



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

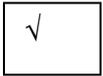
Executive Board

Date: 13th October 2010

Subject: Deputation to Council from the Tenants of Moor Grange Court

Electoral Wards Affected:

Kirkstall



Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In
(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a Deputation by Moor Grange Court tenants to Full Council on 15th July 2010, Officers are required to report to Executive Board. Moor Grange tenants reported that their multi storey block has suffered a number of anti social behaviour incidents from some of the tenants. As a result, the tenants are seeking changes to the way in which properties are allocated through a local lettings policy. Since the deputation members of the Executive Board may have read an article in the Yorkshire Evening Post setting out some the problems faced by the residents and the actions taken by the Council against the perpetrators of anti social behaviour.

This report proposes a local lettings policy for Moor Grange Court which would restrict future lettings to the over 50s. The policy is seen as a way to ensure that there is a community created within the block with a common culture so as to reduce lifestyle clashes and create more harmonious living conditions. Tenants and member have been consulted and are supportive of this proposal.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the deputation from tenants of Moor Grange Court to full Council on 15th July 2010
- 1.2 This report will deal with the issues raised by the tenants group and set out proposals to tackle their concerns.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Moor Grange Court is a multi storey block of flats at the top of Butcher Hill and is managed by West North West Homes (WNW). There are 58 flats which are made up of 1 and 2 bedroom flats. The age profile of the residents shows that 30 are over the age of 45. The ALMO consider Moor Grange Court to be a sustainable block as measured by their mapping database.
- 2.2 Prior to the introduction of the ALMOs in Leeds and pre Choice Based Lettings there were many unwritten "local lettings arrangements" which were technically unlawful as they had no evidence to prove they were needed and had not been formally adopted by the Council. Moor Grange Court had one of these arrangements.
- 2.3 The Council found itself being challenged and as a result there was a review of all of these local arrangements. Evidence of their need was requested by the Council and subsequently many were formally adopted. These are known as local lettings policies.
- 2.4 When the ALMOs were set up Moor Grange Court was originally managed by Leeds North West Homes. That ALMO took a decision not to have local lettings policies. As a result the former "local arrangement" was not formally adopted and flats within the block were let in accordance with the Council's full lettings policy.

3.0.0 Main Issues

The Tenants of Moor Grange Court feel that the decision not to have an adopted local lettings policy has created a change in the profile of tenants within the block that has led to increased anti social behaviour which is destabilising the block. The specific concerns raised are:

3.1.0 Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

- 3.1.1 There is a common misunderstanding of CBL. CBL is the process by which expressions of interest are made following a property being advertised as available to let. It is the Council's lettings policy that determines what priority is awarded to those in need. By law the policy must offer reasonable preference to those with needs. A review of the policy has been completed and the results of the consultation are reported in the October 2010 Executive Board report. One proposal in the review is to allocate 25% of properties to local people thus allowing those with less housing need but a real connection with a community to have an increased opportunity of obtaining a home.

3.2.0 Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)

- 3.2.1 The tenants have noticed an increase in ASB as tenants of different ages and with different lifestyles have begun to be housed within the block. Description of some of the problems that residents have faced were set out in the recent Yorkshire Evening

Post reports. The Council regards ASB that prevents tenants from living peacefully in their homes as very serious and has taken action with the ALMO to evict those involved. A review of the way the response to ASB operates has been completed and in order to ensure that responses are more timely with residents kept better informed on actions it has been agreed to set up multi service teams within localities that will be led by the ALMOs. At WNW, the ALMO have set up a Safer Estates Team to improve the response to ASB and to provide support to victims.

3.3.0 Move to a Local Lettings Policy with age restrictions

3.3.1 The residents feel that it is time to vary the way in which these flats are let from the Council's policy to an age restricted local lettings policy. WNW attended a meeting with the tenants of the block on 20th July 2010. At this meeting it was agreed:

- To explore implementing a "Good Neighbour Agreement". This would entail residents agreeing how their community will be kept safe and thriving through their own actions. All new residents would be encouraged to sign up to this when they are allocated a property.
- To consult on the creation of a local lettings policy restricting residents of the block to being 50 or over.
- To continue to tackle ASB effectively.

3.3.2 A proposal for a local lettings policy that will only allow applicants over the age of 50 to move in to Moor Grange Court has been consulted upon with tenants and members who have given their support to the proposal. The policy has been accepted by the ALMO Board on 21st September 2010 and will be ratified by delegated decision by the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 The council's Lettings policy states how council homes should be let in the city. Furthermore, the council has set the parameters for developing Local Lettings policies. These parameters have been developed in partnership with ALMO tenants and other stakeholders.

4.2 The Council's statutory duties to accommodate those in serious housing need, the increasingly evident issue of supply and demand, and the rights of individuals make it impossible to restrict lettings for customers who have support needs. However, the ALMOs/TMO's increasingly close link between lettings and housing support is designed to minimise the risk of both unsustainable and unsuccessful tenancies, and the potential of ASB to affect neighbours.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 There are no immediate legal or resource implications. However, the Equalities Bill 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate in the delivery of service on an age basis. This will become law in 2012.

5.2 The Council is currently reviewing the implications of this legislation and in particular the impact that it might have on age restricted local lettings policies.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The residents of Moor Grange Court have set out real concerns about changes to their community which they believe is as a direct result of the Council's lettings policy. This report shows that the Council and WNW have responded to their concerns and will continue to work closely with the residents to improve the quality of life in their community.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 The Executive Board is asked to note the response taken by the Council and the ALMO to the problems facing the residents of Moor Grange Court.

Background Papers

1. Moor Grange Court Residents Petition
2. Delegates speech to Council