

- Additional Responses -

Residents Questions for Area Panel November 2020

3 Star (***) Items

Grass cutting and grounds maintenance

Following concerns raised by North and West areas, a written response to the September Area Panel stated that the full service for grass cutting and grounds maintenance had now resumed.

However, the experience of residents is that this service has not resumed. Residents feel that the grass is becoming overgrown and isn't being cut often enough. Weeds are also growing in the gaps between paving slabs, causing a trip hazard.

There were concerns about the poor service before Covid 19 and this has now just been exacerbated.

It was proposed that an urgent resumption of Estate Inspections would help to identify and resolve areas of key concern.

It is proposed that Estate Inspections, with residents and Field Officers present, be scheduled as soon as possible.

Response

Justine Harris – Head of Tenancy Services

We are really sorry to hear that the grass cutting does not appear to be happening as regularly as it should be. It is true to say that the pandemic did have a significant impact on service delivery this year. Robert Walker, head of City Parks will be speaking to the operational managers and liaise with housing to ensure that grass cutting frequency is improved for the next season.

The Estates Service will be undertaking an inspection and will invite the Field Officers to attend. Following this we will report back what improvements have been made and how this will be maintained going forwards.

Tenancy termination following a tenant's death

When a tenant dies their relatives are given a very short period of time to empty all their belongings and personal items from their home. This often doesn't take into account the fact that the tenant may have lived in the property for most of their adult life, or the grief that their loved ones are experiencing.

This policy seems to be in contrast to the extended periods of time that some properties are left empty between the termination of one tenancy and the commencement of the next.

The report at the Area Panel stated the average turnaround for empty properties is 20 days. However, Residents are aware of the length of time some local properties are empty, which is often significantly longer than the average figure.

- a. It is also proposed that the procedures for terminating tenancies so quickly after a tenant's death take into account the circumstances of the deceased tenants and those who are clearing their home.

Response

Justine Harris – Head of Tenancy Services

Tenancy Services work sensitively with the people clearing and sorting out belongings. We appreciate that this can be a very upsetting and sometimes take a bit of time and the people assisting with this may not always live locally. If anyone has a different experience of this please could you let Justine Harris know.

Distribution of Homing In

The Council started to post the Homing In magazines out in biodegradable sleeves. This appears to be an environmentally friendly move, but for the many residents living in flats without access to composting, there is no option but to put them in the usual landfill bins. They also can't be put into plastic recycling.

It was felt that using the biodegradable sleeves is probably less environmentally friendly than it appears.

It is proposed that the Council consider alternative options for the posting of Homing In, such as paper envelopes.

Response

Adrian Ashwell – Communications Manager

We looked at a number of options when we reviewed Homing In production, packaging and distribution in 2019, including using a paper envelope. Unfortunately, paper envelopes were prohibitively more expensive, while the cost of potato starch packaging prices had decreased as it has become more widely available.

'The production and disposal of potato starch has less impact on the environment than plastic. It is compostable, but if that's not available, it is a bio-degradable product so has far less negative impact on the waste stream if thrown away.

'We do review the production costs of Homing In regularly and will look again at comparative costs of packaging options in the next few months. In the meantime, we will include information about the benefits of potato starch packaging over plastic in the December issue.

