



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)

Date: 11th October 2010

Subject: Recommendation Tracking

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Each Scrutiny Board receives a quarterly report, coinciding with the quarterly presentation of performance information, on the progress made in implementing the Board's recommendations.
- 1.2 This tracking system allows the Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations; those progressing to plan; and those where there is either an obstacle or progress is not adequate. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.
- 1.3 A standard set of criteria has been produced to enable the Board to assess progress. These are presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required.
- 1.4 To assist Members with this task, the Principal Scrutiny Adviser has given a draft status for each recommendation. The Board is asked to confirm whether these assessments are appropriate, and to change them where they are not.
- 1.5 This quarterly report shows progress against recommendations arising from the following previous inquiry:
 - Inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing

2.0 Recommendations

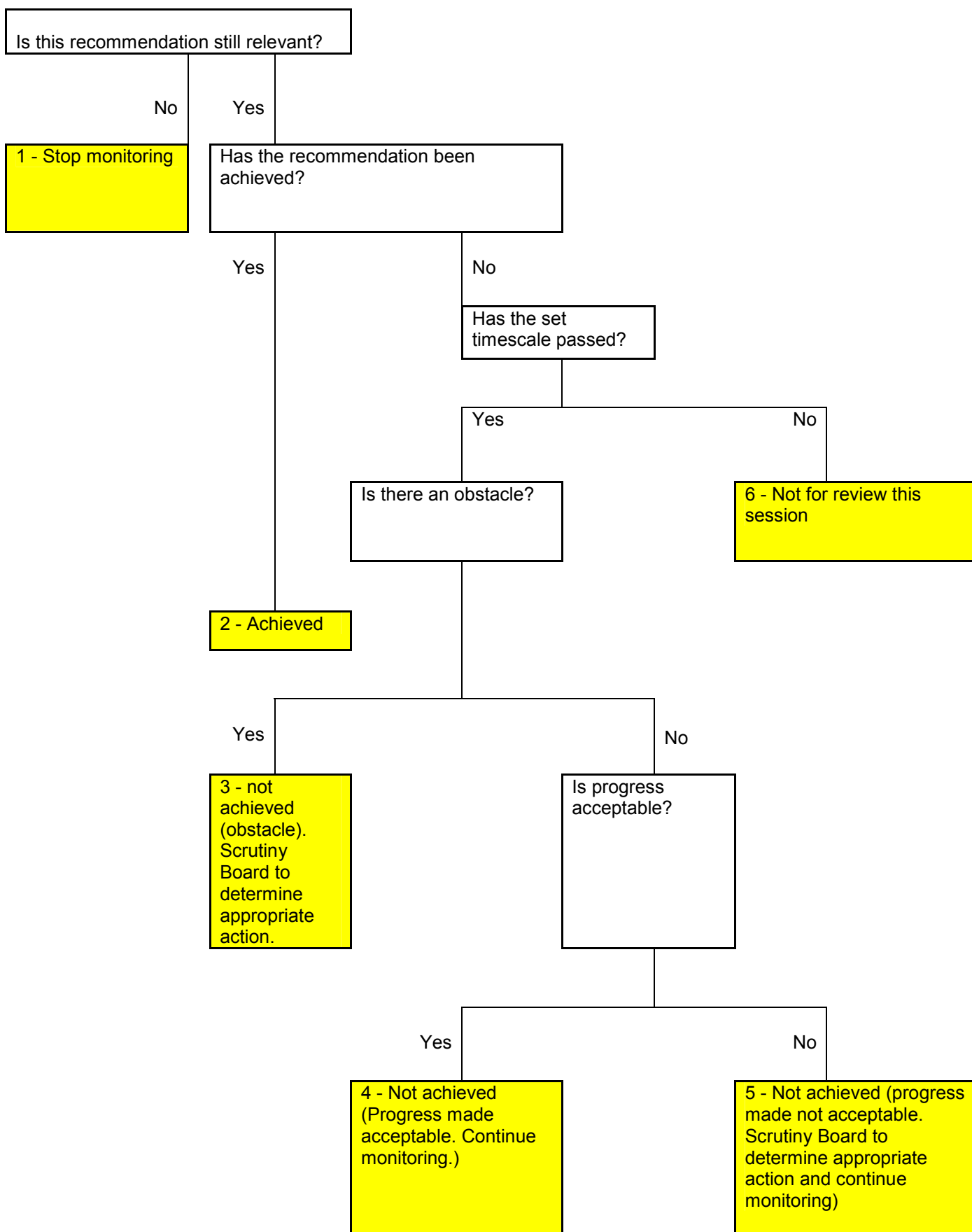
- 2.1 Members are asked to:

- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
- Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

Background Papers

Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board Final Inquiry Report on Private Sector Housing.
May 2009.

Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:
Questions to be Considered by Scrutiny Boards



Recommendation Tracking – Progress Report (March 2009)**Categories**

- 1 - Stop monitoring
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not achieved (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not achieved (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

Inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing

Recommendation for monitoring	Evidence of progress and contextual information	Status (categories 1 – 6) (to be completed by Scrutiny)	Complete
<p>Recommendation 1 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods raises greater awareness of, and helps private landlords gain access to, available grant or loan funding to improve the quality and energy efficiency of private sector housing</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The Council continues to promote energy efficiency to all households irrespective of tenure , and provides financial assistance where available. Capital programme funds for Leeds for 2009/10 amount to approx £6.8m for the whole city for all private housing regeneration, both owner occupied and Private Rented Sector (PRS) stock. Of this, only £300,000 is available specifically for energy efficiency initiatives, so there is limited opportunity in the current programme to provide major financial assistance to Landlords using capital. We do encourage take up of warm front grant by tenants and promote energy efficiency where ever possible (i.e. the 5 Wards initiative in 2008/9 and planned 10 ward initiative scheduled for 2009/10, and included in group repair specifications) but due to costs and technical</p>		

	<p>problems associated with hard to treat older housing the take up is generally poor. Negotiations are on going to secure additional funds and addressing energy inefficiency and resultant excess cold is a key priority of the Council.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>Work is ongoing with technical experts from the Building Research establishment (BRE) to identify solutions to improve efficiency in the hard to treat properties. The Council continues to promote energy efficiency and actively promotes take up of Warm Front grants to all eligible tenants. Other initiatives such as the boiler scrappage scheme and landlord tax benefits are also actively promoted to landlords to encourage energy efficiency improvements in the sector.</p> <p>Funding has been secured and approval given to undertake a free cavity wall and loft insulation pilot in a small number of Lower Level Super Output Areas which score highly in terms of the numbers of low income residents, including tenants of private rented houses . The pilot is to commence later in the year and is based on the Warm Zone model.</p> <p>Current Position:</p> <p>The Authority continues to promote grant assistance such as Warm Front and Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) schemes to provide heating and insulation to private sector households across Leeds. In addition, the Authority has undertaken area based initiatives in Adel and Wharfedale and also in Horsforth and Roundhay in conjunction with the Energy Saving Trust. These schemes have provided subsidised or free cavity wall and loft insulation on a street by street basis. In addition to this, the Authority is developing a city-wide scheme to offer free cavity wall and loft insulation to all private sector</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	
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	<p>households on a ward by ward basis. This is due to begin during the second half of 2011.</p> <p>In order to target measures towards vulnerable households, the Authority is re-establishing it's hot spots scheme which allows workers and volunteers in the community to refer private sector households to heating and insulation measures where necessary. Energy efficiency advice has been provided at a</p> <p>Landlords conference in Leeds in Sept 2010 to provide information about grants and assistance generally.</p> <p>The Authority has secured funding from the Regional Housing Board to set up a solar photovoltaic scheme, to be partially funded through feed-in tariffs. In addition, we are looking at providing a small scale boiler scrappage scheme in conjunction with a major energy supplier. These schemes are currently under development but will be available to Landlords and owner occupiers.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 2 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to ensure that private landlords are proactively engaged in the development of future improvement programmes/schemes aimed at raising the quality and condition of private rented sector housing.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The Director agrees with recommendation 2.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>The landlord community are actively consulted through a variety of forums including the PRS Strategic Working Group, lead by Councillor L Carter, the landlord consultative group and Landlords forum . Landlord representatives were involved in helping develop the PRS Housing Strategy 2009-2012 which was endorsed by the Council's Executive Board in December . This strategy and related action plan has since been presented to the landlord forum to encourage participation in the strategy. Local and national landlord associations were also fully engaged</p>	<p>2 - Achieved</p>	

