

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ROLE OF THE HOUSING OFFICERS</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND REGENERATION</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>YVONNE FOX, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HOUSING</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide Members with a summary of the role and responsibilities of a Housing Officer.
- 1.2 All Housing Officers manage a patch of around 450 and are based in one of three Area Housing Teams, North, South and Central. At times, it may be necessary to move Officers to a different patch or to change the boundary of their patch. Any changes are communicated to the Customer Services Team and more recently, to Members.

## **2. Summary**

- 2.1 The Tenancy Service Team has worked extremely hard over the last 18 months to improve performance. This hard work has resulted in the team achieving the ASB Accreditation award in 2017 and exceeding targets for rent arrears collection in both 2016/7 and 2017/8.
- 2.2 Their job is varied as they are working directly with our customers and this means that they have to reprioritise their workloads on a daily basis.
- 2.3 The teams operate a duty rota to take calls as officers are normally out on visits throughout the day. Some officers may not return to the office until the following day which means that occasionally an email or phone enquiry will be dealt with the following day.
- 2.4 If an enquiry is urgent, an Area Manager and/or the Tenancy Services Manager is normally available. A list of all officers and managers is attached for information.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 The current Tenancy Management Teams structure was implemented in late 2013 and involves three Teams, 'North' (total 2908 properties in management), 'Central' (total 2585 properties) and 'South' (2151 properties), each consisting of 5 or 6 Housing Officers, who are responsible for the day to day tenancy management of a defined portfolio or 'patch' of Council homes and the environment in and around which they are situated.
- 3.2 The number of properties managed by an individual Housing Officer on a patch has been derived from a 'weighting' system which takes into account the number

of rent arrears cases and the number of cases of anti-social behaviour, typically within the historical estate demarcations of the City of Lincoln.

#### **4. The Role of a Housing Officer**

- 4.1 Ensure that the tenancy agreement is complied with, taking prompt and effective enforcement action where a breach of the conditions of the agreement is identified and liaising with other service providers and partner agencies where appropriate.
- 4.2 Maximise income recovery from Council tenants in accordance with established procedures and in line with both individual and team targets and for following enforcement action for the recovery of debts.
- 4.3 Deal with instances of anti-social behaviour, harassment and hate crime in accordance with established procedures following cases through to court where appropriate and providing support for victims and witnesses during and after any court proceedings.
- 4.4 Actively identify any safeguarding issues and act in accordance with common assessment framework requirements.
- 4.5 Prepare case files for legal enforcement action and represent the Council in court where appropriate.
- 4.6 Through regular estate inspections and effective engagement and liaison with others, ensure that the environment in the area is maintained to the highest standards at all times.
- 4.7 Identify, report and monitor individual, communal/estate repairs.
- 4.8 Liaise with the Council's Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team in order to tackle anti-social behaviour on a wider, community-based level, co-working anti-social behaviour cases where appropriate in order to achieve successful outcomes.
- 4.9 Promote and support tenant and resident involvement and engagement, maintaining and building on existing structures (such as tenants' and residents' associations) within their patch.
- 4.10 Promote and develop estate surgeries or similar and attend such surgeries as part of the tenancy management service.
- 4.11 Where required, carry out, collaborate or assist in all aspects of tenant consultation, which may include major and planned works and estate improvements.
- 4.12 Manage introductory tenancies effectively through established procedures, including new tenancy and review visits and taking enforcement, termination or extension action as required. Prepare and take cases to the Housing Appeals Panel.

- 4.13 Provide an active tenancy advice service to tenants on all aspects of tenancy management.
- 4.14 Represent the council at meetings with other external bodies with an interest in working within council estates and with individual or groups of tenants.
- 4.15 The current challenges faced by Housing Officers in their work is dominated by the Welfare Reform agenda, particularly the roll-out of Universal Credit to potentially several thousand Council tenants and how Officers can mitigate and balance the effects of this in maintaining the Council's income stream whilst trying to sustain the tenancies of many vulnerable tenants.

**5. Challenges facing the Tenancy Services Team**

- 5.1 The main challenge is to minimise the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit. The Housing Officers work closely with their counterparts in Benefits and DWP to ensure that our tenants fully understand the requirement to pay rent and are supported to do so.
- 5.2 Keeping the rent arrears to a minimum which could be challenging due to the roll-out of UC
- 5.3 Continue to provide an excellent service to tenants who are experiencing ASB
- 5.4 Supporting tenants who may be vulnerable and at risk of tenancy failure.

**6. Recommendation**

- 6.1 Members are asked to:
  - a) Note the content of the report

<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Key Decision Reference No.</b>	N/A
<b>Do the Exempt Information Categories Apply</b>	No
<b>Call in and Urgency: Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?</b>	No

**Does the report contain Appendices?** Yes

**List of Background Papers:** None.

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