



SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

Meeting to be held in Civic Hall, Leeds on
Friday, 9th October, 2009 at 10.00 am

A PRE-MEETING will take place for ALL Members of the Board
in a Committee Room at 9.30 am

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors

- B Anderson (Chair) - Adel and
Wharfedale;
- A Blackburn - Farnley and Wortley;
- A Castle - Harewood;
- R Downes - Otley and Yeadon;
- J Dowson - Chapel Allerton;
- D Hollingsworth - Burmantofts and
Richmond Hill;
- K Hussain - Hyde Park and
Woodhouse;
- G Hyde - Killingbeck and
Seacroft;
- J Jarosz - Pudsey;
- J Marjoram - Calverley and
Farsley;
- L Mulherin - Ardsley and Robin
Hood;
- M Rafique - Chapel Allerton;

Please note: Certain or all items on this agenda may be recorded on tape

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A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 25 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded.)</p> <p>(*In accordance with Procedure Rule 25, written notice of an appeal must be received by the Chief Democratic Services Officer at least 24 hours before the meeting)</p>	
2			<p>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>1 To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report.</p> <p>2 To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information.</p> <p>3 If so, to formally pass the following resolution:-</p> <p>RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:-</p>	

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
3			<p>LATE ITEMS</p> <p>To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.</p> <p>(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes.)</p>	
4			<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>To declare any personal / prejudicial interests for the purpose of Section 81 (3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 8 to 12 of the Members Code of Conduct.</p>	
5			<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
6			<p>MINUTES OF LAST MEETING</p> <p>To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 14th September 2009.</p>	1 - 8
7			<p>EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES</p> <p>To note the minutes of an Special Executive Board meeting held on 17th September 2009.</p>	9 - 10
8			<p>STATEMENT ON ENFORCEMENT OF DOG FOULING - DOG WARDEN SERVICE STRATEGY</p> <p>To consider a report from the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods presenting a draft Dog Warden Service Strategy.</p>	11 - 24

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
9			<p>INQUIRY INTO PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR HOUSING - FORMAL RESPONSE</p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presenting the formal response to the Board's earlier inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing.</p>	25 - 66
10			<p>INQUIRY INTO OLDER PEOPLE'S HOUSING - FORMAL RESPONSE</p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presenting the formal response to the Board's earlier inquiry into Older People's Housing.</p>	67 - 112
11			<p>HOUSING SOLUTIONS/MORTGAGE RESCUE</p> <p>To consider a progress report from the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods on the development of the Housing Solutions programme and the Mortgage Rescue initiatives being delivered in the city.</p>	113 - 122
12			<p>CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY - INQUIRY INTO INTEGRATED OFFENDER MANAGEMENT - DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE</p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presenting draft terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming inquiry into Integrated Offender Management.</p>	123 - 128
13			<p>WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>To receive a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development on the Board's current work programme.</p>	129 - 152

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
14			DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING Monday, 9 th November 2009 at 10.0 a.m. (Pre-Meeting at 9.30 a.m.)	

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Agenda Item 6

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

MONDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, A Castle,
R Downes, J Dowson, G Hyde, J Jarosz,
J Marjoram and M Rafique

31 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance at today's meeting and welcomed Councillor Jane Dowson to her first meeting of Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods).

32 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Hollingsworth, Councillor K Hussain and Councillor Mulherin. The Chair also announced that Councillor Jarosz would be arriving late due to a prior engagement.

33 Declarations of Interest

The following personal interests were declared:

- Councillor B Anderson in his capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Items 8 & 9 – Minutes 36 & 37 refer).
- Councillor A Blackburn in her capacity as a Director of West North West Homes (Agenda Items 8 & 9 - Minutes 36 & 37 refer). The Councillor also declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 12 (Minute 40 refers) in view of her husband's capacity as Chair of Roseville Enterprises Advisory Group.
- Councillor A Castle in her capacity as a member of West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority (Agenda Item 8 – Performance Indicators 22 & 23 - Minute 36 refers).
- Councillor G Hyde in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes (Agenda 8 & 9 – Minutes 36 & 37 refer). The Councillor also declared a personal interest in his capacity as a member of the Licensing Committee (Agenda Item 8 – Performance Indicator 17 (NI184) - Minute 36 refers).

34 Minutes and Matters Arising - 13th July 2009

The Chair confirmed that the additional information requested by the Board at the last meeting, as detailed in Minute numbers 25, 26 and 29, had been provided to Board Members and that no further action was required.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th July 2009 be approved as a correct record.

35 Executive Board Minutes

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Executive Board meetings held on 22nd July and 26th August 2009 be received and noted.

36 **Quarter 1 Performance Report 2009/10**

The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report presenting the key areas of under performance at the end of Quarter 1 (1st April – 30th June 2009).

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents:

- Appendix 1 – Environment & Neighbourhoods 2009/10 – Quarter 1
- Appendix 2 – Updated 2008/09 Year End Results

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:

- Councillor J Monaghan, Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer
- Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer
- Superintendent Simon Whitehead, Leeds Area Community Safety

An apology for absence was conveyed on behalf of Councillor J L Carter, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods & Housing.

The Chair informed Officers that Steve Clough, Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement Team had attended the pre-meeting to give Members a brief overview of the Quarter 1 performance data.

The Chair invited Board Members to comment on those areas of specific interest within the performance indicators. A general discussion ensued around the Council's performance for reducing residual household waste with references made to the fortnightly SORT pilot; the preparations in place for the food waste collection pilot and plans for future residual waste facilities. It was also noted that a report was due to be considered by the Executive Board in October around improving the recycling infrastructure.

In brief, the main issues raised were:-

- BP-05C – Rent collection by the Local Authority as a proportion of rents owed on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings.
 - Members sought clarification of the difficulties in getting the 1% increase in order to achieve the 97.50% target. In acknowledging that a provisional target was still to be agreed, Members also questioned whether ALMOs would be seeking to reduce this target. (In response, Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer, informed the meeting that in view of the current economic climate, the current performance was considered to be positive. However, every effort was being made to encourage ALMOs to push to achieve a good performance rate. Ongoing work was progressing with the ALMOs to understand the impact of the current economic climate and what effect this was having on rent collection. The department are now

looking at best practice from other local authorities within the region that had achieved positive results in rent collection.

- NI16 – Serious acquisitive crime rate
 - Members sought clarification on the figures relating to the acquisitive crime rate.
(In response, Superintendent Simon Whitehead, Leeds Area Community Safety explained that this particular indicator takes account of a number of different offences which make up the serious acquisitive crime rate. Whilst domestic burglary offences had recorded the biggest increase (up 30%) it was noted that these figures had now started to fall as a result of more intensive management programmes and improved data sharing mechanisms).

- NI152 – Working age people on out of work benefits
 - Members expressed concern over the six month time lag for receiving the Department of Works & Pensions (DWP) data.
(In response, Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods explained that the Council collates its own local intelligence data but the Data Commission only recognised the official figures produced by the DWP in the performance indicators. The Director informed the meeting that that he had no problem with future performance reports making reference to this additional local data as part of the commentary.

The Board requested that they receive monthly unemployment figures, for both male and female unemployed and, broken down into Council wards .

- PI LKI-HAS4 – Number of homeless acceptances made in the year
 - Members requested further details of the homeless prevention work being undertaken by the Council.
(In response, Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer gave a brief update and agreed to provide information about the approach taken by the Council).

- NI158 - % non-decent council homes
 - Clarification was sought on whether the figures included houses currently under appraisal, with particular reference made to housing within the Chapletown area.
(In response, Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer explained that such housing would be included in the figures pending the conclusion of the appraisal).

- NI 32 – Repeat incidents of domestic violence
 - Members noted that a baseline figure had not been included for this indicator and requested that this be rectified.

- NI 184 – Food establishments broadly compliant with food hygiene law
 - It was noted that the Council had successfully applied for a £33,000 grant from the Food Standards Agency to assist businesses in

completing their Food Safety Management Plan to comply with the new law.

- NI 28 / NI 29 – Knife crime rate and Gun crime rate
 - Whilst the Board acknowledged that both of these indicators were new and that datasets had only recently been pulled together, Members requested that comparative data be provided to the Board to illustrate the recent trends in performance.

The Chair thanked Councillor Monaghan and Officers for their attendance.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods be requested to provide the Board with monthly unemployment figures, for both male and female unemployed and, broken down into Council wards .
- (c) That the Chief Housing Services Officer provide Board Members with further information on the Council's homeless prevention work.
- (d) That this Scrutiny Board notes, with sadness, the sudden death of Jas Panesar, East North East Homes and wishes to place on record their sincere appreciation for his past services to the Authority.

- Note:
- (a) Councillor M Rafique joined the meeting at 10.10 a.m. during discussions on the above item.
 - (b) Councillor J Jarosz joined the meeting at 10.50 a.m. during discussions on the above item.
 - (c) During consideration of NI 184 Food establishments indicated above, Councillor G Hyde declared a personal interest in his capacity as a member of the Licensing Committee.

37 Inquiry into Street Cleaning - Formal Response

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report presenting the formal response to the Board's inquiry into Street Cleaning.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents:

- Appendix 1 – Street Cleaning – Scrutiny Inquiry Report.
- Appendix 2 – Environment & Neighbourhoods – Chart detailing the response of the Directorate.

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:

- Councillor J Monaghan, Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer

The Board welcomed the responses to their recommendations.

Members sought clarification on the Council's budget for replacing and providing more street bins.

In response, the Executive Member for Environmental Services informed the meeting that a great many bins were lost due to vandalism and it was proposed that this would be looked at in terms of the budget for next year.

Board Members also sought clarification with regard to Recommendation 1 on when the piece of research around the wider implications of having one single service area responsible for keeping land clear of litter and refuse would be completed and brought back to Scrutiny for consideration.

Whilst the formal response made it clear that the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods did not envisage that this recommendation would include any of the contained land owned by the Council such as parks and school grounds, the Board reiterated the importance of ensuring that there were clear lines of accountability for all pieces of land and that any land not clearly assigned to a park or school should, by default, become the responsibility of the proposed single service area.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance.

RESOLVED - That the report and appendices and the comments now made, be noted.

38 Inquiry into Recycling - Draft Terms of Reference

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report and draft terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming inquiry into Recycling.

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:

- Councillor J Monaghan, Executive Member for Environmental Services
- Andrew Mason, Chief Environmental Services Officer

The Executive Board Member for Environmental Services informed the meeting that he was happy with the draft terms of reference but suggested the Board also makes specific reference to looking at the range of materials currently recyclable at the household waste sorting sites and bring sites and whether there was scope to expand the range.

Councillor Monaghan also informed the meeting that he had met with Friends of the Earth who were interested in the inquiry and requested that the Board looked into the option for collecting items for reuse at the household waste sorting sites.

As part of the inquiry, Councillor Monaghan also requested that the Board look at setting priorities on any of its recommendations for additional recycling facilities.

RESOLVED - That, subject to the inclusion of the Executive Board Member's comments above, approval be given to the terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming inquiry into Recycling.

39 Current Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's current work programme.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:-

- Appendix 1 - Current work programme
- Appendix 2 – Relevant extract of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st September to 31 December 2009.

The Chair gave a brief update on the work programme and on the key changes made to the work programme relating to the timetable for the EASEL inquiry which had slipped as a result of the timing and scope of the neighbourhood planning exercises being reviewed in light of the recession and that the proposed review around enforcement management had been removed from the work programme as Members initial concerns related to the City Development portfolio.

In relation to the unscheduled items, the Board sought clarification on whether the Councillor J L Carter, the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing had spoken with the ALMOs yet to clarify what the scope of any ALMO Management Review would be before this was considered by Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods).

Members noted that a further report regarding the future options for Council Housing was due to be considered by the Executive Board in October 2009 and Members requested a copy of the report as soon as the information became available.

RESOLVED - That the contents of the report, its appendices and the comments now made, be noted.

40 Roseville Door Factory Closure

The Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods submitted a report presenting an update on the Roseville Door Factory closure.

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:

- Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer
- Sandie Keene, Director of Adult Social Services
- Anna Clifford, Business Change Project Manager
- Alex Watson, Human Resources Manager
- Sarah Tostevin, Human Resources Manager

A long discussion ensued and Board Members were happy with the progress reported regarding the redeployment of the 36 staff from the Roseville Door Factory into mainstream jobs and placements across the Council.

The key issues raised were as follows:

- That all 27 disabled staff employed at Roseville Door Factory had their skills profiles directed to the weekly Redeployment Board. Members received a summary of the posts, placements and pilot schemes now identified for these members of staff.
- That the non-disabled staff at the factory would formally enter Managing Workforce Change from 1st October 2009.
- That mainstreaming disabled staff with high support needs raises challenges and risks which need to be strategically managed. However, there was a need to move away from the traditional route of segregated support services for disabled staff.
- That the Council needs to think more strategically about pathways into mainstream employment as part of its overall Disability Employment Strategy.
- That a simplified route of access to specialist support resources would increase the speed, quality and take up of the support that was available.

Members agreed that no further Scrutiny action be taken by this Board and that a formal response be submitted back to Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) highlighting the Board's satisfaction on this matter.

The Chair thanked those officers who had undertaken the task of redeploying the 36 staff in such a professional manner and for their attendance at today's meeting.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the contents of the report and the comments now made be noted.
- (b) That a formal response be submitted to Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care) highlighting the Board's satisfaction on this matter.

41 Inquiry into Asylum Seeker Case Resolution - Formal Response

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report presenting the formal response to the Board's earlier inquiry into Asylum Seeker Case Resolution.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents:

- Appendix 1 – Asylum Seeker Case Resolution – Scrutiny Inquiry Report
- Appendix 2 - Chart detailing the response of the Directorate.

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:

- Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer
- Sharon Hague, Asylum Services Manager

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Friday, 9th October, 2009

Sharon Hague, Asylum Services Manager explained that many of the recommendations had either been implemented or in the process of being implemented.

It was also reported that the baseline data indicated in Recommendation 1 had been received by the department eight days ago. Members requested that they be provided with a copy of that data.

In brief, the main issues raised were in relation to Recommendation 6. It was highlighted that the Council had now provided UK Border Agency with all the necessary information regarding its National Assistance Act and Children's Act cases that require resolution (83 in total). Whilst three of those cases had now been resolved, a further thirteen were expected to be resolved quickly. The Board learned that the UK Border Agency had refused to give an indicative timeframe for resolving the remaining cases due to other priorities. Members were concerned about the lack of commitment shown by the UK Border Agency to resolve those cases and agreed to take the matter up with UK Border Agency and the Minister of Immigration.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That a copy of the baseline data be submitted to Board Members.
- (c) That the Chair writes to the UK Border Agency and Minister of Immigration on behalf of the Scrutiny Board in relation to the above matter.

42 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Friday, 9th October 2009 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-Meeting at 9.30 a.m.).

Scrutiny Board Members requested that a reminder be sent out via email regarding the change of date of the next meeting which was to take place on a Friday instead of the usual Monday.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 a.m.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

THURSDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor R Brett in the Chair

Councillors A Carter, J L Carter,
R Finnigan, S Golton, R Harker, P Harrand,
J Procter, K Wakefield and J Monaghan

Councillor R Lewis – Non-voting advisory member

85 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of appendices 2 and 3 to the report referred to in Minute No. 87, under the terms of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3) and on the grounds that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, as disclosure could prejudice the commercial interests of the Council and other outside bodies.

86 Late Items

There were no late items submitted for consideration, however, a revised version of exempt appendix 2 and exempt appendix 3 to agenda item 5 were circulated prior to the meeting (Minute No. 87 refers).

DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

87 Leeds United Thorp Arch Academy

Further to Minute No. 73, 26th August 2009, the Director of Resources, the Director of City Development and the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a joint report regarding an approach received from Leeds United Football Club with respect to possible Council involvement in the purchase of the Thorp Arch training facility.

A revised version of exempt appendix 2 and appendix 3 to the report were circulated prior to the meeting for Members' consideration.

Following consideration of appendices 2 and 3 to the report, designated as exempt under Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3) which were considered in private at the conclusion of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Director of Resources, the Director of City Development and the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) be authorised to continue negotiations with the Club with a view to agreeing terms that incorporate the conditions now specified by the Executive Board; and
- (b) That, subject to such terms as finally negotiated being agreed by the Chair, the Executive Member for Development and Regeneration, the Leader of the Morley Borough Independent Group and the Leader of the Labour Group, the officers named above be given delegated

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 14th October, 2009

authority to enter into any documentation necessary to conclude the relevant transactions.

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 21st September 2009
LAST DATE FOR CALL IN: 28th September 2009

(Scrutiny Support will notify Directors of any items called in by 12.00 noon on 29th September 2009)

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 14th October, 2009

Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Scrutiny Board: Environment and Neighbourhoods

Date: 9th October 2009

Subject: Statement on Enforcement of Dog Fouling – Dog Warden Service Strategy

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Statement of Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Enforcement of Dog Fouling dated February 2009 identified a number of recommendations for service improvement.
- 1.2 Recommendation ten of the statement stipulated that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods produces a Dog Control Strategy for Leeds by September 2009, setting out the duties of the Dog Warden Service; the current and potential role of other officers in enforcing Dog Control Orders; strategies for future education campaigns; and the implications of having additional Dog Control Orders for Leeds.
- 1.3 The Response to the Statement from the Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods) Dog Fouling dated 13th July 2009 advised that the outline Strategy pertaining to the Dog Warden Service only (but identifying partners) will be drafted for the September 2009 deadline. A Strategy, including the agreement of partners will take longer.

2.0 Summary

- 2.1 The proposed Dog Warden Service Strategy is attached.
- 2.2 The full strategy involving partners will be formulated from the Dog Control Order Project Board, at which the board will also explore the use of Dog Control Orders in Leeds.

2.3 The inaugural Dog Control Project Board meeting took place on Thursday 17th September 2009. At this meeting, the constitution was agreed, key stakeholders were identified and the project team was finalised.

2.4 Initial areas for consideration discussed at the meeting included the consultation process involved and budget pressures arising from the introduction of any dog control orders.

3.0 Financial and Legal Implications

3.1 The Legal process for implementing any Dog Control Orders involves consultation, advertising the intent for an order and subsequent further advertising, confirming the orders. This process has set timescales defined in the legislation.

3.2 Enforcement of any additional Orders would fall to existing Dog Wardens but smarter working through existing Council services should enable further support.

3.3 The Project Officer post (from the Highways and Environmental Enforcement Team), initially identified to undertake work arising from the project board, is subject to Neighbourhood Renewal Funding which ends March 31st 2010.

3.4 Further budget pressures that will arise from any agreed Dog Control Orders include signage costs, educative campaigns and promotional literature.

4.0 Way Forward

4.1 The Dog Control project team will meet on a monthly basis with the main objective of identifying which Dog Control Orders, if any, are appropriate for the City.

4.2 The anticipated timescales for the Dog Control Order project will be approximately 12 months, with any subsequently orders commencing April 1st 2011 (depending on the responses received to the consultation).

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 To recommend that Scrutiny Board notes the content of this report and approves the outline Dog Warden Service Strategy and process.

Background papers

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) final Statement on Enforcement of Dog Fouling (February 2009).



Dog Warden Service Strategy Responsible Dog Ownership Scheme

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1.0. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

Leeds City Council has identified 8 strategic outcomes which it has prioritised for action. These are supplemented with key improvement priorities. The main outcome to which the strategy applies is:-

“Environment – Cleaner, greener and more attractive city through effective environmental management and changed behaviours. The key improvement indicators which apply are addressing neighbourhood problem sites; improving cleanliness of green spaces; improving the quality of the built environment.”

Dog related issues such as fouling, stray dogs and nuisance dogs can adversely affect the environment and people’s enjoyment of it.

Tackling dog fouling also compliments the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Outcome “Reduced health inequalities through the promotion of healthy life choices and improved access to services” by improving our green spaces.

This strategy will identify how Leeds City Council intends to tackle irresponsible dog ownership and nuisance dog activity. The strategy outlines how we will encourage and promote responsible dog ownership and enforce available legislation to address dog control issues such as-

- Stray Dogs
- Dog Fouling
- Dangerous and Nuisance Dogs

This strategy will also identify ways to educate our communities and improve joint working with other agencies for a more streamlined and cohesive service to the community.

The strategy profiles how we will encourage and promote responsible dog ownership and enforce the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (CNEA 2005) on dog control.

This strategy is underpinned by Enforcement Policies relating to Stray Dogs, Dog Fouling and Dangerous Dogs.

2.0 CURRENT DOG WARDEN SERVICE

The Dog Wardens' main duties and powers at present include the following:-

Duty	Power
Dog Fouling (patrols and prosecutions/fixed penalties)	Section 55 Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 (Dog Control Order)
Dangerous & Nuisance Dogs - Prosecutions & Control Orders (investigating & case building)	Section 3 Dangerous Dogs Act 1996 Section.2 Dogs Act 1871
Collection of Stray Dogs (includes those seized on patrols as well as responding to customer collection requests)	Sections 149 & Section 150 Environmental Protection Act1990
Litter Offences (patrols & prosecutions/fixed penalties)	Sections 87/88 Environmental Protection Act 1990

In addition to these duties officers are frequently also regarded as Council Ambassadors by the public and are often approached with queries regarding:-

- Stray dogs (during hours when officers not on duty)
- Dog health/welfare
- Animal behaviour/training.
- Anti Social Behaviour
- Noise Nuisance (mainly from dogs, but also about other noise nuisance)
- General 'sign-posting' for other agencies.

Currently, anyone in the community can access the dog warden service through Contact Leeds on 0113 2224407.

The Council currently has five Dog Warden posts. Dog Wardens work Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays and the service is covered from 8.00 am until 5.00 pm. Out of hours working (to attend meetings or weekend events) is conducted voluntary using the Council's flexible working policy.

2.1 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

Section 55(1) of the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005, states that:-

“A primary or secondary authority may in accordance with this Chapter make an order providing for an offence or offences relating to the control of dogs in respect of any land in its area to which this Chapter applies.”

2.2 Dog Fouling

At present, Leeds has one Control Order in place and this relates to dog fouling. Where a person is found committing an offence of failing to pick up dog fouling they may be issued with a fixed penalty notice. The order applies to all land to which the public have access. If the offender fails to pay the fine, the council will prosecute them for the offence committed. Such an offence is punishable upon conviction by a maximum fine of up to £1000.

The Dog Warden Service will tackle dog fouling in the City as follows:-

- Investigate Complaints of Dog Fouling
- Utilise data to highlight “hot-spot areas”
- Conduct Patrols (from both uniformed and none-uniformed officers)
- Issue fixed penalty notices where offences are witnessed in accordance with the Council’s zero tolerance policy
- Offer dog walkers advice
- Issue “poo bags” where appropriate
- Erect anti dog fouling signage
- Liaise with the Council’s Streetscene Services to ensure the area is swept/cleaned on the scheduled day
- Request provision Request Provision of dog fouling and litter bins where appropriate and subject to funding.

2.3 Dangerous and Nuisance Dogs

The current working practice of the Council’s Dog Warden Service involves investigating complaints relating to dangerous dogs (biting or threats of attack), plus nuisance dog activity, for example, dogs out of control in a public place. This is an unusual practice, as most other local authorities pass this full function to the Police. This aspect of the service is under review.

The Council will follow up such complaints with Legal action, where appropriate.

The Council continues to work in partnership with the Police, as the Police still undertake Dangerous Dogs offences reported directly to them. The Police also have full responsibility for dealing with Banned Breeds, including maintenance of the Banned Breeds register.

3.0 DOG CONTROL ORDERS

There are a number of additional control orders that can be created under Section 55 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act and these are detailed below.

It is important that, before considering implementing any of the orders, appropriate consultation is undertaken. The Council will take into account whether any dog control orders suit the needs of the community and are proportionate, fair and enforceable.

Leeds City Council intend to create a **Responsible Dog Ownership Scheme** which will:-

- consider the responses to the consultation and create Dog Control orders that meet the needs of the community and;
- Encourage and promote responsible dog ownership.

In respect of new Control Orders, clear direction on the use of such powers through accompanying policies and guidance for both the public and officers will be provided.

The Council will also work in close partnership with local parish and town councils to ensure the effective use of any Dog Control Orders across the city and maximise available enforcement resources.

Any offences committed under such orders are punishable upon conviction by a maximum fine of £1000. Fixed Penalty Notices can be issued as an alternative to prosecution.

3.1 Walking Multiple Dogs Order

This type of order will limit the number of dogs one person can walk at any one time. The effect of the Order is to create an offence for a person who walks more than the maximum number of dogs specified by the Order.

This order will encourage managing dog behaviour and collection of dog faeces. General advice from Dog Walking Associations and Charities states that five or more dogs together in any given situation can create a “pack mentality”. This means that dogs become stronger together, change their behaviour and are more likely to ignore a human command.

Dogs in a pack therefore become more difficult to patrol, which can cause distress to both the dog walker and other members of the public.

The National Association of Pet-sitters code of practice recommends a maximum number of four.

