

Housing Select Committee			
Title	Key Housing issues		
Key decision	No	Item no	7
Wards	All		
Contributors	Executive Director for Customer Services		
Class	Part 1	16 November 2016	

Reasons for lateness and urgency

This report is late to ensure that Housing Select Committee have the most up to date information regarding the Handypersons service consultation, which concluded at the end of October. It is urgent as there is no other opportunity for Committee to consider the Handypersons saving proposals before final proposals are presented to Mayor and Cabinet.

1 Summary

- 1.1 Key Housing Issues is a general report that aims to update the Housing Select Committee on current and new issues important to housing.

2 Update on legislation timetable

- 2.1 Housing Select Committee will be aware that the government is due to publish a number of regulations relating to the Housing and Planning Act, in particular regarding the Pay to Stay and High Value Voids policies. At the time of this report being submitted these regulations had still not been made available, but if they are published before the Committee meets officers will provide an update on the night.

3 PLACE/Ladywell awards and event programme

- 3.1 In addition to the two awards won by PLACE/Ladywell earlier this year at the New London Architecture awards, it has also now been shortlisted for two further awards:

- London Planning Awards: “Best New Homes to Live In”
- Local Government Chronicle Awards – “Best Housing Initiative”

- 3.2 There continues to be a large amount of interest in PLACE/Ladywell from a wide range of partners. Recent visitors include senior civil servants from DCLG and a number of representatives from the Housing and Land team at the GLA. The

table below shows some of the events and visits planned in the next few months to exemplify the level of interesting the development is generating

PLACE/Ladywell Event and Visit Plan	
<i>Date and Time</i>	<i>Description</i>
14 November	Tour for representatives of Transport for London
16 November	“Cathy Come Home” screening & fundraiser for the 999 Club
17 November	Tour for representatives of the Cabinet Office
22 November	Tour for delegation from the Indian Civil Service
22 November	Tour for “Legacy London”
8 December	Tour London Assembly Planning Committee

4 Results of Handypersons Consultation

- 4.1 At its meeting on 7 September 2016, Housing Select Committee considered a number of savings proposals relating to Housing Services, and asked for the opportunity to scrutinise the proposal relating to Handypersons again in November in light of the results of a consultation with service users.
- 4.2 The current proposal is to stop providing this service in order to contribute to the overall savings target of £1.5m that is required in Housing and NRPF by 2020. There are also underlying pressures totalling £0.7m for the service that require tough decisions in terms of service provision over the next few years and as a result this proposal is to stop the handypersons service with the budget of £151,000 per year to contribute to the overall savings target.
- 4.3 Consideration was given to providing the service in other ways at no cost to the council such as Lewisham Homes, Police and Age UK as well as looking at whether the Disabled Facilities Grant could be used to cover service costs. We also consulted with residents on whether they would be willing to pay for the service going forward.
- The Police Handyperson service based in Bromley (Blue), offer a handyperson service via ex officers who live in Bromley however will not be able to offer the service in Lewisham. They do not have any ex officers who live in the borough and they say they prefer not to go into London. Lewisham Police were also approached but do not offer a similar service.
 - Lewisham Homes provide a day to day repairs service to housing tenants however this does not include the type of jobs provided in the handypersons service such as fixing curtain rails etc. The repairs service in Lewisham Homes is funded from tenants rents (HRA), whereas the handyperson service is provided largely to homeowners through the general fund. Whilst Lewisham Homes may be able to provide the service they would need to charge recipients of the handyperson services for the work undertaken to cover the costs as it would not be appropriate to use tenants’ rents to provide services to homeowners.
 - Voluntary Sector – Age UK currently provide a free service to Southwark residents that is funded through grant provided by Southwark Council

and complements Southwark's in-house service. Age UK have indicated they may be interested in taking on the service if Lewisham grant funded it like Southwark but this would not deliver the savings required.

- Disabled Facilities Grant – this grant is used to provide major adaptations to make it easier for elderly and vulnerable people to live at home such as level access showers, stair lifts etc. Only costs associated with large expenditure items can be recovered from the grant therefore this option does not deliver the savings required.

3.4 In addition to establishing if users of the service were prepared to contribute to the costs of this non-statutory service the survey also gauged satisfaction with the current service. A postal questionnaire was sent on 23 September 2016 to residents in the borough who had used the handypersons service during the 16 month period, April 2015 to August 2016 inclusive. The survey included a return envelope to increase the number of returns and included 500 or so members of the Positive Ageing Council as well as being uploaded on the Positive Ageing Council website.

