

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 **18 July 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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2 Minutes	5 - 12
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 March 2017.	
3 Urgent Items	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
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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: **10 July 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



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

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 21 March 2017 at 7.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Gerard Rice (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Jan Baker, Jane Potheary and Joycelyn Redsell
- Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative
- Apologies:** Councillors Tunde Ojetola
- In attendance:** Councillor James Halden, Cabinet Member for Education and Health
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services
Les Billingham, Head of Adult Social Care and Community Development
John Knight, Head of Housing
Dawn Shepherd, Housing Strategy and Quality Manager
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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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.

31. Minutes

The Minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 2 February 2017, were approved as a correct record.

Councillor Potheary commented that she had asked officers who would be affected by the 3% heating charge and at the time the question wasn't able to be answered. She asked that the answer be circulated.

It was explained by the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health the Service Charges report would be presented to Cabinet in June and would be brought to the Scrutiny Committee beforehand. He continued to explain the report would include the breakdown of all the service charges and who would be affected.

The Committee raised concerns in relation to the Sheltered Housing Service Charges. Officers explained that the comprehensive consultation finished last week (17 March 2017), so was too soon to bring a report back to the Committee at the present time. Members were further advised that meetings were held at every sheltered housing complex, where officers spoke with many residents and took on board new suggestions which were very helpful.

32. Urgent Items

There were no declarations of interest.

33. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

34. Report on Housing White Paper - 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market'

The Head of Housing introduced the report to Members explaining the Housing White Paper was published in February 2017 by the Department for Communities and Local Government, with a focus on its implications for Thurrock.

He continued by informing the Committee, the government wanted to revise the definition of 'affordable housing' within the National Planning Policy Framework and sought to ensure that more affordable housing was delivered.

It was discussed that the White Paper suggested changes to the planning policy, one of these was to assist households currently 'priced out' out of either buying or renting. The White Paper also confirmed the government's support of Bob Blackman MP's Homelessness Reduction Bill.

Members were advised the White Paper confirmed the 1% rent reduction until 2020 and also sought to address holdups within the planning system, some of which had led to the establishment of Gloriana in Thurrock.

The Head of Housing notified the Committee, Officers had spoken with the Minister for Housing, Gavin Barwell MP, during a discussion with representatives from a number of Local Authorities'. The key points raised by the Minister were as follows:

- Three main areas of focus – the need for land, within Local Plans, the need to speed up delivery when planning permission had been granted and the fact there were too few & too big housing developers;
- Councils to be held to account for not just delivering 'glossy plans', but actually delivering housing;
- If local areas promoted development, the Government would 'stand shoulder to shoulder with you' to ensure the delivery happened and;
- Housing Infrastructure fund, a review would be undertaken to get all parts of Government to be 'housing delivery centric' when considering funding regimes.

It was queried by Councillor Potheary as to whether confirmation had been given to selling properties to housing tenants. The Head of Housing explained that in relation to social housing there was no reference to fixed-term tenancies or high-value voids; however tenants could follow the Right to Buy scheme.

Councillor Redsell welcomed the suggestion to use smaller building companies. She remarked that smaller properties were needed so that people living in three and four bedroomed homes, were able to down size and families on the housing waiting list could be given a home.

It was enquired if the affordable housing would be offered to Thurrock residents first, given the housing waiting list had 8,000 people currently on it. Officers explained that within Thurrock the resident qualification was 5 years. When placing people from the waiting list into affordable housing, it would depend on their need.

The Chair addressed the Committee stating he welcomed the report. In particular he commented on affordable homes, remarking that the reduction of percentage-per-site requirement reducing from 20% to 10% was a good start and would give people hope of owning a property. As many families were living in tower blocks with young children and no garden.

He further commented that developers should be encouraged to include bungalows within developments, as there were single pensioners living in three bedroom houses who would prefer to live in more adequate accommodation, on one level.

Councillor Redsell remarked that not all elderly people wished to be moved or to live in a complex.

The Chair requested that a copy of the Council's response to the consultation arising from the White Paper be circulated to all Committee Members once it had been finalised.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the briefing on the Housing White Paper.

35. Developing And Expanding Assistive Technology For The 21st Century For Social Care Service Users In Thurrock

The Head of Adult Social Care and Community Development presented the report to the Committee explaining a Careline Review Team was established to examine the options for upgrading obsolete equipment in the Careline monitoring centre, in sheltered housing and general needs flats that had hard-wired pull cord alarm systems and to review current arrangements for charging for the service.

He continued by informing Members the essential work was being undertaken to decommission the hard-wired pull cord community alarm system in sheltered housing blocks and general needs community alarm flats, it was explained these were to be replaced with dispersed personal alarms where required by the service user. It was also suggested that the Careline

monitoring system be updated as it was obsolete and lacked the functionality required to support the service.

Members were notified that technology had evolved since community alarms were first introduced, with improved Technology, including mobile phones and digital apps it was possible for people to live in their own homes for longer.

Councillor Halden left at 8.16pm

It was discussed that by modernising the service and utilising the government funding confirmed in the budget, this could in turn make Careline / Assistive Technology and the new telecare service free of charge to users of Adult Social Care as part of the wider prevention strategy.