3.2 Dog Exclusion Order

This order prohibits dogs from entering certain designated areas of Leeds. Such an order may be suitable for children's play areas, school playing fields, sports pitches or ornamental gardens such as Canal Gardens, Roundhay etc. It would not be appropriate to consider an order for a wide open space area such as Otley Chevin or Roundhay Park, for example.

The Council recognises that it is very important for animals to have sufficient exercise and supports Responsible Dog Owners in promoting healthy lifestyles. Many Dog Owners exercise their pets, not only to help their dog to remain healthy but to meet other people, and exercise themselves. However, such an Order would ensure that the designated areas can be used by visitors without concern that a Dog may foul or behave in an uncontrollable fashion.

3.3 Dogs on Leads Order

This type of order will require all dogs to be walked on a lead in a designated area. Such an Order can apply to the whole of Leeds or to specific areas. For example, application of such an order to the public highway in Leeds could assist in reducing the numbers of stray dogs in the city and also make sure that dogs don't run unexpectedly into a road, causing traffic accidents and also injuring the dog.

The effect of the Order is to create an offence for a person who is in charge of a dog not to keep that dog on a lead on any land affected by the Order.

3.4 Dogs on Leads (By Direction) Order

This type of Order will require owners or people in charge of a dog at the time, to put their dog on a lead if asked to do so by an authorised officer (e.g. Dog Warden). The effect of the Order is to create an offence for a person in charge of a dog not to comply with a direction given to him by an authorised officer. A direction to put and keep a dog on a lead can only be given if it is reasonably necessary to prevent a disturbance to any other person on any land to which the order applies, or the worrying or disturbance of any animal or bird.

Dogs can sometimes behave in an unexpected manner and such an order helps bring the dog under control. It may not be a permanent request, and once the dog is under control, and the Authorised Officer feels comfortable, the dog may be let off the lead again.

4.0 PREVENTION & EDUCATION

At present the Dog Warden Service addresses prevention and education through:-

- advice and action taken when responding to service requests, following existing enforcement policies
- identification of hotspot areas and targeted responses to address issues
- partnership working
- participation in local and national education campaigns
- Issuing supportive measures such as dog poo bags, micro-chipping and erecting anti-fouling signage.
- Clear and up to date information on the Council's website

- 4.1 Officers are encouraged to maintain links with the Council's press office to ensure that news stories are frequently reported and the press office is notified in advance of prosecutions and other court cases.
- 4.2 Improved links with partner agencies will also assist in better education. Closer working with the animal charities for example the PDSA , who assists in the care and treatment of dogs whose owners are in receipt of benefits and may not otherwise be able to afford veterinary care. This organisation and others like it are well placed to raise awareness of the issues and help promote a responsible dog ownerships scheme through the distribution of advice and information.
- 4.3 Broadening the range of information and advice distributed by the Service and partner agencies may assist as a preventative measures in respect of roaming and stray dogs. Encouraging people to consider practical issues such as whether they have enough time to properly care for a dog, whether their property is adequately secured and that the living space is large enough to accommodate the size of the dog and encouraging neutering and micro-chipping.
- 4.4 More proactive work by the Dog Warden Service, carried out in high schools may also help to educate younger members of the community. This could assist in the prevention of offences in the future. Many campaigns with social responsibility at their roots have been taken into schools to reach the younger audiences, with great success. From the age of fourteen, young people may still be issued a fixed penalty notice for an offence of dog fouling and many young people are tasked with walking the family dog. Responsible ownership is something that they need to be aware of and will inevitably take home with them and pass on to their parents.

5. DEVELOPING A COHESIVE APPROACH

- 5.1 Improving joint working with key partners is key to the success of the Strategy. Although the service already has already established effective relationships with some key partners, areas where links could be strengthened were identified as follows.
- 5.2 With the introduction of 23 new Community Environmental Officer posts, the Dog Wardens will be in a position to further develop local area knowledge by forging close links with the new post holders. At present, each Dog Warden covers a large geographical area, approximately one quarter/one fifth of the whole of Leeds, per officer. It is envisaged that the Community Environmental Officers will be able to assist the Dog Wardens in providing detailed local area knowledge. Better local knowledge will enable the Service to make better use of resources by targeting the right type of work in the right places. The officers can also be trained and authorised to issue fixed penalty notices.
- 5.3 Park Rangers often provide information regarding dog fouling problems for the Dog Wardens to respond to with patrols. The role of Park Rangers are currently under review and the duties of the post may be extended to issuing littering and fouling fixed penalty notices. Training from the Dog Warden Service on the issuing of fixed penalty notices for fouling offences could be beneficial in ensuring that all officers operate in the same way, offering consistency in the application of policies and procedures.
- 5.4 The links between West Yorkshire Police and the Dog Wardens Service is identified as a further opportunity by Dog Wardens in particular to develop a streamlined approach to dealing with dangerous dog incidents. This will in turn ensure a fair division of work and a consistent response for the customer in the way that investigations are conducted, regardless of which agency takes the lead.
- 5.5 Information sharing should be explored where possible, including prosecutions taken, control orders gained.
- 5.6 Establishing a greater link with the Animal Welfare Licensing Team would enable Dog Wardens to be party to decisions regarding the granting of licences to boarding establishments and share information/concerns to help properly monitor existing licensed establishments.

- 5.7 Relations with the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation, Gypsy and Travellers Services (responsible for managing the Council's static site) and other Registered Social Landlords are areas of opportunity for the agencies to work together to ensure that changes made are effective and adequately address dog related issues that the Council has a responsibility to tackle.
- 5.8 Staff employed by these partners have a good knowledge of smaller areas and are in a good position to share information on dogs regularly seen roaming on council housing estates and areas where fouling is a significant problem. Their knowledge of local people could assist the Dog Wardens in taking appropriate enforcement action to tackle the problems. The tenancy agreement can also be used as another tool in tackling nuisance dogs issues.
- 5.9 The legislation relating to Dog Control Orders refers to Primary and Secondary Authorities. Parish and Town Council's constitute secondary authorities. The Council is committed to working in close partnership with local parish and town councils to ensure the effective use of Dog Control Orders across the city and maximise available enforcement resources.
- 5.10 Overall, the Service will look to identify stakeholders whose role in the organisation naturally compliments that of the Dog Wardens.



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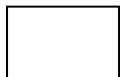
Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)

Date: 9th October 2009

Subject: Inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing – Formal Response

Electoral Wards Affected: All



Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 During 2008/2009, the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) conducted an Inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing and published its report in May 2009. The Board's report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 It is the normal practice to request a formal response from the relevant Directorate(s) to the Board's recommendations, once a report has been published.
- 1.3 On 26th August 2009, the proposed response to the recommendations was submitted by the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to the Council's Executive Board, who accepted the actions detailed in the response. This report is attached for the Board's consideration.
- 1.4 Members are asked to consider the responses provided and to decide whether any further scrutiny involvement is required.
- 1.5 Any recommendations which have not yet been completed will be included in future quarterly recommendation tracking reports to enable the Board to continue to monitor progress.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the responses provided and to decide whether further scrutiny involvement is required.

Background Papers

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Inquiry Report on Private Rented Sector Housing. May 2009.

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Private Rented Sector Housing

Scrutiny Inquiry Report

Introduction and Scope

1.0 Introduction

1.1 During 2007/08, the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) conducted an inquiry into Housing Lettings Pressures. As part of this inquiry, the Board received information regarding the Council's approach to making best use of housing stock in the private sector. As a result, the Board recognised the need to consider private rented sector housing in more detail and resolved to undertake a separate inquiry during 2008/09.

1.2 The private rented sector in Leeds now represents approximately 13% of the total housing stock (41,600 properties) and as such provides accommodation for a significant number of Leeds households, some of whom are amongst the most vulnerable members of society.

1.3 The current lack of affordable housing to buy has contributed to increased demand on the private rented sector, which has responded accordingly over the last few years and flourished as a result of the various 'buy to let' financial packages available. The reduction in availability and access to social housing has also led to increased demand for private rented housing from those households with general

housing needs unable to achieve access to social housing.

1.4 Many people will have some experience of renting privately during the course of their lives and therefore we set out to explore the current provision, management and regulation of private rented housing in Leeds.

Scope

1.5 The purpose of our Inquiry was to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

- the levels of owner occupied and private rented accommodation in Leeds;
- an analysis of trends in demand and supply for private rented accommodation in Leeds;
- the effectiveness of initiatives established by the Council and its partners to improve the condition of private rented sector housing, such as the equity loan scheme;
- issues surrounding energy efficiency and the Decent Homes requirements and how these can be promoted

Introduction and Scope

and sustained within the private rented sector;

- empty private rented sector properties and the negative impact they can have on neighbourhoods;
- the role of the Council in offering advice and support to private landlords about the various options available to them to enable their properties to be re-occupied;
- legislation governing the private rented sector in the current Housing Act, with particular focus on Selective Licensing, Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing, Empty Dwelling Management Orders and Housing Health and Safety Rating System;
- the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme and the incentives to accreditation;
- the views and experiences of private landlords and tenants;
- common perceptions of the different housing tenures and the impact this has on private rented sector housing;
- the Council's role in promoting private rented

sector property and offering advice to prospective tenants;

- the impact of Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit) on private rented sector housing.

1.6 As part of our inquiry, we considered evidence from the various Council services involved in the management and regulation of the private rented sector and also sought the views of a number of private landlords from local landlord representative bodies and Unipol Student Homes . We would therefore like to sincerely thank everyone for their contribution and commitment to our inquiry.

1.7 Whilst we were able to gain an insight into the common issues raised by tenants from the feedback received by services and landlords, we noted that there was a lack of representative bodies specifically for private sector tenants in Leeds outside of the student market. We therefore feel that this warrants further exploration and development by the Council and have made further references to this matter within our report.

1.8 During our inquiry, we also learned of a recent national review of the private rented sector, commissioned by

Introduction and Scope

Communities and Local Government (CLG) and undertaken by the University of York (Julie Rugg and David Rhodes). This review focused on the capacity of the sector to meet a range of housing needs and concludes with an acknowledgement that the sector presents a number of policy challenges relating to such issues as property quality, management standards and security of tenure. Further references to the Rugg review findings are found within our report where we have identified common issues.

- 1.9 In acknowledging that the private rented sector is now considered to be the fastest growing tenure in Leeds, our inquiry has highlighted a clear need to improve professionalism within this sector by improving the quality and condition of private rented sector housing; driving up standards of management; providing effective advice, information and support to the sector; and putting in place effective regulatory and enforcement mechanisms to target and sanction the small minority of wilfully bad landlords. Many of our recommendations are therefore focused around these specific issues.
- 1.10 At the time of conducting our inquiry, we acknowledged that the Council was in the process of updating both its Leeds Housing Strategy and Private Rented Sector Strategy. We therefore appreciate that many of the issues we have raised will already be reflected within these strategies.
- 1.11 Whilst a number of our recommendations seek to increase progress with initiatives already in place to address some the issues raised, we have also made recommendations to further expand or develop new initiatives. We recognise that these will have significant resource implications attached to them, which will need to be taken into consideration. However, our recommendations have been formulated in line with our overall aspirations for the provision, management and regulation of the private rented sector in Leeds.

Conclusions and Recommendations



2.0 Acknowledging the complexity of the Private Rented Sector

2.1 In establishing the current trends in demand and supply for private rented housing in Leeds, we acknowledged the danger of describing the private rented sector as one homogenous tenure given the different variations available.

2.2 Private rented housing provides a home for many different types of household markets, such as students (both undergraduates and mature students); nurses; doctors and young professionals; retirement accommodation; low income households; benefit claimants and households relocating from other parts of the country, migrating from outside the UK or seeking asylum.

2.3 In view of this, we recognised the challenge faced by the Council in identifying an appropriate set of standards to meet the needs of the various household markets across the city. We noted that the Rugg review also acknowledges that the configuration of sub-markets will vary from area to area and therefore the complexity of the sector has to be appreciated in any policy development.

2.4 To manage and regulate such a diverse market effectively, we recognise that the Council's

approach in dealing with this sector will need to be multi-dimensional in order to meet the differing needs and expectations of these various sub-markets.

3.0 Improving the quality and condition of private rented sector housing

3.1 In acknowledging the increasing use of private rented housing, particularly for vulnerable people, we were very concerned to learn that both nationally and locally, the housing conditions within the private rented sector are proportionally worse than other tenures.

3.2 Under the Housing Act 2004, the Council is considered the primary enforcement agency for conditions of health and safety in the private sector, including the private rented sector.

3.3 The Housing Act 2004 had introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which directs councils to consider a range of 29 identifiable hazards within dwellings and assess the risk posed by those hazards. We noted that the most serious hazards are classed 'Category 1' where the Council then has a duty to take action to eliminate or significantly reduce the hazard. The presence of a category 1 hazard would result in the

Conclusions and Recommendations



dwelling failing the decent homes standard.

3.4 We noted that the HHSRS applies to all houses in multiple occupation and singly occupied properties. In undertaking the assessment, the practitioner is required to consider the likelihood of harm from a hazard i.e. the probability of an occurrence during the next 12 months following the assessment of the dwelling and the spread of harms from that hazard. We also learned that the assessment is made of the dwelling, disregarding the current occupiers, and therefore will not be affected by a change of occupier and a vacant property can also be assessed.

3.5 The Leeds Private Sector House Condition Survey (2007) identified that the major hazards affecting the private rented sector in Leeds are excess cold, falls (on stairs, falls on the level and between levels) and inadequate fire safety. Excess cold hazards actually account for 61.6% of all category 1 hazards and pose the greatest challenge for the Council to resolve.

3.6 Excess cold, resulting from poor energy efficiency of houses and inefficient heating systems, is the primary reason why properties fail under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. As a

consequence of the significant proportion of older properties in the private rented sector (56% of rented properties constructed before 1919) and the technical difficulties and higher costs associated with improvements in such houses, the private rented sector presents a significant challenge in terms of scale and cost of improving energy efficiency. Furthermore, privately rented dwellings have proportionally far more Fuel Poverty - currently 33% compared with 16% in owner occupied dwellings.

3.7 Both locally and nationally, the private rented sector is seen to be the tenure where the greatest proportion of vulnerable households live in non-decent homes. Whilst acknowledging the Council's current target to bring 600 properties up to the decent homes standard per annum, we believe that addressing excess cold and fuel poverty across all tenures must remain a key future priority, with a particular focus on the older housing stock, where many private sector tenants, including some of the most vulnerable members of society, reside.

3.8 We were therefore pleased to learn that an overall approach for enhanced action is intended through a refresh of the actions to deliver the Private Rented

Conclusions and Recommendations



Sector Strategy. This will include the development of the Strategy to reflect new themes such as the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy; the Regional Fuel Poverty Strategy and Home Energy Conservation Act recommendations.

- 3.9 With the current economic climate, concerns were raised about the possibility of landlords committing lower levels of investments to their properties than the Council would wish to see. Particular concerns were also raised about landlords maximising the use of their properties by converting cellar spaces to accommodate more tenants, which could contravene fire safety regulations. We were therefore pleased to note that this was being investigated further by the Council alongside other partners.
- 3.10 During our inquiry, we learned that the owners of the vast majority of private rented properties are 'small portfolio' landlords with only one or two properties within their portfolio and therefore we recognised that these are probably the most vulnerable of property investors in terms of the cost of meeting their obligations.
- 3.11 We therefore questioned the Council's efforts in providing incentives, including grants and

loans, to landlords to achieve decency in the private rented sector. In response, we were informed that the health impact of existing group repair schemes was being assessed with a view to extending such schemes to include innovative energy efficiency improvement programmes. We also noted that group repair funding, along with Health Through Warmth and Community Warmth funding, currently represent the only public funded grant aid available to the private rented sector.

- 3.12 We believe that the Council has a key role to play in raising greater awareness of, and helping landlords to gain access to, available grant or loan funding to improve the quality and energy efficiency of their housing. We would also like the Council to be more proactive in engaging landlords in the development of future improvement programmes/schemes aimed at raising the quality and condition of private rented sector housing.

Recommendation 1
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods raises greater awareness of, and helps private landlords gain access to, available grant or loan funding to improve the quality and energy efficiency of private sector housing.

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Recommendation 2
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to ensure that private landlords are proactively engaged in the development of future improvement programmes/schemes aimed at raising the quality and condition of private rented sector housing.

Recommendation 3
That an update report on the actions taken to achieve the outcomes of recommendations 1 and 2 is brought back to Scrutiny within 6 months.

3.13 In relation to the Council's regulatory role, we noted that many of the requests made to the Council for assistance are coming from the North West of the city, where students are predominately based as they are very well aware of their rights as tenants. We therefore questioned how the Council is promoting its services within the inner city areas and particularly to vulnerable groups such as migrants, as this was an area of concern raised during our inquiry into the management of the asylum seeker case resolution programme in terms of tracking and monitoring the welfare needs of those asylum seekers who choose to live within the private rented sector.

3.14 The Rugg review also recognises that for many local authorities, migrant worker overcrowding has become a problematic feature of the private rented sector and that best practice guidance appears to be lacking for local authorities dealing with this problem.

3.15 We learned that migrants in particular would often refuse to approach the Council for help regarding poor private rented accommodation. It was highlighted that as some migrants would often regard their stay as short term, and in some cases have accommodation provided as part of their employment arrangements, they would tend to put up with such living conditions knowing it was a temporary measure.

3.16 However, we were informed that the Council's Housing Regulation Team is in the process of producing advisory leaflets for one stop centres and GP surgeries etc, with the aim of targeting vulnerable tenants and making them aware of their rights. It was highlighted that by having this knowledge to use against a landlord, this can sometimes be enough to create a positive reaction.

3.17 We also recognise the value of educating and empowering tenants, particularly vulnerable tenants, to understand their

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rights and have the confidence to approach the Council for assistance if landlords refuse to improve standards in line with minimum requirements. We therefore recommend that the Council remains proactive in its approach in order to achieve this outcome.

Recommendation 4
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to proactively educate and empower private tenants to understand their rights and have the confidence to approach the Council for assistance if landlords refuse to improve standards in line with minimum requirements.

3.18 We acknowledge that the Council's housing regulatory service is primarily demand led. However, since the service re-structured in May 2008, it has received around 250 service requests a month (approx 3000 per annum) covering a whole range of issues.

3.19 Whilst we have recognised a need to promote this service, we did question whether there was enough service capacity to deal with any additional requests. In response, we learned that although there were resource pressures, it was hoped that such a proactive approach would

help to lessen the reactive work of the service in the longer term.

3.20 As the compliance with the HHSRS helps to tackle some important public health issues such as asthma, coronary heart disease, strokes and accidents in the home, it was reported, by way of example, that Liverpool Council had successfully negotiated with their local Primary Care Trust to secure £10 million for 25 staff to address hazards within properties.

3.21 We too recognise the need for the Council to work more closely with key partners and also central government to develop innovative approaches towards addressing poor housing conditions and to maximise on available resources.

Recommendation 5
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to explore innovative approaches towards addressing poor housing conditions and works closely with key partners and central government to maximise on available resources.

3.22 During our inquiry, particular reference was made to the use of licensing as a way of targeting and enforcing action to address

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very poor quality and unsafe housing. We therefore explored this issue further.

4.0 The effective use of licensing

4.1 The Housing Act 2004 introduced the mandatory licensing of certain high risk houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). We noted that the actual definition of an HMO is complex, as is that of a licensable HMO, but in simplistic terms a licensable HMO is a house where there are 5 or more persons, comprising of at least 2 households and the accommodation is on 3 or more storeys.

4.2 The primary purpose of HMO licensing is to protect the health and safety of tenants living in them. A secondary purpose of licensing is to ensure that HMOs are managed in a way that avoids them having an adverse effect on the immediate neighbourhood.

4.3 We understand that under the Housing Act 2004, the Council has legal powers of enforcement which include summary proceedings which can be instigated for operating a relevant HMO without a license or failing to comply with licence conditions. There are also powers to take over the management of property in

certain circumstances, known as Management Orders.

4.4 The Leeds House Condition Survey 2007 indicated that there are approximately 3,000 mandatory licensable HMOs in Leeds, the largest concentration of such housing in the country.

4.5 It was reported that by the end of December 2008, Leeds had received a total of 3058 applications for licensing. Of these applications only 125 are in respect of bedsit properties with the remaining relating to shared housing which are predominantly located in North West Leeds.

Licences Issued	2597
Variations issued	60
Received	13
Withdrawn	245
Being processed	143
TOTAL	3058

4.6 From these figures, we noted that there are 2597 confirmed licensable HMOs, plus a further 156 either recently received or currently being assessed, bringing the potential number licensed to 2753. This therefore suggests that there are estimated to be several hundred unknown properties operating somewhere in the city without a licence.

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- 4.7 During our inquiry, we acknowledged the efforts of the Council's HMO Licensing Team in trying to identify unlicensed HMOs across the city and such acknowledgement was also received by the private landlord representatives. However, we also appreciated that the Team's resources have primarily been focused around administering the new mandatory scheme.
- 4.8 Now that the Licensing Team has largely concluded the administrative processing of the majority of applications, we were pleased to learn that future resources will be focusing more on identifying unlicensed HMOs by detailed campaigns in targeted areas of the city, along with the inspection and monitoring of properties to ensure licence compliance.
- 4.9 Where inspections are carried out, we understand that these are priority rated over the 5 year period of the licence, with higher priority being afforded to bedsit type accommodation, often housing the most vulnerable households.
- 4.10 At this early stage of inspection, we learned that joint landlords of one particular HMO property that was housing vulnerable tenants have been prosecuted and been found guilty of failing to comply with licence conditions or achieving even basic standards. Their licence was revoked and the property was subject to emergency prohibition and enforcement action. It was reported that further recent inspections have identified four more properties where prosecution action is being taken. Where landlords have been prosecuted, we were pleased to note that other properties within that landlord's portfolio would also be inspected to ensure that they were meeting the required standards too.
- 4.11 However, during our inquiry we learned that the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS), acting on behalf of the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Office, had issued national fire safety guidance in July 2008, two years after the initial implementation date, that in some circumstances allows for less onerous fire safety requirements for certain low risk premises. Clearly this had caused considerable unrest with many landlords and we understand that the Council worked closely again with all stakeholders to develop new agreed standards and also a revised local protocol for fire safety, which was finalised in April 2009.
- 4.12 As a result of these changed standards, this has created

Conclusions and Recommendations



additional administration in relation to mandatory HMO licensing. Development of new licences, advisory notes, licence application form and standard letters must now be undertaken. In addition, we noted that it may be the case that each property will require a pre-licence inspection to determine the type of licence to be granted, and it is anticipated that some landlords will want their existing licences varying to reflect the new standards, all of which will have serious resource implications.

4.13 In view of this, we supported the Council's submission to the Building Research Establishment in relation to the review of HMO licensing setting out the Council's frustrations about the lack of detailed advice and support at the start of the regime which had resulted in authorities interpreting the legislation in different ways and causing confusion for landlords.

4.14 In the meantime, we are conscious of the resource pressures now placed upon the HMO Licensing Team to effectively administer and regulate the mandatory licensing scheme, in addition to the need to identify unlicensed HMOs operating within the city. We therefore recommend that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods conducts an

urgent review of existing resources within the HMO Licensing Team to determine whether it is adequate enough to effectively administer and regulate the mandatory HMO licensing scheme. We also recommend that the Director ensures that all opportunities for data sharing across the Council and other agencies are explored to assist in the identification of unlicensed HMOs within the city.

Recommendation 6

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods conducts an urgent review of existing resources within the HMO Licensing Team to determine whether it is adequate enough to effectively administer and regulate the Mandatory HMO Licensing Scheme.

Recommendation 7

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that all opportunities for data sharing across the Council and other agencies are explored to assist in the identification of unlicensed HMOs within the city.

4.15 We are aware that the Act also enables authorities, at their discretion, to introduce both additional licensing of other HMO's (not within the mandatory licensing definition)

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and the selective licensing of all private rented sector accommodation in multiple and single household occupation in certain situations in defined areas of an authority. If an authority applies for and is granted these powers then the authority will need to be in a position to implement both Interim Management Orders and Final Management Orders where the need arises.

4.16 However, as previously acknowledged, resources are currently being targeted at fulfilling the mandatory requirements and undertaking proactive work, city wide, to identify those landlords failing to comply with mandatory licensing.

4.17 We also acknowledged that additional HMO licensing, if adopted, may be better targeted at certain property types, specifically poorly converted flats, or within areas of poorer housing and multiple deprivation rather than in the traditional student area of North West Leeds that is already well regulated. Whilst we recognise the merits of additional licensing, we fully appreciate that once mandatory licensing obligations have been largely met, further consideration to additional licensing will be appropriate.

4.18 We also acknowledge that the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) allows for poor housing conditions to be addressed wherever they are encountered without the need for additional or selective licensing to be adopted and that individual complaints of poor housing conditions received by the Council are therefore investigated and remedies sought under these powers.

