April. We wanted to consult with customers and respond before any new charges take effect, giving notice that costs won't be due until April 2026. We're sorry if the timing of the consultation felt inconvenient or if post delays meant some customer received it after Christmas. The consultation remained open until 27 January 2026, so that any late feedback could be considered before a decision was made.

Q28: Is the consultation genuine?

A: Yes! Your thoughts and feedback are really valuable to us. We're pleased to have received over 300 responses from customers and have reviewed each one, taking them into consideration before making any decisions.

Q29: Does this consultation meet the requirements of Section 20 of The Landlord and Tenant Act?

A: We want to clarify that this consultation is not a statutory Section 20 consultation. We're simply seeking your feedback on the introduction of new services. Section 20 rules apply only when we enter a Long-Term Qualifying contract or carry out major works, which isn't the case here. If in future the new services trigger Section 20 requirements, we'll consult customers again.

Q30: Please can you bring back regular street checks?

A: We know it's important for you to see us out and about in your communities. We're currently looking at ways to be more present and engaged with our customers and neighbourhoods.

Trees and tree surgery

Q31: What will the new cost for tree surgery be?

A: It depends on the tree work needed in your area. We plan to survey all trees across our homes in 2026/27 to better understand what work is needed now and in the future. Costs for tree surgery may go up or down over time depending on whether major work is needed, or just routine pruning.

If you pay a fixed service charge, the cost will be included in your Rent Review letter sent by the end of February. If you pay a variable service charge, it'll be added after your next account review when your service charge estimate is updated.

Q32: It needs to be made clear to customers exactly what they will get for their service charge and what they're responsible for.

A: We're currently finalising our tree management approach. Once approved, we'll be able to explain to customers what work to expect in the coming years and over the longer term.

Q33: I think provision for tree surgery would be a good idea, as a lot of trees are very tall and have a lot of dead branches. Would it be done yearly or every two years?

A: We plan to survey all trees on communal land owned by Stonewater over the next 18 months. These results will be used to create tree management plans tailored to each scheme. We'll share more details with you once these plans are ready!

Q34: We don't have any trees on our road, why should we pay?

A: Your scheme might just be your road, or a group of roads on a larger estate. Like grounds maintenance, the cost of tree services will be shared evenly across all customers on the scheme, even if the tree isn't directly outside your home.

Q35: There are only two trees on my scheme, and they are not causing any inconvenience, I therefore don't want to pay for tree surgeons.

A: We won't do unnecessary tree work. The proposed costs for 2026/27 cover tree surveys only, to understand what work may be needed in the short, medium and long term. In future years, the cost will reflect the work needed to proactively keep all customers safe.

Q36: I don't have any trees on my scheme, so I won't pay for maintenance.

A: Please be assured that you'll only be asked to contribute toward tree surgery costs where there are communal trees on Stonewater land at your scheme.

Q37: The trees on our scheme are next to my house. Does this mean I will need to pay all the cost?

A: No. The cost of works to trees in communal spaces will be shared across all customers living on the scheme, no matter how close their home is to them.

Q38: If money is not used on trees during my tenancy, will I get my money back?

A: We plan to survey every tree on our communal land over the next 18 months. The money collected through the new tree surgery provision will help spread the cost of these surveys and works identified as required over time. Once the surveys are complete, we can carry out tree work on a planned schedule to manage risks proactively.

To avoid sudden large bills for any one group of customers, we'll use a provision instead of charging for each year's work directly. This makes sure funds are available when needed and no single group of customers is heavily impacted.

Q39: Does this additional service mean that the assessment of the condition and safety of trees across the scheme, prevention of hazards and compliance with safety standards have not been met or addressed throughout my tenancy?

A: No. In the past, costs for these services were not always paid consistently by customers. Stonewater is a not-for-profit organisation, so we cannot cover these costs ourselves. The consultation helps us to make sure we have a fair and balanced approach to keeping our schemes and customers safe.

Q40: The trees outside my property are on council-owned land, will you take this up with them?

A: Yes. We won't carry out works on any trees owned by the council or a third party, but where works are needed, we'll ask for this to be dealt with by them at no cost

to our customers.

Q41: Will the new services cover trees near where cars are parked?

