

**Report of Director of Environment and Housing**

**Report to Environment & Housing Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 22 March 2016**

**Subject: Housing Theme – Update**

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**

This report provides an update on a series of summaries of housing issues that were presented to the Board in September and December 2015.

- The HRA growth programme with a focus on HRA council house programme & use of RTB receipts
- Progress with the Empty Homes Strategy
- Standards within the Private Rented Sector
- Estate Management arrangements
- Local Lettings Policy
- Enforcement of tenancy agreements
- Briefings on housing management forums
- Temporary accommodation
- Update on Responsive Repairs and Maintenance

The report also includes an update on the implications of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority role and Devolution Agenda on local housing decision making. A separate paper on the Housing and Planning Bill is on the agenda for this meeting.

**Recommendations**

Scrutiny Board is requested to note the content of this report and identify areas for further investigation.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

The report covers areas of housing policy / activity highlighted by the Board and sets out the context, current position and the key challenges or next steps.

## **2. Main Issues**

Summaries are shown in Appendix One.

## **3. Corporate Considerations**

### **Consultation and Engagement**

Consultation and engagement is embedded within the individual policy / areas of activity.

### **Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

An equality impact assessment is not required at this stage as this report is primarily an information report.

### **Council policies and City Priorities**

Housing policy and activities contribute to making *Leeds the best city to Live*.

### **Resources and value for money**

Individual evaluations are undertaken within the individual policy / areas of activity

### **Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

### **Risk Management**

Risk management is embedded within the individual policy / areas of activity.

## **4. Conclusions**

The report covers a range of policy areas demonstrating the breadth and complexity of activity.

## **5. Recommendations**

Scrutiny Board is requested to note the contents of this report, and highlight any areas for further investigation.

## **6. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

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.

## Appendix One

### Council House Growth Programme Update

Below is an update on the Council House Growth Programme following the report provided to Scrutiny in December 2015. The Programme is funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and has attracted grant contributions from the Homes and Communities Agency and the Department of Health.

The programme to date includes sites in a variety of locations, listed below and will deliver approximately 1000 units. The programme is a combination of new build contracts procured by the council, the acquisition of new properties from private sector developers and the purchase of long term empty homes.

Site	no	type	Status
<u>New build</u>			
Beeston Hill and Holbeck and Little London PFI	388	2,3 & 4bhf	278 units handed over by Dec 15, and further 110 units due by March 17.
East Park Road, East End Park	32	1 & 2bf	On site - due to complete April 16
Wharfedale View, Yeadon	45	Extra Care apts	On site - due to complete in Q3 2016/17
Swarcliffe Drive, Swarcliffe	18	1 & 2bf	On site – due to complete in Q2 2016/17
Broadlea, Bramley	24	2&3 bh	Kier appointed as preferred partner to develop detailed designs. Scheduled to complete during 2017/18.
The Garnets, Beeston	25	2&3 bh	
Whinmoor Pub site, Swarcliffe	22	2&3 bh	
Beech Walk / Mount, Gipton	27	2b bungalows / 2 & 3bh	Programmed for 2016/17 contract award. Scheduled to complete Q3/4 2017/18.
Mistress Lane, Armley	28	2bf / 2 & 3bh	Site considered to be financially unviable. Further sites being considered.
Westerton Walk, Tingley	45	Extra Care apts	Awaiting outcome of bid for Care and Specialist Supported Housing Fund. Scheduled to complete Q4 2017/18.
Barncroft, Seacroft	16	Tbc	Site investigations and capacity study underway. Scheduled to complete by Q4 2017/18.
Nevilles, Cross Green	18-20	Tbc	Capacity study underway.

<u>Private Sector Acquisitions</u>			
Thorn Walk, Gipton	23	2 & 3bh	Handed over during 2015
Cardigan Green, Bramley	8	2bh	Due for completion during Q3 2016/17
<u>Empty Homes Programme</u>			
Empty properties plus conversion of 2 former community centres (Bramley & Seacroft)	47		Completed
Properties to be identified	100		Acquisitions continue to be identified - , 29 properties are currently being considered, 5 are offer pending 14 have had offers accepted and are in the conveyancing process to date.

The mix of property types on each site and across the programme as a whole is informed by demand information drawn from the Leeds Homes Register. There is an ongoing process of identifying sites to commit the remainder of the programme.

