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## Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Executive Board 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009

**Subject: Response to the Deputation to Council of the Woodbridge Tenants and Residents Association**

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### Electoral Wards Affected:

Kirkstall

Yes

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Yes

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is in response to the deputation to the April Council meeting from the Woodbridge Tenants and Residents Association. The report sets out the history of refurbishment to the estate and provides a £1m injection, jointly funded by WNW ALMO and the Council, to enable refurbishment to continue.

### 1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Executive Board of the proposals to maintain the refurbishment programme for the "5Ms" properties on the Woodbridge estate, following the deputation to Council from the Tenants and Residents Association.

### 2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Woodbridges are an estate of 269 properties in the Kirkstall / Headingley area of north west Leeds. They were built around 60 years ago and are of a system build type with a flat roof known as "5m". The deputation to the Council by members of the Woodbridge Tenants and Residents Association sought Council support to ensure that there is continued refurbishment of the estate.

- 2.2 Woodbridge estate is very popular with a high demand for the properties. Due to the nature of the system build type the estate requires significant investment beyond decent homes funding to enable the properties to have a long term future.
- 2.3 In 2004 Leeds North West Homes carried out a consultation exercise on the future of the properties. Three options were considered: demolitions and rebuilding; full repair; or major renovation. The exercise concluded that a programme of major renovation should be undertaken
- 2.4 In 2005 Leeds North West homes made a decision to refurbish the Woodbridge estate. The ALMO decided that to merely implement the decent homes standard would not resolve the wider structural problems associated with the type of property. The estate was popular and had high demand so the Board took the decision to carry out whole house improvements that would deal with the structural issues as well as decency. Since then 54 properties have been refurbished. West North West Homes (WNW) took over the responsibility for the programme in April 2007.
- 2.5 In 2008, the ALMOs, together with the Council, conducted a review of investment to ensure that the decent homes standard could be met by 2010/11. It was concluded as part of that review that West North West could achieve decent homes by 2010/11 as long as its investment programmes targeted the decent homes standard.
- 2.6 A consequence of this decision was that certain programmes that were being delivered to higher standards than decency were reviewed. The Woodbridge estate was one of these programmes. Each property refurbished cost around £22k, against a decency allocation of £5k per property.
- 2.7 In the light of this, WNW ALMO carried out further consultation with residents at the Woodbridge estate indicating that previously given commitments could not be fulfilled. This resulted in the Tenants and Residents Association making a deputation to Council at the April 2009 Council meeting.

### **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 Following the deputation, officers have held discussions with the ALMO about the future of the refurbishment programme on the Woodbridge estate. It has been established that a further 137 properties require refurbishment work at an estimated cost of £3.014m. The ALMO has been asked to reconsider its decision in the light of the fact that the
- there had been a clear commitment made to the tenants of the estate
  - that the area was one of high demand where investment was a long term benefit.
- 3.2 The ALMO has £1.14m of the £1.9m allocated from the Council's decency reserve over and above its budgeted resources available. The call on this money is in excess of the available funding. Given, however, the above factors, at its Board meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009 the Board agreed to a proposal that the ALMO commits £500k of its available funding for a further stage of the Woodbridge refurbishment programme, with the equivalent match funding from the Council. This additional £1m will allow the programme of improvement to be maintained though 2009/10 and a further 60 properties to be completed.

3.3 This proposal will allow the refurbishment work at the Woodbridge estate to continue. Officers have asked all the ALMOs to provide investment details of work over and above decency that will be needed between 2009 and 2012 so that priorities can be agreed and funding sources explored. As part of this process, officers will explore with WNW Homes, a long term solution for the Woodbridge Estate.

#### **4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

4.1 None

#### **5.0 Legal And Resource Implications**

5.1 The Housing Revenue Account will provide the £500k match funding from an in year surplus forecast on rental income in 2009/10.

5.2 The Council's contribution will be dealt with as a virement into the ALMO's Capital Programme.

#### **6.0 Consultation**

6.1 Officers from West North West homes have met with the Woodbridge Tenants and Residents Association. Whilst this initiative is welcomed the Association would still like to see a long term solution for the estate. The ALMO is working with the Association to agree priorities for this next phase of spend.

6.2 The ALMO has also written to ward members explaining the outcome of discussions with the Council and to appraise them of the views of the Tenants and Residents Association. The views of ward members will be reported at the Executive Board meeting.

#### **7.0 Conclusions**

7.1 The Woodbridge estate is a popular and high demand area to which the ALMO has shown an investment commitment. It is, therefore, seen as a desirable and appropriate priority for further funding.

7.2 This issue does raise a wider concern about funding investment in Council Housing after the decency funding ends. The Council, together with the ALMOs, has begun a piece of work to assess investment need between 2009 and 2012 which is the end of the current management agreement with the ALMOs. The Council has also embarked on a project to assess the longer term needs through the work on "The Future of Council Housing". Reports on both subjects will be brought to the Executive Board later in the year.

#### **8.0 Recommendations**

8.1 The Executive Board is asked to note the agreed actions following the deputation to Council by the Woodbridge Tenants and Residents Association.

#### **9.0 Background Papers**

- Woodbridge Tenants and Residents Association Deputation to April Full Council