A: It depends on whether the trees are on Stonewater communal land. If they are, they'll be included in the new service. If trees or bushes are affecting parking or causing damage, please email us at customers@stonewater.org and we'll have a look into this for you.

Q42: If a tree branch is to break in the wind and cause damage to my car will Stonewater be responsible?

A: No. We're unable to take responsibility for weather anomalies such as this. You would need to make a claim on your insurance, as you would with a tree on council-owned land.

Q43: Will you carry out works to trees in individual gardens?

A: No. Trees in your own garden are your responsibility, so we won't carry out work on them. We can, however, offer advice and help you to access to services if needed.

Q44: Will Stonewater support me with trees that overhang my garden and are owned by another company e.g. Electrolux or Waitrose?

A: Yes. We're happy to help if you need support speaking to a company that owns land that isn't well maintained and is affecting your home or community. Just let us know, and we'll make sure the landowner responsible takes the necessary action.

Q45: Why hasn't grounds maintenance kept up with tree maintenance?

A: Our grounds maintenance service has never included tree work. We've recognised this is an important area to address, which is why we're consulting customers about introducing this new service.

Q46: I would like to see the introduction of more tree surgery services. This would be extremely helpful as I have enquired on numerous occasions regarding the removal of large overgrown hedges.

A: Thank you for your feedback! Hedge maintenance is currently included in your grounds maintenance services and isn't part of the provision for tree surgery. If you

notice any bushes growing too tall or causing damage to fences, cars or the surrounding area, please get in touch and we'd be happy to have a look into this for you.

Q47: How is hedge work different to the new services being proposed?

A: Hedge work is already covered by the current grounds maintenance service. Tree work isn't included in this existing service, as it needs specialist contractors rather than gardeners. Hedge maintenance on your scheme will stay the same.

Q48: I think it's a good idea to assess the condition and safety of local trees. Will this be done by the same contractors who do our grounds maintenance?

A: We're glad this service is welcome! Tree surgery will be carried out by a new contractor. Your regular grounds maintenance services will stay the same and doesn't include tree work.

Find out more about estate services here:

www.stonewater.org/media/tpznclpv/grounds-maintenance-guide-updated-2025.pdf

Q49: Who will do the tree inspections and work?

A: Once a decision is made on the proposals, we'll start the process to appoint a tree surgery contractor to conduct the surveys. Where needed, we'll consult with customers under Section 20 so you can share your thoughts. This may not be the same contractor that we later procure to carry out the ongoing works to trees required as we want to ensure we can obtain the best value for money for customers for both areas of work.

Q50: Tree maintenance in this area has rarely occurred around these areas in the last 20 years, that I'm aware of. I've seen a couple, but there may have been more. This suggests that tree surgery is not a routine or cyclical service. Service charges should be for regular, predictable services, not rare, ad hoc tasks.

A: We agree. Tree maintenance has never been part of grounds maintenance, as it's treated as a separate service. By collecting small amounts more regularly, we can spread the cost over time, act proactively and avoid a large charge for any one group of customers. For 2026/27, the cost will cover tree surveys, which will inform any future work needed.

Q51: We're happy with the introduction of all three services and charges at our scheme. We would like to draw your attention to concerns around trees that may be interfering with building foundations.

A: Thank you for your feedback! Any concerns around individual trees have been sent to the relevant team, who will contact you directly about surveys or planned work.

Q52: We have a 200ft pine tree by our garden and we cannot go out on windy days due to concerns for our safety.

A: We're sorry to hear this. We want all customers to feel safe at home, which is why we're introducing a proactive tree surgery service. Any individual concerns have been passed to the right team, who will discuss them with you.

Q53: There is a tree near my property which rocks during the winds, could someone look at this under the new services?

A: Yes. We want to keep you safe and will investigate any health and safety concerns about trees near homes or gardens.

Q54: Our trees are well established, and works can be several thousands of pounds, what is actually being proposed?

A: We don't want to change the look of your scheme and understand how important outdoor spaces are to our communities. Tree work will only be carried out to keep trees safe and well maintained. In the first year, the service will mainly involve detailed tree surveys to plan any work needed in the short, medium and long term.

Q55: Works to trees should be considered a health and safety concern and therefore not paid by customers.