	<p>over the proposals to designate the selective licensing area in Cross Green and East End Park and continue to be engaged in proposals and work plans.</p> <p>The latest in a series of Landlords' newsletters (Winter 2009) has been distributed providing a wide range of news updates which promote the sector.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 3 That an update report on the actions taken to achieve the outcomes of recommendations 1 and 2 is brought back to Scrutiny within 6 months.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The Director agrees with recommendation 3.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>This update provided a progress report on recent actions</p>	2 - Achieved	
<p>Recommendation 4 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to proactively educate and empower private tenants to understand their rights and have the confidence to approach the Council for assistance if landlords refuse to improve standards in line with minimum requirements.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The Director agrees with recommendation 4.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>Advisory leaflets for tenants have been produced and distributed to educate tenants on how to access the service and what actions can be taken to resolve housing complaints. Over 3,000 requests for service have been received in 2009/10 so far and appropriate enforcement actions have been taken to assist tenants and remove identified hazards.</p>	2 - Achieved	
<p>Recommendation 5 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to explore innovative approaches towards addressing poor housing conditions and works closely with key partners and central government to maximise on</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The Director agrees with recommendation 5.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p>		

<p>available resources.</p>	<p>The Council continues to work with a variety of partners to maximize and encourage use of the private rented sector. The work with Housing Options service has utilized the PRS market to create tenancies and this has resulted in improved housing standards and greater availability of housing for vulnerable tenants. Promotion of Landlord accreditation has also proved an efficient way of improving housing standards and management of properties on a city wide basis.</p> <p>The designation of a Selective Licensing area has seen a multi agency tasking group developed to improve housing conditions and associated community issues such as poor environment and anti social behaviour.</p> <p>Work is also underway to produce a framework contract to provide temporary accommodation for a number of service areas and the contract will ensure suitable housing and management standards for all properties used in the scheme. This will improve efficiencies, promote better property conditions and management standards and be cost efficient for the Council.</p>	<p>2 - Achieved</p>	
<p>Recommendation 6 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods conducts an urgent review of existing resources within the HMO Licensing Team to determine whether it is adequate enough to effectively administer and regulate the</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The Director does not agree to recommendation 6. HMO mandatory licensing is expected to be cost neutral with operational costs being met by license fees, and the recommendation for additional revenue resources to be provided to undertake more proactive work to track down unlicensed</p>		

