

Accent Group Limited

South Customer Group Meeting



AGENDA

Date/Time: Friday 27th March 2026, 12:00pm to 13:30pm
 Venue: Virtual, MS Teams

ITEM			TIME	DURATION	LEAD
1.	Welcome and Apologies	Information	12:00	5	Chair
2.	Update on Actions	Discussion	12:05	5	Chair
3.	National Customer Group Update	Information	12:10	5	Chair
4.	Repairs & Maintenance Performance Update	Discussion	12:15	15	Adam Rickard
5.	Planned Works Performance Update	Discussion	12:30	15	Cara Jackson
6.	Tree Management	Discussion	12:45	10	Gosia Durkalec
7.	Community Engagement Events	Discussion	13:55	10	Paula Angold
8.	Focus for next quarter	Discussion and Decision	13:05	15	Chair
9.	Any other business	Discussion	13:20	10	Chair

PAPER UPDATES		PURPOSE	LEAD
1.	Tree Management Summary	Support agenda item 6	Gosia Durkalec

REPORT	
Meeting Date:	27/03/2026
Report Title:	Tree Management Responsibilities
Author(s):	Gosia Durkalec, Estate Services Manager
For Decision/Approval <input type="checkbox"/>	Review and Recommend <input type="checkbox"/>
Assurance <input type="checkbox"/>	Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Debate <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>BACKGROUND</p> <p>This update provides an overview of tree management responsibilities in response to queries raised by members at the last customer group meeting on 5 December 2025.</p> <p>SUMMARY OF ACCENTS APPROACH TO TREE MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Accent <u>proactively manage communal trees</u>. They're included in the official tree inventory and inspected regularly by independent arborists. Works are delivered through the annual winter programme, when trees are dormant and safest to work on. Additional urgent works are carried out when needed (e.g. storm damage or dangerous trees). Arborists recommend the appropriate action — pruning, crown lifting or felling.</p> <p>Accent <u>reactivity manage trees in customer gardens</u>. At present, and in line with most of the social housing sector, Accent do not routinely include trees in arborist inspections. This means the trees are not included in the communal inventory and not routinely inspected. However, trees are checked during tenancy audits, void inspections, or when concerns are raised.</p> <p>TREE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK</p> <p>Accent uses a Tree Assessment Framework for cases involving trees in customer gardens. This ensures decisions are fair, consistent and evidence-based. The framework considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and safety risk • Customer vulnerability • The customer's ability to maintain the tree • Wider impact on surrounding areas 	

Depending on the outcome, Accent may:

- Intervene where criteria are met
- Use discretionary funds in exceptional cases
- Pass actions to Housing where they relate to tenancy/leasehold management

All assessments and decisions are logged.

RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

When was the advice leaflet on trees in your neighbourhood created and when is it due for review?

The leaflet was created in 2024. We review policies and procedures documents every three years, or if there's any changes to services, relegation or legislation. If any changes are required to policies and procedures, supporting documents (such as the advice leaflet) would also be reviewed.

Why don't Accent routinely inspect trees in customer gardens?

Trees in private gardens are the responsibility of the resident and are not part of Accent's regular inspection programme. Carrying out routine inspections would require repeated access to private gardens, which could be intrusive for residents. For this reason, our routine tree inspections focus on communal areas, where we have clear responsibility and access.

Instead, Accent takes a reactive approach for private gardens. This means we will review and assess trees when a concern is raised, for example if a customer or neighbour reports a potential health or safety issue, or when identified during void or stock audits. Each concern is considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure any risks are managed appropriately.

Is a surveyor qualified to access and diagnose a tree?

Surveyors are not qualified to diagnose trees. They can visibly 'assess' trees, looking for where there may be an impact on structures such as fences, walls or buildings.

Arborists are qualified to diagnose trees. They hold the specialist expertise to assess tree health and safety, diagnose issues, and recommend appropriate works. Any decisions about condition, risk or required tree works are therefore based on arborist advice, not surveyor judgement.

Do tenancy agreements include a clause about trees? Can we see the wording? How is the customer informed of a tree responsibility?

Most tenancy agreements do not include a clause about trees specifically but do mention how customers must look after their gardens – example of clause below. It's important to note there are several different versions of tenancy agreements depending on the type of tenancy and when the customer moved into their home.

