



LIVINGSTON SOUTH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

HOUSING CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

REPORT BY HEAD OF HOUSING, CUSTOMER AND BUILDING SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the service activities within the Livingston South Ward.

B. RECOMMENDATION

The Local Area Committee is asked to note Housing, Customer and Building Service activity as detailed in the ward report for the period 1st October 2018 – 31st December 2018.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. Providing equality of opportunities. Making best use of our resources. Working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	There is no impact
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	There are positive impact on the following SOA indicators: SOA4 – we live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities SOA8 – we make the most effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None
VII Consideration at PDSP	Yes
VIII Other consultations	N/A

D. TERMS OF REPORT

Housing Performance Information

The purpose of this report is to provide the Local Area Committee with an overview of the activities of Housing, Customer and Building Services, specific to the Livingston South Ward.

Property Void & Let Performance: Mainstream Tenancies

Void Period	Oct 2018	%	Nov 2018	%	Dec 2018	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	19	91%	11	73%	0	0%	55%
2-4 weeks	0	0	1	7%	4	50%	30%
4+ weeks	2	9.6%	3	20%	4	50%	15%
Total Lets	21	100%	15	100%	8	100%	100%

Property Void & Let Performance: Temporary Tenancies.

Void Period	Oct 2018	%	Nov 2018	%	Dec 2018	%	WL Target %
0-2 weeks	1	50%	1	100%	1	33.3%	55%
2-4 weeks	1	50%	0	0%	1	33.3%	30%
4+ weeks	0	0%	0	0%	1	33.3%	15%
Total Lets	2	100%	1	100%	3	100%	100%

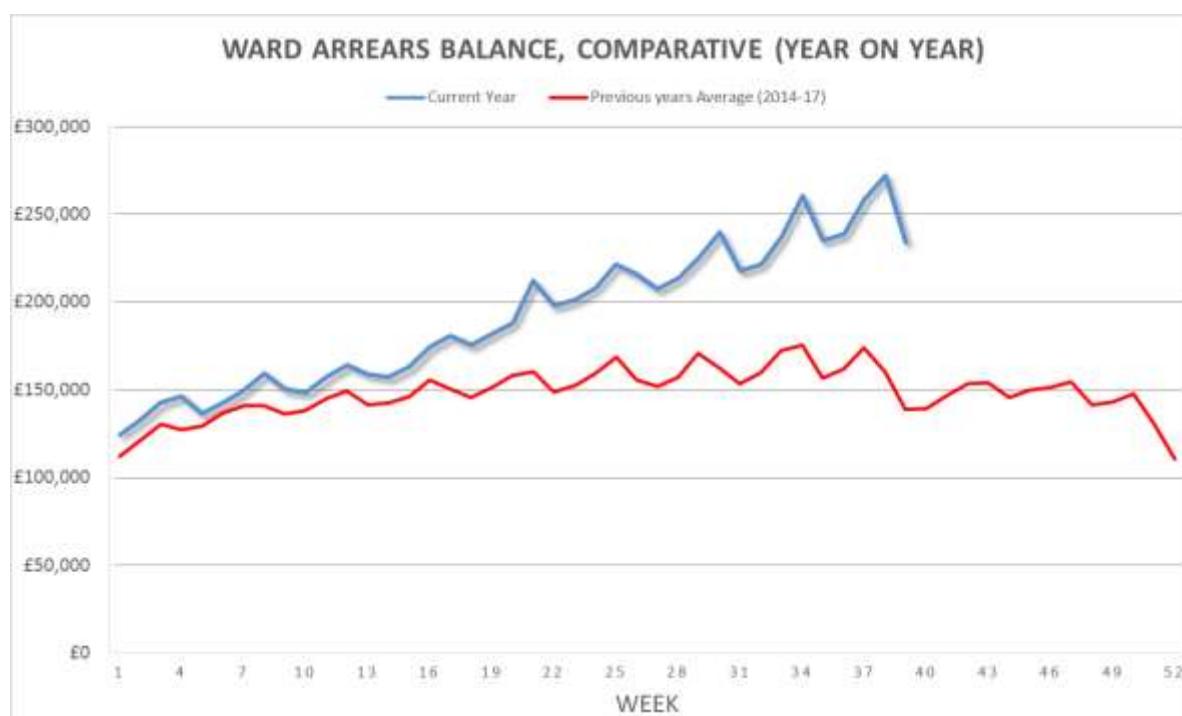
There were 44 Mainstream properties re let within Q3 and 6 Temporary tenancies let within Q3.

Delays in re-letting can occur for a variety of reasons. The type or location of the property, the completion of void work or the identification of additional works not visible during the initial inspection and time taken ensuring that vulnerable persons are supported through the viewing and Sign up process. Some of our applicants have specific support requirements which require detailed planning and co-ordination by both social work and housing services prior to tenancy commencement.

In the year to date there have been 20 mainstream tenancies and 11 temporary tenancies let by the Livingston South Team. There are currently 5 Policy Voids in the ward. Reasons include properties unable to let due Health & Safety reasons, being held for decant purposes due to remedial works.

Arrears Performance: Livingston South Ward.

For this ward the cumulative rental charge this year (debit) for the housing stock is £4,136,605 and £3,998,692 has been collected giving a strong collection rate of 96.7%



	2017/18 (WK39)		2018/19 (WK39)	
Arrears Banding	Balance	Tenants In Arrears	Balance	Tenants In Arrears
£0.01 to £99.99	£8,005	174	£8,485	211
£100.00 to £299.99	£33,111	185	£34,960	186
£300.00 to £499.99	£29,098	77	£37,744	95
£500.00 to £749.99	£24,197	40	£27,812	45
£750.00 to £999.99	£9,401	11	£34,428	40
£1000.00 to £1999.99	£38,802	30	£49,280	34
£2000+	£25,450	10	£41,340	15
Total	£168,064	527	£234,049	626

The Ward arrears position for Q3 is £234,049. This is an increase of £65,984 on last year's position.

