

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe & Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	9th January 2012
3.	Title:	Respect ASB Charter for Housing
4.	Programme Area:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods of the publication on 22nd June 2011 of the 'Respect ASB Charter for Housing', and seeks approval for RMBC to sign up to this standard and commence an assessment of the service we provide against the criteria set out in it.

This is a voluntary standard and is essentially an update and replacement of the previous 'Respect Standard for Housing Management - 2006' that RMBC, the then 2010 Rotherham Ltd and the Rotherham Federation of Tenants and Residents (RotherFed) signed up to in 2007.

At present, RMBC like all landlords is required to adhere to the Tennant Services Authority's (TSA) Neighbourhood and Community Standard and to have developed a local standard with their tenants to identify and agree locally defined outcomes and priorities. Compliance with the TSA standard exists in RMBC and there is no conflict between the requirements of the TSA and those of the Respect ASB Charter for Housing and as a council, we are confident in our ability to successfully work with partners and stakeholders to meet all objectives.

By re-signing to the updated charter RMBC will be reaffirming its commitment to our tenants to put tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) at the heart of what we do and importantly, provides an opportunity to promote the good work that is already taking place across the borough.

Tackling ASB and improving the quality of life within our communities is a key priority of RMBC and the Safer Rotherham Partnership. The new Respect Standard provides a set of key activities that social landlords should carry out to tackle ASB effectively and help build strong and safe communities.

6. Recommendations

- **That a full assessment is carried out of the services we provide against the criteria set out in the charter**
- **That RMBC sign up to the new 'Respect – ASB Charter for Housing' in partnership with 'RotherFed'**

7. Proposals and Details

In 2007 the council, the then 2010 Rotherham Limited and 'RotherFed' signed up to the government's 'Respect Standard for Housing Management 2006'. In doing so we made a public commitment to do everything we reasonably can to tackle ASB and develop a culture of respect in the neighbourhoods we work with.

The Respect Standard for Housing Management was part of a wider national 'Respect' agenda - a cross-government strategy to tackle bad behaviour and nurture good to create a modern culture of respect.

In January 2011, ownership of the standard passed to the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), with support from the Social Landlords Crime & Nuisance Group and 'HouseMark'.

On 22nd June 2011 the CIH launched a new 'Respect – ASB Charter for Housing' (Appendix 'A'). This voluntary charter was created by housing professionals in consultation with residents and commits landlords to provide a high quality service to prevent and deal with ASB. It puts an even higher priority on tackling ASB in order to protect vulnerable tenants and improve the lives of people resident in social housing.

The charter has been developed through wide consultation, continues to be voluntary and is essentially an updating of the previous standard. It is not intended to be a wider community safety charter; it is about the provision, by landlords, of ASB services.

The charter aims to be outcome focused and not prescriptive or process driven. Its purpose is to improve ASB services and consists of seven core commitments:

- Demonstrating leadership and strategic commitment
- Providing an accessible and accountable service
- Taking swift action to protect communities
- Adopting a supportive approach to working with victims and witnesses
- Encouraging individual and community responsibility
- Having a clear focus on prevention and early intervention
- Ensuring a value for money approach is embedded in the service

These commitments are supported by a series of 44 'building blocks' based on sector good practice.

The Respect Standard for Housing management that it replaces was built around the following six core commitments:

- Accountability, leadership, and commitment
- Empowering and reassuring residents
- Prevention and early intervention
- Tailored services for residents and provision of support for victims and witnesses
- Protecting communities through swift enforcement
- Support to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour

It will be seen that there are clear similarities between the core commitments and there would not be a requirement for any significant change of overall approach in re-signing to the updated charter.

In developing the charter the CIH acknowledged that there will be a wide range of diverse organisations who will want to sign up to it and as such, not all of the Commitments and Building Blocks will be appropriate. It is intended to be a framework for landlords to use and adapt to local circumstances and priorities. The aim is for landlords to work with tenants to understand what issues are important to them, and work towards ultimately achieving this.

Signing the Charter simply requires a commitment from the landlord. It does not require full compliance at this time.

An initial gap analysis carried out against the criteria within the Charter shows there are more strengths than areas for development for RMBC (Appendix 'B'). This is to be expected as it was created from the former 'Respect Standard for Housing Management' which has been progressively developed since RMBC/2010 signed up to in 2007.

Benefits

A robust cross partnership structure to tackle ASB is in place and progress has been made in reducing the overall number of reported incidents in recent years. Activity to tackle ASB in Rotherham is driven by a partnership Priority Group and there is in place a recently agreed ASB Strategy supported by a detailed action plan and the council's statutory ASB Policy & Procedures document. Performance is monitored by the Safer Rotherham Partnership through the Joint Action Group.

As a result of the structures already in place it is not envisaged that there will be any additional practical, operational or resource implications associated with re-signing the charter. Re-signing the charter would:

- Reaffirm to our tenants our commitment to provide a high quality ASB service and our accountability for its delivery.
- Ensure there was in place an updated and on going self assessment framework for improvement, tailored to local needs and priorities.
- Provide a set of standards that could be shared and developed with partners, potentially leading to improved service delivery.
- Provide an opportunity for the reintegrated Housing Service to re-assess its response to ASB against the criteria within the updated charter.
- Offer the opportunity to obtain external accreditation through 'HouseMark' and the 'Social Landlords Crime & Nuisance Group Accreditation Service, although this is not a requirement of re-signing the charter.

The localism agenda and elements of the building blocks that make up the Charter ensures that how the council engages tenants to develop and scrutinise the Charter will be key to its overall success.

A joint re-signing of the Charter with 'RotherFed' would show commitment to the principal and also through working with them to develop an action plan which reflects local and customer priorities.

To date a total of 196 Local Authorities and other social landlords have signed up to the new charter, with over 25 organisations having achieved external accreditation.

A list of frequently asked questions in respect of the new charter is shown at Appendix 'C'

8. Finance

There are no foreseen additional financial implications associated with this proposal. Activity to tackle ASB is resourced through existing council and partner budgets and tightly managed external funding streams.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Tackling ASB and improving the quality of life within our communities is a key priority of RMBC and the Safer Rotherham Partnership. The new Respect standard provides a set of key activities that social landlords should carry out to tackle ASB effectively and help build strong and safe communities.

There is a risk of raising and then failing to meet the expectation of tenants after publically reaffirming the council's commitment to provide a high quality ASB service and accountability for its delivery.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

There is clear linkage between how, as a partnership, Rotherham tackles ASB and the objectives within the RMBC Corporate Plan – Helping to create safe and healthy communities, People feel safe where they live, Anti-social behaviour and crime is reduced, People from different backgrounds get on well together. Improving the environment, Clean streets.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Respect – ASB Charter for Housing (June 2011)
- Respect Standard for Housing Management (August 2006)

Contact Name : *Steve Parry, Neighbourhood Crime & Justice Manager.*
01709 (3)34565. steve.parry@rotherham.gov.uk