Results

- 4.5 A detailed summary of the results is attached to this paper in Appendix 1
- 3.6 Of the 1408 surveys sent, 525 responses (37.29%) were received by the closing date of 19 October 2016. Of the 525 responses 432 had used the service before and 97.37% of the 432 respondents stated they thought the service was good, 2.05% (7 responses) stated it was neither good nor poor and 0.58% (2 responses) stated it was poor. 93 people did not need to answer this question as they had not used the service before.
- 4.7 Responses to contributions to the costs of the service were more varied ranging from £0.00 to £100.00 per job; 139 responses (26%) stated they would not want to contribute at all and a small number (14) said they would pay whatever it costs; the average contribution amounted to £ 20.00 against an actual cost per job of £37.27 based on 15/16 outturns.
- 4.8 Similarly, in terms of suggested contributions per hourly rate these ranged from £0.00 to £20.00 per hour; 100 responders or 19%, stated they would not want to contribute to the hourly rate, whilst 19 people or 3.6% said they would be willing to cover any cost; the average contributions were £6.11 per hour against an actual cost per hour of £36.00 based on 15/16 outturns.

Conclusion

- 4.9 Whilst any contribution would be welcome the contribution amounts suggested by responders do not cover the current average price of a job or the current hourly rate and whilst a few responses stated they would pay whatever was required per hour and would pay any amount per job, the contributions are too few in number and in amount to have any impact on the proposal to stop the service.

5 Government Consultation - Houses in multiple occupation and residential property licensing reforms

5.1 DCLG is currently consulting on potential changes to the licensing of HMOs, in particular they are proposing to:

- Remove the current rule, which defines a mandatory HMO as having 3 or more stories, so all houses (regardless of how many floors) with 5 or more people from 2 or more households are defined as an HMO – this will further enable local authorities to tackle poor standards, migration and the problems being seen in high risk smaller properties as the sector has grown; such as a 2 storey house which has been subdivided into rooms.
- Extend mandatory licensing to flats above and below business premises (regardless of the number of storeys) - as the evidence shows more problems in these properties;
- Introduce mandatory national minimum sizes for rooms used as sleeping accommodation in licensable HMOs, that being:
 - 6.52 sq. m for one person
 - 10.23 sq. m for two persons.
- It is proposed that the minimum size would exclude any floor space, other than the usable floor area of a room, based on the minimum height of the room measured from the floor to the ceiling. It is proposed that height should be 1.5 metres.
- Impact Assessments on landlords to estimate the costs to landlords as businesses in extending mandatory HMO licensing.
- Evidence relating to the “fit and proper person” test which are contained in The Housing and Planning Act 2016, and how they may be used in relation to HMO and Selective licensing.
- Proposals to make it a condition of a mandatory HMO licence that the licence holder provides adequate receptacles for the storage and disposal of waste.
- The evidence available of the success of the current regulations surrounding purpose built student housing.

5.2 Overall officers are in support of many of the proposals but also need to seek clarity on some of the proposals such as licensing all flats above and below business premises. The extension of the regulations to all HMOs, regardless of the number of floors in the building, will give the opportunity to tackle the increasing number of landlords acquiring or converting smaller properties into poor standard HMOs that fail to meet the minimum HMO standards. Officers are receiving reports of this type of acquisition in the Bellingham area. The extension of the regulations will help to increase the fire safety standards in these properties as well as give us the opportunity to engage more robustly with landlords around issues surrounding their management of their properties.

- 4.3 Further work is required by officers to examine the fee discount suggestions posited under the Student Housing section of the consultation and how this may be expanded to the whole licensing fee structure in Lewisham to incentivise good landlords and encourage better engagement with the sector as a whole.
- 4.4 The consultation closes on 13 December; officers are currently preparing a detailed response.

6 Allocation of Housing and Homelessness – eligibility of immigrant families

- 6.1 On 21 October DCLG wrote to local housing authorities notifying them of the commencement (on 30 October 2016) of the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.
- 6.2 The effect of the Amendment Regulations is that persons granted leave to enter or remain in the UK under the Immigration Rules on the grounds of family or private life are eligible for social housing and homelessness assistance, provided their leave is granted with recourse to public funds.
- 6.3 This change restores the previous position prior to July 2012, before changes to the Immigration Rules meant that this specific cohort became ineligible for housing allocation or homelessness assistance.

7 Consultation on Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan

- 7.1 Following its consideration at Full Council on 21 September 2016, the Council's Planning department is currently consulting on a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan which aims to identify a site to meet the local accommodation needs of the borough's travelling community.
- 7.2 The consultation is on two potential locations for a new residential site. Only one of these sites will be needed. The sites are:
- New Cross Social Club and adjoining land in Hornshay Street, New Cross, SE15 1HB
 - Land next to Pool Court, Catford, SE6
- 7.3 The consultation runs until Wednesday 30 November 2016. More information can be found at www.lewisham.gov.uk/travellingcommunity

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

9 Financial implications

- 9.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on current housing issues. As such, there are no specific financial implications arising from the report itself.

9.2 The deletion of the handypersons service will contribute £151k to an overall savings target for the strategic housing Service of £1.5m to be achieved between 2017/18 and 2019/2020.

10 Crime and disorder implications

10.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

11 Equalities implications

11.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

12 Environmental implications

12.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

13 Background Documents and Report Originator

13.1 Appendix 1 – detailed summary of the Handypersons Consultation response.

13.2 If you have any queries relating to this report please contact Jeff Endean on 020 8314 6213.