4.19 With regard to selective licensing, we noted that this is also an option for the authority to adopt, subject to approval from Government Office. This is to address a defined area of privately rented properties that is, or is likely to become, an area of low demand or is an area experiencing significant and persistent problems of anti-social behaviour attributable to the private rented sector. It was highlighted that selective licensing can not be introduced in isolation but must be part of an overall regeneration proposal of an area. Once approved, a landlord would need a licence to operate within the locality.

4.20 We were informed that the Council has already identified an area of private rented sector housing located in the Cross Green and East End Park district of the city as a potential selective licensing area. A full

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consultation period has taken place and as a consequence a detailed business case was submitted to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) on 22nd May 2008. It was reported that the CLG have since responded seeking further information and further details and subsequent meetings have taken place following concerns raised by the Leeds Residential Landlords Association who have objected to the proposals. It was highlighted that the Council has now responded in full to the CLG and has received confirmation that its proposals are likely to receive government approval. The formal submission will be made shortly with an anticipated implementation date of 1st October 2009.

4.21 We noted that the mandatory HMO licensing scheme includes a condition that all landlords must attend an approved training course. This has been run in partnership with the Residential Landlords Association and has contributed towards improved housing conditions and property management. The condition has received national recognition and is therefore planned to be included in the proposed selective licensing scheme too.

5.0 Driving up standards of management within the private rented sector

5.1 The Rugg review identifies that one of the more frequent criticisms of the private rented sector relates to the quality of landlord management. It therefore recognises the need for a partnership approach involving working closely with private landlords and other agencies and using a mix of enabling, regulatory and enforcement functions to ensure a healthy and good quality private rented sector.

5.2 Accreditation is recognised as a good example of the mixed approach of enabling and enforcement being taken by the Council and we acknowledge this as a means of driving up standards in the private rented sector. The Rugg review also recognises the importance of accreditation in helping to improve standards in the sector, in combination with enforcement powers available to local councils, and therefore calls for a national scheme of licensing for landlords to increase professionalism in the sector.

5.3 We learned that the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) was originally launched in April 1997 as the Leeds City Council's Code of Standards for

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the Private Rented Sector and was based upon the Unipol Code of Standards launched in 1995, specifically aimed at the student market.

- 5.4 We understand that the aims of the LLAS are to encourage, acknowledge and actively promote good standards and management practices by owners and to assist owners and tenants to undertake their respective responsibilities to each other.
- 5.5 The Council invites accredited private landlords to advertise their available properties through Leeds Homes Choice-Based Lettings scheme. This enables applicants to bid for private lets with landlords, which provides both greater choice and widens the housing options for applicants.
- 5.6 Whilst there are private rented sector properties across the city, we learned that these are significantly concentrated in the North-West and East areas of Leeds and within former Urban Renewal Areas with particular concentrations in the inner city areas such as Armley, Beeston and Holbeck, Burmantofts and Harehills, Chapeltown and Richmond Hill. It was also highlighted that the previous House Condition Survey in 2001 showed that 32% of private

rented dwellings in single occupation and 74% of private-rented dwellings in multiple occupation were located in North-West Leeds. We therefore acknowledged that the majority of the properties owned by LLAS members portfolios are also located in the North-West.

- 5.7 During our inquiry, we sought clarification on the current numbers of members within the LLAS. In response, it was highlighted that there are currently 400 members of the scheme and that overall coverage of accreditation is estimated to be in the order of 16.6% of the private rented sector in total. We also learned that the Council's Private Rented Sector Strategy contains a target for LLAS of 20,000 bed-spaces coverage by 2010 (current bed-spaces 17,853 at 31/12/08 against an interim target of 18,000 by 31/3/09).
- 5.8 The membership of the LLAS is split between Unipol and other non Unipol landlords in the City 27%: 73% respectively and that this is made up of landlords with differing sized portfolios as follows:-
- One property – 28% of members
 - Two-Three Properties – 23% of members

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- 4 or more properties – 49% of members

5.9 We therefore recognised that whilst the LLAS membership and coverage has grown over the last 10 years, there remains much work to do to extend its influence across the whole of the private rented sector and in particular in areas beyond North West Leeds. We therefore explored how this could be achieved.

5.10 During our inquiry, representatives of the Leeds Residential Property Forum, Leeds Property Association and Leeds Letting Agents, all of whom are private sector landlords themselves, were given an opportunity to voice their opinions about the LLAS and why they felt a large majority of private sector landlords across the city were not volunteering to become members of the scheme.

5.11 We noted that three of the representatives were already members of the LLAS and that they had joined the scheme to help improve their own standards and develop a closer working relationship with the local authority. Whilst acknowledging the advantages of being a member of the scheme, one of the key issues raised was around the lack of communication with

tenants in raising the awareness and profile of the scheme.

5.12 In recognising the need for the Council and Landlords to promote the LLAS amongst private tenants, we learned of an Accredited Tenants Scheme that was developed two years ago and which all LLAS members were encouraged to offer their tenants as part of the LLAS requirements. The landlord was to be responsible for administering the scheme, which in effect provided a reference at the end of the tenancy. However, it was reported that when reviewed, only 16% of the tenants interviewed were aware of the Accredited Tenants Scheme and only 13% had a copy of the LLAS. We therefore recognise the benefits of the Council in further developing an Accredited Tenants Scheme as a way of improving communication links with private tenants. The Council should also be looking at opportunities, perhaps through the Accredited Tenants Scheme, to develop a representative body for local private tenants as this will also aid communication links with private tenants in the future.

5.13 Other landlord representatives explained to the Scrutiny Board that whilst they too recognise the wider advantages to becoming a member of the LLAS, there remains certain stipulations

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within the scheme which they felt were acting as barriers towards them becoming members. An example shared with the Scrutiny Board was around LLAS members not being able to re-market their property for at least 24 hours following a request from an interested party to seek independent advice on any contractual terms under which that property had been offered. This was considered unreasonable when landlords may have numerous interested parties competing for a property at the same time.

5.14 It was highlighted that since the LLAS started, its contents have been periodically reviewed and modified. We were therefore pleased to learn that the scheme continues to be updated regularly in terms of the standards set within it and that negotiations with private sector landlord representatives are ongoing.

Recommendation 8
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to engage with private landlords in regularly reviewing the standards set within the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme with the aim of attracting more members and expanding the scheme across the city.

Recommendation 9
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods conducts a review within the next 6 months of the current action plan aimed at promoting the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme and raising its profile amongst private tenants across the city.

Recommendation 10
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to further develop an Accredited Tenants Scheme for Leeds and explores opportunities for developing a representative body specifically for private tenants in Leeds.

5.15 During our discussion with private landlords, particular reference was made to some of the difficulties encountered when dealing with managing agents and the need to gather more detailed information on such agents in terms of their property portfolios and management standards to enable clearer transparency and accountability, particularly before accreditation is given. We noted that the Rugg review also recommends that managing agents should be subject to mandatory regulation to ensure better quality management standards. In view of this, we recommend that the

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development of an Accredited Agent Scheme is explored by the Council as a way of regulating the quality management standards of private sector management agents.

Recommendation 11
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to explore the development of an Accredited Agent Scheme for Leeds as a way of regulating the quality management standards of private sector management agents.

5.16 We recognised that in order to attract and retain private rented sector landlords, it is imperative that the LLAS continues to offer incentives to landlords to enable the much needed increased coverage across the city. It was noted that this concept was also supported by the LLAS Review and the Health Impact Assessment of the LLAS completed in August 2007.

5.17 During our inquiry, we considered a number of potential Leeds City Council concessions that have been suggested as part of the Health Impact Assessment and LLAS Review as incentives that could motivate more landlords to become accredited.

5.18 In discussing these possible concessions, particular reference was made to a proposed incentive for the enhancement of the LLAS refuse disposal concession to include beds, settees and furniture which are currently chargeable and can have a significant negative visual impact on the area when placed in yards. We learned that whilst landlords actively support this extension, there were barriers within the Council in terms of progressing with this any further.

5.19 In recognising that the proposed incentives would help to attract more private sector landlords to the LLAS, we believe that all Council services should be working together in offering such concessions in view of the wider advantages and particularly when these help to address environmental health issues. We therefore recommend that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead on promoting a one Council approach towards introducing concessions as a way of retaining and attracting more private landlords to the LLAS.

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Recommendation 12
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead on promoting a one Council approach towards introducing concessions as a way of retaining and attracting more private landlords to the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

6.0 The use of private rented sector housing for tenants dependent on Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit)

6.1 The reduction in availability and access to social housing has led to increased demand for private rented housing from those households with general housing needs unable to achieve access to social housing. The Rugg review also highlights that local authorities have been seeking properties in the private rented sector to help deal with their responsibilities to eligible, unintentionally homeless households under homelessness legislation.

6.2 During our inquiry, we noted that progress is ongoing to deliver increased bedspace coverage across the city and expand the number of landlords who will work with clients who are in housing need. It was recognised that such clients are usually dependant on Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

6.3 Leeds was one of nine Local Housing Allowance pathfinders where LHA was trialled from February 2004 prior to it being introduced nationally in April 2008. This new LHA scheme is designed to make it easier for tenants and landlords to find out in advance how much rent could be covered by Housing Benefit. It was explained that previously, private tenants often found that Housing Benefit could not meet their rent only after they had signed a tenancy agreement. We acknowledge that this happens less frequently now that the uncertainty has been removed under the new scheme.

6.4 It was also highlighted that the new scheme promotes greater fairness as it is designed to pay the same amount to tenants with similar circumstances living in the same area. Previously, tenants who lived in smaller properties than they were entitled to, or less attractive properties, generally received less benefit than those with similar needs in the same area and living in larger or more attractive properties.

6.5 Another key feature of the scheme is that LHA is paid directly to the claimant and not the landlord as the government considers that this approach will encourage claimants to take more responsibility for budgeting and paying their rent themselves.

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However, the private landlords raised concerns about this approach during our inquiry and recognised this as a potential barrier in attracting private landlords to work with LHA tenants. This is addressed later in our report where we have also identified other potential barriers which need to be considered.

- 6.6 Whilst we noted that the national evaluation of LHA found that the scheme had been a success in the pathfinder areas, we acknowledged that the national scheme introduced in April 2008 differs from the initial pathfinder scheme. In particular, the LHA rates are now based on the median rent and not the midpoint. As a result of the new calculation, the LHA rates are now more generous. It was explained that this different method of calculating LHA rates now means that half of properties available are at rents that are above the LHA rates and half of properties are at rents that are below the LHA rates. The new rates also mean that more tenants receive enough Housing Benefit to meet their rental liability. Prior to 2004, it was noted that only 40% of tenants received enough to meet their rent costs. This increased to 60% under the pathfinder model of LHA and now LHA meets the rent for 68% of claimants. However, it was recognised that

this figure still needs to be increased.

- 6.7 We understand that the scheme also provides an opportunity for tenants to trade between the quality and price of their accommodation. For example, tenants can now choose between paying more to stay in a property that is larger than they qualify for under the size criteria or increasing their after-housing-costs income by moving to a less attractive or smaller house and benefiting from receiving 'excess' LHA of which they are entitled to. However, we learned that whilst tenants received the full excess amount as part of the pathfinder scheme, this was revised for the national scheme and now the amount of excess LHA which tenants may benefit from is restricted to £15 per week.
- 6.8 The introduction of the £15 cap clearly provides less of an incentive for tenants to negotiate with the landlord over the rent, as any increase in rent (up to the LHA rate) is met by Housing Benefit and so there is no longer any advantages for a tenant to negotiate a rent that is more than £15 below the LHA rate for which they are eligible.
- 6.9 Whilst we acknowledge that the new system has brought some simplification in terms of the administration of Housing

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Benefit, we are concerned that LHA rates are based solely on the needs of the household and therefore are not influenced by the quality of the accommodation or the property management. It is the responsibility of the landlord and tenant to agree the level of rent having regard to condition, location and any other relevant considerations, but we recognise that not all tenants take on this responsibility, which means that maximum LHA rates are sometimes paid in respect of properties that are of poor quality and/or are poorly managed.

6.10 As the LHA is payable irrespective of the state and condition of a rental property, this gives no incentive to the landlord to achieve even the basic legal minimum standards. We are therefore pleased to see that Leeds Housing Options scheme acknowledges the duty of care to clients who present for re-housing through that service and use properties owned by landlords who are part of the LLAS or properties inspected by staff within the Housing Options team to ensure each property meets minimum standards.

6.11 Whilst we accept that the aim of the LHA scheme is to promote choice and personal responsibility of tenants, we also recognise the importance of providing practical support and

advice to all tenants, not just the most vulnerable tenants, in assisting them to negotiate a reasonable level of rent, with particular attention given to the consideration of property conditions and the minimum standards they should be expecting to receive.

6.12 We also recognised the importance of building on the close working relationship between the Leeds Benefits Service, as the administrators of the LHA scheme, and the Housing Regulatory Service to provide the necessary checks and balances to the LHA scheme at a local level.

Recommendation 13

(i) That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that practical support and advice is available to all tenants in assisting them to negotiate reasonable rent levels, with particular attention given to the consideration of property conditions and the minimum standards they should be expecting to receive.

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Recommendation 13 continued

- (ii) That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead role in building on the close working relationship between the Leeds Benefits Service and the Housing Regulatory Service to provide the necessary checks and balances to the LHA scheme at a local level.**

6.13 We noted that the number of people claiming Housing Benefit in the private rented sector has grown substantially since the introduction of LHA and that numbers appear to be greater since the LHA rates increased in April 2008, when the scheme was changed. It was reported that the caseload was 6,095 in 2005 and 9,380 in 2008, an increase of 54%.

6.14 The current financial climate has seen a further increase and in March 2009, we learned that around 11,000 tenants in the private rented sector are now claiming Housing Benefit. As there had not been this level of growth in respect of tenants claiming Housing Benefit in Housing Association and ALMO properties or those claiming Council Tax Benefit, this indicated that the increase is due to growth in the private rented

sector generally rather than economic changes alone.

6.15 It was reported that there is also evidence that the increased rates have stimulated movement of tenants in the private rented sector. In 2008 there had been a marked increase in the number of tenants reporting a change of address. However, it was not clear at that stage whether this was primarily due to more properties being available and the tenant choosing accommodation that better suits their needs, or that tenants were changing address to move onto the higher rates of LHA under encouragement from the landlord.

6.16 Although Leeds is generally one Broad Rental Market Area, which means that tenants receive the same amount of LHA regardless of where they live, we noted that rent levels do vary. Whilst the Council works with all landlords across the city, it was highlighted that market forces dictate where properties are available. We noted that 40% of tenants claiming Housing Benefit chose to live within 3 post codes (Leeds 8, 9 and 11) where rental levels are historically lower than in other parts of the city. However, closer inspection of rent levels for the 10 month period from December 2007 to October 2008 in these areas had indicated that

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rents have increased proportionately greater in these areas.

6.17 It was highlighted that the recent increases in rents could be because landlords are now more aware of LHA rates since the scheme was introduced nationally in April 2008. There is now more information available about the LHA in the press and on websites used by landlords and the national rates are also available on the internet.

6.18 We recognise that where rent levels are higher, it can make the transition to work more difficult as tenants must find employment that pays more if they want to cease to be dependant upon benefit. This issue was also acknowledged as part of the Rugg review.

6.19 We also acknowledged that increased rents could also have implications for those people not in receipt of Housing Benefit in areas where rents are historically low. Therefore, if LHA rates do drive up rents throughout the whole sector then tenants could find it impossible to find affordable housing.

7.0 Addressing potential barriers in attracting private landlords to work with LHA tenants

7.1 During our inquiry, the private sector landlord representatives raised specific concerns about LHA payments no longer being paid directly to landlords, particularly in light of previous difficulties encountered with LHA tenants falling into rent arrears.

7.2 We were informed that a landlord would have to wait 8 weeks before any action could be taken by the Council to re-direct rent payments back to the landlord. In the meantime, the landlord would have to pursue legal action against the tenant to recover any rent arrears as the Council was not liable for this debt under the new LHA scheme.

7.3 Again we acknowledged that the Council is the administrator of a national government scheme and therefore is legally obliged to make LHA payments direct to the tenant. However, we do understand that there are safeguards in place to protect those tenants who are unable to take responsibility to pay the rent to their landlord or fall into rent arrears and in these cases LHA can be paid direct to the landlord. It was reported that these cases have increased steadily and now

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represent 22% of the LHA caseload.

- 7.4 We also understand that the Council would pay the landlord the same LHA rate received by the tenant, including any excess LHA up to the maximum £15. Whilst any additional funding received by the landlord would help towards clearing the rent arrears owed by the tenant, it was highlighted that where LHA payments received by the Council did not meet the full rent costs then the amount of rent arrears owed by the tenant would continue to gradually increase.
- 7.5 Whilst it was felt that such problems could potentially lead to fewer landlords letting to LHA dependent tenants, we were informed that the safeguard procedures are well publicised and are generally working well and therefore few landlords have ceased to let to LHA dependent tenants because of loss of direct payment.
- 7.6 However, we still questioned the overall checks and balances in place to ensure that both landlords and claimants were not abusing the new LHA scheme. In response, it was noted that whilst the Council was not obliged to monitor all claimants, those with a history of rent arrears would be reviewed regularly. It was highlighted that

the Private Tenant & Landlord Support Team had previously been developed in partnership with Planning, Health & Environmental Action Service and Leeds Benefit services to ensure improved quality control, enhance the value for money and over time seek to act as a conduit for enhancing the standards of private rented accommodation provision city wide. However, this dedicated service was only funded on a short-term basis and that funding ceased in March 2009. As a result, the functions of this Team were mainstreamed within the Leeds Housing Options Service and therefore concerns were raised about whether the same level of service could now be delivered. In recognising the importance of such a service, we have addressed this specific issue later in our report.

- 7.7 In acknowledging that Housing Benefit is always paid 4 weeks in arrears, the inability for Housing Benefit tenants to access a deposit or rent in advance also continues to remain a barrier to finding accommodation within the private rented sector as this often limits the tenants' choice and ability to negotiate a competitive rent once the landlord discovers that the tenant will receive Housing Benefit. There was a general agreement from the private landlord representatives

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that a deposit scheme and / or advanced rent payments would make it more appealing to landlords when considering LHA tenants.

7.8 The Rugg review also concludes that changes to the benefit regime to introduce universal assistance with deposits and rent in advance, would mean that more landlords would be willing to accept tenants on housing benefits.

7.9 However, we acknowledged that such a scheme would be very costly to introduce as it would need to apply to all landlords and therefore the landlords already working with LHA tenants and not receiving a deposit would eventually begin making requests for a deposit in line with such a scheme.

7.10 During our inquiry, we learned about the Council's Damage Liability Scheme (DLS). This is a pilot scheme developed by the Council's Private Tenant and Landlord Support Team, launched in October 2008. The principle behind the DLS was that it would only be offered to tenants who were housed under the Private Tenant and Landlord Support Team, as the Council was acting as guarantor to tenants housed who could not afford a deposit. For landlords to be eligible to make a claim under

the scheme, they had to meet a number of criteria, which involved being members of the LLAS and that their property had been inspected by the Private Tenant and Landlord Support Team and met current standards.

7.11 We learned that tenants would be asked to sign an agreement letter advising that any money paid out to landlords under the scheme as a result of their actions would be reclaimed back from them. It was also envisaged that where tenants were entitled to money back from LHA (i.e. £15 excess rate) they would be encouraged to use this money to take up a bond loan from the Credit Union which would allow them the freedom to move around the private rented sector or stay in the property beyond the initial 6 month Assured Shorthold Tenancy period (the duration the DLS would be effective). Once a bond loan was in place the Council's liability under the DLS would automatically end.

7.12 It was therefore considered that in expanding this scheme across the city, this could be used as a way of addressing this potential barrier. However, we would still recommend that the Council reviews the potential costs and implications of introducing deposit guarantees for tenants in receipt of LHA.

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Recommendation 14
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews the potential costs and implications of expanding the Council's Damage Liability Scheme across the city and introducing deposit guarantees for tenants in receipt of Local Housing Allowance.

7.13 To encourage the private rented sector to work with tenants who are reliant on LHA to pay their rent, it was also agreed that a more robust method of tenant referencing would increase landlords' confidence in setting up Assured Shorthold Tenancies with LHA tenants and also be an added incentive to take up LLAS membership given that referrals from the Council are made to accredited landlords.

7.14 During our inquiry, we received details of new proposals for a Tenant Referencing scheme, which we understand already has landlord support as this would involve tenants agreeing to be checked by Police, ASB, Housing Benefit, ALMOs etc before they were given a Tenant Reference. This would therefore increase landlord confidence in working with LHA dependent tenants. The reference would be subject to review by landlords following subsequent tenancies and could be operated

electronically. It was highlighted that similar schemes that are currently operating in Manchester and Burnley are considered to be successful. However, in view of the resources needed to operate such a scheme, we noted that this would ideally operate across the region.

7.15 We recommend that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to develop a Tenants Referencing scheme to be operated across the city and explores ways of securing additional funding for operating this scheme, which may involve seeking commitments from other Local Authorities to develop a regional scheme.

Recommendation 15
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to develop a Tenant Referencing scheme for Leeds and explores ways of securing additional funding for operating this scheme, which may involve seeking commitments from other Local Authorities to develop a regional scheme.

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8.0 Bringing empty residential properties back into use

8.1 One way of meeting at least some of the current housing supply shortage is to look at making more efficient use of existing properties, and in particular those that are unoccupied or being used less effectively than they might.

8.2 We learned that the situation in Leeds, as at September 2008, was that 17,639 properties were void, which represents 5.35% of the total housing stock. Of these, 6,377 had been empty for more than 6 months.

8.3 We were particularly interested to know what proportion of the private rented sector stock was located within the city centre and how many of these properties were empty. In response, it was explained that the Council took the initiative to start monitoring the numbers of city centre units (all tenure) as from July 2007 and that at the time there were 5653 units completed. The last reported figures in relation to these specific units showed 1185 (20.96%) to be empty in September 2008. Of these properties 145 (2.57%) were void for more than six months but less than twelve, with 421 (7.45%) properties being void for longer than 12 months. However, it was reported that 232 (4.10%) of

these empty properties within the city centre were known to be vested within trust funds, company portfolios or investors with more than one property.

8.4 We are aware that the government is also now calling on local authorities to take firmer action to tackle the blight of empty homes and re-use properties. Guidance by the Empty Homes Agency sets out the range of strengthened powers local authorities have to deal with the problem of empty homes, including Empty Dwelling Management Orders.

8.5 Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) give the Council discretionary powers to bring empty private sector dwellings back into use where the owners are unable or unwilling to do so. Once an Order has been granted, the Council can manage the property on behalf of the owner but does not become the legal owner of the property and cannot sell or mortgage the property.

8.6 However, we were informed that Leeds, like most other local authorities, are currently experiencing difficulties in putting into place procedures for utilising EDMOs. The primary obstacle is that there has been no serious expression of interest from ALMOs, Registered Social

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Landlords or 'accredited' private landlords to act as managing agents upon the council initiating the process of EDMOs.

8.7 It was noted that Leeds has recently explored the possibility of procuring a partner/managing agent in conjunction with other West Yorkshire authorities in order to maximise the economy of scale for any interested agents. Leeds has joined with Bradford and Kirklees in seeking expressions of interest on this matter throughout the European Economic Area. Whilst acknowledging that no expressions of interest have been forthcoming so far, we were pleased to learn of the Council's intention to re-advertise for any possible interest, which hopefully may be more successful in the current downturn in housing market activity.

8.8 However, we do acknowledge that the Council has already devoted significant resources to returning long-term empty properties into use. One of the reasons for this success is the systematic monitoring of empty properties on a ward area basis and within targeted areas which have previously suffered high levels of empty properties and fragile demand such as East End Park, Cross Green, Harehills, Beeston and Holbeck, and to a lesser extent, Chapeltown. We

received examples of these area profile reports, but acknowledged that the data within these reports had the potential to change rapidly. In learning that such reports are available for each ward, we recommended that these be made accessible, via the Council's intranet, to all Members of the Council to indicate trends within their areas. As a result, we were pleased to note that this action had been taken during the course of our inquiry.

8.9 During our inquiry, we recognised that the recent phenomenon of 'buy to leave' (properties that have been purchased by investors purely for capital growth) could be turned around if the investors see a substantial decline in the equitable growth of their investment properties. Furthermore, this factor could encourage these 'investors' to consider letting/selling their investments thereby bringing these properties back into the equation of being available as 'homes for people'.

8.10 In view of this, there is an opportunity for the Council to broker deals with these property owners in order for them to consider letting out this previously wasted resource to people on the housing register, or perhaps consider targeting

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their product to niche and specialist markets such as providing accommodation for the elderly - thereby freeing up their often under used resource of family housing which would help to alleviate the current shortage of this type of housing throughout the city. However, it was noted that for social housing, the city centre was unlikely to present opportunities because of the high rent levels currently expected, unless market conditions continue to deteriorate and city centre landlords continue to struggle to rent or sell in the sector.

