

**Report of West North West homes Leeds WNWhL**

**Report to Inner West Area committee**

**Date: March 2012**

**Subject: West North West Homes Leeds involvement in Area Committees**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Armley, Bramley and Stanningley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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. WNWhL provide a range of housing management services in the West and North West of Leeds. The Inner West Area Committee area is coterminous with the 'Inner West' housing management area comprising 6100 properties in the Armley and Bramley / Stanningley Wards. Tenancy and Estate Management services are delivered locally from our office located in Bramley and we also operate a number of Outreach Surgeries in the area.
2. Support services such as rent accounting, lettings and property repairs are delivered through a centralised structure, however all customer enquiries can be made locally at the Bramley Neighbourhood Office and at the Armley One Stop Centre; or via the Council Contact Centre.
3. This report seeks to advise the Area Committee of activities undertaken by WNWhL which impact on local communities, and more Corporate activities and achievements which affect the wider community.
4. This is the second of two bi-annual reports, agreed by Area Committee in June, to provide an update of activities and services undertaken by WNWhL.

## **Recommendations**

Area Committee Members are asked to note the content of this report.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To outline the purpose of West North West homes Leeds (WNWhL) involvement in Area Committees, and to explore ways of making that involvement as meaningful and productive as possible.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 An introductory report was submitted to the Inner West Area Committee in June 2011 outlining areas of mutual interest and opportunities to promote collaborative working for the benefit of communities in Inner West Leeds. The report recommended that WNWhL should provide further, more detailed, reports on a twice yearly basis; it was agreed that these reports would fall into the Autumn & Springtime cycle of meetings.
- 2.2 WNWhL delivers services to customers through a combination of centralised and decentralised structures. Generally speaking, estate and tenancy management functions are delivered locally by the Neighbourhood Housing Team based at the Neighbourhood Housing Office on Bramley Town Street. Support services such as Lettings, Rent and Repairs are delivered through a decentralised structure, however enquiries for the range of services we provide can be handled at the local Bramley office, and also at the Armley One Stop Centre. The bulk of customer enquiries are processed through the Council Contact Centre, with whom WNWhL has a Service Delivery Agreement.
- 2.3 This report focuses on examples of joint working, and activities which promote community involvement and well being. However, the Community Safety update report, submitted regularly to the Area Committee, features examples of collaboration and joint working between WNWhL, West Yorkshire Police, Area Management and other agencies.

## **3 Main issues**

### **3.1 Environmental Management**

#### **3.1.1 Partnership working**

The Neighbourhood Housing Team is a key partner in the Monthly Crime and Grime, Multi Tasking meetings which take place with partners including; West Yorkshire Police, Community Safety Unit, Environmental Action Team, Youth Service, the Leeds Anti Social Behaviour Team and Area Management. The meeting is designed to share local information and intelligence and agree local priorities and joint actions for delivering service improvements. Local priorities are agreed by the Tasking Group, which primarily focus on crime and grime (environmental issues). Since the last update provided to Committee in October , this group has delivered local action days in the following areas: New Wortley , Summerfields, Rossefields, Moorsides; and is working with partners to address fly tipping issues in the Little Scotland /Aviaries /Cedars area of Armley. A further action day is planned for the Snowden Estate, and a programme of repair work has been planned for the Raynville Multi Storey flats. WNWhL has an active role in

delivery of local action days, including provision and delivery of promotional information, providing staffing resources, through our Neighbourhood Management Officers and Neighbourhood Caretakers. WNWhL also contributes financially with the provision of skips, where environmental improvements are required. The noticeable outcome of these action days have been improved environmental conditions, where local residents have provided positive feedback about improved conditions.

As a result of attending the Area Committee WNWhL have been represented on the Inner West Environmental Sub Group which until recently has been meeting regularly to discuss and tackle local issues and priorities. This represents a positive outcome from WNWhL's involvement with the Area Committee and an opportunity to cement the relationship for the benefit of the West Leeds Community.

