

**Items from the Central Area Resident Only meeting held on 12/12/14**

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**1. Estate Inspections**

*(Items 4 & 5 from minutes of meeting 9/10/14)*

*Robert Keelan has now met with tenant representatives (Barry Kingston and Carl Boardman) to discuss Estate Inspections. However, there are still a number of outstanding issues around Estate Inspections.*

*The discussion covered, but was not limited to, the following points:*

- a) Estate Inspections used to involve a range of people, and be useful and constructive events.*
- b) Tenant Representatives now feel demoralised and frustrated by the Estate Inspection process, and overall changes to the Neighbourhood system.*
- c) Communication is poor. Follow up reports on inspections are very slow, sometimes don't happen at all, or have inaccurate and partial information. Tenants are not kept informed about cancelled meetings and changed dates.*
- d) Tenants are 'eyes and ears' on the ground, and know what the problems and issues are in a way that officers can't. This is an important and under-used resource.*
- e) Sometimes there is too much talking and not enough listening from officers.*
- f) A programme of Estate Inspections has been produced, but this is meaningless as the timetable on the programme is not kept to.*
- g) Cut backs and staff shortages are continually given as reasons for planned meetings and inspections not happening, poor communication and reporting.*
- h) Tenant Representatives are working hard to build a partnership with officers, and help improve the process, for example by offering to pick up reports from the Housing Office and distribute them.*

*It was noted that problems with Estate Inspections and the level of communication between the neighbourhood team and the tenant representatives on the ground have been raised twice before at Central Area Panel. Despite this, representatives remain dissatisfied with the response and have not seen the situation improve.*

*It was agreed to request the following for the January Area Panel:*

- a) A discussion of concrete and realistic proposals to improve Estate Inspections in the Central Area.*
  - b) A report on the experience of Estate Inspections in other areas, to see if this is a city-wide issue.*
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## **Response from Robert Keelan - Neighbourhoods Team Manager – Tel:- 01273 294675**

There are 12 neighbourhood officers in the team covering 14,000 rented and leasehold council properties in the city. Our workload is varied and reactive and estate inspections form a key part of that.

I am sorry to hear that tenant representatives feel that inspections are not working for them and we want to work in partnership with residents. To this end, I would like all tenant representatives who have concerns at the way their inspections are happening to meet with their local Neighbourhoods Team Leader and Neighbourhood Officer(s) to hear their concerns and discuss a remedial plan.

The Team Leaders can be contacted on 01273 294675 and have geographical responsibility for different areas of the city. Appointments can be made directly with the relevant Team Leader who will be happy to meet you on site.

I appreciate that there is a request for a citywide report on estate inspection satisfaction levels but rather than staff sitting at a desk looking at spreadsheets, I would rather they respond to the complaint where it really matters, at a place of your choosing spending time with tenant representatives on the estates so that we get this right.

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## **2. Warwick Mount Garden**

*New properties have been built on Upper Bedford Street, on the site of the Stag Inn. While work was going on, the contractors were given permission to use part of Warwick Mount garden to store building equipment. Now the work is complete, and the owners have applied for permission to use the land permanently as a 'utility space' – probably a car-park.*

*Warwick Mount residents are opposed to this, and want to have the garden given back to residents for their use, and landscaped so it is in a good condition following its use as a building site.*

*It was agreed to raise concerns about Warwick Mount garden at Area Panel and:*

- a) Ask for formal reassurance from the Council that Warwick Mount garden will be returned to residents, and that the company will be refused permission for their continued use of this land.*
- b) Confirm that the area will be landscaped and left in a suitable state to be used as a garden.*

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### **Response from Theresa Youngman - Contract & Compliance Manager – Tel:- 01273 293190**

Residents at Warwick Mount can be assured that on 28 November the council refused the developer's request to lease part of the land belonging to Warwick Mount.

Compensation money will be used to re-landscape the garden.

Residents requested compensation for this area being out of use and wanted some assurance this would be looked into.

This has been looked at by the Property & Investment team and I can now confirm the following information.

Scott Lunn the Asset Team project manager will ring fence up to 50% of the income from the temporary rental agreement which will be allocated for the garden improvements once the project is completed.

This funding will be ring-fenced for the Warwick Mount garden improvement project which will be delivered through the EDB project manager, Keith Dadswell, in full partnership with the tenants' association. A meeting to agree the project plan will be held with tenants on 19 January 2015.

The works currently being undertaken are projected to take a further 6 months to complete and therefore the total amount cannot yet be disclosed until this completion.

Once we know what funding is available, the Resident Involvement Team (Becky Purnell) will contact Carl Boardman, the tenant representative, to ensure full tenant consultation has been measured regarding this project and instruction will then follow for Mears to liaise and arrange works .

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### **3. 'Outward and upward' new build on medium sized blocks**

*Barry Hughes noted a report in the Area Panel minutes of 3/12/14, about a presentation from Simon Pickles to the Leaseholder Action Group. This was considering the use of land for new housing, and included the possibility of building 'outward and upward' on medium-sized blocks of 3-4 floors. This has not been discussed at Area Panels, but is obviously an issue of some importance and concern to people living in medium-sized blocks.*

*It was agreed to ask for a report at the next Area Panel on the possibility of 'outward and upward' new build, where this would be, and an indication of what consultation would take place before proposals such as this were agreed.*

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#### **Response from Simon Pickles - Housing Stock Review Manager - Property & Investment Team – Tel:- 01273 292083**

This topic came up when Simon Pickles, the Housing Stock Review Manager, was discussing a draft version of the new asset management strategy with the Leaseholder Action Group. Dates are still to be set for presentations to the Area Panels in the early part of 2015.

The draft strategy includes a wide range of options to improve the quality of council housing and increase the supply of new council homes. All these options need to be discussed with and challenged by the Area Panels and the Home Group, before being discussed by Housing Committee.