

Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **17 October 2017**

Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL

Membership:

Councillors Luke Spillman (Chair), Gerard Rice (Vice-Chair), John Allen, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary and Joycelyn Redsell

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors Russell Cherry, Gary Collins, Oliver Gerrish, Ben Maney and Kevin Wheeler

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **9 October 2017**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



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Vision: Thurrock: A place of **opportunity**, **enterprise** and **excellence**, where **individuals**, **communities** and **businesses** flourish.

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated “Good” or better
- Raise levels of aspiration and attainment so that residents can take advantage of local job opportunities
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

- Promote Thurrock and encourage inward investment to enable and sustain growth
- Support business and develop the local skilled workforce they require
- Work with partners to secure improved infrastructure and built environment

3. Build pride, responsibility and respect

- Create welcoming, safe, and resilient communities which value fairness
- Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life
- Empower residents through choice and independence to improve their health and well-being

4. Improve health and well-being

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being and safeguard the most vulnerable people with timely intervention and care accessed closer to home
- Enhance quality of life through improved housing, employment and opportunity

5. Promote and protect our clean and green environment

- Enhance access to Thurrock's river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock's natural environment and biodiversity
- Inspire high quality design and standards in our buildings and public space

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 July 2017 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Luke Spillman (Chair), John Allen, Terry Piccolo, Jane Pothecary, Joycelyn Redsell and Oliver Gerrish (substitute for Gerard Rice)

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Apologies: Councillors Gerard Rice

In attendance: Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Environment and Place
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 21 March 2017, were approved as a correct record.

2. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business. The Chair informed Members that he had spoken with the Leader, who had asked if the relevant Portfolio Holder could be invited to future meeting.

3. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Piccolo declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a Member of the Planning Committee.

4. Gloriana Thurrock Ltd Update

The Corporate Director of Environment and Place addressed the committee, in doing so he explained the report outlined the activity completed by Gloriana over the last 12 months.

He continued to explain Gloriana had established a series of controls put in place to govern the development and delivery of projects. This was known as the Governance Gateway and set the parameters within which Gloriana would gain approvals from Thurrock Council in respect of scheme selection, property transfers and finance.

Members were informed the first development at St Chad's, Tilbury was progressing well and was nearing completion, with 20% of the development being made available for affordable housing. The Committee were notified of the pipeline of schemes with the next proposed scheme - Belmont Road in Grays, which had been submitted to the planning department and was awaiting a decision.

Councillor Potheary thanked the Corporate Director of Environment and Place for the report. She sought clarity on the expected role of Gloriana and commented on the percentages of the amount of units available for affordable housing offered to local residents. It was explained Gloriana's principle aim was to develop new market housing within the Borough and to provide quality housing to meet housing needs and improve the lives of Thurrock residents.

The Corporate Director of Environment and Place notified the Committee there was the opportunity for affordable housing would come through the Section 106 which also provided funds for local environment and education priorities. He continued by confirming all future schemes would similarly be presented to the Planning Committee.

During discussions Members were advised the St Chads site had been contaminated with asbestos and so had been an expensive site to develop with no interest from private developers notwithstanding this the project had been delivered within budget.

Councillor Redsell enquired as to the cost of the service charges on the new development. Officers advised the cost would be included in the rent of the properties.

Councillor Allen commented the residents of Tilbury were disappointed as they were advised the properties would be offered to local people. He further stated that the percentage of affordable housing should have been greater. The Corporate Director of Environment and Place remarked that Gloriana was still a new company and perhaps they could have promoted the development differently at the outset. The amount of affordable housing was agreed by Planning Committee on the basis of viability assessments.

Councillor Piccolo sought additional information on the development of planning permission as mentioned at 2.2 and 2.3 of the report. He also mentioned that the Gloriana development was different to the development at the Topps Club.

It was confirmed that the two developments were different in that the Topps Club was a scheme funded by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The Corporate Director of Environment and Place advised the Committee there was funding available through the recently announced Housing Infrastructure Fund to allow ambitious developments, of which the Council were preparing their bid. These would not be through the HRA however, as the borrowing cap remains. A case would be made as part of the bid for the cap to be lifted to allow more Council homes to be built.

Councillor Gerrish enquired as to the future of the housing developments in Thurrock, in particular to income streams from using Gloriana as opposed to Council led schemes through the HRA.

Officers stated in relation to the St Chads site developed by Gloriana that the benefit was an immediate revenue return from the lending of development finance by the Council to Gloriana and that in addition the council received a capital receipt once the units are eventually sold by Gloriana.

The Housing Tenant Representative commented that officers mentioned a learning process from this first development. She queried as to whether all lessons had been learnt. It was confirmed by Officers that lessons had been learnt as this was the first Gloriana scheme – particularly around communication and residents' expectations.

Members sought as to whether the site would be used for housing for Key Workers in the borough. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health explained that was under consideration. He continued to notify Members the Key Worker scheme had been agreed by Cabinet; however it would need to be integrated with the cycle of recruitment – particularly for teachers and NHS staff.

The Chair of the Committee asked if it was possible in line with the Localism Act, if part of the development could be directed to residents living in the area. The Assistant Director of Housing explained there were provisions under the Housing Act for such a clause, however felt it would be subject to legal challenge.

Councillor Spillman then commented that the current work programme was not on the scale required to fully supplement private sector building, to meet the local housing need. He requested that Gloriana present option to Full Council of an ambitious expansion that can meet this need.

Councillor Piccolo commented that it was important that the council and the Planning Committee were not seen as to giving developments by Gloriana any special treatment, as this would set a precedent for other developers.

RESOLVED that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the information provided on the progress of the Company.

5. Fire Safety in Tower Blocks

The Assistant Director of Housing introduced the report to Members advising them following the tragic events at the Grenfell Tower block in Kensington triggered an urgent review of fire safety arrangements in Thurrock's tower blocks, including:

- The fire safety regime in place for the councils comparable stock and

- The actions taken by the Council since the incident to provide reassurance to residents, co-operate with the government's investigation into the causes of the Grenfell fire, and achieve a 'double assurance' of the safety of our tower block accommodation.

It was stated that the Essex Fire service played a key role at the tenant meetings and further discussed that no tower block in the borough had been called in by the government for testing. Officers notified Members that the council would be carrying out their own cladding testing, which was due to run from August to October.

Officers informed the Committee on nine of the blocks the gas risings were to be removed by National Grid at the end of October, which would also consist of follow up checks. Members were further informed Liberty Gas had been commissioned to carry out gas checks in all the required blocks.

During discussions officers reported they were awaiting guidance from Government in relation to fire sprinklers, Members were advised to install new sprinkler systems of this nature per tower block in Thurrock would cost between £80 thousand to £150 thousand.

The Committee were further notified Officers were to carry out a Stock Condition Survey, along with a stock assessment.

Members thanked officers for the report and congratulated them on how quickly they were in contact with residents to offer reassurance and advice.

Councillor Potheary queried as to whether the compartmentation process was still in place. Officers confirmed fire risk assessments, repairs and daily or weekly checks were being completed. Alongside this fire alarms were checked by the Fire Authority, following which nothing was noted.

The Assistant Director of Housing further commented that front doors on flats within the blocks were to be fire doors. Such doors in an emergency when shut would stop smoke and fire for up to 30 minutes, allowing the fire service to handle the fire.

It was sought as to whether tower block without cladding and schools in the borough would also be checked. Officers informed Members residential homes had been checked, it was further explained NHS England were keen to offer reassurance to residents.

Members commented on the presentation given by the Fire Authority at the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was further commented as to whether any defects identified had been repaired and if the fire risks assessment had been updated. The Assistant Director of Housing explained that a meeting with Mears had taken place and any potential fire safety defect had been made a priority. It was confirmed new fire assessments were to be held and these would be audited by the Fire Service.

The Chair of the Committee asked if funding for the sprinkler systems was to be forthcoming. The Assistant Director of Housing explained they had not received any details at present however such funds would be ring fenced.

The Housing Tenant Representative enquired as to all council properties were too checked, such as the town houses in Chadwell St Mary. Officers advised that it was not really cladding that was used on those properties, however they would be speaking with all residents.

RESOLVED that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the report.

6. Housing Service Review

The Assistant Director of Housing presented the item to the committee and in doing so the following was discussed:

- Last year a three year programme was started to deep clean communal areas of many blocks. This year it aimed to expand further and start a programme of repainting communal areas, where a need is identified;
- In April the East caretaking team received 100% satisfaction from its residents, which means that the service was rated good or excellent by every resident who took part in the survey;
- In relation to Tenancy management 3379 Audits had been completed since 2015, 17 Properties recovered by Fraud and 4 Right To Buys stopped;
- The rents collection team met their target of 99%, 54% of this was a cash collected which is up by 2% from 2015;
- The councils rent arrears for 2016-2017 was the lowest recorded figure in 10 years and of those arrears 67% are below £250. It was further pointed out that 70% of tenants had a clear rent account or were in credit;
- Within the last 12 months the repairs service had undertaken over 34,000 repairs to the councils housing stock and in delivering these repairs had managed to achieve the highest customer satisfaction of 93%, this had been achieved through implementation of new processes of which has included repairs process and new call scripts, however one of the biggest factors was the team had managed to achieve first time fixes to 95% of these repairs;
- Mears void turnaround time was now under 10 days;
- Members were advised complaints were down by 22%, while compliments had risen up by 58%;
- Safeguarding team were working jointly assessing and meeting the needs of applicants facing Domestic abuse and;
- There were currently 8202 residents on the Housing Register

Members were informed the ASB / Enforcement Team had the first ever closure Order to evict a tenant and the council assisted Essex Police

prosecute a resident to a 7 year custodial sentence for GBH by providing A CCTV package and witness statement.