### 3.1.2 Estate caretaking.

These services are undertaken by the WNWhL Neighbourhood Caretaking Teams, who provide a front line environmental service, patrolling estates and communal areas of multi storey accommodation daily, ensuring a high visible presence to deter illegal dumping, illegal entry, vandalism and other acts of anti social behaviour. The team act as the eyes and ears on the estate reporting and recording any illegal activity and breaches of tenancy. They provide a patrol service of estates on a planned basis, assessing and dealing with environmental issues in communal areas, such as ginnels , walkways and communal land where hotspots exist.

The team have also utilised the services of the Probation service to help clear void gardens and more recently as part of a large project with the extensive clean up land behind properties on Leeds and Bradford Road. Currently the team are carrying out extensive environmental clean ups in the Inner West area as part of our 'would you live here campaign' designed to increase the environmental appearance of our estates.

### 3.1.3 Estate Walkabouts and Inspections.

In line with our published service standards WNWhL arranges regular Estate Inspections which take place on a monthly basis for each area; and twice yearly Estate Walkabouts for each area. Estate Walkabouts are promoted on our website and WNWhL welcomes the opportunity for customers, partners and other representatives to attend the inspections and walkabouts with us. Often the issues identified may be the responsibility of other Council Departments e.g. Highways, Parks & Countryside and the Walkabouts provide an opportunity for other agencies to contribute to improving environmental conditions and quality of life for local people. Details of the planned walkabouts for April , May and June are appended to this report.

As a Service Improvement idea, WNWhL are piloting an 'Out of Hours' walkabout programme, the idea being to widen the opportunity for involvement and to gain an alternative perception of estates by having a very visible presence on evenings or weekends. Inner West is at the forefront of this project with a walkabout on the Broadlea estate planned for Saturday the 10 March. Promotional material is attached as an appendices for information.

Members of Area Committee, and colleagues within Area Management, are invited to contact the author of this report should there be any interest in attending one of the walkabouts, or estate inspections.

#### 3.1.4 Grounds Maintenance

A new contract commenced on 1 January 2012 with Continental Landscapes LTD. The contract replaced the previous contract arrangements with Glendale and due to the mild winter we have experienced the grass cutting service has already commenced. Continental therefore already have a visible presence across the area. The new contract mirrors the previous one with Glendale and therefore provides grounds maintenance services to Highways as well as ALMO land. At the time of writing this report, no performance information is available, given the recent commencement of the contract. Continental have expressed a desire to engage with community groups and representatives, and this would include attendance at a future Area Committee meeting.

### 3.2 Area Panels

- 3.2.1 WNWhL has four Area Panels, which have the same boundaries as Leeds City Council's Inner and Outer West and Inner and Outer North West Area Committees.
- 3.2.2 The Area Panels have an active role in setting and agreeing local priorities using local Community Partnership Agreements. They have a delegated budget and are able to approve bid submissions for issues such as:
- Environmental schemes
  - Community safety schemes
  - Tenant involvement schemes
- 3.2.3 Since the last update, funding has been agreed for various schemes across the area including the Broadleas, Wellington Grove and New Wortley. The Area Panel budget however is currently underspent.
- 3.2.4 Following an earlier discussion at Area Committee, WNWhL have instigated improvements to the 'Gassy Field' area in New Wortley to deter the intrusion onto the site by Travellers, and to prevent further disturbance to the local community.
- 3.2.5 At the previous Area Committee meeting in February, the topic of joint funding projects was raised. Meetings are to be held with the Area Management Team to explore ways of joint funding projects which would meet both Area Management and ALMO priorities. WNWhL is seeking to recruit an external funding officer, whose role will be to attract additional funding for community schemes e.g. from the Lottery, or European funding sources. Staff have been encouraged to identify schemes for 2012/13 to ensure budgets are maximised, and the potential to jointly fund projects with Area Committee is seen as advantageous.

