



Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Date: 13th September 2010

Subject: Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board Inquiry into Housing Lettings Process – Formal Response to recommendations

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 To provide Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board a response on the recommendations listed in the inquiry undertaken in 2009/10 on the Housing Lettings process.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 In May 2010 Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board published a report on the Housing Lettings process.

2.2 In April 2009 at a full council meeting concerns were raised about some of the lettings made in the city and the need to develop lettings policies that would lead to more sustainable communities. In response to this Executive Board recommended in July 2009 a number of proposed policy changes to amend the Lettings policy thereby making the process appear fairer and enabling communities to be sustainable. As a result of this Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board developed a scope in October 2009 to investigate where improvements in partnership working and data sharing can be made to improve the allocation and management of tenancies.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 Recommendation 1

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on developing an action plan over the next 6 months to improve the coordination of data shared

between Housing, Adult Social Care, Children's Services and local NHS Trusts to help identify and address the housing support needs of an individual.

As part of this action plan, consideration should be given to the following issues:

- (i) to determine exactly what information from the Single Assessment Process and Common Assessment Framework processes can and should be shared to assist the lettings process in terms of identifying and addressing the housing support needs of an individual.
- (ii) to consider any potential IT data issues and resource implications in terms of developing appropriate mechanisms that will aid the coordination of such data

That this action plan is brought back to Scrutiny for consideration.

3.1.2 **This recommendation is agreed.**

Officers from the Strategic Landlord Group will lead the review. The review will begin by assessing the information requested on both the common assessment framework and the single assessment process and that already gathered in the recently revised housing process, for which a new IT system has been implemented. Any potential changes will need to be factored into the IT development programme.

3.2 Recommendation 2

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on developing a formal data sharing protocol between the ALMOs, the Police and the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit to ensure that local intelligence about prospective and existing tenants is systematically shared as part of the new Support Needs Assessment to inform the application process and enable appropriate action to be taken.

3.2.1 **This recommendation is agreed.**

The current review of the Anti Social behaviour process in the city (termed the Quest project) remit is to ensure that there is an improved process through the council teams (such as ALMOs/ BITMO, Anti Social Behaviour unit, Environmental health, Adults and Children's services, Legal services) involved in tackling anti social behaviour and other statutory teams, especially the Police. As part of this review consideration is being given to the collocation of Police, ALMO and Anti Social behaviour staff. As a result, improved data sharing will be developed between the agencies. In addition, a protocol between the Police, Community Safety and ALMOs/ BITMO will be developed as result of the working more collaboratively.

3.3 Recommendation 3

That the data sharing improvements set out within recommendations 1 and 2 are also used to enable more effective enforcement of Introductory and Demoted Tenancies in future.

3.3.1 **This recommendation is agreed.**

As a result of improvements from Recommendation 1 and 2 as stated there will be a greater amount of data sharing. In addition, other mechanisms have been put in place such as Strategic Landlord Group have asked ALMOs to more closely manage tenants in their Introductory Tenancy period, proposing a minimum number

of visits to be undertaken.

3.4 Recommendation 4

That any concerns or complaints made to the ALMOs about the behaviour of a particular tenant are acted upon with urgency, with an interim response given within 5 working days.

3.4.1 **This recommendation is agreed**

ALMOs and BITMO currently have Service standards to respond to incidents of anti social behaviour within at least 5 working days. The Anti Social Behaviour Review is undertaking process mapping to improve these services.

3.5 Recommendation 5

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on developing a protocol between the Leeds Housing Options Service and the Leeds ALMOs to clarify appropriate stages of referral to the Leeds Housing Options Service for preventative housing related support services to be assessed and coordinated.

3.5.1 **This recommendation is agreed**

A commitment has been made within the Leeds Housing Strategy Action Plan 2010-2012 and the Housing Strategy and Solutions Group Service Plan for the Leeds Housing Options Service to develop joint working protocols with each of the Leeds ALMOs and BITMO. Officers from the Strategic Landlord Group will also be involved in this work. It would not be possible to prescribe all the different circumstances that would trigger a referral/intervention, and each case will need to be assessed on its individual merits, but the protocols will provide broad guidelines for officers. Interim measures are in place where officers from the Paralegal Team of the Strategic Landlord Group are notifying officers from Leeds Housing Options Service of households who are subject to eviction proceedings because of rent arrears.

3.6 Recommendation 6

That the personal case conferencing approach used by the Leeds Housing Options Service is adopted as a good practice model as part of the housing management process for those tenants with acute and complex support needs.

3.6.1 **This recommendation is agreed**

Strategic Landlord has worked in partnership with ALMOs and BITMO to develop a more case conference approach to Lettings assessment. Examples are:

1. Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference. This is a forum led by Police that bring all stakeholders including ALMOs/ BITMO together to formulate a plan to minimise the risk of domestic violence for victims and their families.
2. Adaptations service. where joint case conferences between the agencies has resulted in a more appropriate adaptation installed in a customers house, or a more timely rehousing.
3. The Family Intervention project relies on case conferencing between a numbers of agencies to support a family to reduce occurrences of anti social behaviour.

4.0 **Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

There are no immediate implications for Council Policy and Governance.

5.0 **Legal And Resource Implications**

The recommendations can be resourced from within existing council and ALMO's staffing and budgets.

6.0 **Conclusions**

6.1 Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board undertook a detailed inquiry into improving partnership working and data sharing to improve the allocation and management of tenancies. As a result the Scrutiny Board have highlighted the need for closer partnership working both within teams in the council and external stakeholders, particularly the police.