



Report to:	<b>STOCKPORT HOMES MEMBER COMMITTEE</b>		
	<i>12 February 2024</i>		
Report of:	<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS</b>		
Contact Officer and contact details	Anila Khalid Anila.Khalid@stockporthomes.org		
Type of Report	<i>Assurance</i>		
Title of Report:	<b>MANAGEMENT OF LANCASHIRE HILL</b>		
Purpose of Report:	To provide an update on challenges faced at Lancashire Hill and the actions being taken to address them.		
Recommendation(s):	That Members Committee note the actions being undertaken to manage Lancashire Hill and the progress made over recent months to improve the living conditions for residents.		
Confidentiality	Non Confidential		
Resource Implications	Significant resource continues to be employed on Lancashire Hill to intensively manage the neighbourhood in addition to the capital investment made to date.		
Impact on Risk Appetite and Risk Register	This report highlights the challenges faced in managing Lancashire Hill and demonstrates how risks need to be managed intensely to protect residents. This therefore fits with SHG's minimal risk appetite in this area.		
	Risk Number	Risk Description	Risk Mitigation
	<i>Corporate Risk #6</i>	<i>Positive, strategic relationships / approaches to partnership working are not maintained with Stockport</i>	<i>SHG are part of key partnerships across Stockport and work closely with all to deliver neighbourhood</i>

		<i>Council (at both officer and political level) and other key local partners / third sector organisations across Greater Manchester (GM)</i>	<i>services. The team meet regularly with partners to ensure their priorities are understood.</i>
	<i>Corporate Risk #7</i>	<i>SHG does not deliver excellent customer service and does not deliver customer expectations around accountability</i>	<i>SHG Neighbourhood plans underpin how homes, and the 'Place' agenda will be met. All teams need to ensure customer expectations are managed - this translates into all our working practices</i>

**Customer Voice**                      The paper sets out how customers are engaged in ensuring that excellent services are delivered, and highlights how actions will have a positive impact on services delivered to existing and new customers.

**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion implications**                      All services are delivered ensuring that the team at Lancashire Hill consider the individual circumstances but also recognising that the experience can be very diverse.

**Regulatory compliance**                      *As a landlord SHG are required to keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes managed clean and safe. SHG must also work in partnership with tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.*

From April 2023 the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures form part of the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) regulation of Social Landlords in England and assist with monitoring compliance with the consumer standard.

There are within the TSMs questions about how Landlords manage their neighbourhoods and homes and these are intended to make landlords more accountable to tenants and their performance in key areas more transparent and comparable.

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report is to provide Members Committee with an update of how Neighbourhood teams have managed Lancashire Hill during the last year but more importantly to provide an overview of the current activity across the neighbourhood.
- 1.2 Central to all neighbourhood activity is the work with key partners such as Stockport Council, Elected members, Safer Stockport Partnership, Greater Manchester Police, Youth Offending Services, Probation, other Greater Manchester housing providers, voluntary sector organisations and customers.

# **2 CONTEXT**

- 2.1 Lancashire Hill consists of circa 500 homes, within six different blocks. On average, turnover for the neighbourhood is approximately 18% each year with each home receiving 90+ bids. All SHG managed homes are let in accordance with the Council's approved Allocations Policy via the Choice Based Letting system and allocation is made based on the number of bids. By virtue of supply being significantly outstripped by demand in the Borough, most homes are being let to those in highest housing need, previously homeless, vulnerable and those receiving support from other services. This therefore correlates with the increasingly complex demands and issues being managed on the estate.
- 2.2 The neighbourhood is managed intensively through regular walkabouts, new/current tenant visits and close working with stakeholders such as the Council and other statutory agencies. Housing Management teams and Safer Neighbourhood teams manage Lancashire Hill intensively due to the density of the estate and the complex needs of the residents who live there.
- 2.3 Following the notion passed by the Councillors about Lancashire Hill, a taskforce meeting was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Dec 2023 chaired by Councillor Colin McCallister. Issues raised at the meeting have either been addressed or are continuing to be managed in conjunction with the ward Councillors and residents. The close work with the new ward Cllrs for Lancashire Hill in recent months has proved to be very effective with joint work that has led to positive outcomes.

# **3 TASKFORCE ACTIONS**

## **3.1 Repairs – Maintaining Homes**

- Stock condition surveys are currently being undertaken across all SHG homes including Lancashire Hill. These surveys will feed into future investment, but also highlight any immediate issues that need to be addressed. These surveys commenced in September last year and to

date the following number of surveys have been undertaken on the estate: Pendlebury 35, Hanover 39, Clarkthorne 7, Stonemill 36, Bentleys 49, Longsons 21. Total internal surveys completed as at 30<sup>th</sup> Jan is 187.

