

SELWOOD HOUSING BOARD MEETING

3rd September 2014

Housekeeping & Caretaking Service REVIEW FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SELWOOD SCRUTINY TEAM SUMMER 2014

DECISION	OPEN	CIRCULATION: Board
PREPARED with research & analysis by:	Selwood Scrutiny Team: Julianne Colbran, Barbara Hakes, May Law, Robert Greenwood, Stephen Darvell, Bob Gilbert.	
Staff shadowing exercise performed by:	Selwood Customer Services Inspectors: Christine Shord, Yvonne Crook, Adrian Cizmas, Asma Bakali-Laughton, Linda Monger, Michelle Day, David Pepler	
Supported by:	Kate Gurner Community Engagement Manager 01225 715708	

Executive Summary

The scrutiny team opted to review the housekeeping and caretaking services provided by Selwood Housing to their tenants. They were supported by the Customer Service Inspectors who shadowed both members of the housekeeping and caretaking teams for a session (either AM, PM or a whole day) to gain an insight into their duties and responsibilities. The CSI team submitted their report to the scrutiny team.

The scrutiny team considered the CSI findings and undertook their own research before reaching a range of conclusions about the approach to caretaking and housekeeping services in Selwood Housing and has made a number of recommendations to the Board for consideration.

Throughout this document certain abbreviations will be used as follows:

H&C Housekeeping & Caretaking
CSI Customer Service Inspectors
NM Neighbourhood Manager

1. History

Prior to the stock transfer in 2001 the caretaking service to general needs stock was undertaken by Wiltshire Council, following transfer this service was undertaken by West Wiltshire Housing Society (WWHS) The cost of this included with the rents. The service expanded over time until a full review was undertaken in 2007. Fly tipping was a becoming a major issue and contractors where being continually used to remove items of rubbish etc. The review recommended that the caretaking service be expanded and for vans to be provided to reduce the cost of rubbish removal (£30,000 per year)

Wiltshire Council in their review of the support services provided to Sheltered accommodation as part of their "help to live at home" strategy felt that greater value for money could be achieved through the dedicated use of a smaller number of providers – costs where reduced by not having a number of agencies visiting the same person. In November 2011 the "warden service" was dissolved and some Wardens went to the care providers (Domiciliary and general very low level care) whilst others remained employed by Selwood Housing.

The care provision is currently contracted out to various agencies.

The caretaking service has not been reviewed since 2007; the housekeeping service has not been reviewed since inception.

2. Background

In March 2014 the Scrutiny Team opted to review the caretaking and housekeeping services. A project initiation document was written by the scrutiny team with Kate Gurner, the Community Engagement Manager; this was subsequently agreed by the Head of Neighbourhoods and the Chief Executive.

3. Methodology

The project initiation document identified four key areas that would form the basis of the review.

In scope areas were:

- a) Current standards and policies in relation to both areas of the service (caretaking and housekeeping)
- b) To understand what is included in the service and how this provision is carried out by staff and communicated to tenants.
- c) The efficiency of the service received from tenants' perspective including value for money
- d) Comparison with national good practice and benchmarking.

Out of scope were:

Voids (empty homes) cleaning.

4. List of Appendices

- a) Project initiation document
- b) H&C staff survey
- c) Selwood staff interviews
- d) Tenants survey
- e) Benchmarking report
- f) CSI report
- g) H&C Job descriptions

5. Activities undertaken by the CSI team

Individual CSI team members accompanied both housekeeping and caretaking staff as observers as they performed daily duties. These were pre-arranged.

6. Activities undertaken by the Scrutiny Team

The Scrutiny team undertook a range of activities which included:

- i) Desktop research relating to current standards and policies in relation to:
 - a) Service provision

- b) National good practice and benchmarking
- ii) Surveys of:
 - a) Housekeeping and caretaking staff
 - b) Tenants
- iii) Individual interviews with relevant staff members in neighbourhoods, finance and independent living departments
- iv) Detailed examination of job descriptions for housekeeping and caretaking staff to ascertain actual responsibilities and duties

7. Findings

The Scrutiny Team considered the information that they had and divided this into subsections.

