

Housing

Estate Walkabouts pilot Summary Report September 2022

Introduction & Background:

This report will summarise the outcomes to date of the Estate Walkabout Pilot, and a full report with detailed recommendations will be released in October 2022.

Emerging from the pandemic, we were keen for housing staff to get back out onto our estates and re-engage with residents. In addition, the Social Housing Bill places emphasis on residents being involved in improving their environment. We introduced a pilot programme of weekly area walkabouts facilitated by the area Housing Manager. It was hoped these walkabouts would:

- Result in visible environmental improvements
- Improve collaborative working with each team taking responsibility for their actions
- Promote awareness of available budgets, such as the Environmental Improvement Budget (EIB) and publicise how these budgets are spent across the city
- Create opportunities for Housing staff and Councillors to reconnect with residents

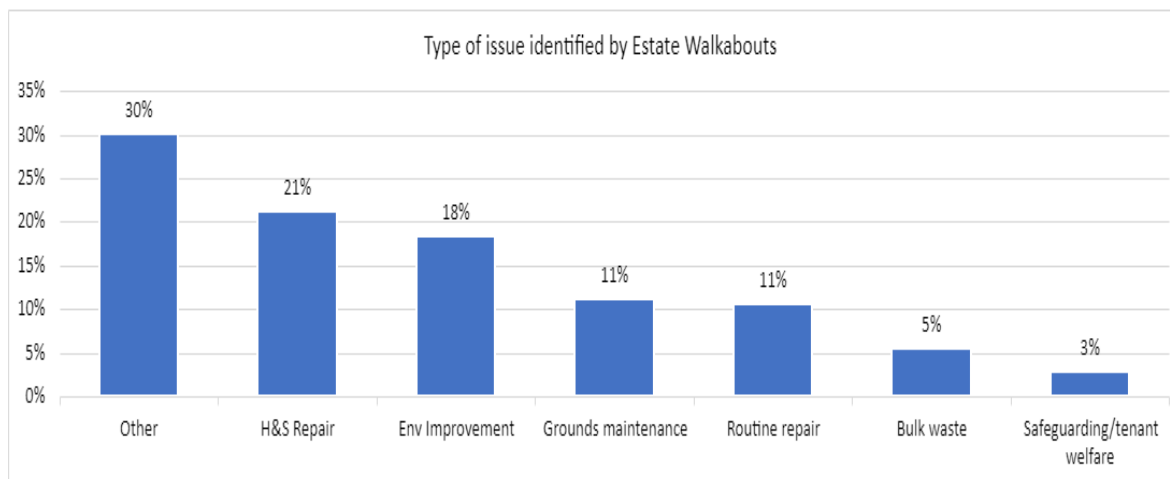
Attendance:

12 Walkabouts were undertaken from 18 May 2022 to 3 August 2022 across the city, attended by Housing Managers, Estate Services, a Surveyor (focusing on Environmental Improvements, Councillors, Community Engagement Officers and residents).

Initially we invited tenant reps only as an appropriate sample size for the pilot, however this was extended as the pilot progressed. A total of 39 residents attended and gave their details over 12 walkabouts. Three of the walkabouts were not attended by any residents, three walkabouts were not attended by a councillor, and two of the walkabouts were not attended by an EIB surveyor (Environmental Improvement Budget). Staff from the Community Engagement Team subsequently attended six of the walkabouts.

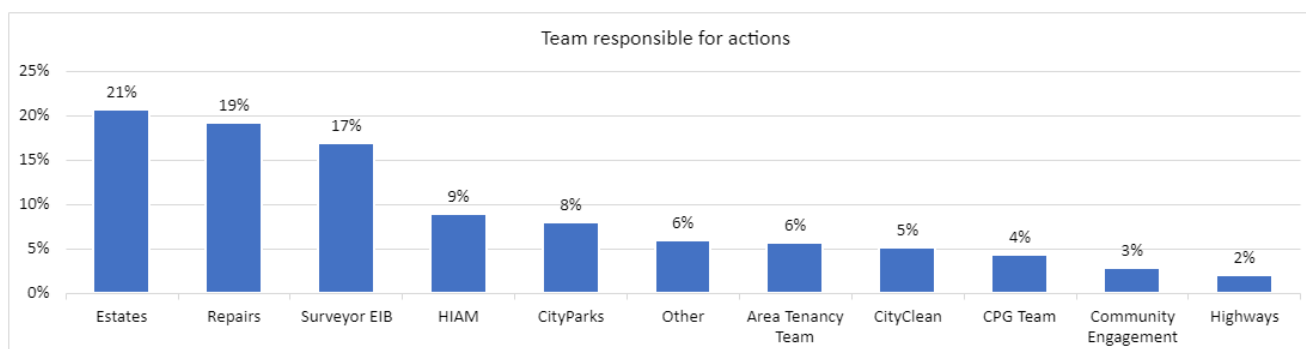
Issues and jobs captured:

A total of 348 issues were identified by the 12 pilot estate walkabouts.



A significant number of issues are categorised as Other (30%) and this is due to the walkabouts covering such a wide range of issues. These mainly concern, parking, highways, cleaning, graffiti and resident involvement queries such as access to water butts, storage for gardening equipment and access to notice boards. Detailed examples are attached as Appendix 1.

Although the walkabouts were not repair focused, 74 H&S repair issues and 37 routine repair issues were reported to the Repairs Helpdesk and the Housing Investment & Asset Management Team.



Estates were responsible for most of the actions arising from the walkabouts (21%), followed by Repairs (19%) and the Surveyor for the Environmental Improvement Budget (17%).

