

**To: City Executive Board**

**Date: 14 April 2016**

**Report of: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)**

**Title of Report: Security in communal areas of tower blocks**

## **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To present recommendations of the Housing Panel on security in communal areas of tower blocks

**Scrutiny Lead Member:** Councillor Linda Smith

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing

**Recommendation** of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

**That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the three recommendations set out in the body of this report.**

## **Introduction**

1. The Housing Panel requested a report on security issues in communal areas of tower blocks and considered this topic at its meeting on 9 March 2016. The Panel would like to thank Daryl Edmunds and Daniel Newton for providing a report and supporting this discussion.
2. The Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team Manager introduced the report and explained that each tower was different. Different types of groups tended to congregate in communal areas at some blocks and within a tower block there may be issues on certain floors that residents on other floors were unaware of. Different enforcement approaches were taken with different age groups and an appreciative enquiry was being undertaken to engage directly with youths and seek their views.
3. To inform this discussion, the Panel also canvassed the views of Block Representatives using a brief survey. Five of the seven Block Reps returned a completed survey and the Panel would like to thank them for providing their opinions and insights. The Scrutiny Officer summarised the survey responses and said that the following observations could be made:

- The results were skewed towards Hockmore Tower, which was the block that officers had identified as having relatively few issues of anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- The majority of Block Reps stated that ASB and crime took place 'quite often' but none responded with 'very often'.
- The majority of Block Reps stated that residents were 'quite affected' by security issues in communal areas.
- No Block Reps stated that residents were 'not affected' by these issues.
- Issues of 'vandalism and graffiti,' noise', 'rubbish or litter' and 'damage to property' were considered by more than one Block Rep to be either a 'fairly big problem' or a 'very big problem'.
- A minority of Block Reps responded that residents typically felt 'very unsafe' in communal areas in 'the evening' and / or 'at night'.
- The Block Reps had provided some suggestions for improving security.

### **Summary and recommendations**

4. The Panel noted that a door knocking exercise had been undertaken at Evenlode Tower to get residents' views on the behaviour of groups of young people in communal areas. The Panel questioned whether feedback would be provided to the residents who had provided comments and whether there were plans to repeat this engagement exercise at other towers.

***Recommendation 1 – That door-knocking to seek views from residents on the behaviour of groups of young people in communal areas should be rolled out to other towers.***

5. The Panel commented that the local police had been given keys to enable them to access communal areas at the two tower blocks in Blackbird Leys and noted from the survey responses that there was a request for occasional police patrols at Hockmore Tower too. The Panel suggest that as part of efforts to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour, there should be an enhanced police presence at all tower blocks and the local police should be given the means to access internal communal areas at the remaining blocks.

***Recommendation 2 – That the local police teams should be asked to undertake occasional patrols of tower blocks, and where necessary should be given the means to access communal areas other towers, as they can at Blackbird Leys.***

6. The Panel Asked a number of questions about youth engagement and provision for young people and welcomed a number of different initiatives, including looking at the viability of reward schemes for positive behaviours, efforts to tackle graffiti 'tagging', the general quality of many community facilities and the appreciative enquiry, which would enable the Council to better understand what youths wanted and use this information to fund these things, for example through the Council's Youth Ambition programme.
7. The Panel heard that Youth Forums had been created in response to 12-15 year olds at Barton saying that they wanted a bigger voice. The Panel encouraged

plans to 'mainstream' this work in various ways including through engaging young people in community groups and helping to support elderly residents.

***Recommendation 3 – That the Council should continue to look at ways of integrating youth engagement activities with other forms of resident and community engagement.***

**Name and contact details of author:-**

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Officer

Law and Governance

Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: [abrown2@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:abrown2@oxford.gov.uk)

**List of background papers: None**

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