

Report of: David Longthorpe, Head of Housing Management, Housing Leeds, ENE

Report to: Inner East Community Committee – Burmantofts & Richmond Hill, Gipton & Harehills and Killingbeck & Seacroft

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Update on Housing Leeds Restructure

Purpose of report

1. To update the Community Committee on the implementation of the new structure for the Housing Management Service for Council Housing for the whole city of Leeds which was outlined in the report to Community Committee the September 2014. The report also updates members on recent initiatives and projects in the area.

Main issues

2. Extensive recruitment and selection has taken place since September 2014 and the Management Teams are now in place across the city. The management team is now complete and is therefore as follows.

Area Housing Manager – Pam Parker

Housing Managers

Richmond Hill & Lincoln Green – Phil Diamond

Ebor Gardens – Paul Harris

Gipton & Harehills – Jamie Martin

Seacroft North & Boggart Hill – Mina Patel

Seacroft South & Cross Gates – Joanne Taylor

3. We have experienced a number of staff vacancies as we have not been able to fill all our posts from a single round of recruitment. There are still a couple of Housing Officer vacancies in the Inner East team and there will be a further Leeds City Council internal advert to recruit to these remaining posts. Staff from across the Inner and Outer North East teams have been working together to cover these vacancies and maintain service to tenants.
4. Training of new and previously specialist's staff is well under way with training already completed in Income Collection, Housing Benefit Advice and Safeguarding training, with further

training planned for March and April on the Grounds Maintenance Contract and Forestry delivered by Parks and Countryside staff.

5. One of our major tasks and challenges for 2015 is the harmonization of policy and procedures due to fact that all three former ALMOs had different Policy and Procedures and differing paperwork to support these procedures. Work has started coordinated by our Service Managers in Neighborhood Services. First areas to be brought together into one process are Income Collection and Tenancy Management to bring consistent ways of working. Work is also ongoing with consultation on Local Lettings Policies and a proposed move to a new approach called Community Lettings Policies.
6. Rent collection and arrears performance is a key priority for Housing Management and the new Income Improvement team have a number of projects for 2015 including
 - Multi Storey Flat DHP Project engaged with over 800 tenants this year affected by Under Occupation and living in a flat. The project helped a number of tenants into work and others getting prepared for work.
 - Tackling Loan Sharks and promoting Leeds City Credit Union,
 - SAFER project – tackling scams that target older people and doorstep sellers.
7. During February Housing Leeds joining forces with social landlords across the region, to shine a spotlight on tenancy fraud during Tenancy Fraud Week. 183 properties have now been recovered since 2008. In our new structure we have a specialist Housing Officer concentrating on investigating reports of Tenancy Fraud. -
8. All our 12 Tenant Involvement officers have now been recruited to, one for each Housing Advisory Panel (HAP) and one to support Leeds Tenant Federation. Their work involves working with HAPs to deliver projects which support healthy lifestyles, helping people out of financial hardship and strengthening local accountability and being more responsive to the needs of local communities. Year to date HAPs have supported 229 local projects around the city, averaging around £4,000. We are working closely with the Community Committees with area meetings and a task group to ensure continuity across both areas. A recent project has seen Winter Warm packs delivered to 300 of our elderly residents to help keep warm in the current cold period. The packs include water bottle, socks, gloves, fleece blanket flask and soup.
9. Locally in Inner East work will start shortly on improvements to the properties above the Lincoln Green Shops including CCTV part funded from the Housing Advisory Panel (HAP), new railings, painting, new asphalt to walkways and floor coverings to lobby areas. The first new council properties purchased from Bellway in the Thorns at Gipton have been allocated with 9 of the 13 properties being allocated to applicants from Gipton & Harehills Ward and the remainder had a local connection to the area. Further properties are due to handed over at the end of April. In Seacroft a new Residents Group has been established in the Monkswood area and the HAP funding a Community Notice Board for the group. HAP have also funded a new seating area for Bailey Towers and new waste storage area for Hansby Grange and Eastdean Grange.

Conclusion

10. Members are asked to note the information in this report and raise any questions.