8.11 There is still a substantial amount of under-used housing accommodation throughout the city but, if the Council can successfully bring these properties back into occupation, this could go some considerable way to providing the much needed housing that Leeds will require in the future.

8.12 It is therefore vital for the Council to continue to seek means of bringing empty private housing back into use by ensuring that it maximises on recent government initiatives and takes advantage of the current economic climate by approaching property owners to broker deals around temporarily letting or leasing of their empty properties to the Council for people on the housing register.

Recommendation 16

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to seek means of bringing empty private housing back into use which maximises on recent government initiatives and takes advantage of the current economic climate by brokering deals with property owners to temporarily let their empty properties to the Council for people on the housing register.

9.0 Providing effective advice, information and support to the private rented sector.

9.1 Throughout our inquiry we have recognised the need for the Council to provide accurate and timely advice and information to landlords and private tenants about their statutory rights and obligations, as well as provide assistance to landlords to improve their property standards, particularly those experiencing financial difficulties.

9.2 We recognised that the Private Tenant & Landlord Support Team, which had previously been developed in partnership with Planning, Health & Environmental Action Service and Leeds Benefit services, played a key role in regulating the private rented sector by ensuring improved quality control; enhancing the value for

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money; and acting as a conduit for enhancing the standards of private rented accommodation provision city-wide. As the funding for this service ceased in March 2009, we understand that the functions of the service have now been mainstreamed within the Leeds Housing Options Service.

9.3 However, in order to improve the quality of service provided to private landlords and tenants, we believe it is vital to have a single point of contact within the Council for this sector, acting as a conduit for both private landlords and tenants to gain access to accurate and timely advice, information and assistance. We would like to see a multidisciplinary approach in improving quality control and tackling housing options within this sector and believe that a single point of contact will help to promote a 'one Council' approach to access the private rented sector.

9.4 We therefore recommend that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods considers the feasibility of establishing this single point of contact within the Council.

Recommendation 17
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods considers the feasibility of establishing a single point of contact within the Council for the private rented sector, acting as a conduit for both private landlords and tenants to gain access to accurate and timely advice, information and assistance.

Evidence



Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

Reports and Publications Submitted

- Briefing paper from Environment and Neighbourhoods on the Council's role in promoting private rented sector (PRS) accommodation and advice to PRS tenants;
- Briefing paper from Environment and Neighbourhoods on housing legislation;
- Briefing paper from Environment and Neighbourhoods on maximising the utilisation of the existing housing stock - recycling the empties;
- Briefing paper from Environment and Neighbourhoods on energy efficiency in the private rented sector;
- Briefing paper from the Leeds Benefits Service on the impact of Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit) on Private Sector Housing;
- Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods updating on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Mandatory Licensing;
- Briefing paper from Environment and Neighbourhoods on the role of the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme and other initiatives to promote improvements in private rented housing conditions;
- Copy of report to the Executive Board on 11th June 2008 on activity in the private rented sector;
- Private Sector House Condition Survey (November 2007). Leeds City Council in partnership with JE Jacobs;
- Copy of the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme Information Pack;
- The Private Rented Sector: its contribution and potential. Executive Summary. Julie Rugg and David Rhodes. Centre for Housing Policy. 2008;
- Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presenting a summary report of the working group – 16th October 2008;
- Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presenting a summary report of the working group – 19th January 2009;
- Scrutiny working group summary report – 13th March 2009

Evidence



Witnesses Heard

- Andy Beattie, Head of Service, Pollution Control and Housing
- Jane McManus, Project Manager (HB reforms), Leeds Benefits Service
- Tracey Harwood, Homeless Services Manager
- Paul Broadhurst, Private Sector Scheme Manager
- Jon Hough, Principal Housing Strategy Officer
- Mike Brook, Acting Housing Regulation Service Manager
- Linda Sherwood, Accreditation and Selective Licensing Manager
- Tom Wiltshire, Head of Housing Needs and Options
- Simon Moran, Leeds Letting Agents
- Richard Aston, Leeds Letting Agents
- Suki Thethi - Leeds Letting Agents
- Martin Blakey, Chief Executive of Unipol
- Scott Blakeway, Unipol
- Chris Town, Leeds Residential Property Forum
- Steve Rowley, Leeds Property Association
- Andy Hudson, Leeds Property Association

Dates of Scrutiny

- 8th September 2008 – Scrutiny Board Meeting (agree terms of reference)
- 16th October 2008 – Scrutiny Working Group Meeting
- 10th November 2008 – Scrutiny Board Meeting
- 19th January 2009 – Scrutiny Working Group Meeting
- 9th February 2009 – Scrutiny Board Meeting
- 13th March 2009 – Scrutiny Working Group Meeting
- 11th May 2009 – Scrutiny Board Meeting (agree final inquiry report)



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Executive Board

Date: 26th August 2009

Subject: Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Statement on Private Rented Sector Housing

Electoral Wards Affected:

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)

INTRODUCTION

The Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) agreed at a meeting on the 11th May to a report following an inquiry into private rented sector housing.

In accordance with the requirements of the constitution, the response to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations needs to be agreed by Executive Board.

The Director's comments general comments and specific responses to each of the recommendations are as follows:

Overview

The scrutiny report reflects in many ways the current range of activity followed by Leeds in understanding, supporting and promoting the private rented sector through accreditation, partnership working and generally accepted good practice, plus enforcement of legislation such as mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the Housing Health and Safety Hazard Rating System. Many of the recommendations are, quite rightly, "to continue ..." what we are currently doing.

However, a number of recommendations seek to increase momentum and progress with initiatives, or extend or develop new additional initiatives across the city. Whilst supportive of the ambitions of

Scrutiny, there are obviously resources implications in some of these proposals, such that without additional staffing and funding Scrutiny's recommendations cannot be fully realised. This has already been recognised in recent papers to Exec Board, and will be an important part of the work of the newly established Private Sector Housing Board, chaired by the Elected Lead Member.

Comments on specific recommendations are as follows:

1. RECOMMENDATION 1

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods raises greater awareness of, and helps private landlords gain access to, available grant or loan funding to improve the quality and energy efficiency of private sector housing.

The Council continues to promote energy efficiency to all households irrespective of tenure, and provides financial assistance where available. Capital programme funds for Leeds for 2009/10 amount to approx £6.8m for the whole city for all private housing regeneration, both owner occupied and Private Rented Sector (PRS) stock. Of this, only £300,000 is available specifically for energy efficiency initiatives, so there is limited opportunity in the current programme to provide major financial assistance to Landlords using capital. We do encourage take up of warm front grant by tenants and promote energy efficiency where ever possible (i.e. the 5 Wards initiative in 2008/9 and planned 10 ward initiative scheduled for 2009/10, and included in group repair specifications) but due to costs and technical problems associated with hard to treat older housing the take up is generally poor. Negotiations are on going to secure additional funds and addressing energy inefficiency and resultant excess cold is a key priority of the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION 2

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to ensure that private landlords are proactively engaged in the development of future improvement programmes/schemes aimed at raising the quality and condition of private rented sector housing.

The Director agrees with recommendation 2.

3. RECOMMENDATION 3

That an update report on the actions taken to achieve the outcomes of recommendations 1 and 2 is brought back to Scrutiny within 6 months.

The Director agrees with recommendation 3.

4. RECOMMENDATION 4

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to proactively educate and empower private tenants to understand their rights and have the confidence to approach the Council for assistance if landlords refuse to improve standards in line with minimum requirements.

The Director agrees with recommendation 4.

5. RECOMMENDATION 5

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to explore innovative approaches towards addressing poor housing conditions and works closely with key partners and central government to maximise on available resources.

The Director agrees with recommendation 5.

6. RECOMMENDATION 6

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods conducts an urgent review of existing resources within the HMO Licensing Team to determine whether it is adequate enough to effectively administer and regulate the Mandatory HMO Licensing Scheme.

The Director does not agree to recommendation 6. HMO mandatory licensing is expected to be cost neutral with operational costs being met by license fees, and the recommendation for additional revenue resources to be provided to undertake more proactive work to track down unlicensed properties could only be met in the short term by the team being subsidised through revenue budget. Alternatively the license fee in future years could be increased but this would meet strong opposition from Landlords and ultimately fall to the tenants through increased rents. On balance, the current fee level we believe to be right and provides sufficient resources of approx £1.5m to administer the scheme in Leeds which has been one of the most successful schemes in the country. Resources will now be focused on inspection compliance checks and any subsequent enforcement required, provided problems such as the recent changes on fire precautions which have created additional administrative work don't keep recurring. The current review of mandatory licensing by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) should give some indication of the benefits which have been derived from such a significant amount of expenditure. The Council will take account of the findings of the impending BRE report in reviewing its operations.

7. RECOMMENDATION 7

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that all opportunities for data sharing across the Council and other agencies are explored to assist in the identification of unlicensed HMOs within the city.

The Director agrees with recommendation 7, and it can be confirmed that this reflects current arrangements where a comprehensive network of data sharing and intelligence gathering has taken place and will continue in the future

8. RECOMMENDATION 8

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to engage with private landlords in regularly reviewing the standards set within the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme with the aim of attracting more members and expanding the scheme across the city.

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods conducts a review within the next 6 months of the current action plan aimed at promoting the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme and raising its profile amongst private tenants across the city.

The Director agrees with both recommendations 8 and 9, in that there are already in place arrangements for regular engagement with Landlord representatives, which include opportunities for reviewing standards in the Leeds landlords Accreditation Scheme (LLAS). Officers continue to work hard to promote LLAS city wide, and are currently working on an agreed action plan to achieve this. However, the scheme is currently heavily subsidised as the annual membership fees are purposely kept low to ensure the membership fee isn't a disincentive. Increasing fees to meet the additional costs of publicity, concessions and administration would be unacceptable to most landlords in the current economic climate, and it should be remembered that such costs invariably find their way into increased rents. If the additional publicity and promotion was fully met by the Council, the cost could be significant.

9. RECOMMENDATION 10

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to further develop an Accredited Tenants Scheme for Leeds and explores opportunities for developing a representative body specifically for private tenants in Leeds.

An accreditation scheme would essentially be a set of standards which a tenant would sign up to comply with, and possibly include tenant training to improve awareness of their obligations and expected behaviour. A scheme has been previously piloted in Leeds in conjunction with LLAS landlords with little success or interest. The Department was only

able to issue a handful of certificates to tenants during the pilot. Landlords would be critical to the success of a scheme by insisting that tenants were, or became, accredited. The potential for relaunching a scheme, in conjunction with a tenant referencing scheme as referred to in recommendation 15 of the report of Scrutiny Board will be reviewed, but there are resources considerations to be taken into account

10. RECOMMENDATION 11

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to explore the development of an Accredited Agent Scheme for Leeds as a way of regulating the quality management standards of private sector management agents.

Similar to accredited tenants, an accredited managing agents scheme would require funding to meet set up and administration costs, and protracted negotiations with agents' representatives over the last year have suggested that they are unlikely to want to meet the full cost of the scheme which would mean LCC subsidy, and agents also have some strong objections to some of the conditions we would want to see in the scheme, including some basic legal requirements.

The set up and running costs would not be dissimilar to the cost of selective licensing which has recently been estimated at approx £350,000 in total over the five year term of each license. The difference with a managing agents scheme would be the resistance to paying a similar fee of several hundred pounds for a discretionary initiative.

11. RECOMMENDATION 12

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead on promoting a one Council approach towards introducing concessions as a way of retaining and attracting more private landlords to the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

This relates to the potential for the Council to encourage membership of Accreditation by way of incentives such as discounts on the cost of other services. A particular example is the refuse disposal concession for all waste, as distinct from waste defined as "domestic". Another example would be in relation to the cost of parking permits for landlords who have need for access to houses they manage in areas with resident only arrangements. Clearly a balance has to be struck between incentives to attract and retain members of the scheme, and other budget considerations, but the Director would agree that there is merit in exploring the full potential for introducing such arrangements in future.

12. RECOMMENDATION 12

i) *That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that practical support and advice is available to all tenants in assisting them to negotiate reasonable rent levels, with particular attention given to the consideration of property conditions and the minimum standards they should be expecting to receive.*

ii) *That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead role in building on the close working relationship between the Leeds Benefits Service and the Housing Regulatory Service to provide the necessary checks and balances to the LHA scheme at a local level.*

This relates primarily to the Leeds Housing Options Service, seeking the establishment of a comprehensive tenant advice service within the Council. The Leeds Housing Options service is committed to offering support and advice to all tenants and this involves negotiating with landlords on rent levels and in some instances assisting with bonds. This work will continue to be developed and will continue to involve close working with the Leeds Benefits Service and Environment and Neighbourhoods directorate.

13. RECOMMENDATION 14

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews the potential costs and implications of expanding the Council's Damage Liability Scheme across the city and introducing deposit guarantees for tenants in receipt of Local Housing Allowance.

The council is proactively exploring all options to assist tenants with rental bonds as part of the wider work undertaken through the Leeds Housing Options service. This work will continue with the aim of maximising the opportunities to assist in the prevention of homelessness and to secure accommodation for people in housing need across the city.

14. RECOMMENDATION 15

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to develop a Tenant Referencing scheme for Leeds and explores ways of securing additional funding for operating this scheme, which may involve seeking commitments from other Local Authorities to develop a regional scheme.

The Council has been working on the potential for a tenants reference and tenants accreditation scheme for some time, including work with West Yorkshire Partners on the potential for a West Yorkshire wide initiative, largely modelled on the Manchester scheme which was reported to the PRS Strategy Group in 2008. The main stumbling block is the cost of operating a scheme. A very rudimentary estimate would be set up costs of upwards of £75k in year 1, plus running costs of not less than £50k per annum thereafter. Other schemes developed by local authorities have ranged in cost from £25k-£125K per annum.

A tenant referencing scheme is an extension of an accreditation scheme, the concept being that tenants would be vetted by the Council and given a "credit rating" to be used when applying for a tenancy. There are many and varied issues with such a proposal including data protection, exclusion from tenancies if holding a poor rating, human rights issues etc. The scheme would need to be properly established and robustly administered, and again would be better run across the whole of West Yorkshire. Proposals are still under consideration but financing will be an important and critical factor.

15. RECOMMENDATION 16

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to seek means of bringing empty private housing back into use which maximises on recent government initiatives and takes advantage of the current economic climate by brokering deals with property owners to temporarily let their empty properties to the Council for people on the housing register.

The Director agrees with this recommendation. The Leeds Housing Options service has developed the recently introduced arrangements for placement of potentially homeless people into private sector housing. The Leeds Housing Options service is also encouraging owners of empty properties to offer the properties to potentially homeless households as assured shorthold tenancies, providing that the properties are of a reasonable standard. Further work to be undertaken includes consideration of the potential for long term leasing of underused stock for renting. An additional area of work which will be considered is the proposals to make use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders to bring back long term empty homes, with ALMOs or other registered social landlords acting as managing agents on the Council's behalf for up to 7 years as allowed by legislation.

16. RECOMMENDATION 17

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods considers the feasibility of establishing a single point of contact within the Council for the private rented sector, acting as a conduit for both private landlords and tenants to gain access to accurate and timely advice, information and assistance.

The recommendation is supported and welcomed, and is one aspect of the on-going development of the Leeds Housing Options Service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board approves the responses from the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods as outlined in this report.

PREVIOUS REPORTS TO SCRUTINY BOARDS

18 January 2005	The Housing Act 2004 – The Impact on the Private Rented Sector in Leeds
07 September 2005	Private Sector Housing – Action to Address Fitness and Empty Properties
22 February 2006	Progress Report – The Implementation of the Housing Act 2004
March 2007	Leeds Housing Investment Programme
24 October 2007	Empty Property Strategy – Position Update

PREVIOUS REPORTS TO EXECUTIVE BOARD

10 March 2003	Long-Term Empty Homes
21 September 2005	The Establishment of an HMO Licensing Team in respect of the Mandatory Licensing of HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation)
13 November 2006	Empty Property Strategy 2006-2010
11 June 2008	Activity in the Private Rented Sector regarding Energy Efficiency

CURRENT LCC STRATEGY DOCUMENTS

- Leeds Housing Strategy 2005/06 – 2009/10
- Empty Properties Strategy 2006-2010 and Action Plan (update at 30.07.08)
- Leeds Private Rented Housing Strategy 2005-2010 (January 2007)
- Leeds Home Improvement Assistance Policy

Research

Leeds Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey 2007

The Challenge of Back to Backs in Leeds 2008

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Originator: A Brogden

Tel:2474553

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)

Date: 9th October 2009

Subject: Inquiry into Older People's Housing – Formal Response

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 During 2008/2009, the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) conducted an Inquiry into Older People's Housing and published its report in June 2009. The Board's report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 It is the normal practice to request a formal response from the relevant Directorate(s) to the Board's recommendations, once a report has been published.
- 1.3 On 26th August 2009, the proposed response to the recommendations was submitted by the Directors of Environment and Neighbourhoods, City Development and Adult Social Care to the Council's Executive Board, who accepted the actions detailed in the response. This report is attached for the Board's consideration.
- 1.4 However, with regard to recommendation 9, the Chair of the Scrutiny Board requested that officers offer a more robust response to this recommendation. The Executive Board agreed to this request and the following response has now been provided by the Director of City Development:

Recommendation 9:

That the Director of Development investigates and reports on the viability of adopting a model to be implemented, which reflects the spirit of the London Supplementary Planning Guidance for mandatory development to Lifetime Homes Standards, but suits the diversity and specific requirements of the City of Leeds, reporting findings to the Executive Board before 31 December 2009.

Response from the Director:

We are currently nearing completion of a draft SPD on Sustainable Design and Construction which it is intended to publish for consultation in the Autumn. For housing, this looks at the introduction of the Code for Sustainable Homes (CHS) which at various levels embraces the Lifetime Homes Standard. Lifetime home standards are mandatory at CSH level 6. From 2010 they will be mandatory at CSH level 4 and in 2013 at CSH level 3. Once approved we will be encouraging housebuilders to follow the guidance but it will not be mandatory. SPD's have to be supplementary to a policy in an approved development plan document as was the case in London where their SPD clearly elaborated on a policy in the approved Plan for London. We will be dealing with the policy position through the LDF Core Strategy. It is currently proposed that the Core Strategy includes a policy requiring new major residential development to meet the requirements of CSH. However, the Core Strategy is only at a relatively early stage of development, although we hope to be in a position to undertake further public consultation in the Autumn. The Core Strategy will eventually will be subject to public examination by an independent inspector, testing the appropriateness and justification for the policies that the Council is seeking to introduce, including in this case issues of viability.

- 1.5 Members are asked to consider the responses provided and to decide whether any further scrutiny involvement is required.
- 1.6 Any recommendations which have not yet been completed will be included in future quarterly recommendation tracking reports to enable the Board to continue to monitor progress.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the responses provided and to decide whether further scrutiny involvement is required.

Background Papers

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Inquiry Report on Older People's Housing. May 2009.



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

Older People's Housing Scrutiny Inquiry Report

Introduction and Scope



1.0 Introduction

1.1 It is recognised nationally that the ageing society poses one of the greatest housing challenges. The Government now predicts that by 2026 older people will account for almost half (48 per cent) of the increase in the total number of households, resulting in 2.4 million more older households than there are today. Within Leeds, the proportion of residents aged 60 or over is likely to rise by approximately 18% in the period up to 2021.

1.2 As well as increasing population figures, the expectations and aspirations of older people are also evolving in terms of the quality and choice of housing and housing support services available to them. In particular, many older people are wanting to remain independent in their homes, for as long as they are able. The Government's vision is therefore focused around supporting older people to live independently within their own homes and to exercise greater choice and control over their lives.

1.3 As the housing needs of older people are not homogenous, the housing options available to older people need to reflect this. In view of this, we agreed to conduct an inquiry into older

people's housing in Leeds to explore how the Council and its partners are responding to the national vision for older people's housing at a local level.

1.4 As well as considering the housing options available for older people, we also recognised the need to explore the development of housing related support services for older people. We noted that such support services would need to be rooted in the evolving national 'personalisation' agenda: that recipients of social care services should play an integral role in shaping or choosing the services they use so that they can be empowered to live independently. One of the guiding principles therefore is to promote a strategic shift away from residential care and acute settings into community-based housing and support services, including extra care provision.

1.5 The provision of personalised services that maximise prevention opportunities will clearly contribute to the objective of reducing the need for placements into residential care and therefore we recognised that services such as housing support, adaptations and assistive technology can all play a crucial role in reducing dependency on day care

Introduction and Scope

services, residential care placements and hospital placements.

1.6 In acknowledging the significant role of Adult Social Care in this area of work, we invited Members of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board to contribute to our inquiry. Whilst it was noted that there was already a crossover of membership between the two Scrutiny Boards, the Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board had taken up this invitation on behalf of the Board.

1.7 When determining the scope of our inquiry, we learned that the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board had already agreed to conduct an inquiry into adaptations. In view of this, we decided not to focus on adaptations as part of our inquiry in order to avoid duplication. However, both inquiries refer to the Government's vision to build more accessible homes in the future in line with its criteria for Lifetime Homes, as set out in the national Strategy 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' (2008). Further reference to this matter is made later in our report.

1.8 At the time of conducting our inquiry, we also acknowledged

that the Council was in the process of revising its Leeds Housing Strategy and therefore attention was given to ensuring that the needs of older people in Leeds were being recognised and addressed within the updated Strategy and in line with other strategic outcomes and priorities.

Scope

1.9 The purpose of the Inquiry was to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

- Links between the national 'personalisation agenda' and the future development of flexible and bespoke housing related services for older people;
- Implications of the increasing older people population on housing related services and the identification of future planning needs;
- The current review of the Leeds Housing Strategy and its need to respond to the relevant strategic outcomes and priorities within the Leeds Strategic Plan and Leeds Local Agreement;

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- The Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy and accompanying action plan;
 - The condition of sheltered housing stock in Leeds and proposals for improvement, with particular reference to the Supporting People Programme and PFI bid proposals for modernising housing provision for older people;
 - Issues surrounding affordable housing for older people;
 - Ensuring that older people have a safe and secure environment to live in, with a sense of belonging to and participating in communities;
 - The role and development of Assistive Technology, Telecare and Telehealth services in promoting the capacity of older people to live independently;
 - Methods of addressing social isolation when promoting the capacity of older people to live independently;
 - Problems relating to fuel poverty and older people.
- 1.10 In acknowledging the increased emphasis around extra-care provision, we were particularly interested in exploring the extra-care housing model. We therefore held our February 2009 meeting at the Moor Allerton Care Centre in Leeds, which is based on the extra-care model, and combined this with a tour of the Centre. We also conducted a visit to Sheffield's Brunswick Gardens Retirement Village as this is one of only a few extra care 'villages' in England. We were therefore keen to learn more about the benefits of developing a scheme of this size and to take back any lessons for future developments in Leeds.
- 1.11 In discussing the expectations and aspirations of older people, it was also vital that we considered the views of older people themselves. We therefore welcomed the contribution of the Leeds Older People's Forum to our inquiry. The Forum currently has over 120 members from older people's voluntary sector organisations in Leeds and during our inquiry, particular reference was made to the valuable work conducted by the Forum around older people and social isolation.
- 1.12 We would like to sincerely thank everyone for their contribution

Introduction and Scope

and commitment to our inquiry, and particularly to the staff and residents at Moor Allerton Care Centre and Brunswick Gardens Retirement Village for their kind hospitality.

- 1.13 Our inquiry has clearly demonstrated that housing is not just about bricks and mortar, it is about providing an environment where older people can be supported to live independently by a range of services. Quality housing and housing services promote the capacity of vulnerable people to live independently and to exercise choice and control over their lives. As far as practicable, older people should be supported in their housing choices. However, it is equally important to ensure that the drive towards promoting independent living and the use of modern assistive technology does not lead to social isolation as a consequence.
- 1.14 We acknowledge that the Council and its partners have already committed a lot of time and resources in developing older people's housing and housing support services. Many of our recommendations therefore seek to build upon existing activities to help meet current aspirations for older people's housing provision.

Conclusions and Recommendations



2.0 National and local policy drivers for improving older people's housing.

2.1 We acknowledge that the expectations and aspirations of older people are evolving in terms of the quality and choice of housing and housing support services available to them. In particular, many more older people wish to remain independent in their homes, for as long as they are able, and to exercise greater choice and control over their lives.

2.2 We therefore recognise that the development of affordable and accessible housing, including new housing, will be a key element of the drive to promote independent living. Housing support services will also play a critical role in delivering the wider social care agenda around promoting the capacity of older people to live independently within their own homes and to exercise greater choice and control over their lives.

2.3 However, this strategic shift in social and health care policy for older people, from a dependency culture towards an enabling and promoting independence culture, where support and care is provided at home or close to home as opposed to institutional or

residential based care, is not a recent development.

2.4 We understand that the Government first published its Strategic Framework around Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing in January 2001. This Strategic Framework promoted the interdependence between housing, social care and health in delivering services for an increasingly ageing population.

