

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 **20 February 2018**

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 and Ben Maney

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

	Page
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 18
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19 December 2017.	
3 Items of Urgent Business	
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.	
4 Declaration of Interests	
5 Review of Garages	19 - 26
6 Repairs Policy	27 - 56

7	Homelessness Reduction Act Update	57 - 66
8	Work Programme	67 - 70

Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Wendy Le, Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

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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;**
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- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

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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.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 December 2017 at 7.00 pm

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

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Apologies: Councillor Terry Piccolo

In attendance: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing
Susan Cardozo, Housing Asset Investment & Delivery Manager
Julie Curtis, HRA and Development Accountant, Corporate Finance
Wendy Le, 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.

15. Minutes

The minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 October 2017 were approved as a correct record.

16. Urgent Items

Following a request made by the Chair of the Committee, a Briefing Note was submitted and circulated as an additional item by the Assistant Director of Housing (ADH), John Knight, which outlined recent announcements from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). These included:

- The renaming of The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to Homes England.
- The reclassification of Housing Associations as 'private non-financial corporations'.
- A summary of actions from the government to achieve the new housing delivery of 300,000 new homes per annum by the end of this Parliament in 2022.
- Central government's announcement to include a £1 billion additional borrowing capacity within the Budget for councils for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The fund would be allocated to councils through a bidding nature.
- Government's formation of a Homelessness Reduction Task Force which related to their commitment to resolve the issue of rough sleepers.

Thurrock is currently undertaking work to adjust the services according to the announced changes. The service department will continue to work to ensure that Thurrock benefits where possible from the new and additional funding.

17. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

18. Grounds Maintenance Service Charge Review

Presented by the Assistant Director of Housing (ADH), John Knight, the report summarised the review of the Grounds Maintenance Charge (GMC) that had been presented earlier in the year. The review sought to resolve the issues that had resulted in the suspension of the charge back in September. Outlined in the report were the following potential options for the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider:

- To proceed with suspended standard charge for all selected tenants (option 3.1).
- To introduce a standard charge for all tenants (option 3.2).
- To withdraw the charge in full (option 3.3).
- To implement a lower standard charge for the same selected tenants (option 3.4).
- To introduce a variegated charge (option 3.5).
- Charging tenants in certain types of property (option 3.6).
- To lower standard charge for fewer selected tenants (option 3.7).
- A phased introduction (option 3.8).

Detailed work would continue to be undertaken to reconcile costings of the GMC and if a charge was proposed, a consultation will be carried out with potential included tenants. The service would also continue to work with other departments to monitor the contract and ensure costs were reduced where possible.

The Chair felt the options given in the report were more detailed and thorough than previous reports that had been brought to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Potheary agreed but stated that she was still against the GMC and that it had left tenants confused over what their rent was paid for. She wished for the charge to be fully withdrawn. Residents have said to her that the services provided were not a full service. She went on to question why the environment charge was high as the work carried out was simple. She also questioned where the previously proposed £5 charge came from and whether alternative options had been considered.

Not wishing to reiterate previous discussions of the GMC, the ADH said the charge had been based on transaction costs, Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and full recovery costs; based on HRA costs for 2016 – 17. The service department would also work with the Environment Team to drive service charges down. There were a number of service elements that would

not be directly charged to selected tenants under certain options. In regards to what tenants' rents were paid for, the basic rent was for the possession of the property, in addition to some management services provided which were legitimate for tenants to be charged for. Councils across the country used this same model of charging and Thurrock would not be unique in this. Thurrock would seek to reduce the annual costs over time. Some of the options provided in the GMC report would reduce the charge and alternatives had been considered with no other cheaper options identified.

Echoing the Chair's earlier comments, Councillor Redsell felt the options were detailed in this report and that the confusion had been caused by the generic letters sent out to council tenants stating the charge the first time round. She said some tenants within her ward of Little Thurrock Blackshots would be paying the GMC and some would not. She felt a broader method of charging needed to be identified and an agreement to be discussed to lower costs.

The Vice-Chair said the reason the GMC came about was due to the Conservative Party in central government decreasing the rents down by 1% each year until 2020. The charges might increase in the next few years but the HRA would not go bankrupt so it was not right to single out the 3800 out of the 10,000 council tenants to charge. He went on to say that if necessary, he would put a motion into Full Council to remove the GMC (option 3.3 of the report) which was seconded by Councillor Potheary. He felt the charge was just recovering the 1% reduction in rent and that the GMC would be charged to vulnerable people.

