



Report of the Head of Tenancy Management & Customer Services (WNWhL)

Inner West Area Committee

Date: 9th December 2009

Subject: West North West homes Leeds Management Update

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 the Area Committee with an update of performance, organisational and service improvement initiatives within the Tenancy Management and Customer Services Directorate of West North West homes Leeds. Specifically the report updates members on performance against core indicators, management restructure, access to services, local lettings review, sheltered review, caretaking review, ASB Audits, capital programme, Area Panels and new initiatives.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 This report sets out to update Area Committee Members on the activities and performance of West North West homes Leeds.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 West North West homes Leeds (WNWhL) is one of three Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) operating as housing management agents on behalf of Leeds City Council (LCC). We were formed in April 2007 as the result of a merger of two of Leeds former ALMOs – Leeds West homes and Leeds North West homes.

WNWhL's primary business focus since January 2009 has been to further facilitate the organisational change process and deliver service improvements identified in the 2008/09 Audit Commission Inspection through which a One Star with Promising

Prospects rating was achieved. WNWhL is striving to offer the best possible service to customers, delivered in the most effective and efficient way and has progressed against an ambitious plan towards excellence and a successful Audit Commission inspection result in March 2010.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 Performance

3.1.1 We have developed a suite of new Local Performance Indicators, which has been accompanied by a robust approach to performance management in 2009/10. We are currently achieving some significant results across our suite of indicators, the headlines are:

- Reduced the number of empty homes by 163 since May 2009
- Only 0.89% of properties are untenanted (compared with 1.67% last year)
- 91.88% of our customers are satisfied with their new home
- 96.57% of rent has been collected
- Eviction levels have reduced from 51 to 28 in the same period as last year
- Notice Seeking Possessions have reduced from 11.14% to 8.56%
- 77% of telephone calls answered in 20 seconds
- 98% of telephone calls answered
- 99% satisfaction levels with One Stop Centres
- 80% of customers are satisfied with the way their ASB case was handled
- 92.47 of Estate Inspections completed
- Only 65.22% of Estate Walkabouts completed (attention required)
- 97.01% of repairs appointments have been made and kept (attention required)
- Average time to complete non-urgent repairs is 9.06 days
- 99.07% of urgent repairs have been completed on time
- 96.54% of customers are satisfied with the repairs service (off target but improving)
- 88% of customer complaints have been responded to within 10 working days
- 15.29% of housing stock non-decent (off target but improving)

3.2 Management Restructure

3.2.1 In October 2009 WNWhL implemented a management restructure which has aligned it's operational boundaries with those of the Area Committees, each now having their own dedicated Area Performance Manager. The key focus of the review was to redress the balance of front line staff to managers/supervisors and improve joined up working and local accountability. Under the remit of the Area Performance Managers will be responsibility for the delivery of local Caretaking Service, the front line Customer Services and the Neighbourhood Teams who undertake al local tenancy and estate management work. By ensuring all these localised services come under the responsibility of one manager, we aim to improve our ability to meet customer priorities, and work cohesively to improve the sustainability of neighbourhoods. The Area Performance Managers and contact details are:

- Jude Wray (Inner North West) – 2145309
- Akbar Khan (Inner West – 2243747
- Sharon Guy (Outer West) – 21435321
- Lesley Brown (Outer North West) - 2141074

3.2.2 We continue to have a number of specialised teams which manage lettings, rent arrears, sheltered housing and tenancy enforcement/support. We also have specialist staff working on Leasehold Management, Access and Environmental contracts.

3.2.3 There have been no changes at Team Leader level; therefore each of the previous seven areas still have their local Team Leader who is responsible for the operational team delivering tenancy and estate management locally. We have started to enhance the teams under the Team Leaders, by reinvesting savings we have realised, into additional Neighbourhood Management Officers and other front line staff.

3.3 **Access Review**

3.3.1 During the 2008 Audit Commission Inspection, concerns were raised over the access arrangements for customers. As such, a strategic review of access has been undertaken and it's recommendations approved at by the Board. The review has found that over two thirds of customers contact the organisation by telephone, and the majority of other contacts are made via the One Stop Centres. Resultantly, WNWhL will be trialling a different approach to access in Outer North West, using the Neighbourhood Office as one of a number of outreach surgeries within the community, which will be supplemented by a mobile office positioned at various strategic locations throughout the area. We have completed a pilot of extended opening at our Bramley Office, where there was very little demand for the service from customers, upon review, the Board of WNWhL decided to run a further pilot of extended opening at the Wortley Office, this is currently ongoing and will be reviewed in December 2009. The current arrangements in all other offices, one stop centres and the call centre will remain under review.