2.5 The more recent Government Strategy 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' (2008) continues to highlight the key aspirations of older people's housing and acknowledges that good housing is critical if we are to manage the mounting pressures of care and support expenditure and provide the best possible help and support to an aging society. However, this particular Strategy places more emphasis on designing and building homes that are generally accessible to a wide range of people, than to build homes that are not future-proof, so become inappropriate to our changing needs. Further reference to the development of such Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods is made in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.15 within our report.

Conclusions and Recommendations



- 2.6 During our inquiry, we were pleased to note that in response to the national policy drivers for improving older people's housing options and support services, the Council, and its partners, developed the Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy 'Home Not Alone' (2005 – 2010). This was the first housing and support strategy for older people in Leeds.
- 2.7 The overall vision of the Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy is to improve the quality of life of older people through providing a range of housing options, care and support services which will promote independence for all older people in Leeds. It's aim therefore is to help integrate housing, support and care to promote the independence and well being of older people and to influence and deliver improvements to the quality and choice of housing available for older people in the city.
- 2.8 We learned that the Action Plan accompanying the Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy is in the process of being updated to ensure that it corresponds with the relevant key themes and improvement priorities identified within the current Leeds Strategic Plan 2008 - 2011 and also the revised Leeds Housing Strategy 2009 – 2012.
- 2.9 The Leeds Strategic Plan is one of the key strategic documents for the city and we acknowledged that the Thriving Places theme within the Plan includes the strategic outcome: 'Improved quality of life through mixed neighbourhoods offering good housing options and better access to services and activities'. Both the Thriving Places and Health and Wellbeing themes contain improvement priorities relating to improving housing decency, increasing the supply of affordable housing, reducing homelessness and fuel poverty, and increasing the number of vulnerable people helped to live at home.
- 2.10 At the time of our inquiry, the Leeds Housing Strategy was in the process of being updated. In May 2009, we were given the opportunity to consider and comment on the draft updated Leeds Housing Strategy. We noted that the updated Strategy is also closely aligned to the improvement priorities, strategic outcomes and themes included within the Leeds Strategic Plan and that its vision is to 'create opportunities for people to live independently in quality, affordable housing'.

Conclusions and Recommendations



2.11 Whilst we acknowledge the need to update the Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy Action Plan to ensure that it corresponds with both the Leeds Strategic Plan and Leeds Housing Strategy, we would also emphasise the importance of this Action Plan being seen within the context of other key strategies aimed at promoting the wider health and wellbeing agenda for older people. Such strategies include the recent national Dementia Strategy; the Leeds Mental Health Strategy; and the Older Better Strategy. This will help to avoid duplication and provide a more coherent approach in enabling and promoting independent living for older people.

2.12 Once available, we would like the updated Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy Action Plan to be brought back to Scrutiny for consideration.

Recommendation 1
That the updated Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy Action Plan is seen within the context of other key strategies aimed at promoting the wider health and wellbeing agenda for older people, such as the Dementia Strategy, Leeds Mental Health Strategy and Older Better Strategy.

Recommendation 2
That the updated Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy Action Plan is brought back to the relevant Scrutiny Board for consideration once available.

3.0 Addressing fuel poverty and improving decency standards.

3.1 Links between the quality of housing, health and wellbeing is compelling. In particular, we noted that excess cold is a major cause of increased winter mortality, especially amongst older people, and exacerbates conditions such as rheumatism, arthritis, bronchitis and cardiovascular illness, which older people are also more likely to experience. In view of this, we explored the measures being taken to address fuel poverty and improve decency standards within older people's housing in Leeds.

3.2 We were pleased to note that one of the key actions identified in the updated draft Leeds Housing Strategy is to reduce the number of older people living in fuel poverty. The official definition of fuel poverty is where a household is spending more than 10% of their household income on meeting energy costs. As the

Conclusions and Recommendations



Council and other housing-related services have limited power to control energy prices, it is clear that the focus needs to be around promoting energy efficiency measures as a means of reducing energy costs and eliminating excess cold.

- 3.3 During our inquiry, we acknowledged the good work already carried out by the Council's Fuelsavers Team in monitoring the incidence of fuel poverty in the city; providing a free and impartial advice service about energy efficiency; and taking a lead role in delivering the Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy (2007 - 2016).
- 3.4 The Fuelsavers Team works with a range of partners, including NHS, the ALMOs, Environmental Health, Adult Social Services and the Energy Providers to implement interventions to meet the Governments Fuel Poverty Targets. In addition, the Fuelsavers Team has developed a number of initiatives designed to tackle fuel poverty amongst the most vulnerable households, such as 'Health through Warmth' and 'Warm Front'. However, we noted that the updated draft Leeds Housing Strategy now recommends that the Council looks beyond these initiatives to

turn Leeds into a 'Warm Zone' area. We understand that there are currently 13 'Warm Zone' areas in the UK, including one covering the Kirklees authority area.

- 3.5 Warm Zones give every household in the catchment area the opportunity to insulate their homes better and to make their homes warmer, reduce energy consumption and cost, reduce carbon emissions and to make a positive contribution to the environment. The scheme works on a ward-by-ward basis, by carrying out initial doorstep assessments and then more detailed surveys to establish the improvements required. All households are entitled to loft and cavity wall insulation, with households in fuel poverty, on income related benefits or occupying hard to treat homes offered improvements to heating systems. All households also receive benefit entitlement and energy efficiency advice.
- 3.6 We understand that Warm Zones are operated on a not-for-profit basis and typically funded through partnerships with local government, European Union agencies, energy companies and other supporters. Whilst we acknowledge that there will be resource implications for

Conclusions and Recommendations



developing this initiative across the city, the existing neighbourhood analysis of fuel poverty rates will enable the Council to prioritise the delivery of the 'Warm Zone' in the council wards with the highest levels of fuel poverty.

- 3.7 We support the development of an area based initiative for Leeds based upon the Warm Zone model and recommend that the Executive Board also commits to the development of such an initiative in Leeds over the next 12 months.

Recommendation 3

That the Executive Board commits to the development of an area based Initiative for Leeds based upon a 'Warm Zone' model over the next 12 months as a method of addressing fuel poverty, particularly amongst vulnerable households such as older people.

- 3.8 We are aware that the Government has already set a target to bring all social housing (stock managed by local authorities, ALMOs and housing association) up to the decency standard by 2010/11 and therefore the Council and the Leeds ALMOs are committed to ensuring that all social housing meets the decency standard by 2010/11. However, we recognise that such properties

are likely to fall out of decency if investment is not maintained or enhanced post 2011. We are therefore pleased that this has been acknowledged within the updated draft Leeds Housing Strategy and that the Council and the Leeds ALMOs are now exploring options for maintaining and enhancing the level of investment in council housing post-2011.

- 3.9 In acknowledging that just under 70% of older people live in the private sector, it is clear that measures to improve decency standards in this tenure will also have a significant impact on the lives of older people in the city.

- 3.10 Running alongside this inquiry, we also conducted a separate inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing in Leeds and found that both locally and nationally, the private rented sector is seen to be the tenure where the greatest proportion of vulnerable households live in non-decent homes. We therefore recognised the importance of addressing excess cold and fuel poverty across all tenures and stressed that this must remain a key future priority, with a particular focus on the older housing stock, where many private sector tenants, including some

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of the most vulnerable members of society, reside.

3.11 However, we were pleased to learn that an overall approach for enhanced action is intended through a refresh of the actions to deliver the Private Rented Sector Strategy. This will include the development of the Strategy to reflect new themes such as the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy; the Regional Fuel Poverty Strategy and Home Energy Conservation Act recommendations.

3.12 We also noted that NHS Liverpool had given funding of around £9 million to improve private sector housing conditions in Liverpool. Whilst acknowledging that the Liverpool model needs to be tested to identify whether comparable investment can be made in Leeds, we still recognised the need for the Council to work more closely with key partners and also central government to continue developing innovative approaches towards addressing poor housing conditions and to maximise on available resources. We therefore made a recommendation to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to this effect.

4.0 The challenge of providing housing related support services.

4.1 It is clear that rising life expectancy and the growing number of older people will increase the need for additional services or support to maximise the capacity of elderly or vulnerable people to continue living independently.

4.2 Supporting People is the national programme for commissioning housing related support services for vulnerable adults. This programme is managed through a Commissioning Body, which comprises representatives from the Council, NHS Leeds and the West Yorkshire Probation Service. The programme is administered on a day-to-day basis by the Housing Strategy and Commissioning section, which sits within the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate. We understand that all proposals made by the administering authority, relating to the commissioning of services, need to be unanimously approved by the Commissioning Body and that the three partner agencies have an equal decision making capacity.

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- 4.3 The Supporting People programme currently commissions 371 services, through 68 organisations, for approximately 12,000 people and we noted that such services range from sheltered warden services for older people, homeless hostels and supported housing for people with learning disabilities. have been achieved through competitive tendering and contract management.
- 4.4 In addition to the information provided during our inquiry, we also received quarterly update reports on the Supporting People programme as part of our 2008/09 work programme.
- 4.5 We learned that in 2008/09, the Leeds Supporting People programme received a grant settlement of £32.9 million, a reduction of £3 million from the position in 2003/04. As a result, we noted that efficiency savings of approximately £7.5 million have needed to be generated since 2003 in order to balance the budget, given the real increases in costs, and to also commission new strategically relevant services. Such services have formed part of the Partnerships for Older People's Projects (POPPs) which aim to assist vulnerable older people with mental health problems to achieve and maintain independent living arrangements. It was reported that such efficiency savings
- 4.6 We were also made aware that whilst the Supporting People grant settlement will be maintained at £32.9 million in 2009/10, it is now expected to be reduced by a further £1 million in 2010/11, which will need to be found from existing services. Given the level of efficiencies already achieved to date, we acknowledge the challenge of achieving this additional saving through the application of value for money measures without compromising service quality.
- 4.7 In addition, we also learned that during 2009/10, Supporting People funds will be paid to the Council as a 'named' grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. This will allow local authorities more flexibility to allocate funding according to local need, but will still be viewed as housing related support. However, it is expected that Supporting People funding will be absorbed into the Area Based Grant from April 2010 onwards, following this transitional year, and can therefore be used for any purpose the Council believes is appropriate.

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4.8 We acknowledge that since the start of the Supporting People programme, the Government has been clear about its intention to mainstream the commissioning of housing related support services within local authorities. Whilst the allocation of funding now rests with local authorities, there are still clear expectations by Government and the Audit Commission that housing related support services will continue to be delivered to vulnerable groups of people to enable them to achieve independent living outcomes. It is vital that the removal of the ring-fenced funding for housing related support services does not have a detrimental affect on existing services. The Council should ensure that from April 2010, housing related support services receive sufficient funding through the Area Based Grant to at least maintain existing services, with a view to enhancing provisions in the future.

4.9 We learned that the Leeds Commissioning Body has agreed to commission a piece of research into the wider benefits and outcomes that are generated through the provision of housing-related support services. We welcome this research and would like the

findings to be brought back to Scrutiny once available.

Recommendation 4

That the Council ensures that from April 2010, housing related support services receive sufficient funding through the Area Based Grant to at least maintain existing services, with a view to enhancing provisions in the future to meet with any increased demands for such services.

Recommendation 5

That the findings of the research commissioned by the Leeds Commissioning Body into the wider benefits and outcomes generated through the provision of housing-related support services, is brought back to Scrutiny for consideration.

4.10 We understand that local authorities are also expected to have local housing related support policies in place to take forward their commissioned services. We therefore noted that a local housing related support strategy will be developed for Leeds under the umbrella of the updated Leeds Housing Strategy. We would also like this strategy to be brought back to Scrutiny for consideration once available.

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4.11 As the allocation of funding now rests with local authorities, we were pleased to learn that the Supporting People Commissioning Body has agreed that decisions relating to service commissioning will be made within the context of the Leeds Strategic Plan and the Leeds Local Area Agreement so that all new and re-commissioned services will contribute directly to the delivery of these strategic outcomes.

4.12 However, during our inquiry we noted the implications of the national personalisation agenda for social care and associated services on the commissioning of housing related support services. The personalisation agenda is focused around enabling clients to design, choose and control the services that they use. Whilst this encompasses a number of elements, particular reference was made to the Individual Budgets element. This is where a client receives an indicative funding value, which could be comprised of several funding sources, and uses this funding to purchase services from selected providers, whether they are from the public, private or voluntary sectors.

4.13 With regard to housing related support, which is commissioned

through the Supporting People programme, this will be included within Individual Budgets if the client is also in receipt of a social care service. As the Supporting People programme block purchases sheltered warden services, by scheme, we noted that this potentially conflicts with the principle of individuals purchasing services and also the concept of creating a genuine 'open market' so that clients have a real choice in how they buy a service. There may also be a conflict between promoting choice and safeguarding vulnerable people as clients may decide to purchase a service outside of the Supporting People commissioned services, which may not have been subjected to the same levels of rigorous testing. We believe that this will need to be taken into consideration in the development of the Leeds Housing Related Support Strategy.

Recommendation 6
That the implications of the personalisation agenda and the role of Individualised Budgets in the commissioning of housing related support services is taken into consideration in the development of the Leeds Housing Related Support Strategy.

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Recommendation 7
That the Leeds Housing Related Support Strategy is brought back to the relevant Scrutiny Board for consideration once available.

5.0 The effective use of Assistive Technology.

5.1 During our inquiry, we acknowledged that the use of assistive technology will play an increasingly important role in promoting the capacity of vulnerable people to live independently.

5.2 In 2004, the Audit Commission defined assistive technology as *“any item, piece of equipment, product or system that is used to increase maintain or improve the functional capabilities and independence of people with cognitive, physical or communication difficulties”*.

5.3 We learned that community equipment, Telecare and Telehealth services are three of a range of services providing assistive technology intended to support people to live as independently as possible. Other assistive technology services include adaptations services, wheelchair services and environmental controls.

5.4 The Leeds Community Equipment Service is an

integrated (between the Local Authority and NHS Leeds) service delivering all aspects of equipment provision for health and local authority service users in Leeds. Under its umbrella, Leeds Community Equipment Service oversees all aspects of relevant staff training; information and advice to actual and potential users of community equipment; service development; and the storage, delivery, fitting, collection, maintenance and cleaning of community equipment.

5.5 We learned that the service holds an average of 600 core stock items of equipment and orders large numbers of individual “one off” specialised items. The type of equipment provided by the service includes: bath boards, bath seats, raised toilet seats, toilet frames, riser recliner chairs, specialist cutlery, zimmer frames, walking sticks, wheelchairs, commodes, urinals, bedpans, hoists, specialised beds and pressure relieving mattresses.

5.6 With regard to Telecare, we learned that this is a service that supports older and vulnerable people to live independently in their own home through the use of simple sensors. Telecare provides 24 hour monitoring of an individual,

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ensuring an alert is raised if the sensor detects any problems.

5.7 Telecare in Leeds builds upon the already existing Care Ring pendant alarm system to offer added security at home. Telecare sensors are discretely placed around the home on ceilings, doors and walls or may be worn by the service user in the form of a pendant, watch or belt. They can be of benefit to those who are having difficulties maintaining their safety at home due to physical or mental impairments.

5.8 We noted that Care Ring service users ordinarily need to nominate two key holders who can be contacted in the event of an emergency. However, it has been identified that a significant number of potential Telecare service users do not have access to such a resource and therefore the Supporting People Commissioning Body has agreed to commission a citywide mobile response service, provided through the Council's security service, from April 2009, for an initial two-year term. It is assumed that the service will be working with 600 service users by the end of 2010/11.

5.9 We were informed that if a Telecare sensor activates in an individual's home, an alert is

automatically raised to a 24 hour response centre who will maintain contact with the service user to check on their safety. Often, practical advice and reassurance is all that is required but on some occasions physical help may be needed. On these occasions the response centre staff will arrange the appropriate support by contacting a family member, mobile response, or if necessary an emergency service. The response centre have access to information on the service user and can identify what sensor in the home has activated to ensure the appropriate responses are arranged promptly.

5.10 It was reported that since its introduction in October 2006, Telecare equipment has been provided to over 2,500 people. We acknowledge that the use of Telecare systems have enabled people to be supported at home for longer, preventing untimely admission to hospital and promoting early discharge. Telecare therefore aims to provide reassurance to carers and family and also promotes confidence in service users.

5.11 We learned that Telehealth monitoring is the remote exchange of physiological data between a patient at home and remote health care staff to assist

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in diagnosis and monitoring. This could include support for people with chest/breathing problems, heart conditions, or diabetes. It includes a home unit to measure and monitor temperature, blood pressure and other vital signs for clinical review at a remote location, (for example, a hospital site), using phone lines or wireless technology.

- 5.12 It was highlighted that Telehealth provision is led by NHS Leeds who are currently conducting pilot programmes to assess the effectiveness of the systems. The money to run these programmes has come from the Preventative Technology Grant allocated to Adult Social Care by the Department of Health.
- 5.13 We were pleased to learn that a Leeds Telecare / Telehealth Development Group has been set up to ensure that there are close links between the agencies leading on all related initiatives. We learned that a wide range of stakeholders are members of this Development Group and include representatives from the Local Authority, NHS Leeds, service users, practitioners and equipment suppliers.
- 5.14 In March 2009, we were also pleased to learn that funding for

Telecare services would become mainstreamed from April 2009. Whilst acknowledging that this funding will help to maintain current services, it was hoped that such services could be expanded further in the future. We learned that a piece of research had been commissioned to assess the impact of Telecare services in Leeds, which will take into account the cost benefits of providing this service in terms of reducing the need for residential placements and preventing untimely admissions to hospital. It is hoped that this research will assist in identifying potential additional funding bids to expand the service further. In welcoming this piece of research, we would also advise that further analysis around future projections for Telecare services in Leeds is included in this research to help determine the level of service capacity required to meet future demands.

Recommendation 8
That further analysis around future projections for the demand of Telecare services in Leeds forms part of the wider piece of research work commissioned to assess the impact of Telecare services in Leeds.

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5.15 Within the updated draft Leeds Housing Strategy, it also states that actions will be taken to identify the contribution Telecare services, and more specifically the mobile response service, has made to promoting independent living. One of the key actions identified is to use the Supporting People contract management process to monitor the effectiveness and long-term requirement of the mobile response service and to carry out an options appraisal to determine whether the service should be remodelled and/or subject to competitive tender. We therefore welcome these proposed actions.

6.0 Delivering Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods.

6.1 We believe that well designed, inclusive housing will help to meet housing needs, improve health, reduce discrimination and create more balanced and inclusive communities. It is clear that it will be more cost effective to build new homes that are generally accessible to a wide range of people than to build homes that are not future-proof, so become inappropriate to our changing needs.

6.2 We learned that the 'Lifetime Homes' standard is a set of 16 design criteria that aim to

promote mobility within the home. This standard will therefore have an impact on the size of accommodation (allowing for wheelchair use and access and space for lifts and hoist in the future), layout of accommodation (allowing for direct access from bedroom to bathroom if required), access to the home and parking space. We understand that to meet these standards, new homes would need to be designed and constructed to be able to be readily adapted to meet future needs and for flexibility in use.

6.3 We acknowledge that by adhering to these design standards, this will increase the cost of housing production, ranging from around £165 to £545 per unit. However, we also recognise that this is a small fraction of the cost of adapting a property or placing a person into residential care.

6.4 We noted that the Leeds Older People's Strategy (2005-2010) already makes reference to the Lifetime Homes standards, stating that all developers should be encouraged to develop Lifetime Homes in order to build in flexibility of use.

6.5 However, we are pleased to learn that within its Strategy 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' (2008), the

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Government now makes a commitment to ensure that all public housing will be built to Lifetime Homes standards by 2011. This is reflected within the updated draft Leeds Housing Strategy, which states that all housing developed through the Affordable Housing Strategic Partnership will now conform to the Lifetime Homes standards and that all new social housing developments are to conform to the Lifetime Homes standard from 2011.

- 6.6 With regard to the private sector, we noted that the Government's aspiration is for all new housing to be built to these standards by 2013. We understand that the Lifetime Homes standards will be made a mandatory part of the Code for Sustainable Homes. However, as this Code is voluntary, it is difficult for planning policy to insist on such higher standards and therefore the focus has been around encouraging take-up on a voluntary basis from private developers.
- 6.7 We are aware that the Government intends to support industry to encourage take-up on a voluntary basis over the next few years and will review take-up in 2010, with a view to bringing forward regulation in 2013 if take-up in the private

sector has not matched market need or expectations. However, we believe that the Council should be proactive now in exploring opportunities for adopting a consistent approach towards all new housing regardless of its tenure in relation to Lifetime Homes Standards. We understand that during its inquiry into Adaptations, the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board also felt that the Council should be exploring possible routes of adopting these standards across all tenures without the need to wait for any national regulations to be enforced.

- 6.8 The Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board was advised that the use of Supplementary Planning Guidance could be used as a way to place greater material weight on planning applicants to create more accessible housing. We understand that this approach is not unprecedented, as this has been adopted in London.
- 6.9 The document 'Accessible London: achieving an inclusive environment. The London Plan Supplementary Guidance' states that *'The Mayor will and boroughs should seek to ensure that all residential units in new housing developments are designed to Lifetime Home standards. These standards*

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should be applied to all new housing, including conversions and refurbishments, and including blocks of flats, for both social housing and private sector housing, and should cater for a varying number of occupants'.

6.10 In acknowledging the positive impact of this approach in London, the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board agreed to recommend that the Director for Development also investigates and reports on the viability of adopting a model to be implemented, which reflects the spirit of the London Supplementary Planning Guidance for mandatory development to Lifetime Homes Standards, but suits the diversity and specific requirements of the City of Leeds, reporting findings to the Executive Board before 31 December 2009.

6.11 In recognising the need for the Council to adopt a more consistent approach towards Lifetime Homes Standards across all tenures, we too appreciate the importance of conducting a viability appraisal on how this will best meet the needs of the city. We would therefore echo the recommendation made by the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board.

Recommendation 9

That the Director for Development investigates and reports on the viability of adopting a model to be implemented, which reflects the spirit of the London Supplementary Planning Guidance for mandatory development to Lifetime Homes Standards, but suits the diversity and specific requirements of the City of Leeds, reporting findings to the Executive Board before 31 December 2009.

6.12 We also recognise that it is not just lifetime homes that are needed, but lifetime neighbourhoods, where the built environment offers 'age-proofed' communities. This would mean that the provision of accessible local amenities, such as community centres and shops, and the transport and street environment would be consciously planned for people of all ages and conditions in mind and therefore not exclude people as they age or become more frail or disabled. We believe that such inclusive planning can only help to achieve an increased sense of belonging and pride in local neighbourhoods that will help to build cohesive communities.

6.13 We acknowledge that the concept of Lifetime Neighbourhoods is not a new

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one, but it has been recognised nationally that this is yet to make a significant impact on planning and neighbourhood design. It is therefore vital that local planning policy takes account of ageing and the needs of older people. Within its Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods Strategy, the Government has stated that it will incentivise good design by introducing a new Beacon theme on inclusive planning to recognise local authorities providing leadership in this area.

6.14 We understand that the new Homes and Communities Agency will also be charged with supporting the continued well-being of communities in England and ensuring that all new planning policies and initiatives give an explicit priority to design and quality. The Government also gives a commitment that future planning policy reform will fully reflect the high priority now given to address the challenges of an ageing society.

6.15 We would very much like to see Leeds be at the forefront of promoting innovative and inclusive planning design and quality across the city in line with the Lifetime Neighbourhoods concept and work towards achieving Beacon

status for leadership in this area.

6.16 We recommend that the Director of Development reports back to Scrutiny within 3 months on the existing and planned policies and guidance aimed at promoting innovative and inclusive planning design and quality across the city in line with the Lifetime Neighbourhoods concept, and how Leeds can work towards achieving Beacon status for leadership in this area.

Recommendation 10

That the Director of Development reports back to Scrutiny within 3 months on the existing and planned policies and guidance aimed at promoting innovative and inclusive planning design and quality across the city in line with the Lifetime Neighbourhoods concept.

Recommendation 11

That the Director of Development reports back to Scrutiny within 3 months on how Leeds can work towards achieving Beacon status for inclusive planning.

7.0 Developing the extra care housing model.

7.1 The development of extra care housing for vulnerable older

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people is a key strategic and service transformation objective for the Council. In view of this, we were interested in exploring the benefits of the extra-care housing model as an alternative to residential care.

- 7.2 We understand that extra care housing schemes are designed to offer more independent living for residents than residential care, with fully self contained accommodation (usually 1 or 2 bedroom apartments and sometimes linked bungalow properties) with access to shared communal facilities often termed a 'resource centre'. We have already established the importance of service users being given opportunities to exercise choice and be involved in influencing the services that they receive. Choice and involvement are in many ways integral to the whole model of extra care housing since the status of people as tenants gives them rights and potentially a level of control over their own lives that would often be lacking in other service settings.
- 7.3 As part of our inquiry, we were keen to visit an existing extra care housing scheme within Leeds and the Moor Allerton Care Centre was highlighted as one of the exemplar schemes. As part of our inquiry, we also agreed to conduct a visit to

Sheffield's Brunswick Gardens Retirement Village, which opened in March 2008 and consists of 217 one and two bedroom units of mixed tenure. As this is one of only a few extra care 'villages' in England, we were keen to learn more about the benefits of developing a scheme of this size and to take back any lessons for future developments in Leeds.

