

Report of David Longthorpe – Head of Housing Management

Report to Housing Advisory Board

Date: 20th June 2017

Subject: Tenant Scrutiny Enquiry of Estate Environment – Progress Report

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 update Housing Advisory Board of the progress with addressing the recommendations of the tenant Scrutiny Board enquiry into the Environment of Estates and the joint response from Housing Leeds, Waste, Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Parks and Countryside to Tenant Scrutiny Board, following its inquiry.
- 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 At The Tenant Scrutiny Board on the 30th November 2016 it was accepted that the majority of the recommendations had been achieved.

Recommendation

Housing Advisory Board are asked to note the actions taken by Housing, Waste, Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Parks and Countryside in response to recommendations received regarding the environment of estates inquiry.

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is update Housing Advisory Board of the progress with addressing the recommendations of the tenant Scrutiny Board enquiry into the Environment of Estates and the joint response from Housing Leeds, Waste, Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Parks & Countryside to the Tenant Scrutiny Board Inquiry.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Housing Advisory Board received a report in June 2016 outlining the investigation undertaken by the Tenant Scrutiny Board into the Environment of Estates. The 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 All recommendations were accepted and the various teams that contribute to the condition of estates have been working closely together to bring about improvements to deliver these recommendation's. Appendix 1 Tenant Scrutiny Board Recommendation Tracking Document Provides full details of actions undertaken by the various services in response to the recommendations.

A summary of the recommendations are outlined below.

- 2.3 **Recommendation 1** - That the Tenant Scrutiny Board review in September 2016 progress made towards service harmonisation and the implementation of the 'one council approach'

Actions - Procedure Harmonisation completed and implemented and training delivered to all teams. Team Leaders in Housing , Cleaner Neighbourhoods , Parks & Countryside and Civic Enterprise Leeds are in regular communication including some co-location and working on Joint Local Action Plans on tackling Estate Management Issues. Housing Officers represent other services during Walkabouts and act as a conduit for contact with other services.

- 2.4 **Recommendation 2** -That various procedure improvements be considered as part of the current harmonisation project and that the results of the harmonisation project be reported back to Tenant Scrutiny Board.

Actions – Harmonised procedures and documents incorporating Tenant Scrutiny Board suggestions. Improved communication and promotion of the estate walkabout with greater lead in time, improve tenant participation, improved communication and feedback to ward members and those attending walkabouts

- 2.5 **Recommendation 3** - That the Council introduces the best waste collection solution for individual estates, even if that results in variations across the city.

Actions – Alternative waste collection arrangements have been introduced at Beckhill estate Meanwood and Cottingley estate in South Leeds. Housing, Waste and Cleaner Neighbourhoods working together to try to resolve waste collection issues in a number of other areas including Bawn Estate and Burmantofts.

- 2.6 **Recommendation 4** - That the Council Provides - more bins on estates, Ensures the timely removal of full glass banks , Introduces more clean up days and undertakes an education campaign to raise variations across the city.

Actions – Additional waste bins provided in a number of locations in consultation with Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team. Waste Services working with Recycling contractor to review collection frequencies for popular recycling sites. Numerous Clean up days delivered on various estates around Leeds with further days planned for the current year. All departments working on various education / information campaigns.

- 2.7 **Recommendation 5** - That appropriate enforcement action is taken to ensure tenants fulfil their tenancy agreement with regards to the upkeep of gardens.

Actions - The Messy Garden procedure which includes clear enforcement process has been harmonised and rolled out to all teams.

- 2.8 **Recommendation 6** - That the responsibilities of tenants with regards their gardens are clearly communicated, particularly during pre-tenancy training

Actions - Tenant responsibilities for gardens are outlined during accompanied viewings, signing of the Tenancy Agreement, New Tenant Visits, Annual Home Visits and specific contact and communication with tenants when the standard of their gardens fall below acceptable levels. Pilot Pre Tenancy Training undertaken as part of Clydes and Wortley Project and is currently being evaluated.

- 2.9 **Recommendation 7** - That Housing Leeds encourages and facilitates the start-up of tool bank schemes.

Actions - Historically Tool Banks have not been sustainable therefore consideration given to Love Your Garden Project in Middleton with Health for All as a model for other areas.

- 2.10 **Recommendation 8** - That greater publicity be given to the constraints faced by the Council in terms of grounds maintenance.

Actions - A leaflet has been produced by Parks and Countryside setting out what grounds maintenance works are undertaken and the constraints on these. Leaflet placed on Website and distributed to Housing Teams. FAQ document produced by Forestry on Tree Management, Housing now receives a monthly report on tree work progress and a weekly report from Parks and Countryside regarding grassed areas not cut and reasons.

- 2.11 **Recommendation 9** - That Parks and Countryside in liaison with Housing Leeds pro-actively identify those areas 'not on the map' and action accordingly.