Officers further notified the Committee of the work to date relating to the Housing Service review. Phase 1 of the review included:

- Looking at how services were running
- Identifying quick wins
- Investigating longer term improvements and efficiencies

The Chair of the Committee commented that prior to the Assistant Director of Housing joining the Local Authority, the customer service performance was poor. Councillor Spillman asked if he was happy with the current performance.

The Assistant Director of Housing, replied he was happy with the improvement made, however there was more to do such as working with residents and changing mind sets. He explained that client care letters had been sent explaining what the council can do and what they could do to help themselves. He stated that dialogue with residents was an important first step.

The Chair of the Committee noted that there was a reference to the importance of homeless prevention in the recent Housing Service report to the Council. He continued to comment that given the causes of homelessness in Thurrock it was not realistic to suggest that homeless prevention alone will effectively reduce the demands on the service.

Councillor Potheary reported that she had received negative commenting from residents relating to the caretaking service. She started on top of their rent; residents had to pay a service charge and were not seeing improvements. Officers explained they were aware of certain blocks which had reported problems. It was explained that the caretaking service was to be reviewed as part of phase 2 of the Housing Review, however inspections were taking place.

Members discussed the Hubs in the borough advising members of the public on housing issues. Councillor Redsell stated she felt it was unsafe for volunteers to advise people of their housing issues as these were often confidential matters. Officers notified the Committee that the role would be to offer first line support and advice such as which team to contact. It was not to complete or assist with case work.

Standing Orders were suspended at 9.15pm to allow Members to complete the item. The Chair suggested a 10.00pm finish.

Councillor Allen queried what would happen if a resident was given the wrong advice. The Assistant Director of Housing assured Members that volunteers are the Hubs were only to offer frontline support and all volunteers were to be mentored and fully training before they were to give any advice. He further

commented that if a volunteer was not confident, they could always contact the Housing team.

Councillor Piccolo declared an interest in that he worked for the CVS which supported the volunteers the Hubs. He continued by commenting the main enquires received at the Hub relating to Housing matters was how to bid on a property and to log a repair.

RESOLVED that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation.

7. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Members discussed the work programme for the current municipal year.

RESOLVED:

Members agreed the following items be included on the Work Programme:

- **Keep Mote**
- **KPI Performance Quarter 1 – October 2017**

The meeting finished at 9.37 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

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17 October 2017	ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
HRA Service Charges Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Assistant Director: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director Adults, Housing & Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report updates the Committee on the progress of the proposals to extend some service charges to tenants which were considered earlier this year and agreed by Cabinet in July.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee comments on the report

1.2 That the Committee agrees the approach proposed in the report to re-considering the grounds maintenance charge, following the decision in September 2017 to suspend the introduction of the charge for tenants pending a review.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 As part of the ongoing requirement to produce a 30-year Business Plan for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), a report was first submitted to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2016 summarising the position of the HRA and identifying a number of financial pressures.

2.2 The report recommended that service charges were extended and introduced for a number of housing management services which were at that point not the subject of a dedicated charge. Estimates of the additional revenue which would be available if such charges were applied at the levels proposed were included in the financial projections incorporated into the report, although the projected additional revenue was highlighted separately to show clearly that the revenue was not assumed, given the need for approval by Cabinet to bring in the proposed charges.

- 2.3 The rationale for the extension of charges was set out in the report, which identified a number of councils where similar charges were already being made, and also summarised the current charging arrangements to highlight what could be seen as anomalies in the current model – for example the fact that those tenants in sheltered housing who had most recently moved in paid an £8.00 p.w. charge for the enhanced housing management service provided to all residents, while tenants of longer standing were not charged anything for receiving the same service.
- 2.4 Following a discussion at the December 2016 Committee it was agreed that officers would re-visit the proposal to extend the sheltered housing charge to all sheltered residents, particularly in light of the proposal to increase the charge over a three-year period to a new figure of £15.00 per week for all residents. The implementation date for all the proposed charges was adjusted from May to July 2017 to allow for this further scrutiny. A further report was duly submitted to the Committee in February 2017, which set out the service's conclusion that all the proposed charges – i.e. both for sheltered and general needs services - should still proceed.
- 2.5 In the February meeting the Assistant Director of Housing set out in detail the approach to consultation on the proposals which was going to be applied. In the case of those general needs tenants who would be liable for the new charges for lift maintenance, communal electricity, door entry systems and grounds maintenance, this would consist of an initial notification letter, accompanied by a Frequently Asked Questions document setting out clearly in plain English the reason for the proposed changes and the impact on those tenants who would be affected. The letter would also give details of the opportunity to comment on the proposals through a consultation process, via an online portal, in writing, by email, and in the case of tenants identified as 'vulnerable' by calling a dedicated number in the Contact Centre to have their responses entered by a Customer Services Officer.
- 2.6 Following the February meeting this approach was duly followed, and the consultation exercise took place during March. A small number of general needs tenants responded to the consultation, and their responses along with those of tenants in sheltered housing were captured in a full report, This was summarised in the report to Cabinet in July which recommended the extension of the charges to general needs tenants as originally proposed (in the case of sheltered tenants some adjustments to the proposed charges had been made after the consultation exercise, leading to a reduction of the charge in future years to £10.00 p.w. rather than the £15.00 originally proposed).
- 2.7 Following Cabinet approval of the report in July, the service prepared for the implementation in October of all the charges which were then agreed. Using the same mail-merge mechanism, and the same data-set of affected tenants, the service formally notified those tenants who had previously received the preliminary notice that the charges were taking effect and that they would be

applied to individual rent accounts from Monday October 2nd. The letter also included details of how any tenant who disagreed with any of the charges could contact the service, so that the decision to include them could be revisited.

3. Suspension of grounds maintenance charge

- 3.1 Between the sending of the formal notification letters on August 25th and the full Council meeting on September 27th, the service received a number of enquiries from tenants and members relating to the new charges, the great majority of which concerned the introduction of grounds maintenance charges for general needs tenants. Among these enquiries the majority concerned residents of street properties, rather than flats. As set out in the notification letter, the service responded to all enquires about the application of the charge by re-visiting the decision to include the tenant in the list of tenants to be charged. In a small number of cases this exercise led to the charge being removed from the tenant's account – in the majority of instances the exercise confirmed the original decision to include the tenant in the charges, and full details were given in individual responses of why this decision had been taken.
- 3.2 On September 27th the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chair of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, made a decision to suspend the introduction of the grounds maintenance charge pending a review. A letter was sent to all affected tenants making clear that the charge had been suspended and that their rent account would not include the £5.00 per week amount from October 2nd as originally decided.
- 3.3 The advice letter also made clear that the service would be amending Direct Debits and Housing Benefit payments accordingly. Because of the timing of the announcement, in the case of a small number of tenants whose Direct Debit payments had been adjusted to reflect the charge, the revised amount was taken from their bank despite the fact that the charge itself had been rescinded. This is because the banks through the BACs system require 10 days' notice of a variation to the Direct Debits being processed by regular automated transfers for a 'bulk' customer such as the Council. As was clearly conveyed in the advice letter, adjustments will be made to future payments which will fully offset the impact of those payments which do not accurately reflect a tenant's current liability.
- 3.4 A motion was then carried unanimously at the Council meeting on September 27th, calling on the Cabinet to re-evaluate the needs for the grounds maintenance charge for general needs tenants.
- 3.5 The grounds maintenance charge for general needs tenants has been removed from the Northgate database at source, pending the conclusion of the review, so there is no possibility that any charges will be applied to rent accounts during the review period. Formal notices of variation are also being prepared to supersede those sent in September to make each tenant's liability

clear in the interim period. Where tenants had already requested a review of the decision to include them, prior to the decision to suspend the charge, the service is still carrying out the necessary checks to establish if the decision was reasonable. At this point, however, these tenants are only being substantively advised that the suspension is in effect, and that they will be advised of their individual position going forward once the review has been concluded.

4. Review of grounds maintenance charge

4.1 In light of the decision to suspend this charge the service is proposing a comprehensive review of the proposal to introduce it, taking a 'first principles' approach and considering the proposed charge from every relevant perspective. The work required to provide the necessary analysis is already underway, and a report will be submitted to the Committee in December setting out the full context of the proposed charge and inviting comment on a range of options for the future.

4.2 The review will consider the charge under a range of headings including the following;

- The overall initial rationale for the charge as set out in the HRA Business Planning report(s)
- The work carried out after the adoption of the Business Planning report to identify a) the areas of land being maintained under the HRA, and therefore included in the cost of the grounds maintenance service, as delivered by the Environment team through a Service Level Agreement with Housing, and b) the individual tenants who should be liable for the grounds maintenance charge based on their enjoyment of some of the areas/facilities being maintained
- The impact on the HRA and on Housing services of all the available financial options, including; a) the retention of the charge at the level already proposed; b) the withdrawal of the charge in full; c) the implementation of a lower standard charge; d) the modification of the charge to vary the amount payable by each tenant according to the level of service they receive; e) the impact of moving in annual phases towards the recommended level of charges for each tenant (whether standard or variegated); f) the option of charging only tenants in certain types of property (e.g. flats on estates) rather than all tenants deemed to be benefitting from the service, regardless of property type, as currently envisaged; and g) any other variations of the proposed charging model which may be relevant, and the impact of each one on the revenue position of the HRA
- The wider context of the HRA Business Plan in the context of current planning for the next 30 years, including the announcement in early October of the end from 2020/21 of the current mandatory reduction in basic rents, and the re-introduction of a rents model allowing Councils to increase rents annually by a maximum of the Consumer Price Index plus 1%

- 4.3 In the event that it is proposed to continue with a grounds maintenance charge in some form, the service will consult widely on its (re)-introduction, using meetings of Tenants and Residents Associations where these are functioning along with community forums, hubs, etc., in order to give tenants an opportunity to engage with managers directly and raise their concerns.
- 4.4 Separately, and as a part of the housing review which would be taking place in any event, the operation of the current Service Level Agreement is being reviewed, and action will be taken if possible to reduce the overall cost of the service, potentially leading to reductions in the future of any charges which are derived directly from that overall cost.
- 4.5 As stated above the Committee will be asked to consider in December a full report giving the findings of the review, and setting out the full range of options for the Council to consider. Based on the Committee's feedback at that stage the service will consider the way forward and decide what proposals if any to progress to Cabinet in relation to grounds maintenance charges.

5. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

No direct implications arising from this report.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis**
HRA and Development Accountant

At each stage of the process the financial effects of extending service charges have informed provisional HRA business planning, with financial information provided to members which made clear how additional revenue could be spent if the direct costs of certain services were covered by new revenue streams.

As made clear in the main body of this report, the full financial impact of each potential outcome of the review will be modelled as part of the review, and will inform the findings and recommendations. The final revenue position will determine the service's prioritisation of spending items within the HRA.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**
Principal Solicitor

No direct implications from this report.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

No direct implications from this report.

6.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- Not applicable.

7. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- HRA Business Planning reports to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, December 2016 and February 2017
- Service charges – report to Cabinet, July 2017

8. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes December 2016
- Appendix 2 – Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes February 2017
- Appendix 3 – Notice of Variation
- Appendix 4 - FAQ Documents
- Appendix 5 – Consultation Letter 1
- Appendix 6 - Consultation Letter 2

Report Author:

John Knight
Assistant Director of Housing
Adults, Housing and Health Directorate

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 December 2016 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Gerard Rice (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Jan Baker, Jane Potheary and Joycelyn Redsell

Lynn Mansfield, Co-Opted Member

Apologies: Councillors Tunde Ojetola

In attendance: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
John Knight, Head of Housing
Dulal Ahmed, Housing Enforcement Manager
Julie Curtis, HRA and Development Accountant
Sue Kane, Sheltered Housing Manager
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

16. Minutes

The Minutes of Cabinet, held on 9 November 2016, were approved as a correct record.

17. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

18. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair of the Committee took the opportunity to welcome John Knight, the new Head of Housing to the Committee.

19. Sheltered Housing Changes to Service – Update

The Sheltered Housing Manager presented the report to Members informing them that Thurrock Sheltered Housing currently provided 1283 units of sheltered accommodation at 30 sites across the borough.

She continued to advise the Committee feedback from tenants' showed satisfaction levels with the Estate Officers service was good with over 80% of tenants judging the service as good or above. It was also mentioned of the 489 tenants who responded to the latest survey 35% scored the service as

excellent, Members were notified this was an improvement from the previous year.

Members were informed Anti-social behaviour (ASB) remained a concern given the vulnerability of the tenants in Sheltered Housing. However, the service was successfully managing ASB, with only 3 recorded open cases as of 28 November 2016.

It was explained that in spite of the reassuring set of survey results, the additional responsibilities for estate management had proved difficult within the sheltered housing team and therefore recently an extra 3 members of staff were employed, this brought the team to 18 Officers.

Members enquired as to whether the void level had been benchmarked against other local authorities in the area. Officers apologised as they didn't have any benchmarking figures to hand, however this could be sent to Members. However, voids were very low and there was a waiting list.

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health stated that he had visited all but 3 of the sheltered accommodation complexes in the borough; he informed members that he was very impressed with the quality of the stock and proud of the community spirit of tenants. It was mentioned by the Sheltered Housing Manager that the team held McMillian Coffee Mornings within the complexes and raised just over £6,000.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the update report concerning the Sheltered Housing service.

20. Update on HMO Licence Fee Consultation and the Proposal of Additional Licensing

The report was delivered by the Housing Enforcement Manager, and in doing so he highlighted the following to the Committee:

- At their last meeting, the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed to review the HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation) licence fee changes proposed by the Private Sector Housing Service;
- The report outlined the consultation feedback and recommendations of residents, private landlords and stakeholders who would be affected by the proposed changes;
- The Government had announced its decision to extend mandatory HMO licensing. This included removing the storey rule so all houses with 5 or more people from 2 or more households are involved; and
- There were 300 plus HMOs within the borough that Officers were aware of.

The Housing Enforcement Manager advised the Committee following a telephone survey undertaken by KWest in July 2016, results showed 67% out

of 166 residents were supportive of extending HMO licencing. It was also agreed that the Council should be doing more to tackle poorly managed HMOs. It was mentioned that Essex Police and Fire Brigade were in strong support of extending mandatory HMO licensing in Thurrock.

Members were further advised landlords with more than one HMO welcomed the capped discount to support them. This would be a 20% cap per property should the landlord own more than one property.

The Chair welcomed the report and commented he felt the fees were acceptable and well controlled.

Members queried as to why temporary licences were for 12months. Officers explained that guidance advised 12 months, benchmarking against other local authorities had also been carried out.

RESOLVED that Members:

- 1. Note the Central Government changes to mandatory HMO licensing scheme;**
- 2. Note the feedback to Thurrock Council's public consultation on this extension to HMO licencing and on the revision of HMO licence fees to carry out this duty;**
- 3. Note the proposed HMO licence fee charges for 2017/18 to Cabinet in January 2017.**
- 4. Note the proposal to explore the option of Additional HMO licensing to properties below the Government's mandatory definition. This assessment will test it's appropriateness for additional licensing powers in Thurrock.**

21. HRA Business Plan and Budgets 201718 Onwards

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health introduced the report informing Members the item was to be present to Cabinet in February.

The HRA and Development Accountant addressed the Committee and notified Members that the report set out the current position and progress in developing a new HRA Business Plan for 2017/18.

She continued by informing Members there was uncertainty around previously announced government proposals and the Housing White paper due in December should give Officers clarity.

It was mentioned that inflation had been included at 1% for salaries, 1.5% for repairs linked to contractual uplifts and 0% for all other costs during the Business Plan.

Members were advised that in line with the governments rent policy a 1% reduction has been applied to all rents for 2017/18. Furthermore, in addition to the general services provided to all tenants and leaseholders the Council

provided a range of specific services. These services included communal lighting, door entry systems, lift maintenance and maintenance for the grounds.

The HRA and Development Accountant explained that other Councils currently charged tenants for the costs of a range of services depending on locally delivered services via the HRA, these included Basildon, Havering, Barking and Dagenham and Medway.

The Committee were advised the Council had two main options;

- To continue with the current arrangements and only charge leaseholders the actual costs of the services provided, or
- To introduce service charges for tenants as well.

Members were further advised should they decide to introduce charges for tenants the Council could do so immediately or on a phased basis.

During the Committees discussions the following was raised:

- If tenants living in high rise flats owned their property would they have to pay the same costs as those who were renting. Officers explained that all costs would be calculated in the same way so that costs were fair for tenants and leaseholders;
- Members asked if the proposed charges would force more people into the a benefit cap. It was explained that all service charges would be worked out with the Rents team and that would show if anyone would be affected.

The Chair of the Committee raised concerns as to the service charge for people living in sheltered accommodation. He asked that Officers awaited the Government White Paper and report back to Committee once all guidance had been issued.

RESOLVED:

That the report be brought back to the next meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, once the Government White Paper has been released.

22. Council Spending Review Update

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health delivered the report to the Committee stating that the report had been presented all of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

It was mentioned the report summarised the main changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2017/18 through to 2019/20.

The Committee were advised that at the current stage there were no specific housing general fund savings proposals.

Members were further advised the Medium Term Financial Strategy position included the assumption of a 3.99% increase in council tax each year, which included 1.99% general increase and 2% adult social care precept.

The Committee commented that the report mentioned where the budget gap could not be closed through recommendations it was likely that reductions or full cessation of services would be looked at. Members enquired which services would be subject to cessation. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health stated that there were no formal proposals to close services at the present time. He continued by advising services may be delivered in a different way.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the revised MTFs position and the Council Spending Review approach and timetable.

23. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

Members discussed the Work Programme, with the Chair seeking that the Pay to Stay Update report be removed from the February meeting.

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health sought if the Committee would be happy for Officers to incorporate a number of the items for February meetings into one report. It was confirmed Members were happy for this.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated, in line with Members discussions.

The meeting finished at 8.00 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 February 2017 at 7.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Gerard Rice (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Jan Baker, Tunde Ojetola, Jane Potheary and Joycelyn Redsell
- Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative - Co-Opted Member
- In attendance:** Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
John Knight, Head of Housing
Julie Curtis, HRA and Development Accountant
Stefanie Seff, Corporate Procurement Strategy Delivery Manager
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer
-

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

24. Minutes

The Minutes of Cabinet, held on 13 December 2016, were approved as a correct record.

25. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

26. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

27. Procurement of Housing Capital Programme Delivery

The Head of Housing presented the item by explaining the report set out the proposals for the re-procurement of the Housing Capital Programme, which was part of the Transforming Homes programme.

He continued to inform Members that the programme would bring significant improvement to the long term viability of Council housing and to the living conditions of residents and ensured the Council fulfilled its duty to provide warm homes with modern facilities. Members were notified the feedback from residents was positive with 82% of residents rating the contractor as good or excellent and 84% of residents rating the overall delivery of the programme as good or excellent.

It was stated that once out for advertisement, the Council's current contractors, were also entitled to bid for the contract along with other suppliers.

The Chair of the Committee enquired as to the financial impact of the government's 1% rent reduction. Officers explained that following the government's announcement £2.5 million would be removed from the housing budget.

Members sought as to how the key principals noted with the report were to be achieved. The Head of Housing informed the Committee that the second principal was to be accomplished with the support of a third party and the first would be achieved by monitoring the programme, working with the Liaison Officers and making visits to ensure that the process was explained to all tenants.