Councillor Potheary queried if residents currently receiving the service would experience any changes and sought if current users would face new charges. The Head of Adult Social care explained that in the long term the decommissioning of community alarm systems would enable people to live an enhanced life. He continued by explaining that monitors could be placed on doors, windows and even fridges to allow people to live in their own homes.

The Committee were notified in relation to the charges, officers were looking for a cost effective option, by completing this could bring all charges equal and would allow the service to be improved. All charges could then be removed in the long term.

During discussions it was enquired if staffing would be reduced. Officers confirmed staffing reductions were not proposed at the current time.

Councillor Redsell welcomed the report and praised Officers for the work they were completing in improving the existing service.

RESOLVED the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to support:

- 1. To the essential work being undertaken to decommission the hard-wired pull cord community alarm system in sheltered housing blocks and general needs community alarm flats, and to replace them with dispersed personal alarms where required by the service user.**
- 2. To the plan to upgrade the Careline monitoring system which is also obsolete and lacks the functionality required to support the service.**
- 3. To develop the Careline service into a new, enhanced and expanded telecare and assistive technology service, linked to telemedicine services where appropriate;**
- 4. In relation to charging for Careline and the new telecare service:**

- **To make Careline / Assistive Technology and the new telecare service available free of charge to users of adult social care as part of our wider prevention strategy.**

The Head of Adult Social Care and Community Development left at 8.28pm

36. Key Worker Housing Scheme

The Housing Strategy and Quality Manager addressed Members advising the Council had experienced difficulties in recruiting staff to key roles in the borough such as teachers and social workers. In addition the NHS locally had faced similar difficulties in recruiting to front line positions especially nursing staff.

Members were further informed in order to fill vacant posts the Council and NHS had undertaken a number of recruitment drives both nationally and abroad. These included recruitment fairs across the country and most recently in Spain, Ireland and Australia.

It was explained there were two key issues obstructing recruitment of Key Workers these were:

- Wage Levels - Thurrock's close proximity to London provided easy access to London jobs with weighting allowances.
- Housing costs – Thurrock's housing prices had substantially increased in the past three years, with Thurrock now being the most expensive place across the Thames Gateway.

Members were then notified that recruits from abroad faced additional challenges in that they may have no experience of living abroad or renting in a foreign country, they may have no family, friends or other contacts in the UK. It was further commented as this would be a first job, it was unlikely recruits would be in a position to purchase a property.

The Housing Strategy and Quality Manager advised the Committee of the Councils plan, that it was intended the Council would initially rent 8 x 4 bedroom properties providing 32 spaces for key workers and then as the scheme developed, more properties would be procured.

Councillor Redsell raised concern that elderly residents would be opening their homes. It was explained that the Right Size scheme was for home owners who would like to down size into smaller more appropriate accommodation that better met their needs. Properties could then be used to home those on the housing waiting list or potentially key workers

It was enquired if the term Key Worker would include other services. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health explained the pilot at present would be restricted to those professions detailed in the report, however it could be expanded in the future.

RESOLVED:

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to support the proposal to assist key workers from outside the borough with shared accommodation, during their first year of employment.

37. Residents Survey Results

The Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services presented the report which provided Members with the headline results of the recent Residents Survey. Members were notified that Cabinet had invited all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider the results.

She continued by advising 1,000 telephone interviews with Thurrock residents were carried out between late November and early December 2016, achieving a representative sample of the population across the borough.

It was mentioned the survey was the first of its kind since 2010 and was an important opportunity to capture local people's experiences and perceptions of the place, their community, the council and its services, that can be considered representative of the wider Thurrock population.

Members were informed that the majority of the results were positive with:

- 69% of residents feeling satisfied with their local area as a place to live
- 70% felt that they belong strongly to their local area
- 61% agreed that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds got on well together
- 89% felt safe when outside in their local area during the day

It was also discussed that the results clearly displayed the issues most important to Thurrock residents including the maintenance of roads such as fixing potholes, waste and recycling collections, and parks, playgrounds and green spaces.

The Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services informed the Committee that Cabinet had agreed Clean it, Cut it and Fill it to continue to improve cleanliness around the borough and to also improve Customer Service within the Council.

Members were further advised that Cabinet had agreed to repeat the survey in September 2017.

It was enquired as to how resident's details were collected to enable them to be called. Officers explained that an external marketing company was used to carry out the survey. It was further explained that residents' were asked to confirm their postcode and if they were happy to provide an email address.

The Chair of the Committee mentioned that it was important to look at the results for Grounds maintenance service, parks, playgrounds, open spaces and street cleaning. He commended the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet for their policy relating to enforcement with litter.

During discussions Members commented on the cleanliness of the A13 on the Dock Approach road stating it was unacceptable for Highways England to leave it in such a state.

Councillor Redsell remarked that she had reported areas of the A13 to Environment Officers, who had informed her that it was not the Council's responsibility but that of Highways England.