The Chair also felt option 3.3 was best and did not like giving the Housing department 'tax raising powers' for the GMC which he saw as an aggressive tax. There was no guarantee that other administrations would not raise the revenues in the future. Echoing the Vice-Chair's earlier comments, Councillor Allen commented that the charge was political and that the rent reduction from central government had caused a shortfall so money could not be spent elsewhere e.g. in home improvements.

The Housing Tenant Representative (HTR), Lynn Mansfield, questioned where the funds would come from to pay for grounds maintenance if the charge was to be withdrawn in full. The ADH replied that the other reports within the agenda would explain the funds and investments in housing stock. The service had been effective in managing the HRA with the limited number of resources the service department had. Under current conditions, there was limited investment into the housing stock and with the combined costs from grants and rents; it was not enough to maintain the 10,000 council owned properties. Where charges were introduced, it would be charged year on year and would allow for capital investments and maintenance of the housing stock. The big ticket expenditures were repairs in which there were no other resource revenues available to pay for these. The service department would continue to provide grounds maintenance even without the charge but the proposal of the GMC had been to collect the cost from tenants who benefitted from the service.

The HTR sought further clarification on whether the charges for grounds maintenance would be sought elsewhere or if another charge would be introduced that would be related to grounds maintenance. The ADH said the costs would need to be met from the 'basic rents pool' as they could not be collected from other sources such as the General Fund. There was no equation of other costs to match the GMC nor was there a flexibility to increase tenants' rents. Instead, the service department would have to manage other expenditures more carefully.

Councillor Allen asked whether there would have been revenue to cover grounds maintenance costs if there had not been the 1% rent reduction. The ADH responded that a GMC had been an established feature within other Housing departments from the benchmarking data gathered prior to the reduction so the link was not necessarily as strong as suggested in Councillor Allen's question. Service charges were a part of social housing charges elsewhere before the introduction of the 1% per annum rent reduction.

Referring to the 1% rent reduction, Councillor Redsell queried whether another charge could be taken to lower council tenants' rents. The ADH stated that rent was a recognised cost for the purposes of Housing Benefit. Service charges were a part of the regime and eligible to be in the 'eligible rent' for benefits. The model used to charge rents was not based on incomes as it had been considered before and rent increase would have an impact on housing benefits.

Councillor Redsell asked for clarification on where grass verges were split to indicate which part of land belonged to the HRA or General Fund. As discussed in the previous Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, the ADH said a bigger piece of work would need to be carried out on the land and assets that fell under the HRA and General Fund. The SLAs implemented with the Environment services was to avoid the differences and ensure they maintained both plots of land. Councillor Redsell went on to say that the disparities lay in areas of land where old pensioners resided and that some of the grass verges could be cut by the residents themselves. She stated that she was not in favour to withdraw the GMC in full as the services provided had to be paid for somehow.

Following on from Councillor Redsell's last comment, the Chair asked Members to vote on the options. The Vice-Chair, Councillor Potheary and Councillor Allen voted for option 3.3 which was to withdraw the GMC in full. Councillor Redsell voted for option 3.4 which was to implement a lower standard charge for the same selected tenants. With the Chair's vote on option 3.3 as well, he asked Officers to take the recommendations from the Committee to Cabinet. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health (CDAHH), Roger Harris, stated that this would be taken to Cabinet in February 2018. Councillor Redsell asked if the report would come back to the Committee again after going to Cabinet to which the CDAHH confirmed it would not.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the options outlined in the report regarding the grounds maintenance charge.
- 2) That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee made a recommendation to Cabinet based on its consideration of the report.

19. Stock Condition Survey

The ADH presented the report which outlined the results of the recent Stock Condition Survey that had been conducted by external surveyors, Baily Garner. The survey had not been intrusive or invasive but had been conducted visually. A summary of the survey had been provided in the report and the full report consisted of over 100 pages which the ADH held up for the Committee to see.

