

**Report of Area Leader – South East and Chief Executive of Aire Valley Homes Leeds**

**Report to South Leeds (Inner) Area Committee**

**Date: Wednesday 21st September 2011**

**Subject: Aire Valley Homes Leeds Contribution to Locality Working and Involvement in Area Committees**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Beeston & Holbeck City & Hunslet Middleton Park
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. To outline the current involvement Aire Valley Homes Leeds (AVHL) have with the Area Committee, explores ways of making that involvement as meaningful and productive as possible and meets the design principles for locality working.

**Recommendations**

2. Members of the Inner South Area Committee are requested to:
  - a) Note the contents of the report
  - b) Agree that Aire Valley Homes Leeds provides a six monthly update to the Area Committee on progress with areas of mutual interest.
  - c) Consider and comment on any specific areas of interest they may wish future reports to address.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This joint report from the South East Area Leader and Aire Valley Homes Leeds Chief Executive outlines the current involvement Aire Valley Homes Leeds (AVHL) have with the Area Committee, explores ways of making that involvement as meaningful and productive as possible and meets the design principles for locality working.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 AVHL is one of three Leeds Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMO's) and provides a range of housing management services under the terms of a Management Agreement with Leeds City Council. Services provided by AVHL include the management of the Leeds Housing Register, repairs and property improvements to council homes, and tenancy management, including rent collection. AVHL also manage the Leeds Anti Social Behaviour Team (LASBT) following the recent QUEST Review, and have an extensive customer involvement network.
- 2.2 In 2010, AVHL was inspected by the Audit Commission and received a '2 star' rating, equating to the delivery of good housing management services, along with promising prospects for improvement.
- 2.3 The ALMO's are by definition arms length and have formal delegated powers to deliver front line housing services through a Management Agreement. Whilst AVHL is a company wholly owned by LCC it is governed by a Board of 12 Company Directors (4 elected Members, 4 Tenant reps and 4 Independents). Since the initial creation of ALMO's in 2003 the relationship with LCC, and its partners, has matured to become an integral part of joint service provision in local communities to deliver services that are responsive to local service priorities and also contribute to the strategic needs for service provision within a City Wide context. AVHL, along with other ALMO's have welcomed the invite to explore joint working arrangements with the Area Committees across Leeds.

## **3 Current Working**

- 3.1 AVHL currently have a good relationship with the Area Committee and are keen to build on this and explore opportunities for increasing coordination and cooperation within localities as part of the integrated locality working agenda.

### **3.2 Community Safety**

- 3.2.1 In order to address a number of concerns about the need to improve community safety from a customer perspective, there have been a number of new initiatives introduced to improve the way ASB is dealt with at a local level.

A comprehensive service review has been jointly facilitated by Leeds community Safety, the ALMO's and West Yorkshire Police which has resulted in the creation of three geographically based, multi disciplinary teams that are managed by the ALMO. The teams are staffed with officers seconded from the ALMO, West Yorkshire Police, Arson Task Force, Community Safety and Victims Support

Through a combined approach to local tasking arrangements, AVHL and the Area Committee work with other partners to tackle community safety issues within all areas of geographical responsibility. These meetings are attended by the Area Committee Community Safety Champion, and tenancy management officers from the respective AVHL housing office.

### 3.3 Community Engagement

3.3.1 Joint working projects around the priority neighbourhoods of Cardinals, Manor Farms and the new project in Cottingley have engaged with local residents to involve them in more in local improvement schemes.

### 3.4 Environment

3.4.1 As part of AVHL's core business a full range of Housing Management activity is undertaken to support the impact on the environment. These activities include;

- Annual tenant visits – 20% of all customers will be visited on an annual programme
- New Tenancy visits – all new tenants will receive a visit within 28 days
- Customer profiling data – current performance is 78%
- ASB – Creation of a new team managed by AVHL
- Quarterly Walkabouts – Approx 280 are planned throughout the year
- Monthly Walkabouts – Over 800 are planned throughout the year
- Garden Enforcement – In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 430 cases were identified and 161 formal actions were taken

3.4.2 Collaborative working between the Area Committee and AVHL is currently achieved through both the independent and joint funding of identified capital projects designed to improve the infrastructure in communities in the Inner South .

Projects include the clearance, re-design and structural alteration of problem bin-yards within the Crosby's and Recreation areas of Beeston & Holbeck. Alley-gating within the Leasowe's (Hunslet) and Sisson's (Middleton) targeted at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. Major environmental improvements to public green space in Middleton within the Westwood and Manor Farm areas

Local residents play a significant role in both the design and development of the sites and on completion the projects will have a positive impact on the appearance of the local environment.