3.4 **Local Lettings Review**

3.4.1 In April 2009 a review of WNWhLs Local Lettings Policies was approved by the Board of Directors, and subsequently approved by the LCC Executive Board. The outcome of this review was:

- 15 Local Lettings Policies were amended
- 12 Local Lettings Policies were removed
- 33 Local Lettings Policies remained unchanged

3.4.2 In November 2009 we undertook an evaluation of the impact of these changes and found that Local lettings plans have been largely successful in contributing to the reduction in ASB cases in their areas of operation. ASB has reduced overall in the areas covered by the plans. The review has been successful in that where the plans have been removed or amended this has not led to a significant increase in ASB in those areas. It should be noted that Local Lettings Polices are one of a number of tools that Housing Management Organisations use to combat Anti-Social Behaviour and make increase the sustainability of neighbourhoods.

3.5 **Sheltered Review**

3.5.1 In 2008 the Board of WNWhL decided not to bid for the Sheltered Housing Service which was up for tender in WNWhLs management area, due to the financial viability and the management environment at the time. There were no other bids made for the service, however due to the management changes, and improvements in performance and service delivery, the Board of WNWhL have commissioned a further

review. This is currently underway and will determine if the circumstances are now right for the organisation to continue delivering this service.

3.6 Caretaking Review

3.6.1 In 2008 a review of the Caretaking arrangements in WNWhL was undertaken, with a number of short and medium term actions being agreed by the Board. A number of these actions have now been delivered, and a supplementary review of the overall service is currently underway. The key issues arising from the review to date are that:

- Customer satisfaction with mobile cleaning arrangements is 87%
- Customer satisfaction with residential caretaking arrangements is 71%
- Customers identified their main priorities as:
 - Security
 - Reduction in ASB
 - Improved cleaning
- Current arrangements are costly when benchmarked with others
- The Environmental Caretaking Service is an asset, but requires clearer focus
- Ad-hoc pieces of land have no environmental maintenance arrangements, which require urgent attention

Once the review is heard and decisions made by the Board of Directors, further updates will be provided.

3.7 Anti-Social Behaviour Audits

3.7.1 WNWhL undertakes regular audits of ASB Case Management. To date these have demonstrated an inconsistent approach to addressing ASB across the different offices. The audits also report against our new Service Standards for ASB, and again have highlighted inconsistencies across the organisation. Resultantly we have increased the frequency of these audits, delivered additional training and developed localised reporting to drive up performance. We are also going to work with LCC and the other Leeds ALMOs on a Citywide process review to ensure clarity of roles and effective joint working.

3.8 Capital Programme Update

3.8.1 WNWhLs Capital Programme equates to £24.2m and is earmarked for a number of projects across the area with a priority for decent homes and essential investment works, although some over programming has been allowed. This can be summarised as follows:

- £2.1m window and door replacement in Pudsey/Calverley, Kirkstall/Little London, Armley and Otley/Horsforth
- £3.3m heating and energy efficiency programme (additional grant energy funding drawn down)
- £1.9m defective and system build housing programme in Kirkstall (including 5M properties)
- £1.3m electrical rewire programme undertaken to empty homes and via electrical servicing programme
- £660K re-roofing programme
- £2.3m remedial works to multi-story works

- £877K sheltered housing refurbishment programme at Wharfdale Court (completed) and Cockcroft House (scheme review underway)
- £3m kitchen and bathroom refurbishment
- £1.2m major property improvements
- £2.9 major voids
- £500K area panels
- £890K demolition and home loss for Little London, Holdforths and Clydes
- 2.9m adaptations programme
- £1m service delivery

3.9 **Area Panels**

3.9.1 The four Area Panels have continued to operate within the four Area Committee boundaries. The area panels have received regular performance information specific to their areas and have worked with WNWhL staff and other agencies to deliver projects through the Area Panel funding. A snapshot of these projects to date is:

Inner North West

- Lovell Parks – Chute room flooring replacement
- Operation Champion Newsletter
- Tenant training sessions
- Community development project
- Lovell Park MSF car parking