Gardens

You must keep any sheds, other buildings (such as garages or greenhouses), gardens or grounds your home has clean and tidy. This includes dustbin areas.

Do Accent have any properties within conservation areas?

Yes, Accent do have properties within conservation areas, and these are managed accordingly.

Do Accent have a record of all trees within their land and their gradings according to the BS5837 system?

Accent does not keep a full register of all trees on our land assessed against the BS5837 standard. This standard is mainly used when trees are being assessed as part of new developments or planning applications, rather than for day-to-day tree care.

Instead, we manage our trees by carrying out inspections based on safety, condition, and potential risk. This means we focus our time and resources on trees that may need attention, rather than producing detailed surveys for every tree.

This approach allows us to manage trees responsibly, address issues where they matter most, and keep costs proportionate for residents.

Are customers informed of the tree grading when they take over a tenancy?

Tree grading does not apply to trees in private gardens, as these trees are not routinely surveyed by Accent.

Customers do not have buildings insurance. Do Accent insurances cover the trees in the customers' gardens? Would they be claiming on any insurances in the event of a tree causing extensive damage?

If damage is caused by a tree because of a storm or ground movement (subsidence), this would usually be covered by Accent's insurance. Any insurance claim would be made by Accent, not the customer. This is because customers do not insure the property themselves. Problems linked to routine tree maintenance, such as pruning or general upkeep, are not covered by insurance and would be managed separately.

Would Accent consider publishing images of examples of diseased trees?

We understand why examples of diseased trees might feel helpful, and we've considered whether this is something we could provide. However, in practice this is a very broad and complex area. There are many different types of tree disease, caused by things like fungi, bacteria, pests, or structural decay. These conditions can look very different depending on the type of tree, the time of year, and how advanced the issue is.

Sharing a small number of example images could be misleading, as trees with different problems can look similar. Without a professional assessment, this may unintentionally encourage residents to try to diagnose issues themselves. There's also a risk this could lead to confusion or disputes, for example if a tree appears to look like an online example and expectations are raised about removal or action being taken.

For these reasons, we don't feel that publishing examples would be helpful overall and believe it could create more problems than benefits. Instead, concerns about trees are best assessed case by case by qualified professionals, to ensure the right decision is made.

There is currently no inspection of trees in customers gardens, will this be introduced if the annual customer review comes into effect?

There are currently no plans to introduce routine tree inspections within private gardens as part of the annual customer review process. Extending inspections in this way would have wider implications around cost, liability, and consistency across our homes.

That said, Accent will always review individual cases where a specific health and safety concern is raised. Any reported issues are considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure risks are managed appropriately.

Do Accent require hedges within customers gardens to be kept under 2 meters in height? How do they currently regulate this?

Looking after gardens, including hedges, is normally the resident's responsibility. However, Accent may step in if a hedge causes a safety risk, creates an obstruction, or becomes a nuisance, in line with the tenancy agreement.

If a hedge is over two metres high and is having a significant impact on a neighbour's enjoyment of their home, neighbours can also raise concerns through the High Hedges legislation.

Each situation is considered on a case-by-case basis, considering safety, impact on others, and the relevant tenancy conditions.

Appendices attached:	Appendix 1: Tree Assessment Framework
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Appendix 1: Tree Assessment Framework

Accent Framework: When to Intervene with Trees in Tenants' Private Gardens

We Will Not Intervene If:

- Tree is manageable and no vulnerabilities apply
- No evidence of risk, hardship, or historic neglect
- Work is purely cosmetic or tenant-planted
- Tenant has resources or capacity to manage

Three or more must apply for Accent to review:

Criteria	When Accent May Intervene	What Does NOT Qualify	Required Evidence	Assessment Checklist
Health & Safety: Access / Light	Tree blocks communal access or shared lighting pathways	Minor overgrowth in private garden; reduced private light	Photos, contractor note, tenant report	<input type="checkbox"/> Affects shared space, not just private garden <input type="checkbox"/> Obstructs route or light essential for safety
Health & Safety: Slip/Trip Hazard (e.g. leaf fall)	Tree causes persistent leaf build-up on hard surfaces, tenant is permanently mobility-impaired, and has no support or means to manage it	General seasonal leaf fall; tenant able-bodied or has help; garden is mainly lawn	Photos of affected area, evidence of mobility issue, financial hardship indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Repeated build-up on paving/steps <input type="checkbox"/> Tenant has permanent mobility issue <input type="checkbox"/> No informal help <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot afford gardener
Health & Safety: Property Damage	Tree is demonstrably causing damage to paths, patios, gutters, drains, walls	General tree growth; potential risk with no current damage	Contractor report, photo evidence, survey if needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical damage visible or confirmed <input type="checkbox"/> Tree in tenant garden <input type="checkbox"/> Costly or unsafe to leave unresolved
Encroachment into Neighbouring/Communal Land	Tree significantly encroaches into communal land or causes a dispute where the tenant cannot resolve due to vulnerability or hardship	Branches overhanging into another private garden with no dispute or access issue	Neighbour complaint, photos, contractor input, documentation of tenant hardship	<input type="checkbox"/> Communal land or proven neighbour dispute <input type="checkbox"/> Tenant unable to resolve <input type="checkbox"/> Potential safeguarding or complaints
Tenant Vulnerability	Tenant is elderly, disabled, frail or has long-term mobility issues	Temporary illness or injury; no evidence of reduced capacity	Medical note, support worker input, tenancy vulnerability flag	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability is permanent or long-term <input type="checkbox"/> Living alone or lacks support

Financial Hardship	Tenant is on means-tested benefits, in arrears, or confirmed unable to afford tree work (especially if specialist)	General statement of hardship with no supporting documents	Evidence of UC/HB, arrears, support worker note, advice agency input	<input type="checkbox"/> Receives benefits or arrears on record <input type="checkbox"/> No ability to pay for private contractor <input type="checkbox"/> Support service confirms hardship
Safeguarding Risk	Tree issue is contributing to wider safeguarding concerns – e.g., neighbour conflict, threats, intimidation, or emotional distress in vulnerable household	General dislike of neighbour or tree	Safeguarding report, SHP referral, complaint evidence	<input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding referral made <input type="checkbox"/> Tree part of wider issue <input type="checkbox"/> Incident has emotional/social impact
ASB Link or Dispute	Tree is involved in or escalating an ongoing ASB dispute that housing cannot resolve without intervention	Single complaint with no further evidence or context	ASB case record, incident reports, complaint logs	<input type="checkbox"/> ASB case is open or recent <input type="checkbox"/> Tree is directly mentioned <input type="checkbox"/> Intervention may reduce ongoing conflict

Clarified Summary:

A tree is considered “**not manageable**” when it cannot be safely maintained from ground level using domestic tools, or when it requires working at height, power tools, or professional intervention due to health and safety risks.

Assessment Area	Indicators of “Small Enough”	Y/N	Indicators of “Not Manageable”	Y/N
Tree Size / Height	Under approx. 5–6 metres (16–20 feet)		Over 6 metres tall, mature canopy, or substantial trunk girth	
Tree Type / Species	Ornamental, small fruit trees, young birch/rowan		Large species (e.g., sycamore, oak), fast-growing conifers, or invasive species	
Maintenance Required	Occasional light pruning using basic tools (e.g., secateurs, loppers) from ground level		Requires working at height (e.g., elevated branches beyond safe reach), or use of power tools or specialist equipment	
Garden Access / Layout	Flat, accessible ground with clear working space around the tree		On slopes, behind overgrowth, near unstable surfaces, or inaccessible areas	

Health & Safety Risk	No immediate hazard to people, buildings, or pathways		Overhanging structures, dead branches, near power lines, or root damage to property	
Resident's Capacity	Resident is physically able, has tools or informal support (e.g., family or neighbours)		Resident has health limitations (e.g., fibromyalgia, mobility issues) or no access to support	
Customer vulnerability	The customer has capable adults or older dependants living in the home who can reasonably assist with the maintenance.		Household members cannot assist due to disability, health conditions, or other verified vulnerabilities. There is evidence of financial hardship preventing the customer from arranging the work independently.	
Other Considerations	No safeguarding or tenancy risk		Tree exacerbates vulnerability, tenancy breach risk, or environmental health issues	