A: We agree that not managing trees proactively can create health and safety risks for customers and visitors, and we want to manage these risks so everyone can feel safe. Tree maintenance isn't part of standard rent responsibilities and is classed as a service charge by the National Housing Federation.

Q56: What action will be taken when trees fall?

A: If specialist work is needed, our tree surgery contractor will handle it. Tasks like collecting broken branches or small fallen trees may be done by your grounds maintenance contractor. We'll make sure all work is done safely and as cost-effectively as possible.

Q57: The sap from trees makes paths slippery, will you do something about this?

A: Some elements of the outside environment and UK weather are beyond our control. However, we're happy to work with customers if there are health and safety concerns, such as adjusting grounds maintenance to sweep areas affected by falling leaves or sap.

Q58: I'm really pleased that you will now offer tree surgery as the tree outside my house blocks all my light and I'm having to have my lights on all year round which is costing a lot in electricity.

A: Thank you for your feedback. Customers who've raised individual concerns will be contacted by the relevant team. We may not be able to carry out work immediately, as we first need to survey all trees and assess any health and safety risks, but we want everyone to live comfortably, and if a tree is causing a problem, we'll discuss options with you.

If you're struggling with household bills or worried about money, we're here for you and can offer support. Just get in touch!

Q59: Why can't I just do the tree surgery myself?

A: We strongly advise customers not to carry out work on trees in communal spaces. These are our responsibility, and any work should only be done by professionals to protect the tree and consider all customer's views.

Q60: I'm concerned that works to trees will impact birds nesting in time for spring.

A: Please be assured, we won't make any immediate or major changes to trees unless there is a health and safety risk. Protecting the environment is important to us, and any future work will consider the impact on wildlife. You can find out more about our approach to the environment here: www.stonewater.org/about-us/our-environmental-impact/

Q61: Please can customers see a copy of your tree management policy?

A: Yes. This policy is currently going through our internal approval process and will be available for customers to view soon.

Q62: We have one small horse chestnut tree on the land at the rear of the building that I planted in memory of my father, who died this year. This land is owned by the National Trust, and those trees are all carefully managed by the National Trust with no cost or demand on you or us.

A: This sounds like a lovely way of remembering your father. Please be assured that we'll only carry out work on trees on Stonewater communal land.

Q63: Please don't get rid of the beautiful trees near my home.

A: Don't worry! We will only carry out tree work where it's needed to keep the area safe. We won't remove any trees unless they're in very poor condition and pose a safety risk.

Q64: The trees near my house provide me with security and privacy, please don't cut them back.

A: Please don't worry, we will only carry out work to trees where they're needed to make sure the tree is safe and healthy. We'll always balance the wishes from customers around both privacy and light into their homes and make sure works are proportionate.

Q65: Please can you lop the tree near my home as it drops leaves and sap over all our cars.

A: We understand your concerns. Over the next 18 months, we will survey trees in our communal spaces to see what work is needed. We'll carefully consider the costs and benefits before deciding on any actions, like lopping or removing trees, to make sure it's right for all customers and the environment.

Q66: I welcome tree surgery and would like to request you change the gardening contract to include sweeping leaves.

A: Thank you for your feedback. Later this year, we're looking to reprocure our grounds maintenance services and welcome your thoughts on what should be included. You can see what's expected under your current contract here: [grounds-maintenance-guide-updated-2025.pdf](#)

If you feel work isn't being done, or isn't to the standard you expect, please let us know at 01202 319 119 or customers@stonewater.org

Q67: Please can our washing line be moved away from the trees on our scheme?

A: That sounds like a good idea. We'll be in touch!

Q68: Could we have more trees planted at our scheme?

A: We recognise the importance of trees in our communities and have worked closely with the Community Forest Trust to plant over 30,000 trees as part of our environmental

strategy, helping us work towards net zero by 2050 and reduce the impact of building new homes. We'd love to hear your ideas for planting more trees at existing schemes, so please get in touch!

Pests

Q69: How many times have pest control contractors been to my scheme in the past year and what will be the cost be?

A: The service charge for pest control will be based on how much has been spent in this area over the last three years. If no visits were needed during that time, the charge will stay at £0.00 until pest control work is required.

