

**THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA****HOUSING AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****10 NOVEMBER 2011****CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES****CABINET MEMBER REPORT ON CURRENT ISSUES**

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of recent policy and practice developments, which are likely to impact on the future work of the Business Group and to update Members on progress of important current projects.

**FOR INFORMATION****HOUSING****1. Silchester Garages Site.**

- 1.1 Much needed affordable new homes will be provided following a decision by Cabinet in September to choose Peabody as its development partner to build 112 new homes on the Silchester Garages site.
- 1.2 This includes 63 new homes associated with the development of land at Holland Park School. The planning permission for the school's redevelopment created an obligation to develop 63 units of affordable housing on the Council-owned Silchester Garages site. Thirty of these will be large family homes available through social renting, with the remainder smaller properties for shared ownership. The scheme will be delivered by 2014 to meet the requirements of the Holland Park School project.
- 1.3 Peabody will receive a grant of £2,925,000 from the Council, financed from the sale of part of the Holland Park School site.
- 1.4 The development will help the Council meet its targets for the delivery of new housing of all tenures in the borough. The proposals extend further than the existing planning permission, relating to the requirement for the 63 homes, and will involve the demolition of fourteen one-bedroom flats. This will enable an extra 15 social rented homes, six shared ownership and 28 homes for market sale to be built.

- 1.5 The scheme, designed by award-winning architects Haworth Tompkins, will also contribute to the regeneration of the Latimer area through improved urban design and a more balanced tenure mix. It will provide a new community building, retail space and landscaping improvements to enhance the wider estate.

## **2. Update to the Royal Borough's response to the changes in Housing Benefit**

- 2.1 Over the last quarter, all households who will be affected by the changes in the Housing Benefit (HB) caps in February and March 2012 have been written to, inviting them to attend a drop in session for advice about the changes. We have also written to all households with members aged 70 or over who will be affected by the LHA caps between January and April 2012. In early October, drop in sessions were held over two days, with 297 households invited and 13 households attending for advice. In November, all households to be affected in April, May and June will be contacted, to ensure that people are aware of the changes and the impact upon them as soon as possible. For all households affected by the changes, the actual date that their benefit will fall will be from January 2012 onwards. The lack of attendance at the advice sessions is misleading as this does not necessarily indicate that the majority of households do not require our assistance.
- 2.2 The P1E is a return to central government and records the type of accommodation someone is leaving when they make a homeless application. The majority of people applying for assistance are from the private rented sector. Between April and June 2011, there were 48 households accepted as homeless and between July and September 2011 this went up to 61 households accepted.
- 2.3 In anticipation of a potential increase in approaches to the Council next year, work continues to ensure we are able to offer advice and assistance. We continue to look for opportunities to spot purchase temporary accommodation and we are developing a new scheme to assist households move to the private rented sector (which forms part of this Scrutiny Committee's agenda). We are also investigating joining the Brent Framework to increase our chances of procuring properties in the private rented sector throughout London.

## **SUPPORTING PEOPLE UPDATES**

### **3. Managing Reductions in the Supporting People Grant**

- 3.1 The Supporting People Team is working in partnership with Hammersmith and Fulham to establish a new Supported Housing Procurement Framework in conjunction with 6 other West London authorities, including Westminster. The Framework is programmed to be established in April 2012, which we believe will bring about greater service innovation across socially excluded client groups and community care groups, whilst ensuring that the personalisation agenda is incorporated into service models.
- 3.2 Procurement through the existing procurement framework (2008-2012) is currently underway, for the provision of support for socially excluded clients. It is anticipated that a saving of approximately £275k could be made in efficiencies from this procurement exercise, with the potential for an in-year saving to be made.

## **FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS IN RBKC RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS – PROGRESS UPDATE**

### **4. Introduction**

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is reminded that in July 2009 the London Fire Brigade's Fire Safety Team set the TMO and RBKC a timescale for compliance with the Fire Safety (Regulatory Reform) Order. Specifically, it was agreed that a risk-based approach would be adopted and that fire risk assessments of the communal areas of all blocks would be completed within a 3-year period and further, that all high and medium risk recommendations made by the assessments would be progressed / instigated within a 5-year period.

### **5. Background**

- 5.1 The Fire Risk Assessment programmes for the potentially high and medium risk blocks have now successfully completed and the third and final programme, to assess the remaining low risk blocks, commenced in September 2011 and is proceeding well and should be complete by March 2012. The consultants engaged to progress these programmes has been appointed in consultation with RBKC.

- 5.2 Each Fire Risk Assessment Report has been accompanied by an Action Plan setting out prioritised recommendations clarifying which actions were required to comply with legislation, British Standards and good practice. This has enabled us to target resources at the higher priority actions.
- 5.3 To date all completed assessments and re-assessments have been given a "normal / medium" rating which our Consultants have confirmed is the best rating that an occupied residential block could ever achieve.

## **6.0 Progress with Fire Risk Assessments Recommendations**

- 6.1 Quite a range of recommendations have been made. Some have been simple and cheap and therefore have been able to be progressed swiftly such as simple responsive repairs, changes to inspection regimes, enhancement of existing fire safety training programme etc. However, there have also been a number of costly items such as the requirement to ensure that flat entrance doors of enclosed blocks meet specific fire safety standards.
- 6.2 To date significant progress has been made in progressing these recommendations. In particular the Committee is asked to note -
- A flat entrance door replacement programme to replace twelve hundred doors on tenanted dwellings is well underway and scheduled to complete in this financial year. These doors significantly improve fire safety within these blocks and also improve security as they comply with the Metropolitan Police's "Secure by Design" requirements.
  - A programme of fire safety work including complete refurbishment of communal fire doors, installation of emergency lighting, fire escape signage etc. has been undertaken and completed at Trellick Tower to address the recommendations in the Fire Risk Assessment. These recommendations had also been reiterated in a Deficiency Notice served by the London Fire Brigade. The London Fire Brigade has been invited to inspect the work.
  - Within the terms of the lease the responsibility for the flat entrance doors is demised to the leaseholder. Counsel's opinion has recently been sought and would seem to support the position that any action taken by the London Fire Brigade because of inadequately fire-rated flat entrance doors on leasehold properties should

be taken against the leaseholder and not the TMO or RBKC. We are currently seeking a meeting with officers from the London Fire Brigade's Fire Safety Team and also their Policy Department before we finalise our policy on this and we are hopeful that this final policy will meet with the agreement of all parties. Once this has been finalised we will write to leaseholders advising them of the requirements and our position.

## **FOR INFORMATION**

### **Councillor Timothy Coleridge**

Cabinet Member for Housing and property Services

Background Papers used in the Preparation of this Report: None

Contact Officer: Mr. M. Waddington, Head of Policy and Performance, Tel: [REDACTED] and E-mail: [Martin.Waddington@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:Martin.Waddington@rbkc.gov.uk)