

Report of Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Report to Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board

Date: 30th April 2013

Subject: Update on the analysis of current housing market trends within the Leeds 6 postcode areas

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Headingley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse, Weetwood	Yes
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	Yes
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	No

Summary of main issues

1. Safer, Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board's April 2012 report into the private rented sector recommended that consideration of current market trends in the Leeds 6 area be considered and used to help predict future empty property trends.
2. On the 29th January 2013 the Housing and Regeneration Board received a report on the issues facing Leeds 6. That report showed that there has been a migration of students from the Far Headingley towards the city centre. This has been compounded by the increased number of purpose built student accommodation units built since 2005. However the existing evidence suggests that as of yet there has not been an increase in empty property numbers in the area.
3. As part of the on going research by Unipol and re'new further discussions have been held with housing providers in the area. These discussions have confirmed the conclusions of the previous Scrutiny Board Report of January 2013.
4. The discussions with the housing providers confirmed that there has and continues to be a readjustment in the markets with newer markets being developed away from the traditional student lets. Providers are also considering options around future demand and the potential conversion of properties into flats aimed at couples.

5. Providers are currently of the opinion that market forces will determine the nature of the market and that it will be for the Council to help to facilitate this change by taking action over those issues over which it has direct control.

Recommendations

6. Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board is requested to note the progress made against recommendation 4 from the Safer, Stronger Communities Scrutiny report into the Private Rented Sector (2012) and the subsequent Board report of January 2013.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board on progress since the Scrutiny Board Report in January 1023 regarding recommendation 4 of the Safer Stronger Communities scrutiny enquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing.
- 1.2 Recommendation 4 was
 - 1.2.1 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on undertaking an analysis of current housing market trends within the Leeds 6 postcode areas and for this to then be used to predict empty property trends within these areas over the next 2-3 years

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Safer Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board carried out an investigation into the Private Rented Sector in 2011 and published its report in April 2012. As part of the recommendation an initial report was brought to the Housing and Regeneration Board in January 2013.
- 2.2 The Board made the following requests for further information following on from the January 2013 meeting, namely;
 - 2.2.1 An update on the discussions that have occurred with Housing Providers in the area and what the Council can do to help them;
- 2.3 The purpose of the report is to provide the Board with the updates as per this issue.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Leeds 6 has traditionally been the home for students in Leeds whilst studying at its further education institutions. The Scrutiny Board report of January 2013 illustrated that there had been a change in the Leeds 6 market with an increased number of purpose built student flats and a migration of students away from the far reaches of Leeds 6 towards the city centre.
- 3.2 As part of the continued research undertaken by re'new into the area further discussions have been undertaken with interested housing providers in the area. Those discussions have indicated the following;

- 3.3 The providers do not believe there is or can be a grand plan for the area. The market is undergoing a change but the implications are yet to be fully understood. Far Headingley and Meanwood appear to be moving away from the student sector towards a more professional and young persons market, Hyde Park remains predominately students, with more uncertainty in the Burley, Woodhouse areas as to future demand.
- 3.4 Providers are bidding their time as to the future nature of the market. Currently some large portfolio holders are letting below capacity, reducing numbers in properties, where necessary but smaller holders are still letting at the capacity of their holdings wherever possible. It is their opinion that properties are unlikely to attract the traditional family market but possibly the younger element of single people, couples, friends etc. There was some interest in converting larger properties into flats to accommodate this type of future market. However this would depend upon the cost of such conversions.
- 3.5 In terms of the Council, providers believe that market forces will drive the changes to the area. The Council's role is to monitor what is happening, help to facilitate change through local partnerships and to take action on those issues under its direct control. These issues in their opinion include waste disposal, street and environmental improvements and community safety.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Though the Council's consultation processes stakeholders and partners will be engaged and consulted with, with a view to determining any necessary changes to service provision which may be required by the Council and partners.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration (EDCI)

- 4.2.1 Any new strategy, action plan or new service provision which may result from the work undertaken by any Council Service will be subject to EDCI assessment(s).

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The work will continue to contribute to Council priorities across a number of themes:
- Reducing the number of long term empty properties
 - Reducing crime levels and their impact across Leeds
 - Effectively tackling and reducing anti-social behaviour in our communities
 - Increase a sense of belonging that builds cohesive and harmonious communities
 - Increase affordable homes within sustainable neighbourhoods
 - Improve quality of the environment.
 - Improving housing conditions and energy efficiency

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 Currently the Council and partners are providing services within Leeds 6 to address the issues faced by this community. It is essential that any potential changes in this area are determined to enable appropriate resources and services to be provided to the Leeds 6 area. This will ensure that the service provision meets the new needs of any new emerging community.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 Officers will continue to operate within their existing powers and to work with partners to address current and emerging issues affecting Leeds 6.
- 4.5.2. The Executive Board decision was eligible to call in.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The Council's normal risk management procedures have been and continue to be applied.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 There have been changes to the housing market in Leeds 6. The outer areas have seen a contraction of the traditional student market. With the raise in purpose built student accommodation and city centre living students have migrated towards the city centre away from Far Headingley, Meanwood and Kirkstall.
- 5.2 Currently Housing Providers are of the opinion that market forces will drive the changes. The role of the Council is to affect those services that it directly controls, including collection of waste, environmental and community safety. The Council should continue to monitor the change and determine what it means for the city as a whole and engage with the relevant partners as and when any issues arise.
- 5.3 Any changes to the existing housing market and the demographics of the area will affect the current service provision in the area. The Council and its partners will need to consider the potential changes and the affect that these will have on the delivery of existing current services.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board is requested to note progress made against recommendation 4 from the Safer, Stronger Communities Scrutiny report into the Private Rented Sector (2012) and the Scrutiny Board Report in January 2013.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 Safer, Stronger Communities Inquiry report into the Private Rented Sector (2012)
- 7.2 Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board Report January 2013

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.