The survey had been significant as the data gathered would be used to set budgets and plan ongoing and future investments in the HRA for the next 30 years. Properties included in the representative sample were a balanced mix of flats, houses and maisonettes which ended up with a total of 3223 surveys undertaken. The housing stock owned by the Council consisted of 10,000 residential properties and almost 3,000 garages. It was found that the average energy efficiency rating of the stock to be at a Band D rating of 61.9 so the Council aimed to meet at least a Band D rating for all its residential properties by 2022 with a targeted view of achieving a Band C rating in the longer term. To bring all lower rated properties up to this target, the following recommended works would include:

- improving loft insulation;
- renewing singled glazed windows; and
- replacing boilers which would improve the heating controls.

Damp and mould was reported in 4% of the surveyed properties and the recommendation was to install ventilation fans and advise tenants on daily housekeeping to manage condensation. Overall, the results from the survey showed the housing stock to be in a fair to good condition which would provide building blocks for future planning.

Referring to Baily Garner, the Chair asked what due diligence had been carried out before hiring the company to carry out the survey. The ADH responded that as stated in the report, the company had been appointed through a procurement process. Baily Garner did not deliver the Council's main contracts, which meant they would have objective views to the Council's services. The company was well established with evidence of their qualifications and the Council had used them a few times before without faults.

The Chair went on to say the percentage of properties surveyed was impressive but queried why a small number of garages had been surveyed. The reason was because there were not so many variations between the garages as between residential units. The Chair also asked why only 37% of the boilers were passed as good. Referring to the Transforming Homes programme, the ADH stated that the priorities had been on improving the kitchens and bathrooms within the housing stock. This had resulted in a lower level of investment into other areas which had caused them to lag behind.

The Chair further asked if there was a concern on the 10% of surveyed homes that had poor electrics. The ADH's response was that all areas that had been identified as poor condition were of concern. The data would be used to prioritise areas of concern and enable the service department to plan repairs accordingly. The Chair also queried on when there would be no more single glazed properties in Grays. The ADH was unable to provide an exact date but the survey would enable the service department to plan the Transforming Homes programme more accurately.

Referring to the 4% of damp and mould found in the surveyed homes, Councillor Redsell questioned when the survey had been carried out as the blocks of flats within her ward of Little Thurrock Blackshots, had mould problems. She felt the survey carried out on the garages were quick and had seen some that were in derelict conditions and required repairs with a fresh coat of paint. She also mentioned the council owned outbuildings which were in a state of disrepair and had never been repaired.

The ADH said the damp and mould were local issues and a representative sample had been selected in the survey to ensure each architect type of property was represented. Damp and mould issues were being monitored and these were issues that could be addressed through good housekeeping and the service department were producing leaflets to guide tenants in this. So far, there had not been an increase in the amount of complaints related to damp and mould as there had been in previous years. The use of low level treatments would be effective in addressing most damp and mould problems.

In regards to the garages, the ADH said there had not been a transforming programme for these and as garages had not been used for their original purpose, it had caused deterioration over time. A semi-strategic review of the council owned garages would be brought to the Committee. Regarding the repairs, there were many of these that could not be repaired due to asbestos within the buildings and the state of disrepair. The service department were aware the garages were not being utilised and would consider demolishing them or upgrading into potential residential properties. For outbuildings, these had not been included in the survey but could look into any particular ones of concern. Councillor Redsell pointed out that some of the garages were too small to fit a car inside and even if they were demolished, it would not provide much space to build anything else in its place.

Councillor Potheary mentioned loft insulation should be a priority and asked whether there were schemes from central government that they could benefit

from to reduce carbon footprint. The ADH stated there were no current schemes from central government which individual tenants could access and that it was down to social landlords to reduce carbon footprints. Although the survey showed more work needed to be done to improve energy efficiency; safety concerns would be of a higher priority.

The Vice-Chair brought up the issue of old front doors and asked how many there were left to replace. The ADH answered that 71% of the front doors within the housing stock were in good condition and those in a state of disrepair would be replaced. It was not a priority to upgrade front doors and the service department had to ensure other repairs were carried out instead. In response to this, the Vice-Chair said the replacement of front doors was in the Transforming Homes programme. There were some homes in Chadwell-St-Mary that had doors from the 1960s which were unable to keep drafts out and needed repainting.

Referring back to damp and mould issues, the Vice-Chair pointed out that this was not simple to resolve in some buildings or to leave a fan on all day to deal with condensation. There needed to be better solutions than leaving a window open, particularly during cold weather. He went on to say that the main sources of heat loss came from doors, single glazed windows and loft insulation and this required a programme that specialised in older properties. Adding to the Vice-Chair's comments, the Chair said the Transforming Homes programme seemed rigid and certain properties had to be targeted e.g. flats. He queried whether there were any tower blocks of flats that were of concern or unfit for human habitation.