If you pay a fixed service charge, this'll appear in your Rent Review letter sent by the end of February. If you pay a variable service charge, it'll be added after your next account review when your service charge estimate is updated.

Q70: If pest control is added, it should be billed only when used, not as a service charge.

A: Pest control will be added as a service charge for all customers, but it will stay at £0.00 until work is needed. We won't charge for work that isn't carried out.

We also want to assure customers that we don't make a profit from service charges – the cost reflects what is spent on each scheme.

Q71: Pest control has always been dealt with promptly at my scheme as it is a 'rat run' being near a stream.

A: We're glad this service is working well! We'll continue to carry out pest control work as needed.

Q72: There are not enough bins for this block, and this is why we get pests.

A: Thank you for your feedback. Feedback like this has shared with our Neighbourhoods team, who will discuss it directly with customers. Please get in touch if you have ideas on reducing pest control and rubbish issues – we'd love to hear your thoughts.

Q73: Someone came out to deal with rats but never followed up.

A: We're sorry to hear this. Any concerns raised during this consultation about services on schemes have been shared with the relevant team, who will discuss them with you. Please feel welcome to raise any concerns directly with us at customers@stonewater.org or 01202 319 119.

Q74: My neighbour consistently acts in a way which encourages pests to the scheme, what will you do?

A: Thank you for letting us know. We know how important it is that everyone plays their part in helping to build healthy, sustainable communities. We'll work with the whole community to help to prevent pests, from giving advice on the best ways to dispose of rubbish to taking action when customers behaviour puts others at risk. Where needed, we'll take action against any customers who consistently behave in a way which causes harm.

If you haven't already, please get in touch so we can find out more and have a look into how we can help to resolve this situation.

Q75: Can cleaning services be increased to prevent pest control issues?

A: We're happy to consider changes to our estate services that could help to prevent pests on your scheme. Please share your ideas with us at customers@stonewater.org

Q76: Please can I have a copy of the pest control policy?

A: Our customer guide to pest control can be found here:

www.stonewater.org/media/fqhhhy35u/020424-pest-management.pdf

A copy of our pest management policy can be found here:

www.stonewater.org/media/oopasswg/pest-management-policy.pdf

Q77: My experience with pest control is that I didn't get proper help, will it be better in the future?

A: We're sorry to hear this! We're always working to learn and improve. If you feel a service hasn't been delivered properly, please let us know at customers@stonewater.org or 01202 319 119. You can also find out more about making a complaint on our website.

More information about the pest management support we provide can be found here:

www.stonewater.org/media/fqhhhy35u/020424-pest-management.pdf

Q78: Is pest control conducted internally or externally?

A: Both. You can see the areas where we may need to act on pest management to keep customers safe in our guide: www.stonewater.org/media/fqhhhy35u/020424-pest-management.pdf

Q79: Why isn't pest control covered under your landlord insurance?

A: We do insure all our homes, but most pest control work costs are too small to make an insurance claim.

Q80: Please can you take action on customers who don't look after their pets, such as allowing them to urinate inside, and cause pest issues.

A: We encourage responsible pet ownership so everyone can enjoy their pets without causing problems for others. If you're concerned that a neighbour isn't following the guidance, please get in touch – we'll be happy to look into it.

You can find out more here: www.stonewater.org/customers/manage-your-home/pets/

Q81: I agree with the provision for tree surgery. However, I do not agree in part regarding pest control. I strongly object to removal of the squirrels as I do not consider them as pests. It would be sad not seeing them in the garden and observing these beautiful creatures. I would not like paying towards removal of them.

A: We're pleased to hear you welcome the proposed tree surgery changes! For pest control, please be assured we will only take action when pests affect your home or cause health and safety risks.

You can read more about our approach to pests here:
www.stonewater.org/media/fqhhhy35u/020424-pest-management.pdf

Q82: I like feeding the wild birds on my scheme.

A: We're pleased to hear that you enjoy interacting with the wildlife around your home! You're welcome to continue to feed birds using hanging feeders, however, please avoid feeding seagulls or similar larger birds that can cause damage to buildings.

Q83: I get immense pleasure from watching squirrels, please don't do anything to remove them.