Members further discussed the parking of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs). It was raised that the car park at the Tilbury Fort was being used as a parking lot, along with the laybys on the Mannorway in Stanford Le Hope. The Committee agreed that Port of Tilbury and DP World should be informed of the situation.

It was remarked that HGVs should be using the lorry park situated at West Thurrock not parking on the highway.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and commented on the results of the Residents Survey 2016.

38. Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme 2016/2017

Members were given the opportunity to suggest topics they would like to discuss in the new municipal year.

Councillor Potheary raised that she had previously asked to see a report on the review of gatekeeping, which had been commented upon in the Thurrock gazette.

The Head of Housing informed Members that a Housing review was to be completed in April 2017 following which a report would be presented to the Committee.

The Chair sought that an update be emailed to the Committee in relation to the topic raised by Councillor Potheary as this was not the first time the report had been enquired.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be updated with Members suggested topics ahead of the new municipal year.

The meeting finished at 9.05 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**

18 July 2017	ITEM: 5
Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
Gloriana Thurrock Ltd Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Helen McCabe, Gloriana Development Manager	
Accountable Head of Service: Duncan Blackie, Interim Head of Property	
Accountable Director: Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Environment and Place	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Gloriana's principle aim is to help deliver the Council's growth agenda by developing new housing to stimulate market confidence within the Borough and to provide quality housing to meet housing needs and improve the lives of Thurrock residents.

Within this context, it is anticipated that Gloriana will take on a more prominent role in continuing to supply good quality housing across the Borough whilst generating a return to the Council which could be used to support wider service and/or housing delivery. The first development St Chad's, is progressing well and is nearing completion. The second anticipated Gloriana scheme, Belmont Road in Grays, has been submitted to planning and is awaiting a decision.

Gloriana has established a series of controls put in place to govern the development and delivery of projects and set the parameters within which Gloriana would gain approvals from Thurrock Council in respect of scheme selection, property transfers and finance.

Gloriana will ensure effective communication of its business with its shareholders and others through, for example, newsletters, Annual Report and Information updates.

Gloriana Thurrock Ltd had set up a subsidiary company to separate the strategic development and sales aims of the parent company from the operational management of its assets through the subsidiary.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the information provided on the progress of the Company.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock Council has ambitious growth plans. Proximity to London and connectivity to the capital and wider south east provides the context for strong housing demand. The Council has a focus on delivering real change within the Growth Hubs of Purfleet, Grays and Tilbury. There is a target to provide 18,500 new homes to support 26,000 new jobs (2001-2021). Historically however, housing development has not kept pace with targets and was increasingly in the green belt, diluting the ambition for town centre growth and regeneration. It is recognised securing a range of good quality housing was critical to supporting aspiration for more high value jobs and the wellbeing of the community.
- 2.2 The Government's recent White Paper on Housing 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market' highlights the need for further growth in housing supply.
- 2.3 The Government asks local authorities to be as ambitious and innovative as possible to get homes built in their area. All local authorities should develop an up-to-date Local Plans with their communities that meet their housing requirement, decide applications for development promptly and ensure the homes they have planned for are built out on time. To help ensure these actions happen, Local Authorities can charge higher fees, new capacity funding is available to develop planning departments, together with more funding for infrastructure and action against those who do not build out once permissions have been granted.
- 2.4 Where Local authorities are not making sufficient progress on producing or reviewing their plans, the Government will intervene. And where the number of homes being built is below expectations, the new housing delivery test will ensure that action is taken.
- 2.5 Many Councils' want to improve the quality of their local housing markets, so they are now taking a lead on new housing delivery as an ideal way of addressing these issues. The financial strength of Local Authorities provides a platform to both improve the supply and quality of housing markets, and to generate a significant revenue return. This is particularly the case if the Council has land to invest in the proposition.
- 2.6 The most common route to implement these proposals is to hold new housing in a wholly owned company, which (for simplicity and value for money purposes) would probably be funded by the Council. More than 100 Local Authorities are exploring this route, with companies already set up or in the pipeline. In financial terms, over the next five years it is estimated these companies will have invested in or developed around 25,000 homes, at a cost

of some £6 billion. On a similar basis, Thurrock's set up its own regeneration company, Gloriana and was one of the first to do so.

- 2.7 Gloriana Thurrock Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Thurrock Council. The principle focus of the company is to support the achievement of the Council's wider regeneration goals through the delivery specific schemes which support the economic development of the borough.
- 2.8 The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 requires registered providers of social housing in England to reduce social housing rents by 1% a year for 4 years from a frozen 2015/16 baseline and to comply with maximum rent requirements for new tenancies. This is likely to reduce the ability of the Council to bring forward further affordable housing schemes through the Housing Revenue Account and has necessitated a review of the wider development and estate regeneration programmes.
- 2.9 Within this context, it is anticipated that Gloriana will take on a more prominent role in continuing to supply good quality housing across the Borough whilst generating a return to the Council which could be used to support wider service and/or housing delivery.
- 2.10 This report provides an information update to Members on the Gloriana Thurrock Ltd.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options – Information Update

3.1 Gloriana Thurrock Ltd

- 3.1.1 Cabinet agreed in March 2014 the proposal for Gloriana to develop up to 350 properties. At present, Gloriana is developing one site at St Chads, Tilbury of 128 units and has another development subject to planning permission of 80 units.
- 3.1.2 Gloriana's principle aim is to help deliver the Council's growth agenda by developing new housing to stimulate market confidence within the Borough and to provide quality housing to meet housing needs and improve the lives of Thurrock residents.

