

**REPORT FOR: Tenants', Leaseholders'
and Residents'
Consultative Forum**

Date of Meeting: 19th February 2014

Subject: INFORMATION REPORT – Head of Asset Management's Report

Responsible Officer: Lynne Pennington
Divisional Director of Housing

Exempt: No

Enclosures: Appendix 1

Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out a range of information and discussion items that the Head of Asset Management would like to bring to the attention of the Tenants', Leaseholders' and Residents' Consultative Forum (TLRCF)

FOR INFORMATION and DISCUSSION

Section 2 – Report

Updates from previous discussions and new items for information

1. Apprentices and Work Placements through Asset Management Contracts

1.1 At the December TLRCF meeting officers were asked to provide further information about the work placement opportunities and appointment of apprentices by contractors working with us in delivering both responsive repairs and planned investment programmes. A short presentation on the current position will be given at the meeting.

2. Recharges

2.1 At the December TLRCF meeting officers were asked to bring forward an update on the implementation of the recharge policy in housing, and the progress made to date in collecting monies due.

2.2 The rechargeable element of void works has been recorded since October 2012. Up until 17th December 2013 75 voids have had an element of rechargeable cost, with a total debt raised of £44,301. Individual recharges vary from £53.00 to £2750-but the majority are between £200 and £800, with the average charge being £590.68. Whilst this may seem high, to put charges into context the cost of a mini skip is £95 and in some voids the rubbish and possessions left behind in the property, garden and outbuildings can need 5 or more large skips to clear completely.

2.3 All former tenants where a recharge has been raised have now been written to twice but to date no money has been received for payment of these debts.

2.4 The only exception to this is where the outgoing tenant has moved under the cash incentive or Grants to Move scheme. In these cases and recharges payable are deducted from any grant payment at source. £5,500 in rechargeable costs has been collected through this mechanism for the period April-September 2013 - which is a little over 12% of the recharges raised.

3. Repair MOTs

3.1 MOTs were initiated during 2011/2012 with the objective of managing those demanding tenants who had cause to contact the repairs service and manage their expectations. The lead Contracts Surveyor managed tenants' repairs on a planned basis for the duration of the pilot for 3 years from 2011 to 2014. The table of expenditure indicates the average cost of repairs identified per property for 10 tenants and further reporting is required on a bi-annual basis.

3.2 The following numbers are the total costs followed by the value, and the average amongst the sample:

| Date range | Total spend (£) | Average (£) |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 04/02/2011 - 03/02/2012 | 24,582.88 | 2,458.29 |
| 04/02/2012 – 03/02/2013 | 24,505.10 | 2,450.51 |
| 04/02/2013 – 03/02/2014 | 24,439.75 | 2,443.98 |

4. Consultation on the Better Homes Standard

4.1 Following discussions at the December TLRCF plans are progressing with the consultation event to be held on Saturday 15th March. These plans have been developed in consultation with HFTRA and the event will focus on the priorities for the capital programme from 2015 onwards and developing new ways for tenants to be engaged in the planning process.

4.2 The Better Homes Standard will replace the old “Decent Homes standard” and determine how we deliver the programme of improvements in future. We have a number of commitments already to do more than we have done previously arising from both the Asset Management Strategy and other pieces of work such as the garage strategy. However there are other areas to explore such as developing a programme to address both tenancy management issues (such as should we install sound insulation to reduce noise complaints) and ongoing repair issues (such as whether we should take more radical action to resolve ongoing problems with damp through the capital programme) There are some hard choices to be made and it is really important that we capture tenant and leaseholder views in designing the standard.

4.3 The consultation event is a first step in designing future programmes of works.

5. Joint working with the London Fire Brigade

- 5.1 Procurement has been successful for the installation of a standalone sprinkler system at a flat within Watkins House, where the resident is a known hoarder and smoker. The successful company were Elite Fire Services Ltd who submitted a proposal to install a Plumis Automist sprinkler system. The Plumis system was demonstrated to staff of Harrow Council and members of the London Fire Brigade including the Borough Commander in November of 2013 at Harrow Weald Park Sheltered Scheme. The demonstration was successful in showing how the mist created by the system offers quick and complete coverage of an area whilst using a lot less water than a conventional sprinkler system. The system uses the existing water supply in a property, with no additional tanks required. The fairly quick and easy installation means it is possible to remove the sprinkler system, and relocate it to a new property if the resident moves on or is no longer considered to be a substantial fire risk.
- 5.2 Working with the London Fire Brigade we aim to continue to identify vulnerable tenants who present a substantial risk of starting a fire, via the Fire Brigades Home Fire Safety Visits, and Harrow Council's staff who are to be trained by the Borough Commander at the next HAP event to identify people at risk. We have already identified the next resident we would like to receive a standalone sprinkler system, a known hoarder located within a general needs block. If the first installation of Plumis is successful we will also consider installing the system in other residents flats in Watkins House, as this scheme has a lot of vulnerable people in it and is considered the highest risk by the London Fire Brigade.

