

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 SEPTEMBER 2018

Title:

TENANCY AND ESTATES UPDATE

[Portfolio Holder: Carole King]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

To inform the committee of the progress of the Tenancy and Estates team. There have been a number of changes regarding provision of service and team structure since 2017.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

This report supports the priorities of Customer Service, Community Well-being, Environment and Value for Money

Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

Introduction

1. The Tenancy and Estates team is central to the wider housing operation service and works in close partnership with other housing teams to ensure consistency of service to our customers. In January the team was involved in the wider housing re-structure and the administrative support was moved to the Housing Customer Service Team to facilitate a more efficient and responsive service to our customers.
2. The current team structure comprises of:
 - Tenancy and Estates Manager - strategic manager with overall responsibility for the team
 - Team Leader - responsible for operational day to day management of Tenancy and Estates officers
 - 5 Tenancy and Estates officers - responsible for the tenancy management of approximately 5000 properties
 - 2 Intervention Officers - responsible for aids and adaptations to our properties and case working the most vulnerable tenants.
 - 2 Community Development Officers - responsible for supporting the officers to improve the environment and infrastructure for our customers

- Utilities Officer – responsible for identifying and recording centrally all communal energy meters to facilitate improved service charging.

Tenancy and Estates Officers

3. As previously reported the team have completed a review of the tenancy agreement and the new version applied to all tenants from 4 June, the implementation of the new processes will be completed by the end of September. A significant improvement for the team has been the introduction of the Case Management System (CMS). This was developed to facilitate accurate record keeping relating to our tenants, an adequate recording method had not previously been available to the T and E team. The new system allows for cases to be added relating to their subject and awards the appropriate level of priority alerting the officer to the target date for completion. We are now able to report on volume and type of cases categorising by subject (see Annexe 1) and have just rolled out revised priority response times to the team.
4. The role of the officer has diversified and in addition to tenancy management tasks, the team are now managing much more complex cases as thresholds for other services have increased. Frequently as landlord, we are the only service involved with our customers as other statutory partners withdraw. Officers are now undertaking recurring visits to our most vulnerable tenants and there is often a requirement to visit in pairs due to the unpredictable behaviour of some of our customers. This can be due to Mental Health issues, substance misuse problems, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) or learning disabilities.
5. We are also utilising our enforcement powers more effectively, this was popular with our customers when consulting on the new agreement. We have worked closely with the police on a number of cases of ASB or Serious and Organised Crime, successfully obtaining three closure orders and moving a victim of crime to a safe environment. As part of ASB week we targeted vulnerable households who were at risk of crime or harm, and visited jointly with the police to provide information and support. We have just been granted possession of a property after an unauthorised trespasser had a significant negative impact on the community.

Intervention Officers

6. Intervention officers have seen a significant increase in their involvement with complex cases, these figures are included in the CSM report.
7. We are currently reviewing the Aids and Adaptations policy and have been looking at ways to ensure best use of the budget. The officers have successfully completed the Disabled Living Foundation level 3 Trusted Assessor Training at the end of July, enabling them to undertake minor adaptation assessments for our customers, reducing the need for an Occupational Therapy referral saving time and money. They have already completed 6 assessments. Aids and Adaptations figures for the last financial year are attached (see Annexe 2).

Community Development

8. The Community Development service work plan for 2018/19 follows on from the extensive work undertaken last year with the key priorities as follows:

- Assist T&E officers by developing and trialling new subsidised services including gardening and tree/ arboriculture support for vulnerable tenants utilising the re-charge process, offering flexible payment to customers
- Assist both the surveyors and inspectors with planned works for identifying key estate improvements e.g. parking projects, path projects and lighting. Community Development will liaise with homeowners, manage applications with other landlords and Surrey County Council to ensure successful planning and contract management for project completion
- Develop the use and lease arrangements of the remaining unused and under-utilised community rooms and housing land
- Provide support for ecology issues on estates and between the Housing Service and other landowners, such as badger setts
- Identify and manage community projects on our major housing developments and to help fundraise on behalf of new groups that emerge to help our estates e.g. from the community rooms

Conclusion

9. The team have been through significant change and continue to provide a customer focussed service while embracing new processes and implementing a new system. The team is settled and officers continue to support each other within a challenging and at times stressful working environment. Our priority is to ensure the new system is fully embedded within the team by the end of this financial year and we will plan the direction of service on the reporting outcomes.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee considers and supports the direction of the team

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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