- 7.4 In February 2009, we held our public Board meeting at the Moor Allerton Care Centre and this was followed by a tour of the Centre, which gave us the opportunity to speak with the staff and residents.
- 7.5 The Moor Allerton Care Centre was established in December 2004 by MHA Care Group, a leading national charity that works to improve the quality of life and independence of older people through the provision of care homes and a range of housing and support services. This particular scheme is regarded as purpose built housing with care and day care facility for older people including those with dementia.
- 7.6 The Moor Allerton Care Centre comprises of:
- Yew Tree Court providing 45 units of housing with care, 28 of which are two-

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bedroom flats and 17 of which are one-bedroom flats; plus five flats commissioned by the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) to provide Intermediate Care.

- Rosewood Court providing 20 one-bedroom units of housing with dementia care, which can be occupied by a single person, or a couple.
- Bay Tree Resource Centre offering dementia day care services for up to 20 older people per day

7.7 We learned that to be eligible for a tenancy in Yew Tree Court, the Centre requires people to fit a number of the following criteria:

- Be aged 55 or over;
- Have a requirement for sheltered housing;
- Be frail or physically disabled;
- Exhibit some cognitive dysfunction, possibly with short term memory loss and some disorientation, provided they will be able to cope with the independent living aspects of extra care housing and be likely to derive psychological benefit from living in this setting in preference to, for example, residential care;

- Suffer from depression or some other mental illness, which is managed through appropriate treatment and support, and be likely to derive psychological benefit from living in this setting rather than a more specialist one;
- Have a degree of learning disability; again provided they will be able to cope with the independent living aspects of extra care housing;
- Have or be willing to have a Social Services assessment completed for required care needs.

7.8 For allocation of a flat in Rosewood Court, as well as some of the above criteria, we learned that people must also meet the following requirements:

- Dementia is the primary care need.
- A potential service user will have a diagnosis of dementia from an appropriate source - for example: Consultant Psychiatrist.

7.9 We were particularly interested to learn that the local Primary Care Trust funds five of the flats in Yew Tree Court as Intermediate Care places. These Intermediate Care flats

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are used to provide an alternative to hospital admission, or to facilitate earlier hospital discharges, for people who require short-term support to remain in their own homes.

7.10 During our tour of the centre, we noted the range of communal facilities on site to assist with daily living tasks, socialising and making friends. Yew Tree Court has a communal lounge; a dining room/restaurant; a hairdressing salon; communal laundry; guestroom and assisted bathrooms, all of which are open to all who reside at the centre. Within Rosewood Court, we noted that there is a specially designed lounge, dining area and a fully enclosed garden to enable those individuals living with dementia to safely enjoy their living environment.

7.11 We also visited the Bay Tree Dementia Day Care Centre, which offers care and therapeutic services to older people living with dementia.

7.12 In terms of security and safety measures, we noted that the door-entry system enables residents to speak to visitors from within their own apartments before opening the front door. Pull cords are also located in all apartments and

communal areas to summon staff if needed, which are responded to 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Overall we believe that the provision of care provided within the Centre met with the philosophy of the extra care model in terms of promoting independent living within a safe and secure environment.

7.13 In January 2009, a working group of the Scrutiny Board and senior officers from the Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Care Directorates, conducted a visit to Sheffield's Brunswick Gardens Retirement Village. Brunswick Gardens is an extra care housing scheme developed in partnership by Arena Housing Group (landlord), the ExtraCare charitable Trust (care and support provider) and Sheffield City Council. It opened in March 2008 and consists of 217 one and two bedroom units of mixed tenure. It is one of only a few extra care villages in England.

7.14 Whilst extra care villages operate in a similar manner to the smaller schemes, there is considered to be greater scope for developing communal facilities. We were therefore keen to learn more about the

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benefits of developing a scheme of this size.

- 7.15 During the visit, the working group met with the Village's Manager, senior officers from Sheffield Council, the Cabinet Member for Independent and Healthy Living, and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable, Safer Communities. Two of the residents also kindly accompanied the working group around the premises, including their own accommodation, and shared their experiences of living within the village. A summary of the working group's visit was reported back to the full Scrutiny Board in March 2009.
- 7.16 In relation to the communal facilities on site, the working group was very impressed by the wide range of facilities available, which included a gymnasium, Jacuzzi, well-being suite, hair salon, various craft rooms, bar, coffee bar and lounge, restaurant and village hall.
- 7.17 It was noted that many of the facilities are run by volunteers, often the residents themselves, or include local businesses which have relocated on site, such as the hair salon. It was also highlighted that non-residents aged 55 and over and

living within the local community could choose to become 'friends of the village' and make use of the facilities for an annual membership fee of £25. We learned that in January 2009, there were 270 registered friends of the village.

- 7.18 The working group also observed the accommodation facilities and was given the opportunity to observe a two bedroom apartment. Details of all the apartment layouts were also provided as additional background to the visit.
- 7.19 The working group was impressed with the quality of the apartments but understood that a number of maintenance issues had been reported by residents, which were considered to be initial 'teething' problems with the scheme. However, overall it was felt that the apartments were spacious, comfortable and met the needs of the residents.
- 7.20 It was noted that the lifts and corridors within the premises were also very spacious, which helped with wheelchair access, and that all the corridors within the village were also referred to as 'streets' and given names to help residents distinguish them easier. This was a very welcome approach by the residents. On each floor, there

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were also communal areas where residents could meet up with their neighbours as an alternative to the larger communal areas within the village centre. This again helped to promote a sense of community, which the working group was able to observe during its tour of the village.

- 7.21 The visit to Sheffield proved to be extremely helpful in terms of demonstrating the benefits of developing an extra care scheme of this size. With regard to the lessons learned from this particular development, we identified a number of key issues which we believe are important factors to consider in any future development of extra care housing schemes in Leeds and therefore recommend that these are taken into account by the Council.

Recommendation 12

That the following factors are taken into account by the Council in the future development of extra-care housing schemes:

- i. To have a very clear strategic position before embarking on a new scheme;**
- ii. That the scheme fits in with the needs of the wider community and integrates with and complements what already exists locally;**

Recommendation 12 - continued

- iii. To look at what is practicable and deliverable before consulting the wider community on the scheme;**
- iv. To project-manage the scheme so that the lead-in time from the development stages to completion is kept as short as possible;**
- v. To be more inventive with the name of the scheme, such as 'retirement village', rather than use the term 'extra care housing' which may not attract residents;**
- vi. To have a transparent allocations criteria and procedure (making use of an independent body to act as mediator) and to be clear from the outset that not all applicants will receive a place;**
- vii. To accept that new schemes will continue to evolve as technology develops and expectations change.**

- 7.22 Whilst we appreciate that the number of accommodation units within the Brunswick Gardens Village development is significantly higher than that envisaged for Leeds, we would

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recommend that this development be considered by the Council as an example of good practice, particularly in relation to the development of communal facilities.

Recommendation 13
That the Brunswick Gardens Retirement Village in Sheffield is considered by the Council as an example of good practice for extra care provision, particularly in relation to the development of communal facilities.

8.0 Modernisation of sheltered housing in Leeds.

8.1 The majority of the Council's sheltered housing stock was built prior to 1979 and predominantly comprises one bedroomed bungalow or low-rise flatted accommodation. However, we understand that the recent Housing Market Assessment identified a strong preference amongst older people for two bedroomed accommodation, so that family or live-in carers could stay over. We also noted that there are approximately 480 units of bed-sit accommodation, many of which have communal washing facilities, which the ALMOs are often having difficulty letting due to low level of demand.

8.2 In view of this, we learned that the Council had submitted a bid to Central Government for £271 million of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) credits to contribute towards the modernisation of sheltered housing and build 471 new units for social renting and demolish/replace 639 units of outmoded stock.

8.3 We were informed that the bid proposes the development of 600 units of extra-care housing and 510 units of Lifetimes Homes housing (although this has since been scaled back to 540 units of extra-care housing and 280 units of Lifetimes Homes housing at the request of the Homes and Communities Agency as the PFI programme had been significantly oversubscribed nationally).

8.4 However, we noted that the extra-care model included in the Council's initial Expression of Interest was based on an average scheme size of 60 units, with 60% two bedroom accommodation and 40% one bedroom accommodation. We therefore questioned why the proposal had included one bedroom accommodation when national and local research indicated a greater demand from older people for two bedroom accommodation. In response, it was explained that the proposal

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was based around the initial advice about the proportions needed. However, we were pleased to learn that this has since been changed and the proposal for extra care provision is now based on two bedroom accommodation.

- 8.5 We were also very pleased to note that the proposal is also framed around the concept of Lifetime Neighbourhoods, as the location of the Lifetime Homes will be in close proximity to transport links, shops, green spaces and leisure facilities.
- 8.6 We acknowledged that although initial assessments have been undertaken on a range of sample locations, in terms of suitability, location and delivery, these have yet to be the subject of full assessment including user consultation and comparison with alternative sites that may become available within the vicinity. It was noted that this detailed analysis will take place as part of the preparation of the Outline Business Case. During this process, we would again emphasise the importance of ensuring that any new extra care scheme fits in with the needs of the wider community and integrates with and complements what already exists locally.
- 8.7 We acknowledge that the Council's PFI funding bid is for

capital funded works and does not include revenue funding such as housing-related support. In acknowledging that extra care housing tends to be more expensive than traditional warden services, we understand that this additional cost will need to be identified as part of the Supporting People budget management. However, we have already established the existing challenges facing the Supporting People budget in terms of finding further efficiency savings. It was reported that the support and care model for the PFI bid will be developed as part of the Outline Business Case, taking account of budgetary pressures and the move towards personalisation of care and support arrangements.

- 8.8 We recommend that the Directors of Adult Social Care and Environment and Neighbourhoods conduct an urgent piece of work to establish the potential costs of providing housing-related support services to the proposed schemes outlined within the Council's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) funding bid for the modernisation of sheltered housing.

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Recommendation 14
That the Directors of Adult Social Care and Environment and Neighbourhoods conduct an urgent piece of work to establish the potential costs of providing housing-related support services to the proposed schemes outlined within the Council's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) funding bid for the modernisation of sheltered housing.

people's housing irrespective of the outcome of the PFI funding bid.

Recommendation 15
That the details of the options appraisal into the future investment/management of council housing, with specific reference to older people's housing, is brought back to Scrutiny for consideration at the earliest opportunity.

8.9 In acknowledging the value of the PFI proposal, we questioned whether the Council had put in place any contingency plans if the bid proved not to be successful.

Recommendation 16
That a dedicated Strategy is put in place to take forward the Council's plans for the development of Older People's Housing irrespective of the outcome of the PFI funding bid.

8.10 We were informed that the PFI bid was only a partial solution to the modernisation of sheltered housing and that the Council and the Leeds ALMOs would need to consider future investment options for sheltered housing as part of the options appraisal into the future investment /management of council housing. In view of this, we recommend that the details of the options appraisal, with particular reference to older people's housing, be brought back to Scrutiny for consideration at the earliest opportunity. In particular, we would expect to see a Strategy put in place for taking forward the Council's plans for the development of older

8.11 It was reported that the Council believes there is an identified need for more extra-care housing than can be secured through the PFI bid, especially in relation to other tenure forms. We therefore identified the need to accurately quantify demand and required supply across tenures and locations and to prioritise schemes across the city according to need.

8.12 We noted that one of the proposed actions set out within the updated draft Leeds Housing Strategy is to develop an extra-care housing plan that will quantify demand and required

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supply across tenures and locations. We therefore support this proposed action and request that this Plan is brought back to Scrutiny for consideration once available.

Recommendation 17

In supporting the development of an Extra-care Housing Plan to quantify the demand and required supply of extra care provision across tenures and locations, we recommend that this Plan be brought back to Scrutiny for consideration once available.

8.13 At the time of concluding our inquiry, the Council had still not received a decision from the Communities Local Government (CLG) on the funding bid. We therefore look forward to receiving this confirmation over the coming months.

9.0 Providing housing support and advice services to older people.

9.1 It is recognised nationally that for older people, there is a prior and paramount need to improve information and advice services so that they know how to make the right choice for them, and are not forced to leave their homes before they are ready, or need to do so.

9.2 We are therefore pleased to note that the Government has made a commitment to work with partners across Government and in the voluntary and community sector to provide a new approach to a national housing advice and information service. The Government intends to strengthen local housing information services to provide a first class information service, whether at the end of a telephone line or online, as well as a local one stop shop where anyone can find out the full range of options that might be available locally. In time, this resource is to be developed so that it covers social care, health and benefits and links together all the services that older people need to know about.

9.3 We acknowledged that the Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy also recognises that older people want to see a holistic advice service that provides advice and information to help them make informed choices about housing options and to determine whether they are better able to remain in their current homes or be supported to make planned, timely moves to alternative housing. We learned from the Leeds Older People's Forum that this continues to be a priority area of need and therefore we

Conclusions and Recommendations



recommend that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on producing an action plan over the next 6 months aimed at enhancing existing housing support and advice services targeted at older people across the city.

Recommendation 18
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on producing an action plan over the next 6 months aimed at enhancing existing housing support and advice services targeted at older people across the city.

10.0 Addressing social isolation

10.1 During our inquiry, we recognised the need to ensure that the drive towards promoting independent living and the use of modern assistive technology, such as Telecare Services, does not lead to social isolation as a consequence.

10.2 In February 2009, we learned that Adult Social Care had commissioned the Leeds Older People's Forum to lead the delivery of a multi-agency programme of work to tackle social isolation as part of delivering the city's Older Better Strategy. A summary of the

actions delivered by the Forum this year included:

- Delivery of a social isolation learning conference to 100 frontline workers including housing staff;
- Ongoing support to the social isolation peer support group, which includes housing staff;
- Published a conference report including a practical action plan for this annual year, and a proposed action plan for next year which has been presented to the assistant Director of Adult Social Care to ask for support in delivering it;
- Setting up a pilot befriending scheme in care homes;
- Promoting the Infostore to older people;
- Delivering training on social isolation to front line staff including ALMO sheltered housing staff;
- Promoting lifelong learning opportunities to all older people and coordinating the Gladys

Conclusions and Recommendations



Roberts life long learners award;

- A second edition of the Social Isolation resource pack has been printed and 700 copies have been disseminated;
- The library service has developed a reminiscence pack and are delivering reminiscence sessions.

10.3 The Leeds Older People's Forum highlighted that social isolation and loneliness are complex issues, and as such, have complex solutions.

10.4 We acknowledge that social isolation is, by its nature, not something that is easily measurable, or indeed, something that many people feel comfortable disclosing. Feelings of isolation and loneliness are very personal and may affect individuals in different ways. It was also noted that to some older people, increased isolation may be accepted as 'part and parcel' of the ageing process, and might not be challenged.

10.5 The Leeds Older People's Forum explained that what is clear from the Older Better strategy for Leeds is that older people want to be actively involved in the services and

developments that affect their lives. In view of this, it was noted that when planning services for older people who are socially isolated, perhaps the most important step is to ask people what they actually want.

10.6 Whilst concerns were expressed about older people living alone in private accommodation, it was highlighted that social isolation can also affect those in shared and sheltered accommodation.

10.7 We learned that the Leeds Older People's Forum had provided training to front line staff on tackling social isolation and produced a Resource Pack intended to help individuals think about the various issues that affect older people who may be socially isolated.

10.8 However, we understand that the funding allocated to the Leeds Older People's Forum for its work on tackling Social Isolation has now ceased. In view of this, there is a need to ensure that their valuable work has been embedded into existing training mechanisms for all front line staff working with older people.

Conclusions and Recommendations



Recommendation 19

That the Directors of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Care ensure that the work conducted by the Leeds Older People's Forum around addressing social isolation amongst older people is embedded into existing training mechanisms for all relevant front line staff delivering services to older people.

11.0 Delivering integrated services within local neighbourhoods.

- 11.1 In delivering housing and housing related support services to older people, it is vital that the Council and its partners adopt a 'whole system' rather than a fragmented approach.
- 11.2 However, during our inquiry we also discussed the potential benefits of delivering such integrated services at a more local neighbourhood level and highlighted services which already adopt this approach.
- 11.3 Particular reference was made to the positive work carried out by the Neighbourhood Network Schemes in Leeds, which are primarily funded by Leeds Adult Social Care and some are supported by NHS Leeds. These Schemes provide a range of activities that promote independence, health and

wellbeing, including advice and information, help around the home, healthy living activities, leisure and recreation, transport and general support. The Schemes work with some of the most isolated and vulnerable older people in Leeds. Each Neighbourhood Network Scheme is managed by a committee of local people and team of staff and volunteers, including many older people. The Schemes are therefore responsive and flexible, working within communities to meet local needs and provide the services, activities and opportunities that older people want.

11.4 Neighbourhood Network Schemes were created to improve the lives of older people in Leeds and there are now over forty Schemes working throughout the city, supporting over 25,000 people each year.

11.5 We also acknowledged the valuable contribution made by programmes such as Keeping House, which is sponsored by Adult Social Care and has assisted over 2,000 older and disabled people in Leeds to find practical support and help in the home.

11.6 Keeping House creates new ways of developing and

Conclusions and Recommendations



supporting local organisations to provide domestic services in Leeds that can help older people and disabled people to maintain their independence in their own home for as long as possible. The central idea is that these services are run as social enterprises, charging for work done but putting any profit back into the business for the benefit of the community and those using the service. These are also run by local people who know what is needed in their area.

- 11.7 We therefore recommend that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead role in developing a working model aimed at delivering integrated housing and housing support services to older people at a neighbourhood level.

Recommendation 20
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead role in developing a working model aimed at delivering integrated housing and housing support services to older people at a neighbourhood level.

Evidence



Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

Reports and Publications Submitted

- Summary report of working group meeting in December 2008;
- Summary of the Scrutiny visit to Sheffield's Retirement Village in January 2009;
- Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods on the updated Housing Strategy (February 2009);
- Report of the Director of Adult Social Services on Community Equipment Telecare and Telehealth Services to Support Older People in the Community (February 2009);
- Executive Summary of Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A national strategy for housing in an ageing society (2008);
- Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods presenting the updated draft Leeds Housing Strategy (May 2009);
- Extract from the Older People and Social Isolation Resource Pack

Evidence



Witnesses Heard

- Bridget Emery, Head of Housing Strategy and Solutions
- Tom Wiltshire, Project Adviser, City Project Office
- Phil Charlton, Project Manager, City Project Office
- Martin Kennard, Adult Social Care
- Andrew Cross, Finance Manager, Adult Social Care
- Rob McCartney, Housing Strategy and Commissioning Manager
- Dennis Holmes, Chief Officer, Commissioning, Adult Social Care
- Tim O'Shea, Head of Commissioning, Adult Social Services
- Mark Phillott, Commissioning Manager, Adult Social Services
- Liz Ward, Disability Service Manager
- Paul Langford, Chief Housing Services Officer
- Alan Jones, Fuel Savers Manager
- Mick Ward, Head of Strategic Partnerships and Development (Older People & Disabled People)
- Iain Kyles, PFI Project Adviser
- Christine Addison, Head of City Projects
- Susan Chesters, Chair of the Older People's Forum
- Caroline Starkey, Deputy Manager of the Leeds Older People's Forum
- Bill Rollinson, Director of Care and Repair Leeds and Member of the Leeds Older People's Forum
- Wesley Grant, Manager of the Leeds Older People's Forum

Sheffield City Council

- Councillor Steve Ayriss, Cabinet Member for Independent and Healthy Living
- Councillor Bob McCann, Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable, Safer Communities
- Liz Cook, Programme Director for Services for Vulnerable People, Health and Social Care Partnership
- Sharon Marriott, Commissioning Officer, Older People, Neighbourhoods and Community Care
- Jackie Ainsworth, Project Co-ordinator, Neighbourhoods and Community Care

Evidence



Dates of Scrutiny

- 8th September 2008 – Scrutiny Board Meeting (agree terms of reference)
- 1st December 2008 – Scrutiny Working Group Meeting
- 8th December 2008 – Scrutiny Board Meeting
- 9th January 2009 – Visit to Brunswick Gardens Retirement Village, Sheffield
- 9th February 2009 – Scrutiny Board Meeting (held at Moor Allerton Care Centre)
- 11th May 2009 – Scrutiny Board Meeting
- 15th June 2009 – Scrutiny Board Meeting (agree final inquiry report)

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Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Executive Board

Date: 26th August 2009

Subject: Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Older People's Housing

Electoral Wards Affected:

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)

1. Purpose Of This Report

1.1 In June 2009 Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) published a report on Older People's Housing. In accordance with the requirements of the constitution, the response to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations needs to be agreed by the Executive Board. The purpose of this report is therefore to outline for Executive Board the recommendations made by Scrutiny Board and to note the comments of the Environment and Neighbourhoods, Adult Social Care and City Development directorates.

2. Main Issues

The directorate's comments to each of the recommendations are as follows:-

Recommendation 1 – *That the updated Leeds Older People's Housing Strategy action plan is seen within the context of the other key strategies aimed at promoting the wider health and wellbeing agenda for older people, such as the Dementia Strategy, Leeds Mental Health Strategy and Older Better Strategy.*

The director agrees with Recommendation 1 and can confirm that work is underway to update the action plan in the wider context of national and local strategies.

Recommendation 2 – *That the updated Leeds Older People’s Housing Strategy action plan is brought back to the relevant Scrutiny Board for consideration once available.*

The director agrees with Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3 – *That the Executive Board commits to the development of an area based Initiative for Leeds based upon a ‘Warm Zone’ model over the next 12 months as a method of addressing fuel poverty, particularly amongst vulnerable households such as older people.*

Excess cold has been identified as the most common hazard relating to private housing stock in the city. Action to address excess cold is therefore a key priority in relation to improving private sector housing standards. The draft Housing Strategy puts forward a proposal relating to establishing a ‘Warm Zone’ in the city, albeit with the caveat that this proposal will need to be initially considered by the Executive Board.

Recommendation 4 – *That the council ensures that from April 2010, housing related support services receive sufficient funding through Area Based Grant to at least maintain existing services, with a view to enhancing provisions in the future to meet with any increased demands for such services.*

Decisions relating to the distribution of funding lies with the Executive Board. Information can be provided to the Executive Board, when setting the budget, which will describe the potential impact of budget proposals.

Recommendation 5 – *That the findings of the research commissioned by the Leeds Commissioning Body into the wider benefits and outcomes generated through the provision of housing-related support services, is brought back to Scrutiny for consideration.*

The director agrees with Recommendation 5.

Recommendation 6 – *That the implications of the personalisation agenda and the role of Individualised Budgets in the commissioning of housing related support services is taken into consideration in the development of the Leeds Housing Related Support Strategy.*

The director agrees with Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 7 – *That the Leeds Housing Related Support Strategy is brought back to the relevant Scrutiny Board for consideration once available.*

The director agrees with Recommendation 7.

Recommendation 8 – *That further analysis around future projections for the demand of Telecare Services in Leeds forms part of the wider piece of research work commissioned to assess the impact of Telecare services in Leeds.*

Adult Social Care agree that current research being undertaken into the impact of telecare should include a future demand forecasting exercise.

Recommendation 9 – *That the Director of Development investigates and reports on the viability of adopting a model to be implemented, which reflects the spirit of the London Supplementary Planning Guidance for mandatory development to Lifetime Homes Standards, but suits the diversity and specific requirements of the City of Leeds, reporting findings to the Executive Board before 31 December 2009*

This recommendation is not agreed. The council is already taking steps to address this through the formal planning process.

Recommendation 10 – *That the Director of Development reports back to Scrutiny within 3 months on the existing and planned policies and guidance aimed at promoting innovative and inclusive planning design and quality across the city in line with the Lifetime Neighbourhoods Concept.*

The Council's existing adopted guidance 'Neighbourhoods for Living' (2003) includes a range of principles and guidance aimed at developers, designers, community groups, decision makers, businesses and the public which are consistent with the Lifetime Neighbourhoods concept. Key issues addressed include improving accessibility for disabled people and accommodating an ageing population, creating walkable neighbourhoods and creating a safe and secure environment. In addition major new policies and guides are subject to Sustainability Appraisal and Equality Impact Assessment. Given that this is broadly consistent with the aspirations expressed in the Scrutiny recommendation it is not considered that the further work proposed is appropriate, particularly given the context of other work priorities and resources.

Recommendation 11 – *That the Director of Development reports back to Scrutiny within 3 months on how Leeds can work towards achieving Beacon status for inclusive planning.*

Whilst it is recognised that Beacon status would be a positive achievement experience suggests that this involves a resource intensive process both in achieving Beacon status (through an application process/rigorous assessment) and if successful, delivering the on going work programme (including the Beacon year). This entails both maintaining and 'growing' the initiative as a Beacon authority and also external PR & partnership hosting (events and arranging visits from authorities wishing to learn from best practice i.e. the 'Beacon authority'). Given current resourcing levels, existing commitments and the need for further efficiencies it would be difficult to absorb this work without severely affecting other work streams. Comments on the previous recommendations indicate that we are already looking to address these issues and it is clearly not necessary to have Beacon status in order to achieve better outcomes.