3.2 Governance Gateways

- 3.2.1 Gloriana has established a series of controls put in place to govern the development and delivery of projects and set the parameters within which Gloriana would gain approvals from Thurrock Council in respect of scheme selection, property transfers and finance.
- 3.2.2 The current arrangements see five Gateway Stages taking in all elements of the life cycle of a project.

3.2.3 Full Council approval is required at Gateway 2 with decisions regarding land transfer and financial funding. Further Full Council approval may be required at Gateway 3 and 5, if additional funding is required:

Gateway zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity Identification, capacity, feasibility and viability assessment
Gateway 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess opportunity, select delivery route - decision to be taken by the Property Board
Gateway 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Council approval to confirm land availability, funding availability – costs to be underwritten by the Council and confirms provisional offer to Gloriana • Gloriana Board approval - consideration of viability, desirability, approval to undertake outline design up to planning
Gateway 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloriana Board – consider changes from Gateway 2, approval for submission to planning and procurement of contractor (and fix costs) • Refer back to Full Council if project is outside financial tolerance
Gateway 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of any changes from Gateway 3 • Approval of completion of s.106 • Approves appointment of contractor
Gateway 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change control – reviews changes, assesses financial impact on the Council • If additional funding is required, seek approval through Full Council

3.3 Communications

3.3.1 Gloriana Thurrock Ltd will communicate its business to its shareholders and others through:

- Quarterly newsletters
- Annual Report
- Business Plan
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Ctte (Information Updates)
- GTL General meeting with shareholders

3.4 Update on Petitions and Motions – Full Council

3.4.1 In order to demonstrate transparency on its policies, implementation of its policies and overall performance and further to Gloriana Limited willingness to

co-operate with such scrutiny from Members, Thurrock Council believes that Gloriana Limited should: provide an Annual Report to the Council; provide regular quarterly updates to our General Services Committee, voluntarily submit to the full democratic scrutiny of Full Council and General Services Committee on the thoroughness of its Business Plan and funding requirements. This is not to seek to inappropriately discuss the specific merits of any material planning considerations or predetermine the quasi-judicial decision properly within the remit of our Planning Committee on the current part heard planning application.

- 3.4.2 “The motion agreed by Council has been raised and discussed with Gloriana Thurrock Ltd (GTL). GTL welcomes the continued scrutiny of its activities, business planning and funding requirements by Council, including producing an annual report and quarterly reports to its shareholders forming part of the General Services Committee. GTL is working with the Council to formalise how this will be implemented at the next Gloriana Board meeting and ahead of a report to the next general meeting of GTL Shareholders planned for June 2017. GTL welcomes the reassurance provided in the motion with regard to Members of the Council which also form part of the Planning Committee”.

3.5 Gloriana Thurrock Homes Ltd

- 3.5.1 Gloriana Thurrock Ltd (GTL) is wholly owned by the Council and can provide a range and mix of quality homes / commercial property with the objective of stimulating inward investment. GTL is an investment company – building a range of property across various tenures.
- 3.5.2 Gloriana will seek to recycle investment to maximise the impact of borrowing until such time as the Company is self-financing.
- 3.5.3 Gloriana Thurrock Homes Ltd is an operational subsidiary of GTL. The company will be wholly owned by GTL, keeping separate the strategic development and sales aims of the parent company from the operational management of its assets through the subsidiary.
- 3.5.4 Net rental income after the cost of operating the new Company and properties will be used to service and repay the debt. However, over time, the new Company will sell properties, again to repay the debt.
- 3.5.5 Gloriana Thurrock Homes Ltd, by providing rental housing under assured short hold properties will help meet different housing needs not currently provided for by the market.

3.6 St Chads, Tilbury Update

- 3.6.1 The St Chads housing development has 128 homes a mix of 2, 3, and 4 bed houses. The scheme is split into 4 phases with Phase 1 and Phase 2 completed. Phase 3 and 4 are due for completion by the end of July 2017.

- 3.6.2 The first residents have moved in to the completed homes with 40% being let to residents in the Borough.
- 3.6.3 The development has 20% (26 units) affordable housing. The homes have been marketed with Housing Associations.
- 3.6.4 The site has had several apprentices on site (providing 92 weeks of experience). Through the construction of the properties many apprentices have gained permanent employment. 25.4% of the work force resides in a 10 mile radius of the site.
- 3.6.5 The contractors have also undertaken many workshops with local schools and colleges to provide an insight into the construction industry.
- 3.6.6 The contractors have continued to attend monthly resident community meetings and undertaken community projects e.g. re-painting the local nursery.
- 3.6.7 The scheme is, against the original forecasting on target on budget, despite £3.5m spent on remediation costs.