<p>Mandatory HMO Licensing Scheme.</p>	<p>properties could only be met in the short term by the team being subsidised through revenue budget. Alternatively the license fee in future years could be increased but this would meet strong opposition from Landlords and ultimately fall to the tenants through increased rents. On balance, the current fee level we believe to be right and provides sufficient resources of approx £1.5m to administer the scheme in Leeds which has been one of the most successful schemes in the country. Resources will now be focused on inspection compliance checks and any subsequent enforcement required, provided problems such as the recent changes on fire precautions which have created additional administrative work don't keep recurring. The current review of mandatory licensing by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) should give some indication of the benefits which have been derived from such a significant amount of expenditure. The Council will take account of the findings of the impending BRE report in reviewing its operations.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>The ring fenced budget for mandatory HMO licensing continues to be carefully monitored , and the resources are now being used to support a programme of compliance inspections for licensed premises during the 5 year license period. The BRE report referred to above was published on 27th January and confirmed that a lack of resources was an issue for some local authorities , justifying why good progress had not been made with licensing, but this is not the case in Leeds. Nationally the average license fee is £387 where as the fee in Leeds is on average £525. Work will commence in 2010 to review the fee in readiness for the next phase of licensing when the majority of existing 5yr licenses will need to be renewed in 2011/12.</p>	<p>1 - Stop monitoring</p>	
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<p>Recommendation 7 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that all opportunities for data sharing across the Council and other agencies are explored to assist in the identification of unlicensed HMOs within the city.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The Director agrees with recommendation 7, and it can be confirmed that this reflects current arrangements where a comprehensive network of data sharing and intelligence gathering has taken place and will continue in the future</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>The data sharing between Council Departments has been further improved and access is now readily available to confirm property status.</p> <p>The Council is also exploring the possibility of a formal data sharing protocol with the police to improve cooperation and access to more information. Work is also ongoing within the Council to align free standing databases with main systems to ease access and availability of data.</p> <p>Current Position:</p> <p>Work continues to integrate the various free standing databases to the main system but has taken longer than initially envisaged due to technical difficulties in merging the different data. However, once completed it will improve data availability and sharing capabilities within the Council. Formal procedures have also now been formalized between Departments to comply with freedom of information and data protection rules to ensure compliance whilst still allowing full transfer of appropriate data. This has proved particularly</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	
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	<p>useful for the selective licensing and mandatory licensing schemes when investigating potential unlicensed properties.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 8 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to engage with private landlords in regularly reviewing the standards set within the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme with the aim of attracting more members and expanding the scheme across the city.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The Director agrees with both recommendations 8 and 9, in that there are already in place arrangements for regular engagement with Landlord representatives, which include opportunities for reviewing standards in the Leeds landlords Accreditation Scheme (LLAS). Officers continue to work hard to promote LLAS city wide, and are currently working on an agreed action plan to achieve this. However, the scheme is currently heavily subsidised as the annual membership fees are purposely kept low to ensure the membership fee isn't a disincentive. Increasing fees to meet the additional costs of publicity, concessions and administration would be unacceptable to most landlords in the current economic climate, and it should be remembered that such costs invariably find their way into increased rents. If the additional publicity and promotion was fully met by the Council, the cost could be significant.</p> <p>Formal response received in March 2010:</p> <p>Consultation continues with all landlord associations, Managing agents and LLAS members on a regular basis. The LLAS is actively promoted and the scheme has seen positive growth and membership across the city with significant increases seen in Leeds 11, 12, 13 and 28. The scheme is currently on track to meet the target set in the current action plan to cover 20,000 bedspaces city wide.</p> <p>It is planned to further review the LLAS action plan but consideration will need to be given to the likely resource implications should the scheme be expanded further.</p> <p>Consultation has also begun with a nationally recognized landlord</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	

	<p>association to discuss the potential for them to take over the administration of the scheme although this is still at an early stage.</p> <p>Current Position:</p> <p>Full consultation with landlords and the landlord associations continues along with quarterly forums and newsletters. The LLAS scheme fully met the targets set in the action plan and by the end of March 2010 had achieved 503 members and covered 20,026 bedspaces. In line with the action plan the membership has seen continued growth in targeted areas of the city.</p> <p>Plans to undertake a further review of the scheme and production of new targets has largely been put on hold due to ongoing discussions with an external partner over the possibility of them undertaking the accreditation role in Leeds. These discussions have now centered around the specific functions and likely costs and a further meeting is planned to determine the feasibility of such a scheme.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 9 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods conducts a review within the next 6 months of the current action plan aimed at promoting the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme and raising its profile amongst private tenants across the city.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>(See response to recommendation 8)</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>(See response to recommendation 8)</p> <p>Current Position:</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	