A: This is lovely to hear, and we're always happy to see videos and photos from customers enjoying the wildlife on schemes. Pest control is only used when animals can cause a problem, for example, if squirrels get into loft spaces. When we do act, it's done humanely and focuses on prevention, so that animals are kept safely outside in their natural environment.

Q84: With regards to removal of pests, certainly go ahead with mice and wasps. However, regarding squirrels, please, please do not remove these as they give me much pleasure in watching their antics around the garden.

A: We won't take action on squirrels in communal areas unless they enter buildings and become a health and safety risk.

Q85: I live in a very rural area, and I'm concerned you will start to use bait boxes that will harm owls, kestrels, foxes and more. Can you leave pest control to the natural wildlife?

A: We completely understand your concerns. Many of our homes are in rural areas, so this is a priority for us. We want our homes to fit naturally into their surroundings, and if nature can manage itself, we won't get involved. We'll only deal with pests if they become a health and safety risk to customers in their homes.

Q86: We live in the countryside and have animals that could be considered pests but have never had any issues, will we be charged?

A: We'll only get involved in pest control when it causes a nuisance or health and safety risk. Customers will only be charged for work that benefits the wider scheme.

Find out more about our approach to pest control
here: www.stonewater.org/media/fqhhhy35u/020424-pest-management.pdf

Q87: We have an area of land next to the property that is part of the South Downs, a National Park. This land is home to many varieties of bird and mammal, including mice, squirrels and voles, moles, rabbits, rare toads, frogs and newts and at least one bat colony. Controlling any of them would be against the National Park rules, and attempting to do so would be pointless due to their numbers and the size of the park.

A: What a lovely variety of wildlife around your home! Please don't worry – we'll only take pest control action if wildlife enters buildings and poses a health and safety risk.

Q88: I'm in favour of introducing pest control services, but this should include customers over 60 or disabled that live in bungalows and or flats houses.

A: Our Pest Management guide sets out where we're responsible for dealing with pest issues: www.stonewater.org/media/fqhhhy35u/020424-pest-management.pdf

We can't always deal with problems inside individual homes, and service charges are only used for work that benefits everyone on the scheme. We understand that some customers may find it difficult to access services, and even if we cannot carry out work in your home, we can still provide advice and support to help you to access these services.

Refuse (rubbish and fly tipping)

Q89: The dumping of items by some should be dealt with as a tenancy breach, it's not fair to ask other customers to pay.

A: We understand it's frustrating to pay for fly tipping you didn't cause. Please report any fly tipping you see to us - where we can identify who is responsible, we will act and recharge individuals accordingly. The cost will only be covered by service charges if we can't identify who is responsible.

Q90: I may be at risk if I report another customer for fly tipping.

A: We know reporting neighbourhood issues can sometimes feel worrying. Please be assured, we'll never name anyone who reports a problem and always act to keep you safe. You can find out more about how we tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and other neighbourhood issue here: www.stonewater.org/customers/get-support/anti-social-behaviour/

Q91: Why should customers pay for fly tipping when this is done by people from outside of the scheme?

A: We know fly tipping has become a big problem across our schemes, and we understand it's frustrating to pay for this when it's not caused by you. Unfortunately, last year, we spent over £500,000 to keep our communities clean and safe, and we can't cover this without using service charges.

Please report any fly tipping you see to us. We will act and charge the person responsible where possible.

Q92: I should not be held accountable for another customers behaviour.

A: We know it can be frustrating when not everyone works together to keep our communities safe. We're not holding customers responsible for others' behaviour, instead, we want to work with all customers to build cohesive communities. Where action is needed for individual customers, we'll act accordingly.

Q93: Why is fly tipping not covered by the council?

A: If fly tipping happens on council-owned land, the council is responsible for clearing it, so please report it when you see it. If it's on land owned by Stonewater – like around bin stores, car parking or streets - we must arrange removal, which comes at a cost.

Q94: Who is responsible for disposing of rubbish where this spans both council and Stonewater owned land?

A: We'll work closely with local councils to address fly tipping. If we can arrange free collection of items through the council, we will. We won't charge customers for clearing items from council-owned land and will work with the council to resolve it.

Q95: Please can you deal with the large mattress and mirror which has been left at my scheme?