- Different channels/platforms to report repairs have been promoted on both electronic and static noticeboards at Lancashire Hill to encourage residents to report any repairs they have including Damp, Mould or Condensation (DMC).
- All reports of DMC are being attended to within 11 days. The first visit includes a mould wash and the completion of any associated minor repairs.
- All customers at Lancashire Hill who have reported DMC have a follow up outward contact after 6 months to check whether the DMC has been resolved and follow up action is being taken as necessary.
- All faulty intercom units that were reported have been addressed.
- Additional fobs have been issued to all residents who requested them and have been provided to further properties where it has been highlighted that carers need to attend.
- A consultation exercise has commenced with residents regarding the internal doors that separate different blocks which are currently beyond repair. As these doors are continually damaged due to fob access being required, residents are being asked whether free access between blocks would be preferred to prevent the doors from being repeatedly forced. Following the outcome of the consultation, the doors will be replaced.

### **3.2 Safer Neighbourhoods (ASB) – what is the current focus?**

- There are currently 14 live ASB related cases for Lancashire Hill with a further 3 for Neighbourhood Resolution (Noise), and 1 Tenancy Fraud Case
- 5 of these are high level and being progressed through relevant legal channels.
- There have been 70 cases opened since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 which demonstrates the scale of intensive management required on the estate.
- In response to the Housing Ombudsman spotlight on noise which highlighted that not all noise should be viewed as anti-social behaviour, a 'Resolution Officer' role was created to solely focus on resolving issues of noise between families, particularly in flats such as those on Lancashire Hill. This issue was raised at the resident meeting in December. To date at Lancashire Hill, 37 reports of noise transference have been received, 33 have been resolved, 1 progressed to legal action with 3 still ongoing.

- A Good Neighbour Policy was developed in April 2023 and there is a plan to launch a media campaign reminding everyone of what this means and publicise some of the work of the Resolution Officer.
- On 30<sup>th</sup> Jan a warrant was executed at a SHG property in Heaton Norris following intensive work by the Safer Neighbourhood Team and the police which will be followed up by legal action. The resident was known to be dealing drugs to Lancashire Hill residents as reported at the resident meeting.
- It has been agreed that Lancashire Hill will be the pilot area for an out of hours mobile security patrolling project. This will give the area some much needed proactive monitoring to increase community confidence and encourage reporting of any ASB.

### **3.3 Housing Demand and Supply – How are we supporting?**

3.4 In Stockport on the housing waiting list, as of April 2023, c4000 households were categorised as having ‘reasonable preference’, which in essence means they are in urgent housing need (for example actually homeless, sofa surfing, at imminent risk of eviction, statutorily overcrowded). The most common type of need amongst housing applicants is medical need and the second being overcrowded. This overcrowding is true of some households at Lancashire Hill and it is recognised that this is frustrating and waiting times are long.

3.5 Due to the lack of adequate affordable housing, SHG’s Property Management Team are proactively promoting mutual exchanges to all Lancashire Hill residents wanting to move and dedicated officers have been supporting access to a national data base. In the last year alone 4 mutual exchanges have completed at Lancashire Hill, with a further 3 in progress to be completed by March 24. There are 1085 households (SHG and other landlords) registered for a move and wanting to live in Stockport. In 2022/23 124 SHG households moved via a mutual exchange and as at Dec 2023 records show 142 mutual exchanges completed.

3.6 In addition, the organisation’s ‘rightsizing’ project commenced in April 2023 which is aimed at supporting those who are under occupying family accommodation into smaller properties. To date this has freed up 17 three / four-bedroom homes in high demand areas of the Borough (e.g., Cheadle, Woodley) with an expected further 3 in the pipeline to be completed by March 2024. This is 20 additional homes in 23/24 let to families living in overcrowded conditions and in high need.

### **3.7 Inspections Regime – One Team approach**

#### **3.8 Building Safety**

- Building Safety inspections are carried out at all blocks monthly by SHG’s Building Safety Technician. All building safety equipment is

checked such as firefighting equipment, ventilating windows, emergency lighting and fire doors. This equipment is electronically tagged and when scanned prompts a series of questions specific to that asset which are answered and saved on the system. Should there be any repairs required then these will be raised accordingly.

### 3.8 **Caretaking / Housing Management Services**

- Daily inspections of each block, via a full walk through are conducted by the Caretaking Service, 365 days of the year. Any highlighted issues are recorded on an electronic reporting tool called Sweep and reported/addressed accordingly including repairs, fly tipping, anti-social behaviour, homelessness to etc.
- Monthly inspections are also conducted by the Caretaking Team Leader for each of the blocks on the estate.
- Since April 2023 the caretaking service have reported 1799 issues. The issues the caretakers highlight can be widespread. Examples include:
  - 635 incidents of ASB and Fly Tipping:
  - 194 repairs
  - 31 incidents of homelessness
  - 187 separate bulky collections
  - 27 involving biohazards.
- The above demonstrates the intensive nature of the work undertaken by the caretaking team and the proactive approach taken to highlight and address issues within the blocks.
- Two new caretakers have been brought into Lancashire Hill to bring 'fresh eyes' to the neighbourhood. Positive feedback has been received from residents about the work of the new caretakers and their overall approach.
- In addition to the above inspections current tenancy visits are carried out by Housing Officers at all properties every 3 years. At Lancashire Hill priority for these visits has been given to those customers who have not reported a repair for two years or if there is a known vulnerability/cause for concern. The visits are designed to pick up any support needs, identify repairs, and check property condition.
- The Housing Team have taken enforcement action over the last 12 months where individual gardens have not been maintained and have recharged residents for fly tipping where there is evidence of a perpetrator. As always, the need to strike the right balance between support and enforcement is key for the housing management team at Lancashire Hill.
- A new Housing Officer has been assigned to Lancashire Hill, to bring renewed vigour and ideas to manage the neighbourhood successfully.

