

Report of West North West Homes

Report to Inner North West Area Committee

Date: April 2012

Subject: West North West homes Leeds involvement in Area Committees

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
Hyde Park & Woodhouse		
Headingley		
Kirkstall		
Weetwood		
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?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

1. WNWhL provide a range of housing management services in the West and North West of Leeds. Tenancy and Estate Management services are delivered locally from our offices located in Kirkstall and Little London.
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 Neighbourhood Offices and 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 areas where opportunities exist to work collaboratively to improve conditions for local people, alongside 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 September 2011, to provide an update of activities and services undertaken by WNWhL.

Recommendations

Members of the North West (Inner) Area Committee are invited to note the content of this report and it is recommended that WNWhL provide a further six monthly update to Area Committee of progress with areas of mutual interest in the Autumn period.

1 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 To update on the involvement of West North West homes Leeds (WNWhL) 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 North West Area Committee in September 2011, outlining areas of mutual interest and opportunities to promote collaborative working for the benefit of communities in Inner North 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 Teams based at the Neighbourhood Housing Offices, located in Kirkstall and Little London. 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 aforementioned offices. 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. The Community Safety update report, submitted regularly to the Area Committee, also features examples of collaboration and joint working between WNWhL, West Yorkshire Police, Area Management and other agencies.

3. Main issues

3.1 Partnership Working

- 3.1.1 Crime and Grime Multi Tasking Groups were set up in 2004. Their aim is to provide a clear framework for the positive management of the Inner North West area, whilst delivering a multi agency approach, when dealing with issues relating to crime and grime. To share local information and intelligence, to agree local priorities and deliver joint actions for delivering service improvements.
- 3.1.2 Agreed priorities of the Crime and Grime Group are to improve environmental conditions within the Inner North West area, to provide a joined up approach when dealing with issues in relation to crime, anti social behaviour.

- 3.1.3 The Inner North West, Crime and Grime Tasking Group has two Neighbourhood Action Plans. The Kirkstall, Hawksworth Wood Neighbourhood Plan (the Hawksworth Wood Burglary Reduction Plan feeds into this) and the Hyde Park Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.1.4 A key element of the Hawksworth Wood Neighbourhood Plan is to involve & empower tenants and residents living on the estate and a public meeting with residents showed that this was crucial for any plan to work. WNWhL is working with partners to create a Community Engagement Board for the Hawksworth Wood Estate. Consultation has taken place with partner agencies and tenants and residents and street representatives are being identified for each street on the estate. The group are also identifying the top priorities for the estate and partners agree that one priority is to ensure that local people are 'skilled' up to be in a position to apply for future jobs, which will be available through the regeneration of the Kirkstall Forge site, the British Home Stores site and the proposed development of TESCO on the site at the top of Kirkstall Hill.
- 3.1.5 A Good Neighbour Local Lettings policy for the Hawksworth Wood estate was approved by WNWhL board in February 2011 but due to problems with the Police ISA implementation was delayed. WNWhL launched the Local Lettings Policy in February 2012, Councillor Gruen briefed Ward Members on the 1st February 2012. The policy will mean that any applicant applying for a one bedroom flat on the estate will have to demonstrate that they have not committed crime or ASB within the estate for the last two years. Checks will be carried out by the LASBT/Core team. A review of this will be presented to WNWhL Board. Jude Wray, Area Performance Manager and Chief Inspector Sam Millar are attending to present the update.
- 3.1.6 As part of the Burglary Reduction Plan, WNWhL has funded the purchase of 'Radio Tactic equipment' and part funded a further piece of equipment with Safer Leeds. This will enable the Neighbourhood Policing Team to identify stolen goods recovered for anyone who has registered goods with 'Immobilise'. The equipment will enable PCSOs and NMOs to scan customers goods such as mobile phones, TVs, etc by scanning the bar code, particularly on 'action days'. The police will also be able to scan any goods in 'stop and search' and second hand shops. The Neighbourhood Policing Team's vision is that all residents, public sector tenants, private tenants and students will register goods on immobilise and this will reduce crime in the Inner North West. WNWhL are to write to all Tenants and Residents Associations to promote this scheme, we are also to include information in our sign up pack for new tenants. The Universities and Leeds Metropolitan have also purchased the equipment. The Neighbourhood Policing Team are working with the School clusters to promote Immobilise to Owner Occupiers, through parents evenings.
- 3.1.7 A training session has been delivered by the Police to all front facing staff within the Inner North West Team including the caretakers on Burglary reduction.
- 3.1.8 A clean up day was carried out in August 2011, lead by the Neighbourhood Management Officer which was a great success. In the same month WNWhL also attended the Hawksworth Wood Community day organised by the Community Centre. WNWhL have also taken part in two Hate Crime Action days, organised by the MARAC, on Hawksworth Wood and on the Silk Mill Estate.
- 3.1.9 A clean up week was carried in the Hyde Park area by the Neighbourhood Caretakers, concentrating on Hyde Park Close and St Johns Close area, to clear overgrown areas,

remove all fly tipping and litter pick. This improved the overall look and condition of the estate and residents have fed back that they have seen a marked improvement in the area. The Hyde Park Tasking Board are planning to have a volunteer day of action and to carry out perception surveys in the area which WNWhL will assist with.

3.1.10 WNWhL is a member of the Inner North West Cluster and the Open XS Cluster, and of the Little London Children's Centre and a member of the Rosebank Children's Centre Advisory Board.

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 The Inner North West Area Panel budget for 2011/12 is set at £100K, £75K on Capital schemes and £25K on Revenue. The panel consider VFM and Community Partnership Priorities when discussing and making decisions to approve bids.