Recommendation 12 – *That the following factors are taken into account by the Council in the future development of extra-care housing schemes:*

- i. To have a very clear strategic position before embarking on a new scheme;*
- ii. That the scheme fits in with the needs of the wider community and integrates with and complements what already exists locally;*
- iii. To look at what is practicable and deliverable before consulting the wider community on the scheme;*
- iv. To project-manage the scheme so that the lead-in time from the development stages to completion is kept as short as possible;*
- v. To be more inventive with the name of the scheme, such as 'retirement village' rather than use the term 'extra care housing' which may not attract residents;*

- vi. *To have a transparent allocations criteria and procedure (making use of an independent body to act as mediator) and to be clear from the outset that not all applicants will receive a place;*
- vii. *To accept that new schemes will continue to evolve as technology develops and expectations change*

In relation to recommendation 12 (vi), the Council will need to ensure that any changes to the allocations criteria and procedure, including the use of an independent body as a mediator, are made in accordance with the legislative framework.

Recommendation 13 *That the Brunswick Gardens Retirement Village in Sheffield is considered by the council as an example of good practice for extra care provision, particularly in relation to the development of community facilities*

The director agrees with this recommendation and would also recommend that other examples of best practice are used to inform future developments in Leeds.

Recommendation 14 *That the directors of Adult Social Care and Environment and Neighbourhoods conduct an urgent piece of work to establish the potential costs of providing housing related support services to the proposed schemes outlined within the council's Private Finance Initiative funding bid for the modernisation of sheltered housing.*

The directors of Adult Social Care and Environment and Neighbourhoods are committed to work to establish the potential costs of proposed schemes as outlined in Recommendation 14. This work will be undertaken within the wider revenue scoping required within the schemes. A cross-directorate project team has been established in relation to the proposed PFI schemes and the revenue costs will be included within the overall project plan.

Recommendation 15 *That the details of the options appraisal into the future investment/management of council housing, with specific reference to older people's housing, is brought back to Scrutiny for consideration at the earliest opportunity.*

The director agrees with this recommendation.

Recommendation 16 *That a dedicated strategy is put in place to take forward the council's plans for the development of Older People's housing irrespective of the outcome of the PFI funding bid.*

The director agrees with this recommendation and would comment that this will be included in the refresh and update of the older people's housing strategy and action plan. Members will note that the council has been successful with the PFI Expression of Interest and that £183m has provisionally been allocated to the city.

Recommendation 17 *In supporting the development of an Extra-Care Housing Plan to quantify the demand and required supply of extra care provision across tenures and locations, we recommend that this Plan be brought back to Scrutiny for consideration once available.*

The director agrees with this recommendation.

Recommendation 18 *That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on producing an action plan over the next 6 months aimed at enhancing existing housing support and advice services targeted at older people across the city.*

The director agrees with this recommendation. The refresh of the current Older People's Housing Strategy action plan will reflect the outcomes of this recommendation.

Recommendation 19 *That the Directors of Environment and Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Care ensure that the work conducted by the Leeds Older People's Forum around addressing social isolation amongst older people is embedded into existing training mechanisms for all relevant front line staff delivering services to older people.*

The directors agree with this recommendation and will ensure that this requirement is built into all services commissioned by the two directorates.

Recommendation 20 *That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead role in developing a working model aimed at delivering integrated housing and housing support services to older people at a neighbourhood level.*

The director agrees with this recommendation. The services currently commissioned to provide housing related support to older people are delivered at a local level but there is work ongoing to ensure that these are integrated with other services offering care and housing management in the same locality. The Environment and Neighbourhood directorate works closely with Adult Social Care to jointly fund Neighbourhood Networks through the Supporting People programme and will continue to develop this integrated approach.

3. Recommendation

That the Executive Board approves the responses from the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods as outlined in this report.

Background papers

None

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Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)

Date: 9 October 2009

Subject: Housing Solutions/Mortgage Rescue

Electoral Wards Affected: All

(Ward Members consulted referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Leeds Housing Options Service is the principal Council service for people who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or in some form of housing need. The mission statement of the Leeds Housing Options Service is to 'deliver high quality and enhanced housing options services so that people are better able to find a solution to their own housing needs'. The concept of Housing Solutions reflects a commitment to deliver personalised housing options services, tailored to the specific needs of individuals or families, where the service user is able to exercise optimum choice and control in relation to addressing their housing needs. The two key service priorities for the Leeds Housing Options Service are maximising homeless prevention options and minimising temporary accommodation placements. Homeless prevention outcomes are now more than three times higher than homeless acceptances; temporary accommodation placements have also reduced significantly in the last year. The Council has met the Central Government target to halve the number of households placed in temporary accommodation.

Mortgage rescue is part of the package of options available to the Council and partners to prevent home loss for owner-occupiers. The Council has established a citywide Mortgage Rescue scheme in partnership with Yorkshire Housing Group. A second mortgage rescue scheme, the Golden Triangle Partnership, operates in North West Leeds and is a partnership between Leeds City Council, York City Council and Harrogate Borough Council.

1. Purpose of This Report

- 1.1. To give Scrutiny Board members an update on progress relating to the development of the Housing Solutions programme through the Leeds Housing Options Service.
- 1.2. To give Scrutiny Board members an update relating to Mortgage Rescue initiatives that are being delivered in the city. .

2. Background Information

- 2.1. The Leeds Housing Options Service is part of the Housing Strategy and Solutions Group within the Housing Services Division. The Leeds Housing Options Service is the principal Council service for people who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or in some form of housing need. The mission statement of the Leeds Housing Options Service is to 'deliver high quality and enhanced housing options services so that people are better able to find a solution to their own housing needs'. The concept of Housing Solutions reflects a commitment to deliver personalised housing options services, tailored to the specific needs of individuals or families, where the service user is able to exercise optimum choice and control in relation to addressing their housing needs. Promoting independent living is a core strategic theme of the Housing Solutions programme, with housing options services working to help people retain their current homes, make planned moves to alternative accommodation or secure independent housing after a period of residence in managed accommodation.
- 2.2. The key service priorities for the Leeds Housing Options Service are maximising homeless prevention opportunities and minimising temporary accommodation placements. Central Government has set all local authorities a target to halve, by the end of March 2010, the number of households who are placed in temporary accommodation. This is monitored through NI156: Number of households in temporary accommodation. The baseline for the performance indicator is the number of households placed in temporary accommodation at the end of December 2004. There were 521 households placed in temporary accommodation at the end of 2004 and therefore the target is to have no more than 261 households in temporary accommodation at the end of March 2010. The Leeds Housing Options Service also has a local performance indicator relating to the number of homeless preventions achieved and the number of homeless acceptances made. A homeless prevention outcome is defined as being where a household is able to retain their current home or to make a planned move to alternative long term housing because of action taken by the local authority. A homeless acceptance is where the Council establishes that a household is unintentionally homeless and in priority need and therefore accepts a duty to secure them suitable temporary accommodation. Homeless prevention outcomes exceeding homeless acceptances is one yardstick for measuring the effectiveness of housing options services.
- 2.3. The Housing Strategy and Solutions Group recognises that the shift towards delivering personalised housing options services, with a focus on homeless

prevention activity, needs to be underpinned by a programme of staff training and development. It is acknowledged that in recent years, the Leeds Housing Options Service has been subject to a high number of customer complaints, many of which related to the quality of the housing options service that was being offered. Staff at the Leeds Housing Options Service need to have comprehensive knowledge of housing/homeless law, housing options and case management standards in order to deliver a high quality service. Personal characteristics, such as negotiation skills, have become more prominent with the shift towards maximising homeless prevention outcomes.

- 2.4. It has been assumed that the economic downturn would have ramifications for service delivery at the Leeds Housing Options Service, with an increase in the number of people experiencing difficulty meeting housing costs resulting in an accompanying increase in presentations at the service. There were 24,584 enquiries at the Leeds Housing Options Service in 2008/09; for the period April to August 2009, there were 12,176 enquiries, which suggests that there will be around 29,222 enquiries over the course of the year. This emphasises the need for all staff to have comprehensive knowledge/expertise around all aspects of housing options work and to maximise homeless prevention opportunities.
- 2.5. Preventing repossession of mortgaged properties is a key element of the Council's homeless prevention programme and overall strategy to ameliorate the effect of the economic downturn. Mortgage Rescue schemes are designed to be an alternative option for lenders and borrowers where previously the lender would have sought to re-possess the property. There are two Mortgage Rescue schemes in operation in the city: the Leeds Mortgage Rescue Scheme and HomeSave Plus (Golden Triangle Partnership).
- 2.6. The Leeds Mortgage Rescue Scheme operates across the city and is a partnership between the Council and Yorkshire Housing Group. Households are offered two options through the scheme.
 - 2.6.1. Equity Loan – Yorkshire Housing Group offers the household a loan to part pay off outstanding mortgage debt and therefore reduce mortgage payments. Household has to pay an interest charge on the loan; the loan is repayable when the property is sold. The loan is treated as a percentage of the value of the property at the point of award. The amount repayable will reflect the change in valuation at the point of sale.
 - 2.6.2. Mortgage to Rent - Yorkshire Housing Group pays off the outstanding mortgage balance and purchases the freehold or leasehold to the property. The household then becomes a tenant of Yorkshire Housing Group on an assured shorthold arrangement with a three year fixed term. The household are charged an intermediate rent: 80% of the market rental level. At the end of the three-year term, the household is offered an assured tenancy. The household can claim Local Housing Allowance to cover the cost of rental payments if they are eligible.

- 2.7. Central Government has applied a number of criteria relating to Mortgage Rescue Scheme eligibility: the mortgage rescue option must be an alternative to the Council accepting a homeless duty to secure accommodation for the household, the property must be in a reasonable state of repair, the value of the property should not exceed £140,000, the household must not have an annual income exceeding £60,000, and the loan to valuation ratio must not be over 125%.
- 2.8. The Council, through the Leeds Housing Options Service, has to carry out an assessment to determine whether all scheme eligibility criteria are met. Once this has been carried out, then a referral is made to Yorkshire Housing Group to determine which, if either, of the two mortgage rescue options can be taken forward.
- 2.9. The Golden Triangle Partnership is a three-way partnership between Leeds City Council (Banker authority), Harrogate Borough Council and the City of York Council. The Partnership was initially formed in 2005 and successfully attracted funding from the Regional Housing Board (Single Housing Pot).
- 2.10. The main aim of the Partnership is to develop innovative solutions to address the affordability problems faced by local households in the Golden Triangle area of Harrogate and York district and the outer/ North Leeds areas of the City.
- 2.11. The Partnership is accountable to a Partnership Board, set up in April 2008, consisting of lead members and chief housing officers in all three authorities. The key responsibilities of the Board are to provide strategic and political leadership for the Partnership and to oversee the monitoring and delivery of the projects funded through the Regional Housing Board.
- 2.12. The Golden Triangle Partnership launched HomeSave Plus, a pilot mortgage rescue scheme in January 2009, to respond to the economic climate and changing housing market conditions. The aim of the scheme is to assist homeowners in financial difficulty with their mortgage and or secured loan repayments. The funding of £750,000 allocated to the scheme is available until the end of March 2010.
- 2.13. The scheme can assist eligible homeowners by providing an equity loan of between £2,000 to £35,000, which is secured on the property. There is no ongoing interest charged on the loan, however the loan must be repaid in full when the property is sold. There is certain criterion which applies to the scheme, for example, the value of the property must be below £350,000 and there must be a minimum of 3% equity in the property. In addition, the financial difficulty must be due to a recent change of circumstances linked to loss of income. The scheme is administered by Guinness Northern Counties, a registered social landlord, which is responsible for the operational management of the scheme.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1. A rolling programme of staff training has been implemented for all staff at the Leeds Housing Options Service, with sessions being carried out relating to housing/homeless law, housing options and case management standards. Staff also

now attend the Statutory Review Panel, which meets three times a week. Housing applicants have a right to request a review of specific decisions relating to their housing application: such as the level of priority for rehousing that they been awarded and the suitability of housing offers, made by social landlords such as the Leeds ALMOs, to discharge the housing duty owed to them. Attendance at the Statutory Review Panel is an opportunity for staff to learn about issues relating to housing law and to gain a greater understanding of wider housing policy and practice.

- 3.2. The Housing Strategy and Solutions Group recognises that it is paramount that Leeds Housing Options Service managers have a firm understanding of the quality of service being offered. This has been challenging in the past given the high volume of service presentations. A Quality Assurance Panel is convened twice weekly and comprises both Statutory Review Panel lead officers and Leeds Housing Options Service managers. The Quality Assurance Panel examines a number of both positive and negative homeless decision letters, and accompanying case papers, to assess whether housing law has been correctly applied and whether an applicant's housing options have been clearly identified and addressed. Service managers are expected to give feedback to staff through the supervision process. A Homeless Prevention Panel also meets once a week and consists of senior managers within the Leeds Housing Options Service. The Homeless Prevention Panel examines the case detail of applicants placed in temporary accommodation during the previous week, in order to assess whether homeless prevention opportunities were exhausted. A report setting out the panel findings is sent to all members of staff and issues are raised with specific staff through the supervision process.
- 3.3. The Housing Strategy and Solutions section are committed to maximising efficiency savings that can be generated through the Leeds Housing Options Service. Demand led services, such as temporary accommodation, have proved to be costly to the Council in recent years. The Housing Strategy and Solutions Group have strengthened the 'invest to save' approach to delivering housing options services. It is recognised that intervention that results in a household being able to stay in their existing home or make a planned to alternative independent accommodation will often cost the Council a fraction of the cost incurred from placing a household in temporary accommodation. The benefits to the household of being able to live in their own home are more difficult to quantify but are equally important: a stable living arrangement will promote the capacity of a child to excel in education and their other development; stable housing will act as a platform to encourage adults to seek employment, education or training opportunities.
- 3.4. The establishment of a Homeless Prevention Fund is a key element of the Leeds Housing Options Service focus on maximising homeless prevention opportunities and fostering an 'invest to save' approach. The Homeless Prevention Fund has been established using grant funding from Central Government. Eligibility criteria for the Homeless Prevention Fund are relatively fluid: the key condition is that there is evidence to suggest that by spending to secure a homeless prevention outcome a greater saving will be generated by the household not having to be placed in temporary accommodation.

3.4.1. Case Study 1 - Woman plus one dependent made homeless due to relationship breakdown with family. Household wished to be rehoused in Otley. There is no temporary accommodation in Otley and likely waiting times for an ALMO let in the area were estimated at 120 weeks. The household would be placed in privately leased temporary accommodation, in all likelihood in Harehills/Cross Green/Beeston, until a social housing let could be made. The household found a private rented tenancy in Pool-in-Wharfedale, and whilst they were able to pay the rent in advance (£575), they were unable to pay for a bond of £600. The cost of keeping the household in temporary accommodation was estimated at £19,200 and therefore paying the bond of £600 avoided a temporary accommodation placement and saved the Leeds Housing Options Service around £18,600.

3.4.2. Case Study 2 - paranoid schizophrenic served with possession order due to condition of his property: refuse and other waste had been allowed to build up in the property, resulting in a health hazard for the occupant and neighbours. The person would not allow the social landlord, or other support services, access to the property and had isolated himself from other people. It was envisaged that if evicted the person would be in temporary accommodation for a number of years, could repeat action in such temporary accommodation and was likely to be a frequent user of mental health services, including the Becklin Centre. A support service was put in place, through Foundation Housing, which first focused on engaging with the person. The Homeless Prevention Fund was used to carry out a clean of the property. Foundation Housing persuaded the person to secure respite accommodation, at Pennington Place Hostel, so that the contract clean could be carried out, the social landlord could access the property to carry out repairs and support could be offered to stabilise the person's mental health. A case conference is being convened so that a co-ordinated support programme can be developed.

3.5. It has been estimated that the first £4,500 spend through the Homeless Prevention Fund has generated savings of around £100,000. The initiative is currently being funded through Central Government grant and longer-term funding options will need to be explored. One option being considered is offering people loans whereby repayment is made on an incremental basis. This will ensure that there is a constant stream of income for the fund.

3.6. 2008/09 was the first year where homeless prevention outcomes exceeded homeless acceptances, with 1261 preventions compared to 1099 homeless acceptances. This equates to 118 homeless preventions for every 100 acceptances. In the first four months of 2009/10, 494 homeless preventions were achieved compared to 158 homeless acceptances. This equates to 312 homeless preventions for every 100 homeless acceptances. The Sanctuary scheme, offering security installation packages for households experiencing domestic violence or hate crime, continues to be a major source of homeless preventions. The Private Sector Lettings Scheme, underpinned by the Damage Liability Scheme, offering bond guarantees up to the equivalent of four weeks rent, is now delivering lettings of around 60 per month. The Youth Mediation Service, currently provided by Re'new, is the only prevention

initiative that is delivering a low level of positive prevention outcomes. This service has been subject to competitive tender, a preferred bidder has been identified, with a view to a new contract being place by 1 December 2009.

Performance Indicator	Performance 08/09	Target 09/10	Performance 09/10	Forecast 09/10 performance
NI156: Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation	281	261(max)	197 (end of July)	175 (max)
LKIHAS4: Number of homeless acceptances made	1099	1060 (max)	199 (end of July)	597
Old BV213: Number of homeless preventions achieved	1261	1500	494 (end of July)	1650
LKIHAS11: Number of Sanctuary installations made	383	390	158 (end of July)	474
LKIHAS9: Number of private sector lettings made	426	720	153 (end of July)	633
Number of youth mediation homeless preventions achieved	182	200	18 (end of July)	54 (min)

3.7. The focus on homeless prevention opportunities, including the establishment of a Homeless Prevention Fund, has contributed towards the reduction in temporary accommodation placements made in the last year. The return for NI156 includes households placed in emergency tier units commissioned through the Supporting People programme and households placed in privately leased accommodation. At the end of December 2006, the Council reported to Central Government that there were 615 households placed in temporary accommodation. The equivalent figure for the end of July 2009 was 197, a reduction of 68%.

3.8. The reduction in placements in private sector leased accommodation is even more dramatic: in September 2008, the number of temporary accommodation placements with private providers peaked at 412 per night; the equivalent figure for 15 September 2009 was 90 placements – a reduction of 78%.

3.9. The Housing Strategy and Solutions Group recognise that the procurement of temporary accommodation remains a key challenge, not least in relation to the quality of accommodation supplied by providers. All such temporary accommodation units are subject to inspection by Council officers. Failure to meet requisite standards of repair means that a property is removed from the contract pool. A joint tender exercise, with Children’s Services, is being carried out to contract the provision of temporary accommodation. A strong emphasis has been placed on the quality of housing supply and officers from Environmental Services, which leads on private sector housing standards, are key members of the procurement project team. Organisations tendering for the contract will also be expected to supply units of accommodation in a wider range of locations than is currently the case. The reduction in placement numbers means that officers from the Leeds Housing Options Service are better able to monitor standards of accommodation supplied.

- 3.10. A key element of the Housing Solutions programme is the rolling out of housing options services to different locations/establishments across the city and more effective engagement with partner agencies. Data monitoring has identified that a high proportion of households in housing need first approach the Council through the Dewsbury Road One Stop Centre. The Housing Strategy and Solutions Group has therefore started to deliver an outreach service at this establishment. An outreach housing options service is also now delivered at the Becklin Centre to better ensure that patients are discharged from hospital to suitable accommodation.
- 3.11. It has been identified that a number of people are approaching the Leeds Housing Options Service after being evicted from tenancies by a social landlord. The Housing Strategy and Solutions Group recognise that possession action is a necessary and often last resort for social landlords to address breaches of tenancy agreements. Nevertheless, the Housing Strategy and Solutions Group believes that there may well be opportunities to prevent breaches to tenancy agreements, and therefore homelessness, if arrangements were in place for social landlords to engage with the Leeds Housing Options Service/housing related support providers to develop prevention/tenancy sustainment packages. This view is perhaps supported by reference to Case Study 2 – paragraph 3.4.2. It is intended that a protocol be developed between social landlords operating in the Leeds area and the Housing Strategy Solutions Group. This would involve the social landlord contacting the Housing Strategy and Solutions Group, at the point when enforcement action commences, to identify if it is feasible to put in place a preventative/tenancy sustainment package. If this is not feasible then the social landlord will pursue possession action and at the very least the Leeds Housing Options Service will be aware of a potential homeless approach.
- 3.12. At the end of August 2009, 25 households had active mortgage rescue applications, through the city wide scheme, that were being processed by the Leeds Housing Options Service. To date, no applications have been approved by the Yorkshire Housing Group for one of the two mortgage rescue options. The Leeds Housing Options Service believes that a number of these applications will be approved and processed in the next few months. It is assumed that the 'mortgage to rent' option will be used more often than the equity loan option, given that households on benefits will be eligible for Local Housing Allowance.
- 3.13. For the period January to August 2009, the Home Save Plus scheme has successfully assisted three homeowners with an equity loan. Two homeowners have been assisted in Leeds and one in York. There are a further three homeowners progressing on the scheme at various stages. The average equity loan provided to the three homeowners assisted is £24,000, with the average of 2 months taken for completion of the loan. The level of take-up has to be viewed in relation to Government changes with regard to homeowners being eligible for income support and the reduction from 39 to 13 weeks for interest payments to be made.

4. Implications for Council Policy and Governance

4.1. There are no specific implications for Council policy and governance relating to the development of the Housing Solutions programme and the delivery of Mortgage Rescue services.

5. Legal and Resource Implications

5.1. The Council complies with the legal provisions relating to households who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or in housing need, principally set out in the 1996 Housing Act (as amended). The Council also has regard for the Homelessness Code of Guidance.

6. Conclusions

6.1. The Housing Solutions programme represents a shift in focus for the Leeds Housing Options Service towards the delivery of personalised advice services that aim to maximise homeless prevention outcomes and minimise temporary accommodation placements. The Housing Strategy and Solutions Group believe that homeless prevention activity often represents an 'invest to save' opportunity, with the cost of prevention interventions costing far less than those relating to temporary accommodation placements. Whilst significant progress has been made in relation to fostering a preventative culture, there are further opportunities to establish joint working arrangements with other housing providers such as the Leeds ALMOs. Mortgage Rescue schemes are an important element within the Council's wider programme of preventing homeless/promoting sustainable housing options. Whilst the number of outcomes achieved to date are low, it is assumed that there will be an increase in the number of households assisted as more ongoing applications are concluded.

7. Recommendation

7.1. Scrutiny Board to note the content of the report.

7.2. To arrange for a further update on progress relating to the development of the Housing Solutions programme and the delivery of Mortgage Rescue services to be presented to the Scrutiny Board.

Background papers

None.

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Originator: A Brogden

Tel:2474553

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)

Date: 9th October 2009

Subject: Crime and Disorder Scrutiny – Inquiry into Integrated Offender Management – Draft Terms of Reference

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At the beginning of the municipal year, the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) agreed to conduct a piece of Scrutiny work in line with its new statutory role to scrutinise crime and disorder functions (as set out within the provisions of the Police and Justice Act 2006).
- 1.2 Both the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing had suggested Integrated Offender Management (IOM) as an area of work for Scrutiny to investigate further given the rise in serious acquisitive crime in Leeds and particularly domestic burglaries.
- 1.3 In its broadest sense, the IOM model of working can be used to identify and deliver interventions for individuals, families or neighbourhoods and it is the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Safer Leeds, that is accountable for the overall development, delivery and performance of the Leeds IOM model.
- 1.4 Draft terms of reference for this inquiry are attached for the Board's consideration and agreement.

2.0 Views of the Safer Leeds Executive

- 2.1 The views of the Safer Leeds Executive on the draft terms of reference have already been sought. The Chairs of the Safer Leeds Executive and Board have confirmed that during a meeting of the Safer Leeds Executive on 10th September 2009, it was concluded that the draft terms of reference are acceptable.

3.0 Recommendation

- 3.1 The Board is requested to agree the terms of reference for its forthcoming inquiry into Integrated Offender Management.