7.1 How caretaking and housekeeping services are managed.

H&C falls into the Neighbourhoods' team headed by Adrian Walshe. There are three team managers including Paul Fife who has assisted with the day to day management of the caretakers and housekeepers. There is a H&C Manager and two deputies plus five housekeepers and five caretakers.

7.1.1 Key strengths

- Adrian Walshe was more than aware of issues within this area of the business and Paul Fife was tasked to assist him in the day to day operational running of the caretaking and housekeeping service.
- The H&C Manager has a good relationship with his team and has regular contact with them.
- Selwood offers relevant and proper training in most areas.

7.1.2 Areas of concern

- There are currently no documented standards or service levels in existence that are applied to H&C services.
- Relationships between other Selwood staff and the H&C team is tense and needs considerable improvement.
- There is insufficient communication between all parties with no formally recognised pathways within the management structure.
- Additional requests of both H&C's by various Selwood teams are often made to perform tasks not related to core duties. These result in a down-grading of the overall service provided to tenants. They are assumed to be cost negative and not logged on QL system.
- Management are unaware of the whereabouts of H&C at any given time, which poses risks associated with lone working.
- Training records do not reflect completed training.
- The H&C Manager carries out cleaning duties at various sites to the detriment of his managerial duties.
- The H&C Manager and/or Neighbourhood Managers are not carrying out inspections on a regular basis and no formal records are kept.
- The complaints procedures require examination as figures supplied are not realistic. It would appear that there has been one complaint in the past three years relating to housekeeping and caretaking.

7.2 The quality and performance of caretaking and housekeeping services.

7.2.1 Key strengths

- H&C staff are friendly and approachable.
- Housekeepers are able to cover for each other in the event of absence as they work in pairs (buddy system).

- Both H&C are flexible when asked to perform extra duties outside their normal required work pattern.
- Since the reorganisation of neighbourhood's team there has been more contact between NM's and H&C.
- Staff are aware of the importance of health and safety procedures and ensure that testing is carried out in a timely manner and documented.

7.2.2 Areas of concern

- The Caretakers are unable to cover for each other in the event of absence due to extensive areas to be covered and the number of buildings. This results in an inadequate service to the tenants.
- Due to staff shortage of Neighbourhoods Managers the contact between them and H&C is not at a desired level.
- There is no written work schedule or formal check list of duties required.
- There is a need for a review of equipment and materials, some are found to be inadequate and some pose a health and safety risk.
- The lack of clean water supply on some sites does not enable the staff to perform cleaning duties as required.
- Caretakers and housekeepers do not feel that their concerns are taken seriously. They do not feel that there is an adequate process whereby they can raise complaints or concerns about tenants and the way in which they are often abused by them. They also feel, that are unable to effectively raise issues regarding other members of Selwood staff in a safe and productive way. They believe there is a lack of support and backup from Neighbourhoods staff, especially in relation to verbal abuse from tenants.
- The morale of the H&C staff is low and they do not believe their work is understood or appreciated; they believe that they are regarded as 'merely cleaners'. This directly affects the level of enthusiasm,

efficiency and pride in their work which reflects adversely on the service offered to the tenants.

- The division of responsibilities between housekeepers and agency care staff (wardens) is unclear in sheltered housing schemes. Examination and clarification of the care agency contract with regard to actual responsibilities would be beneficial.

