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## TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

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Meeting to be held in Civic Hall, Leeds, LS1 1UR on  
Wednesday, 6th April, 2016 at 1.30 pm

*(A pre-meeting will take place for ALL Members of the Board at 1.00 p.m.)*

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### MEMBERSHIP

Sallie Bannatyne

Olga Gailite

John Gittos (Chair)

Christine Gregory

Michael Healey

Maddy Hunter

Peter Middleton

Roderic Morgan

Jackie Worthington

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*Please note: Certain or all items on this agenda may be recorded*

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# A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p><b>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <p>1 To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report.</p> <p>2 To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information.</p> <p>3 If so, to formally pass the following resolution:-</p> <p><b>RESOLVED –</b> That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:</p> <p><b>No exempt items have been identified.</b></p>	
2			<p><b>LATE ITEMS</b></p> <p>To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.</p> <p>(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes.)</p>	
3			<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
4			<p><b>MINUTES - 3 FEBRUARY 2016</b></p> <p>To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2016.</p>	1 - 4
5			<p><b>INQUIRY - ENVIRONMENT OF ESTATES - DRAFT SCRUTINY REPORT</b></p> <p>To agree the Board's Inquiry report into the Environment of Estates.</p>	5 - 22
6			<p><b>MOBILE WORKING FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT OFFICERS</b></p> <p>To receive a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development providing an update on mobile working for Housing Management Officers.</p>	23 - 24
7			<p><b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD</b></p> <p>To receive a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development detailing the future administrative support arrangements for Tenant Scrutiny Board.</p>	25 - 26
8			<p><b>CHAIR'S UPDATE</b></p> <p>To receive an update from the Chair on scrutiny activity, not specifically included on this agenda, since the previous Board meeting.</p>	27 - 28

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
9			<p><b>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>The following meeting dates have been agreed for the 2016/17 municipal year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 June 2016</li> <li>• 29 June 2016</li> <li>• 3 August 2016</li> <li>• 31 August 2016</li> <li>• 28 September 2016</li> <li>• 26 October 2016</li> <li>• 30 November 2016</li> <li>• 21 December 2016</li> <li>• 1 Feb 2017</li> <li>• 1 March 2017</li> <li>• 26 April 2017.</li> </ul> <p>All the above meetings to take place on a Wednesday at 1.30 pm with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 1.00 pm.</p> <p>Meetings to be held at Leeds Civic Hall, Committee Room 6/7 wherever possible.</p>	

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
			<p><b>THIRD PARTY RECORDING</b></p> <p>Recording of this meeting is allowed to enable those not present to see or hear the proceedings either as they take place (or later) and to enable the reporting of those proceedings. A copy of the recording protocol is available from the contacts named on the front of this agenda.</p> <p>Use of Recordings by Third Parties– code of practice</p> <p>a) Any published recording should be accompanied by a statement of when and where the recording was made, the context of the discussion that took place, and a clear identification of the main speakers and their role or title.</p> <p>b) Those making recordings must not edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or comments made by attendees. In particular there should be no internal editing of published extracts; recordings may start at any point and end at any point but the material between those points must be complete.</p>	

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## TENANT SCRUTINY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 2016

**PRESENT:** John Gittos in the Chair

Sallie Bannatyne, Christine Gregory,  
Michael Healey, Maddy Hunter,  
Peter Middleton, Roderic Morgan  
and Jackie Worthington

**50 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were no exempt items.

**51 Late Items**

There were no late items.

**52 Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was submitted by Olga Gailite.

**53 Minutes - 6 January 2016**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2016 be approved as a correct record.

**54 Chair's Update**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided the Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board with an opportunity to update Board Members on some of the areas of work and activity since the January meeting.

The Chair advised that he had attended Scrutiny Board (Environment & Housing) on 2 February 2016, at which PCSOs, flooding, homelessness and other matters were discussed.

**RESOLVED** – That the above update be received and noted.

**55 Discussion with Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Board Member (Communities)**

The Board welcomed to the meeting, Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Board Member (Communities) to discuss the work and ambitions of the Tenant Scrutiny Board and possible future areas for Scrutiny.