3.7 Pipeline of Schemes

- 3.7.1 The current Gloriana Investment Strategy seeks to establish a development pipeline of 150 homes per annum. However there will be no lending and no land transfer without Council approval.
- 3.7.2 There is currently, one scheme on site, St Chads, Tilbury of 128 units with a further development, Belmont Road Grays, 80 units in Planning.
- 3.7.3 It is appropriate to identify future opportunities to offer to Gloriana, following the Company's Governance Framework and Investment Strategy, to ensure there is a continuing pipeline of development.
- 3.7.4 A number of sites have been identified through reviews of the Council's asset portfolio and the various studies looking at development potential in Purfleet, Grays, South Ockendon and Tilbury. The sites are on General Fund Land however further analysis is required for suitability, viability, restrictions on the land e.g. green belt / amenity green, etc. Further sites are available, with strategic site and land asset discussions are ongoing.
- 3.7.5 The Grays Planning Framework, currently being reviewed, includes a number of sites identified as being appropriate for residential led development that had the capacity to generate the funding to support wider initiatives in Grays including the development of the boulevard underpass in place of the existing level crossing and options for a new Theatre to replace the existing Thameside Theatre.
- 3.7.6 There is potential pipeline for approx. 3,000 additional homes to be developed if all current identified sites and areas of land are utilised.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Providing a genuine choice of quality housing stock across the Borough is central to achieving the aims of the Corporate Plan and critical to the regeneration/growth ambitions in areas like Purfleet, Grays and Tilbury. Gloriana can contribute towards this vision as well as gaining social value for local residents through its contracts and providing a financial return to the Council through interest payments and profits.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Resident and community consultation has taken place on the site proposals, together with updates for members, officers and stakeholders.
- 5.2 Our programme of consultation with all relevant stakeholders associated with all proposed housing developments and regeneration proposals are on-going. Local support and influence is critically important for all housing development and regeneration.

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

- 6.1 Regenerating areas of the Borough and providing quality homes together with creating a sense of place is a key priority and part of the Council's overall growth targets and corporate objectives - helping to deliver improved health and wellbeing, build pride in our communities and their environment and promote skills development and job creation.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

- 7.1.1 As the report sets out, through the Governance gateways each scheme is assessed through a financial viability model that has been based on industry standard figures for construction, rents, sales, etc tested against known development etc within Thurrock.
- 7.1.2 The model will need to demonstrate that any development is both viable for the Company and the Council. Having been developed, any development request put forward from the company will now be tested against the model and officers will only be able to recommend approval if these tests are passed.
- 7.1.3 The approach is for the General Fund to borrow the finance and onward lend to the Company at a premium. There is of course risk associated with this

activity and officers, with their advisers, have tried to mitigate this wherever possible through building sensitivity analysis into the model. However, should costs spiral for any reason or sales at the required price not be forthcoming, the Council could make a financial loss. This is why the review of any business case and financial model will be robust to lessen this possibility.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Assaf Chaudry**
Major Projects Solicitor

7.2.1 Gloriana Thurrock Ltd is a wholly owned Company of Thurrock Council which was set up under section 95 of the Local Government Act 2003 and section 1 and 4 of the Localism Act 2011. The Council now wishes to embark on the regeneration programme of which the Final Business Case is being put forward for approval. The hese activities contemplated in this report are within the Council's powers under, of the Localism Act 2011, section 95 of the Local Government Act 2003, section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 9 and 32 of the Housing Act 1985, sections 2 and 3 of the Local Authorities (Land) Act 1963 and section 24 of the Local Government Act 1988 subject (where required) to obtaining any consent of the Secretary of State. However the transfer of any sites to Gloriana and the loan requirements will require further Full Council approval.

Apart from ensuring that any procurement process contemplated within this report may need to comply with, if appropriate the EU procurement rules and legislation , other than that, there should be no direct legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

7.3.1 All of the projects identified within the report have been subject to extensive public consultation and are seeking to respond to the identified housing needs by providing a mix of types of property. Continuing to provide a diverse range of homes and tenure types is critical to building sustainable communities.

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

- None

8. 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

9. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

Helen McCabe

Gloriana Development Manager, Housing / Environment and Place

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18 July 2017		ITEM: 6
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Fire Safety in Tower Blocks		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Report of: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Head of Service: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director Adults, Housing & Health.		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The tragic events at the Grenfell Tower block in Kensington on 14 June 2017 triggered an urgent review of fire safety arrangements in Thurrock's tower blocks.

This report summarises a) the fire safety regime in place for Thurrock's comparable stock and b) the actions taken by the Council since June 14th 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.

The report also outlines the further measures we are taking to ensure the safety of all of our Council housing, and notes some of the potential implications of the events at Grenfell Tower.

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
 - 1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and comments on the report.**
- 2. Introduction and Background**
 - 2.1 Within the Borough of Thurrock there are fifteen tower blocks containing 981 purpose built flats. These tower blocks are located in three different areas of the borough, Grays, Chadwell St Mary and Tilbury.
 - 2.2 All fifteen tower blocks were constructed circa 1970 or shortly before using a concrete frame, with infill brick works, and concrete panels to form the exterior façade. All property elements blocks have been maintained and

refurbished through ongoing maintenance and capital improvement programmes, covering external features, individual dwellings and communal areas.

