

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

Date of Meeting:	10 th December 2014
Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT – Moving from Decent Homes to Better Homes standard
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Lynne Pennington Divisional Director of Housing
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Glen Hearnden Portfolio Holder Housing
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides an introduction to the proposal to move to a new Better Homes standard for improving Council properties from April 2015. A presentation giving further details will be given at the TLRCF meeting.

FOR INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

Section 2 – Report

1. Background

- 1.1 For a number of years the Housing Department were required by central Government to meet a standard in all homes, known as the Decent Homes Standard. There was a requirement on Councils to ensure that all their homes met this standard by 2010.
- 1.2 In many ways this was a positive move for tenants as it ensured that improvements to the inside of their homes were made, such as upgraded kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems. However the standard was quite basic and did not include works to improve the exterior of homes or the areas surrounding homes.
- 1.3 We are still required to meet Decent Homes standard, but because we have caught up with a back log of these works, the numbers of homes requiring these improvements each year is reducing. This means that funding is available to do more improvements than we have been able to do in recent years. In addition to the new standard moving from an annual to a 4 year programme will give us improved opportunities for better planning, enable us to publish the outline programme in advance and achieve savings by moving to longer term procurement where appropriate.
- 1.4 In March this year officers held a workshop with members of Harrow Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (HFTRA) to present a vision of what can be delivered through a new *Better Homes* standard and begin consultation on what further works should be included in the new standard. The aim was to develop an ambitious yet tangible methodology to provide a lead for best practice in asset management planning; developing innovative, modern, functional and sustainable housing refurbishment programmes. Residents told us what they wanted to see added to future programmes and prioritised these by what was most important to them.
- 1.5 Following this workshop, officers took the ideas and priorities received from the residents and began to work up the new standard, design specifications and plan the 4 year capital programme. On 15th November a further workshop was held to begin consultation on the proposed new standard. This day was successful and residents thanked the officers for taking their views on board and expressed the view they felt they had really been listened to.

2. Our approach to developing the New Standard

2.1 With any improvements to be undertaken in our homes we have a number of key aims:

- To protect our investment in the housing stock by ensuring our homes meet tenant needs and aspirations both now and in the future and that all homes can continue to meet housing needs in Harrow for many years to come.
- To ensure all homes are warm, secure, comfortable and energy efficient.
- To give tenants and leaseholders more choice in what improvements are carried out, the design standards and priorities by involving you more in the planning process.
- To extend the life of all improvements undertaken by choosing products that are high quality, low maintenance and facilitating the provision of higher specification installs by doing more associated works such as upgrading pipe work and plumbing.
- To future-proof home refurbishment works through careful packaging and grouping of elements.
- Reducing management issues or difficulties tenants experience such as noise nuisance, inadequate bin sheds and storage.
- Reduce tenants' fuel and utility bills where possible by undertaking a wide range of energy efficiency works, offering showers as an alternative to baths and introducing motion sensor lighting.
- Integrating low maintenance but highly functional components to elemental work specifications. For example; passive ventilation (heat exchanger) systems with no moving parts or running costs.
- To design “enveloping schemes” that will improve the exterior of homes and the external environment in full consultation with residents
- To extend lifecycle of all elements; implementing solutions that account of heavy tenant usage with more durable and higher specification components.
- To provide new focus on the external environment; *physical and social* and not just the fabric of the home. Incorporating options appraisal and design solutions for external spaces; security and access improvements. Integrating this approach with block enveloping works resulting in a refurbishment led regeneration of blocks and estates.

- To bridge the gap with standards for new build and regeneration projects; with a focus on innovation, integrating new developments that improve functionality with low maintenance solutions across elemental work packages.
- To provide new focus on energy efficiency works; solar photovoltaic , external wall Insulation and heating solutions
- Wider programme of works to implement infrastructure and plumbing adaptations to facilitate new component functionality as standard.
- To improve wellbeing by providing modern living spaces that are also energy efficient and secure.

3. Details of the new standard

- 3.1 Full details of the proposed new standard will be explained, through a presentation at TLRCF.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report as the new standard can be delivered within the budget for the 4 year capital programme that was agreed by Cabinet in February. However it is anticipated that the standard will reduce responsive repair expenditure over time and that opportunities for longer term procurement will help ensure that value for money is consistently achieved.

5.0 Risk Management Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific risk implications arising from this information report. The Housing Risk Register includes risks associated with non-delivery of the capital programme.

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this information report

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The Council's vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

7.2 The work of the Housing Department supports the administration's priorities as follows.

7.3 Making a difference for the vulnerable

A number of initiatives within the Asset Management service plan and capital programme are specifically targeted to assist the most vulnerable households living in the Council's housing stock to sustain their tenancies, reduce health and safety risks and live independently.

7.4 Making a difference for communities

The Asset Management service plan includes a commitment to improve the external environment, providing communities with better places to live and improve the appearance of our estates.

7.5 Making a difference for local businesses

Asset Management are committed to supporting local businesses through encouraging local contractors to bid for all contract opportunities and ensuring that a high percentage of spend on supplies is committed in Harrow.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Dave Roberts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 24/11/14		

Ward Councillors notified:	No
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Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

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

Background Papers: None