The Chair invited questions and the key areas of discussion were:

- Flooding
- PCSOs, funding and deployment
- Letting and Management Policy
- Universal Credit roll out in Leeds
- The role of the Credit Union in helping those affected by Universal Credit

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That Councillor Coupar be thanked for attending the Board
- (b) That arrangements be made for Tenant Scrutiny Board to be consulted during the development of a Lettings and Management Policy.

**56 Scrutiny Inquiry - Environment of Estates**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented information as part of the Board's Inquiry on the Environment of Estates. This included a written report detailing the outcome of the questionnaire sent to all tenants and resident groups, the 11 Housing Advisory panels and 37 Service Improvement Volunteers.

This was the Board's last evidence gathering session for the Inquiry therefore the Board concluded the session with a discussion with those officers who attended the Board in September 2015 at the beginning of the Inquiry.

The following were in attendance to respond to Board member questions;

- Jill Wildman, Interim Chief Officer (Housing Management)
- Jason Singh, Locality Manager
- Simon Frosdick, Business Development Manager, Parks and Countryside.

In summary the key areas of discussion were;

- The methodology used by the Board in gathering its evidence for this Inquiry.
- Progress made on developing a 'one council' partnership approach to estate management.
- Progress on the estate walkabout harmonisation project and the submission already made by the Board to that work.
- The harmonisation of 'systems' across the different services.
- The concept of a special annual walkabout which would involve all agencies.
- Clarification on the 'mapping' process.
- The responsibility of tenants in relation to gardens.
- The potential to roll out community 'tool banks' and associated funding sources.



- Weed management.
- The management of waste.
- The one piece of rubbish campaign. <http://www.1pieceofrubbish.com/>
- The concept of involving private home owners in the activities on estates.
- Garages

Concluding the discussion, the Chair thanked attending officers for their input to the Inquiry and the support provided. The Board would now draft its final Inquiry report with the intention that this is discussed at the March meeting.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That officers be thanked for their attendance and support during this Inquiry
- (b) That the findings of the questionnaire be noted
- (c) That the Chair in conjunction with the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development draft a final report.

#### **57 Recommendation Tracking - ATV Inquiry**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a recommendation tracking report in relation to the Boards Annual tenancy Visit Inquiry.

The following were in attendance to answer any questions;

- Sharon Guy, Housing Manager (Customer Relations, Tenant Scrutiny, Tenant Involvement and Equality
- Lee Ward, Neighbourhood Services Officer.

The Board reviewed the status of each recommendation and concluded that recommendations two three, five, six, seven and eight be regarded as achieved and required no further monitoring. Recommendations one, nine and 10 be classified as 'Not fully implemented' (progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring). It was noted that Housing Leeds had not agreed to the Board's recommendation 4. It was agreed therefore that no further monitoring would take place.

The Board also agreed that it would submit a further recommendation to Housing Leeds requesting that tenants be made aware of home insurance options, during contact time, for example home visits. (within the constraints of not selling a particular product)

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) To agree the status of the Board's recommendations
- (b) To submit a further recommendation to Housing Leeds in relation to home insurance.

**58 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Wednesday, 2 March 2016 at 1.30pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 1.00pm)

(The meeting concluded at 3.30pm)



Report author: Peter Marrington

Tel: 0113 39 51151

## Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

### Report to Tenant Scrutiny Board

**Date: 6 April 2016**

### **Subject: Inquiry - Environment of Estates – Draft Scrutiny Report**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

1. This year, the Scrutiny Board had undertaken an in-depth inquiry into the Environment of Estates. Terms of reference for this inquiry were agreed by the Board in September 2015.
2. This inquiry has now concluded and the Board is in a position to report on its findings and recommendations resulting from the evidence gathered. The Board's draft report is attached.
3. Once the Board publishes its final report, the appropriate Director(s) will be asked to formally respond to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations within three months.

