



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Inner North West Area Committee

Date: 18th October 2007

Subject: Student Accommodation Change-over: Feedback from activities

Electoral Wards Affected:

ALL



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 detailed feedback from the recent student accommodation change-over initiative. The project aimed to reduce the environmental impact of the annual change-over, as well as enhancing the community safety of both transient and permanent residents across the affected area during a period which has historically seen heightened levels of community safety issues.

There have been positive results with regards to street cleaning of key hotspots, partnership working and communications. However, there continued to be considerable challenges across the student areas due to the large quantities of waste being cleared from properties. The challenge posed by this volume of waste needs further consideration and activity by both streetscene services and enforcement.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To provide Area Committee with an overview of the increased services in operation across the student areas from 17th June to 15th July 2007.
- 1.2 To provide feedback from partners, residents and landlords about the effectiveness of our response.
- 1.3 To make recommendations for future development of this project.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The end of each academic years see a mass change-over of accommodation by university students in the inner north west area. With the relatively recent introduction of year round leases this change-over period is focused over one weekend per year, generally in late June or early July. This time sees tens of thousands of students leaving their rented properties to either return home for the summer or to relocate to a new property.
- 2.2 With this mass and concentrated movement comes well documented issues, the most significant of which is caused by household waste and unwanted bulky items. The affect this has on both the streetscene of the area and the Council's resources, in terms of effective and efficient clearance, is considerable.
- 2.3 Since March 2006 a multi agency group, including local residents, has been meeting to try and minimise the impact of this time, both for the community and the Council.

3.0 Main Activities and Issues

3.1 Communications

- 3.1.1 Additional work was undertaken to communicate with students and landlords about responsible disposal of waste and the council services being provided, including:
- 'Leave Leeds Tidy' – a dedicated website for students created by Leeds University Union in partnership with the North West Area Management and Leeds Metropolitan University Union;
 - an educational leaflet, designed by Leeds University Union, which was distributed to 10,000 households in the area. The leaflet was distributed with the Council's newspaper 'About Leeds';
 - the Accredited Landlord Team undertook a series of communications to landlords about extra services and there was an amnesty on commercial waste for accredited landlords during the change-over period; and
 - an advert was included in the UNIPOL newsletter, which was sent to all UNIPOL tenants.

3.2 Streetscene

- 3.2.1 The information below details the additional services that were provided over and above the level of core service activities:
- 950 tonnes of domestic waste collected from the servicing of wheeled bins, equating to 82 vehicle loads;
 - 24 extra refuse collectors;
 - 328 tonnes of side/bulky waste cleared;
 - 5 additional bulky waste crews, totaling 97 staff days; and
 - 100% of the Streetscene Area Manager's time was dedicated to the area.

3.3 Enforcement

3.3.1 Summary of activity:

- 8 officers worked over the main weekend, equating to 21 officer days;
- 129 streets were inspected;
- 16 properties were targeted for monitoring to ensure land cleared;
- 11 fly tipping investigations undertaken in respect of waste found on the street where non-student residents are suspected of offending;
- 2 abandoned cars were found and reported to Highways Enforcement;
- 1 serious waste fire was found and extinguished;
- Kirkstall Road Waste Site was visited by officers to ensure compliance with the accredited landlord amnesty;
- 7 vehicles were checked and asked to produce licences and proof of legal waste disposal;
- 57 properties received targeted monitoring or received enforcement activity in the form of litter clearing notices; and
- 10 prosecutions arose as a direct result of work over the change-over period.

4.0 Others

- 4.1 Both Neighbourhood Wardens currently in post worked over the main change-over weekend, providing additional support to the environmental enforcement work being undertaken.
- 4.2 Leeds Met Student Union held their annual bargain hunt event in May on Woodhouse Moor. The event aims to encourage students from both universities to recycle their unwanted items by selling them rather than throwing them away. The event has been running for a number of years, with this year's a continued success.
- 4.3 The police, while not able to input significantly into the change-over work, did arrange for additional PCSOs to be on patrol over the main change-over weekend.

5.0 Issues

- 5.1 Although considerable effort had been made to promote responsible disposal of waste by students and landlords, there remains issues across the area in terms of volume of waste being disposed of in the peak time.
- 5.2 The take-up of the landlord amnesty at Kirkstall Road site was disappointing. This is despite a notice in the Accredited Landlord newsletter, a presentation at their April forum, and e-shots through the Accredited Landlord scheme. The main issue flagged up by landlords has been the limited items covered by the amnesty (general household waste, with chargeable exclusions including mattresses, sofas etc).

- 5.3 'Bag slashing' across the area has exacerbated the scale of the challenge and highlighted the need to either remove waste immediately, or provide secure storage until collection.
- 5.4 A number of hotspot neighbourhoods within the Area of Housing Mix were specifically targeted. In these, the clearance of household waste and bulky items was effective in the main. However, due to limited resources being available, other areas affected were not dealt with as efficiently; an increased number of complaints were made to both the Council and to ward Members.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 That Area Committee is asked to: -
- a) note the initiatives undertaken and feedback received;
 - b) continue the work of the change-over group; and
 - c) request a report with suggestions for tackling student change-over issues to be taken to Executive Board.