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## Report of Chief Officer Statutory Housing

### Report to Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board

**Date: 18 December 2012**

**Subject: Former residential properties utilised for non residential/ community/ office purposes**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Please see Appendix 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

This report is an update to Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board (following on from the report submitted in September 2012) on the work being undertaken by the Asset and Development Team, in assessing the initial 49 residential properties (which form part of the ALMO Management agreement) identified as being used for non residential, community or office purposes.

### Recommendations

Scrutiny Board are requested to note the contents of this report and the updated list of properties (Appendix 1) which sets out the approach to deal with former residential properties utilised for non residential, community or office purposes.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The Environment and Neighbourhoods Asset and Development team, at Scrutiny Board's request, undertook a piece of work to assess the number of residential Council properties which are being used for non residential, community or office purposes.
- 1.2 This report provides Scrutiny Board with an update on work, following on from the report submitted in September 2012.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The report submitted in September 2012, reported that there were 49 units across the city which have been identified as residential properties being used for office/ community/ non residential purposes. Since the initial report this figure has now changed 55 units, as further work has brought more properties forward. These 55 properties are listed in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 At the Scrutiny Board meeting in September, clarification was requested on the sheltered flat arrangements for Queensview and Queenswood Court, the local circumstances involved and if the schemes had their own furniture. Following on from the meeting, the Asset and Development Team looked into this query and can confirm that Queensview is a 17 storey block of flats built in 1966 and managed by East North East Homes, which was converted into a Sheltered Housing block in 1997. The ground floor flats were converted into two communal rooms, two disabled showers, two disabled toilets, a launderette and two offices. The resident's flats are equipped with the 24 hour Care Ring system. The old second floor entrance has now been converted to a snooker room for residents. On a similar basis Queenswood Court is a sheltered complex of 40, 1 and 2 bedroom flats with ground floor communal rooms, lounge, laundry and conservatory. The properties are let to tenants of 60 years of age.
- 2.3 Both complexes are equipped with furniture and the communal areas are well used by residents. On this basis, they are deemed unsuitable for conversion into residential accommodation.
- 2.4 Further work by the team, in conjunction with the ALMOs, has meant that more detail of these 55 properties is now known, and they are being used for the following purposes:
  - 4 properties are used as ALMO offices
  - 7 properties are now let for residential use
  - 1 property is a CCTV control room
  - 11 properties have formal lease arrangements with community groups
  - 6 properties have tenants groups using buildings on an informal basis with no formal lease agreements
  - 3 properties are void
  - 2 properties are Guest rooms in sheltered blocks
  - 5 properties are used as residential/ communal areas in non sheltered flats
  - 16 properties are used as residential/ communal areas in sheltered flats

- 2.2 Of the 55 properties the Asset Team, in conjunction with the ALMOs, have assessed that 22 units are not suitable for conversion for residential, and should remain as community/ communal use (the majority of these are sheltered units).
- 2.3 4 units are considered not to have immediate potential to be returned to residential use, as they are currently used by community groups, but should be reviewed again in 2 years.
- 2.4 6 units are considered to have the potential to be returned to residential use, and the Asset team will be working closely with the ALMOs to explore these further.
- 2.5 The Asset team are awaiting comments from the ALMOs on 16 properties and their suitability to bring back into residential use, or remain as a community facility.

### **3.0 Main issues**

- 3.2 Since the last report in September 2012, the Asset and Development Team have worked in accordance with the action plan (submitted as part of the report in September 2012) in conjunction with officers in the ALMOs and BITMO to assess the current use of the properties and agree if any are suitable to bring back into charge for letting for residential purposes. The team also work with Strategy and Commissioning (who are responsible for the management of purpose built community centres managed by Environment and Neighbourhoods) to establish if there are any other suitable shared facilities in the area where groups can meet, rather than occupying a residential property for their sole use.
- 2.6 Leeds City Council currently owns approximately 58, 000 properties. The 55 residential properties which are used for non residential purposes equates to approximately is 0.08% of the total council stock.

### **4.0 Corporate Considerations**

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

- 4.1.1 This piece of work originated from an enquiry at Scrutiny Board on the numbers of residential properties which are used for non residential, community or office purposes. An initial report was presented in September 2012.
- 4.1.2 The Asset and Development Team have worked with Housing Management and the ALMOs to compile the information. A report outlining the issues was submitted to DMT COG on 23 August 2012.
- 4.1.3 The groups using the facilities are to be fully consulted, along with Local Ward Members and Area management, who will be consulted on a case by case basis as and when decisions are made on individual properties.

4.1.3 The Asset and Development Team have also been working with Strategy and Commissioning (who are responsible for the management of purpose built community centres managed by Environment and Neighbourhoods) to assess the availability of alternative community facilities (i.e. should a decision be taken to bring units utilised for community purposes back into charge for residential purposes, we can find the groups alternative facilities).

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

5.1 Should decisions be made to bring the properties back into charge for residential purposes full Equality and Impact Assessments will be undertaken.

## **6.0 Council policies and City Priorities**

6.1 The high demand for affordable homes in the City means that the Council has an obligation to ensure that all suitable residential properties are let for those in housing need. The Environments and Neighbourhoods Asset and Development Team are also working to ensure that the Council achieve best value for all its assets (i.e. that the Council is receiving full rental revenue income from its residential properties) in order to ensure that the self financing HRA remains strong financially.

## **7.0 Resources and value for money**

7.1 The primary purpose of the work is to return as many suitable properties back to residential use, to increase housing supply and rental income to the Council. The estimated rent forgone on the 55 properties is £1,395,632. This equates to an annual rent loss figure of approximately £147,686.

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

8.1 The proposals contained within this report are eligible for call in.

## **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 The current demand for housing stock within the city means that LCC, the ALMOs and BITMO must review all the assets listed on Appendix 1 and assess their suitability to bring back into charge to be let for residential purposes. By not undertaking this review there is a risk that £147,686 revenue per annum is lost to the HRA, on providing community/ non residential uses which are potentially under utilised.

## **10.0 Conclusions**

10.1 There are currently 55 units across the city which have been identified as residential properties being used for non residential, community and office purposes. The Asset Team are continuing to work with the ALMOs to assess these properties and establish which are suitable to bring back into residential use.

## **11.0 Recommendations**

11.1 Scrutiny Board are requested to note the contents of this report.

## **12.0 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

Appendix 1 – List of properties being used for non residential, community or office purposes

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.