



Report of Chief Environmental Health Officer.

West Leeds Inner Area Committee

Date: 20th September 2007

Subject: Environmental Health Service Activity in the Inner West Area

Electoral Wards Affected:

Armley
Bramley & Stanningley

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Council
Function

Delegated Executive
Function available
for Call In

Delegated Executive
Function not available for
Call In Details set out in the
report

Executive Summary

This report provides information to the West Leeds Inner Committee on the work of the West Leeds Environmental Health Team during the previous financial year. It also provides information on the priorities of that team within their service plan for the coming year 2007/8.

1.0 Purpose of This Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the work of the Environmental Health Services West Area Team within the inner area of West Leeds during 2006/7. It is intended to give information about the focus of the team and its activities within the Inner West Leeds area. The report also provides information to members on the location, make up and future priorities for the team. A presentation will be made at the West Leeds inner area committee meeting which will expand on this report.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Environmental Health Services operate 5 teams, each covering one of the five designated wedges of the City. The area teams deal with all aspects of Environmental Health with the exceptions of food safety, health and safety and air quality. These are dealt with by specialist teams which operate city wide.

3.0 Main Issues

West Team location and staff

- 3.1 Environmental Health Services West Area Team are based at the old South Pudsey Community Centre on Kent Road.
- 3.2 The West Team is made up of the Service Manager, Ruth Lees, Deputy Service Manager, Paul Spandler, 3.5 Environmental Health Officers, 4 Technical officers and Office Support. In addition the Armley Asbestos Project Team are based in the West Team.
- 3.3 The City wide Out of Hours Noise service is also managed within the West Team.
- 3.4 The West Team also covers a significant portion of the city centre.

Key Work Areas of the Team

- 3.5 Housing - Enforcing standards in the private rented sector including houses in multiple occupation, bringing long term vacant property back into use, providing Home Improvement Assistance for vulnerable home owners and the Armley Asbestos Project.
- 3.6 Environmental Protection – Investigating and abating nuisance caused by noise, odour, smoke, dust, drainage, filthy & verminous premises.
- 3.7 Consultancy Services – Planning applications, premises license applications .
- 3.8 Partnership Working - Area Management, Operation Champion, Anti Social Behaviour Unit, Leeds West North West Homes, West Leeds Housing Partnership and Education Leeds, Entertainment Licensing, West Yorkshire Police.

Requests for service and proactive work in the Outer West Area.

- 3.9 1331 requests for service were received between the 1st April 2006 and the 31st March 2007. 902 service requests in the Armley ward and 429 in the Bramley & Stanningley ward. This represents an overall increase in requests for service in comparison with last year of 14%. Increase in requests for service by ward breaks down as 20% for Armley and 4% for Bramley & Stanningley. Armley continues to be a high activity area, receiving the fifth highest number of service requests of all the City's wards.
- 3.10 Noise nuisance accounted for 48% of all requests for service. 13 noise abatement notices have been served within the inner area. A persistent noise offender was prosecuted resulting in a fine totaling £698. One offender on the Broadlea estate had their hi fi system, television and DVD player confiscated by officers.
- 3.11 43 private rented dwellings have been inspected and action taken to improve conditions. 26 dwellings were found to contain such serious hazards that formal

repairs notices were issued to the landlords, requiring that essential repairs were undertaken in order to bring the properties up to standard. The Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme has been successfully promoted with 148 landlords owning properties in the West area currently signed up.