#### Right To Buy (RTB) Replacement Programme

At the end of Quarter 3 2015/16, there is a confirmed RTB programme of £14.6m, with the programme increasing by a further £10m by the end of 2018/19 based on income from projected RTB sales.

To date there is £10.7m earmarked for Council and Registered Provider schemes. This leaves almost £4m to be allocated against new schemes.

There have been some changes to the programme of Registered Provider schemes earmarked for RTB funding following a review of financial viability linked to the 1% rent reduction and, more recently, the Local Housing Allowance cap on supported housing. Subsequently £2.8m of RTB funding is no longer being committed against identified schemes. The current RP programme breaks down as follows:

- A firm RTB funded Registered Provider grant programme of £947k delivering 36 units, with total scheme costs of £3.6m;
- An indicative programme to deliver 37 units with a potential contribution of £1.141m RTB funding, with total scheme costs of £3.8m;
- A number of longer terms schemes are also in the pipeline which would deliver 59 units and spend £1.812m, with total scheme costs of £6m.

## Empty Homes Strategy

The reasons for homes being empty are diverse, often complex with no single answer to the problem. Empty homes are part of the normal turnover in the housing market. The vast majority return to occupation in a short space of time as part of the natural cycle of letting and purchasing. However, there are a significant number of long term empty homes that require the Council's intervention in order to return them to occupation.

Returning long term empty homes into occupation has been a priority for the Council and remains one in the 2015/16 Best Council Plan and is part of the Housing Growth targets, which include a net reduction in long term empty homes of 400 per annum to 2017.

Since March 2010 the number of empty homes in the city has reduced from 16,700 to 11,535 in January 2016. The number of long term empty properties for which the Council has powers to tackle, that is to say excluding second homes and homes belonging to residents in care homes, has reduced from 6,721 in March 2010 to 3942 at January 2016. This represents a reduction of 590 in the year to date. Figures fluctuate throughout the year, particularly around December due to issues with properties that are in fact occupied by students being recorded on Council Tax as being empty; measures are now in place to rectify this anomaly. It is now anticipated that the figure at the end of the March 2016 will be in the region of 3800.

Long term empty homes in the private sector now represent 1.1% of the housing stock.

The Council has a range of activities targeted at returning empty properties into occupation. Such as:

- 100% Council Tax is charged on all homes from the moment they become empty rather than provide a six month exemption.
- 150% Council Tax is charged on all empty homes which have been unoccupied for more than 2 years.
- Prioritising all long term empty homes to determine the appropriate routes for action.
- The targeting of empty homes, as well as poor quality accommodation by intervening in small neighbourhood areas. This is known as the Leeds Neighbourhood Approach.
- Additional capital investment to facilitate stronger compulsory purchase activity.
- Implementation of LCC empty homes loan to help owners bring their homes back into use.
- Building on the existing partnership with Leeds Empties, a social enterprise, to provide free independent help and advice to empty home owners via their Empty Homes Doctor service.
- £2.2m programme, in 2014/15, to convert two unused community centres into council homes and to purchase 20 former council houses which were bought under the Right to Buy legislation and have been empty and blighting neighbourhoods.

- Supporting Canopy, GIPSIL and LATCH, third sector partners, to buy 48 empty homes through the HCA empty homes programme.
- We are now delivering the 2015/18 £9m scheme to convert one unused community centre into council homes and to purchase 100 former council houses which were bought under the Right to Buy legislation and are empty and blighting neighbourhoods.
  - To date, 11 properties have been acquired and a further 13 are in conveyancing process and are expected to be acquired shortly. All will be upgraded to ensure they meet the Councils' lettable standard and will then be let to tenants on the Leeds Homes Register.
  - The estimated average cost for the properties that have been acquired (including all refurbishment, valuation and legal costs) is £84,000 per property which is well within budget.
- We have also introduced a small interest free empty homes loan in partnership with the Leeds City Credit Union to help owners undertake minor works to bring properties back into occupation.

We will continue with all the actions above and will:

- To look at how to use right to buy receipts to support partners to tackle empty homes and support regeneration across the city.
- Improving the working partnership between the Council Tax Unit, the Empty Homes Team within E&H and Leeds Empties.
- Explore the potential for a joint venture to buy up long term empties.

