

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

HOUSING AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 MAY 2015

LIVE ISSUES REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

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 current projects.

FOR INFORMATION

1. Leaseholder doors

Leaseholder doors identified as non-compliant

- 1.1 Work is continuing in relation to the issue of leaseholder flat entrance doors which are not compliant with fire safety standards.
- 1.2 In March 2014 we reported that we had been working with the householders of 37 doors that had been assessed as non-compliant. This had gone down from a high of 107 doors in December 2013. 35 of these households have now provided evidence of their doors being compliant, this leaves 2 households with non-compliant doors.
- 1.3 One of the two remaining households who have a non compliant door is an elderly leaseholder who has stated she can't afford to replace the door. After investigating her situation arrangements have been made for the door to be replaced and the leasehold re-charged for the costs. A contractor has been instructed to agree a date with the leaseholder for the works to be carried out. An affordable monthly plan has been agreed with the leaseholder.
- 1.4 KCTMO'S Home Ownership Department have exchanged a number of emails with the final leaseholder on the list. Despite this correspondence they have failed to provide any evidence that their door is compliant. This leaseholder will therefore be referred to legal for enforcement action to be pursued against them.

On-going work to identify, and change non-compliant doors

- 1.5 KCTMO's programme of Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) is ongoing and continues to consider the compliance of flat entrance doors as they

form an integral part of the means of escape from the block. The FRA highlights any flat doors which are potentially non-compliant.

- 1.6 Where clarification is required about the standard of a tenant's door the Fire Consultant is instructed to attend, carry out an assessment and produce a report confirming what action is required. Where replacement is required a repair order is raised for the installation of a suitably fire-rated, self-closing door.
- 1.7 Where a leaseholder's door is highlighted, the Home Ownership Team write to the lessee seeking documentation confirming their door's compliance and offering an assessment if they are unable to provide this. The lessee is provided with a copy of the report and where the door is deemed to be non-compliant to date we have worked with the leaseholder to persuade them to prioritise its removal.

2. Housing Regeneration Programme (HRP)

- 2.1 One of the Royal Borough's strategies for achieving improvements to the shared facilities and appearance of social housing estates has been to run an annual Housing Regeneration Programme (HRP) and invite bids from both Registered Providers and KCTMO. Since the financial year 1999/2000 a fund of £250,000 per annum has been made available for HRA schemes and £215,000 for non-HRA schemes.
- 2.2 The composition of the 2014/2015 programme was:

RBKC TMO	Balfour of Burleigh Clubroom – refurbishment of existing clubroom. Project has been subject to some delay. Works to commence in mid-May 2015 and should be completed during July.
RBKC TMO	The Sandhills – new landscaping scheme of rear courtyard. Works underway and due for completion by the end of April 2015.
RBKC TMO	Kensal New Town – Re-landscaping of garden area. Initial scheme was subject to re-design. Out to tender and anticipate completion by mid-May.
RBKC TMO	Tavistock Crescent – improved community garden to rear of buildings. Works underway and due for completion by the end of April.
RBKC TMO	Longlands Court – Undercroft lighting improvements to improve security. Works underway and due for completion by 24 April 2015.
RBKC TMO	Sir Thomas More Estate – central courtyard improvements including new community space.

	Works approaching completion.
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Registered Providers/other organisations

Catalyst	Paul House, Wornington Green – access transformation. Works in progress.
Chapter 1	Dashwood House, Pembridge Square – CCTV installation. Completed
Affinity Sutton DNT	Binbrook House, Dalgarno – improvement to roof garden. Completed
Family Mosaic	Russell Road – gate refurbishment and bin area improvement. Completed
Family Mosaic	Redcliffe Gardens – gate and railings, improved waste management. Awaits planning approval to proceed.
Family Mosaic L&Q HFW	Russell Road – front garden improvements. Planting due to commence.
Genesis H A	St Josephs Close – Replenish neglected garden beds. Due to complete April 2015
HFW	Hilary Daniels House, Cromwell Rd – reconfiguration of basement areas. Works in progress.
RBKC TMO	Burgess Field Extra Care – CCTV and lighting improvements. Works yet to commence.
Notting Hill	63 Chesterton Road – improve security to property boundary. Awaits planning approval to proceed.
Notting Hill	104 Oxford Gardens – improved waste collection arrangements. Works underway.
Notting Hill	12-18 Nevern Place – damp proof underground cellars. Works commence April 2015.
Notting Hill	2 Longridge Road – bin store. Works due to commence.
Notting Hill	Longridge Road – replace all bin vault doors. Works due to commence.
RBKC	Borough wide deployable CCTV units. Equipment ordered.
Riverside	65 Elsham Road – CCTV installation.
Sanctuary	Penywern Road – provision of internal post boxes. Completed.
Stable Way RA	Community Hut, Traveller’s Site – refurbish and redecorate. Completed.
Westway H A	Cadogan House, Hogarth Road – provision of internal mail boxes. Work in progress.

