
Report of Director of Environment and Housing

Report to Environment & Housing Scrutiny Board

Date: 20 April 2017

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 two key housing issues which were identified by Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board as particular areas of interest. They are as follows:

- Turnaround times for filling void Council properties;
- Re-commissioning of Housing Related Support

The Board also requested an update on the implications of the 2016 Housing and Planning Act on Leeds City Council and progress with planning for implementation of policy changes. However, as we are still waiting for updates from Central Government on all proposed policy changes there are no updates further to those provided in the January Housing Themed Report. If updates are received from Central Government by the time of the meeting, a verbal update on progress will be provided to the 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

2.1 Void Turnaround Times of Council Homes

- 2.2 As of week 48 (up to the end of February 2017), citywide re-let days stand at 28.02 days compared to 2015/16 year-end figure of 30.52 days, against a target of 30 days. Please see below for a detailed breakdown.

	Jan 17	Feb 17
BITMO	28.94	30.2
East	26.92	26.9
South	29.39	29.4
West	27.43	27.6
Housing Leeds	27.90	28.02

- 2.3 Monthly performance reports continue to show stronger performance than 2015/16. The number of voids as at week 48 (end of February 2017) is 363 (+61 new build, buy backs and major refurbishments which will be discounted once re-let). Voids excluding new build, buy backs and major refurbishments is 0.65% of the total LCC stock and the percentage rent loss from voids is 0.62%, an historic low.
- 2.4 There continue to be some variances in relet times between different areas of the city. Performance in the South dipped again during January and February as a result of the impact of letting a number of difficult to let properties in the area, including sheltered bedsits, back to backs and 2 or 3 bedroomed flats, which had been vacant for long periods. The Housing Team is currently undertaking greater analysis of difficult to let voids in the South and will consider options to improve the relet times of these property types.
- 2.5 We are continuously looking at how we can further improve performance through improved processes and place a greater emphasis on quality and customer care, whilst ensuring that budgets are managed effectively.
- 2.6 Improvements include the following:
- From April 2017, the client role for the voids service in East Leeds will be carried out by the Voids Team rather than Leeds Building Service, to mirror the South and West process. This will ensure that there is greater consistency across the city. The teams have been working hard over the last few months to realign the service so that processes and customer experience are consistent across the city.

- Monthly void operational meetings and joint meetings with the Lettings Team will continue to monitor performance, quality and spend. Any issues will be dealt with and discussed at these meetings.
- Customer satisfaction with the void service is 90.2% for the period April 2016 to January 2017. In terms of those tenants who are dissatisfied, in the main this has been due to follow on work identified once the tenant has moved in. The Voids Team is assisting wherever possible to try and resolve the issues as quickly as possible.
- In November 2016, Housing Leeds introduced a Variable Lettable Standard which enables us to offer an enhanced lettable standard (decoration to the kitchen, bathroom and one other room) to 22 blocks / streets which have sustainability issues, high turnover and low levels of customer satisfaction (listed in appendix 1). This has been completed at 55 properties to date and we have received positive feedback, although it has increased the relet times for each property by an average of 3 days. A full evaluation will be undertaken in due course.

2.7 Re-commissioning of Housing Related Support

2.8 A review of housing related support has been undertaken over the last year and new services have been procured. The review has sought to deliver 'a step change' and has included extensive consultation with stakeholders and service users. The new model features new services and will be implemented from 1 April 2017. It is expected that the new model will better meet the needs of all service users including people who are rough sleeping. The new model features a move away from larger hostels to dispersed accommodation or smaller communal properties, in line with service user preference.

2.9 Delivery will be focused upon the following themes: Prevention of homelessness and early intervention, sustainment and a person's ability to live in safe and suitable accommodation and integration -supporting people to participate and access the services and social/recreational opportunities available to them.

2.10 Key features of the new model are outlined below:

2.10.1 A new IT gateway which will facilitate referrals, information and collation of performance data.

Visiting Housing Related Support Service - Engage Leeds

2.10.2 A new single, city wide service delivered by a consortium led by Gipsil and including Barca-Leeds, Riverside and Connect Housing Association to provide support to vulnerable adults, couples and families to enable them to live independently whilst improving and sustaining their long term wellbeing. The agencies involved have considerable experience of supporting people with housing related support needs.

2.10.3 Engage Leeds will provide a range of support options including: formal 1-2-1 visiting support offered with flexibility of intensity and duration, informal drop-in provision, locally based to enable easy access, peer support, befriending and community engagement opportunities.

- 2.10.4 The Service will develop a focus on recovery and person centred planning & support and will work in partnership with a wide range of other agencies to help all clients, particularly those people who have multiple or complex needs to tailor their own personal 'recovery journey' and improve client choice. It will assist in building client resilience and maximise opportunities for sustainable outcomes.

Accommodation Based Service - Beacon

- 2.10.5 Beacon has been commissioned to provide a new city wide Housing Related Support (HRS) accommodation service for vulnerable adults, couples and families to prevent homelessness, and address housing need. Beacon will be delivered by a consortium led by Leeds Housing Concern in partnership with Touchstone and Foundation.
- 2.10.6 The service will provide accommodation and support and enable individuals to have choice and control through a personalised, responsive and flexible service promoting independence whilst improving and sustaining individuals' long term wellbeing and independent living.
- 2.10.7 The service will work in partnership with a wide range of other agencies to help all clients, particularly those people who have multiple or complex needs to tailor their own personal 'recovery journey'.
- 2.10.8 Accommodation will be delivered through a mixture of intensive accommodation (28 units) with access to staff 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and community dispersed properties with visiting support (206 units).
- 2.10.9 Peer support, befriending and volunteering is an integral part of the new model and part of a range of options available to clients. The service will ensure that all clients have the opportunity to access this as part of their support package.
- 2.10.10 In addition a number of accommodation based housing related support services have been retained as part of the wider model. These services include emergency accommodation at St George's Crypt Overnight Centre and Hub and RD Willis; Regents Terrace and Carr Beck for people with ongoing alcohol support needs and Kirkstall Lodge for longer term offenders who are unable to live independently.
- 2.10.11 We have also retained the street outreach service which undertakes night time outreach three times a week to support rough sleepers and daily outreach five times a week to support people who are rough sleeping or begging. This service supports individuals and ensures they have access to accommodation and support.

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. Equality impact assessments are undertaken of each key policy change.

Council policies and City Priorities

Housing policy and activities contribute towards the delivery of a number of Best Council Plan outcomes:

- Be safe and feel safe;
- Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible;
- Live in good quality, affordable homes within clean and well cared for places;

Housing also supports a number of the Council's Breakthrough Projects – Tackling domestic violence and abuse, housing growth and high standards in all sectors, making Leeds the best city to grow old in, strong communities benefiting from a strong city, cutting carbon and improving air quality, and early intervention and reducing health inequalities.

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. Conclusion

The report covers two main policy areas identified by Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board.

5. Recommendations

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

6. Background documents¹

None

¹ 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 – LIST OF BLOCKS / STREETS PART OF VARIABLE LETTINGS STANDARD

Address	Cottingley Heights	Recreation Place
Alderton Heights	Cottingley Towers	Recreation Row
Boston Towers	Cromwell Heights	Recreation Street
Burnsall Grange	Gledhow Towers	Recreation Terrace
Clayton Court	Parkway Towers	Recreation View
Clayton Grange	Ramshead Heights	Wortley Heights
Clyde Court	Raynville Court	Wortley Towers
Clyde Grange	Recreation Grove	