

**Brierley Hill Area Committee – 28<sup>th</sup> June 2012**

**Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services.**

**Beech Road, Kingswinford**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To update Committee on an issue that was raised at the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012, regarding the condition of the flats at Beech Road, Kingswinford.

**Background**

2. The above complex is made up of six three bedroom first floor maisonettes sited on top of six shops. There are also fourteen garages to the rear of the block. Five of these properties are under the ownership of Housing and one flat is owned by a leaseholder, purchased via the Right to Buy Scheme. Only one of the shops is open for business, as a general convenience store. The others are boarded up and not in use. All six maisonettes are occupied. Each of the empty shops has a rear garden all of which are in an overgrown condition. The garden areas have also been subject to fly-tipping. They also have rear outbuildings, which are boarded up.
3. At the rear of the complex are 14 void garages and one void garage plot which are held not to be relet until the future of the complex is decided. Behind the garages is an area of open overgrown land in the management of DACHS. The land is not regularly maintained as part of the Grounds Maintenance contract.
4. The flats have experienced some vandalism. Access is gained to the block by the communal doors which are susceptible to being forced as they are timber construction and not very robust. We are working with the residents and Police to try and identify those responsible so that appropriate action can be taken to remedy the situation.
5. To ensure that any problems are dealt with speedily a fire safety inspection is carried out fortnightly. Any repair issues are reported and actioned as a priority. The Housing Manager also conducts fortnightly visits to the flats to check the security of the properties. The Police are also working with us and have keys to access the block, if necessary.
6. The complex has been the subject of various reviews and was considered to be part of the Brierley Hill Small Sites Project. A number of Registered Providers were approached but they decided against taking this project further. Black

Country Housing did carry out a feasibility study but then decided not to continue because they did not deem it to be commercially viable.

7. Despite the problems that these flats are subjected to, in the past we have not encountered any difficulties in reletting them. They are large 3 bedroomed maisonettes in a popular area. In addition there is a shortage of 3 bedroomed properties in the Kingswinford area.
8. We are currently carrying out an options appraisal of the site. This includes looking at the pruning of a large hedge that is adjacent to number 12 Beech Road to improve visibility, the possibility of installing steel doors to the communal entrances and improved lighting to the front and rear of the block. In addition, improvements are needed to the internal communal areas.

### **Finance**

9. There will be significant costs attached to the clearance of the flytipping and any of the measures mentioned above.

### **Law**

10. Provisions relating to the Council's Housing stock are contained in the Housing Act 1985.
11. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 allows the Council to do anything that it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its area.

### **Equality Impact**

12. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report. However, dependent on the outcome of the options appraisal an Equality Impact Assessment may have to be carried out to identify and address any equality and diversity issues that may arise from the decisions that have been made.

### **Recommendation**

13. The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report. An update on the outcome of the options appraisal and the associated costs will be submitted to the Area Committee in September 2012.



.....  
**Andrea Pope-Smith**  
**Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services**

Contact Officer: Diane Channings  
Telephone: 01384 815063  
Email: [diane.channings@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:diane.channings@dudley.gov.uk)