## **Standards within the Private Rented Sector**

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) has been the fastest growing housing sector over the last decade. The 2011 census placed the sector at 18% of the Leeds housing market which would equate to around 58,000 properties. This growth will have continued since the census and the sector now outstrips the council housing sector in size.

The PRS is made up of different markets, each of which has varying needs. The largest growth in the PRS has however been in the low rental markets which are dominated by LS7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 postcodes and provide some of the poorest quality housing in the city. This is the market area that remains the biggest challenge to the Council.

The Council has mandatory and discretionary powers through the Housing Act 2004 by which to regulate the sector which can lead to prosecution. This responsibility is undertaken by the Housing Regulation Team which is based within Housing Services. The team undertakes the following work:

- Inspecting individual properties on a referral / complaints basis and assessing their fitness under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This can lead to wider inspection of landlord portfolios. Normally properties will be inspected and a programme of improvements agreed with the landlord.
- Mandatory licensing of HMOs of three storeys or more and containing five or more units of accommodation. There are around 2,700 in the city and they must have a license which sets the standards of accommodation to be provided. These are mainly in the student market.
- Inspection of all properties in the Temporary Accommodation contract.
- Inspection of all properties let under the Private Letting and Bond scheme.
- Contract management of the Leeds Landlords Accreditation scheme (LLAS) which has a membership of 220 landlords covering 15,000 bed spaces.
- Supports the Leeds Neighbourhood Approach which is a multi-agency targeted area based initiative.
- Liaise with Adults and Childrens Safeguarding units where necessary.
- Liaise with the Police and Home Office as necessary.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 (Qtr 3) the service received 1,935 requests for help, undertook 1,509 property inspections, helped 3,500 people with conditions in their property, served 373 legal formal enforcement Notices and removed 833 hazards from properties.

In addition to the above, the service has now begun implementation of the new regulatory responsibility relating to property letting and managing agents through the Property Redress Scheme. This, so far, has resulted in:

- 200 investigations into agent activity across the city
- Served 93 legal notices against agents found to be contravening requirements
- Issued penalty notices amounting to £47.5K and are in the process of recovering this money
- Appointed a new member of staff to specifically work on this area of work.

We will continue with the actions above and:

- Respond to the government's consultation paper on tackling rogue landlords and improving the PRS.
- Respond to governments' consultation paper on proposals to extend the scope of Mandatory HMO Licensing
- Look at ways that the service can do more to tackle landlords that persistently provide substandard accommodation.

In addition, for the last December update to this Scrutiny Panel we gave details of the government proposals published in the Housing and Planning Bill 2015. This paper set out its proposals to boost home ownership, boost the supply of housing and improve standards in the private rented sector. The Bill is still being debated within the House of Commons which is the first stage of its legislative process. The contents of this Bill are therefore still potentially open to change as the Bill moves through the legislative process.

We therefore continue to monitor progress of the Bill and engage with Government on proposals. We are actively reviewing working practice in order to be in a position to provide a thorough response to consultations and be in a position to implement the new procedures once they are formally enacted.



## **Update - Tenant Scrutiny Inquiry – Environment of Estates**

### **Introduction**

At its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015, the Tenant Scrutiny Board considered its work programme for the 2015/16 municipal year. It was agreed that the Boards first piece of work should be environmental standards.

### **Scope of the Inquiry**

Tenant Scrutiny Board selected environmental standards as an area for investigation because:

- It was thought that performance in this area would benefit from improvement and;
- It was felt that environmental standards are fundamental to tenants' experience of the Housing Management service and;
- It would address issues arising from the STAR survey

The 2014 STAR survey highlighted the rising importance of neighbourhoods and the environment as an issue for tenants, the top 5 city wide priorities are:

- Car parking
- Dog fouling
- Rubbish or litter
- Overgrown trees/shrubs/grass
- Drug use or dealing

During the course of their investigation, Tenant Scrutiny Board have examined a wide range of information and undertaken extensive consultation including:

- Attending joint estate inspections with Housing Officers
- A survey of all Elected Members
- A meeting with Councillors from Armley, Bramley, City and Holbeck and Moortown.
- Commissioned a survey of tenants and tenant and resident groups
- Met with senior managers from Housing, Waste, Parks and Localities
- Consulted with Housing Officers, Team Leaders and Housing Managers
- Met with Cllr. Coupar, Executive Member for Environment & Housing

It is felt this approach adds validity to the inquiry as the findings and resulting recommendations will be based on a wide range of consultation with key stakeholders.