### Recommendations

5. Members are asked to consider and agree the Board's report following its inquiry into Environment of Estates.

### Background documents<sup>1</sup>

6. None used

<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

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**Environment of Estates  
Tenant Scrutiny Board  
April 2016**

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**DRAFT**



# Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

**Desired Outcome** – Assurances that the 'One Council' approach is operating at estate level

**Recommendation 1** – That the Tenant Scrutiny Board review in September 2016 progress made towards service harmonisation and the implementation of the 'one council approach'.

**Desired Outcome** – An improved walkabout process

**Recommendation 2** – That the following be considered as part of the current harmonisation project and that the results of the harmonisation project be reported back to Tenant Scrutiny Board

- Better communication of estate walkabouts with greater lead in time
- Proactive campaign to increase tenant participation both at walkabouts and in other associations
- That for some walkabouts specific agencies attend at the request of Housing Leeds to target particular issues.
- All ward councillors and those attending receive outcome reports following walkabouts
- All actions agreed happen within agreed timescales
- Uniform reporting template
- Use of compliment letters
- Consistent approach to enforcement

**Desired Outcome** – Cleaner estates

**Recommendation 3** – That the Council introduces the best waste collection solution for individual estates, even if that results in variations across the city.

**Desired Outcome** – Cleaner estates and better educated residents on the issue of waste

**Recommendation 4** – That the Council

- Provides more bins on estates
- Ensures the timely removal of full glass banks
- Introduces more clean up days
- Undertakes an education campaign to raise variations across the city.

**Desired Outcome** – Improved appearance of gardens

**Recommendation 5** – That appropriate enforcement action is taken to ensure tenants fulfil their tenancy agreement with regards to the upkeep of gardens.

**Desired Outcome** – Improved knowledge of tenants as to their responsibilities

**Recommendation 6** – That the responsibilities of tenants with regards their gardens are clearly communicated, particularly during pre-tenancy training.



# Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

**Desired Outcome** – Providing tenants with the tools to keep their gardens neat and tidy

**Recommendation 7** – That Housing Leeds encourages and facilitates the start-up of tool bank schemes.

**Desired Outcome** – A better understanding by tenants of what is achievable and within what timescales

**Recommendation 8** – That greater publicity be given to the constraints faced by the Council in terms of grounds maintenance.

**Desired Outcome** – Up to date map

**Recommendation 9** – That Parks and Countryside in liaison with Housing Leeds pro-actively identify those areas 'not on the map' and action accordingly

**Desired Outcome** – Improved garage policy

**Recommendation 10** – That Housing Leeds reports back to Tenant Scrutiny Board back on any recommendations and or proposed policy changes following its review of garages.

**Desired Outcome** – The development of tenant associations which can help deliver estate initiatives

**Recommendation 11** – That Housing Leeds pro-actively encourages and supports the development of tenant associations in those areas where such activity is low.





# Introduction and Scope

## Introduction

1. This is our second Inquiry report since the amalgamation of the scrutiny panels previously established under the three ALMOs.
2. Our first Inquiry report looked at Annual Home Visits. Ten recommendations were put forward to Housing Leeds nine of which were agreed. This second report focuses on the Environment of Estates.
3. The Board chose this topic as there was a strong belief that good housing and the welfare of tenants was not just about decent buildings but the 'whole environment' in which tenants lived. It was acknowledged that often the reputation of an area was determined by factors other than the state of the house. These included landscaping, gardens and the management of waste.
4. Terms of Reference for this Inquiry were agreed on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015 when we concluded that the purpose of the Inquiry would be to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
  - Performance measuring
  - Customer satisfaction.
5. The Inquiry was conducted over six formal evidence gathering sessions which took place between September 2015 and February 2016.
6. Members of the Board also undertook extensive site visits, attending local 'estate walkabouts'. We also met with local ward members and conducted surveys with residents and tenant groups.
7. We would like to thank all those involved in this Inquiry. A full list of those who participated is detailed at the end of this report.