3. Fire Safety regime in Thurrock

- 3.1 The Housing service follows Thurrock Council's agreed fire safety policy which covers the Council's overall approach to asset management. The over-arching policy is subject to regular reviews and updates to ensure it has remained relevant to current legislation. The latest of these exercises was completed in September 2016 with the next planned review in September 2019 under the three years stipulated in the policy.
- 3.2 Comprehensive Fire Risk Assessments are undertaken across all of the housing stock on a rolling three year programme. Intermediate assessments are also undertaken on an individual basis if there are any major works or alterations completed within the three-year period. These assessments are completed by an independent consultant with the relevant skills and knowledge, with the last appointee being a recently retired firefighter with the required specialist expertise.
- 3.3 Thurrock Council's fire risk assessments for the high rise blocks are undertaken in accordance with the guidance set out for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Local Government Association documentation (Fire safety in Purpose-built blocks of flats). In addition to this Thurrock Council work in partnership with the Essex Fire and Rescue Service with regards to emergency procedures in the event of a fire. Based on the information and guidance above, Thurrock Council implements the "Stay Put Policy" in high rise residential accommodation.
- 3.4 All 15 tower blocks within the Thurrock Borough were designed, built and have been maintained for the implementation of the 'stay put' policy. This principal is based on ensuring that necessary 'compartmentation' systems and structural elements are in place to stop and delay the spread of fire, giving sufficient time for the Fire and Rescue service to attend and either extinguish the fire, or undertake a controlled evacuation procedure if this becomes necessary.
- 3.5 Housing staff carry out pre-defined checks on a daily, weekly and monthly basis – such as manually triggering the alarms on each floor - to ensure these systems operate as required. Any defective elements are quickly identified and addressed. External contractors are utilised to undertake quarterly servicing and maintenance on fire detection systems within our high rise blocks, covering elements such as smoke detection systems, dry risers and emergency lighting.

- 3.6 The tower blocks within the Thurrock borough are fitted with fire detection systems within the communal areas and the residential flats themselves. The communal fire detection system has been specifically designed as a non-audible system, but it controls self-closing fire doors to prevent the spread of smoke and fire. The communal fire detection system is non-audible in order to adhere to the principles of the stay put policy.
- 3.7 The fire detection systems within each flats is a `stand-alone' system comprising a heat detector in the kitchen and a smoke detector in the hallway. These devices are audible, ensuring that any resident immediately affected by a fire will be alerted and can leave the property quickly, closing the front door which is fire door designed to contain the fire inside the unit.

4. Cladding on Thurrock Council's Tower blocks

- 4.1 All of the fifteen tower blocks, with the exception of those in Chadwell St Mary, had thermal improvement works completed circa. 2000, including the installation of a new facade via an external cladding system.
- 4.2 None of the cladding systems on Thurrock's tower blocks are of the same materials or construction details of those used on Grenfell Tower. The cladding used Kensington is comprised of an Aluminum composite material (ACM) with polyisocyanurate (PIR) insulation board. The cladding in Thurrock is made from a glass fibre reinforced polyester resin substance, covering a mineral wool slab insulation. Both the cladding material and the insulation material used in Thurrock have the highest classification for fire safety, i.e. A1 for combustibility and Class O for spread of flame. The cladding system is therefore, categorized as a `not readily combustible' installation. .
- 4.3 Following the fire in to the Grenfell Tower, Central Government requested that every local authority provided information on their high rise buildings and particularly cladding systems. Based on these returns, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) working on behalf of the Government requested samples of cladding where appropriate for combustibility testing. Thurrock Council was not required to provide any cladding samples for testing.
- 4.4 Notwithstanding this a decision was taken to commission an independent consultant to undertake an assessment of the cladding systems in place in Thurrock to ensure the system meets all current legislative requirements. On site checks should commence during July.

5. Actions since the Grenfell fire

- 5.1 Following the fire at Grenfell Thurrock immediately moved to a number of measures to reassure our residents of their safety. A letter containing an extract from the 'stay put' policy other information was hand-delivered to 981 flats by June 16th. Officers engaged in an estimated 700 face-to-face discussions. allowing them to provide additional reassurance and giving residents the opportunity to raise any concerns.
- 5.2 In partnership with the Essex Fire and Rescue Service, all 15 tower blocks were immediately assessed to ensure that the standards that Thurrock Council implements on a day to day basis had been maintained. We can confirm the only salient point that arose from these inspections that required addressing was related to parking around the high rise accommodation to ensure it remained clear for emergency services vehicles. This is now being addressed through a combination of parking enforcement and additional structural works such as installing extra bollards to prevent unauthorized access to areas near the blocks. The Council and Fire Service staff are now working to a programme to complete a comprehensive check of all 15 high rise blocks by the beginning of August. .
- 5.3 On the 27th June 2017 all tower block residents were issued with a more detailed letter, in a 'Frequently Asked Questions' format. This letter is attached at Appendix A, and has been added to the website and shared with members and media outlets as necessary. We have also held residents' meetings for each area to give residents a further opportunity to seek assurances and to contribute to the service's response. These meeting were held between Wednesday 28th June and Friday 7th July 2017.

