



## Report of: Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Meeting of	Date	Ward(s)
Housing Scrutiny Committee	28 March 2017	All

Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
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## SUBJECT: Service Review Group: Management of External Communal Areas

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The Service Review Group (SRG) identified the management of external communal areas as an area that would benefit from review in May 2016. This report sets out the background to the review and the recommendations made by SRG members.
- 1.2 The review was resident-led and facilitated by the Principal Resident Participation Officer and Principal Housing Manager, Estate Services.
- 1.3 The purpose of the review was to look at how Islington Housing Services manages external communal areas on estates and measure how effective we are in dealing with the following issues:
  - Dog nuisance/fouling
  - Bulk refuse collection, flytipping and the general cleanliness of common parts including litter management, flowerbed and shrubs

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the recommendations of the Service Review Group be received by the Committee.

### 3. Recommendations from the Service Review Group (*set out in detail in Appendix 1*)

- 3.1 Develop and improve working relationship between Estates Services and Mechanised Services (MS) to improve collection of bulk refuse and deal with fly tipping more effectively.
- 3.2 Take action to reduce dog fouling to lessen the impact it has on residents and in particular residents with disabilities (e.g. use of Community Protection Notices, better publicity re: proper disposal of dog mess and provision of bags for the disposal of dog mess)
- 3.3 Revise and streamline the dog nuisance policy and procedure.

- 3.4 Improve publicity for residents around the costs of not recycling and dealing with flytipping and dog mess.
- 3.5 Staff training to include putting people ahead of processes and improve dealing with members' enquiry and complaints.
- 3.6 Benchmark with and learn from other good-practice authorities

An action plan has been developed based on the recommendations and is set out at Appendix 2.

#### 4. Background

- 4.1 The SRG first met with officers on 5 May 2016 to scope out the review and identify the activities that that would be undertaken by members of the SRG and officers. Appendix 3 sets out the programme of activities. At the first meeting, the following timetable was agreed:

Agreed task	Task completed
Scope the review	25 May 2016
Gather the evidence	May to July 2016
Evaluate the evidence	July to September 2016
Agree recommendations	29 September 2016
Present recommendations to panel of officers	3 November 2016 and 29 November 2016
Report to Housing Scrutiny	28 March 2017

#### 4.2 Evidence gathering

- 4.2.1 A desktop review was carried out and included the following activities:

- Reviewing the monitoring processes of Estate Services/Tenancy Management teams
- Reviewing the Dog Nuisance policy and procedure
- Reviewing sample complaints and members enquiry responses
- A benchmarking exercise looking at websites of other organisations

- 4.2.3 To test the desktop research, members of the SRG:

- Visited St Luke's and Hillside Estates and spoke to Caretakers and Estate Services Coordinators
- Spoke to Estates Services and Tenancy Management staff from the Upper Street Area Housing Office
- Spoke to various staff from Public Protection and Public Realm including a Street Care Manager, an Animal Welfare Officer and a Compliance Team Manager
- Met members of the Repairs, Housing Management and Leasehold Reference Groups to ask them about their experience of flytipping and dog fouling and how the housing service deals with these problems
- Spoke to an officer from Hackney Council about their processes
- Carried out a survey by email of members of the Resident Involvement Register
- Met with members of the Disability Housing Panel
- Carried out a Mystery Shop

#### 5. Summary of findings

- 5.1 SGR members highlighted areas of good practice. On examining the evidence and conducting interviews; SRG members found a number of examples where the service provided for residents worked really well and they wanted to highlight some of the good practice, as follows:

## 5.2 Estate Services/Mechanised Services:

- Staff on the whole take responsibility and are concerned about giving a good service
- Staff are aware of green issues and are concerned about the environment
- The area housing offices share good practice.
- Use technology to make reporting and monitoring easier.
- Work smarter rather than asking for more staff.
- Development of a smart phone app (GO system) to reduce manual updating of systems.
- The focus group as a whole felt that the good work of caretakers should be recognised as quite often they only hear complaints. A good relationship between residents and caretakers was reported in some areas.
- The SRG visited to St Luke's Estate with the caretaker where first impressions of the estate were good. The caretaker has a good relationship with residents on the estate and communication with the area office was good.
- The SRG visited Hillside Estate where the main issue was flytipping. The estate is well maintained and there is a good relationship between caretakers, residents and the area office.
- Metal screens conceal the bin areas and improve the look of the area.

## 5.3 Dog Nuisance/ Public Realm

- Relationship between Caretakers/ASB teams/Welfare Officer is good regarding dog nuisance.
- Over the last 18 months an Animal Welfare Officer has started receiving all intelligence and complaints from the Out of Hours Teams and area housing offices. This partnership working has improved the service for residents.
- Concierge teams send over intelligence they see on CCTV cameras and the images are then used to identify perpetrators and take necessary action.
- Dog Exclusion Designated zone signs for play areas have been installed and are all in place.

5.4 SRG members also highlighted where improvements could be made. The table below shows the SRG's findings and suggested improvements.