## Scope of the Inquiry

3. The Board chose this topic as there was a strong belief that good housing and the welfare of tenants was not just about decent buildings but the 'whole environment' in which tenants lived. It was acknowledged that often the reputation of an area was determined by factors other than the state of the house. These included landscaping, gardens and the management of waste.
4. Terms of Reference for this Inquiry were agreed on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015 when we concluded that the purpose of the Inquiry would be to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
  - Current policies
  - Tenant involvement
  - Co-ordination of services and agencies
  - Developing and delivering standards



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Partnership working and the harmonisation of Services

8. It is clear that Partnership Working – all council teams that contribute to the estates being kept clean and tidy, (Housing, Localities , Parks, Waste Services and Civic Enterprise Leeds) coming together at Team leader level is key to better estate environment.
9. It is crucial that these teams forge closer working relationships in order to develop and implement shared local Estate Improvement Plans and jointly problem solve local estate management issues.
10. We acknowledge the progress made in this regard, but by officers own admission there is more to do, particularly with regards the harmonisation of services and systems.
11. We are of the view that we will only be able to claim that partnership working has truly been achieved when the tenant experiences a seamless service and where officers talk in terms of working for Leeds City Council rather than their individual service areas.
12. The Tenant Scrutiny Board is very willing to offer input to the harmonisation of services and provide the tenants perspective.

**Recommendation 1** – That the Tenant Scrutiny Board review in September 2016 progress made towards service harmonisation and the implementation of the ‘one council approach’.

## Estate Walkabouts

13. One such harmonisation project is the harmonisation of estate walkabouts. During the course of our Inquiry we undertook seven walkabouts on estates in Bramley, Moortown, Armley and Beeston and Holbeck. These were followed with discussions with the relevant Housing Officers and local ward Councillors. Our findings have already been submitted to officers undertaking the harmonisation project; however we share them again here. Our input is intended to act as a helpful contribution by putting forward a series of observations and recommendations.

### Observations

#### Feedback from Tenant attendance at Walkabouts

14. A number of common themes emerged from these discussions. Those being:
  - The lack of tenant involvement in walkabouts
  - The role of local ward members in the walkabouts
  - A discussion on the best people to attend walkabouts. There was a



# Conclusions and Recommendations

general consensus that there would be no added value for a PCSO to attend, but a close relationship with housing officers was required. A concern expressed by the Board was the regular movement of PCSOs between estates often resulting in residents not knowing who their local PCSO officer was. The Board acknowledges that operational duties will, on occasions, require the movement of PCSOs; however the goal should be to have a consistent and known presence. The Board also emphasised the value of CCTV and acknowledges that the use of CCTV on estates would help against anti social behaviour and requested that when the budget allows more cameras should be considered in areas where they would serve as a deterrent. There was further consensus that whilst desirable, it was unrealistic to have a member of the locality team on the walkabouts due to limited resources. This therefore should be compensated by a close working relationship between the locality team and housing office. However in conceding that there were not enough locality officers to attend all walkabouts, this did, raise the question in as to whether there were enough locality managers in post generally to deal with the numerous issues identified by the walkabouts.

- How owner occupiers on estates are integrated into the activities and community of estates
- The general need for agencies to manage tenants expectations by being clear as to what services and be provided and in what time scales
- The need for Housing Managers and Team Leaders to be aware of issues

so as to be able to target the appropriate resources to deal with recurring issues

## Feedback from Member questionnaire

15. As part of our evidence gathering methodology we sent a questionnaire, specifically in relation to estate 'walkabouts' to all 99 ward Councillors. (Shown as appendix 1). The following was noted:

- 32 Ward Councillors representing 25 out of the 33 wards responded
- 100% of Councillors had attended a walkabout, 98% in the last 12 months
- All stated that the process was useful

## Positive comments included

- Ideal way to develop relationships with housing officers
- Important for tenants to see that councillors and officers are interested and care
- Important to see estates for oneself
- Good way of identifying other 'personal' issues
- Good way to share perspectives and establish good practice
- Provides the opportunity for ward Councillors to set clear expectations and to set standards for the environment
- Provides opportunities to monitor the consistency in performance of housing officers



# Conclusions and Recommendations

- Provides the opportunity to gather the intelligence needed to target resources

Negative comments included;

- lack of notice over times
- diary clashes
- poor communication over pending visits resulting in low tenant involvement

