

Report of West North West homes Leeds WNWhL

Report to North West (Inner) Area Committee

Date: 24th October 2013

Subject: West North West Homes Leeds involvement in Area Committees

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Hyde Park & Woodhouse Headingley Kirkstall Weetwood		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

1. WNWhL provided a range of housing management services in the West and North West of Leeds. The Inner North West Area Committee area is coterminous with the 'Inner North West' housing management area comprising 6456 properties in the Kirkstall, Weetwood, Hyde Park and Woodhouse Wards. Tenancy and Estate Management services are delivered locally from our offices located in Kirkstall and Little London and we also operate a number of Outreach Surgeries in the area.
2. Support services such as rent accounting, lettings and property repairs are delivered through a centralised structure, however all customer enquiries can be made locally at the Kirkstall Neighbourhood Office and at the Little London Neighbourhood Office or via the Council Contact Centre.
3. This report seeks to advise the Area Committee of activities undertaken by WNWhL which impact on local communities, and more Corporate activities and achievements which affect the wider community.
4. It was agreed by Area Committee in June 2011 that WNWhL would provide and update of activities and services twice yearly. This is the second of the two bi-annual reports. It will also be the last WNWhL report following the recent housing review and services moving back to Leeds City Council from 1 October 2013.

Recommendations

Area Committee Members are asked to note the content of this report.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To outline West North West homes Leeds (WNWhL) involvement in Area Committees, and to explore ways of making that involvement as meaningful and productive as possible.

2 Background information

- 2.1 An introductory report was submitted to the Inner North West Area Committee in September 2011 outlining areas of mutual interest and opportunities to promote collaborative working for the benefit of communities in Inner North West Leeds. The report recommended that WNWhL should provide further reports on a twice yearly basis; it was agreed that these reports would fall into the Autumn & Springtime cycle of meetings.
- 2.2 WNWhL delivered services to customers through a combination of centralised and decentralised structures. Generally speaking, estate and tenancy management functions are delivered locally by the Neighbourhood Housing Team based at the Neighbourhood Housing Offices at Kirkstall and Little London. Support services such as Lettings, Income Management and Repairs are delivered through a centralised structure, however enquiries for the range of services we provide can be handled at the local offices. The bulk of customer enquiries are processed through the Council Contact Centre, with whom WNWhL had a Service Delivery Agreement.
- 2.3 As part of the recent housing review a consultation exercise with customers and a survey of our tenants' opinion on two options was undertaken.
 1. Move to a single company model (e.g a single ALMO) with a retained locality delivery structure and strengthened governance arrangements; or
 2. Move to all services being integrated within direct council management with a retained locality delivery structure and strengthened governance arrangements to include tenants and independent members.

The outcome of the consultation with tenants was that 61% were in favour of option 2 and this was approved at the executive board on the 16 July 2013.

Implementing this option involved the creating of a new Housing Management Advisory Board, chaired by the Executive member with responsibility for housing, which will retain a mix of elected members, tenants and independents of ALMO boards. Local delivery arrangements in the current 3 areas should be retained. The best practice across the range of housing management services will be identified as part of the review and applied across all areas of the city.

The Area Panel functions are to be retained and strengthened to make sure tenants remain fully involved and engaged in the work of the new service and in turn, allow the service to be responsive to local needs

The new Environment and Housing Service will be built around 3 elements of

1. Statutory Housing
2. Council Housing Tenancy Management
3. Property and contracts.

The transfer of staff from the 3 ALMOs to Leeds City Council under TUPE arrangements took place on the 1 October 2013. Work is on going to review the new look services for housing and environmental in Leeds.

- 2.4 This report focuses on examples of joint working and activities which promote community involvement and well being within the Inner North West area. Any good practice will be captured as part of the housing review process.

3 Main issues

3.1.1 Partnership working

The Neighbourhood Housing Team is a key partner in the monthly Multi Tasking meetings which take place with partners including; West Yorkshire Police, Community Safety Unit, Environmental Action Team, the Leeds West Anti Social Behaviour Team Area Management and Youth Services. The meeting is designed to share local information and intelligence and agree local priorities and joint actions for delivering service improvements. Local priorities primarily focus on crime and grime (environmental) issues.