3.4.3 An informal agreement between the Area Committee and AVHL has been to support community clean ups with the provision of skips on a 50:50 basis, this, coupled with Elected Members attending estate walkabouts, contributes to tackling environmental issues on priority estates.

3.4.4 AVHL have been key members of the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Sub Group which provides an opportunity AVHL to contribute to the wider Council objectives. Such a move would be consistent with our Place Making Strategy, which identifies how AVHL will influence how neighbourhoods are shaped to become places where people choose to live, learn and work.

## **4 Future Working**

4.1 A more formal contribution to the Area Committee would allow AVHL to ensure that approaches are developed in ways which are consistent with the broader integrated locality working priorities and design principles (**Appendix 1**), and to seek support in meeting the objectives of AVHL service and customers. The following four design principles would be specifically championed through closer links between AVHL and the Area Committee.

- Strong local leadership (political, council officers and partners) that champions the needs of residents, leads across service boundaries and can be held accountable for the delivery of improved outcomes for local people.
- Engage communities in a way that supports residents in developing local priorities, holding services to account, enabling them to do more for themselves and developing a sense of pride and belonging in their local neighbourhood.
- Maximise the use of local intelligence to prioritise and shape services to local people.
- Integrate and organise front line service delivery to deliver responsive services and support at the right time and in the right place.

4.2 Within the current financial constraints it is vital that AVHL contribute to joined up working which assists in developing service provision and quality, while generating savings and efficiencies in the provision of council services.

4.3 A stronger link with the Area Committee will allow AVHL to become more aware of the broad range of issues being discussed at Area Committees. While some of these do not seem at first to be directly relevant to AVHL, it is envisaged that over time beneficial linkages may be found. AVHL are aware that the broad range of neighbourhood issues are of major relevance to our tenants and customers and that these issues strongly affect their experience and perception of the area they live in.

4.4 In order to develop a joint approach to deliver service improvements in local communities, AVHL is currently undergoing an internal review to ensure that adequate resources are deployed into the roles of Customer Involvement Officers and to create additional capacity to deliver effective partnership working across a full range of service partners.

4.5 In addition to continuing with the current methods of joint working outlined above, Area Management and Aire Valley Homes have identified the following areas for future working:

### **4.5.1 Integrated Locality Working**

- The membership of the newly established South East Area Leadership Team includes the Chief Executive of Aire Valley Homes Leeds and the South East Area Leader. The group, chaired by a member of the corporate leadership team, will oversee the development and successful implementation of local integrated services that improve outcomes in south east neighbourhoods and meet the objectives of the Area Committee Business Plan. The first meeting is planned for 23<sup>rd</sup> September.
- A Ginnel Cleansing and Maintenance project has been established by the Locality Manager with a city wide remit to undertake a review, and make recommendations for future collaborative working to ensure the ginnels are cleansed and maintained and contribute to an enhanced environment. Area Management and Aire Valley Homes are both members of this group.
- The South East Area Leader has established a South East Environmental Integrated Locality Working group who meet monthly to oversee integrated locality working to tackle environmental issues in four key areas of the wedge. In addition to improving the visual appearance in these targeted neighbourhoods, lessons learnt on future collaborative working will be identified and implemented.

#### **4.5.2 Supporting Area Committee Delegation of Environmental Services**

- In September 2011, the Area Committee will be delegated responsibility for some environmental services. Conversations are underway on ways that the Street scene services can be overseen by Area Committee's and the caretaking services provided by AVHL can work in mutually supportive ways. There are many areas throughout the South East area where there is an interface between land which is maintained by Street scene and AVHL. In addition, AVHL have a role in identifying service delivery issues and also supporting resolution of these issues.
- A service level agreement (SLA) has been drafted between the Area Committee and the South East Locality Team to manage the delegation. At the August meeting of the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Sub Group, members agreed to amend their terms of reference and membership to create a group that will monitor the SLA on behalf of the Area Committee and ensure integrated locality working. AVHL will continue to be a key partner on the sub group to support this agenda.
- Stronger links to be developed between AVHL and the Environmental Action Team enforcement officers. The Locality Team to be approached with the proposal for enforcement officers to attend walkabouts in specific neighbourhoods.

#### **4.5.3 Community Safety**

- Continuation of work within tasking meetings, and to support proposed changes to these meetings with four new crime and grime tasking groups for the South East that will be coterminous with the Neighbourhood Policing Team boundaries.