Background Papers

None

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)

INQUIRY INTO INTEGRATED OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At the beginning of the municipal year, the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) agreed to conduct a piece of Scrutiny work in line with its new statutory role to scrutinise crime and disorder functions (as set out within the provisions of the Police and Justice Act 2006).
- 1.2 In June 2009, both the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods and the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing raised concerns about the rise in serious acquisitive crime in Leeds and most notably domestic burglary. The Board learned that in 2008/09, there were 9,248 recorded domestic burglaries in Leeds, which is equivalent to a 9.5% increase (799 more offences) when compared with the previous year. It was clear that reducing burglary in a dwelling would therefore be critical to realising the overall target for serious acquisitive crime.
- 1.3 The Board was informed that there is now a strong commitment and willingness from strategic leaders to extent joint activity and co-operation between partners and build on the existing city-wide burglary reduction plan to tackle these difficult issues. However, particular importance was also placed on embedding local processes as part of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme and therefore this was suggested as an area of work for Scrutiny to investigate further.
- 1.4 Integrated Offender Management is the process of developing and delivering a range of interventions for those individuals identified as of most concern to police and communities. With the overall aim of reducing or stopping such individuals offending, the 3 strands of the IOM model are based around the existing national Prolific and Other Priority Offender (PPO) Strategy, which are Prevent and Deter; Catch and Control; and Rehabilitate and Resettle. In its broadest sense, the IOM model of working can be used to identify and deliver interventions for individuals, families or neighbourhoods and it is the Safer Leeds Partnership that is accountable for the overall development, delivery and performance of the Leeds IOM model.
- 1.5 The Scrutiny Board agreed to conduct an Inquiry into Integrated Offender Management, ensuring that the 3 strands of offender management can be utilised across the partnership and that the right interventions are being provided at the right time to the right individuals. As part of the inquiry, particular attention will be given to managing offending behaviour in relation to burglary.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

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

- The current IOM framework in Leeds, identifying any barriers or gaps in relation to the range of partners/interventions/resources available
- The mechanisms in place for information sharing between partner agencies to ensure a successful IOM process in Leeds
- The local selection/de-selection arrangements for PPOs, ensuring that the intensive management of offenders delivered through the PPO approach is provided for those who need it
- The role and development of Offender Health in Leeds
- The local IOM performance management framework, ensuring that auditing processes are in place to monitor delivery against agreed outcomes.

3.0 Comments of the Safer Leeds Executive

3.1 The views of the Safer Leeds Executive have been sought and incorporated where appropriate into these Terms of Reference.

4.0 Timetable for the inquiry

4.1 The Inquiry will take place over a number of sessions. These sessions will involve working group meetings and site visits which will provide flexibility for the Board to gather and consider evidence that will aid the discussions during the public Board meetings.

4.2 The length of the Inquiry is subject to change.

5.0 Submission of evidence

5.1 Dates for the working group meetings are to be arranged.

5.2 Session one – October/November 2009

The current IOM framework in Leeds, identifying any barriers or gaps in relation to the range of partners/interventions/resources available.

To consider the mechanisms in place for information sharing between partner agencies to ensure a successful IOM process in Leeds.

5.3 **Session two – November/December 2009**

To consider the local selection/de-selection arrangements for PPOs, ensuring that the intensive management of offenders delivered through the PPO approach is provided for those who need it.

5.4 **Session three – January 2010**

To consider the role and development of Offender Health in Leeds.

To consider the local IOM performance management framework, ensuring that auditing processes are in place to monitor delivery against agreed outcomes.

5.5 **Session four – April 2010**

- To agree final report

6.0 **Witnesses**

6.1 The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the Inquiry:

Chief Officer Leeds Community Safety
Chairs of the Safer Leeds Executive and Board
Chair of the IOM Strategic Group
IOM Case Managers
Local Criminal Justice Board
Chief Officer (Drugs and Alcohol)
Commissioning and Development Manager, Safer Leeds
Drugs & Offender Management Unit (West Yorkshire Police)
Representatives of the Drug Intervention Programme User Forum

7.0 **Site visits**

7.1 As part of the inquiry, the following site visits will be undertaken by Board Members:

- Safer Leeds IOM and Drugs Intervention programme ,Mabgate Mills.

8.0 **Post inquiry report monitoring arrangements**

7.1 Following the completion of the Scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.

7.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for how the implementation of recommendations will be monitored.

9.0 Measures of success

- 8.1 It is important to consider how the Scrutiny Board will deem if their inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.

DRAFT



Originator: A Brogden

Tel:2474553

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)

Date: 9th October 2009

Subject: Current Work Programme

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A copy of the Board's work programme is attached for Members' consideration (appendix 1). This includes an update on the reviews being conducted by the Board's working groups. However, a separate briefing paper setting out the proposed approach and timetable for the Scrutiny review into Lettings is attached for the Board's consideration (appendix 2).
- 1.2 A schedule of all the planned working group meetings for the rest of the municipal year has also been provided for Members' information (appendix 3).
- 1.3 Appendix 4 is the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st October to 31st January 2010.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board is requested to:
- (i) Determine from these documents whether there are any additional items the Board would wish to add to its Work Programme.
 - (ii) Receive and make any changes to the attached Work Programme following decisions made at today's meeting.

Background Papers

None

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SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS) – LAST UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2009

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	TYPE OF ITEM
Meeting date: 9TH November 2009			
EASEL Inquiry	To consider evidence in line with the Board's ongoing Inquiry.		RP
Inquiry into Recycling	To consider evidence in line with session one of the Board's inquiry		DP
Meeting date: 14TH December 2009			
Performance Management	To consider Quarter 2 information for 2009/10 (July - Sept).	All Scrutiny Boards receive performance information on a quarterly basis.	PM
Recommendation Tracking	This item tracks progress with previous Scrutiny recommendations on a quarterly basis.		MSR
Integrated offender Management Inquiry	To consider evidence in line with session one of the Board's inquiry.	Subject to the agreement of the terms of reference.	RP
Meeting date: 11TH January 2010			
Inquiry into recycling	To consider evidence in line with session two of the Board's inquiry		DP

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS) – LAST UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2009

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	TYPE OF ITEM
Meeting date: 8th February 2010			
Inquiry into Recycling	To consider evidence in line with session three of the Board's inquiry		DP
Integrated offender Management Inquiry	To consider evidence in line with sessions two and three of the Board's inquiry.	Subject to the agreement of the terms of reference.	RP
Asylum Seeker Case Resolution	To receive an update report on the Asylum Seeker Case Resolution programme.		B
Procurement of Contracts in Housing	To consider and agree the Board's final Statement following its review of the procurement of contacts in housing.		RP
Meeting date: 8th March 2010			
Performance Management	To consider Quarter 3 information for 2009/10 (Oct – Dec).	All Scrutiny Boards receive performance information on a quarterly basis.	PM
Recommendation Tracking	This item tracks progress with previous Scrutiny recommendations on a quarterly basis.		MSR
EASEL Inquiry	To consider and agree the Board's draft inquiry report		RP
Worklessness	To consider and agree the Board's final Statement following its review into Worklessness.		

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS) – LAST UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2009

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	TYPE OF ITEM
Meeting date: 19TH April 2010			
Annual Report	To consider the Board's contribution to the Scrutiny Annual Report.		
Inquiry into Recycling	To consider and agree the Board's draft inquiry report.		DP
Integrated offender Management Inquiry	To consider and agree the Board's draft inquiry report.	Subject to the agreement of the terms of reference.	
Grounds Maintenance Contract 2011	To consider and agree an interim Statement of the Board following its review of the procurement process for the new Grounds Maintenance Contract in 2011.		

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS) – LAST UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2009

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	TYPE OF ITEM
Unscheduled Items			
ALMO Management Review	To review the current ALMO management arrangements.	This was a referral from the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing in June 2009. The Board has requested further clarification on the potential scope of this inquiry.	RFS
Area Management Review	To review the current Area Management functions, with particular focus on the role of Area Committees in Leeds.	This was a referral from the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing in June 2009. The Board agreed to include this in the work programme with a view to conducting a review later in the municipal year.	RFS
Climate Change	To conduct an Inquiry into Climate Change.	This was a referral from the Executive Member for Environmental Services in June 2009. In acknowledging the interest expressed by the City Development Scrutiny Board in this topic area, the Board agreed to keep this request in the work programme as unscheduled pending the decision of the City Development Scrutiny Board as to the scope of their inquiry.	RFS
Future options for Council Housing	To monitor developments in relation to future options for Council Housing.	This was a referral from the Central and Corporate Functions Scrutiny Board.	RFS

Key:

CCFA / RFS – Councillor call for action / request for scrutiny

RP – Review of existing policy

DP – Development of new policy

MSR – Monitoring scrutiny recommendations

B – Briefings (Including potential areas for scrutiny)

SC – Statutory consultation

CI – Call in

PM – Performance management

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS) – LAST UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2009

Working Groups		
Working group	Membership	Current position
Lettings	Councillor Barry Anderson Councillor Ann Blackburn Councillor Graham Hyde Councillor Mohammed Rafique	A separate briefing paper on the proposed approach and timetable for this review is attached for Members' consideration.
Procurement of Contracts in Housing	Councillor Barry Anderson Councillor Graham Hyde Councillor Joe Marjoram	The working group is due to meet again on Wednesday 21 st October 2009 at 10.00 am to consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The general procurement process followed by Environment and Neighbourhoods for contracts procured in relation to housing services and the specific role of Procurement and Legal Services in this process. • The rationale and processes followed to waiver contracts procedure rules in relation to housing contracts
Worklessness	Councillor Barry Anderson Councillor Ann Blackburn Councillor Graham Hyde Councillor Josie Jarosz	The working group is due to meet again on Monday 19 th October 2009 at 2.00 pm to consider the overall strategic aim of the new Employment Leeds delivery model.
Grounds Maintenance Contract 2011	Councillor Barry Anderson Councillor Ann Blackburn Councillor Ann Castle Councillor David Hollingsworth	The working group will be consulting with Parish Councils during October with a view to meeting with representatives from Environment and Neighbourhoods and ALMOs in November to consider the new draft specification.

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Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Review of Housing Lettings Process

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A working group of the Scrutiny Board met on 29th July 2009 to consider the scope of this particular review. In acknowledging the proposed options for change already put forward to the Executive Board in July 2009, the working group expressed an interest in the following key areas:
- The current criteria and procedures in place when determining an individual's application to become a Council tenant and also their housing need.
 - Existing tenancy management arrangements, with a particular focus around the management of anti-social behaviour and the working relationship between the ALMOs/BITMO, the Council's Anti-social Behaviour Unit and the Police.
 - The implications of any new Government policy and guidance on the Council's powers and flexibilities in relation to lettings.

2.0 Proposed approach for the Scrutiny review

- 2.1 It is important that the Scrutiny review complements the wider piece of work already being undertaken to develop the proposals for change put forward to the Executive Board in July 2009. This will enable resources to be used effectively and also avoid duplication of work.
- 2.2 The Scrutiny review aims to take a broad look at the lettings process from the housing application stage through to tenancy management to explore where improvements in partnership working and data sharing can be made to improve the allocation and management of tenancies.
- 2.3 It is proposed that particular focus is given to the development of a robust risk assessment process where more detailed and comprehensive information is gathered at an early stage in the housing application process, such as priority assessment, and utilised effectively throughout the lettings and housing management process. Specific reference will therefore be made to the development of Personal Housing Plans (PHP) for all customers that have housing need assessments.
- 2.4 As the PHP is to be used initially by the lettings officer to help inform whether a letting should be made, Scrutiny can review whether appropriate information is being gathered as part of the PHP to assist with the overall risk assessment process. Linked to this, Scrutiny can also look into the development of an information sharing protocol between key partners, which will include Leeds Housing Options, the ALMOs, the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (ASBU) and Police Community Safety to ensure that all relevant information is being fed into the PHP process.

- 2.5 Scrutiny can then look at the next stage of the lettings process and explore how PHPs could be used to support customers during the bidding process and assist in making appropriate offers.
- 2.6 Finally, Scrutiny can look at tenancy management issues and explore how PHPs could be used as a tool for identifying the support needs of tenants and assist in making appropriate referrals to specialist support agencies and also address anti-social behaviour. Particular focus will again be around partnership working to ensure that the information being held on a customer's PHP is accurate and updated on a regular basis.
- 2.7 The Scrutiny review will also consider the implications of any new Government policy and guidance on the Council's powers and flexibilities in relation to lettings. Members will be given an opportunity to consider the Council's response to the government consultation on the new draft statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England. The new guidance aims to address the lack of awareness and understanding about allocations, and to tackle misconceptions. The deadline for this consultation is 23rd October 2009 and the new guidance is expected to be published in November 2009.

3.0 Proposed timetable:

Session 1 - Thursday 15th October 2009 at 10.00 am.

Main purpose:

To consider the Council's response to the government consultation on the new draft statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England.

To understand how Personal Housing Plans are currently used by Leeds Housing Options and the rationale for extending these for all customers that have housing need assessments.

Session 2 – Monday 16th November 2009 at 10.00 am

Main purpose:

To meet with representatives from Leeds Housing Options, ALMOS/BITMO, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and Police Community Safety to discuss the following:

- The benefits and limitations of Personal Housing Plans in the application and assessment process
- The type of information that should be included in Personal Housing Plans
- How information can be shared more effectively between the relevant partners with a view to developing an information sharing protocol

Session 3 – Tuesday 8th December 2009 at 10.00 am

Main purpose:

To meet with representatives from Leeds Housing Options, the ALMOs/BITMO and tenant representatives to consider the following:

- The level of support given to customers during the bidding process and how PHPs could be used as a tool during the bidding process and assist in making appropriate offers.
- The benefits and limitations of Introductory Tenancies and Demoted Tenancies when managing tenancies.

Session 4 – Monday 18th January 2010 at 10.00 am

Main purpose:

To meet with representatives from Leeds Housing Options, ALMOS/BITMO, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, Supporting People, and Police Community Safety to discuss the following:

- How PHPs could be used as a tool for identifying the support needs of tenants and assist in making appropriate referrals to specialist support agencies
- How PHPs could assist in the prevention of anti-social behaviour and enable a more co-ordinated approach towards enforcement action where necessary.
- Methods for ensuring that the information held on a customer's PHP is accurate and updated on a regular basis and the resource implications linked to this

Next stage:

To draft the Board's final Statement to be considered at the March pre-meeting with a view to agreeing the Statement in February.

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Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) Schedule of planned working group meetings

The schedule below provides details of the working group meetings that have been arranged in line with the Board's ongoing reviews and major inquiries. Members are asked to note these dates in their diaries.

Inquiry into Recycling

Session 1 – Working Group Meeting - Monday 19th October 2009 at 10.00 am
Session 3 – Working Group Meeting – Tuesday 1st December 2009 at 2.00 pm

Inquiry into Integrated Offender Management

Session 1 (part 1) – Working Group Meeting - Monday 26th October 2009 at 10.00 am
Session 1(part 2) –Working Group Meeting – Monday 23rd November 2009 at 10.00 am
Session 2 – Working Group Meeting – Thursday 17th December 2009 at 2.00 pm
Session 3 – Working Group Meeting – Tuesday 5th January 2010 at 10.00 am

Inquiry into EASEL Programme

Session 2 – Working Group Meeting – Thursday 15th October 2009 at 1.30 pm
Session 3 – Working Group Meeting – Monday 30th November 2009 at 11.00 am

Lettings Review

Session 1 - Thursday 15th October 2009 at 10.00 am.
Session 2 – Monday 16th November 2009 at 10.00 am
Session 3 – Tuesday 8th December 2009 at 10.00 am
Session 4 – Monday 18th January 2010 at 10.00 am

Grounds Maintenance Contract Review

Session 2 – Working Group Meeting – Thursday 22nd October at 10.00 am
Session 3 – Working Group Meeting – Tuesday 10th November 2009 at 10.00 am

Procurement of Housing Contracts Review

Session 1 – Working Group Meeting – Wednesday 21st October 2009 at 10.00 am
Session 2 – Working Group Meeting – Tuesday 24th November at 2.00 pm

Worklessness Review

Session 1 – Working Group Meeting - Monday 19th October 2009 at 2.00 pm
Session 2 – Working Group Meeting - Tuesday 17th November at 10.00 am
Session 3 – Working Group Meeting - Monday 4th January 2010 at 10.00 am

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LEEDS CITY COUNCIL**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

For the period 1 October 2009 to 31 January 2010

Key Decisions	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	Documents to be Considered by Decision Maker	Lead Officer (To whom representations should be made and email address to send representations to)
Request to invoke a twelve month extension for the existing 3+1+1 contract with Gipsil with a total annual contract value of £496,081.92 Authorisation to invoke a twelve month extension for the existing 3+1+1 contract with Gipsil with an annual value of £496,081.92	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods	1/10/09	n/a	Report to be presented to the Delegated Decision Panel	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods neil.evans@leeds.gov.uk
Request to invoke a twelve month extension for Leeds Housing Concern for the 3+1+1 Block Gross contract at an annual contract value of £334,156.23 Authorisation to invoke a twelve month extension for the 3+1+1 block gross contract with Leeds Housing Concern for the following services: Sinclair, Sustain, Focus and Sahara. The annual contract value of the extension is £334,156.23.	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods	1/10/09	N/A	Report to be presented to the Delegated Decision Panel	Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods neil.evans@leeds.gov.uk

Key Decisions	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	Documents to be Considered by Decision Maker	Lead Officer (To whom representations should be made and email address to send representations to)
<p>Request to enter into a Supporting People contract with Leeds Housing Concern with a total contract value of approximately £853,585.33 per annum</p> <p>Authorisation to enter into a Supporting People contract with Leeds Housing Concern for the following services: NAOS, Young Persons Project, Mens Sector and Womens Sector at a total annual contract value of approximately £853,585.33</p>	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods	1/10/09	n/a	Report to be presented to the Delegated Decision Panel	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods neil.evans@leeds.gov.uk
<p>Request to vary the existing Supporting People contract with Foundation Housing for the Adult Offender Services from 1 April 2009 to the expiry of the existing contract on 11 February 2010, to deliver an additional MAPPA service</p> <p>Authorisation to vary the existing 3(+1+1) Supporting People contract with Foundation Housing to provide the MAPPA service.</p>	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods	1/10/09	N/A	Report to be presented to the Delegated Decision Panel	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods neil.evans@leeds.gov.uk

Key Decisions	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	Documents to be Considered by Decision Maker	Lead Officer (To whom representations should be made and email address to send representations to)
<p>Request to enter into a Supporting People contract with St Anne's Community Service for Alcohol Floating Support Service and Holdforth Court Hostel Service at a total contract value of approximately £451,412.00</p> <p>Authorisation to enter into a Supporting People Contract with with St Anne's Community Service for Alcohol Floating Support Service and Holdforth Court Hostel Service at a total contract value of approximately £451,412.00.</p>	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods	1/10/09	n/a	Report to be presented to the delegated Decision Panel	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods neil.evans@leeds.gov.uk
<p>Request to enter into a Supporting People contract with Community Links with a total contract value of approximately £1,267,762.06 per annum</p> <p>Authorisation to enter into a Supporting People contract with Community Links for the housing related support provision to people with mental health needs at a total contract value of approximately £1,267,762.06 per annum.</p>	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods	1/10/09	n/a	Report to be presented to the Delegated Decision Panel	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods neil.evans@leeds.gov.uk

Key Decisions	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	Documents to be Considered by Decision Maker	Lead Officer (To whom representations should be made and email address to send representations to)
<p>Proposed Restructure of the Neighbourhood Warden Scheme The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods will make a decision to implement revised staffing arrangements in relation to the Neighbourhoods Warden service on completion of consultation on the proposals with staff and trade unions to enable immediate implementation. The restructure proposes the deletion of the existing Neighbourhood Wardens staff structure currently located within the Regeneration Service and the creation of new Community Environment Officer posts in Environmental Services, in the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate.</p>	<p>Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>1/10/09</p>	<p>Consultation with staff, trade unions and the Area Committees</p>	<p>Restructure report</p>	<p>Stephen Boyle stephen.boyle@leeds.gov.uk</p>
<p>Landfill Disposal Contracts To extend existing contracts up to 6 months and thus accommodate the timetable to complete a formal retendering of service provision</p>	<p>Chief Officer Environmental Services</p>	<p>1/10/09</p>	<p>Corporate Procurement</p>	<p>Timeline for procurement/related report</p>	<p>Chief Officer Environmental Services susan.upton@leeds.gov.uk</p>

Key Decisions	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	Documents to be Considered by Decision Maker	Lead Officer (To whom representations should be made and email address to send representations to)
Leeds City Council's Response to CLG's consultation document - Reform of Council Housing Finance Executive Board are asked to note and agree Leeds City Council's response to the proposals contained in the CLG's consultation document - Reform of Council Housing Finance.	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	14/10/09	Tenants, Leaseholders, Councillors, Aire Valley Homes, East North East Homes, West North West Homes.	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Richard Ellis richard.ellis@leeds.gov.uk
Recycling Improvement Plan To endorse the approach to extending access to recycling across the city and approve the reprofiling of an existing contingency sum to provide the funding to commence the improvement plan as scoped.	Executive Board (Portfolio: Environmental Services)	14/10/09	With members and residents of the specified areas	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods susan.upton@leeds.gov.uk
Leeds Housing Strategy/ Leeds Private Rented Strategy Approve the Leeds Housing Strategy/Leeds Private Rented Strategy	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	14/10/09	Previously undertaken	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods bridget.emery@leeds.gov.uk andy beattie@leeds.gov.uk

Key Decisions	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	Documents to be Considered by Decision Maker	Lead Officer (To whom representations should be made and email address to send representations to)
The future of Council Housing A decision about the future of council housing after the achievement of decent homes. This will need to account for the vision for future services, the capital investment required and the revenue requirement to run services.	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	14/10/09	A detailed exercise will be taken during 2010 following the assessment of options	The report is to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods john.statham@leeds.gov.uk
Acquisition of 2 Branch Road, Armley Approval to acquire 2 Branch Road, Armley, through negotiation with the building owner, to support the regeneration of the West Leeds Gateway	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	14/10/09	Armley Ward Members, West Leeds Gateway Programme Board on which the Executive Member for Development and Regeneration sits.	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods michelle.anderson@leeds.gov.uk
Demolition of properties in advance of Private Finance Initiative Scheme - Little London, Beeston Hill and Holbeck Approval of necessary capital expenditure to demolish empty properties at Carlton Towers and Carlton Carr and Carlton Gate, Little London and Holbeck Towers, Gaitskell Grange, Holbeck.	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	14/10/09	Executive Members Ward Members Aire Valley Homes West North West Homes	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting.	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods iain.kyles@leeds.gov.uk

Key Decisions	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	Documents to be Considered by Decision Maker	Lead Officer (To whom representations should be made and email address to send representations to)
Bangladeshi Community Centre for a 50 Years lease at peppercorn rent Approval for Legal progress and complete a 50 year lease at peppercorn rent	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	14/10/09	Elected members, Area Committee, Regeneration Management Team, community group	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods jas.panesar@leeds.gov.uk
Lifetime Neighbourhoods (Round 6 Housing) Outline Business Case To approve the Outline Business Case and Project Affordability Position.	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	4/11/09	PFI Housing Project Board and PPP/PFI Coordination Board	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods christine.addison@leeds.gov.uk
Recycling of long term empty private properties Approval for the mechanism of disposal for private sector properties purchased via the recycling empties scheme	Executive Board (Portfolio: Environmental Services)	4/11/09	Legal, Asset Management, Councillor Les Carter – Lead Member for Environment and Neighbourhoods	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Chief Officer Environmental Services mark.ireland@leeds.gov.uk

Key Decisions	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	Documents to be Considered by Decision Maker	Lead Officer (To whom representations should be made and email address to send representations to)
<p>Pilot Council House Build Project Injection and authority to spend from Executive Board to purchase 27x2 bed properties built by Keepmoat.</p> <p>To use the land receipt from the sale of Evelyn Place, (less than best) and the former Waterloo school site (less than best) as contributions to the purchase price of the units.</p> <p>To agree that Keepmoat build the new council properties at Silveroyd Hill under a licence agreement.</p>	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	4/11/09	The Chief Housing Services Officer has discussed this issue with both the Lead Member for Environment and Neighbourhoods as well as the Chair of the Strategic Affordable Housing Partnership Board	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods megan.godsell@leeds.gov.uk
<p>Chapelton and Armley Townscape Heritage Initiative schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Executive Board to include an allocation of Leeds Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) Funding into the Capital Programme of the City Council to assist funding the Armley and Chapelton Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) schemes 	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	6/1/10	West Leeds Gateway Programme Board, IMP Act (Improving Chapelton), ward councillors	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods richard.spensley@leeds.gov.uk

NOTES

Key decisions are those executive decisions:

- which result in the authority incurring expenditure or making savings over £250,000 per annum, or
- are likely to have a significant effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards

Executive Board Portfolios

Executive Member

Central and Corporate

Councillor Richard Brett

Development and Regeneration

Councillor Andrew Carter

Environmental Services

Councillor James Monaghan

Neighbourhoods and Housing

Councillor John Leslie Carter

Leisure

Councillor John Procter

Children's Services

Councillor Stewart Golton

Learning

Councillor Richard Harker

Adult Health and Social Care

Councillor Peter Harrand

Leader of the Labour Group

Councillor Keith Wakefield

Leader of the Morley Borough
Independent Group

Councillor Robert Finnigan

Advisory Member

Councillor Richard Lewis

In cases where Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive Board are not included in the Plan, 5 days notice of the intention to take such decisions will be given by way of the agenda for the Executive Board meeting.

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