

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	27/11/18
<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, Tenancy Visits Project Manager	

### Summary

The Corporation has a duty to ensure fair, effective 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 is carrying out a comprehensive visits 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 underway, and the locum team is working well with estate staff on the sites.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- note the report.

### Background

1. Officers currently visit and inspect up to a third of its 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

2. The programme started in early August 2018. The team started on the sheltered housing schemes and the City of London Almshouses. Once these were completed, the visiting team moved on to visit general needs tenants.

3. The first round of visits has happened at Windsor House, York Way, Holloway, Dron House, and Middlesex Street.
4. The programme is proceeding at a good pace, with a total of 1,442 doors knocked on and re-visited. At the time of writing, 525 interviews have been completed. This accounts for 27% of the tenanted housing stock.
5. So far there have been three potential fraud issues uncovered from the tenancy visits and referred to the Anti-Fraud Manager. Some tenants are also making the visiting officers aware of possible sublets and student sublets, and this information is referred on for further investigation as soon as it is raised.
6. Tenancy Inspectors have been trained around hoarding and are using the hoarding scale to identify tenants who may need more support to address the issue. They have discovered a further two cases of hoarding since the last update and have referred them to the relevant Estate Manager.
7. Tenants continue to express satisfaction that the fire safety checks are being carried out and they are grateful to have the advice and signposting for further information.
8. Most tenants are proving to be cooperative with the visits and see the benefit in completing the survey. Having background information provided by managers, estate staff and the fraud team has helped identify tenants less willing to allow us access. We are confident that we have robust procedures in place for handling any issues we come across.
9. The estate teams are proving to be an invaluable resource and are assisting and supporting visits with tenants. Their knowledge of the tenants is improving the efficiency of the programme. In return, the visiting team is developing the estate staff's knowledge of using the survey and the digital technology, which will be used for future tenancy inspections once this project ends.
10. Whilst the programme is going very well, with high rates of completions, we expect that some of the residents who haven't responded to our invitations for visits will prove difficult to engage. We are prepared with procedures to address this eventuality and ensure we can gain access for the inspections.

## **Conclusion**

11. The visit programme is going very well so far, with over a quarter of all tenanted properties successfully visited. Tenants are being very cooperative in completing the surveys and the estate teams' local knowledge has assisted in gaining access to properties.
12. Several potential fraud referrals have been made and numerous tenancy management issues, such as hoarding concerns, have been referred to estate management.

## **Appendices**

- None

## **Background Papers**

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

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