

Gardening Initiative

Briefing Note for Area Panels

July 2008

1.0 Purpose of report

To provide a progress update on the gardening initiative and the pilot in North Dudley.

2.0 Background

As part of our approach to reinvest efficiency savings within the Housing Service to respond to tenants priorities, funding has been provided to develop a gardening scheme. A budget of £100,000 has been agreed to fund the initiative for 2008/09.

It is anticipated that this will provide sufficient funding for 50 properties in the North Dudley pilot area, which will include an initial clearance and regular maintenance. The pilot will continue to 31st March 2009.

3.0 Progress to Date

The development of the initiative has been undertaken in partnership Age Concern.

A specification has been agreed, which is similar to the existing scheme currently provided by Age Concern to residents within the Borough. This scheme is partly funded by social services and has been up and running for some 5 years.

Criteria and application forms have been agreed with DFTRA and Greencare representatives. The scheme will apply to tenants aged over 60 or registered disabled or in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

To date 23 properties have been identified by the North Dudley Housing Managers for inclusion in the pilot.

A small number of properties have been identified where a clearance would be required prior to regular maintenance commencing. Unfortunately, due to the lack of availability of resources within Greencare the clearance of gardens will not commence until 1st October 2008.

The scheme was officially launched on 1st July in conjunction with Age Concern. Maintenance work has commenced on the gardens which do not require any clearance. The clearance works that are required for the remaining properties will be scheduled for October 2008 after which regular maintenance can commence. It is anticipated that the average cost of clearing a garden (obviously dependant on degree) will be approximately £1,000.

Age Concern have agreed to carry out maintenance on tenants gardens for a charge of £347.50 per year, this figure includes all administration costs.

Letters have been sent out to all tenants identified by their housing managers advising of the scheme, charge rate of £5.50 per visit with a maximum visit of 2 per month and application forms.

Age Concern was already providing a service to 8 local authority tenants and these have been adopted onto the scheme.

On the day of the launch, four tenants requested inclusion in the scheme and assessments are due to take place by 18th July 2008.

The first monthly meeting has been arranged with Age Concern for the 30th July 2008.

4.0 Review and Evaluation

At the end of the pilot the scheme will be evaluated to determine if the pilot should be extended to other areas.

Qualitative checks will be carried out during the period of the project to ensure that the service provision is maintained to a high standard.

Regular monthly meeting will take place between DMBC and Age Concern to discuss any issues that may arise through the period of the pilot.

A satisfaction survey will be provided to all tenants at the end of the pilot that participated within the scheme. The scheme is flexible enough to accommodate new applications from tenants during the pilot period.

Yvonne Steele
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