Outer North West

- Adel Wood Grove & Gardens – path resurfacing
- Community Safety – Operation Champion output costs
- Customer training sessions

Inner West

- Burnsall Croft – secure bin area and recycling facilities
- Burnsall Court and Gardens – replacement entrance doors
- Fearnley Place – enhanced lighting
- Customer training sessions
- The Cedars – fencing for bin areas

Outer West

- The Heights (East & West) – fencing
- Brookleigh – resurfacing
- Farrows – removal of outhouses
- Bawn Approach and Tong Drive – car parking facilities
- New Street Grove – fencing
- Farnley – Neighbourhood Action notice board
- The Gardens – pathways

3.10 **New initiatives**

3.10.1 WNWhL has recently introduced a number of new initiatives that may be of interest to Area Committee members.

3.11 ASB Hotline

3.11.1 We have set up a dedicated hotline for WNWhL customers to ring outside normal working hours to report incidents of anti-social behaviour, and receive advice from a specialist officer. The number is 07891 273625, and is widely promoted on our website, in customer magazines and in our Neighbourhood Offices. We are the only ALMO in Leeds to provide this service and will be reviewing the success of the initiative at the end of the financial year

3.12 Good Neighbour Agreements

3.12.1 As part of WNWhLs commitment to delivering the RESPECT Standard for Housing Management, we have undertaken widespread consultation throughout the areas we manage and in partnership with the Woodbridges, Gilbert & Sandford Road, Little London and Oatlands Tenants and Residents Associations, have established our first two Good Neighbour Agreements. A Good Neighbour Agreement is a tool to promote positive neighbourhood behaviours. They set out, in the form of a non-legally binding contract, the mutual rights, responsibilities and expectations between residents, social landlords and other service providers. To view our promotional video, please visit <http://vimeo.com/7435125>. Further Good Neighbour Agreements are planned for estates in Otley, Bramley, Armley and Kirkstall.

3.13 Local Leasehold Forums

3.13.1 Previously we have organised two Leaseholder Forums per year, allowing Leaseholders from all over the area to attend, hear news about the service we deliver to them, and provide us with feedback. In August 2009 we launched an enhancement to this service, by organising out of hours local surgeries in sheltered housing communal rooms and other local venues. We have seen a significant increase in the number of people accessing our services through this approach, and publicise the surgeries on our website at <http://www.wnwhl.org.uk> and in our Neighbourhood Offices.

3.14 Customer Service Excellence Award

3.14.1 In September 2009, WNWhL were the first organisation in the County to be awarded the Customer Service Excellence Award. To receive this prestigious award, the assessor agreed that we have an understanding of our customers' needs and we provide the services which are important to them. The information we provide is clearly understood and accessible. Our customers are satisfied that we consult them on important issues and we deliver our services on time and to an excellent quality. Our customer satisfaction is the highest in Leeds but we do not aim to stop there. Gaining this accreditation is really important to us but it also means that we will be aiming to retain this standard on an annual basis so our commitment to our customers will be maintained.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

4.1 West North West homes Leeds operates within all appropriate Leeds City Council policies, and is currently represented on a number of groups set up by the Council to review policies. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

5.1 There are no direct legal implications related to this report.

- 5.2 West North West homes Leeds operates within a finite resource known as the Management Fee. The Management restructure, combined with a number of process reviews has targeted the optimum use of the management fee, ensuring that resources are deployed to deliver robust and efficient front line and estate based services, in accordance with customer priorities.
- 5.3 The improvements in Empty Homes performance has enabled an additional 163 properties back into habitable use since May 2009, demonstrating that WNWhL is managing the housing resources under it's remit effectively and efficiently, providing increased housing for people in the area. This performance has also decreased potential rent loss by a further £188K. This performance places WNWhL as the best performing ALMO in Leeds against these indicators.
- 5.4 The improvements in rent arrears performance, both recovery and preventative related has demonstrated WNWhLs continued focus on reducing debt, and increasing income to LCC. We have achieved our quarter 2 target of rent collected to 96.57%, whilst also reducing evictions from 51 to 28 during the same period last year.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 This report provides the Area Committee with an update of performance and service delivery within the Tenancy Management and Customer Services Directorate of West North West homes Leeds.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 The Area Committee are requested to note the content of this report.

Background Documents:

None