	(see response to recommendation 8)		
<p>Recommendation 10 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to further develop an Accredited Tenants Scheme for Leeds and explores opportunities for developing a representative body specifically for private tenants in Leeds.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>An accreditation scheme would essentially be a set of standards which a tenant would sign up to comply with, and possibly include tenant training to improve awareness of their obligations and expected behaviour. A scheme has been previously piloted in Leeds in conjunction with LLAS landlords with little success or interest. The Department was only able to issue a handful of certificates to tenants during the pilot. Landlords would be critical to the success of a scheme by insisting that tenants were, or became, accredited. The potential for relaunching a scheme, in conjunction with a tenant referencing scheme as referred to in recommendation 15 of the report of Scrutiny Board will be reviewed, but there are resources considerations to be taken into account</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>(See recommendation 15)</p> <p>Current Position: To be advised by Scrutiny Board</p>	<p>3 - not achieved (obstacle). Scrutiny Board to determine appropriate action.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 11 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to explore the development of an Accredited Agent Scheme for Leeds as a way of regulating the quality management standards of private sector management agents.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>Similar to accredited tenants, an accredited managing agents scheme would require funding to meet set up and administration costs, and protracted negotiations with agents' representatives over the last year have suggested that they are unlikely to want to meet the full cost of the scheme which would mean LCC subsidy, and agents also have some strong objections to some of the conditions we would want to see in the scheme, including some basic legal requirements.</p>		

	<p>The set up and running costs would not be dissimilar to the cost of selective licensing which has recently been estimated at approx £350,000 in total over the five year term of each license. The difference with a managing agents scheme would be the resistance to paying a similar fee of several hundred pounds for a discretionary initiative.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>The negotiations are still ongoing and a further meeting was held in December 2009 to determine whether such a scheme had merit. Issues around scheme conditions, definition of agent and appropriate incentives were again discussed in full. It was reiterated that there would be financial implications for the Council and the agents should a scheme be introduced and the agents representatives agreed to discuss the matters further with their colleagues to determine whether there was sufficient interest to pursue the matter. No response has yet been received but further correspondence has now been sent to the agents to enquire over their interest in the scheme.</p> <p>It should be noted however that following proposals in the Rugg Review the Government has now issued a consultation paper to explore the possibility of a national Accredited Managing Agents Scheme and it may be the case that a national scheme removes the need for a local scheme.</p> <p>Current Position:</p> <p>The negotiations with local managing agent representatives have now ceased as no progress was made and there was little or no local appetite from the agents to pursue such a scheme at this time. The main barriers related to scheme conditions over property standards but also related to the likely financial costs which Managing Agents would be expected to meet.</p> <p>It is also noted that national proposals put forward by the</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	
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	<p>last Government to consider national regulation of managing agents has now been suspended by the new coalition Government.</p> <p>Managing agents are still able to join LLAS to cover any properties they actually own and the Council continues to consult with the agents to promote improved property and managing standards on a voluntary basis.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 12 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead on promoting a one Council approach towards introducing concessions as a way of retaining and attracting more private landlords to the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>This relates to the potential for the Council to encourage membership of Accreditation by way of incentives such as discounts on the cost of other services. A particular example is the refuse disposal concession for all waste, as distinct from waste defined as "domestic". Another example would be in relation to the cost of parking permits for landlords who have need for access to houses they manage in areas with resident only arrangements. Clearly a balance has to be struck between incentives to attract and retain members of the scheme, and other budget considerations, but the Director would agree that there is merit in exploring the full potential for introducing such arrangements in future.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>Discussions are still taking place to determine the feasibility of improving the existing incentives, particularly in relation to waste services which is seen as a major issue by landlords. However, the current financial restraints make in-house concessions very difficult at present and a balance still needs to be determined. Financial incentives from external partners, promoted through the LLAS Network and landlord forums continue to be popular and readily available.</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	