- 2.3 The Registered Provider proportion of the programme appears to have run its course as since 2011/12 bids have been progressively declining despite continual promotion of the programme. Consequently, a revised approach to the HRP is being adopted from 2015/2016. Other than the residue of expenditure required to complete committed Registered Provider schemes, this element of the programme is being discontinued so no new bids have been sought.
- 2.4 The RBKC TMO part of the HRP will continue for 2015/2016 with the TMO responsible for managing the bids process, prioritisation and selection of projects within the programme total. In 2016/2017 the amount available for the programme will be reduced to £100,000 and discontinued in 2017/2018.
- 2.5 The TMO will be reporting progress to their Board on a bi-monthly basis. For monitoring purposes, these details will be shared with the Council and spend against projects will be monitored in the same way as other capital expenditure.

3. Progress of the wholly owned council company

- 3.1 Discussions have been held with key consultants that have experience of setting up council owned companies with London Authorities. Legal advice has been offered relating to what is to be expected when establishing the company and that there are certain considerations when determining the best model for RBKC.

Key points for consideration are:

3.2 Finance

The Council would need to decide on whether it chooses to grant funds or to loan the funds from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) to the company. Loaning funds from the Council may seem beneficial to the company due to it receiving cheaper rates. It is expected that funds received would need to be EU State Aid compliant. A loan agreement would need to set up between the Council and the Company.

3.2 Relationship between the Council and the Company

RBKC will be viewed as the main shareholder of the company. It is expected that accountability and governance agreements will need to be in place via a Shareholder's agreement and Article of Association. A Board of Directors (possibly consisting of members and senior management within the Council) will need to be identified and established.

3.3 **Right to Buy**

It has recently been highlighted within a Ministerial Statement (20th March 2015), by Brandon Lewis MP, that he is aware of the fast development of housing via the setting up of council owned companies. It states:

"if councils continue to develop social or affordable stock which they fail to account for within the Housing Revenue Account the Secretary of State will consider issuing a direction under section 74 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to bring that stock into the Housing Revenue Account".

RBKC would need to consider what would be the best course of action. Although there have been no amendments or change of legislation it does provide uncertainty. It is noted that it does provides RBKC the window of opportunity to consider any preferences before any direction is issued or passed into legislation.

- 3.4 A workshop has been devised to provide key staff members in Housing, Finance and Property Services the opportunity to view a successful project by London Borough of Ealing, Broadway Living and also consider the business plan benefits for RBKC.

4. **Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment.**

- 4.1 The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham have been conducting an accommodation needs assessment, in line with guidance set out by DCLG, October 2007, to ascertain how many additional pitches will be required over the next five years. Planning and housing departments from both boroughs are involved as well as representatives from the Traveller Community.
- 4.2 A detailed questionnaire was completed by the occupants of 17 out of the 19 residential pitches on the Stable Way site, which is the joint responsibility of both boroughs. An analysis of the information obtained is currently being completed, the next stage will be the drafting of a report for distribution to all those involved. The report will be delivered to the Traveller community by officers at a meeting in the Community Hut on site so that questions may be answered directly. We are now proceeding on to secondary sources of data (e.g. health, education and benefits). Planning is leading on this. The work will go towards supplementing and corroborating the findings from the survey and help to inform the final report of the assessment of need.

5. **Supported housing procurement**

- 5.1 The supported housing procurement programme is progressing well. The procurement of a new provider for young people's services is now completed and the Salvation Army is appointed as a new provider.
- 5.2 The procurement of the new providers for socially excluded services is now completed and savings of approximately £400k will be delivered.
- 5.3 The contracts for the Earls Court YMCA and Dashwood House services for young people and mother and babies are agreed and direct contract awards have been made to South London YMCA and Chapter 1 respectively.

FOR INFORMATION

Laura Johnson
Director of Housing

Background Papers used in the Preparation of this Report:

Contact Officer: Mr Tony Heavey, Senior Housing Policy Officer.
Tel: [REDACTED] and E-mail: tony.heavey@rbkc.gov.uk