### 3.3 Local Area Management Plans (LAMPs)

3.3.1 WNWhL work with Area Management to deliver key improvements to priority areas, determined by area profiling information such as the multiple deprivation index. In Inner West Leeds, LAMPs have previously been created for New Wortley, the Fairfields and the Wythers. Currently the Fairfields and New Wortley LAMP's are continuing however WNWhL have developed the Wyther Improvement Group (WIG) and the Broadleas Improvement Group (BIG) which operate in parallel to the LAMP framework and feature partnership working to deliver outcomes for the local communities. Area Management provide key partnership links and this is a further example of collaborative working aimed at delivering improvements for local people in west Leeds. Examples of the positive outcomes achieved through this network include:

- Two new Housing Surgeries implemented on the Broadlea's and Moorside's Estates.
- New weekly surgery established at Raynville Grange
- Crime survey and Hate Crime awareness days on the Broadlea's estate
- Environmental Action days on estates in the Inner West areas
- Home Fire Safety Checks on Coalhill's and Ganners estates
- Cooking classes on the Wyther Estate
- Walking group set up on the Wythers estate

As the action plans are ongoing there are a number of objectives we still want to achieve; some of these objectives are listed below as examples of continuing improvement :

- Establishing links with Job Centre Plus to address worklessness
- Raising awareness of Young People's Aspirations
- Health living Activities
- Maintaining Green Spaces
- Engaging local people and promoting integration
- Under reporting of Crime
- Opportunities for Business Start up

A recent meeting with the Area Support Team indicated that a revised model for local area improvements, the proposal of a Neighbourhood Improvement Programme , may present a way forward to refresh our approach and develop further joint working for the benefit of local communities.

### 3.3.2 Burnsalls

Although not part of any formal LAMP area, Burnsall Croft is currently subject to an intensive Housing Management programme. We are trying to ensure all residents are contacted for a home visit; issues concerning noise nuisance and dog ownership are being addressed and cleaning standards at the block are being monitored constantly. A monthly update is sent to the Armley Ward Members by means of a progress report, and the local neighbourhood management officer is in regular dialogue with the Residents Association. The Local Letting Policy for this block ( age 40+) has been recommended by the WNWhL Board for retention in 2012/13.

### 3.4 Community Engagement

WNWhL has a successful track record in community engagement, and received a very positive ranking for this service in the most recent Audit Commission Inspection (June 2010).

There are more than 15 different involvement methods that customers can access to become involved with WNWhL. These range from traditional Tenant & Residents Associations, of which there are 12 in the Inner West area, to innovative forums such as the Sheltered Housing Forum and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Group.

Some other examples of community engagement have included:

- Working with partner agencies on a Broadlea improvement group and Wyther Improvement Group to improve issues such as health, employment, education and youth provision;
- The creation of local surgeries across the area, including at Moorside, Broadleas, Coal Hills, Fairfields, Armley mosque, Raynville. Coffee mornings are attended at Sir Karl Cohen Square and Phil May Court Sheltered Schemes; and
- Attendance by Neighbourhood Housing Office staff at tenant and resident meetings.

Some of our successes have been in the following areas:

- At Armley Mosque which has increased customer involvement from members of a BME community;
- We have maintained active resident groups across the area; and
- Successfully developed a multi agency action plan at both Improvement groups which is delivering improved services in local areas of high deprivation.

In terms of challenges ahead, the Wyther Estate continues to present various issues which would be better faced with support and involvement from the local community. WNWhL however continues to face difficulties in attracting and retaining involved residents from this area, despite our best attempts to do so.

In the future we expect to see increased customer involvement across the area. We aim to achieve this by continued good relationships with our partner agencies and our Neighbourhood Housing Team focusing on excellence in tenancy management.

This report suggests that to further cement the relationship between Area Management and WNWhL there is potential to explore existing communication channels with WNWhL customers for wider consultation on a range of community issues. It is also suggested that WNWhL is represented regularly at the Armley and Bramley Community Forums.

### 3.5 Financial Inclusion

- 3.5.1 WNWhL has an agreed Financial Inclusion Strategy which includes the strategic priority : Access to Housing Benefit and other Welfare Benefits. Using customer profiling data and the Deprivation Index, WNWhL has planned 2 take up campaigns

in 2011/12. The first of these focused on promotion of Discretionary Housing Payment ( DHP ) for tenants living in the Bramley, Armley and Wortley areas. The second of the campaigns is designed to undertake a Benefit Healthcheck for tenants living in the Armley area, due to commence on 19 March. Future reports to Area Committee will reflect the evaluation of these campaigns including the positive outcomes achieved for customers.