## Comments from Ward Councillors of estates visited

16. Some ward Councillors had fed back that they received the reports of walkabouts even if they had not attended, however this was not consistent across the city. Others stated that the walkabout should be used to identify and compliment those tenants who kept a tidy and pleasant environment and to start enforcement action on those in breach of their tenancies.
17. A recurring theme was the importance of ensuring that actions agreed happened in a timely manner and the importance of 'joined up working' between the different agencies and council departments. It was also acknowledged that the process of picking up actions during walkabouts illustrated previous 'system failures'. It was suggested that at least once a year *all* appropriate agencies undertake a joint walkabout.
18. All ward Councillors stated that the estate walkabout was only one of a number of ways in which they gained knowledge and an understanding of

their estates. Other methods cited included; street surgeries, casework, attendance at tenant/community group meetings, private walkabouts, correspondence and membership on HAP.

19. The Tenant Scrutiny Board would make the following recommendations.

**Recommendation 2** – That the following be considered as part of the current harmonisation project and that the results of the harmonisation project be reported back to Tenant Scrutiny Board

- Better communication of estate walkabouts with greater lead in time
- Proactive campaign to increase tenant participation both at walkabouts and in other associations
- That for some walkabouts specific agencies (particularly locality officers) attend at the request of Housing Leeds to target particular issues
- All ward councillors and those attending to receive outcome reports following walkabouts
- All actions agreed happen within agreed timescales
- Uniform reporting template
- Use of compliment letters
- Consistent approach to enforcement

## Waste Management



# Conclusions and Recommendations

20. The biggest issue we found on estates from the perspective of tenants, officers and elected members was waste management and general issues around litter.

21. Our immediate thoughts on this brought us to the conclusion that one size cannot fit all. We are aware of the on-going work between services as part of the High Rise Project to review waste management in high rise blocks. We also acknowledge that development is on-going of a pilot scheme in Lincoln Green to provide a bulky waste collection service, improve recycling and reduce fly tipping in and around blocks.

22. We are aware that many households cannot have wheeled bins. This is usually where it is not safe to wheel the bin to the kerbside for collection. In lots of situations this does mean that households have a bag collection service. In a few areas there are communal waste facilities where residents take their bagged waste to a large bin away from the property. A large proportion of these are high rise properties.

23. We are also aware that in parts of Headingley, green bins have been withdrawn and an 'opt in' service introduced.

24. It is with these varying arrangements in mind that lead us to conclude that estates need bespoke arrangements as far as is practically possible and consideration should be given to such an approach.

**Recommendation 3** – That the Council introduces the best waste collection solution for individual estates, even if that results in variations across the city.

25. On a practical level we are of the view that more general bins and dog waste bins should be located on estates. A common complaint from residents is that the lack of such bins can encourage littering. Also glass bins are often left full encouraging residents to leave bottles nearby.

26. We also recommend the greater use of 'clean up days' with skips strategically placed around estates.

27. Our final comment in relation to waste is the need to better educate residents on the waste arrangements in their particular estates.

## **Recommendation 4** – That the Council

- Provides more bins on estates
- Ensures the timely removal of full glass banks
- Introduces more clean up days
- Undertakes an education campaign to raise variations across the city.

## **Garden and Common Land Management**

28. It was clear from our walkabouts that a common frustration amongst residents and officers was the unkempt nature of some gardens and common land. In the majority of cases unkempt gardens are the result of tenants not fulfilling their tenancy agreement. It is our view that in such circumstances appropriate



# Conclusions and Recommendations

enforcement should be taken. This should be consistent across the city.

**Recommendation 5** – That appropriate enforcement action is taken to ensure tenants fulfil their tenancy agreement with regards to the upkeep of gardens.

29. On other occasions unkempt gardens can be the result of lack of knowledge regarding responsibilities. For example some hedges are part of the boundary to tenanted properties so would fall to the occupant to maintain as part of a tenancy agreement. This is not always understood or accepted by the tenant and needs intervention from local housing staff. We understand that Housing Leeds is considering introducing pre tenancy training. We would recommend that garden maintenance figures highly in that training

**Recommendation 6** – That the responsibilities of tenants with regards their gardens are clearly communicated, particularly during pre-tenancy training.

