

Area Panels

29 November, 3, 4, 11 December 2018

Briefing Paper: Proposal for environmental improvement budget - Housing Revenue Account

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A report is being presented to the November Housing & New Homes Committee on a proposal to introduce an environmental improvement budget within the Housing Revenue Account. As this committee meets after the report packs for this round of Area Housing Panels need to be prepared, the main points from the report that will be presented to committee are set out below. Area Panels will receive an update at their meetings in late November/early December on any decisions the Housing & New Homes Committee make about this proposal.

2. Main points in the committee report

- 2.1 This report proposes that a proportion of the Housing Revenue Account budget is set aside to support early actions to improve public areas of the Council's housing estates. This will enable the Council to respond with greater speed to tenant's satisfaction levels with their neighbourhood as a place to live.
- 2.2 The Estates Development Budget (EDB), set aside for tenant voting, remains separate from this proposal.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The Council's housing estates or 'neighbourhood as a place to live' have been reported by tenants responding to the Survey of Tenants and Residents as the main area of the housing service in which satisfaction has reduced. A project is underway to identify work needed on specific estates to address tenant concerns, however the extent of the work is not yet known and has therefore not yet been costed.

- 3.2 The proposed budget will be spent on work that has been identified through the many different ways the Council engages with residents and gathers their feedback. These include:-
- the two-yearly Survey of Tenants and Residents' satisfaction survey
 - feedback residents have recently given during consultation on the delivery of repairs and maintenance
 - the quarterly customer satisfaction survey
 - tenants views fed back through councillors' community representative roles, residents associations, complaints, Field Officers and other council staff.
- 3.3 The budget will have the potential to fund environmental and communal area improvement work that has already been talked of by tenants - including fencing, enhanced grounds maintenance, public way decorations, estate recycling and rubbish storage areas, soft furnishing and common areas of Seniors schemes, gutter clearance programme, car park resurfacing and clothes drying areas.
- 3.4 The residents' Estates Development Panel has been carrying out a review over the summer to make the EDB bidding process simpler for residents. The outcome of this work will be reported to a future committee.

4. Community Engagement

- 4.1 An example of consultation carried out with residents is the survey of people newly moving into council housing. Results up to July 2018 show that from their list of 16 items for improvement mentioned, among the top five that residents would like to see are waste and recycling, flooring and decorating of shared areas, and fencing. From a list of 10 items residents mentioned for improving their local neighbourhood, among the most frequently cited were car parking and garages, landscaping, play areas, and traffic calming.
- 4.2 Consultation this summer with over 1,000 residents on the new arrangements for the repairs and maintenance service from 2020, showed that many residents are concerned with the condition of estates, as opposed to individual properties, and would like to see the delivery of improved programmes in this area.

- 4.3 Residents will be invited to focus groups and the results will be detailed in the full report for January committee.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 A full report will come to the January 2019 Housing & New Homes Committee and Area Panels will be updated as part of this work.

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