It was further queried as to who made the decision to continue with two main refurbishment packages. The Corporate Procurement Strategy Delivery Manager advised that it was recommended that the Council continue with two contractors, as the competition between the two would keep works to a high standard and should the work of one contractor begin to lack, work could be given to the other.

During discussions the Committee were advised that any feedback rated under 'fair' was not satisfactory, only ratings of good or excellent were considered a 'pass' under Key Performance Indicators and Officers were able to see comments left by residents, which could be used to improve the service.

The Housing Tenant Representative commented that at her complex many of the contractors could not speak English, which for the elderly and vulnerable people living there made them uncomfortable and they would often not allow them into their homes. She continued by stating the manager did a good job at assisting residents. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, stated all contractors' especially those visiting elderly or vulnerable people were required to wear ID badges and speak English as a basic need.

It was finally enquired as to why void properties within the borough were being left, for at times up to a year. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health explained that the Council had a 30 to 40 day turn around period for void properties. He continued by commenting if a property had been left then it could mean that substantial work was required or the property could be privately owned.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were recommended to comment on the proposed process and contract package as set out in the report for re-procurement of the refurbishment and strategic cost management elements of the Housing Capital Programme.

28. HRA Business Plan and Budgets 2017/18

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health introduced the report and in doing, so advised Members the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had been redeveloped due to the government's announcement of the 1% rent reduction and was to be presented to Cabinet on Wednesday 8 February 2017.

It was explained that Officers had also taken into account additional costs such as repairs and the 3 Capital Programmes and were now facing the decision on how to generate an income or charge for services.

The Head of Housing informed the Committee that following the last meeting where Members raised concerns on the suggested service charges and the announcement of the 1% reduction Officers had relooked at the HRA. He continued by explaining the Council were still awaiting the Housing Whitepaper, which was to be announced immanently.

Members were notified that following their concerns at the previous meeting, Officers had come to the conclusion to offer satisfactory services to tenants and invest into the HRA, to complete this the phased extension of service charges was thought to be the most appropriate means of generating the required additional revenue.

The Chair of the Committee commented he felt the consultation with residents was important, however the Sheltered Service Charge of £15 per week was unacceptable. He continued by stating that people living in Sheltered Housing would rather complete certain tasks such as grass cutting themselves, than to have to pay for the services they received.

The Housing Tenant Representative agreed with the Chair stating that tenants did not want to pay for services that they did not receive. She further mentioned that she checked the lights, in her own complex and when informing the manager of lights which were not working, was informed to call the repair team herself.

Members were advised by the Head of Housing that the Council was the landlord for sheltered housing residents, which meant repairs were up to the Council to complete. He further mentioned in relation to a question about garages in the borough, that issues were to be picked up with the relevant service and he accepted that improvements were required.

It was discussed that the Council were commissioning a Stock Survey, following which they would be able to create a potential management plan with regards to garages.

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health mentioned that he had visited all but 3 Sheltered Housing Complexes in the Borough. He notified the Committee that 70% of sheltered housing tenants were on full or partial

housing benefit and assured the Committee that all affected residents would be included within the consultation.

During discussions, Councillor Potheary stated that she was against the Sheltered Service charges. She queried as to who the Council was charging for heating, as this was subject to a 3% increase. It was explained that the 3% heating charge, came from the fees and charges policy.

Councillor Ojetola commented that he had concerns with Thurrock's vulnerable residents paying additional costs, when living in sheltered housing. The Head of Housing explained that the HRA budget was ring fenced and that the Council was currently charging some residents and not others for the services they were receiving.

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health advised that all Local Authorities would be having the same conversations and looking at ways to contribute to the HRA budgets and so were also considering charging tenants for services offered.

It was queried as to whether the service charges would mean that an improved service would be offered to residents. Officers advised that the service charges would allow the Council to maintain the services currently provided.

Members were notified that all tenants affected would receive an advice letter, informing them of the consultation, which was to be undertaken via telephone, email or online. The Head of Housing advised the consultation would start at the end of February and would finish at the end of March.

The Chair of Committee suggested a new recommendation which was seconded by Councillor C Baker:

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that no new charge of £15 per week be introduced for sheltered housing tenants and that following the Council's consultation, any such charge will apply to new tenants only.

Members voted on the suggested recommendation as follows:

For: Councillors G Rice, C Baker, J Baker, J Potheary and J Redsell.

Against: Councillor T Ojetola.

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health explained that a report was to be presented at the February meeting of Cabinet, then the consultation would begin, after which a report would be presented to Cabinet in April for a final decision.

RESOLVED:

1. That the assumptions included in the HRA Business Plan be noted.
2. That the budgets for 2017/18 be noted.
3. That the HRA New Build programme maximises the use of Right to Buy (RTB) Receipts in place of Homes and Communities Agency funding.
4. That growth for revenue repairs and capital investment is noted.
5. That a 3% increase to all existing tenant charges is noted in line with the Council's increases to Fees and Charges.
6. That tenants receiving certain housing management services be consulted on the phased introduction of service charges, which are currently only levied on leaseholders, with a final report back to Cabinet in April.
7. The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that no new charge of £15 per week be introduced for sheltered housing tenants and that following the Council's consultation, any such charge will apply to new tenants only.

Councillor Potheary declared that she was against recommendations 1.5 and 1.6.

29. Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2017/18

The Chair of the Committee introduced the report commenting that it was self-explanatory, he enquired if Members had any questions. There were no questions from any Member on the report.

RESOLVED That Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Note the revised fees and charges proposals including those no longer applicable;
2. Commented on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.

30. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Members discussed the Work Programme. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health sought if the Committee would be happy for an extraordinary meeting to be arranged for March 2017, as there were a number of reports, which Officers wished to present to Members before presenting to Cabinet in April.

It was enquired by Members if a report on Garages, could be brought to a March meeting. Officers explained that it might not be possible to present a report at an agreed March meeting, however confirmed a report would be presented at the first meeting of the Committee in the new Municipal Year.

Members further requested a report on the Review of Gatekeeping be presented to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated in line with Members discussions and an extraordinary meeting be arranged for March 2017.

The meeting finished at 8.40 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

Dear Tenant

Consultation Letter

As you may be aware from recent local meetings, Thurrock Council (your Landlord) intends to introduce some changes to the service charges currently paid by its tenants.

Clause 2.1.2 of your tenancy agreement provides that 'where services are provided as part this agreement you will pay a service charge which is included in the total weekly payment. The services provided and their charges are shown in page 1 of your agreement. The service charge may include a sum payable towards a sinking fund, which allows us to collect an amount to cover any usually heavy costs for services which may have to be paid in the future.'

Clause 2.2.4 provides that 'we may after consulting with you and any other tenants affected, increase, add to, remove, reduce or vary the services provided. This may include adding services where you have not previously paid a service charge at all. We will establish a procedure for consultation which will be publicised and made available to you if you ask for it.'

The Council provides a range of services to Thurrock Council tenants living in flats and Maisonettes.

Services include:

- Lifts
- Electricity in communal areas
- Secure door entry
- Maintenance of the gardens/ areas surrounding the properties

You already have the use of one or more of these four services. Other Councils charge their tenants for these services but Thurrock Council has not done so up to now. The cost of providing these services is considerable and the Council cannot continue to subsidise these costs. The Council is proposing to introduce a service charge to all its tenants who have use of these four services. You would only be charged according to the services you use.

It is estimated that a charge of £7.79 per week (per property) would be made to tenants receiving all four services. If you are currently in receipt of housing benefit or universal credit, the proposed additional service charges is eligible to be covered by housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit. If you are not entitled to any benefits at present, you may want to contact the Housing Benefit department for a reassessment of your income to see if you are entitled to financial support towards any additional charges introduced.

Sheltered Housing

As you may be aware, tenants who live in sheltered housing receive an extra service provided by sheltered housing officers covering a range of services. In 2014 the Council introduced a basic service charge of £8 per week per property to all new tenants however the revenue generated from this charge does not cover the full cost of services provided.

The Council is now proposing to introduce a sheltered housing charge of £15 per week to all tenants who live in sheltered accommodation including current tenants. This charge will be

introduced gradually over a 3 year period, namely £5 in the first year, rising to £10 in the 2nd year and then to £15 in the 3rd year. For tenants in sheltered housing who currently pay £8 per week, there will be no extra charge until the 2nd year when their weekly service charge will increase to £10.

Have your say

There are two documents attached to this letter which explain the proposed changes and their effects as well as the answers to some frequently asked questions (FAQ's) that I trust will help you understand this process. You are invited to make any comments on the proposed changes no later than **31st March 2017**.

You can respond in any of the following ways:

- By completing our online survey at [ADDRESS TO BE CONFIRMED]
- By email to tenancyvariation@thurrock.gov.uk
- In writing to
Tenancy variation officer,
Housing
Thurrock Council Civic Office,
New Road, Grays,
Essex RM17 6SL
- By calling our contact centre on 01375 366120

Sheltered housing tenants can also attend the next sheltered housing forum to provide comments;

This will be held at [ADDRESS TO BE CONFIRMED] on [DATE TO BE CONFIRMED] at 10:30am *What happens next?*

We will consider all the comments we receive and then make a recommendation to the Thurrock Council's Cabinet. After this, if the above proposal is approved by Thurrock Council's Cabinet, we will serve you with a formal Notice of Variation (under Section 103 of the Housing Act 1985) later this year. This will include a copy of the new tenancy agreement with details of the new service charges and will inform you of the date on which the changes will become effective.

Yours sincerely

John Knight
Head of Housing

Tenants Service Charges

FAQ for consultation – General Needs Tenants only (see separate script for Sheltered Housing tenants)

What is a Service Charge?

As part of the rent we collect from our tenants we can make specific charges for services which are provided as part of our management of our properties.

We already charge tenants as part of their rent for Caretaking and Concierge services we provide.