Pointing out 2.1 of the report, the ADH said these were the realities that the service department was confronted with. 30% of the housing stock was of concern and the data provided was to inform a mere strategic approach. He stated that the Transforming Homes programme was rigid to ensure it stayed on track. The survey had not identified any tower blocks that were unfit for human habitation and the work carried out had been highly technical which looked at all sources of heat loss. The ADH felt it was correct to provide advice and housekeeping guidelines on damp and mould issues. It would help to avoid bigger costs in the future. In regards to the replacement of doors, the ADH reiterated that 71% of doors were in good condition and could not be replaced based on age and the data looked at the life cycles.

A case of damp and mould in a particular home was discussed by the Vice-Chair. The ADH responded that the survey data would enable the service department to plan and replace assets.

The Chair questioned when it would be reasonable for an Officer of the Council to instruct council tenants to open windows to reduce the risk of damp and mould. The ADH said this was part of a wider assessment and council tenants were not being instructed; Council Officers would only guide as social landlords. The Housing Asset Investment & Delivery Manager (HAIDM), Susan Cardozo added that the approach of the Transforming Homes programme had been amended to include the replacements of doors which

opened externally. Many of the doors within Chadwell-St-Mary had been replaced but some of the homes had two front doors which needed reassessment as it would cost more to replace both front doors. There were still 10% of properties within the programme that needed to be assessed through site visits.

Councillor Allen commented that the areas of particular concern were in electrics and the boilers. With 8% of the boilers in poor condition, he asked when these boilers would be renewed in terms of safety aspects. He went on to say he agreed with the Vice-Chair's earlier comments on replacing old doors and added that these had security issues. New PVC doors were safer with better structure and lock options. He mentioned he had seen solar panels on some homes within Gravesham which must have saved on electricity costs. He asked what the life cycle was on a particular door. The ADH said the areas of concern were in certain areas but the priority to replace old boilers was high. The service department would be working on replacing old doors within the parameters of the HRA.

Councillor Redsell gave praise to the extensive work that had been done on damp and mould in some properties within her ward of Little Thurrock Blackshots. The work was good but it needed more than just housekeeping as the use of new appliances such as dishwashers attributed to the damp and mould issues. She went on to comment that the tower blocks of flats were no longer fit for purpose so they could be knocked down and new buildings could be erected in place.

The Vice-Chair highlighted the use of storage heating in some properties which were realistically not fit for purpose and instead needed upgrading to a central heating system. He asked how many properties still used storage heaters. The HAIDM answered that many high rise blocks did not have the gas pipes for central heating and in the Transforming Homes programme, some homes would be converted to a gas central heating system where possible. The Vice-Chair outlined a particular case in which he would discuss with the HAIDM via emails. Adding to this, the ADH said 9% of the properties surveyed had poor heating conditions so heating replacements would not be a priority.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the estimated investment requirements to maintain the Council's housing owned stock for the next 30 years.**
- 2) That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the approach being taken to investment programming for the next five years and the prioritisation of certain elements including single glazed windows.**

20. Housing Revenue Account - Business Plan and Budgets (2018/19 - 2048)

The report was introduced by the ADH and set out the HRA Business Plan and Budget for 2018/19 after reviewing it for the next 30 years. A range of areas were identified where efficiencies and improvements could be made in relation to HRA activities to free up resources to enable reinvestment into the service. Following the results of the Stock Condition Survey, the estimated investment required to maintain and improve the current housing stock for the next 30 years would be £452,447,897.

Every opportunity would be pursued to secure extra funding for new-build homes and to deliver improved value for money as a modern social landlord. As mentioned in the Briefing Note brought forward by the ADH earlier in the meeting, the Council would be bidding for the £1 billion additional borrowing. Overall, the Business Plan was robust and viable which would keep the HRA on path.

The Vice-Chair queried on the costs of fire safety such as sprinkler systems, in high rise blocks. The ADH said the government position was to ensure residents were kept safe and a case could be made to the DCLG during the bidding of the additional funding. The fire services have limited funding to ensure fire safety and many Boroughs could request funding for fire safety within their bidding narratives.

