

Report of Housing Leeds – Chief Officer of Housing Management

Report to Tenant Scrutiny Board

Date: 31 March 2015

Subject: Housing Management Response to Tenant Scrutiny Board Inquiry – Annual Tenancy Visits

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

The purpose of this report is for Housing Management to provide a formal response to Tenant Scrutiny Board following its Inquiry and subsequent recommendations made about the Annual Tenancy Visit process.

Recommendations

1. Housing Management would like to thank Tenant Scrutiny Board for the work and commitment undertaken on the Annual Tenancy Visit Inquiry and acknowledges the positive contribution to service improvement and delivering improved outcomes for tenants.
2. Tenant Scrutiny Board are asked to consider feedback from Housing Management in response to recommendations received regarding the Annual Tenancy Visit Inquiry, see appendix 1.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for Housing Management to provide a formal response to Tenant Scrutiny Board in respect of the Annual Tenancy Visit Inquiry.

2 Background information

- 2.1 A routine programme of home visits was introduced in 2008 following Audit Commission recommendations made to the former ALMO's. The home visit process has evolved in recent years to meet changing business needs.
- 2.2 Tenant Scrutiny Board have examined a wide range of information and evidence for the whole of the Annual Tenancy Visit process, including performance data and direction from Housing Leeds Senior Management Team. Tenant Scrutiny Board selected Annual Tenancy Visits as an area for investigation because:
- It was thought that performance in this area would benefit from improvement; and
 - It was felt that Annual Tenancy Visits are fundamental to tenants' experience of the Housing Management service.
- 2.3 The Inquiry involved a variety of methods of investigation, including a desk top review of relevant literature and a review of performance information. Discussion and consultation with; tenants, Housing Officers, Housing Managers and benchmarking with other landlords including Wakefield District Housing. It is felt this approach adds validity to the Inquiry as the findings and resulting recommendations are based on empirical evidence and extensive consultation with stakeholders.
- 2.4 The level of commitment and scale of work undertaken by volunteer tenants in this exercise has been considerable.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Tenant Scrutiny Board have summarised the quality of the Annual Tenancy Visit process is determined by the consistency with which Housing Management are able to:
- Accurately record data
 - Build on good tenant/landlord relations
 - Communicate to tenants the purpose and benefits of the visit
 - Effective use of officer time, achieving a reduction in duplication of effort, increased service efficiencies and opportunities for savings
 - Ensure data collected is correct and used to improve service outcomes for customers

- 3.1.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Board concluded that; the Annual Tenancy Visit process could deliver an improved service if their recommendations are implemented. The recommendations from Tenant Scrutiny Board which includes feedback form Housing Management can be found in Appendix 1.
- 3.1.2 The approved recommendations will be implemented on Monday 20th April 2015.
- 3.1.3 On receipt of the Tenant Scrutiny Board report, Housing Management has reviewed its Annual Tenancy Visit policy and procedures and has incorporated many of the findings into the process. This updated process will be followed in completing Annual Tenancy Visits for 2015/16.

3.2 Consultation and Engagement

- 3.2.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Board is made up of tenants only. They have led on and directed the purpose of this Inquiry; from deciding what the Inquiry should be about, who to speak with and what information to request and review. As part of the enquiry there was wider consultation with tenants through a survey.
- 3.2.2 We will report back to Tenant Scrutiny Board on a periodic basis.

3.3 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 3.3.1 The nature of a Tenant Scrutiny Board Inquiry is for tenants themselves to identify how services can be improved by taking time to investigate a particular service area and then make recommendations for improvement.
- 3.3.2 An Equality Impact Assessment of the Annual Tenancy Visit review has been undertaken in conjunction with tenants.
- 3.3.3 The following recommendations are examples of where the service is likely to advance equality of opportunity:
- By providing a quality and comprehensive annual tenancy visit this will enable Housing Management to provide a tailored and proactive housing service where interventions are put in place at an early stage to promote tenancy sustainment.
 - To provide effective sign posting to all of our services and the services of other agencies and partners and to promote tenant involvement.

3.4 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 3.4.1 The Annual Tenancy Visit supports the Best Council objective to 'ensure high quality public services, improving quality, efficiency and involving people in shaping their city.'

3.5 Resources and value for money

- 3.5.1 Value for Money is one of the key drivers for Tenant Scrutiny Board. The recommendations made, support the principle of; improved efficient and effective ways of working by removing duplication and providing efficient services.

3.6 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

3.6.1 As a landlord Housing Leeds are required to promote and support Tenant Scrutiny Board in line with the Homes and Communities Agency's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. This is known as co-regulation and is how landlords are now regulated. Failure to comply with this standard could result in intervention from the regulator and put at risk the reputation of the service.

3.7 Risk Management

3.7.1 By delivering a quality, comprehensive Annual Tenancy Visit this provides tailored support for vulnerable tenants, which enables the most vulnerable tenants to maintain a successful tenancy and promotes independent living.

3.7.2 Tenancy fraud is a key priority for Housing Management. The Annual Home Visit helps us to identify and manage risks to tenants sub-letting their tenancies. It enables us to identify tenancy breaches and take early intervention.

3.7.3 Additionally, it enables Housing Leeds to deliver customer focused services, tailored for individual need. A key feature of the Annual Tenancy visit process is partnership working with other agencies, including Adult Social Care and Children's Services.

4 Conclusions

4.1 Housing Management wish to acknowledge the work of Tenant Scrutiny Board and their positive contribution to service improvement and delivering better outcomes for tenants.

4.2 Tenant Scrutiny Board are asked to review and accept feedback on recommendations made by Housing Management.

5 Background documents¹

5.1 Appendix 1: Tenant Scrutiny Board Recommendations – Annual Tenancy Visits, which includes feedback from Housing.

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.