We are now proposing to extend this to other services for which there is no charge at present;

- Lift maintenance and repair
- Heating and lighting in communal areas
- Secure door entry
- Maintenance of the communal greens / other grass areas around our properties

What is changing?

We intend to introduce service charges for all tenants in properties where one or more of the above services are being provided.

Why is this changing?

The cost of providing these services is over £2million per year. This is currently paid for by using part of the rent collected from all tenants, and not just those who receive these particular services. We believe the change will ensure that the charges are fairly collected from those who receive these services. Leaseholders already pay for all the service they receive.

Who currently pays service charges?

Councils are entitled to recover the costs of these services from all users but at present we only recover the charges for these services from leaseholders.

When will this start?

We intend to introduce this from 1st July 2017.

Who is affected?

All tenants living in flats or houses who receive one or more of the above services.

If I live in a house, will I still be paying service charges ?

You will not be charged for lift maintenance, heating and lighting of communal areas or secure door entry if you do not receive these services. You may have to pay a grounds maintenance service charge if the Council is providing this service close to your property.

How much will it cost?

The exact charges have not been agreed yet but for tenants receiving all the above services we would expect the additional charge to be approximately £8.00 per week in 2017/18. Any further increases will be on a phased basis over three years to allow sufficient time for you to budget for the increase.

Do other Councils charge for this?

Yes, other Councils charge tenants for the costs including; Basildon, Havering, Barking and Dagenham and Medway in order to recover their costs.

How will I pay this?

All these charges can be included in your Housing Benefit claim if you are receiving Housing Benefits. If you do not qualify at present because your income is only slightly above the required amount, you may be eligible if you re-apply and include the charges in the overall rent for your claim. If you are not receiving benefits you will have to pay from your other sources of income.

Are there any exceptions to who pays?

No – after this change every tenant who receives these particular services will be paying for them. If you do not receive a service – for example you live in a block without lifts – you will not be charged for what you do not receive.

Can you help me pay the charges?

Our Rents and Financial Inclusion team can help you to budget for your rent and give you assistance with making sure you can pay your new rent,

What happens if I can't pay?

As the charges are included in your rent the normal action would be taken if you fall into arrears – we will work with you to prevent this wherever possible.

Can I complain/appeal?

Yes – *if* the charges are introduced for all tenants you will have the legal right to challenge the increase.

What happens next?

Consultation is taking place with all affected tenants. When this has finished the Council will review all the responses and decide whether to bring in these charges.

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Dear Tenant

Consultation Letter – service charges

As you may be aware, Thurrock Council as your landlord is considering some changes to the service charges currently paid by its tenants.

Your tenancy agreement states (clauses 2.1.2 and 2.2.4) that where services are provided as part of your rent you will pay a service charge, and that we can make changes to the service charges included in the rent, including charging for services for the first time.

The Council provides a range of services to Thurrock Council tenants living in our properties. .

Services include:

- Lift maintenance and repair
- Electricity for heating and lighting in communal areas
- Secure door entry
- Grounds maintenance of the communal gardens/ other grass areas around our properties.

You are currently receiving one or more of these services. Many Councils charge their tenants for these services but Thurrock Council has not done so up to now. The cost of providing these services is considerable and the Council considers it is reasonable to charge for them in future. The Council is proposing to introduce a service charge to all its tenants who receive one or more of these four services. You will only be charged for the services you use.

It is estimated that a charge of approximately £8.00 per week will be made to tenants receiving all four of the above services. Those not receiving all the services will pay less.

If you are currently in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, the proposed additional service charges can be included in your rent for benefit purposes. If you are not entitled to these benefits at present, and the charges are introduced, you may want to contact the Housing Benefit department for a reassessment of your income to see if you are entitled to financial support towards any additional charges introduced.

Have your say

The Council is consulting you on these changes.

I enclose a document with more information, as well as the answers to some 'frequently asked questions' (FAQ's) that I trust will help you understand this process. You are invited to make any comments on the proposed changes no later than **Monday March 20th** .

You can respond by completing our online survey.

To give your views please click on the link below – you will need to enter this reference number;

REFERENCE NUMBER FOR CONSULTATION; XXXXXXXXXXXXX (*Rent account no.*)

<http:.....>

Next steps

The Council will consider all the responses we receive before making a decision on whether to introduce the charges.

If the decision is to proceed you will receive a formal Notice of Variation (under Section 103 of the Housing Act 1985) later this year. This will include full details of the new service charges, and will inform you of the date on which the changes will become effective.

Yours sincerely

John Knight
Head of Housing



Dear Tenant

Consultation Letter – service charges

As you may be aware, Thurrock Council as your landlord is considering some changes to the service charges currently paid by its tenants.

Your tenancy agreement states (clauses 2.1.2 and 2.2.4) that where services are provided as part of your rent you will pay a service charge, and that we can make changes to the service charges included in the rent, including charging for services for the first time.

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It is estimated that a charge of approximately £8.00 per week will be made to tenants receiving all four of the above services. Those not receiving all the services will pay less.

If you are currently in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, the proposed additional service charges can be included in your rent for benefit purposes. If you are not entitled to these benefits at present, and the charges are introduced, you may want to contact the Housing Benefit department for a reassessment of your income to see if you are entitled to financial support towards any additional charges introduced.

Have your say

The Council is consulting you on these changes.

I enclose a document with more information, as well as the answers to some 'frequently asked questions' (FAQ's) that I trust will help you understand this process. You are invited to make any comments on the proposed changes no later than **Monday March 20th**

You can respond by completing our online survey.

To give your views please click on the link below – you will need to enter this reference number;

REFERENCE NUMBER FOR CONSULTATION; XXXXXXXXXXXXX (*Rent account no.*)

<http:.....>

You can also respond in the following ways;

- **By email** to tenancyvariation@thurrock.gov.uk
- **In writing** to
Tenancy variation officer,
Housing
Thurrock Council Civic Office,
New Road, Grays,
Essex RM17 6SL
- **By phone** – please call our Contact Centre on **01375 366120**

Next steps

The Council will consider all the responses we receive before making a decision on whether to introduce the charges.

If the decision is to proceed you will receive a formal Notice of Variation (under Section 103 of the Housing Act 1985) later this year. This will include full details of the new service charges, and will inform you of the date on which the changes will become effective.

Yours sincerely

John Knight
Head of Housing

17 October 2017	ITEM: 6
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Homelessness Reduction Act Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report of: Lorrita Johnson, Interim Housing Solutions Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director; John Knight , Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director Adults, Housing & Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

The Homelessness Reduction Act originated with a Private Members Bill introduced by Conservative MP Bob Blackman and received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017. The Act replaces the current duties detailed in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. Local Authorities are scheduled to commence operating within the new statutory framework from April 2018.

This report provides a summary of the new changes detailed within the Homelessness Reduction Act, and of the implications for demand and service delivery in Thurrock. The report also outlines preparation work undertaken by the Housing Solutions Service in readiness of commencement.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the information provided on a) the introduction of the Act and b) the progress of the Housing Solutions Service in preparing for implementation.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 During the summer of 2015, Crisis, the single homelessness charity established an independent panel of field experts to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current homelessness legislation in England. The panel made recommendations following the review which focused on two key issues within the current statutory framework.

2.2 First, the distinction between ‘priority’ and ‘non priority’ groups embedded in the 1977 Act Homelessness Act meant that most single homeless people

were entitled to only advice and assistance. In practice, as a mystery shopping exercise by Crisis had demonstrated, single people were often 'turned away' with little or no meaningful assistance being offered.

- 2.3 Second, the growing emphasis since 2003 on informal 'housing options' interventions by local authorities sat uncomfortably alongside the formal statutory framework, raising concerns about unlawful 'gatekeeping' in some areas. Equally, there were concerns that local authorities engaged in good-quality prevention work could be left exposed to legal challenge because their actions did not have a clear legal context.
- 2.4 The purpose of the independent review was to recommend legislative change in order to prevent and tackle single homelessness more effectively, while ensuring that the current entitlements for families and others who are assessed as in priority need and might be owed the main statutory homelessness duty were not undermined.
- 2.5 The key Panel proposals were incorporated into a Private Members Bill sponsored by the Conservative MP for Harrow East, Mr Bob Blackman, in June 2016. The Homelessness Reduction Bill subsequently received backing from the Government, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, and peers and MPs from across the political arena.

3 Proposed timescales for implementation

- 3.1 A new Homelessness Code of Guidance is due to be published in autumn 2017 which will provide practical guidance on how the legislation and related policies should be implemented. Commencement of implementation is expected in April 2018.
- 3.2 The Government announced additional funding earlier this year as recognition of the 'new burden' demand the Act will create, which is currently estimated to be in the region of £40,000 p.a. for Thurrock. This funding is for two years only as the government believes that after that time the initial additional costs will be absorbed. The exact amounts for each borough will be confirmed before spring 2018.

4. Summary of the Homelessness Reduction Act

- 4.1 The Act introduces a common homelessness 'prevention' duty on local authorities, as well as a 'relief' duty to take 'reasonable steps' to help to secure accommodation for 6 months for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need or whether they are 'intentionally homeless'.
- 4.2 It also extends the definition of those considered 'threatened' with homelessness to include people likely to lose their home from within the present 28 days to 56 days. This would include those served with a valid Section 21 notice by a private landlord, notifying the tenant that possession is

required and preceding the necessary legal steps to obtain a Court Order for possession.