Actions - Unmaintained land frequently identified during Walkabouts, Estate Inspections and during routine visits to estates. While the land is question is often mapped and included in the Grounds Maintenance contact to be maintained the

problem may often be that grass cannot be cut for other reasons such as fly tipping that has not been removed access issues or blockages such as vehicles blocking access.

- 2.12 **Recommendation 10** - That Housing Leeds reports back to Tenant Scrutiny Board back on any recommendations and or proposed policy changes following its review of garages.

Actions - All garage sites have been inspected and rated regarding their condition and sustainability. Empty garages on sustainable garage sites are being advertised for reletting in a variety of ways. Option Appraisals being undertaken on other sites for possible investment and improvement , demolition or possible redevelopment opportunities.

3.0 Main issues

- 3.1 The Head of Housing Management attended Tenant Scrutiny Board on the 30th November 2016 to provide an update on progress made by the different services in meeting the recommendations. The Head of Housing Management was questioned by the Tenant Scrutiny Board on the actions taken and associated issues.

- 3.2 The Tenant Scrutiny Board voted unanimously to agree that following the update and additional clarification provided by the Head of Housing Management, that all the recommendations had been achieved other than

- Recommendation 3 in relation to Waste Management and
- Recommendation 10 which was not fully accepted due to the ongoing Garage Review. Tenant Scrutiny Board awarded “Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable, continue monitoring) status” by the Tenant Scrutiny Board.

- 3.3 Recommendation 3 was not accepted by Tenant Scrutiny Board as being achieved although examples had been provided where Waste Services and Housing Leeds had worked closely together to improve waste management including bespoke solutions Including

- The Beckhill Estate in Meanwood,
- The Cottingley Estate
- Infrastructure improvements funded from the Environmental Improvement Programme to facilitate provision of wheelie bins and Alternate Week Collection service in various locations.
- The “opt in” recycling solution had also been introduced in Headingley and Harehills where green recycling bins are removed where residents did not opt in to recycle waste.

However Tenant Scrutiny Board members had seen a particular waste issue around high rise flats in Armley where there was an accumulation of waste outside the blocks. The two blocks concerned are currently having major repair work undertaken to the concrete exterior which has meant Waste Services have not had access to the bin chute chambers. A temporary external waste collection point has been provided for the use of residents. The normal internal rubbish chute provision will be reinstated as and when access to bin rooms can be reinstated. The concrete repairs on these two blocks are due to be completed by January 2018.

- 3.4 Recommendation 10 - The Garage review is ongoing but with a number of elements already implemented including harmonised procedures rolled out to staff including allocation, tenancy management, termination of garage tenancies and dealing with vehicles or items left in garages. The waiting list has also been reviewed in quarter 3 last year with all applicants for garages written to confirm their request for a garage which has significantly reduced the waiting list. Garages have been marketed with revised posters , use of the council website, on the Leeds Homes Website and using social media pages. All Garage sites have been colour rated (RAG) according to their sustainability in relation to demand, condition and investment need. A number of sites have been assessed as unsustainable with a red rating with a number of sites demolished that have been assessed as being in worst condition. Of these red sites 30 were initially identified for possible re-development for housing or self build opportunities with 7 of these taken forward for further consideration. Amber and Green sites are being revisited for additional investment needs with this work expected to be completed by the end of September. Temporary garage sites and former garage sites previously demolished are also being inspected and assessed.
- 3.5 The current years diary of Walkabouts have been agreed with resident groups and local champions with local ward members advised. Local publicity is produced and information on the council's website under local Housing area pages in order to encourage additional interested residents to get involved.
- 3.6 There have been a few issues in relation to Estate Walkabouts with inconsistency in some wards with follow up communication to ward members and resident groups in terms of giving feedback on issues identified on the walkabout and actions taken. This has been addressed with reminder to all teams to ensure the follow up feedback is provided in every case and has now been included in the Performance Management Framework for Housing Managers and Team leaders.

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.

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.

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 2017 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 Significant progress has been made with improving working relationship at a local level between the various services that contribute to maintaining a high standard of Estate Management and resolving issues locally.

10.2 Estate Walkabouts have been arranged around the city for the year ahead in consultation with resident groups or interested individual residents with the Housing Officer taking a lead role in their promotion and encouraging engagement by local residents and in particular promoting clean up days where local residents are interested in participating. The Housing Officer continues to be the one point of contact and link to other services to maintain standards and identify improvement Schemes for additional funding via Housing Advisory Panels

11.0 Recommendation

- 11.1 Housing Advisory Board are asked to note the actions taken by Housing, Waste, Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Parks & Countryside in response to recommendations received regarding the environment of estates inquiry.

Background documents¹

Appendix 1: Tenant Scrutiny Board recommendation Tracking Document.

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.