### **Progress of Inquiry**

During the course on their inquiry, Tenant Scrutiny Board have indicated that partnership working – all Council teams that contribute to the estates being kept clean and tidy, (Housing, Localities , Parks and Waste) coming together at Team leader level is key to better estate environment. 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 and adopt a “one Council approach”.

Common themes arising from consultation with stakeholders include the need for:

- A routine estate inspection programme, which is widely promoted and greater lead in time for all stakeholders
- Items identified on estate walkabouts are monitored through to completion
- Ensure information collected is correct and used to improve service outcomes for customers
- All parties attending estate inspections to be kept advised of outcomes and progress
- Consider bespoke waste arrangements for estates of none traditional layout
- Harmonisation of estate inspection process
- Ensure all green assets are mapped for maintenance

Housing Leeds is reviewing its estate inspection procedure, Tenant Scrutiny Board members have welcomed the opportunity to contribute toward the harmonisation review from a tenant perspective.

The Localities Team is also currently reviewing its processes to include the introduction of target completion dates for actions raised, which will improve the availability of information for Housing Officers, which can then be input into the estate management system “Caseworks” and shared with key stakeholders including; residents and Ward Members.

At an informal meeting in March, the Tenant Scrutiny Board discussed its recommendations which will be passed to the Director of Environment and Housing for consideration and formally agreed in April with a view to their report, and a response, going to the June meeting of the Housing Advisory Board.

## Community Lettings Policies

Following feedback from Housing Advisory Board, Scrutiny Board and tenants groups, Housing Leeds has extended the scope of the local lettings policy review to include the wider lettings framework. This has 3 main elements:

- **Introduction of a tenant transfer policy** to give greater preference to and reward existing council tenants who have successfully held a secure tenancy as part of our commitment to the social contract and enabling the council to make better use of its housing stock;
- **Review of the main lettings policy** to mainstream some elements previously covered by local lettings policies – specifically: local connection, good tenancy record, home visits, pre tenancy training and good neighbour criteria;
- **New approach to community lettings policies** to replace local lettings policies, with a greater emphasis on tenancy management issues in the wider community.

The January meeting of Scrutiny Board received a presentation focussing on the rationale for reviewing existing lettings policies and procedures; Housing and Planning Bill changes; and the key elements to effective lettings and tenancy management.

In February 2016 Executive Board approved a consultation programme for a new lettings framework for Leeds. This will commence with two member sessions on 14 and 24 March, to brief elected members on the proposed changes. Public consultation will commence immediately after this with individual tenants and residents and representative groups. The consultation will run from March to June. Scrutiny Board will have a chance to discuss the final proposals before the outcome of the consultation and final proposals are presented to Executive Board in September 2016.

In addition, a further report will be taken to Executive Board in September 2016, giving more detail about the changes set out in the Housing and Planning Bill, and the potential impact this may have on Housing Leeds.

## Enforcement of Tenancy Agreements

Over the last 18 months the service has been working to harmonise policies and procedures relating to tenancy management and the majority have now been completed so that there is a consistent approach being undertaken to tenancy management and tenancy enforcement across the city.

The following policies and procedures have now been harmonised:

<b>Harmonised procedures</b>	
Abandoned properties and non-occupation	Pets Policy
Annual Home Visits	Permission to make alterations
Assignment and succession procedures	Running a business from a council home
Cats Protection Neutering Vouchers	Satellite dishes
Decoration vouchers	Sign up procedures
Demoted tenancy procedures	Subletting procedures including the tenancy fraud referral form and latest fraud performance figures
Garage tenancies	Tenancy agreement
Hoarding	Tenants Contents insurance - Application form and policy leaflet, claim form and guidance for staff
Introductory tenancies and proportionality assessment	Taking in a lodger
Invasive weeds	Tenancy Agreement
Joint tenancies	Tenancy Policy
Lettings procedures	Tree referrals
Messy Gardens	Unauthorised occupiers
Mobility Scooters	Viewing form
Mutual exchange	
New Home Visits	

The service is now focusing on reviewing existing policies and procedures and developing new policies where they have previously not been in place, as outlined below:

<b>Next phase</b>	
Annual Home Visit – review for 2016/17	Permissions CCTV
ASB procedures	Pest Control; rats, mice, moles, squirrels, bees, wasps and pigeons
Bonfires/Garden fires	Pre tenancy termination visit procedure and notice pack
Demoted tenancies	Property conditions
Document filing & house file maintenance	Recharges
Domestic Violence procedures	Tenant transfer policy for internal moves
Firearms	3 <sup>rd</sup> party tenancy termination
Generic enforcement procedures	Torts
Hate crime reporting procedure	Trustees for 16/17 year olds
Leaseholders	
Parking/caravans	

A new Housing Leeds Tenants Handbook has now been developed and will be formally launched in the new financial year. The new handbook was developed with tenants groups, and will be given to all new tenants as they sign up for a property. The handbook

has put a significant emphasis on outlining tenants' rights and responsibilities in managing their tenancies, and providing clear information that is useful to tenants moving into their new home.

A proposed programme of pre-tenancy training is being developed to help support and prepare targeted applicants for living in rented accommodation before they are offered a property. The programme will include sessions on how to maintain a tenancy successfully, why tenancies fail, rent payment and budgeting, community responsibilities, how to find a home and employment. Giving preference to people who have completed pre-tenancy training gives prospective tenants the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to taking on the responsibility of becoming a council tenant.

The pre tenancy training offer will be inclusive, with the aim of supporting prospective tenants to hold a successful tenancy rather than to exclude people from being rehoused.

Initially, pre-tenancy training will be piloted with tenants in the Clydes and Wortleys blocks as part of a wider improvement programme. The pilot programme will help shape the offer with a view to it being rolled out to other priority areas and vulnerable groups, including young people looking for their first property, high rise properties where there is specific need to highlight issues around living in a block, and lettings to applicants who have a failed tenancy, for example, having left a previous council property with rent arrears or with another tenancy breach.

This will provide the opportunity to evaluate the programme further before deciding whether to implement pre tenancy training across all lettings.

## **Update on Leeds Housing SLA Forums**

### Leeds Housing Forum

The Forum met on 12 January 2016. The theme was on Independent Living and presentations were given to forum members on the Housing Related Support Review, the Children and Young People's Plan, Leeds City Council's Homelessness Strategy and Leeds City Council's approaches to Housing for Disabled Children.

The last meeting of the forum was held on 8 March 2016. The theme was Housing Growth, and there was discussion around the Housing and Planning Bill, Renew's State of the Nation Report and Energy Efficiency Initiatives. The next meeting will be held in June/July 2016 and will look at an update on the Housing Related Support Review, engagement with city centre businesses regarding homelessness, and a discussion around the council housing waiting list and an analysis of those in need.

### Homelessness Forum

- Leeds Homelessness Forum takes a multi-agency approach to ensure a strategic approach to the tackling and prevention of homelessness. The Forum meets quarterly and is chaired by an external partner.
- The last meeting of the Homelessness Forum was held in December 2015 and the main focus was on the production and ongoing consultation of the Homelessness Strategy. Forum members had previously participated in workshop discussions to inform the development of the new Homelessness Strategy which is currently being reviewed and updated.

### Housing Management Forum

The inaugural forum was held on the **29th September 2015** where the format and the terms of reference were agreed. Currently Renew is gathering feedback from stakeholders to confirm the agenda before agreeing a new date for the forum. The next forum will be held at the end of April and the theme of the meeting will be on Intensive Tenancy Management and tackling anti-social behaviour.

### Private Rented Sector Forum

- The forum is made up of representatives of private landlords, landlord associations, managing agents, third sector agencies, Unipol, Renew, Universities, Leeds Tenants Federation, Student Welfare Officers, Housing Associations, Police / Safer Leeds and Council Members and Officers. The forum is chaired by Cllr Hamilton.
- The aim of the forum is to bring together key stakeholders to understand issues of concern and to influence strategies and policies.
- The last meeting was on 14 January 2016 and the next meeting will take place in April.
- Current issues that the forum is covering are the future policy direction for the private rented sector, implications of the Housing and Planning Bill and the renewal of the Empty Property Strategy.

## Temporary Accommodation

Leeds City Council, in common with other housing authorities, has a duty to secure suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households to whom it owes a housing duty. The duty is owed if the household is assessed to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. An interim duty is also owed, pending a full assessment, if the household is believed to be homeless and in priority need. The temporary accommodation duty may also be owed to an intentionally homeless household who is in priority need – perhaps because of dependent children.

