

Report of West North West homes Leeds WNWhL

Report to Inner West Area committee

Date: September 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 first of two bi-annual reports, agreed by Area Committee in 2011, 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

Partnership working

- 3.1 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 March, this group has delivered local action days in the following areas: Broadleas, Clydes, Hedleys, Holdforths with planned works booked in

for the Poplars and St Catherines. Hot spot areas include the Broadlea, Wyther and Clyde estates. A further action day is planned for the Snowden Estate in September and a programme of repair work is ongoing 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.

- 3.2 Partnership in the form of Locality Working has been piloted in the Outer West area and has been featured in reports to Area Committee by the Locality Manager. We are hopeful a similar approach can be tried in the Inner West area, and during informal discussions, the New Wortley area has been suggested as a possible location to extend the pilot.

Neighbourhood Caretaking.

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The team have also utilised the services of the Probation service to help clear void gardens with a total of 60 garden clearances completed since May. 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 improve the environmental appearance of our estates. The caretakers are also currently focussing on providing an enhanced service to tackle the top 3 priorities identified by our customers in our Multi Storey Flats (MSF). This is part of an ongoing service improvement plan for this year to increase satisfaction of our customers living in High Rise Accommodation.

Estate Walkabouts and Inspections.

- 3.6 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 September, October are appended to this report.
- 3.7 As a Service Improvement idea, WNWhL have piloted '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. So far the scheme has unfortunately attracted little interest but the area teams aim to plan further out of hours events and we will ensure there is adequate marketing and publicity to try and maximise participation. A request has been sent to Area Managers across the ALMO to identify areas to re-launch this scheme with a view to completing out of hours walkabout before the winter months.

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

Service Improvement- Out of Hours working

- 3.9 A new Out Of Hours Tenancy team was launched in late July with a pilot scheme for 3 months currently underway in the Inner West Area. It was identified through our customer satisfaction surveys that our customers had raised concerns of vandalism and Anti Social Behaviour after 5pm and at weekends. The team consists of 4 officers working in pairs during evening hours 4pm until 12pm from Tuesday to Sunday each week. Officers are carrying out various visits, identifying abandoned and sub let properties and providing a surveillance of our MSF at weekends in order to be able to provide witness statements in Anti Social Behaviour cases. The officers have been well received on the estates and customer feedback has been very positive to date as the officers are increasing visibility on the estates and providing reassurance to our customers. The new service will be officially launched in September with MP's, tenants and local councillors and will be advertised through BUZZ and our website.

Grounds Maintenance

- 3.10 A new contract commenced on 1 January 2012 with Continental Landscapes LTD, replacing the arrangements with the previous contractor, Glendale. The new contract mirrors the previous one with Glendale and therefore provides grounds maintenance services to Highways as well as ALMO land. Feedback from customers and performance information suggest the opening period of the contract has been successful; in July we reported that 97.2% of sites were cut to specification. The Neighbourhood Management Officers monitor quality and performance locally, and Continental have an effective rectification process for any sites that fail the standard and are subsequently 'snagged' by the NMOs. The season is nearing conclusion with the last cut due in October, and we will be able to present a fuller picture of performance in future reports.

Area Panels

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 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

- 3.13 Since the last update, funding has been agreed for various schemes across the area including the Broadlea, Poplar, Coal Hill and Wyther estates. We have also secured funding for the good garden competition for our tenants.
- 3.14 Following an earlier discussion at Area Committee, WNWhL have completed 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. So far the improvements appear to have been successful, with no further intrusions or occupation of the site.
- 3.15 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 have recruited 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.

Neighbourhood Improvement Plans

- 3.16 The Area Committee received an update in June, regarding the introduction of Neighbourhood Improvement Plans (NIPs), representing a revised model for neighbourhood improvements in our most deprived areas. WNWhL have met with the Area Support Team recently to explore how we can be involved in this initiative in a meaningful way. There are obvious connections as many of the deprived areas are associated with areas of Council housing managed by WNWhL. As WNWhL develops Estate Plans we will continue to consult and work with the Area Support Team to contribute to and integrate with the NIP programme.

Community Engagement

- 3.17 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). We have recently been awarded accreditation by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) after scoring very highly on our assessment.
- 3.18 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.
- 3.19 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.

3.20 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.
- Attending the Armley Funday and Bramley Carnival
- Community involvement week where we organised a rounders and cricket match against residents from Moorsides and the Armley Mosque.
- Organised and attended the Broadlea's community fun day with partnering agencies.

3.21 We are currently awaiting the outcome of an assessment for the Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF) and retain our Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award. One of the outcomes of WNWhL's involvement with the Area Committee is our renewed involvement in the local Armley and Bramley Forums, where we try to ensure attendance on a regular basis.

Financial Inclusion & Welfare Reform

- 3.22 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 plans 2 take up campaigns annually in parallel with our rent arrears campaigns. In 2011/12 these focused on promotion of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) for tenants living in the Bramley, Armley and Wortley areas, and a Benefit Healthcheck for tenants living in the Armley area.
- 3.23 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. In terms of the 'bedroom tax' – a reduction in benefit entitlement for claimants under-occupying their property, we are implementing a home visit programme to raise awareness and discuss the options currently available. In the Inner West area this amounts to approximately 800 visits, which are to be shared amongst our Customer Account Team, NMOs, and Independent Living Teams.
- 3.24 The Strategy also includes the priorities of Debt Prevention and Early Intervention, and Access to Support and Financial Services. 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.

- 3.25 As we review and develop our Strategy, the Unemployment and NEET agendas are adopting a higher profile, and it is envisaged that Worklessness may form a 4th strategic priority when we refresh the Financial Inclusion Strategy in the future. 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. We are promoting the worklessness agenda with our West North West Works project, and are seeking to appoint a Financial Inclusion Officer to further develop service delivery in this area.
- 3.26 Working with colleagues in LCC Customer Services, we are awaiting the outcome of a bid to the DWP that will provide additional resources at the Bramley NHO and Armley 1SC aimed directly at supporting and helping local residents deal with the implications of the Welfare Reform programme, for example being able to make benefit claims on line.

Repair Services

- 3.27 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.
- 3.28 Earlier this year the Council and ALMOs jointly agreed a recovery plan with Morrison and this is being very carefully managed by senior managers & executives. Recent press coverage and statements from the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities indicate that whilst we are working with the contractors to achieve improvements in services, a very robust stance is being taken, with the Council considering all options going forward.

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 WNWHhL'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 Springtime.

7 Background documents

7.1 Appendices :

- Details of planned walkabouts