	<p>Current Position:</p> <p>The current position is very similar to that in March as severe financial pressures faced by the Council make the provision of further concessions very difficult. The existing concessions are still available to LLAS members and remain a popular feature of the scheme. As discussed in recommendation 8 the future role and management of the LLAS is also under review and it would appear sensible to await the results of this review before exploring the possible expansion of any new concessions and incentives. However, external financial incentives also continue to be actively sourced and promoted through the LLAS Network and landlord forums and are again well received by scheme members.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 13</p> <p>i) That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that practical support and advice is available to all tenants in assisting them to negotiate reasonable rent levels, with particular attention given to the consideration of property conditions and the minimum standards they should be expecting to receive.</p> <p>ii) That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods takes a lead role in building on the close working relationship between the Leeds Benefits Service and the</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>This relates primarily to the Leeds Housing Options Service, seeking the establishment of a comprehensive tenant advice service within the Council. The Leeds Housing Options service is committed to offering support and advice to all tenants and this involves negotiating with landlords on rent levels and in some instances assisting with bonds. This work will continue to be developed and will continue to involve close working with the Leeds Benefits Service and Environment and Neighbourhoods directorate.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>i) The Leeds Housing Options Service manages a Damage Liability scheme which provides a bond guarantee of up to four</p>	<p>2 - Achieved</p>	

<p>Housing Regulatory Service to provide the necessary checks and balances to the LHA scheme at a local level.</p>	<p>weeks rent for damage/rent loss incurred on properties let through the service. All properties let through the initiative are subject to inspection by staff from the Leeds Housing Options Service, and where necessary Environmental Services, to ensure that they meet requisite quality standards. Membership of the Leeds Landlord Accreditation scheme is a condition of eligibility for the damage liability funding. All tenants who sign up for a property are offered support from a Supporting People commissioned service – primarily Foundation Housing. The reduction in temporary accommodation placements has released capacity to offer floating support for longer term tenancies. Staff from the Leeds Housing Options Service have regular liaison meetings with officers from the Leeds Benefits Service.</p> <p>ii) Close cooperation is being maintained between officers with responsibilities for regulation of standards and administration of Local Housing Allowance. DWP has recently published a consultation document on possible amendments to the current system of benefits payments , which has included seeking views on links between payments and housing standards and direct payments to landlords, both of which issues were raised in the scrutiny inquiry on the prs. The Council’s response has included a recommendation for these proposals to be supported , with strong links to accreditation.</p>	<p>2 - Achieved</p>	
<p>Recommendation 14 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews the potential costs and implications of expanding the Council’s Damage Liability Scheme across the city and introducing deposit guarantees for tenants in receipt of Local Housing Allowance.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The council is proactively exploring all options to assist tenants with rental bonds as part of the wider work undertaken through the Leeds Housing Options service. This work will continue with the aim of maximising the opportunities to assist in the prevention of homelessness and to secure accommodation for people in housing need across the city.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p>		

	<p>The Leeds Housing Options Service has expanded the Damage Liability initiative by offering bond payments for prospective tenants who find their own private tenancy through the Homeless Prevention Fund. Private sector tenancy sign ups are currently averaging between 65 and 85 lets per months. This is higher than the number of ALMO lettings to statutory homeless households which was 40 in December 2009. The private rented sector will continue to be the major rehousing source for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Assisting people to access private rented accommodation has helped reduce the number of temporary accommodation placements made through private providers from 412 in September 2008 to 7 on the 9th of February 2010.</p>	2 - Achieved	
<p>Recommendation 15 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to develop a Tenant Referencing scheme for Leeds and explores ways of securing additional funding for operating this scheme, which may involve seeking commitments from other Local Authorities to develop a regional scheme.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009 The Council has been working on the potential for a tenants reference and tenants accreditation scheme for some time, including work with West Yorkshire Partners on the potential for a West Yorkshire wide initiative, largely modelled on the Manchester scheme which was reported to the PRS Strategy Group in 2008. The main stumbling block is the cost of operating a scheme. A very rudimentary estimate would be set up costs of upwards of £75k in year 1, plus running costs of not less than £50k per annum thereafter. Other schemes developed by local authorities have ranged in cost from £25k-£125K per annum.</p>		