6. Fire Safety across Thurrock Council Housing Stock

- 6.1 Whilst the current national focus is centered on high rise residential accommodation, as a large social landlord covering a multitude of different building archetypes and tenures it is our duty to ensure that we maintain a consistent approach for the safety of all residents of Thurrock.
- 6.2 Thurrock Council currently has no overdue Fire Risk Assessments for any of our social housing stock. In 2016/17 £220k of capital improvement works were carried out through a bespoke programme to ensure maintain fire safety across our stock.

6.3 In accordance with the three year risk assessment policy, new assessments completed for all sheltered complexes and low rise blocks during 2017/18. Although none of these assessments is currently overdue, the programme has been accelerated in light of recent events elsewhere.

7. Future Implications

7.1 Whilst the full implications of events that occurred in Kensington are not yet apparent, the housing department will be keeping the situation under review and assessing whether any 'ripple effects' are likely which will have an impact on our services. For example, there may be an inflationary effect on the local temporary accommodation market if London boroughs are required to rehouse large numbers of tenants currently occupying blocks where similar cladding has been used.

7.2 It can be anticipated that fire standards in private sector properties will also become a focus of concern. Our Housing Enforcement team already deals effectively with category one hazards in this type of accommodation, and we will intensify our efforts to encourage local landlords to provide safe homes.

7.3 Finally, we will work closely with central government and other regulatory bodies to respond to any wider changes as they occur in terms of improvements to fire safety, to ensure they are fully embedded in Thurrock where necessary. In view of this the Council has begun a feasibility study into the retro-fitting of sprinkler systems through the tower blocks in Thurrock – potentially a jointly funded project with the Essex Fire Service. We will of course monitor the national development of these issues, and move quickly to respond to any legislative and regulatory changes as they occur.

7.4 The fire has led to a wide-ranging public debate on issues ranging well beyond the fire itself, such as the possible accelerated demolition of high rise blocks across the sector, the financing of social housing, and the procurement arrangements which have potentially led to the use of materials with questionable safety ratings across a large number of authorities. The longer-term impacts of the tragedy can at this juncture only be a matter for conjecture – even at this stage, however it seems likely that significant changes may arise from this appalling tragedy.

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

8.1 This report has no direct impact on the above.

9. Implications

9.1 Financial

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

The Council's residential housing assets are managed within the Housing Revenue Account.

Financial forecasts for the HRA have not been adjusted at this stage. To reflect the possibility of additional expenditure on relevant capital works – for example the fitting of sprinkler systems in all the tower blocks managed by Housing - we have more generally recognised the financial risk by adding a pressure of up to £1m at this stage until more details are known.

9.2 Legal

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

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Legal Services are available to give legal advice as specific queries or issues may arise in respect of fire safety, in particular, advice on duties of a landlord and freeholder, powers under tenancy agreements and long leases to enforce inspections, reviews and remedial works – such as entrance doors that are fire safety compliant, gas installations, and other issues that might arise following inspection by Essex Fire.

9.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The Council's tower block accommodation, like its entire remaining social housing stock, provides accommodation for a wide range of residents including disproportionate numbers of elderly and disabled people and those with other vulnerabilities. The measures in this report will ensure that these residents are not put at risk because of the nature of their housing tenure, and will contribute to the social cohesion of the borough.

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

- Not Applicable

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

- Appendix 1 - Letter to residents of tower blocks, June 2017

Report Author:

John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing

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Name

Address,

Dear resident,

Re; Fire safety in your property

As a resident of a property in a tower block you were contacted last week by your housing team in light of the tragic events at the Grenfell Tower block in Kensington.

I am writing with some further information on your safety and the situation in Thurrock's high rise properties. You will also receive details of a meeting near your home which you can attend to discuss any concerns you may still have about your safety. These meetings will be led by elected Councillors as well as staff from the Council and from the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

Please see below some 'Frequently Asked Questions' with answers and further information.

1. **How many tower blocks does Thurrock Council have within its stock?**

Thurrock Council has 15 high rise tower blocks located in Chadwell St Mary, Grays and Tilbury. There are a total of 981 flats in all the properties. Most of the occupiers are Council tenants, with some leaseholders and a small number of people who are renting from leaseholders who have moved out since buying their properties.

2. **Are the properties managed by a company, like the Kensington and Chelsea Tenancy Management Organisation ?**

No. The properties are managed in-house by Council staff. Repairs and maintenance, as well as improvement programmes such as Transforming Homes, are delivered by private companies who are appointed through a procurement process.

3. **Does Thurrock Council implement the "Stay Put" policy for fire safety in tower blocks ?**

Yes. The Council works in partnership with the Essex Fire and Rescue Service and in accordance with their guidance the "Stay Put" policy is the safest procedure in the event of a fire in high rise accommodation.

