

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	24/09/2018
<b>Subject:</b> Tenancy Visits Programme	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Dean Robinson – Department of Community and Children's Services	

### Summary

The Corporation has a duty to ensure fair and efficient use of its housing assets. To help ensure this, officers currently visit and inspect up to a third of tenanted properties each year. There is a growing need to update the information provided through these visits more quickly than at present to ensure proper delivery of the landlord function and other services for residents. The Departmental Leadership Team has therefore decided to implement a comprehensive visit programme to collect and improve baseline data across all tenanted properties within a six-month timeframe. Trial visits of leasehold properties on Golden Lane Estate will also be included to assess the benefits for leaseholders and the Corporation. Visits are now well underway, and the locum team are working well with estate staff on the sites.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Background

1. The Corporation has a duty to ensure fair and efficient use of its housing assets. This requires it to ensure that stock is properly let and used for its intended purpose, that service delivery arrangements incorporate principles of equality and diversity, and that it understands its tenants' needs. A number of these requirements have been given added emphasis in recent years through legislation such as the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 and the Equalities Act 2010, both of which strengthened the powers and responsibilities of social housing landlords in their respective areas.
2. To help ensure these duties are carried out effectively, officers currently visit and inspect up to a third of the City's tenanted properties each year. Tenancy visits enable the Corporation to ensure properties are being properly occupied and maintained in accordance with tenancy conditions. They also help us to get to

know our tenants and their specific needs better. Visits may, for example, help us to uncover tenancy fraud, update household information where circumstances have changed, or identify additional or changed needs within households which can then be addressed.

### **Current position**

3. The programme commenced on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018. Working with the Sheltered Housing Manager and the Sheltered Scheme Managers, officers were able to visit many of the sheltered housing tenants on the first visit. The sheltered scheme teams were an invaluable resource and assisted and supported visits to vulnerable tenants, sharing their knowledge to enhance and improve the efficiency of the programme.
4. The programme is proceeding at a good pace, with a total of 571 doors knocked on and re-visited; At this writing, 206 interviews had been completed.
5. So far, no suspected fraud issues have been discovered during the tenancy visits. This is to be expected this early in the project.
6. A few cases of hoarding have been discovered and referred to the Estate Offices for further action. Tenancy Inspectors received training around hoarding and are using the hoarding scale to identify tenants who may have a hoarding issue before highlighting cases with Estate Managers.
7. The fire safety checks are being carried out and the tenants have indicated that they are pleased to have the advice and signposting for further information.
8. Once the first visits were made with the sheltered housing residents, the team moved on to general needs estates. As most of our tenants work, appointments for later dates have been made and visiting officers have been re-visiting tenants who have not contacted the team after being left calling cards.
9. Tenants who are not home on the first visit are left a calling card requesting that they contact the Project Manager, Dean Robinson, within 48 hours to make an appointment at a convenient time. A follow-up reminder letter is delivered if the resident does not make contact within 48 hours.
10. A second reminder letter will be delivered to tenants who do not respond to the previous communications and, if they still do not contact the team after this, they will be referred to Estate Managers and warned of the possibility of further action.
11. While the project is in the early stages, we are confident that we have robust procedures in place for handling any known issues, and support from estate teams and management to address issues we come across.

## **Recommendation**

12. Members are asked to:

- Note the report

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

13. The tenancy visit programme is a key objective in the Housing & Neighbourhoods division business plan and contributes to the delivery of Strategic Priority 4 - *Supporting homes and communities: Developing strong neighbourhoods and ensuring people have a decent place to live.*

## **Conclusion**

14. The visit programme is going very well so far. The programme is still in its early stages and we expect to have challenges arise, but we are equipped with the training and support to handle them.

## **Appendices**

- None

## **Background Papers**

Tenancy Visits Programme, Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee,  
23 July 2018

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