

## Report on the Walkabout

**Area - Cottingley**

**Date - 13th October 2015**

**Present - Ann Marie Carney ( Housing Officer Patch 3 )  
Sam Costigan ( Housing officer Patch 2 )  
Chris ( Line Manager )  
Emma Louise Simpson ( Project Support )  
John Gittos ( TSB Chair and Cottingley resident )**

Cottingley is an urban area to the south west of Leeds

It has its own railway station , and has services that serve Leeds and Huddersfield and intermediate stations , and the line is on the Leeds to Manchester route and therefore will undergo electrification in the near future .

Cottingley is served by regular buses to Leeds and Morley , there is also an Access bus service for those residents who need it .

Most of Cottingley is a council estate but there are some private dwellings . Two tower blocks form the centre of the estate and are Leeds tallest flats .

The Cottingley estate was built in the 1970s, replacing an estate of temporary prefabricated housing . The estate is set around a series of *cul de sacs*, segregating large volumes of traffic from housing and pedestrians. This method of building has often been criticised as creating a 'rabbit warren', impractical for the local police and fire services .

On the estate there are three shops a small grocery store , a chemist , a hairdresser , and a paper shop , a post office was closed two years ago after a breakin and has never been reopened .

There is a primary school on the estate .

There is Junction 1 Retail Park separated from the estate by a cemetery which includes a B&Q warehouse, an Aldi supermarket, PC World and a Burger King.

The estate is split into three patches and overseen by three housing officers for the purposes of this report I covered two of the patches on the walkabout that I did

I found the officers knowledgeable about the estate , they knew their patch and had obviously done their homework , and empathised with the problems that face tenants.

What was a concern was that there was no enthusiasm from tenants to attend the walkabouts , I asked the officers how they informed the residents of the walkabout and was told via the usual channels ,with that in mind I checked the notice boards but there was nothing to indicate a walkabout had been planned so perhaps this might have to be addressed .

Although on this particular walkabout no councillor was present , I was told that a councillor does attend normally , but the person in question on this particular day was on leave .

No PCSO attended but there was frequent communication between them and council officers , and I would question the necessity of a PCSO attending other than to meet residents and perhaps that can be achieved in other ways.

There was not a problem at this particular time with anti social behaviour on the estate .

The estate has a community centre that organises events for residents and by residents , it is actively supported by three councillors and is proving to be bringing the community together ,a resident from the estate manages the centre , it still has a long way to go but with encouragement and support it can succeed .

There is a regular TRAC meeting that brings together residents , councillors , police ,and housing officers , attendance numbers vary and tends to be more women than men .

### **Problems Observed On the Walkabout**

- No Tenants were present
- No Councillor involvement
- Waste and litter on pathways
- Bulky items in gardens for disposal
- Garages needing repairs
- Overgrown edges from private dwellings .
- No PCSO attended
- Rubbish been thrown from tower blocks .

There is on the estate a lot of fly tipping and other waste being dumped ,there are in my opinion three reasons for this , one a lack of receptacles to put waste in, secondly a need for designated areas to house bulky items prior to disposal , and thirdly and perhaps the most important to make tenants more aware of how they can get rid of waste .

What I did observe was that when waste was building up in gardens, sometimes bulky items making it an eyesore the officer knocked on the door and did politely point out to the tenant that this was not acceptable , this approach seemed to work in the three cases I saw , and it seemed in two of the cases the tenant was not aware of how and where they could remove the items to , the officer in both cases provided information on this , the officer made it clear that she would return to check it had been removed it was all done quite amicable .

Although there were still weeds growing around footpaths there were areas pointed out to me where weed spraying had recently been carried out and the area was much neater , when I asked how often spraying is done I was told it's only three times a year .

There seemed plenty of garages to go round , but not all were taken and given the fact parking on parts of the estate is a problem I found that surprising .One of the reasons may be some of them are in need of repair , so were they to be in better condition perhaps tenants would hire them I have no evidence to come to any conclusion either way . Another reason perhaps for lack of interest may be the fact some of the garages were not in eye shot of the tenant's home .

It was obvious walking around the estate there was a variation in the state of individual gardens , so I asked if there were provisions for people who were incapable of doing their own gardens ,I was told yes on health grounds but only if they had no family to do it for them .

There is a report due to be discussed soon and one of the ideas coming from this is a community tool bank , where tenants who perhaps cannot afford the equipment to improve their gardens can borrow them .

Cottingley is no different to other places when it comes to litter it is a big problem ,they have a litter picker who works on the estate three times a week , he used to be permanently in Cottingley but due to cuts this was no longer possible . What was noticeable was that the litter problem was bad around the school perimeter .

As I stated previously Cottingley has two high rise blocks with six flats on each landing and there are 24 floors in each block , the flats are one or two bedroomed . Two significant problems in the flats are people throwing rubbish from the windows , and the other some tenants although contrary to their tenancy agreements have dogs .There are cameras around the blocks .Each block has a meeting room .One of the blocks Cottingley Towers houses an office for the estate which is manned once a week for a couple of hours by one of the housing officers .

The local school gets involved in the community where it can which I think is a good thing to get the children involved in the community .

One of the main gripes of residents on this estate is refuse collection .

Surely refuse collection, as one of the council's core services, should be tailored to the location and sometimes I wonder if that is happening , on this particular estate due to the way it was built tenants have to move their bins along narrow paths to a road and that is not always easy .

“ Cottingley In Bloom “ is active on the estate where tenants can help to improve their surroundings and local councillors not only encourage but are very much hands on .

Written by John Gittos

16th October 2015