	<p>A tenant referencing scheme is an extension of an accreditation scheme, the concept being that tenants would be vetted by the Council and given a "credit rating" to be used when applying for a tenancy. There are many and varied issues with such a proposal including data protection, exclusion from tenancies if holding a poor rating, human rights issues etc. The scheme would need to be properly established and robustly administered, and again would be better run across the whole of West Yorkshire. Proposals are still under consideration but financing will be an important and critical factor.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>Unfortunately little progress has been made on this issue to date. A revenue budget bid to fund a Leeds scheme was not supported due to budget pressures. However, colleagues across West Yorkshire are still exploring ways to proceed and fund such an initiative but the current financial climate has proved to be a stumbling block. Further contact has however been made with the West Yorkshire Housing Partnership lead officer responsible for this project and we still await an update.</p> <p>Current Position: To be advised by Scrutiny Board</p>	<p>3 - not achieved (obstacle). Scrutiny Board to determine appropriate action.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 16 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to seek means of bringing empty private housing back into use which maximises on recent government initiatives and takes advantage of the current economic climate by brokering deals with property owners to temporarily let their empty properties to the Council for people on the housing</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The Director agrees with this recommendation. The Leeds Housing Options service has developed the recently introduced arrangements for placement of potentially homeless people into private sector housing. The Leeds Housing Options service is also encouraging owners of empty properties to offer the properties to potentially homeless households as assured shorthold tenancies, providing that the properties are of a reasonable standard. Further work to be undertaken includes consideration of the potential for long term leasing of underused</p>		

<p>register.</p>	<p>stock for renting. An additional area of work which will be considered is the proposals top make use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders to bring back long term empty homes, with ALMOs or other registered social landlords acting as managing agents on the Council's behalf for up to 7 years as allowed by legislation.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>The Private Sector Solutions initiatives, managed through the Leeds Housing Options Service, are making an important contribution to the empty homes challenge. It is recognised that there is a symmetry between tackling homelessness/housing need and reducing the number of empty homes. 583 private lettings were arranged between April 2009 and January 2010 – only 90 lettings were arranged between April and June – of which 302 were previously empty. 225 of these properties had been empty for longer than six months.</p> <p>Current Position:</p> <p>The Government has indicated that they will be reconsidering the EDMO legislation in light of its poor record of achievement in providing a stimulus to return long term empty homes back into occupation.</p> <p>The total number of properties let through the Private Sector Letting Scheme since April 2010 is 236 (target set for 2010 / 2011 is 840), comprising 161 previously empty properties, of which 71 were previously empty >6mths and 90 were</p>	<p>4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)</p>	
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	<p>previously empty <6mths. All of these properties are now free from Category 1 Hazards due to the exacting standards that are required in order to be compliant with the scheme.</p> <p>Since April, 42 properties have been improved as a direct result of the Leeds Private Sector Letting Scheme, whereby the properties failed on initial inspection and subsequently owners have carried out works to comply with required standards.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 17 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods considers the feasibility of establishing a single point of contact within the Council for the private rented sector, acting as a conduit for both private landlords and tenants to gain access to accurate and timely advice, information and assistance.</p>	<p>Formal Response received in October 2009</p> <p>The recommendation is supported and welcomed, and is one aspect of the on-going development of the Leeds Housing Options Service.</p> <p>Formal Response received in March 2010</p> <p>The Leeds Housing Options Service is the central contact service for both landlords and tenants. A email address has been set up: landlordandtenant@leeds.gov.uk.</p> <p>The specific issue of how best to ensure tenants receive appropriate help and advice has been highlighted in a recent CLG publication in early February : The Private Rented Sector- Professionalism and Quality – consultation. Further proposals now to be taken forward for more detailed consideration include a national register of landlords ,a tenants helpline, the regulation of letting and managing agents and the introduction of local letting schemes. Officers will continue to support these developments through representations wherever possible.</p>	<p>2 - Achieved</p>	