30. We would also invite Housing officers to review their working practices in relation to enforcement. We learnt that some officers would deal with issues via a 'letter through the door'. Others would adopt the approach of knocking on doors and speaking to tenants.

31. Our recent inquiry into home visits emphasised the need for housing officers to have a relationship with their tenants. We think this is better achieved by face to face relationships rather than by letters.

32. We are also aware that the other side of enforcement is the acknowledgement of responsible behaviour. We would therefore encourage the Council to look at how it might reward such behaviour, whether that is through material award or through the lettings policy,

33. We are aware of an initiative in Middleton around 'tool banks'. This is a scheme whereby small garden tools may be hired/loaned out to those who may not otherwise have access to such equipment thus helping people who may struggle maintaining their gardens. Lack of money to purchase the necessary equipment and the means to store it is often an issue for tenants. The idea of the scheme is not only to help tenants keep nice gardens, but also to improve how neighborhoods look.

34. The Scheme in Middleton is supported financially by local ward Members and the Community Committee. However it is not run by the Council. We acknowledge that there is a view expressed by some officers that such schemes would achieve better success if not Council managed and to a certain extent we agree with that view. However, it must be recognised that not all areas have the strong community organisations required to start and run



# Conclusions and Recommendations

such a scheme. We therefore recommend that Housing Leeds encourages and facilitates the start-up of tool bank schemes in other areas and where appropriate encourage local management.

**Recommendation 7** – That Housing Leeds encourages and facilitates the start-up of tool bank schemes.

35. The management of the Grounds Maintenance contract is undertaken by Parks and Countryside with works including the cutting of grass plots within housing areas and highway verges along with the pruning and weeding of planted areas such as shrub and rose beds. The works are undertaken by an external contractor, Continental Landscapes Ltd within a contract that commenced in 2012.
36. As a result of our Inquiry the Board has a much better understanding of some of the constraints faced by Parks and Countryside in the management of common land. For example hedges that don't fall within the responsibility of tenants this are maintained as part of the grounds contract with Continental.
37. There is legislation that prevents the Council cutting hedges during the bird nesting season unless there is a clear risk to safety. The season is accepted as being March to August and whilst it is not impossible to cut back hedges in this window it is normal practice not to do so.
38. This does sometimes lead to complaints from residents that the council is failing but the penalties (and reputational

damage to Leeds City Council) should a nest be disturbed and a prosecution brought, are not insignificant.

39. Similarly, we now better understand issues around weed killing and the legislative restrictions on chemicals that can be used.
40. Given the above, we are of the view that better publicity around the constraints faced by the Council would help considerably to reduce tenant's expectations and therefore complaints.

**Recommendation 8** – That greater publicity be given to the constraints faced by the Council in terms of grounds maintenance.

41. Another type of complaint we heard from residents was that often they were told that common land was not been managed as it was 'not on the map'. We were advised that Continental Landscapes Ltd work to an electronic 'map'. Therefore if an area had not been highlighted for inclusion on the map by the former ALMOs it was not included in the data base for works and would be referred to as 'not on the map'. We were told that these areas were being corrected as and when identified.

**Recommendation 9** – That Parks and Countryside in liaison with Housing Leeds pro-actively identify those areas 'not on the map' and action accordingly.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Garages

42. The Board briefly discussed the issue of garages. We are aware that not all garages are in a good condition. Empty ones are often vandalised and many are of poor design. We welcome therefore the proposed review of this area by Housing Leeds and would be pleased to make any relevant contribution to the review.

**Recommendation 10** – That Housing Leeds reports back to Tenant Scrutiny Board on any recommendations and or proposed policy changes following its review of garages.

## Resident Associations

43. It is our view that the success of many estate initiatives rely on the presence of strong tenant associations. We are aware that in some areas association activity is limited or non-existent. We recommend that Housing Leeds pro-actively encourage the establishment of tenant associations in those areas where participation is low.

**Recommendation 11** – That Housing Leeds pro-actively encourages and supports the development of tenant associations in those areas where such activity is low.