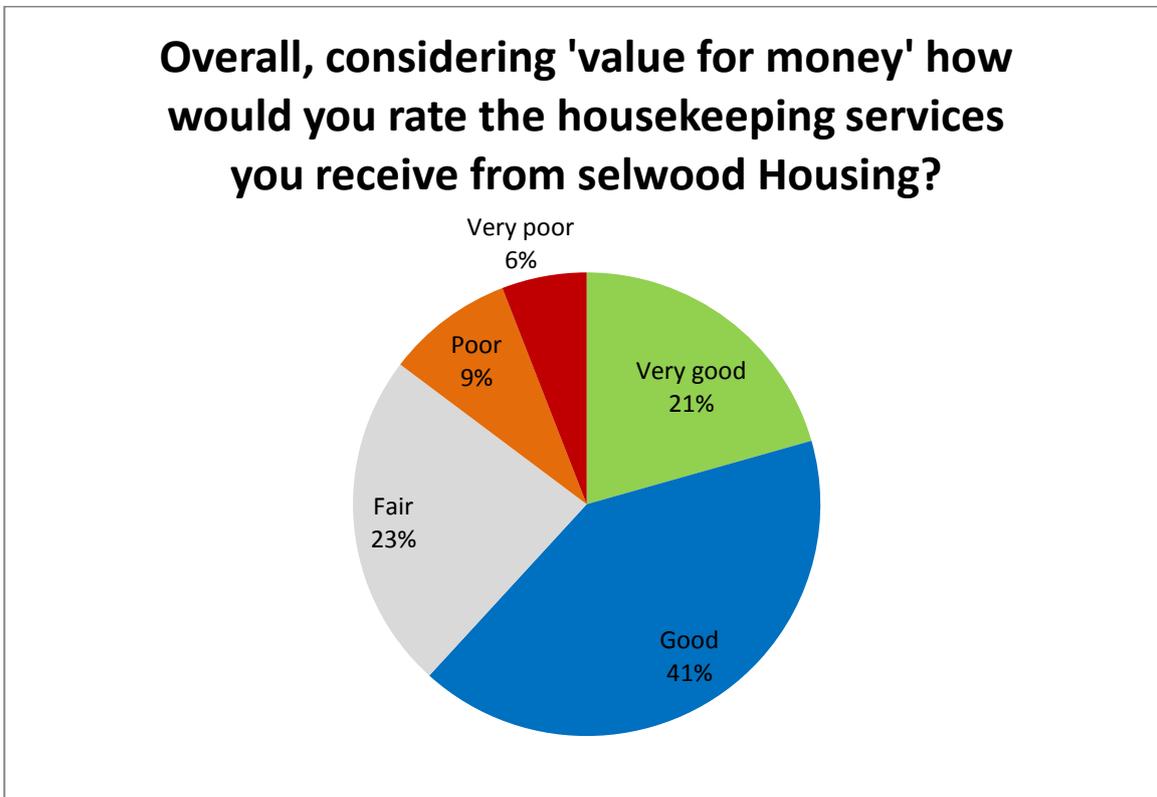
8. Tenant satisfaction with caretaking and housekeeping Services

A snapshot survey was conducted over several days at ten sites covering the main towns. The results are contained within Appendix D. The associated comments are listed below in descending order of concern:

1. Poor time keeping and time wasting
2. Non-performance of cleaning duties
3. Rubbish bins not cleaned
4. Dog faeces and rubbish around buildings
5. Pathways slippery due to weeds and leaves
6. Staff require more time to complete duties
7. Tenants expected to carry out cleaning duties
8. Tenants have no knowledge of H&C responsibilities
9. Lights in communal areas not replaced
10. Numerous complaints regarding maintenance of garden areas