Since the last Committee update concerns have been raised of ASB in the Queenswood and Moor Grange Court areas. Several meetings have been held with residents who are concerned about intruders in high rise blocks and report criminal activity in neighbourhoods near to the blocks. The police have increased visits to the area and have specific operations planned. The WNWhL out Of Hours Tenancy Management Team have been working in the area to observe, report and intervene to reduce ASB activity. A further meeting is scheduled with residents on the 10 October to assess progress and review action.

WNWhL has an active role in the delivery of local action days, including provision and delivery of promotional information, staffing resources through our Neighbourhood Management Officers and Neighbourhood Caretakers and where environmental improvements are required, we fund and provide skips.

In May 2013 WNWhL were involved in an action day held at Woodhouse community centre. As part of this Caring Together held keep active workshops, served tea coffee and lunch. WNWhL held a housing surgery, provided advice for residents Police offered advice for crime prevention and Local solicitors, offered free consultations.

Overall, the day was a great success and gave local residents access to a number of services in one place, who under normal circumstances, may not be able to access these services without assistance.

WNWhL is continuing to work with the Police on operation Optimal to tackle and reduce burglary in the area. Each week we receive details of burglary hot spot areas, this is shared with our NMOs and Neighbourhood Caretakers and where possible work patterns are arranged so we can have a visible presence in the area, wearing our high visibility vests and being extra vigilant which acts as a deterrent to potential burglars. Figures taken from police stats in July 2013 show a positive outcome for Ward 19 (Headingley, Hyde Park & Woodhouse) as no longer the highest burgled ward in West Yorkshire.

3.1.2 Neighbourhood Caretaking.

The WNWhL Neighbourhood Caretaking Teams provide a front line environmental service, patrolling estates and communal areas of multi storey accommodation daily, ensuring a high visible presence to deter illegal dumping, illegal entry, vandalism and other acts of anti social behaviour. The team act as the eyes and ears on the estate reporting and recording any illegal activity and breaches of tenancy. They provide a patrol service of estates on a planned basis, assessing and dealing with environmental issues in communal areas, such as ginnels walkways and communal land where hotspots exist.

The monitoring of the Grounds Maintenance contract currently held by Continental Landscapes Ltd was transferred to Parks and Countryside in April 2013. Responsibility for tree management has also been transferred to the Forestry section.

As part of last years Service Improvements, WNWhL set up an Environmental Caretaker Apprenticeship Scheme with the recruitment of 4 apprentices all from Leeds. They worked primarily on our Vulnerable Persons Gardening Scheme but have also developed their skills to wider environmental and handy person tasks. One has been successful in being recruited to the enhanced Locality Team. Contracts for the remaining 3 have been extended until the end of 2013 pending service reviews where it is hoped that they will be able to secure posts.

3.1.3 Estate Inspections & Gradings.

In line with our published service standards WNWhL arranges regular Estate Inspections and quarterly Estate Gradings. Estate Gradings are promoted on our website and WNWhL welcomes the opportunity for customers, partners and other representatives to attend the inspections and grade the areas for us.

Issues identified may be the responsibility of other Council Departments e.g. Highways, Parks & Countryside and the Inspections provide an opportunity for other agencies to contribute to improving environmental conditions and quality of life for local people. Members of Area Committee, and colleagues within Area Management, are invited to contact the author of this report should there be any interest in attending one of the estate inspections.

Findings from the estate inspections are used to identify where improvements are needed and link to our Local Neighbourhood Action Plan and Area Panel Funding process to help with funding in addressing some of the issues.

The Holborn Estate falls outside the Little London regeneration area and a recent inspection found pathways and drying areas which are tired and in many cases crumbling. An action day with volunteers and WNWhL staff took place at the end of September and a thorough cleanse of the area was carried out. The Highways department were asked to undertake a joint inspection of areas of concern and from this have agreed to renew and repair estate paths this financial year. An Area Panel project bid is being presented in October to seek approval for improvement of drying areas and undertake landscaping work.