### 3.10 Greenspaces - Managing the 'Place'

- Active management of the Ground Maintenance Contract continues. Glendale, the appointed contractor visits every 2 weeks to undertake works in accordance with SHG's specification.
- Further inspections are carried out each month with SHG's Greenspace Officer and Glendale to check on the condition of the estate and the quality of their work.
- In accordance with SHG's Tree Policy and Procedure, trees are inspected on a 3-year cycle with the next survey at Lancashire Hill being due this year. The tree survey is conducted by SMBC's Arborist team. If required trees can be inspected reactively at any other time.
- Work has already been issued for 32 trees at Lancashire Hill including 2 which are affecting the CCTV visibility as highlighted recently.
- Playgrounds – SHG are responsible for the play area in the middle of estate opposite the shops. A Service Level Agreement is in place with SMBC 23-2025 for Playground Maintenance. This includes fortnightly inspections of the site and equipment and undertaking any repairs and maintenance required.
- Additional Greenspace improvement works are scheduled to take place before the end of March 2024
  - Approx 200m<sup>2</sup> of daffodils to be planted to add some colour around estate.
  - A raised bed will be planted with Herbaceous outside the Bentleys.
  - Possible removal of some of the central shrub beds around the carparks between Bentleys and Stonemill as these have become litter and leaf traps.
  - Removal of shrub bed on slope alongside steps near the Bentleys.
  - Rear of Bentleys to address the issue of litter and long grass the team are exploring an alternate ground cover which is more manageable.
- There has been additional dialogue and collaboration with TLC who manage SMBC's areas on the estate to ensure that there is a more consistent approach and shared understanding.

### 3.11 Support for Community Groups – what is being done?

- SHG manages Lancashire Hill Community Centre – the centre was mothballed prior to COVID as there was no interest from the community to have the centre open. Work is now ongoing with SHG's Customer

Engagement Team to promote the use of the centre; this includes working with the charity 'Forever Manchester' who are working with customers to build a stronger community for the Lancashire Hill area of Stockport.

- Weekly activities at the Community Centre now include Monday and Tuesday activities for a drop in café and a 'Beating the Blues Round the Blocks', 'Tech & Toast', kids club, food groups and weekend groups. Stockport Oromo Community use the centre to run sessions to teach young people indigenous language and there are drop-in sessions from NHS giving flu/covid injections

### 3.12 **Support for Vulnerable Customers – what is on offer?**

- Since April '23 there have been 88 Energy Advice referrals for Lancashire Hill, resulting in a home visit, phone advice or funding. In addition, Energy Advisors have attended residents' meetings, coffee mornings and Pantry events, with another surgery drop-in scheduled for Wed 7th Feb. The last campaign was in Dec 23 and was promoted as 'Winter is Coming'.
- In the same period, the team have supported over 100 Lancashire Hill households, having issued a total of £12,052, consisting of £6,090 Pay Point fuel vouchers, £5,535 of grocery vouchers where prepayment meters are not in place, and £482 emergency cash vouchers.
- The Food Pantry at Lancashire Hill offers weekly affordable shopping for residents.
- The Learner Lounge in Stonemill is used by a number of organisations for supported groups such as Alcohol Anonymous.
- Dedicated Housing Support Officers often base themselves at Lancashire Hill due to the high number of referrals made and the complex needs of the residents living there. Individual and bespoke support is provided, and all residents are encouraged to seek support should they need it.
- Work is underway to develop more visuals to be put up at Lancashire Hill to advise residents of the Housing Support offer if they are not already aware.
- Neighbourhood Housing officers hold a weekly surgery that residents can access at Stonemill every Wednesday morning. Any referrals are made as appropriate to agencies or internal teams.

### 3.13 **Future Plans for Lancashire Hill**

- There is a recognition that significant investment is needed for Lancashire Hill in the relatively near future. Officers are undertaking



assessments and will be bringing investment options to the Member Committee later this year once further work has been completed to assess the available options.

## **13 CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 As can be seen significant work continues to take place at Lancashire Hill to manage the neighbourhood. The actions and activities highlighted above link directly to the task force discussions with residents, SMBC and elected council members. There is however the need to recognise that, with the density of household numbers in a tight geography and the complex needs of the residents, intensive management will always be required going forward.

## **14 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 14.1 It is recommended that Members Committee note the actions being undertaken to manage Lancashire Hill and the progress made over recent months to improve the living conditions for residents.