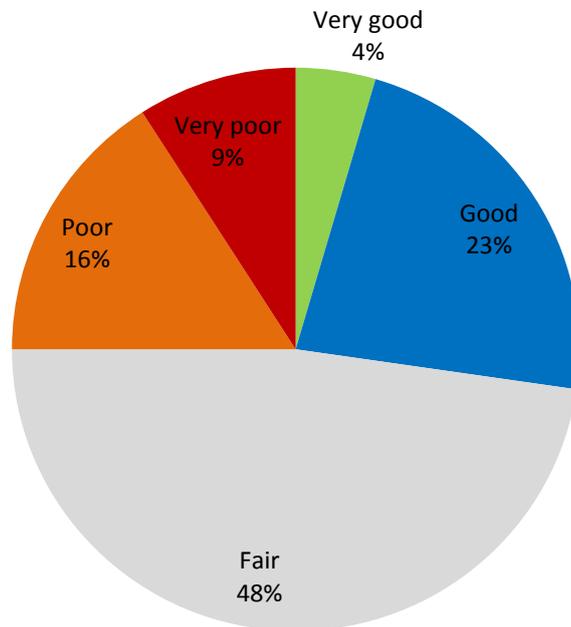
8.1 The two most important issues to tenants that came to light through our survey related to Value for Money and Satisfaction.

Tenant survey question 7 - Considering 'value for money' results are displayed in pie chart below.



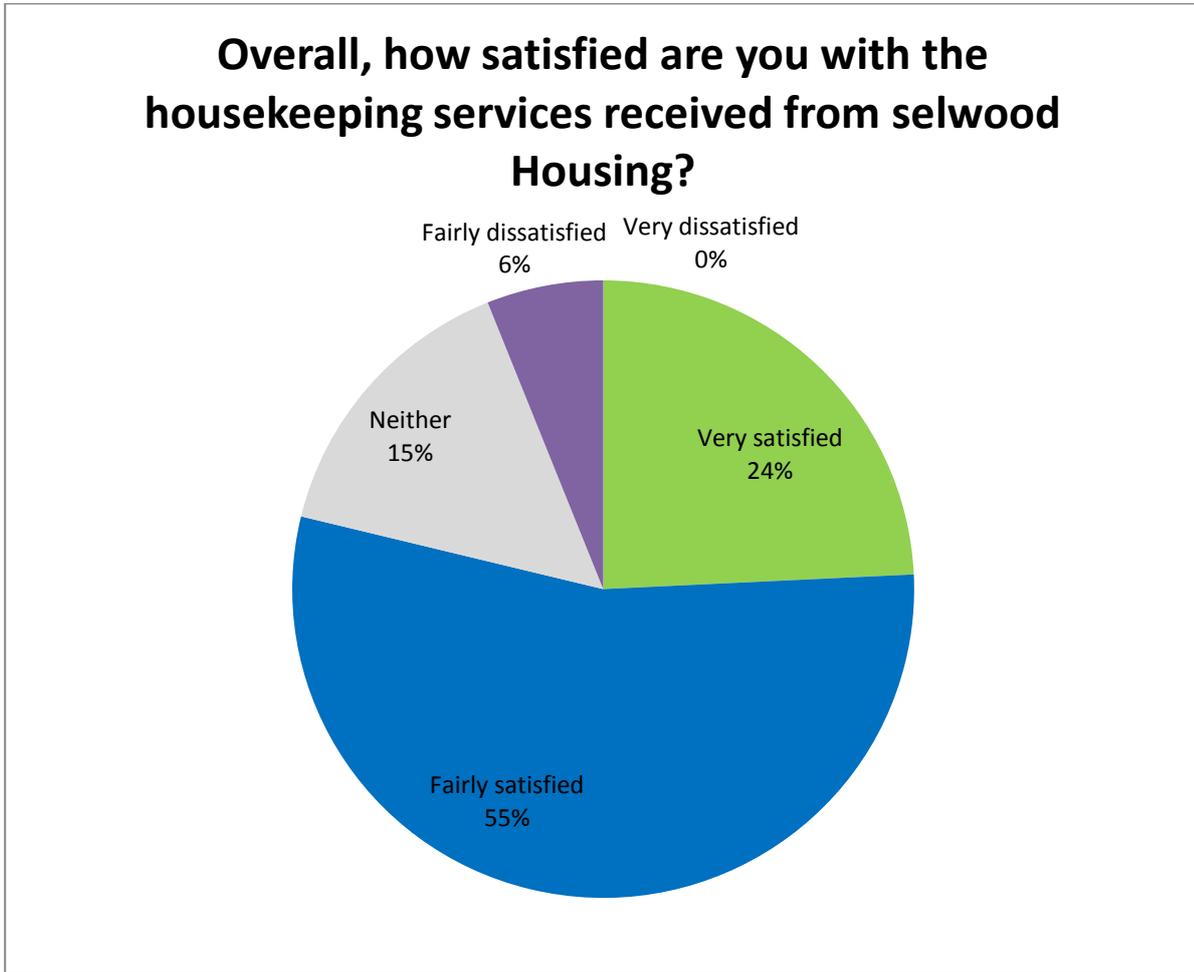
Overall value for money - Housekeepers	
Very good	7
Good	14
Fair	8
Poor	3
Very poor	2