SRG findings based on tasks carried out by the group	Suggested improvements
<p><b>Staff meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm the service level agreement/working arrangements; including defining and agreeing the meaning of 24 hours (Mechanised Services define 24 hours as three working days). However, it is important to be realistic with residents about what the service can offer rather than setting targets that are very difficult to achieve.</li> <li>• Mechanised Services (MS) to prioritise getting operation licenses for both Randolph Road and Cottage Road sites. MS staff are based at Randolph Road and vehicles are based at Cottage Road so time is wasted in travelling form one location to another.</li> <li>• Carry out a service needs analysis to see if there are sufficient numbers of vehicles to support the service level agreement.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop and improve working relationship between Estates Services and Mechanised Services (MS).</p> <p>Housing Operations have offered funding to Mechanised Services for additional vehicle to improve collection of bulk refuse.</p>
<p><b>Staff Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estate Services to monitor missed collections and raise concerns at monitoring meetings.</li> <li>• Residents to be given a reference number so they can follow up on calls they have made.</li> <li>• Public Protection suggested, and members of the SRG agreed, that Housing Services should consider appointing a specialised officer to investigate fly tips and take legal action or expand an existing officers role to deal with this issue</li> </ul>	<p>Improve collection of bulk refuse and deal with fly tipping more effectively</p>

<p><b>Mystery Shopping</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean Islington app will take time to bed in for staff and residents and technical difficulties including the track location need to be improved.</li> </ul> <p><b>Focus Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signage near bin areas should be improved.</li> </ul> <p><b>Site Visit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area Housing Offices to agree the type of screening they wish to use and then tender to get best possible materials and price.</li> <li>• The Council should enforce clauses with their contractors ensuring that they do not flytip or leave their waste after carrying out repairs.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Disability Housing Panel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dog fouling is a problem for residents with disabilities, particularly for the partially sighted and wheelchair users. The area housing office should carry out impact assessments on affected residents and put appropriate measures in place.</li> </ul> <p><b>Site Visits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some caretakers did not see dog fouling as an issue. They will clear it up but not necessarily report it to the area housing office.</li> </ul> <p><b>Focus Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider placing more bins on estates and streets.</li> <li>• Consider preventative walkabouts with TRAs and Dog Patrol Wardens.</li> <li>• Put stencils on the pavements pointing the way to the nearest bin.</li> <li>• There should be more dog exercising areas with bins and bags should be provided.</li> <li>• Signs about dog nuisance should be bigger and more creatively designed to attract people's attention.</li> </ul>	<p>Take action to reduce dog fouling to lessen the impact it has on residents and in particular residents with disabilities (e.g. use of Community Protection Notices, better publicity re: proper disposal of dog mess and provision of bags for the disposal of dog mess)</p>
<p><b>Polices and processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area offices should keep better records of dog fouling so that incidents can be monitored and locations can be tracked.</li> <li>• There is a need to simplify the dog nuisance procedure</li> </ul>	<p>Revise and streamline the dog nuisance policy and procedure.</p>
<p><b>Website Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social behaviour information on the Council's website needs simplification.</li> <li>• Information on Hackney's website is concise and to the point,</li> </ul> <p><b>Survey and Focus Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council should publicise success stories about dealing with dog mess and flytipping. We should also publicise good news stories by using electronic notice boards and block letters.</li> </ul> <p><b>Focus Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• .</li> <li>• There should be stronger messages about enforcement. These could be displayed on electronic notice boards with examples of how much it costs the Council to deal with refuse and flytipping.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disability Housing Panel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents with dyslexia and with literacy issues or whose first language is not English would find pictorial signs easier to understand.</li> </ul>	<p>Improve publicity for residents around the costs of not recycling and dealing with flytipping and dog mess</p>

<p><b>Site Visits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents to be advised on what to recycle and the consequences of contaminating recycling with non-recyclable materials.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Disability Housing Panel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disability awareness on site to help staff focus on the practical issues that have a day to day impact on disabled residents.</li> <li>Training should include walking around an estate to identify potential trip hazards, poor lighting, getting access to communal bins, disrepair and stepping on dog excrement and what this can mean for people who are blind/ partially sighted or wheelchair users.</li> </ul> <p><b>Mystery Shopping</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There should be better monitoring of email response times.</li> <li>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Focus Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about contact details for staff needs improving (e.g. estate notice boards).</li> </ul> <p><b>Site Visit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career progression for caretakers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Review of sample complaints and members enquires responses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider moving away from standard letters when it comes to responding to complaints. Make complaint responses more personalised.</li> <li>The phrase "I'm sorry we are not able to give you a more positive response to your complaint" does not always feel appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>Staff training to include putting people ahead of processes and improve dealing with members' enquiry and complaints.</p>
<p><b>Benchmarking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Hackney the Street Cleansing Teams and Estate Services Teams are being moved into one division so they can liaise with each other and deal with issues effectively. (Whilst Hackney Council are merging these two sections there is a recognition that what may work well with one council does not necessarily do so for another)</li> </ul>	<p>Benchmark with and learn from other good-practice authorities</p>

5.4 A summary of findings is set out in Appendix 4.

## 6. Implications

### 6.1 Financial Implications

No direct financial implications that arise as a result of the recommendations:

### 6.2 Legal Implications

No direct legal implications arise as a result of the recommendations.

### 6.3 Environmental Implications

No direct environmental implications arise as a result of the recommendations.

## 6.4 Resident Impact Assessment

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

A Resident Impact Assessment has not been completed as the Service Review Group is a resident-led body which is making recommendations to the council. The recommendations made are intended to improve the communications with residents in the new build process. Services would need to consider any resident impacts arising from implementing the recommendations.

## 7. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 7.1 The recommendations reflect the key issues and areas for improvement identified by the SRG during the review. The recommendations identify that while there are good areas of practice in the management of external communal areas, there are areas where improvements can be made.
- 7.2 The recommendations have been developed into an action plan for consideration and agreement.

**Background Papers:** None

### Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Detailed recommendations
- Appendix 2 - Action Plan
- Appendix 3 - Programme of activities carried out by the SRG
- Appendix 4 - Summary of findings

Final report clearance:

### Signed by:



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Corporate Director of Housing and  
Adult Social Services

20 March 2017  
Date

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