A: Any reports about individual fly tipping issues received during this consultation have been passed to our Neighbourhoods team, who will investigate.

Q96: Could you introduce bulk item removal support?

A: We know some of our customers find it difficult to dispose of bulk items during their tenancy or when moving. Your first option should be your council, which often offers large-item collections or visits to local recycling centres, sometimes at discounted rates. If you're unsure what's available, you can call us for help. We're also aware of other providers that allow customers to pay for collections over time. We'll review this option in 2026/27 and will update you on whether this is something we can offer.

Q97: Who will deliver fly tipping collection services?

A: Currently, these services are delivered through our estate services contractors. We're looking at how to deliver this service in the most cost-effective way for customers.

Q98: There is no facility for customers to dispose of green waste.

A: Disposal of garden or green waste varies by scheme and council. We're happy to help customers arrange council collection service, or where we manage rubbish collection, we can explore options if all customers on the scheme would like to take part.

Q99: Please can our bins be washed as part of the provision to supply them?

A: We're happy to look at changing current contract arrangements for individual schemes! Please send any concerns to customers@stonewater.org

Q100: Rubbish accumulation and fly-tipping have been a persistent problem on this estate for many years, particularly since the removal of housing officers. The lack of visible enforcement or site visits has resulted in the estate effectively becoming a dumping ground, with some customers behaving as though there are no consequences for their actions.

A: We're really sorry to hear this. We always want to put our customers at the heart of our services and are reviewing how we can stay better connected with our communities. Please be assured, your feedback will be considered.

Q101: What action have you previously taken against fly tipping?

A: We've had a dedicated Neighbourhoods team since 2020, specialising in handling issues like rubbish, bins, pests, trees and parking. They work closely with our Community Champions to improve services and create solutions based on feedback.

Find out more about our Neighbourhoods team

here: www.stonewater.org/customers/manage-your-home/looking-after-your-neighbourhood/

Q102: Could we have announced and unannounced visits from housing officers to tackle fly tipping?

A: Thank you for this feedback. We recognise our role in encouraging customers to act in ways that support the whole community. We're happy to visit schemes more often where issues happen and speak with any customers who have concerns.

Q103: Can CCTV camera be installed on our bin store or communal spaces to review evidence for fly tipping as not all customers are able to report issues due to vulnerabilities.

A: We're happy to consider installing security systems like CCTV, but we'll first work with communities to explore all other options. Installation and ongoing costs can be high,

and these would be added to service charges, which could increase costs for customers.

Q104: We now have an extensive CCTV system in place, so any fly tipping would be clear to see on the system.

A: We'll use any evidence we have to make sure the person responsible pays for the disposal costs, wherever we can.

Q105: Will Stonewater remind all customers how to dispose of items correctly?

A: Yes, this is something we already do when we become aware of problems with how rubbish is placed in bin areas or where fly tipping happens. If you have concerns about rubbish or bin stores on your scheme, please let us know. You can contact us at 01202 319 119 or by emailing customers@stonewater.org

Q106: If you charge people for refuse disposal, they'll make no effort to dispose of items correctly.

A: We understand this is a concern and will work with our communities to make sure everyone knows how to dispose of items properly. If we can identify who is responsible for dumped items, we'll charge them directly rather than using service charges.

Q107: Will Stonewater spread the cost of fly tipping from all its schemes across everyone?

A: No. You'll only be charged for costs that relate to your own scheme. The refuse disposal service charge applies only when there are direct costs for the scheme your home is part of.

Q108: Would photos be considered as evidence of fly tipping?

A: Yes! If we can tell that an individual has disposed of items incorrectly, we'll charge that person rather than sharing the cost across the community.

Q109: Will Stonewater make use of doorbell footage to combat fly tipping?

A: Yes, any evidence that helps identify who carried out fly tipping will be used to make sure the costs are paid by those responsible, not by customers through service charges.

Q110: Will Stonewater learn from other Housing Associations on how to better manage fly tipping?

A: Yes. We work closely with other providers and councils to tackle issues affecting all social housing customers. If you know of a good practice we may not have considered, please reach out.

Q111: Will refuse disposal cover alleyways behind houses?

