

Report of David Longthorpe – Head of Housing Management

Report to Housing Advisory Board

Date: 7th June 2016

Subject: Joint Response to Tenant Scrutiny Board Inquiry – Environment of Estates

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

- 1 The purpose of this report is to advise Housing Advisory Board of the outcome of the tenant Scrutiny Board enquiry into the Environment of Estates and the joint response from Housing Leeds, Waste, Localities and Parks and Countryside to Tenant Scrutiny Board, following its Inquiry and subsequent recommendations made about environment of estates.
- 2 Tenant Scrutiny Board chose this topic as there was a strong belief that good housing and the welfare of tenants was not just about decent buildings but the 'whole environment' in which tenants live. They also felt this was an area where improvements could be made and help address issues from the 2014 Star Survey.
- 3 Information was gathered in a variety of ways including joint estate inspections, survey and meetings with Ward Members, meetings with senior managers and staff and a meeting with Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Environment & Housing
- 4 Tenant Scrutiny Board concluded that the quality of the environment of estates is determined by the consistency with which the various departments of Leeds City Council are able to work together in partnership, involve residents, agree joint improvement plans and act on identified issues with monitoring to completion of actions.

- 5 The Tenant Scrutiny Board concluded that; improving environment of estates would lead to improved tenant satisfaction and would deliver an improved service for tenants if their recommendations are implemented. The recommendations from Tenant Scrutiny Board which includes feedback form Housing Leeds, Waste, Parks and Locality team can be found in Appendix 1.

Recommendations

- 6 Housing, Waste, Localities and Parks and Countryside would like to thank the Tenant Scrutiny Board for the work and commitment undertaken on the environment of estates Inquiry, and acknowledges the positive contribution to service improvement and delivering improved outcomes for tenants.
- 7 Housing Advisory Board are asked to note the feedback from Housing, Waste, Localities and Parks and Countryside in response to recommendations received regarding the environment of estates Inquiry, see appendix 1.
- 8 Housing Advisory Board are asked to note that Environment and Housing Department services will be working together to deliver outcomes recommended in this report and will be providing an update to Tenant Scrutiny Board in 6 months' time.

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of the report is for Housing, Waste, Parks and Countryside and Localities teams to provide a formal response to Tenant Scrutiny Board in respect of the environment of estates inquiry.

2.0 Background information

2.1 Tenant Scrutiny Board chose this topic as there was a strong belief that good housing and the welfare of tenants was not just about decent buildings but the 'whole environment' in which tenants live.

2.2 The purpose of the inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

- Current policies
- Tenant involvement
- Co-ordination of Council services and other agencies
- Developing and delivering standards
- Performance measuring
- Customer satisfaction - (STAR survey)

2.3 Tenant Scrutiny Board selected environment of estates as an area for investigation because:

- It was thought performance in this area would benefit from improvement
- It was felt that environment of estates is fundamental to tenants' experience of the Housing Management service and;
- It was felt it would address issues arising from the 2014 STAR survey

2.4 Information presented to Tenant Scrutiny Board during the course of their investigation in relation to the 2014 STAR survey, highlights the rising importance of neighbourhoods and the environment as an issue for tenants.

The top 5 tenant citywide priorities taken from the STAR survey are:

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

2.5 Tenant Scrutiny Board have examined a wide range of information and evidence including:

- Joint estate inspections to obtain first-hand experience in Armley, Bramley, City & Holbeck and Moortown

- A survey of all Elected Members
- A meeting with Councillors from Armley, Bramley, City and Holbeck and Moortown.
- A survey of tenants and tenant and resident associations
- A meeting with senior managers from Housing, Waste, Parks and Countryside and Locality Team
- Consultation with Housing Officers, Team Leaders and Housing Managers
- A meeting with Cllr Coupar, Executive Member for Environment & Housing

2.6 It is felt this approach adds validity to the inquiry as the findings and resulting recommendations are evidence based and include extensive consultation with stakeholders.

2.7 The level of commitment and scale of work undertaken by Tenant Scrutiny during this inquiry has been considerable.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 Tenant Scrutiny Board have summarised the quality of environment of estates is determined by the consistency with which the various departments of Leeds City Council are able to:

- Adopt a 'one Council' approach and work in partnership
- Involve tenants and other stakeholders in managing estate standards
- Have a routine inspection programme
- Provide joint Estate Improvement Plans
- Harmonisation of processes
- Set agreed timescales for referrals
- Act on items identified and monitor through to completion
- Ensure information collected is correct and used to improve service outcomes for customers

3.2 The Tenant Scrutiny Board concluded that; improving environment of estates would lead to improved tenant satisfaction and would deliver an improved service for tenants if their recommendations are implemented. The recommendations from Tenant Scrutiny Board which includes feedback form Housing Leeds, Waste, Parks and Locality team can be found in Appendix 1.

The approved recommendations will be implemented and reported within 6 months time.

3.3.1 On receipt of the Tenant Scrutiny Board report, Housing Leeds has reviewed its estate inspection policy and procedures and has incorporated all of the findings in relation to recommendation 2, into the new process. This updated process was implemented on 15th April 2016 and will be shared with Team Leaders at a city wide meeting on the 6th May 2016.

4.0 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1 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 inquiry there was wider consultation with tenants through a survey.
- 4.2 An update on progress will be reported to Tenant Scrutiny Board in 6 months' time from Housing, Waste, Localities and Parks and Countryside.

5.0 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment of the estate inspection process has been undertaken in conjunction with tenants.
- 5.3 The following recommendations are examples of where the service is likely to advance equality of opportunity:
- By providing well managed estates this will enable Leeds City Council to provide improved environmental conditions, which will lead to improved tenant satisfaction.
 - To provide effective sign posting to all of our services and the services of other agencies and partners and to promote tenant involvement.

6.0 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 6.1 Improving environmental standards supports the Best Council objective to 'ensure high quality public services, improving quality, efficiency and involving people in shaping their city.'

7.0 Resources and Value for Money

- 7.1 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.

8.0 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 8.1 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.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 By delivering a coordinated approach in the management of environmental standards this will create neighbourhoods where tenants want to live and improve tenant satisfaction. In addition, it will address tenant feedback from the 2014 STAR survey.
- 9.2 Additionally, it enables Housing Leeds and other departments to manage risks associated with potential compensation claims arising from slips, trips and falls. The revised estate inspection process includes an annual inspection of footpaths, ginnels, walkways and paved areas.

10.0 Conclusions

- 10.1 The Environment and Housing Department wish to acknowledge the work of Tenant Scrutiny Board and their positive contribution to service improvement and delivering better outcomes for tenants.
- 10.2 Housing Advisory Board are asked to note the feedback from Housing, Waste, Localities and Parks and Countryside in response to recommendations received regarding the environment of estates Inquiry, see appendix 1.
- 10.3 Housing Advisory Board are asked to note that Environment and Housing Departmentt services will be working together to deliver outcomes recommended in this report and will be providing an update to Tenant Scrutiny Board in 6 months' time.

11.0 Background documents¹

Appendix 1: Tenant Scrutiny Board Recommendations – Environmental Standards, which includes feedback from Housing, Waste, Parks and Countryside and Locality teams.

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.