We are preparing for the Government's planned Welfare Reforms by collaborating with the other Leeds ALMOs, RSLs and the Leeds Benefits and Revenues Service; however the possibility of the Leeds 12 are being selected for the ' Demonstration Project' has been removed as the DWP have selected another area to test the reform programme.

3.5.2 The Strategy also includes the priorities of Debt Prevention and Early Intervention, and Access to Support and Financial Services. Using Business Intelligence we are reviewing our methodology for rent arrears cases requiring escalation to the County Court for recovery action. This is because there appears to be an imbalance with the general profile of tenants with a Kurdish background entering the Court system, suggesting a breakdown in terms of communication and advice for these customers. In terms of support we continue to work with Leeds City Credit Union and promote their products and services, and signpost customers to the voluntary sector for advice in appropriate circumstances. A recent Service Improvement initiative has been the implementation of a Hardship Fund and tenants from Inner West have accounted for 33% of the cases referred, indicating the financial hardship and difficulties that many of our customers are experiencing.

3.5.3 As we review and develop our Strategy, the Unemployment and NEET agendas are adopting a higher profile, and it is envisaged that Worklessness will form a 4<sup>th</sup> strategic priority when we refresh the Financial Inclusion Strategy later in 2012. We already have partnership links with Job Centre Plus and this development will encourage and facilitate further joint working and collaboration with Area Management and other areas of the Council and wider Public Sector.

### 3.6 Repair Services

3.6.1 Area Committee members may be aware that WNWhL, along with Aire Valley Homes ( AVH), commenced a new maintenance contract with Morrison FS in 2011. Problems have been experienced since the start of the contract due to a number of issues and WNWhL has seen an increase in the number of customer complaints and enquiries from Ward Members regarding the completion of repairs to Council properties. At a local level Housing Management staff report a gradual improvement in services delivered by Morrison, and point to the establishment of a weekly repair surgery, staffed by Morrison FS, as a constructive step forward and helpful means of support for customers experiencing problems. In addition Morrison have established a secondary call handling centre at their Leeds HQ and communication problems are also starting to improve as a result of this initiative.

Corporately, discussions are taking place with Morrison FS about the management of the contract with representatives of LCC AVH and WNWhL involved at a senior level. WNWhL has been asked to provide a briefing paper which will be circulated to Ward Members separately.



As with Continental Landscapes, Morrison are keen to engage with the Communities which they are serving and this would include attendance at a future Area Committee meeting.

#### **4.0 Corporate Considerations**

##### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 This report confirms the commitment of WNWhL to consult and engage with residents wherever possible. We also seek to consult with stakeholders including Area Management and other Council Departments where appropriate.

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

- 4.2.1 The services and functions described in this report are consistent with the Council's and WNWhL's approach to Equality Diversity and Cohesion.

##### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The content of this report is consistent with the WNWhL strategic objectives, and the strategic aims of the Council encompassed by the Vision for Leeds; Leeds Children & Young Person Plan; Strategic Health & Wellbeing Plan.

##### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 4.4.1 No direct implications, services delivered by WNWhL are within budget allocated through the Management Fee arrangements.

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

- 4.5.1 No direct implications. This report is not eligible for call in, due to being a Council Function.

##### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 WNWhL has a corporate approach to risk management, with risks to business prioritised according to likelihood and impact. Risks are mitigated by action planning accordingly.

#### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 It is concluded that there are clear benefits and opportunities for WNWhL working closely with the Area Committee as outlined in this report. This approach provides the opportunity to develop services and deliver joined up solutions to support local communities.

#### **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Members are invited to note this report, and it is recommended that WNWhL provide a further six monthly update to Area Committee in the Autumn period.

## **7 Background documents**

### 7.2 Appendices :

- Details of planned walkabouts
- Marketing material for 'Out of Hours' Walkabout Programme.