The temporary accommodation remains in place until the household is made an offer of suitable longer-term accommodation – ordinarily an offer of a social housing tenancy. The Council has to assess what constitutes ‘suitable’ temporary accommodation and does so by adhering to the legal framework and having regard for the homeless code of guidance. The legal position is that an authority should ordinarily secure temporary accommodation within its district and that it should advise the relevant authority if it needs to make a placement within that authority area. Relevant case law is that suitable temporary accommodation is primarily a matter of offering sufficient living space and being accessible with location being a secondary factor. The use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families is enshrined in law as being unsuitable and should only be used in exceptional circumstances and then for no longer than 6 weeks.

Temporary accommodation placements, as at 29 February, for homeless households owed some form of temporary accommodation duty was as follows:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Mar -15</b>	<b>Apr -15</b>	<b>May -15</b>	<b>June -15</b>	<b>July -15</b>	<b>Aug -15</b>	<b>Sept -15</b>	<b>Oct -15</b>	<b>Nov -15</b>	<b>Dec -15</b>	<b>Jan -16</b>	<b>Feb -16</b>
LEAP	41	39	38	36	33	24	18	4	2	2	0	0
Holdforth Court	30	28	31	28	30	28	31	27	28	26	24	11
Oakdale	7	5	7	6	7	7	8	7	5	9	9	7
Re-Connect	30	34	35	31	34	35	36	23	16	12	14	14
RD Willis	3	3	7	6	11	8	4	2	1	3	4	3
Seacole	5	7	5	6	8	6	8	6	7	6	7	8
Stonham	23	24	25	24	23	24	24	23	21	17	17	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>62</b>

LEAP was a Leeds Federated Housing Association managed service offering self-contained units to homeless families and single people. The contractual capacity was 65 properties (reduced to 50) and Leeds Fed HA gave notice to end the contract due to high number of vacancies.

Holdforth Court is a homeless hostel, managed by St. Anne’s, for single males with 36 units. Holdforth Court is able to take referrals from sources other than the Council and had 15 people in the hostel on 29 February. The service is within the scope of the current review of housing related support services.

Oakdale House is a homeless hostel, managed by Leeds Housing Concern, for single females with 10 units. Leeds Housing Concern is able to take referrals from sources other than the Council if they have more than 3 vacancies. There were 8 placements on 29 February. The service is within the scope of the current review of housing related support services.

Re-Connect, managed by Connect Housing, provides 36 self-contained properties to homeless families. The high number of vacancies means that 13 units have been used to offer permanent tenancies to Syrian and Afghan refugees as part of the agreed dispersal programme. The service is within the scope of the current review of housing related support services.

RD Willis is a private landlord offering self-contained temporary accommodation to homeless families and single people. The service can be accessed on a 24 hour basis. The contract covers placements by Housing Leeds, Children's Services and Adult Social Care. The current contractual capacity (27) is being reviewed and will be reduced at the end of March 2016 due to high number of vacancies. The service is within the scope of the current review of housing related support services.

Seacole is a homeless hostel, managed by Leeds Housing Concern, for single young people. The service is used by both Housing Leeds and Children's Services.

Stonham, managed by Stonham Housing Association, is a service for women fleeing domestic violence offering 25 units in a core refuge service and dispersed units. The service is able to take referrals from a range of services (including the police) and from people living outside the service. There were a total of 23 households placed on 29 February.

The additional placements in Holdforth Court (4), Oakdale House (1) and Stonham (4) mean that there were 71 households placed on 29 February.

A total of 62 placements, owed a housing duty, on 29 February means that a 58% reduction in placements has been made since May 2015 when placements stood at 148. Leeds had 450 households, owed a housing duty, placed in temporary accommodation on 30 September 2008. The comparison with the Core Cities is as follows (the first column is the actual number placed and the second column the number placed were the other authority to have the same population as Leeds):

	Actual Number	If population equal to Leeds
Leeds	62	62
Birmingham	991	768
Bristol	524	914
Manchester	507	782
Sheffield	98	137
Nottingham	104	266
Newcastle	39	107
Liverpool	45	71



The reduction in temporary accommodation placements can be attributed to a combined focus on maximising homeless prevention and an increasing focus by officers from Leeds Housing Options on move-on work to support that delivered by the supported housing service. The Council would be incurring significant additional cost if had temporary accommodation numbers of some of the other Core Cities.

