

Meeting:	Tenants & Leasehold Consultative Forum
Date:	6 <sup>th</sup> January 2009
Subject:	Estate Services Consultation
Responsible Officer:	Gwyneth Allen - Divisional Director - Housing
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Barry Macleod-Cullinane - Portfolio Holder for Adults & Housing Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Estate Services Consultation Presentation

## Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides feedback on the consultation with residents on improving estate services to Council housing estates

### **Recommendations:**

TLCF is requested to note the outcome of the consultation into estate services

TLCF is requested to agree to the setting up of a Steering Group to progress service improvements on estates

### **Reason: (For recommendation)**

The council is required to consult on any proposed changes to its services.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **2:1 Background**

2:1:1 Estate services comprise the following:

Caretaker Services  
Grounds Maintenance Services  
Parking Controls  
Building Cleaning (internal common parts)

2:1:2 Estate services are provided by directly employed teams for caretaking from within the Resident Services team. Grounds Maintenance is provided through a Service Level Agreement with the Council's Public Realm Team. Parking control is provided by a private company Borough Parking Enforcement (BPE).

2:1:3 In October 2007 an initial review of the Caretaker service was undertaken by Brent Housing Partnership (BHP).

2.1.4 The findings of this report were that a number of short term improvements to services were required and the report highlighted the need to ensure value for money. At the TLCF meeting on 22 July 2008 it was agreed that Resident Services would consult with residents on the services required and how best to provide the full range of estate services delivered by the Housing service in the medium to longer term. It was also agreed to report to TLCF within the current financial year providing specific recommendations having completed this consultation exercise.

2.1.5 One of the short term improvements put in place during 2008 is a short term arrangement to provide a dedicated team of cleaners that are providing a deep clean to all internal communal areas of buildings on council estates owned by the London Borough of Harrow. This was done as a pilot to ensure it was both necessary and required by Tenants and Leaseholders. This project has proven highly successful and it has been well received. If residents are to continue to receive this service as a regular estate cleaning service it will be necessary to undertake formal consultation and provide costing. The current deep clean project has been funded as a one off scheme through a contingency budget in 2008/9 and this is not currently integrated into our regular services provision. A Steering Group is being set up in January 2009 to review all existing and proposed service charges to tenants and leaseholders.

2:1:6 All parking in Harrow is currently subject to an efficiency review agreed by the Efficiency Improvement Board. The scope of the review has identified the need to look at the Housing estate areas and the Project Manager leading the review has contacted Housing Services to enable the service to contribute to that review. Parking on housing estates, un-adopted highways, will be considered as part of the review which is due for completion in January 2009. Only some 9 estates are covered by the current arrangements and there is an opportunity to review those arrangements for car parking on housing estates.

### **2:2 Consultation**

2:3:1 Resident Services undertook the consultation during the autumn from a number of locations including various estate based community centres.

2:3:2 Eight meetings took place between 7 and 29 October 2008. The meetings were chaired by a member of the Resident Services management team and one other manager or officer was in attendance. The presentation set out at Appendix 1 was used at each meeting.

The meetings were not estate specific and did provide opportunity for all residents throughout the borough to attend and make their comments. The aim was to allow access to as many tenants and leaseholders as possible and to receive their comments.

2:3:3 Invitation letters were sent to all council tenants and leaseholders and a total of 79 residents attended meetings.

2:3:4 The majority of comments received related to the need to ensure value for money, lack of caretaking service and lack of internal cleaning. Leaseholders in particular expressed the view that they do not wish to pay increased service charges for an enhanced service.

2:3:6 Consultation with tenants and leaseholders was not conclusive and provided information that will enable a review of estate services to move forward with residents as part of the project steering group which will fully consider options for improving the services provided to residents.

## 2.4 Options

2.4.1 The options outlined in the presentation to tenants and leaseholders were as follows:

- a) Maintaining “as is” arrangements with more effective monitoring and enforcement
- b) Improve the existing services retaining in house provision of the service
- c) Seeking an alternative contractor

**Option a)** Existing Caretaker and Grounds Maintenance services will not deliver a 3 star service without investment and redesign. There have been failures in service delivery in the past which must be urgently addressed. Currently the service does not deliver the full scope of estate services particularly internal cleaning and effective parking controls.

**Option b)** Retaining the existing service with improvements that may require re-tendering the service level agreement with the Public Realm Service for grounds maintenance. The service could include all estate based services including grounds maintenance, internal cleaning, and caretaker duties as well as parking control. This option may result in increased costs.

**Option c)** Requires an options appraisal to be undertaken followed by formally tendering the service within a formal contractual arrangement including advertising in the Official Journal for the European Union. This

would require full market testing and a comprehensive specification. It could involve the transfer of a number of council employees to the successful contractor and monitoring and payment would be based on performance and delivery of the service. This option would take at least one year of project work.

## **2.5 Recommendation**

2:5:1 It is recommended that the service is maintained in its existing form in the absence of a clear option for change at present. A Steering Group should be established to deliver service improvements in estate services which have been shaped, by tenants and leaseholders. The officers on the Steering Group will include tenants and residents working with staff from housing and finance. The first meeting of the Steering Group would be in January 2009.

2:5:2 TLCF is requested to decide on the number of tenants/leaseholder representatives who would attend the Steering Group meetings.

2:5:3 It is essential that residents are involved throughout this process. At the consultation meetings, residents were asked to consider becoming resident volunteers during a future review process if that was the decision of the TLCF. A total of 11 people have expressed an interest in this role.

## **2.6 Implications of the Recommendation**

### **2.6.1 Resources, costs and risks**

The review can be undertaken within existing resources; at this juncture there are no risks to the service.

Failure to agree the recommendation may delay longer-term improvements to the service. The identified risk is continued dissatisfaction of the services provided and not achieving improved value for money.

## **2.7 Financial Implications**

## **2.8 Performance Issues**

BV74 Overall satisfaction with landlord

BV74b Overall satisfaction with landlord (BME residents)

Both the above BVPI are at below lower quartile for CPA purposes but at middle quartile when reviewed through the tenant's satisfaction survey undertaken in 2006 and compared London wide. Surveys are undertaken every two years and a further survey will be undertaken in 2008.

## **2.9 Risk Management Implications**

All risks are set out in the report.

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No

## **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

Name: Donna Edwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 9 December 2008		
Name: Paresh Metha	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 17 December 2008		

## Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Ghazala Faizi, Service Manager, Resident Services, 020 8424 1473  
Ghazala.Faizi@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:  
Estate Services Consultation report November 2008

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES