

## **Appendix 1 Private Sector Housing**

### **INNER WEST – PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

#### **Background**

Private sector housing is the largest tenure in the city, with owner/occupation the largest individual sector. Within the private sector there are a number of different markets covering different needs. The markets include the student market, the highest single rental market, professional, city centre, family accommodation and the benefit or low income market. All has different needs and require different interventions.

In recent years with restrictions on lending there has been a shift in the market as a whole with a significant growth in the private rented sector. The Council's Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2007 indicated that the rental market was around 13%. The most recent Census data now shows the rental market at around 18%, the same level as the Council's own stock.

As part of the Council's ambition to be the best city it is essential that the city has the best standard of accommodation and choice available for the residents of the city.

#### **The Council's Private Sector Teams**

The Council has a duty under the Housing Act 2004 to take action to address standards in the private sector. To meet this duty a number of interventions have been adopted

- Enforcement of standards in the private rented sector – the Council receives over 3000 requests for service from tenants of privately rented properties per annum
- Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation – any such property containing 2 or more households, 5 or more tenants and is 3 or more stories will require a licence to be rented. The licence covers standards that must be achieved and maintained. In Leeds there are 2,634 licensed multi occupied properties, which is more than any other authority in the Country.
- Licensing of the private sector – under certain criteria properties a Council can set up a Selective Licensing Scheme, which requires all privately rented properties in a given geographical area to be licensed. The Cross Green/East End Park area of the city is the only area in the city covered by this type of scheme.
- Accreditation – the Council has an accreditation scheme which landlords sign up to and agree to meet certain standards of accommodation and management. The Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme currently has 305 members covering 15,862 bed spaces across the city.
- Financial Assistance to Vulnerable Owners – the Council operates 2 loan schemes for vulnerable owner/occupiers. One scheme allows the owner to release equity up to £15,000 from their home via a secured loan to undertake works and repay it at the point of sale of that property. Working with the Leeds Credit Union the Council also offers an unsecured repayment loan of up to £5,000 over five years to allow essential maintenance of owner/occupied properties.

- Private Sector empty homes – this is a priority for the Council. Long term private sector homes are targeted by the Council using a number of initiatives from help and advice, to empty home loans to compulsory purchase to try and bring empty properties back into use to provide homes for someone in need.
- Leeds Neighbourhood Approach - this is a multi-agency approach to improving areas across the city, led by Private Sector Housing. A separate briefing paper has been attached regarding this approach in Armley.

### **Inner West**

The 2007 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey specifically covered the Armley area. It showed that the level of non-decency within the Armley area was 51% of all the private stock. Unlike the public sector decency is an aspirational target for the sector and is not enforceable.

Long term empty properties (unoccupied for greater than 6 months) are an issue across the city. Across the city 1.97% of the stock is currently classified as long term empty. In October 2013 there were 231 empty homes in the Armley Ward which represents 1.91% of the stock. Bramley and Stanningley had 140 long term empty homes, representing 1.32% of the stock.

### **Private Sector Activity within Inner West**

There has been no specific proactive action within Inner West. Services have been provided as per the city wide function. It is proposed to adopt Armley as the second LNA area targeting 130/140 properties in the Edinburgh area of the ward.

Overall the following activity has been undertaken in Inner West

- A total of 79 requests for service (related to housing disrepair) have been received in Armley and a further 13 for Bramley between 01/04/2013 and 04/12/13.
- Leeds 12 has been a priority area for increased take up accreditation by landlords. Since 01/04/2013 there has been a 12% increase in bed space coverage in the area. This is due to the proactive promotion of the scheme within the area.
- There are 24 licensable HMO's in Armley and a further 2 in Bramley. All have been subject to compliance inspections since mandatory licensing was introduced by the Housing Act 2004
- A total of 119 properties in Armley have been inspected by officers in Armley and a further 12 in Bramley between 01/04/13 and 04/12/13. These inspections covered disrepair complaints and applications for licensing or were linked to the private sector letting scheme or Housing Bond scheme run by Housing Options.