Homeless families are either placed in the RD Willis or Re-Connect units. All three occupied units are in Leeds 11. RD Willis also has units in LS8/9/10. The breakdown of the 23 (14 occupied by homeless families/9 vacant) Re-Connect units is as follows:

	LS6	LS7	LS8	LS9	LS12	LS14	LS28
Number of units	1	3	4	5	4	4	2

A number of local authorities routinely make 'out of area' temporary accommodation placements with some London boroughs making placements in Birmingham, Stoke and Hull. Harrogate DC sometimes makes temporary accommodation placements in Leeds. Leeds never makes 'out of area' placements. In addition to trying to have a geographical spread of temporary accommodation placements, homeless households are offered the option of retaining a priority award for council re-housing whilst they take a private rented tenancy and this enables them to stay in their chosen area until they are re-housed.

Leeds does not place families in bed and breakfast accommodation. In comparison 80 of the 991 placements made by Birmingham were to bed and breakfast accommodation.

## Responsive Repairs and Maintenance

Within Leeds there are a number of building contractors delivering both revenue and capital work across the City. The main two contractors in Leeds are Mears and Leeds Building Services who deliver the responsive repairs contracts, which includes voids works and some elements of capital improvements to assist the delivery of our investment strategy.

Mears cover the West and South areas of the city with Leeds Building Services covering the East. The table below shows the number of properties in each geographic area.

Area	Contractor	No. Properties	% of Total
East	Leeds Building Services	17,476	31.94%
South	Mears	16,424	30.02%
West	Mears	20,815	38.04%
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>54,715</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data taken from HMIS dwellings sheet week 44 Jan 16, excludes BITMO

### Mears

#### RR1 – Repair First Time

This is where a repair is started and finished on the same day.

CONTRACTOR	TARGET	NOV	DEC	JAN
MEARS SOUTH	90.00%	93.50%	92.97%	93.52%
MEARS WEST	90.00%	92.74%	91.95%	92.46%

Mears now consistently achieve or better the target on this indicator. This follows an extensive joint review of this KPI and the delivery of process enhancements.

#### RR2 – Repairs Completed Within Target

For emergency repairs the target is 24hrs. For priority repairs the target is 3 days. For general repairs the target is 28 days and for planned work the target is 60 days.

CONTRACTOR	TARGET	NOV	DEC	JAN
MEARS SOUTH	99.00%	99.16%	98.38%	97.54%
MEARS WEST	99.00%	98.99%	98.16%	98.34%

Though the target is not consistency achieved Mears performance is still considered strong and consistent, generally performing with 1% or less of achieving target.

### RR3 – Appointments Made and Kept

Has the contractor attended on the date and time that has been agreed with the customer when the repair has been ordered?

CONTRACTOR	TARGET	NOV	DEC	JAN
MEARS SOUTH	99.00%	96.90%	95.28%	97.76%
MEARS WEST	99.00%	97.22%	96.78%	97.29%

Analytical investigation is ongoing by both Leeds and Mears to identify areas that can improve the score on this KPI.

### EP1 – Time Taken by Contractors to Complete Void Repairs

Has the contractor complete the voids works within 15 days.

CONTRACTOR	TARGET	NOV	DEC	JAN
MEARS SOUTH	15.00	10.53	9.53	11.65
MEARS WEST	15.00	12.91	13.07	14.96

Mears performance on EP1 is very strong and frequently betters the 15 day target. There was a spike in January on the West contract due to a high influx of voids. However, Mears planned accordingly and still achieved target.

Council Officers continue to work in partnership with Mears to maintain and enhance strong relationships and performance. In April 2016 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Leeds: Mears Service Development Conference will be delivered. This event invites front line staff from across the partnership to work together in identifying service improvements.

A full review of all performance indicators has been completed which places greater focus on customer satisfaction and is due to be introduced 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.

### Leeds Building Services

#### RR1 – Repair First Time

This is where a repair is started and finished on the same day.

CONTRACTOR	TARGET	NOV	DEC	JAN
Leeds Building Services	90.00%	96.82%	95.52%	96.18%

Leeds Building Services have exceeded the target of 90%. This is due to ongoing regular analysis and monitoring of the KPI and the immediate implementation of service improvements.

