

	Report to:	Item No:
	Board 29 November 2016	14
Title:		
Scrutiny of Re-Let Standard		
Date:		
7 November 2016		
Responsible Person:		
Customer Review Panel		
Status:		
PUBLIC		
This report is for:		
DISCUSSION		

PURPOSE OF REPORT	
To provide an update to Board Members on the findings and recommendations of the Customer Review Panel on Waverley Housing's Re-let standard.	
RECOMMENDATION	
Board Members are requested to note this and respond to the recommendations of the Panel.	

IMPLICATIONS	
Resource implications	Financial: To be determined, depending on any recommendations being approved
	Staffing: To be determined, depending on approval of recommendation to employ another painter and decorator.
	Other: none
Risk Assessment	Medium
Consultation	Customer Review Panel
Impact on other Policies & Strategies	Voids Management Policy Estate Management Policy
External Impact	Low
Equality & Diversity	Considered and inclusive
Companies Act Requirements	n/a

APPENDICES	

1. Background

1.1 After the success of the Customer Review Panel's exercise carried out on Customer Services in 2015, the Panel met on 10 February 2016 and chose the re-let standard of void properties as their next scrutiny project.

1.2 Scrutiny Objectives

To work in partnership with staff to ensure that Waverley Housing deliver the best possible re-let standard to future tenants of Waverley Housing.

To identify improvements and make recommendations which would support Waverley's ambition to be the preferred Landlord throughout the Scottish Borders.

Scope of the Review

To examine current Re-let standard.

To examine current Voids Management Policy and Procedure.

2. Planning the Exercise

2.1 The Panel met and decided on outcomes required in order to allow them to make informed recommendations regarding the organisation's Re-let standard.

2.2 The Panel split this process into three parts.

(i) The first part of this process was for them to visit 3 void properties, all at different stages of the re-let process:

- A recent abandonment.
- A property deemed ready to let with a decoration pack.
- A property which had been fully decorated by our painter and decorator and ready to let.

(ii) Interview staff from property services and housing management.

(iii) Carry out their own satisfaction survey with tenants who had signed up to a Waverley property in the last 6 months.

3. Detailed of Scrutiny Findings

3.1 The Panel's findings on each of the three parts are detailed below: -

(i) Recent Abandonment

- Panel members were shocked at state property was left in; (a real eye-opener as to how some tenants live and opened up discussions on mental health issues).
- Works were being carried out; however the property was still dirty and contained rubbish. The Panel felt that a better finish would be achieved if

Trades Staff were working in a relatively clean environment and not adding to the mess/dirt already there i.e. hanging new doors off filthy door frames.

Property deemed ready to let with a decoration pack

- Not enough paint/materials offered to complete job.
- Property not cleaned properly.
- Flooring that was left in kitchen and bathroom was below standard and should have been removed.
- Communal area leading to the property was grubby and smelt of dirt and urine.

Property which had been fully decorated and ready to let

- Did not look ready to walk into – dirty/dusty.
- Foot print on living room ceiling?
- Stained sanitary ware.
- Kitchen cupboards unaligned.

(ii) Interview with Staff Members

It was clear that Property Services and Housing Management staff were focusing on different objectives. Both teams were working towards deadlines and had budgets to consider.

Property Services were under pressure to turn a property round and have it ready to let as quickly as possible with minimum costs.

Housing Management was focusing on tenant sustainability whereby they wanted tenants to accept a property and remain living in it. They felt that if the property was let in a better condition then the tenant would be more likely to stay there and look after it. Housing Management staff also commented that on occasion a tenant does not move into a property as they are unable to decorate or get help to decorate. This can cause the tenant to fall into rent arrears as they pay for someone else to carry out decoration works on the property. The tenant may struggle to clear such arrears and eventually terminate the tenancy before it has had a chance to succeed.

(iii) Survey

The survey was sent to 71 new tenants asking them to comment on their view of the property condition when they accepted a Waverley tenancy. This had a disappointing return, only 16 responses (22.5%). The key findings from this survey were:

- tenants felt the decoration pack was not enough to complete the job.
- tenants felt under pressure to accept the property 'there and then', they would have preferred a day or two to think about it overall however,
- tenants were fairly satisfied with the condition of Waverley properties, it was the decorative state and cleanliness of the property that caused dissatisfaction.

Strengths identified during this exercise

- The organisation is committed to delivering an excellent customer service.
- Fewer than expected tenants complained re condition of the actual property, it was the decoration and cleanliness that let the process down.
- Tenants spoke highly of their experience with Waverley Housing.

4. Recommendations

- Employ another decorator (understand that this would have to be cost effective and would require further analysis).
- Remove all woodchip wallpaper as standard practice.
- If property is being re-let with a decoration pack, then prepare properties for decorating i.e. remove wallpaper, put up lining paper where required, fill in holes, rub down paintwork and leave it clean and ready for incoming tenant to decorate.

If this was done for all properties then there should be fewer properties that would actually need full redecoration (costs should cancel each other out)

It generally takes over 1 week for 2 staff members (1 painter and decorator and 1 apprentice) to carry out a full redecoration, by preparing property only, this should take half the time. One week for 1 bedroom property but takes more than 1 week to complete full decoration in larger properties.

- Sparkle clean for all void properties (cost would be incurred).
- General clean before any improvement works commenced (existing void team duties).
- Clean common areas (existing voids team duties).
- Gardens require more attention including walls, fences etc. (existing organisation resources).
- Offer voluntary basic half – day decorating classes which would allow tenants skills to paint their home.
- Make it clear to ingoing tenant that if the decoration packs are not increased in value/amount, that this is only a contribution towards decorating.

5. Timescales

The Panel appreciate that there have been several recommendations made and that some of them would require further analysis before being agreed upon due to financial implications.

The Panel would like the Board to consider these recommendations and request costings for those that they think would benefit both the organisation and tenants.

The Panel would welcome meeting the Board at their February 2017 meeting for feedback on this report, the outcome of recommendations made and progress as to any that were approved and implemented.