# Evidence and Witnesses

## Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

## Reports and Publications Submitted

- Terms of Reference for the Board's inquiry into Environment of estates
- Estate Inspection/Walkabout questionnaire and responses to tenants and tenant groups
- Estate Inspection/Walkabout questionnaire and responses to Elected Members
- Report of Board members in relation to site visits and walkabouts

## Witnesses Heard

- Susan Upton, Chief Officer (Waste Management)
- Jill Wildman, Interim Chief Officer Housing Management
- Jason Singh, Locality Manager
- Simon Frosdick, Business Development manager, Parks and Countryside
- Sharon Guy, Housing Manager (Customer Relations, tenant Scrutiny, tenant Involvement and Equality)
- Sgt. Jon Glennon, Safer Leeds/West Yorkshire Police
- David Longthorpe, Head of Housing management
- Judith Wray, Housing Manager
- Lynn Richards, Housing Manager
- Baldev Dass, Housing manager
- Rebecca Smith, Housing Manager
- Akhwan Ali, Housing Manager
- Sam Costigan, Housing Manager
- Peter Wajdner, Team Leader
- Councillor Adam Ogilvie
- Councillor Angela Gabriel
- Councillor Caroline Gruen
- Councillor Kevin Ritchie
- Councillor Sharon Hamilton
- Debra Harding, Operations Manager, (Contact Centre.)



# Evidence and Witnesses

## **Dates of Scrutiny**

Tenant Scrutiny Board meetings on:

- 2 September 2015
- 7 October 2015
- 4 November 2015
- 2 December 2015
- 6 January 2016
- 3 February 2016
- 2 March 2016
- 6 April 2016

Site Visits/walkabouts

- 8 October 2015 - Armley Ward, Cedars and surrounding areas
- 8 October 2015 – Moortown Ward, Brackenwoods, Larkhills, Lincombes
- 13 October 2015 – Bramley Ward, Church Hills, Britannia's and Stanningley Ct
- 13 October 2015 – Beeston & Holbeck, Cottingley Drive
- 13 October 2015 - Beeston & Holbeck Ward, Cottingley, Cottingley Heights
- 21 October 2015 – Bramley Ward, Fairfields
- 21 October 2015 – Moortown Ward, Leafields

DRAFT

**Tenant Scrutiny Board  
Environment of Estates March 2016  
Report author: Peter Marrington**

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## Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

### Report to Tenant Scrutiny Board

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

### **Subject: Mobile Working for Housing Management Officers**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

#### **1.0 Summary of main issues**

- 1.1 At the Board's meeting of October 2015 an update was provided on a pilot scheme to introduce mobile working for Housing Officers, following recommendations made by Tenant Scrutiny Board, as part of its Annual Home Visit Inquiry.
- 1.2 It was noted that a report was to be submitted to the Senior Leadership team with a view to rolling out the selected mobile solution to all Housing Officers before the end of the current financial year.
- 1.3 The pilot identified a number of positive outcomes for staff including the ability to run more effective surgeries on estates, resolve tenant enquiries in their homes, completing issues at the first point of contact, and further time saving benefits have been seen through Housing Officers no longer needing to obtain information in the office before working on our estates.
- 1.4 Issues were raised during testing of the tablets by officers around connectivity to the mobile network which had an impact on the practical use of the devices.
- 1.5 With current technology, this was felt an insurmountable issue at present and as a result a decision was made to move away from tablets to small laptops.
- 1.6 To resolve the issue of a reliable signal, a MiFi unit will be used. MiFi units are compact, wireless devices that enable multiple users to share a single mobile broadband connection while Officers are on site. MiFis work by creating a localised signal, like wireless routers used for home broadband.