A: Yes. If the land is owned by Stonewater, we'll take action. We'll first check with households connected to these areas to identify ownership and encourage them to remove items themselves before we step in.

Q112: Please can there be locks installed on our bin store?

A: Yes. We're happy to work with customers on solutions like restricting access to bin stores to customers only. If locks are broken, please let us know.

Q113: I'm disabled and unable to access the communal bin store, will I have to pay?

A: It's important to us that our schemes and services are accessible for all customers. If you have trouble accessing a service, please let us know! In cases where a customer genuinely can't use a service, we may not charge them.

Q114: Are customers able to use bin stores for any block?

A: No. Customers should use the bin store designated for use by their home or block. If you have extra waste or bulky items that don't fit, please arrange collection through your local council or take them to your local refuse centre.

Q115: Our car park is openly accessible, and non-customers use this and leave waste behind. What will Stonewater do?

A: We're sorry to hear this and can understand how frustrating this must be! We're happy to work with communities to put prevention measures in place, to help to stop non-customers using the schemes car park.

Q116: Fly tipping is against the law, and I find it very depressing to look out from my home and see this on my estate.

A: We agree. We want our customers to feel proud of where they live and share your frustration that a few people can cause problems for many. We continue to act quickly to tackle issues when they happen and work closely with local councils to help to prevent them in future.

Q117: Your own contractors are the ones leaving behind rubbish.

A: We're sorry to hear this! We expect our contractors to leave your homes and communities clean and tidy after visiting – whether they're working in communal spaces or individual homes.

We'd like to speak with you about your experience, so we can understand what happened and how we can put things right. Please get in touch!

Feedback

We want to again thank every customer who took the time to tell us what they thought. We were really pleased to read so many comments which welcomed the new services and the impact these would have on their homes and communities. Whilst these weren't questions we wanted to acknowledge these with a few below.

'I'm happy to pay a little more, especially for services around vermin and tree surgery.'

'I accept that certain charges around the scheme would be beneficial to all the customers and neighbouring areas.'

'I think the principle of charging for tree surgery and pest control is a good idea.'

'Thank you for introducing these new services.'

'I absolutely agree to the introduction of tree surgery provision.'

'I received the changes to the new services, I fully agree that these changes need to be implemented, especially the trees.'

'I think the new services are very much needed.'

'Our scheme at Combe Bank is in much need of these proposals.'

'It's very welcome news that this issue and its importance have finally been recognised and accepted.'

'I agree with all the new services especially the provision for the tree surgery and pest control.'

'I think the provision for tree surgery and pest control are an excellent idea and we'd be happy to pay an additional charge if the services are to be introduced. Thank you for contacting us regarding this matter.'

'I think the provision for tree surgery is fantastic.'

'Changes to services to Stonewater homes will be very welcome and make a big difference to living standards around all estates in the way people dispose of rubbish, and the tree care would be very welcomed, and the additional charges would be acceptable.'

'Thank you for your letter. Once again you are to be commended for your welcome services. Much appreciated.'

'I definitely agree with the introduction of tree surgery and the condition and safety issues of the communal area.'

'I fully support the provision for tree surgery, although this is not actually relevant to myself, I can see this would be of huge benefit to neighbours on my road. Some of whom do have trees very near to their properties and in the communal areas. These trees in my opinion, are already posing a risk to properties.'

'These two additional services would be an asset to our tenancies.'

'I agree to the hopefully proposed "provisions for tree surgery" service, I also have no objections to pest control.'

'In relation to the provision of tree surgery, I fully acknowledge that this work is beneficial for all customers and would be willing to contribute to a reasonable additional cost. Similarly, in relation to pest control, I agree that this is necessary and would be prepared to pay a reasonable additional charge.'

'I am so pleased that you are having a provision for tree surgery as there is an oak tree near my house which is over 200 years old and needs cyclical work every three years. Thank you very much, it is much appreciated.'

'I consider that the two proposed new services will be beneficial to your housing schemes.'

'I am in favour of all three services you are proposing to introduce.'

'I agree to extra service charges for trees at Shepherd Lodge.'

'I fully support the introduction of refuse disposal as our scheme suffers a lot with fly tipping.'

'We give full permission for any tree surgery, pest control or refuse disposal.'