Overall, considering 'value for money' how would you rate the caretaking service you receive from selwood Housing?



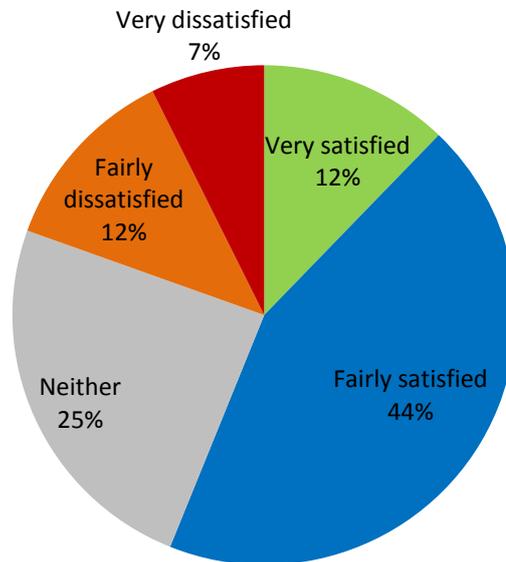
Overall value for money - caretakers	
Very good	2
Good	10
Fair	21
Poor	7
Very poor	4

Tenant survey question 8 - Considering 'overall satisfaction' results are displayed in pie chart below.



Overall satisfaction - Housekeepers	
Very satisfied	8
Satisfied	18
Neither	5
Dissatisfied	2
Very dissatisfied	0

Overall how satisfied are you with the caretaking service you receive from Selwood Housing?



Overall satisfaction - Caretakers	
Very satisfied	5
Satisfied	18
Neither	10
Dissatisfied	5
Very dissatisfied	3

9. Value for money – H&C services

9.1 Key Strengths

- 69.03% of housekeeping costs and 85.42% Of caretaking costs are recovered through the application of service charges.

9.2 Areas of concern

- There are a total of 338 working days per annum when there is not a full complement of staff due to holidays and Bank holidays. H&C duties are not adequately completed during holiday times therefore tenants are not receiving value for money.
- The installation of key safes for both Selwood tenants and private customers on behalf of Independent Living are completed by caretakers. Monies received for this service are directed into the Telecare Income Stream account with no part into H&C budget.
- Where other tasks are requested of H&C there would appear to be no audit trail since these extra tasks are not logged onto the QL system.

10. Overall recommendations (incorporating findings from all areas)

The Housekeeping and Caretaking Service appears to have been structured on an ad-hoc basis since its inception. The Scrutiny Team suggests that the service be subject to a complete and thorough overhaul as per the following recommendations to the Board. A 'repair and patch approach' is felt to be insufficient given the evidence and research that led us to make our final conclusions.

Improve the way caretaking and housekeeping services are managed:

- Produce a guide to service levels and standards to H&C by the formation of a focus group consisting of H&C, tenants and relevant neighbourhood

team manager. From this it would be desirable to produce a tenants charter, to include Selwood's expectations of the tenants' responsibilities in relation to housekeeping and caretaking roles.