The policy is based on people 'staying put' if they are not directly affected by a fire. This is to allow firefighters to carry out a safe evacuation if required.

Fire risk assessments undertaken on all Thurrock Council's housing stock are carried out in accordance with the Local Government Association's guidance document "*Fire safety in purpose built blocks of flats*" which confirms the use of the 'stay put' policy in high rise blocks.

4. Does the “Stay Put” policy mean that people shouldn’t leave the building if they are aware of the fire?

No. The policy involves the following approach.

- When a fire occurs within a flat, the occupants alert others in the flat, make their way out of the building and summon the fire and rescue service.
- If a fire starts in a communal area (hallways/stairwells etc.) , anyone in these areas makes their way out of the building and summons the fire and rescue service.
- All other residents not directly affected by the fire would be expected to ‘stay put’ and remain in their flat unless directed to leave by the fire and rescue service.

It does not mean that people who want to leave the building should not do so, or that people who have decided to leave should not tell their neighbours about a fire.

5. What fire detection systems do we have within our high rise blocks?

All fifteen tower blocks have a central fire alarm system which has two parts.

There are smoke detectors on each floor linked to the fire doors. If smoke is detected the doors close automatically to contain the fire on that floor until the fire service arrives.

The system is tested every day by housing staff to make sure that all the doors close as required. Any faults or damage identified are dealt with as a priority by the contractor, and fixed within 5 hours under the contract.

The second element is the heat detector and a sprinkler system that is located in the bin room on the ground floor, at the bottom of the main bin chute. In the event that the heat detector is triggered, the sprinkler system automatically operates to contain or put out the fire. The bin store rooms all have the necessary measures in place to contain a fire in that area.

The main bin chute running right up through the block also has fire-stopping measures on each floor – this is a system which triggers closing flaps above and below any fire that starts in the chute itself.

6. Are there sprinklers in the communal areas on every floor ?

No. In line with ‘Staying Put’ the Council applies an approach based on removing potential causes of a fire and minimising the need for alarms. Where a fire does occur, sprinklers can sometimes cause smoke to disperse more easily and increase the bad effects of a small fire.

7. Do the blocks have an audible fire alarm system in place?

No. This would also not be in line with the 'staying put' policy, which is based on fires being contained within the building by a system of 'fire breaks', i.e. barriers, including fire-proof doors, which work automatically to stop a fire spreading. This approach is also known as 'compartmentation'.

8. Are there fire alarms in the individual flats ?

Yes. Each flat has a heat detector in the kitchen and a smoke detector in the main hallway which are provided by the Council. Residents whose alarms are triggered by a fire in their property can escape safely, and can also notify other residents in the immediate area if necessary.

9. Do any of our tower blocks have an external cladding system in place?

Yes. Twelve of the fifteen high-rise tower blocks have an insulated cladding system installed over ten years ago.

The cladding that was used on the Grenfell Tower and that has been identified on a number of other high rise buildings across the UK is (ACM) Aluminium Composite Material. Also the insulation used on the Grenfell Tower was a ridged PIR (Polyisocyanurate) insulation board.

The cladding utilised on the tower blocks in Thurrock is a glass fibre reinforced polyester resin cladding system which is classified as class "0" for fire spread – the highest possible rating - and also classified as a "non-combustible" material. These details have been sent to the government, and they have not requested any material for testing (i.e. none of Thurrock's blocks is on the list of 600 which the government is investigating)

The insulation installed on the tower blocks in Thurrock is a fibre "Rockwool" product. So neither the cladding or the insulation used in Thurrock is of the type being urgently reviewed by the Government.

10. Was the work to the cladding panels in 2012 to the Grays and Blackshots tower blocks to do with insulation / fire improvements?

No. That work was not 're-cladding'. The work was to install fixings and make secure the original panels. This did not involve removing the old cladding panels or using any new cladding materials – so the works did not affect the safety rating of the blocks.

11. Is the Council taking any extra action to check that the cladding on its blocks is safe ?

We are commissioning an independent assessment of cladding systems that have been used on our twelve tower blocks. This will ensure that all fire stopping measures are in place and

meet legislative requirements. We have not been asked by the government to do this (or to send any samples from our buildings), but are doing it as an extra precaution.

12. What else is the Council doing to make sure the tower blocks are safe ?

We are working with the fire service to review all our fire risk assessments. Any necessary works will be given top priority. We are also reviewing car-parking arrangements on some estates to make sure the fire service can have access to the buildings if necessary.

If any more changes come about because of the fire in Kensington we will implement them quickly and keep you informed. Your safety is our number one concern.

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
KPI – Q1 Performance Report	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		
Allocations policy	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Estate Regeneration (subject to sufficient progress in the interim)	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Stock Condition Survey	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Review of garages	Roger Harris /John Knight	Members
Repairs Policy	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Housing development Project update	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer/ Member

Work Programme

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
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
Homelessness Reduction Act	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Council Spending Review Update(?) 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
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
20 February 2018		
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
24 April 2018		
Housing Review updates	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer

Work Programme

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
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

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