Completed actions:

It is not possible to report on the majority of completed actions at this stage as data from Repairs, CityParks, CityClean, Car Parks & Garages is not readily available and is logged as an issue as part of the project review.

Environmental Improvement Budget (EIB):

As a result of the walkabouts, 24 proposals at an estimated value of £72,700 have been approved by the EIB board. A further 14 proposals are awaiting resident consultation.

		Value
Total proposals	64	
Accepted	24	£72,700.00
Investigation/ Consult	21	£119,600.00
Rejected	19	

The accepted proposals concern planting, signage and improving the appearance and access to refuse & recycling bins. Residents of Swallow Court have already received new pedal operated bins with lids, situated in a new location.

Estates

The Estates Team have completed 36 jobs (out of a total of 64) raised from the walkabouts. These were mainly fly-tip removal, graffiti removal, weeding and painting yellow nosing on to edges of external steps.

There are still some jobs ongoing due to staffing, weather and time restraints but these will be completed by the end of October 2022.

Feedback:

On completion of the walkabouts, we contacted 19 staff, 10 Councillors and 27 residents to complete a feedback questionnaire (Appendix 1) with a response rate of 59%.

In summary, residents feel the successes of the Walkabouts have been

- Residents appreciated the representation of staff across Housing teams and felt listened to
- Appreciated the opportunity to meet with councillors and housing staff in person to discuss longstanding issues on the estate
- Feedback report useful and residents able to see actions completed
- Craven Vale residents appreciated attendance of Rachel Sharpe, Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities, Sam Warren, Community Engagement Manager and an additional officer who ran a 'surgery' to discuss ASB concerns

Staff feel the positives are

- Very useful for council staff (and councillors) to physically visit estates and to have a presence, particularly after a long period of working mainly online
- Walkabouts present an opportunity to involve a disability expert and link with work on the council's accessible city strategy
- Increased opportunities for collaborative working between Community Engagement and Housing
- Proactive work focusing on what officers can do to improve the area and involving residents in decision making

The main concerns reported by residents are

- Clearer information needed on route and duration, particularly for residents with mobility issues, access to facilities – e.g. shelter and toilets
- Inspections of building condition (internal & external) needed
- Need involvement / attendance from Repairs, CityClean and CityParks
- Improved advertising of walkabouts needed and more residents to attend

The main concerns raised by councillors are

- Internal areas need to be inspected
- Need to adopt a 'one council' approach e.g. reporting uneven pavement to Highways
- Ensure all residents can attend, not just residents involved with Tenant & Resident Associations (TRAs)
- In areas where residents did not attend the walkabout, officers not confident about undertaking improvements without advance consultation.

The main concerns raised by staff are

- Need better representation / input from residents and all interested housing staff should have opportunity to attend
- High number of repair issues noted even though walkabouts are not meant to be repair focused.
- Need for involvement from CityClean and CityParks, lots of questions from residents re. Bins, weeds and grounds maintenance
- Managing expectations of residents
- Additional workload pressure for officers attending walkabouts. Significant time spent on follow up work, particularly following up on repairs and planned maintenance issues.

Preliminary recommendations:

- Housing Investment & Asset Management (HIAM) to establish programme of formal building inspections focusing on stock condition and health & safety, whilst ensuring compliance with the Building Safety Act 2022.
- A programme of weekly Estate Walkabouts cannot be fully delivered with current resources and structure. Further investigation is needed into this resource. There is no current capacity to take full ownership of and follow up on actions raised. A significant amount of administration has been done temporarily by the project team and lacks resource in the current structure.
- Further consideration given to the financing of the Environmental Improvements proposals. The current EIB budget is £500,000 per annum, and approximately £72,700 of works have been agreed from 12 walkabouts. It is anticipated that a two year programme (50 walkabouts per annum) will commence 2022/23.
- Further work needed to engage a wider group of residents to contribute to improving their environment, particularly those who do not ordinarily take part in any resident involvement activity.
- Further clarity is needed on the Grounds Maintenance contract.
- Create agreement with other key teams such as City Parks and City Clean.
- Further investigation needed to ensure there is resource in Community Engagement to undertake resident consultations arising from EIB proposals.
- Additional resourcing for EIB surveyor, including arrangements for cover to ensure all walkabouts are attended by a surveyor.
- Actions captured during the Walkabouts and basic feedback to be uploaded to the website on a quarterly basis, rather than sending out to attendees individually via email and post, which is resource intensive.
- Create an agreement with Housing Repairs to coordinate jobs raised through Estate Walkabouts as a body of work.
- Further investigation needed into the role of Field Officers.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Examples of issues identified by walkabouts categorised as ‘Other’
Appendix 2 – Feedback questionnaire (staff & councillors)

Appendix 1 – Examples of issues identified by walkabouts categorised as ‘Other’

Issue (Other)	Action taken
Cracked and uneven paving- report of tripping hazard/fall	Referred to Highways
Misuse of visitors bays	Referred to Car Parks & Garages
Loose cables on block	Referred to HIAM
Graffiti on back of garages	Referred to Estates
Tree growing out of pavement	Referred to Highways
Report of dog users on grass and dog mess being put into recycling bins	Referred to Housing Officer
Padlocks to be replaced or hasp and staples to be fitted on all noticeboards - give key to RA rep	Referred to Estates
The drying areas are never used and the car park has limited use. Could consideration be given the installation of additional housing	Referred to Hidden Homes
Internal Storage area for gardening supplies and equipment requested	Referred to Housing Officer