- 1.7 A MiFi unit works by tapping into 3G or 4G mobile phone networks and using this connection to create a mini wireless broadband cloud. This can be shared between mobile internet-enabled devices, such as mobile phones and laptops that are within range of its signal.
- 1.8 MiFi offers advantages over dongles in that they do not need to be plugged in to the device they are connecting to the internet. This means they can be placed in an optimum position to ensure a good signal, thus allowing users to overcome some of the problems associated with using a dongle.
- 1.9 Although the decision has been taken to move away from tablet based devices, this does not impact on the overall scope of the project to provide a mobile working solution for officers and the benefits this brings.
- 1.10 Staff will be provided with a backpack to carry both the laptop and Mifi unit in. They will initially be rolled out to the centralised Income team who are working on Universal Credit.
- 1.11 The devices will then progress to Housing Office staff on a prioritisation basis starting with the relocation of staff to the Community HUBS. A rolling programme of the devices will take place during 2016.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Board is requested to;
  - (i) Note the contents of this report and progress made to roll out mobile working across Housing Management.
  - (ii) Note that the move from tablet based devices to small laptops does not impact on the overall original benefits from mobile working.

## **3.0 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 3.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

## Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

### Report to Tenant Scrutiny Board

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

### **Subject: Administrative Support Arrangements for Tenant Scrutiny Board**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

#### **1.0 Summary of main issues**

- 1.1 At the Board's informal meeting in March 2016 a discussion was held on the changes to how Tenant Scrutiny Board would be supported in the future. It was agreed that this matter should be reported at today's meeting in order to formally record the views of Board members.
  
- 1.2 Following the amalgamation of the three ALMO Scrutiny Boards into the existing city wide Tenant Scrutiny Board, administrative support has been provided by Democratic Services, in conjunction with Housing Leeds, specifically the Housing Manager, Customer Relations, Tenant Scrutiny, Tenant Involvement, Equality & Diversity (Sharon Guy).
  
- 1.3 A review of this support has taken place which has concluded that from the June 2016 meeting, support to Tenant Scrutiny Board will be provided by the Housing Manager, Customer Relations, Tenant Scrutiny, Tenant Involvement, Equality & Diversity and her team.
  
- 1.4 In making this decision officers are aware that the Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board has, quite rightly, raised the issue of continuity of service and the independence of this support.
  
- 1.5 The Tenant & Community Involvement Section within Housing Leeds, in which the post of Housing Manager, Customer Relations, Tenant Scrutiny, Tenant Involvement, Equality & Diversity sits is specifically established to provide support to tenants and facilitate tenant 'challenge' to the services and performance of Housing Leeds. This will ensure that the advice given to Tenant Scrutiny in undertaking its Scrutiny functions will remain independent from Housing Leeds.

1.6 This independence will be further cemented by the Board's Terms of reference which state;

*"The Tenant Scrutiny Board provides independent, customer focused scrutiny which will robustly challenge policy practice and performance to ensure that Leeds City Council provides a high quality housing service that retains tenants at the heart of the organisation".*

1.7 Existing procedure rules will remain, providing the Tenant Scrutiny Board authority to call officers before them and to receive relevant information.

1.8 There is a clear commitment from the City Council to ensure Tenant Scrutiny Board is supported in undertaking its Scrutiny role. This commitment is not compromised by the changes in officer support detailed above.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 The Board is requested to;

- (i) Note the changes in officer support provided by Leeds City Council to the Tenant Scrutiny Board
- (ii) To review in six months whether the new support arrangements are providing the appropriate support and independence expected.

## **3.0 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

3.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.



**Report of Head of Scrutiny and Member Development**

**Report to Tenant Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 6 April 2016**

**Subject: Chair's Update Report – April 2016**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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**1 Purpose of this report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline some of the areas of work and activity of the Chair of the Scrutiny Board.

**2 Main issues**

2.1 Invariably, scrutiny activity often takes place outside of the formal monthly Tenant Scrutiny Board meetings. Such activity can take the form of specific activity and actions of the Chair of the Tenant Scrutiny Board.

2.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an opportunity to formally update the Tenant Scrutiny Board on activity since the last meeting, including any specific outcomes. It also provides an opportunity for members of the Tenant Scrutiny Board to identify and agree any further scrutiny activity that may be necessary.

2.3 The Chair and Head of Scrutiny and Member Development will provide a verbal update at the meeting, as required.

**3. Recommendations**

3.1 Members are asked to:

- a) Note the content of this report and the verbal update provided at the meeting.
- b) Identify any specific matters that may require further scrutiny input/ activity.

#### **4. Background papers<sup>1</sup>**

4.1 None used

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