- 4.3 Anyone accepted by the Council as being threatened with homelessness will be owed the new prevention duty, and councils must take 'reasonable steps' to help them avoid becoming homeless. This could include placing them into temporary accommodation whilst steps are undertaken to secure future accommodation.
- 4.4 The 2017 Act also specifies the need for enhanced advisory services. The Housing Act 1996 stipulates that local authorities must ensure advice and information around homelessness and preventing homelessness is available free of charge to everyone in their district. The new Act will require a more robust and targeted approach to advisory services with the specific duty to provide information and advice on:
- Preventing homelessness;
 - Securing accommodation if homeless;
 - The rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and; any other support (provided by the local authority or any other local organisations) that is available for people who are homeless or likely to become homeless, as well as how to access that help.
- 4.5 The Act stipulates that the support offered to eligible applicants is to be more robust than currently required. Once a local authority is satisfied that someone is homeless / threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance an assessment should be carried out which includes;
- The circumstances that have caused homelessness / potential homelessness;
 - The housing and other support needs of the applicant and their household;
 - A 'personalised rehousing plan', setting out steps for both the applicant and the Council to take to ensure accommodation is secured and/or retained.
 - An applicant's assessment and rehousing plan must be kept under review and updated as necessary, until the local authority has determined that no further duty is owed.
- 4.6 In addition, a new provision places a requirement on all applicants to cooperate with the Council's attempts to prevent or relieve their homelessness. If the Council considers that an applicant has deliberately or unreasonably refused to cooperate or take steps agreed as part of their assessment plan, a notice can be served to the individual informing them of the Council's decision, the consequences of it (e.g. ending of prevention /relief duty) and their right to request a review. This notice can only be served if a warning has been given to the applicant beforehand and a reasonable time period has elapsed since the warning was given.

4.7 The Act gives applicants the right to request a review of any decision made by the local authority (in addition to those laid down in current legislation) regarding:

- Steps set out in assessment plans;
- Giving notice to withdraw prevention or relief duties;
- Suitability of accommodation offered.

4.8 In addition to duties for Housing services, the Act stipulates that “specified public authorities” e.g. NHS services, will be required to refer details of people who they consider being homeless or threatened with homelessness to their local authority (provided the person agrees to the notification being made). The local authority will in turn need to make contact with this individual for assessment.

5 Actions Undertaken Thus Far

5.1 The Housing Service has been proactive in improving its homelessness services and ensuring work is underway in readiness for the changes introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

5.2 The Housing Solutions Service Pilot was launched in August 2017. The service model has been redesigned into two discrete areas:

- Homelessness Assessments conducting the homelessness assessments functions (soon to include the new ‘relief’ duties)
- Housing Options casework, carried out for all applicants prior to the statutory assessment stage and delivering the full range of prevention functions (soon to be the new prevention duties for all applicants threatened with homelessness)

5.3 The new way of working seeks to:

- focus on early intervention and prevention to help keep people in their own homes or enable them to be self-sufficient
- provide good quality resident focussed services that aim to meet the needs of residents at the first point of contact through a telephone triage system
- develop tailored service for single applicants
- clearly define roles and responsibilities in the service
- facilitate closer working with adults and children’s social care services within the specialisms
- gain better control of enquiries through closer working with Customer Services to filter ‘contact slips’ effectively
- develop partnership work with private sector landlords and third sector organisations
- Implementation of the Housing First model to address single homeless rough sleeping in the borough. Housing First is an approach that offers permanent,

affordable housing as quickly as possible for individuals experiencing homelessness and provides the supportive services, connections to the community based support for people need to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 Establish a Homelessness Forum in the borough which includes third sector, voluntary organisations to combine efforts to identify and tackle homelessness at earlier stages.
- 6.2 Working with current partners such as St Mungos and Family Mosaic to ensure alternative options to the Council are also available locally, especially for single people not currently deemed to be in priority need or to have significant support needs.
- 6.3 Establish stronger relationships with lenders, County Courts to ensure early intervention referral process is in place for households at risk of homelessness due to possession action
- 6.4 Maximise the use of digital communications (i.e. social media, the website etc.) The new Northgate Housing Options module will go live in November 2017; this will help customers to self-serve and offers signposting to the housing options toolkit of support. In addition, more development of the information on the website to help customers understand the assessment process is in progress.
- 6.5 Explore the feasibility of incorporating into the current system, the new National Practitioner Support Services Jigsaw casework management system which is tailored to the new Act.
- 6.6 Develop robust policies and procedures for staff to refer to when faced with a client failing to co-operate or requesting a review.
- 6.7 Recruitment of an in-house Reviews Officer to manage all review requests. (The current service provided by Basildon council is being terminated)
- 6.8 Work to develop a cross-service prevention culture, highlighting each team's role in preventing homelessness.
- 6.9 Implement essential awareness training for key staff and service areas
- 6.10 Carry out a review to ensure the impact on corporate services is understood (in particular for Customer Contact Centre)
- 6.11 Review the use of Discretionary Housing Payment to provide a greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness especially for private tenants.

- 6.12 Review the deployment of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant in assisting with the prevention of homelessness.
- 6.13 Develop new budgeting tools to help customers better understand what they can afford and a link to where those properties are likely to be.
- 6.14 Meet with Landlords/Private Rented Sector agents to understand their motives and how they can be influenced. The final offer to landlords would incorporate the recent proposal from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which seeks to strengthen security and well-being of residents in the private rented sector. This would be a tool to increase the portfolio of reputable landlords working with the service to provide accommodation to nominated households, which in turn ends the Council's prevention and relief duties.

7 The potential impact of the Act

7.1

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-6	2016-17
Total	1252	2342	3072	3759	6679

As shown in the table above, the number of homelessness approaches has been steadily rising; in 2012-2013 the figure was 1252, rising to 3759 in 2015-2016.

In addition there has been an increasing number of households owed the main housing duty, making over 50% of the overall statutory decisions. This is also reflected on the Housing Register where those with a homeless priority increased from 0.5% of all households in 2012- 2013 to 2% in 2016-2017. As band 3 cases these households have a much higher prospect of being rehoused quickly than applicants in bands 4 and 5 who make up the great majority of register cases.

- 7.2 The Department of Communities and Local Government estimate an increase of approximately 26% of potential advice and prevention caseload, but it is anticipated to be greater than this in Thurrock.

In summary it is expected that the service will see;

- single applicants entitled to increased services
- increased number of formal applications
- increased number of formal homelessness decisions
- Increased reviews and resources to manage these
- Increased number of duties to secure accommodation, especially for a limited period for non-priority households.

8. Reasons for Recommendation

- 8.1 The Committee's comments are sought as this is a significant new set of measures for statutory homelessness services and other services and partners.

9. Implications

9.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis**
HRA and Development Accountant

The service intends to meet the majority of the increased demand through the new government grant. Following confirmation of the allocation of funds, the service will continue with the regular monitoring to ensure the viability of forecasts and spend.

9.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**
Housing Solicitor/Team Leader

It is expected that the service would need to get to grips with the new duties in a relatively short time frame, effective training delivered to staff to be legally compliant and provide a robust service limiting successful lawful challenges will need to be provided.

9.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development & Equalities Manager

The new DCLG data collection is being set up to receive household level rather than aggregated local authority level data. It will cover a broader range of households, including all those who receive homelessness assistance from the local authority rather than, as now, focusing primarily on those that authorities are currently legally obliged to help under the statutory homeless definition.

The design of the new data collection has been shaped by the Homelessness Reduction Act and will collect data to enable the effects of the Act to be monitored. We will continue to monitor trends for adverse impacts the protected characteristics and review any deviance from local data.

We will ensure there are means of communication available for non-English speakers e.g. translations on web pages & application forms, translators available at interviews

Encourage minority groups to be represented on Homelessness forums.

9.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Staffing levels may need to be reviewed to effectively manage any increased demand.

10. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

11. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

Lorrita Johnson
Interim Housing Solutions Manager
Housing Solutions

17 October 2017		ITEM: 7
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Housing Performance (April – August 2017)		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Report of: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Assistant Director: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director Adults, Housing & Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

A summary of Housing performance for the 2017-18 year to date has been provided as well as details of work being carried out to improve the position for those indicators which are currently below target.

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The performance dashboard for Housing has been designed to ensure that key objectives are identified for reporting and that every team has a role in delivering at least one of the high profile indicators included in the dashboard. Performance is reported at various levels on a monthly basis including locally within the Housing department, at Directorate level, to the Performance Board and to the corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 The first section of the dashboard captures and records Housing's individual contribution to corporate indicators such as budget variance, the number of complaints received, the percentage of complaints upheld, sickness absence and staff turnover.

2.3 The second section of indicators includes the six corporate Key Performance Indicators which relate directly to Housing performance including the vital Housing management measures of voids, rents and repairs. This section also includes an indicator for improvements achieved for private tenants in the borough to reflect the growing strategic importance of the private rented

sector in Thurrock. Housing's performance for these Key Performance Indicators is reported to Performance Board on a monthly basis.

- 2.4 The third section includes a full set of Local Performance Indicators which have been designed to ensure all teams and individual members of staff are represented on the performance dashboard. These indicators measure the performance for key outputs for each team such as the time taken to provide a shortlist for a void property and tenant satisfaction with responsive repairs.
- 2.5 The final set of indicators comprises 'trackers', i.e. activity measures rather than performance measures with targets, to highlight trends or demands affecting the Housing service. These items include the number of individuals in each band on the housing register, and the numbers of households at risk of homelessness approaching the Council for assistance.
- 2.6 The dashboard now also includes two columns to clearly indicate the direction of travel and 'polarity' of Housing performance in comparison to previous months out turns, so that it is clear if the trend is improving or worsening for each indicator.

3. Housing Performance - Summary

- 3.1 As a result of the performance review which took place during July based on the full dataset for quarter 1 performance, Housing performance has improved in comparison with performance at the end of quarter 1.
- 3.2 In August 2017, 24 of the 37 (65%) targeted performance indicators with reported outturns were achieved with the remaining 13 below target. Of performance indicators which were below target, performance has improved in comparison with July for 9 of the 13 (69%) below target indicators.
- 3.3 Directly compared with performance at the end of quarter 1 where targets were achieved on 18 of the same 37 (48%) indicators, performance across the full suite of indicators in August has improved by 17% overall with 24 of the same 37 indicators achieved in August.