### RR2 – Repairs Completed Within Target

For emergency repairs the target is 24hrs. For priority repairs the target is 3 days. For general repairs the target is 28 days and for planned work the target is 60 days

CONTRACTOR	TARGET	NOV	DEC	JAN
Leeds Building Services	99.00%	84.21%	83.87%	81.96%

Leeds Building Services has experienced a resource issue with particular trades, notable Plumbers and Bricklayers. Leeds Building Services have recently conducted interviews for additional plumbers and bricklayers and these new starters should be in position by the start of April 2016.

### RR3 – Appointments Made and Kept

Has the contractor attended on the date and time that has been agreed with the customer when the repair has been ordered?

CONTRACTOR	TARGET	NOV	DEC	JAN
Leeds Building Services	99.00%	92.21%	95.43%	92.00%

Repeated poor performance has been caused by an IT interface between operatives PDA's and Orchard. The problem has been rectified but some files have been corrupted which has caused a problem with reported data.

### EP1 – Time Taken by Contractors to Complete Void Repairs

Has the contractor completed the voids works within 15 days.

CONTRACTOR	TARGET	NOV	DEC	JAN
Leeds Building Services	15.00	17.43	18.17	20.00

A detailed review of the repairs service at Leeds Building Services has been completed. The review involved detailed analysis of the current process as well as identifying best practice from visits made to other providers – St Ledger, Berneslai, City Response, Kirklees and St Ledger. The following key areas for improvement were identified:

1. Align Technology and resource to best practice
2. Improve processes
3. Review Supervisor and Technical Inspector role
4. Introduce a range of management information for service, team and individuals

These actions are being fed into the existing Leeds Building Services integration project and will ensure the service improvements are delivered.

A review of the voids process is now underway. The first stage of this will be to map the existing process and identify areas of concern. Leeds Building Services will also adopt best practice from Mears so city-wide the service is delivered in a consistent manner.

## **Implications of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority role and Devolution Agenda on local housing decision making:**

With regard to local decision making on housing matters, the journey towards devolution of policy making and full budgetary control to Leeds and the City Region remains in its early stages, with some funds devolved to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) which can support housing growth, but limited scope for genuine local control over matters that are currently within the ambit of national policy.

Combined authorities are created in areas where they are considered likely to improve performance in those matters they have pooled responsibilities for. They are created voluntarily and receive certain delegated functions from central government in order to deliver policy more effectively over a wider area. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) was formally established in April 2014 as a strategic local authority with powers over transport, economic development and regeneration across Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield, Calderdale and Kirklees (with York and the Chair of the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership as associate members).

The national programme of bidding for Growth Deals in 2013/14 was considered by government as one of the essential first steps towards devolution of powers and resources. Working with the LEP, WYCA put together a Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) that secured the country's largest Growth Deal in July 2014, a £1bn programme to be delivered through four strategic investment 'pillars' - supporting growing businesses, developing a skilled and flexible workforce, building a resource smart city region and delivering the infrastructure for growth. Within this final pillar the SEP recognises the need to create more, better quality housing by kick-starting strategic developments across the city region.

Funding for delivery of housing through the Growth Deal is being made available to Leeds and the other West Yorkshire Local Authorities by WYCA on the basis of 'recoverable investments' – loan funding that will in due course require repayment upon completion. Leeds City Council has to date secured £5.7m of such funds over 2015/16 and 2016/17 at 0% interest to facilitate development of brownfield housing in the East and South of the city through site preparation works. These investments will therefore provide for de-risking and site acceleration through a preferable rate.

The Council and WYCA are taking a joined up approach to investments with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to ensure maximum benefit and optimum coverage of available public sector support to housing growth, including for large sites of strategic significance. The HCA has a range of investment programmes available, though it too has moved away from granting funds towards recoverable investment streams focused on providing development finance. WYCA and the HCA have established joint working arrangements to co-ordinate investment discussions, into which the Council feeds, for example through its programme to accelerate stalled private sector sites through brokering support and finance.

Beyond these new growth funds and the alignment of public programmes for housing growth, there has been no devolution to date in respect of control over local housing policy or delivery of new budgets with the exception of collaboration with the LEP for the successful bid to increase HRA headroom which required a statement of LEP support.

Proposals for more and fuller devolution of a range of powers and responsibilities remains a matter of negotiation between Leeds, other Local Authorities and central government. As the format for devolution and the scope of any deal becomes clear, further updates can be provided on any implications for housing delivery, policy and funding.