

Cabinet/Committee:	Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum
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Subject:	INFORMATION REPORT Garages
Responsible Officer:	Penny Furness-Smith Corporate Director (Adults and Housing)
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr. Camilla Bath - Portfolio Holder for Housing
Exempt:	No

## SECTION 1 – SUMMARY

This reports sets out the current position on garages following changes to the repairs service and rent increases as at June 2007  
**FOR INFORMATION**

## SECTION 2 - REPORT

### Garage Demand

There are currently 112 people awaiting the allocation of garages. Garage demand remains healthy albeit within desirable garage areas. Demand is set out below, by wards:

Stanmore 17  
Pinner 20  
North Harrow 11  
Wealdstone Harrow Weald 34  
South Harrow 16  
Kenton 10  
Miscellaneous 4

## **Garage Supply**

There are 1052 garages across the Borough of which 18.5% or 194 garages are currently void (empty). These garages are empty for a number of reasons:

- Garages in need of substantial repairs
- Garages require basic repairs
- Garages are located in undesirable areas and are hard to let
- Some garages are beyond affordability

These are broken down as follows:

Voids in repairs and ready for letting – 84

Voids requiring repairs prior to letting – 104

## **Activity to maximise income**

### **Repairs**

Provision within the day-to-day repairs' budget has been made for repairs to garages. We expect, that over time, delays in getting repairs completed will be overcome once the KIER contract has been fully mobilised. Officers within the housing department are working closely with staff from KIER and the council's property group to ensure that repairs are carried out promptly. The impact of an improved repairs service will take some months to be realised so we have prioritised empty garages in need of repairs to match areas of demand across the borough.

### **Letting garages**

A number of initiatives are being undertaken in order raise awareness of garage availability. These include advertisements in communal areas and advertising in magazines such as *Homing In*. Other options include placing adverts in the local press if current activity fails to stimulate more demand.

### **Other options for garages**

There are 3 areas (Masefield Avenue, Charles Crescent and Mill Farm) where demand is low with relative high void numbers that offer the potential for development of affordable housing. We are looking at options to determine whether this would be possible. These sites will give rise to anti social behaviour and will result in continuing drain on resources both financial and otherwise. There is, therefore, the need to carefully consider the best use of under-used sites and land.

There is also a site at Westfield Lane, which may benefit from a localised amenity development as opposed to garages.

## **Affordability**

It is difficult to determine what the effect of the April 2007 rent increases has been on garages. Quite often garages cannot immediately be re-let due to the need for minor repairs and lock changes. Inevitably a number of people would have ended arrangements for garage rental purely on affordability grounds. However there remains a reasonable level of demand. The number of garages in disrepair has increased and remains high and this affects voids levels particularly in areas of high demand. It is critical that we ensure these empty garages are treated as a priority within the repairs budget to ensure that they are let and income is received.

Garages, which fall into the hard to let category, will require constant advertising and consideration for potential development if necessary.

Overall the effect of a poor response repairs service has had a major impact on the number of empty garages. There is the potential to reduce empty garages overall by at least 30% once repairs are completed.

## **Performance**

Individual performance targets have been set for garages to be re-let with a view to achieving a 50% reduction in voids levels by the end of 2007/08. We are confident that this can be achieved as repair services are improved.

## **SECTION 3 – FURTHER INFORMATION**

None

## **SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers to this report

**Contact:** William Manning, Resident Services Manager, 020 8424 1473

**Background Papers:** none