- Daily work logs to be kept and submitted at the end of each week (to account for specific duties undertaken, where and how long for), combined with a formal time and motion study.
- There have been 16 developments built since 1/1/2010, all needing H or C services. There has been one member of staff taken on since the same date. However, until it can be ascertained that the existing staff are fully occupied in carrying out their duties, it is impossible to gauge whether or not extra member/s of staff are required.
- The installation of trackers in vehicles to increase the safety of staff 'working alone' and also to monitor staff movement during each day is recommended.
- Remove cleaning duties from the H & C manager to enable more effective management of staff.
- Evolve a system of recognition for staff excellence.
- The health and safety elements within H&C are due to be completely reviewed in August by Robert Webster-Garvey, Head of Health & Safety.

Improve the most cost effective and efficient ways to provide caretaking & housekeeping services for all tenants by:

- Supply clean water to sites that do not have an existing supply.
- Investigation of extra jobs added to workload by other teams within Selwood should be recorded and/or logged through the QL system. These extra duties detract from the H & C's primary goal of providing a value for money service to tenants.
- Investigation and provision of updated equipment, especially cordless vacuum cleaners, to promote ease of use and remove health & safety hazard for both tenants and staff.
- Review of sourcing and quality of materials.

- Further H & S training and updates required – especially risk assessments.
- Regular and thorough inspection of work carried out through performance indicators, monitoring, and measurement. To measure, compare and monitor standards of work, value for money and satisfaction levels by some or all of the following:
 - Regular site inspections along the lines of existing 'estate inspections' – inside and out of buildings and consequent written report and action plan produced.
 - Random spot checks
 - Regular customer satisfaction surveys by cards/forms, phone and door knocking.
 - Survey of all tenants in whole block of flats/schemes at random – especially where any complaint has been received.
 - Periodic meetings between tenants, H & C and neighbourhood managers.
 - Possible use of a tenant/s to inspect and sign off weekly after visit.
 - Suggestion schemes inviting suggestions/comments by tenants
 - More robust monitoring of complaints/problems.

All of the above to be the responsibility of a combination of tenants, street reps (when this project is launched later in 2014), neighbourhood managers, C & H manager, caretakers and housekeepers.

- Consider the possibility (and suitability) of assimilating the H & C team into Silcoa in the future. Their management, organisation, equipment and disciplined working arrangements would appear to be a better 'fit' than that currently existing within Neighbourhoods.

Conclusions and summary

The scrutiny team found that the service currently being provided to tenants is not of an acceptable standard, mainly due to inadequate time management and staffing limitations. There are many areas that could be improved but the overriding requirement is that the provision of service to the tenant should take priority over any other duties. The emphasis should be moved from utilising the H & C staff for any and all purposes to ensure cost savings, at the expense of the service to tenants for which they are being charged.

We understand that the Head of Neighbourhoods and his staff have been aware for some time that this review is long overdue. The reorganisation of Neighbourhood Managers and the formation of the Lettings Team being complete, this should now allow sufficient time for appropriate attention to be paid to the management, organisation, updating and staffing of the H & C team.

The scrutiny team found that the H&C staff were reluctant to complete a survey without a guarantee of anonymity (assured by the Scrutiny Team). This lack of trust in Selwood management is a prime example of the sense of isolation to which the H & C team are subject, due to the lone nature of their work and separation from the main office.

There are many systems of caretaking service measurements in use throughout the social housing sector that could be utilised by Selwood Housing. i.e. the use of a "traffic light" system to grade standards of cleaning from excellent to unacceptable with descriptions and photographs.

The scrutiny team found that while undertaking this review, the level of cooperation from staff in the many different departments was timely, open and honest.

As one of the Neighbourhood Managers succinctly put it

"IF YOU CAN'T MEASURE IT – YOU CAN'T MANAGE IT"