3.2.4 A report was taken to Septembers Area Panel Meeting to evaluate previous bids. The bids valuated were;

- Clayton Grange - Yellow Lines in front of Bin Room
- Sandford Road - Community Space
- Silk Mill Approach - Car Park Lines
- Woodbridge Green - Bollards
- Woodbridge Place – Fencing

The bid evaluated as being most successful in achieving its aims was the provision of bollards to prevent vehicles gaining access to the pedestrian access of Woodbridge Green. The only bid felt to have not generally met its aims was the provision of Yellow lines in front of bin room at Clayton Grange. All the bids received more than 50% in relation to customers being satisfied or very satisfied that they had improved their area and quality of life

3.2.5 Throughout 2011/12 The Inner North West Area Panel have approved bids to fund a notice board to be supplied and fitted on the Gilbert & Sandford estate to compliment a new playground. This gives the local Tenant and Residents Group a focal place to share information to local tenants and residents and for the ALMO to promote the work that they are carrying out. Bids have also been approved to fit bollards on a number of sites which have restricted cars parking on grassed areas or driving onto flagged areas which can cause repairs and maintenance issues.

3.2.6 Bids have also been approved for white lines to be marked on existing car parks which maximises parking space meeting one of the top three Inner North West Community Partnership Priorities. The Panel has also approved bids to tackle an overgrown and unused patio area for residents living in Broomfield Crescent. The Hyde Park and Woodhouse areas have a number of bin yards that are difficult to maintain and Area Panel have agreed funding of £9K to lower walls and fit gates to address this problem. Funding has also been approved to fit low fencing to the 'ledge' at the side of a property on the Woodbridge estate to prevent youths from sitting on the ledge and reduce issues of Anti Social Behaviour. The Panel have agreed funding of £35K as part of an overall joint funding bid of £100K to fit fencing round the perimeter of the Marlborough estate. This will help prevent people walking through the estate as it is situated opposite Park Lane College in Leeds. This will then allow further bids to be placed for environmental improvements, the estate has many areas of tarmac and paving and it is planned to reduce these and replace with grassed areas for easy maintenance or areas which tenants and residents can use to plant fruit and vegetables.

3.2.7 A successful Good Garden Competition was held in the Inner North West with prize money being part funded by the area panel.

3.3 Caretaking and Cleaning.

3.3.1 Our Neighbourhood Caretaking Team provide a front line environmental service, patrolling estates and communal buildings including daily visits to multi storey flats, 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 'grot spots' exist.

3.3.2 The Caretaking team also undertake regular work in a number of areas which are identified as hotspot areas for litter and fly-tipping. They have focussed on the Lovells, Oatlands, Blenheims, Hyde Park and Carlton estates.

3.3.3 The monitoring of the new grounds works contract with Continental forms an important part of the work undertaken by the Neighbourhood Caretaking Team and Neighbourhood Management Officers in the Inner North West area. The successful implementation of the new contract will have a significant positive impact on the environment within the Inner North West area.

3.3.4 The Little London Office are meeting with Street Scene to see how resources can be better used to tackle the issue of litter in the Little London area.

3.4 Estate Walkabouts & Inspections

3.4.1 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.

- 3.4.2 The Neighbourhood Management Officers have invited their Ward members to attend the estate inspections and will ensure that they make members aware of when they are to take place.
- 3.4.3 The estate grading process is currently under review to strengthen delivery against local priorities and generate opportunities for maximising funding with partners and stakeholders to deliver environmental improvements and raise the conditions of the estates.

3.5 Grounds Maintenance.

- 3.5.1 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. Continental have expressed a desire to engage with community groups and representatives, and this would include attendance at a future Area Committee meeting.

3.6 Community Engagement.

- 3.6.1 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). In 2008 we were awarded the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Quality Accreditation for Resident Involvement, the first ALMO in the country to achieve this. This is a three year award and we are currently awaiting results for re-accreditation.
- 3.6.2 We have recently established Tenant Scrutiny, a method of involving customers which will offer us independent challenge and suggest proposals for change to the way we deliver our services. This has been done in consultation with customers over the last year.
- 3.6.3 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:

- Identifying an Area Representative for Hyde Park
- In the process of setting up a new TARA for Iveson Grove
- A new TARA to represent the Tinshill and Silk Mill Estates, first meeting February 2012
- Community Engagement Board Hawksworth Wood estate.

3.7 Financial Inclusion

- 3.7.1 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.
- 3.7.2 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.
- 3.7.3 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.
- 3.7.4 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 4th 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.

3.8 Repairs Service

- 3.8.1 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.
- 3.8.2 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.

- 3.8.3 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 Corporate Considerations

The joint work and development of shared services between WNWhL and the Inner North West Area Committee, provides an efficient and cost effective way of working, to drive improvement and efficiency, within the Inner North West area.

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

All residents living in the Inner North West area have been consulted using our Community Partnership Agreements, to ascertain their priorities for the area and to identify improvements they would like to see. Current priorities have been identified as;

- Litter
- Youth provision
- Dog Fouling

Detailed consultation is undertaken for each Area Panel bid submission. Post evaluation of schemes is also undertaken.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

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

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

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

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

4.6 Risk management

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

It is concluded that there are clear benefits and opportunities for WNWhL working closely with Area Committees as outlined in this report. Developing this approach provides the opportunity to further develop services and join up working to the benefit of residents, which ensures that all agencies in the area target resources in a joined up and effective way.

6 Recommendations

Members of the North West (Inner) Area Committee are invited to note the content of this report and it is recommended that WNWhL provide a further six monthly update to Area Committee of progress with areas of mutual interest in the Autumn period.

7 Background Documents

None