
Meeting of the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee – 22nd January 2024

Report of the Director of Housing and Communities

Community Housing Services – the neighbourhood approach

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the work that is underway to restructure and improve the tenancy and estate management services provided to Dudley MBC tenants.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the content of the report is noted.

Background

3. The Neighbourhood Model, and associated restructure of housing management services, has been implemented to improve services and ensure that our teams reconnect with customers, elected members and communities.

The principles of the model are to strengthen our approach to neighbourhood management through an increased presence, with greater visibility of Housing staff, ensuring greater local involvement of customers, Ward Members and partner organisations.

The Community Housing Team

4. The restructure of the Community Housing team has been completed, with the new structure and roles focused on delivering the neighbourhood model. The team now consists of 36 Community Housing Officers, supported by a team of 8 Community Housing Assistants. There are six Team Managers,

each with responsibility for a team of Community Housing Officers and Assistants.

Community Hubs

5. As part of our commitment to communicate better with tenants, we are opening Housing Hubs and surgeries across the borough. Our first two Housing Hubs in Halesowen and Brierley Hill are ready to receive visitors from the new year. While we work to put other hubs in place, we will be running surgeries from a variety of locations including, Dudley Council Plus, some Children's Centres and other public offices. These surgeries will be up and running in January too.
6. As well as acting as a focal point in our communities from which advice surgeries and estate walkabouts can be based, the hubs will increase opportunities for partnership working, both with other council services and with key partners. We are working closely with our police partners, who are looking to co-locate their neighbourhood team within the Halesowen hub.

The Brierley Hill Housing Hub is situated on the Chapel Street Estate and will be opening to the public from 16th January 2024. The office will be open for surgeries Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10am and 2pm. During this time residents can attend pre-booked appointments with their Housing Officer and walk-in enquiries will also be assisted where possible.

The Halesowen Housing Hub is located on the Highfields Estate and will be open to the public from 9th January 2024. The office will be open for surgeries Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10am and 2pm for pre-booked appointments and walk-in enquiries. There will be a number of Housing teams who co-locate at this office to ensure a joined-up approach to housing management.

We are still looking at options for a permanent Housing Hub in Stourbridge. However surgeries are taking place weekly at Stourbridge library and Baylie Court at a variety of times to meet the needs of tenants with different commitments.

Surgeries will commence at North Dudley family Centre for our tenants living in the North of the borough. Initially this will be for three hours each week but will be increased if we have sufficient demand.

For tenants who live in central Dudley, surgeries will commence from Tuesday 9th January, every Tuesday and Thursday, 10am-3pm at Dudley Council Plus.

The South Dudley Area Hub is planned to be situated at the Dudley Federation of Tenants & Residents Association (DFTRA) office and the Community Housing Team are working in partnership with DFTRA to develop the hub for weekly surgery appointments to improve our customer experience and raise levels of satisfaction. As soon as arrangements have been finalised further communications will follow to keep tenants and stakeholders informed.

Customer Experience

7. Since the Neighbourhood Model was implemented the Community Housing service has developed a different approach to improve our high rise estates by completing 4 High Rise Living events targeting 6 high rise buildings across the borough as part of our managed programme of visits to our high rise blocks.

At the High Rise Living events we have involved other service areas and key partners such as the Fire Service where appropriate. The High Rise Living Events have been successful and have helped to:

- Foster positive professional relationships amongst colleagues and strengthen cross-team working in Housing & Communities.
- Forge stronger partnerships with other council departments and promote interagency working with external partners at both strategic and operational levels.

Further events are being planned in our high rise buildings at Chapel Street, Brierley Hill and Highfields, Halesowen. Other events in high priority low rise buildings including Hill Bank will also be held in 2024.

The team have also supported the work of other service areas, including door knocking, awareness raising and advice in relation to access for compliance visits and tackling tenancy fraud.

Finance

8. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Law

9. The actions set out within this report will help ensure the Council's compliance with Regulator of Social Housing's regulatory standards and the Housing Ombudsman Code.

Risk Management

10. There are no material risks arising directly from this report.

Equality Impact

11. There are no equality impact implications arising directly from this report.

12. The Neighbourhood Model will have a positive effect on children and young people who live in the homes and communities supported by the Community Housing Team.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

13. Whilst this report does not have any immediate organisational development impact, the skills and capabilities of our workforce will be key to making this model successful. The new model will be supported by a review of current skills and capabilities and will be supported in the future by the mandatory qualifications that the Regulator of Social Housing will be bringing in for housing professionals.

Commercial/Procurement

14. There are no commercial or procurement implications arising directly from this report.

Environment/Climate Change

15. There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

Council Priorities and Projects

16. Developing Housing services which meet the regulatory standards and the aspirations of the Social Housing White Paper also supports the delivery of all four priorities in the Dudley Council Plan 2022 - 25:

- Dudley the borough of opportunity
- Dudley the safe and healthy borough
- Dudley the borough of ambition and enterprise
- Dudley borough as the destination of choice



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Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Know Your Community Housing Team posters