4. Corporate Performance Indicators

- 4.1 Performance relating to the Councils corporate performance indicators are on track in the main with a forecast budget variance of 0% for both the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund.
- 4.2 In addition to this the number of Housing related complaints received remains low at 278 during the 2017-18 year to date and below the target threshold of 335. In August, only 4 complaints were received relating to responsive repairs, the lowest monthly figure for some years (the monthly average in 2016-17 was over 10). Of the complaints responded to, 29% have been upheld over the year to date in comparison with 41% during 2016-17.

- 4.3 Performance on all sickness absence and staff turnover indicators have improved or remained consistent in comparison with the position reported at the end of quarter 1.

5. Key Performance Indicators

- 5.1 Performance relating to Housing's Key Performance Indicators remains largely on track with targets achieved for 4 of the 6 indicators in August 2017. Consistent, above target performance has been recorded month on month for the number of homes transformed as part of the Transforming Homes programme, percentage of repairs completed on target and the percentage of rent collected. In addition to this, 326 private tenants' homes have been improved as a direct result of Housing intervention during the 2017-18 year to date against a profiled target of 220. Among many types of hazards removed or reduced, improvements made include fire hazards removed at 215 private properties, 32 properties made secure against intruders, damp and mould growth removed or reduced at 20 properties and excessive cold reduced at 16 properties.

- 5.2 General tenant satisfaction with services provided by Housing is currently below target. Performance has improved by 3% in comparison with July and 73% of respondents in August rated the services provided by Housing as good or excellent. It should be noted that the methodology for this indicator is to include only the excellent and good ratings from a 5-point rating in the overall percentage. Were fair ratings to be included the performance for August would be at 89%. We remain hopeful of maintaining current performance as there is increasingly positive feedback evident in other resident satisfaction collection exercises, including satisfaction with repairs and the Transforming Homes programme. Some examples of recent quotes from residents regarding works completed as part of the Transforming Homes Programme are below:

"You could not fault the kitchen and bathroom from how it was before. It is absolutely brilliant." – September 2017

"Beautiful choices, beautiful quality, very pleased" – September 2017

"We have no complaints the process was smooth. We couldn't wish for better" – September 2017

The recent response from some tenants regarding the extension of service charges is likely to have a negative impact which will offset the progress we would otherwise be confident of seeing in this indicator.

- 5.3 Performance for the average time to re-let voids is also currently below target. A full analysis of voids performance data has been completed with a view to streamlining the voids process and reducing the overall re-let time and a meeting has been held to discuss and agree improvements to the voids process. Re-let time has reduced by 6 days in comparison with July's

performance outturn and the changes made to streamline the void process are beginning to take effect. But for 2 outliers within the dataset, performance would have been on target at 30 days. In addition to this, at the time of reporting the provisional re-let time for September stands at 30 days on average, i.e. on target. Overall void numbers remain at a consistent level with 102 properties void at the end of July and 98 properties void at the end of August.

6. Local Performance Indicators

- 6.1 In addition to the improvements in void re-let times reported above, performance has improved in several areas where under performance was previously reported to the Committee. The number of households assisted to downsize over the year to date is currently 18, improving from 1 during July to 6 during August. An officer in the Allocations Team is specialising in actively promoting this option to under occupying residents. In addition to this, the number of homelessness preventions has also improved from 14 in July to 41 in August. The 41 homelessness preventions include 27 single adults, 12 families or single parents with children and 2 couples over 60. The number of households in temporary accommodation has also improved and was 10 below the target threshold of 125 at the end of August.
- 6.2 One area of notably improved performance is the average days taken to provide a shortlist for a void property has been managed down from 15 days in April to 3 days in August. Performance has improved as staffing has become stabilised on the Allocations Team and we are confident of maintaining performance. This indicator is crucial to the overall average void re-let time.
- 6.3 Consistent performance has been reported month on month for the percentage of statutory gas checks carried out within timescale (100%), submissions of statutory returns within deadlines (100%) and the number of projects due, delivered on time and on budget (96% year to date).
- 6.4 Performance relating to tenant satisfaction is generally positive with satisfaction with the sign up process (76.4%), responsive repairs (91.3%) and Transforming Homes (87.7%) all above target over the 2017-18 year to date based on good and excellent ratings. Satisfaction for responsive repairs is particularly high and in August, 97.8% of all repairs were completed within their target timeframe. Satisfaction with grounds maintenance, although below target at 72.8% over the year to date, represents an improvement on the 2016-17 outturn of 70.2% and remains relatively consistent month on month.

Tenant satisfaction is measured by telephone surveys carried out by an independent market research company (KWEST Research) with experience in conducting Housing satisfaction surveys. KWEST Research call a varied sample of residents on a monthly basis to measure satisfaction with various services provided by the Housing department.

- 6.5 Tenant satisfaction with the ASB service is currently below target at 58.2% year to date. Tenants who were contacted expressed dissatisfaction with low level anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood such as noise, nuisance parking and were concerned that not enough was being done to tackle ASB. A robust approach to tackle low level offending anti-social behaviours is being adopted. This will be proportionate and transparent to improve satisfaction with the response to low-level anti-social behaviour such as graffiti, noise and fly tipping. The ASB Enforcement Team has power to serve Community Protection Warnings, Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices under the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014 similar to Essex Police. These are more effective powers to deal with low level behaviours that are persistent in nature and unreasonable spoiling the quality of life of those in the locality. Officers have been trained in this area during quarter 2 and will support the Tenancy Management Team enforcing low level breaches more quickly to stop. The Housing service review is also looking at centralising all ASB reports in one place with the purpose to improve ASB record keeping, case management accountability and tenant satisfaction.
- 6.6 Areas of concern include properties recovered as a result of detecting fraud. The number of CCTV incidents resulting in enforcement action is also relatively low (58 year to date), and there are few properties sourced in the private sector as preventions/PRSO discharge for homeless households (16 year to date). There are clear action plans in place to improve performance in each of these areas.
- 6.7 Performance for the number of council properties taken back has decreased. There is a remedial plan increasing tenancy verification checks in order to improve performance output in quarter 3 and 4, with a greatly enhanced programme of visits. This joint operation between the Counter Fraud & Investigations and the Housing Team aims to increase housing investigations and also the public reporting of suspected fraud.
- 6.8 The CCTV Service is reviewing the use of public images to increase the reporting of persons responsible for spoiling our community so that the Council can take action against them. This measure aims to reduce the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour. For unreasonable and repeat offences our use of Community Protection Warnings and Notices will be adopted by the Housing Teams to increase their enforcement outputs in line with the Council's ASB policy and procedure.
- 6.9 In order to improve performance on properties sourced in the private sector as preventions/PRSO discharge we will engage with landlords to encourage them to make properties available to those in receipt of housing benefit and to sustain tenancies for those in receipt of housing benefit. We will also work with landlords to clearly set out behavioural expectations within tenancy agreements and encourage them to proactively mediate, contacting the Housing Solutions Service where there is a risk of breakdown. In addition to this we will re-market the PRS incentive scheme to landlords, agents and applicants approaching the Housing Solutions Service. The new flexible

homelessness fund, replacing the previous notional management fee for temporary accommodation, is partly intended to ensure that councils focus on 'front-end' preventions of this kind rather than on the provision of temporary accommodation, and it should be possible to utilise some of this grant for preventions in the second half of the financial year.

- 6.10 Garage void loss as a measure of foregone income remains relatively high. Intensive work on garages this year has led to the elimination of the backlog of applications for the waiting list and the compilation of a full data-set for these assets. A total of 60 lettings have been completed since April, and another 65 are now ready to let. More work is needed to bring all the void units back into use, as a number of them need to be cleaned, repaired and/or made secure. For those which are available the Northgate Allocations module which goes live in November will enable the matching process to be automated and speed up the process., More widely, data from the Stock Condition Survey will inform the review of these assets which is already underway and lead to a clear set of options for the future.

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 7.1 The Housing performance dashboard reflects the service's commitment to the Council's corporate priorities.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis**
HRA and Development Accountant

No direct financial implications arising from this report.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**
Principal Solicitor

No direct legal implications arising from this report.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

No direct diversity or equalities implications arising from this report.

8.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- Not applicable.

9. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None.

10. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - Housing Performance Scorecard (August 2017)

Report Author:

John Knight
Assistant Director
Housing

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Housing Performance Scorecard 2017/18

Corporate Performance Indicators

KPI	Performance Indicators	Responsible Officer	Target	2016-17	April	May	June	July	August	YTD	Direction of Travel	Polarity (Performance)
HCP0010	HRA Budget Variance	John Knight	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%			↔
HCP0020	GF Budget Variance	John Knight	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%			↔
HCP0030	% of Invoices, handled by Housing, paid within 30 days	Chris Seman	97%	-	98.5%	95.4%	98.2%	98.2%	TBC	97.9%		↔
HCP0040	Number of Complaints Received	Claire Quinn	800 (Profiled Monthly)	894	43	62	76	55	42	278 (Target <325)		↕
HCP0050	% of Complaints Upheld	Claire Quinn	40.0%	41.0%	38%	22%	25%	25%	36%	29%		↕
HCP0060	Average Days Sickness Absence Per FTE	Wendy Sutton	0.75	-	1.14	1.15	1.16	1.21	1.03			↕
HCP0070	% of Staff Turnover Within Year (Rolling Year Average)	Wendy Sutton	TBC	14.0%	18.0%	15.4%	14.9%	13.1%	14.0%			↕
HCP0080	% Sickness Within Service Which is Long Term	Wendy Sutton	TBC	-	88.2%	77.1%	79.8%	84.1%	74.7%			↕
HCP0090	% absence within service which is stress related	Wendy Sutton	TBC	10.4%	39.2%	33.9%	8.5%	9.2%	8.9%			↕
Key Performance Indicators												
KPI	Performance Indicators	Responsible Officer	Target	2016-17	April	May	June	July	August	YTD	Direction of Travel	Polarity (Performance)
HKP0010	% General Satisfaction of Tenants With Neighbourhoods / Services Provided by Housing	Chris Seman	75.00%	70.97%	72%	69%	74%	70%	73%	73%		↕
HKP0020	Number of Homes Transformed as Part of The Transforming Homes Programme	Chris Seman	1000 (Profiled Monthly 83)	1,115	91	112	94	92	97	486 (Target - 415)		↕
HKP0030	% of Repairs Completed Within target	Chris Seman	97.00%	98.30%	97.0%	98.4%	98.4%	98.0%	97.9%	98.1%		↕
HKP0040	% Rent Collected	Heather Gumm	98%	99.0%	82.0%	91.2%	92.5%	95.6%	95.6%	95.6%		↔
HKP0050	Average Time to Turnaround / Re-let Voids (in days)	Chris Seman	30.0	34.7	32	41	38	40	34	37		↕
HKP0060	Number of Private Tenants Whose Homes Have Been Improved as a Direct Result of Housing Intervention	Dulal Ahmed	530 (Profiled Monthly 44)	636	68	54	48	86	70	326 (Target 220)		↕

Local Performance Indicators												
LPI	Performance Indicators	Responsible Officer	Target	2016-17	April	May	June	July	August	YTD	Direction of Travel	Polarity (Performance)
HLP0010	Number of Households Assisted to Downsize	Loritta Johnson	50 <small>(profiled Monthly 4.1)</small>	51	6	4	1	1	6	18 <small>(Target 21)</small>		↔
HLP0020	CORE Data Submitted	Loritta Johnson	100%	-	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		↔
HLP0030	Average Days Taken to Provide Shortlist	Loritta Johnson	3	-	15	12	7	4	3	8		↔
HLP0040	Satisfaction of New Tenants With The Sign-up Process	Chris Seman	75.0%	76.0%	89.2%	80.6%	65.2%	63.2%	74.0%	76.4%		↔
HLP0050	Average Days Taken to Complete Letting After Keys Returned by Contractors	Lorraine Stockdale	4.00	-	5.5	6.8	11.6	10.9	9.0	8.6		↔
HLP0060	Level of Void Loss (£) - Dwellings	Bill Sargent	£700,000 <small>(profiled Monthly <£58.3K)</small>	£445,777	£38,436	£42,055	£45,573	£37,017	£49,615	£212,696 <small>(Target <£291.5K)</small>		↔
HLP0070	Level of Void Loss (£) - Garages	Bill Sargent	£250,000 <small>(profiled Monthly <£20.8K)</small>	£249,678	£22,926	£22,433	£28,918	£23,269	£29,300	£126,846 <small>(Target <£104K)</small>		↔
HLP0080	Average Number of Days Taken to Complete a Technical Survey	Chris Seman	5.0	5.5	6.5	5.6	4.6	4.6	4.7	5.2		↔
HLP0110	Tenant Satisfaction With Responsive Repairs	Chris Seman	90%	91%	92.2%	92.7%	91.2%	91.7%	90.0%	91.3%		↔
HLP0120	% of Gas Service Checks Carried out Within Statutory Timescale	Dan Billson	100%	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		↔
HLP0130	Percentage of calls substantively responded to within 2 working days	Dawn Shepherd	95%	-	100.0%	97.0%	99.0%	98.0%	100.0%	99.0%		↔
HLP0140	Number of projects due, delivered on time and on budget in the period	Dawn Shepherd	90%	-	100.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	100.0%	96.0%		↔
HLP0150	Properties Recovered as a Result of Joint Action With Corporate Fraud	Dulal Ahmed	30 <small>(profiled Monthly 2.5)</small>	17	2	2	1	0	1	6 <small>(Target -12.5)</small>		↔
HLP0160	Number of CCTV Incidents Resulting in Enforcement Action	Dulal Ahmed	300 <small>(profiled Monthly 2.5)</small>	-	10	14	7	11	16	58 <small>(Target -12.5)</small>		↔
HLP0170	Tenant Satisfaction With ASB Service	Chris Seman	65%	64%	62.0%	56.1%	63.7%	61.4%	49.0%	58.2%		↔
HLP0180	Submission of all Statutory Returns by Deadline Date	David Mynors	100%	-	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		↔
HLP0190	% of Caretaking Visits Completed on Schedule	Lorraine Bright	95%	-	97.0%	95.0%	99.0%	TBC	TBC	97.0%		↔
HLP0200	Tenant Satisfaction with Grounds Maintenance	Chris Seman	90%	70.2%	71.9%	75.5%	73.3%	71.6%	73.0%	72.8%		↔
HLP0210	Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation	Loritta Johnson	125	133	136	137	135	123	115	115		↔
HLP0220	Properties Sourced in The Private Sector as Preventions / PRSO Discharge	Loritta Johnson	120 <small>(profiled Monthly 2.0)</small>	45	3	1	4	4	4	16 <small>(Target -5.0)</small>		↔
HLP0230	Number of Families in B&B For More Than Six Weeks at Last Day of Month	Loritta Johnson	0	-	11	6	1	6	12	12		↔
HLP0240	Number of Homelessness Preventions	Loritta Johnson	350 <small>(profiled Monthly 2.9)</small>	396	12	31	24	14	41	122 <small>(Target 14.5)</small>		↔
HLP0250	% Rent Collected - Travellers	Steve Smith	98% <small>(Profiled Monthly)</small>	-	95%	97%	98%	98%	98%	97%		↔

TRK	Performance Indicators	Responsible Officer	Target	2016-17	April	May	June	July	August	YTD	Direction of Travel	Polarity (Demand)
HLP0260	Tenant Satisfaction With Transforming Homes	Chris Seman	80%	84%	86.7%	84.6%	85.0%	88.5%	90.0%	87.7%		↑
HLP0270	% of Transforming Homes Contractors' Workforce Who Are Thurrock Residents	Sue Cardozo	40%	-	43.0%	45.4%	45.4%	50.0%	50.0%			↕
HLP0280	% of Transforming Homes Contractors' Suppliers Based in Thurrock	Sue Cardozo	40%	-	52.0%	50.0%	53.0%	53.0%	53.0%			↕
HLP0290	% of RTB Applications Processed in Target Timeframe	Sue Cardozo	100%	-	58.6%	62.8%	79.6%	89.7%	75.0%	75.58%		↓
Tracker Items												
HTR0020	Number of mutual exchanges completed in the period	Loritta Johnson	Tracker	-	12	2	4	5	4	27		↓
HTR0030	Number of new social lettings	Loritta Johnson	Tracker	-	17	62	41	58	53	231		↓
HTR0040	Number of Households at Risk of Homelessness Approaching the Council For Assistance	Loritta Johnson	Tracker	-	106	108	102	121	120	557		↓
HTR0050	Number of Homeless Cases Accepted	Loritta Johnson	Tracker	287	54	26	14	21	14	115		↓
HTR0060	Outcome of Damp and Mould Inspections A - Housekeeping Advice Given B - Condensation related mould treatment & general maintenance C - Damp proofing works required due to building fabric failure	Alastair Wood	Tracker	-	A = 7 B = 14 C = 3	A = 12 B = 7 C = 12	A = 16 B = 18 C = 18	A = 13 B = 14 C = 12	A = 3 B = 3 C = 3	A = 51 B = 35 C = 48		↓
HTR0070	Reported Households placed in Thurrock Borough Council by other Local Authorities	Dawn Shepherd	Tracker	183	8	7	6	6	10	37		↓
HTR0080	Number of cases where formal ASB action has been taken	Dulal Ahmed	Tracker	-	11	4	3	9	10	37		↓
HTR0090	Number of DA cases where formal enforcement action has been required	Dulal Ahmed	Tracker	-	6	1	5	7	2	21		↓
HTR0100	Number of tenants evicted	Heather Gunn	Tracker	60	7	4	0	10	3	24		↓

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Work Programme

Committee: Housing Overview & Scrutiny

Year: 2017/2018

Dates of Meeting: 18 July 2017, 17 October 2017, 19 December 2017, 20 February 2018 & 24 April 2017* (**if required*)

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
18 July 2017		
Housing Review updates	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Repairs Policy	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
KPI – Q1 Performance Report	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer/ Member Moved to October meeting
Housing development Project update	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer/ Member
Gloriana update (Provisional)	Steve Cox / Helen McCabe	Officer/ Member
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
17 October 2017		
KPI – Q1 Performance Report	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer/ Member
Allocations policy	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Travellers site review	Roger Harris /John Knight	Members
Homelessness Reduction Act	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer

Work Programme

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
Update on the implementation of Service Charges	Roger Harris /John Knight	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
19 December 2017		
Housing Review updates	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Private Sector Licensing update (subject to progress)	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Review of garages	Roger Harris /John Knight	Members
2018/19 Budget Setting Update	Sean Clark /Carl Tomlinson	Officer
HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting and Budget	Roger Harris/ Julie Curtis	Officer
Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2018/19	Carl Tomlinson/Laura Last	Officer
Estate Regeneration	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Stock Condition survey	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Repairs policy	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item

Work Programme

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
20 February 2018		
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
24 April 2018		
Housing Review updates	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
Date To Be Confirmed		
HMO (House of Multiple Occupation) – Update	Bali Nahal	Officer
Fixed Term Tenancies	Roger Harris /John Knight	Members
National Building Policy update	Roger Harris / John Knight	Officer/ Member
Keep Mote	Roger Harris / John Knight	Members

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