- 3.12 Home Improvement Assistance Loans to a value of £41,510 have been provided to owners of homes in the inner area. The low interest loans allow vulnerable homeowners on limited income to have essential repairs and improvements carried out to ensure their homes are weather tight, warm and with modern facilities.
- 3.13 All long term empty properties within the inner area have been visited as part of Environmental Health Services Empty Property Strategy. Owners have been traced and encouraged to bring their properties back into use. Enforcement action has been taken to secure and repair derelict and nuisance properties
- 3.14 The West Team has been actively involved in all Operation Apollos and latterly Operation Champions within the inner area. The Team have undertaken environmental audits of the Broadleas, Swinnow, Wythers and Raynviles areas. An information stall was set up at Bramley Shopping Centre providing advice on a range of environmental issues.
- 3.15 The West Team regularly attend and contribute to a number of community forums across the inner area including the Wythers Improvement Group and the Inner Area Crime & Grime Tasking meetings. Officers take the lead on all environmental and public health issues. As a follow on from the Wythers Improvement Group it is proposed to set up an Environmental Health advice surgery at the Community House. An officer will be on hand to take enquiries and provide advice to members of the community.
- 3.16 There is a high concentration of commercial and industrial premises within the inner area. Environmental Health Services have been involved with a number of nuisance investigations involving waste transfer stations and manufacturing works as well as smaller concerns including shops, pubs, food premises and offices.
- 3.17 A joint operation with City Services Enforcement and West North West Homes was undertaken on an area to the rear of Armley Town Street which was infested with rats. It was ensured that shopkeepers were storing and disposing of trade waste correctly. Any defective drainage was attended to and all overgrowth in the area was cut back.
- 3.18 The smoke free legislation came in to force on July 1st. The West Team have proactively promoted issues in relation to the smoke free legislation. Advice has been provided to licensees on their legal responsibilities. A poster advising customers to “keep the noise down when smoking outside” has been produced and distributed by the team to be displayed in licensed premises. In addition many planning and licence variations relating to smoking shelters have been processed. During this process all possible measures have been put in place to minimize the impact caused by the use of these.
- 3.19 Enforcement action to remedy defective private drains and sewers increased significantly on previous years. 106 unblocking and repairs notices were served. Two

large public sewer systems each serving approximately 20 properties in Bramley were repaired by works in default at a joint cost of £15,000.

- 3.20 The Armley Asbestos Project is in its eleventh year. To date 713 properties from the 800 within the designated area have been tested for asbestos. £8.8 million has been spent on the regeneration of the area with 584 properties now decontaminated

Closer Working with area management

- 3.21 Officers of the West Team have been working more closely with Area management to deliver a programme of agreed proactive work which supports the work of the LAMPS in the Wythers and Lower Wortley area. A copy of this programme is contained at appendix 1. As a follow on from the LAMP meetings an Environmental Health advice surgery is being trialed at New Wortley Community Centre. An officer will be on hand to take enquiries and provide advice to members of the community

Service plan and targets for 2007/08

- 3.22 Five key priorities have been identified for the coming years:

- To achieve the national performance indicators in relation to housing standards, decency and empty properties.
- To deliver the capital programme through loans, grants and regeneration projects
- To investigate and respond to requests for service from the public in relation to public health matters.
- To support the 2012 Public Health Agenda.
- To develop our work with partners including District Partnerships, Area Housing Partnerships, PCT, ASB and Care and Repair to support the narrowing the gap agenda.

In addition two key local targets have been identified:

- The Cedars Bin Yard Improvement Scheme. £9,300 has been secured from the Inner West Area Committee Well Being Fund to fit security gates and bin rails to privately owned bin yards to help reduce fly tipping, arson and anti social behaviour in the area.
- The “Scotlands” area of Armley has been identified as a hotspot for poor housing conditions, a high proportion of private rented accommodation, vacant and derelict properties and fly tipping. Environmental Health Services are to proactively target problem properties and take the necessary enforcement action on a street to street basis.

4.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 4.1 The work of the West Team contributes to the aims of Vision II, particularly “Going up a league as a city – making Leeds an internationally competitive city, the best place in the country to live, work and learn, with a high quality of life for everyone,” and

“Narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities in the city”.

4.2 The team has an impact in contributing to two of the eight themes of Vision II namely “Environment City - a reputation for environmental excellence” and “Health and Wellbeing – creating a healthy city”.

43 Following on from Vision II the team contributes to the seven strategic aims in the Corporate Plan 2005/08.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

5.1 The work of the west Team involves legal enforcement of various statutes which are delegated to officers in accordance with the Council’s constitution.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The work of the West Team supports the Inner West Area Committee in achieving its aims.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted by the West Leeds Inner Area Committee.