The West Lothian overall position has increased by £879,735 from last year and on 01 October was £2,698,513

While there are 49 serious arrears cases (£1,000+) it should be noted 63% of cases are in the lower bands (£300 or less)

The overall increased arrears in comparison to last year are as a result of Full Service Universal Credit being introduced in West Lothian from May 2018, along with other Welfare Benefit reforms and the current economic climate

During the course of this year we plan to focus on the following:

- Making best use of resources by considering communicating more with customers through email and telephone.
- Increase Direct Debit Take Up by targeted work for example tenants who currently pay by Standing Order.
- Benchmarking with other local authorities to ensure we identify and consider implementing any best practice.
- Performance Monitoring and Reporting will be reviewed and where appropriate streamlined to ensure information is meaningful and robust to assist with improving rent arrears due.
- Promote Alternative payment methods, particularly the Tenant's Self Service Portal.
- Undertake a root and branch review of our arrears process to ensure we maximise rental income

Livingston South Team Activity

Rent arrears activity continues to be a weekly priority task for the team and will continue to work with all our tenants in offering support, advice and assistance. Such assistance includes referrals for money, energy and debt advice, benefit health checks, completion of income and expenditure to help set up a sustainable payment plan and where appropriate, assist with applications for Discretionary Housing Payments.

Officers in the team have a number of tenancies under supervision for issues such as child protection, anti-social behaviour and poor tenancy conditions. Our officers' work with a range of services and agencies to ensure tenants and residents are fully supported, tenancies maintained and sustained as far as possible and appropriate action taken where necessary.

Capital Programme and New Build Council Housing.

Ward 4 Livingston South

Ward 4 Livingston South	Site	No of units	Site Start	No. of Houses Handed Over	Site Completion
	Almond Link	20	Feb-16	20	April - 2017
	Lammermuir	44	Jun-16	44	January 2019
	Almondvale Stadium	37	Aug -17	0	August – 2019 (estimated)

Tenant Participation Update – Oct - Dec

Homeless Tenant Led Inspection

A team of Inspectors have carried out an inspection into the Housing Need Service. The inspectors are expected to report back their findings early in 2019 to the Head of Housing, Senior Managers and officers working within the Housing Need Service. An action plan will be developed following the feedback session

TIS Award for Best Innovative Practise

The TP Team were successful in the Council's Celebrating Success Awards, receiving the 'New and Innovative Services for our Communities' award for the team's work on Digital Involvement with tenants through the use of text messaging and the services Facebook Group, specifically for council tenants.

Evening Housing Network

The first evening network meeting was held in the Civic Centre on the 7th November. 13 new tenants attended and advised they would be interested in attending other sessions in 2019. The session included an overview of Tenant Participation, to show those attending the ways they can get involved in improving and shaping service delivery.

Tenants Repairs Policy Scrutiny Session

A working group was formed from members of the West Lothian Tenants Housing Network, to review the repairs policy with officers from Building Services. Two sessions were held, one on 23rd October and the other on the 7th November at the Whitburn Tenants Resource Centre.

Good Neighbour Award Ceremony

The annual award ceremony was held on Friday 26th October in the Civic Centre,. The awards are held to celebrate those neighbours nominated for being a kind and considerate neighbour. Both tenants and residents can be nominated and we promote this award in the e summer edition of Tenants News

Focus Groups

Four meetings were held on the 21st and 22nd November (am and pm sessions) in Whitburn and East Calder to discuss tenant satisfaction, following the 2017 Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Tenants attended for an informal discussion, focussing on four questions relating to decision making, quality of their home, good value for money and whether or not support was required with their tenancy. Officers are currently reviewing the comments/feedback received.

Tenants Training

A session was held on the 5th December with tenant representatives from throughout West Lothian, to help increase awareness on the Housing Allocation Policy, with practical insights and information provided on how applications are processed and assessed.

Safer Neighbourhood Team.

The Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT's) continue to work in two teams across the nine multi member ward areas as an integral part of the Community Safety Unit. In all the wards, partnership working involves the local housing team, youth worker, council officer with the SNT and officers from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service all working together to tackle antisocial behaviour. When necessary, the partners will liaise with partners from the voluntary organisations including Mental Health advisory workers and private landlords in order to reduce antisocial behaviour. The Safer Neighbourhood team of 9 officers now work in two zones, the East and the West zones. All the officers now deal with noise nuisance calls as part of their working remit.

Issues from previous month in relation to HMO are continuing to be followed up on and work done with landlords to achieve resolution.

Ongoing ASBO case against an address in Dedridge was continued for 2 months.

Joint initiative was carried out with local police officers regarding youth disorder in Dedridge and with housing officers to addresses concerning tenants with mental health issues. Furthermore, contact made with Almond Housing Association regarding issues with one of their tenants.

Various court cases are coming to an end resulting in an area being visited regularly to maintain a presence.

An increase in tensions in an area in Ladywell was reported regarding an increase in youth disorder. Regular updates from residents should assist in resolving all the issues.

Complaints received regarding a party which had got out of control in Dedridge where property was damaged and an ASB warning was served. For another address, at a court hearing regarding an address in Dedridge, an interim ASBO was continued until March 2019 regarding incidents of noise.

During ASB enquiries, information has been gleaned in relation to other incidents that have been referred to the social work department for them to carry out their own enquiries and issues arising from private lets and HMO have been carried out and follow up work was being undertaken where landlords were encouraged to register and submit appropriate applications.

E. CONCLUSION

To note the contents of the report.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: None

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