#### 4.5.4 Community Engagement

- AVHL has recently revised its Customer Engagement Strategy in order to reflect the way it delivers services that are responsive to local needs within specific local communities.
- AVHL has purchased a mobile office which is used to deliver services in rural communities. A review of this service is currently ongoing and AVHL is keen to involve service partners in this review so that any opportunities for collaborative working can be developed. Members may wish to comment on opportunities for collaborative working.
- Customer profiling data is collected against the six diversity strands and is used to shape service delivery across all strands of service activity.
- AVHL supports 32 formal RTG's (Registered Tenants Groups) which covers approx 49% of our management area as well as a number of informal groups and tenants voices, which are local advocates who support vulnerable residents within the community. These groups are financially supported through grant funding.
- Local residents have been elected to stand as Tenant Board Members and become Company Directors of AVHL.
- In addition to the above residents are appointed, through a recruitment process, to the three Area Panels and the Tenant Scrutiny Board. The Area Panels have a delegated budget of £80k each which is used to help support, through match funding, local environmental projects.
- Less formal consultation is delivered through three working groups which cover Repairs, Improvements and Housing Management (inc ASB) which meet on a quarterly basis.
- To celebrate our achievements AVHL holds a Tenants conference twice a year which includes our annual awards ceremony, to recognise community achievements by either individuals or residents groups.
- As part of our corporate social responsibility programme AVHL is working in partnership with Leeds Ahead to deliver a number of opportunities which includes mentoring local school children, providing resources for community clean up campaigns and providing life skills support for pupils leaving school at 16.

#### 4.5.5 Children and Families

- AVHL is keen to engage much closer with Children's Services as there are some key benefits to joint service provision for both organisations.
- There are many examples of a developing relationship with Children's Services as AVHL staff are Board members for the local Children Centres, have assisted with OFSTED inspections and provide local surgeries in a number of Children Centres.

- To improve performance in other areas of activity that will help deliver LCC's corporate priorities, AVHL has entered into a partnership with Job Centre Plus and delivers advice around jobs, skills, training opportunities and benefit entitlement as well as providing advice sessions at a number of locations and providing third sector support agencies space to deliver drop in sessions on existing ALMO premises.
- Whilst Children Services are the lead organisation to deliver the 'Hello' campaign to raise awareness and give opportunity for families who have children with learning difficulties, AVHL has been nationally recognised as one of the first social housing providers in the country who have signed up to support this campaign.

## **5 Corporate Considerations**

### **5.1 Consultation and Engagement**

5.1.1 Any projects developed as a result of collaborative working between AVHL and the Area Committee will be developed in consultation with Elected Members and local communities.

### **5.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

5.2.1 AVHL and the Area Committee are committed to equality and cohesion and all projects developed will consider these issues.

### **5.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

5.3.1 The work outlined in this report contributes to targets and priorities set out in the following council policies:

- Vision for Leeds
- Children and Young People Plan
- Health and Well being City Priority Plan
- Safer and Stronger Communities Plan
- Regeneration Priority Plan.

### **5.4 Resources and Value for Money**

5.4.1 No additional resources are needed to deliver the approach outlined in this report, which will be delivered within existing resources.

5.4.2 The proposal to have a formal link to the aims of the Area Committee will contribute to achieving value for money

5.4.3 It is envisaged that by delivering a joint approach to certain aspects of local service delivery the economies of scale achieved will deliver additional capacity that will be deployed back into local services.

## **5.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

5.5.1 There are no direct implications for the above as a result of this report.

## **5.6 Risk Management**

5.6.1 This report provides an update on current working arrangements and proposed working arrangements for the future between the Area Committee and AVHL. No risks are identifiable.

## **6 Conclusions**

6.1 There are clear benefits and opportunities for AVHL working closely with Area Committees as outlined in this report. Developing this approach provides the opportunity to develop services and join up working to the benefit of residents. Following discussions with the Area Leader, it is recommended that Members agree to AVHL providing a six monthly update to Area Committee of progress with areas of mutual interest and Members consider areas of interest they wish future reports to address.

## **7 Recommendations**

7.1 Members of the Inner South Area Committee are requested to

- a) Note the contents of the report
- b) Agree that Aire Valley Homes Leeds provides a six monthly update to the Area Committee on progress with areas of mutual interest.
- c) Consider and comment on any specific areas of interest they may wish future reports to address.

## **8 Background documents**

8.1 None