3.1.4 Locality working

The Little London area was designated as the Locality pilot area this year. From October 1st a large section was passed to the responsibility of the PFI contractors Keepmoat. Prior to this the Locality team alongside the caretakers, concentrated efforts to ensure the area was clean and up to standard for handover to the contractors. Caretaking resources have been redeployed to concentrate on environmental issues in other estates.

3.1.5 Area Panels

WNWhL has four Area Panels, which have the same boundaries as Leeds City Council's Inner and Outer West and Inner and Outer North West Area Committees. The Area Panels have an active role in setting and agreeing local priorities using local Community Partnership Agreements. They have a delegated budget and are able to approve bid submissions for issues such as:

- Environmental schemes
- Community safety schemes
- Tenant involvement schemes

Improvement project bids being presented to Octobers panel include:

- Silk Mill railings
- Kendal Close Graffiti Wall
- Holborn Drying Areas
- Queenswood Drive pathway

3.1.6 Community Engagement

WNWhL has a successful track record in community engagement and in 2012 were again awarded accreditation by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) after scoring very highly on our assessment. WNWhL also gained the "Excellent" standard of the Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF) as awarded by the Local Government Association (LGA).

We have an established Tenant Scrutiny Executive, a method of involving customers which offers us independent challenge and suggests proposals for change to the way we deliver our services. This has been done in consultation with customers. Earlier this year 20 recommendations were agreed by the WNWhL Board of Directors based on Gas and Electrical Safety Testing processes and property security. The group are currently testing the successes of these recommendations and working with the Tenants Inspectors to ensure these are firmly embedded within the organisation.

There are more than 15 different involvement methods that customers can access to become involved with WNWhL. These range from traditional Tenant & Residents Associations, of which there are 12 in the Inner West area, to innovative forums such as the Sheltered Housing Forum and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Group.

In preparation for the organisational change we are working with other ALMOs to review best practice in resident involvement and are consulting with key customer

groups regarding preferred opportunities for customer involvement and influence. In future we expect to see increased customer involvement at a city wide level. We aim to achieve this by continued good relationships with our partners and our neighbourhood housing teams focussing on excellence in tenancy management.

3.1.7 PFI Little London

The Little London Neighbourhood Office has moved to a new temporary location at the side of the Community Centre. The old office will be demolished as part of the commercial regeneration plans in the area. Customer services are not affected by the relocation and feedback to date on the new office from both customers and staff has been positive.

The regeneration programme commenced 30th September with the first wave of work. Homes on Carlton Carr, Carlton Gardens and some on Carlton Rise will get new windows, doors and wall insulation, followed by new kitchens and bathrooms. Scaffolding was erected week commencing 7th October around the low rise Carlton blocks, evidencing the beginning of transformation in the area. Partnership working with the local housing team and Keepmoat staff is cohesive and effective. Job fairs will be taking place towards the end of the October with various vacancies available and West North West Works is linking in with this to signpost local people.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 This report confirms the commitment of WNWhL to consult and engage with residents wherever possible. We also seek to consult with stakeholders including Area Management and other Council Departments where appropriate.

4.2.1 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.2 The services and functions described in this report are consistent with the Council's and WNWhL's approach to Equality Diversity and Cohesion.

4.2.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.2.4 The content of this report is consistent with the WNWhL strategic objectives, and the strategic aims of the Council encompassed by the Vision for Leeds; Leeds Children & Young Person Plan; Strategic Health & Wellbeing Plan.

4.2.5 Resources and Value for Money

4.2.6 No additional resources are required to deliver the approach outlined in this report.

4.2.7 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.2.8 No direct implications. This report is not eligible for call in, due to being a Council Function.

4.3 Risk Management

4.3.1 WNWhL has a corporate approach to risk management, with risks to business prioritised according to likelihood and impact. Risks are mitigated by action planning accordingly.

5 Conclusions

5.1.1 It is concluded that there are clear benefits and opportunities for WNWhL working closely with the Area Committee as outlined in this report. Developing this approach provides the opportunity to develop services and deliver joined up solutions to support local communities.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Members are invited to note this report and reminded that this is the last report from WNWhL following the outcome of the housing review.

7 Background documents

- None