Update on work to reduce false alarm calls in sheltered housing

- 5.3 We had a meeting with the LFB in January where we discussed the amount of false alarms being generated by sheltered schemes which is considered too high. This is in part due to having a full fire alarm system throughout the schemes, which gives us the best possible response if there is a fire but can trigger more false alarms. We are now analysing all fire alarm data for 2013. Where a alarm has been triggered on more than one occasion we are looking at the reason for this and then carrying out a modification to the alarm sensor. This may include changing the threshold of a sensor so it is not as sensitive, or changing a sensor from a smoke detector to a heat detector as a lot of false signals are caused by smoke generated from cooking. All modification will be approved by the London Fire Brigade. We will also assess the resident at the same time, because setting off false alarms may be an indication that the resident is at risk of starting a real fire. This could lead to measures including educating the resident, visits from the Fire Brigade to offer advice, fire retardant bedding, and ultimately a standalone sprinkler system.

6. Capital Programme 2014/15

- 6.1 We are currently preparing the 14/15 programme for procurement.
- 6.2 Freedom of a 4 year programme gives us opportunity to procure those elements of the programme that will be required every year (i.e. heating, windows, doors, kitchens and bathrooms) on a longer term contract giving us both better value for money and more consistency in delivery. This new way of working should also help us to spend less time on tendering and procuring contracts and more time on managing the contracts to ensure tenants and leaseholders receive even better services from the Asset Management service. We will also try to package the works in a way that would attract more local contractors to express an interest in bidding for contracts.

7. Staffing Updates

- 7.1 Rukshan Kariy been appointed to Project Manager post following Tony Graham's retirement.
- 7.2 Adverts for senior Planned Investment officer and Cyclical survey for external recruitment now.
- 7.3 Aids and Adaptations team transferred to Housing Asset Management on 6th January. Now exploring synergies between the teams, opportunity to develop promote handyperson service for tenants and leaseholders and look at new opportunities to further improve adaptations service and design bathroom upgrades that meet homes for life standards. Also opportunities for better assessment of needs of people with disabilities where major works being undertaken.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Any financial issues are contained within the body of the report.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report. No Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Dave Roberts



on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 6 February 2014

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Maggie Challoner
Interim Head of Asset Management
Tel: 020 8424 2473
Email: Maggie.challoner@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Appendix 1.

| Budget Description | 2013/14 | | 2014/15 | | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | | 2017/18 | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | No. dwellings | £ | No. dwellings | £ | No. dwellings | £ | No. dwellings | £ | No. dwellings | £ |
| Capitalised Salaries | | £317,000 | | £317,000 | | £317,000 | | £317,000 | | £317,000 |
| Major Voids | | £76,870 | | £76,870 | | £76,870 | | £76,870 | | £76,870 |
| Kitchens / Bathrooms / Rewires | 384 | £1,542,000 | 578 | £2,400,000 | 626 | £2,600,000 | 675 | £2,800,000 | 600 | £2,649,380 |
| Health and Safety | 3 | £200,000 | 3 | £200,000 | 3 | £200,000 | 3 | £200,000 | 3 | £200,000 |
| Boiler / Heating | 275 | £871,230 | 347 | £1,100,000 | 379 | £1,200,000 | 473 | £1,500,000 | 500 | £1,600,000 |
| Enveloping | | £1,523,660 | | £1,330,200 | | £1,589,470 | | £1,673,990 | | £2,408,130 |
| Enveloping Francis Road | 78 | £1,000,000 | 0 | £0 | 0 | £0 | 0 | £0 | 0 | £0 |
| Door Entry | 52 | £512,500 | 52 | £512,500 | 52 | £512,500 | 52 | £512,500 | 52 | £512,500 |
| Lifts | 1 | £207,500 | 1 | £207,500 | 1 | £0 | 1 | £0 | 1 | £0 |
| Sheltered Warden Voids | | £51,250 | | £51,250 | | £0 | | £0 | | £0 |
| Structural Issues | | £256,250 | | £256,250 | | £256,250 | | £256,250 | | £300,000 |
| Garages | | £61,500 | | £61,500 | | £61,500 | | £61,500 | | £61,500 |
| Aids and Adaptations | | £615,000 | | £615,000 | | £615,000 | | £615,000 | | £615,000 |
| Capitalisaiton Responsive Repairs | | £142,500 | | £142,500 | | £142,500 | | £142,500 | | £142,500 |
| Develop Wider Housing Initiatives Pot | | £256,240 | | £256,240 | | £256,240 | | £256,240 | | £256,240 |
| Council Funded Expenditure | | £7,633,500 | | £7,526,810 | | £7,827,330 | | £8,411,850 | | £9,139,120 |
| Grant Funded Extentions | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total HRA Capital Programme | | £7,633,500 | | £7,526,810 | | £7,827,330 | | £8,411,850 | | £9,139,120 |