

Walkabout Wednesday 21/10/2015

Area Fairfield Crescent , Bramley , LS13 3EB

Present Gloria Thompson (Housing Officer)
Jackie Worthington TSB)
Councillor Kevin Ritchie
John Gittos (TSB)

Problems observed on the walkabout

- No Tenant involvement
- No PCSO
- Lack of bins
- Untidy gardens
- Trees needed cutting
- Hedges trimming
- Reported work not being done
- Mobility scooters

No tenants were present on this walkabout and the housing officer and the councillor said this was a normal occurrence , when asked about the way they go about informing tenants of an intended walkabout it was done through the usual channels . There is no tenants association on the estate although there are plans to try and set one up but in the past it seems getting tenants to participate in the community has not been a great success .

No PCSO have ever attended the walkabout apparently and I am not convinced had there been one there today it would have been of any advantage to either housing officer or the PCSO .

What was noticeable was there was a lack of litter bins around the estate , and nobody was sure of the reason for this , it may be because of vandalism in the past , but perhaps were there to be some bins there may be less litter about . There was a distinct problem near the shops with litter .

We found some gardens to be overgrown or rubbish piling up some of which could be described as bulky items , there were quite a few that were in this category and this was noted by the housing officer , she said she would then write to the tenants concerned and follow a process set out by LCC . There was a number of overgrown hedges around the

estate which were the responsibility of the tenant (i.e in their gardens) she would also use the same method of writing to the tenant .She pointed out to me there was about 25 of these letters that had been sent out regarding gardens and hedges that were in various stages of being acted upon , some of them for a length of time that made it obvious they were being ignored .There was a feeling that perhaps the powers of the council are not robust enough to deal with the minority of tenants who clearly ignore requests to tidy their gardens . I am not sure that the first response to these problems is to send out official letters perhaps the tenants would react differently were they to get a knock on the door and a face to face conversation , it seems this is done in some areas by officers successfully before a letter is sent out . I did notice the estate seems to have particularly large gardens compared to some areas of Leeds which would make an untidy garden even more noticeable because of its size .

When hedges needed cutting or trimming or weed spraying was required it seems the officer would be told either yes it will be done or no because it's not on the mapping area . It seems the mapping area is only updated yearly so if the area in question is not on the map it won't be done . At present I have not got enough information as to how places get onto the mapping area so further investigation on this is required by the board .

Part of this officers patch covers Sheltered housing scheme it was obvious from the appearance the area was well maintained .There was one problem that needs to be look at and that is tenants in Sheltered housing that have mobility scooters ,it seems the parking of these when not in use can be a problem , residents are told in case of fire they are not to be parked too close to the building and if the tenant has very little or no garden it may end up blocking the pathways then that too becomes a problem .It may be useful to look at some kind of a shed that's big enough to house a scooter , in a place for obvious reason not too far away from the tenant's door .

We also visited a well maintained community centre , mainly used by those in Sheltered housing but can be used at a small cost by other tenants in the area . If the estate could form a tenants association then this would be the perfect venue for any meetings .

There are a number of Accent Homes on the estate .***Accent is a registered social landlord with homes for rent and sale across Yorkshire, the North East, North West, East Midlands and the South of England.***

There are some private houses on the estate and they were generally well kept , although there are two properties which the council were in the process of taking legal action against due to the state of their gardens , letters had been sent out but to no avail ,so it seemed legal action was the only option .

There were not many garages available to tenants on the estate , but it seems tenants are reluctant to take up offers of a garage anyway and some at the time of writing this were actually vacant . When I asked why the poor uptake of garages the response was the same as I found on the other estates they are much too small for today's cars , I was told for example the cars can get into the garage but the problems arises when the driver tries to get out of the car , not enough space to open his or her door . Councillor Ritchie did voice his concerns about speeding and a need for speed bumps , but I think before commenting further on this the board may need to seek more information regarding the speed limits in and around the estates and the criteria used before placing speed bumps .

There is no bus service that runs through the estate but a regular service to Leeds/Bradford is available on Stanningley Rd which is on the perimeter of the estate .There is also in walking distance Bramley railway station with trains to both Leeds and Bradford and stations beyond .

There are some local shops , and a Morrisons supermarkets quite near .

Overall I found the housing officer pleasant with a good knowledge of the area ,and very approachable . Councillor Ritchie was someone who regularly attended the walkabouts , and had a determination to make the environment on the estate has pleasant a place for his constituents as possible

Jackie Worthington / John Gittos

21 st October 2015