Commenting on the £5 million cost to build 500 homes as part of the regeneration scheme within Thurrock; the Vice-Chair asked if it was possible for Thurrock to set up its own Housing Association to build these homes. The ADH explained that Housing Associations were now seen as private entities. Setting one up would be complicated and would not give the Council much financial freedom if the HRA was still the vehicle for delivery. Working in partnership with a housing association would not enable the build of 500 homes but would enable the Council to purchase more homes and repair older homes and to utilise Right to Buy receipts, as outlined in the report.

At 9.20pm, Members agreed to suspend standing orders until 10.00pm to enable all items on the agenda to be heard.

Referring back to the garages review, Councillor Redsell queried on what the outcome would be. The ADH said the garage review would check whether garages were being effectively used to maximise the revenues. Business processes such as mainstream lettings for the garages and costs for repairs, demolition and reprovisions were being reviewed which would give a clearer picture and provide solutions. Councillor Redsell went on to ask whether the service department knew what was stored within the garages and if these were checked. The ADH answered that the report would not be detailed in this aspect but the service department would check what the garages were used for.

Referring to the Council's bid for the additional borrowing from DCLG, Councillor Potheary asked whether the service department's plans would be dependent on winning the additional funds. She also asked would the much needed homes within Thurrock be dependent on the private sector building

new homes. She also queried what the additional funds would be spent on and how many projects would be funded. The ADH explained that the DCLG were refining their criteria for the additional funds and looking at Local Plans. If simple criteria were used, a small number of London boroughs might see all extra funds allocated to them. It could not be guaranteed that Thurrock Council would meet the DCLG's criteria once known. The cost of a regeneration scheme over the next 10 – 15 years would be in the multi-millions but there were many upfront costs and fees for purchasing leaseholds as well as demolitions so the ADH could not answer with a single statistic. The funds from DCLG would potentially be to complement other funds or to bridge a funding gap. It could potentially be used to help fund the regenerations of four of the estates within Thurrock that met the social deprivation, density and other relevant criteria, for a range of projects or for viable schemes.

Councillor Potheary thanked the ADH for his detailed explanation in answer to her questions. She further asked whether there were any concrete statements made from the DCLG that could be highlighted. The ADH stated that £400 million's worth of extra funding would be good to enable Thurrock to deliver additional social housing. There were still a range of initiatives to be released and there was a comment within the House of Commons' briefing paper regarding something of a shift to investment in social housing rather than home ownership. The Chair questioned the readiness of the Council to take advantage of any funding to which the ADH replied that they were in a good position to do so.

Referring to Housing Associations, Councillor Allen asked how their rents compared to council rents. The ADH explained that rents from Housing Associations were generally higher. These used an affordable rent model for new lettings which was 80% of the market rent but was still cheaper than private rents.

The Chair referred to 3.5 of the report which had a £15 million requirement per year in regards to capital investment across all aspects. He asked what the cost implications of this would be down the line. The ADH said that there would be less spend on responsive repairs which made up most of the weight of the budget. The figure of repairs and maintenance was £10.5 million which was not the same as the Transforming Homes project. Responsive repairs would eventually be shifted into a planned approach which would give an idea of clearer costs.

In regards to the excess £9.5 million of unallocated receipts that the Council had in 3.10, the Chair questioned whether this money would be given back. The ADH stated that the report sets out the requirement to repay the money back if it was not used. It was possible to do what was outlined in the report so the money could be spent on new build developments but it would also be subject to other developments around Thurrock. The Chair went on to ask whether the money could be used to buy stock off the market to which the ADH replied it could not be done without matching the funding.

The Vice-Chair commented on the local plan to build 32,500 homes and gave a scenario of private developers purchasing land off the Council to build luxury homes instead. He asked how the Council's housing department would spend the money in this scenario. The ADH replied that this was known as commuted sums. The service department had a number of sites assessed by Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL) and if the scenario given was to happen, then the sums could be deployed immediately to the TRL sites.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the assumptions reflected in the HRA Business Plan, as summarised in the report.**
- 2) That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the budget formation which was also provided.**

21. Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2018 / 19

The report was presented by the ADH and outlined the charges in relation to the General Fund within the Housing Service. The charges would come into effect from 1 April 2018, these charges were listed in appendix 2 of the report. For traveller sites, the rent would be increased but the proposal was there to increase rent over two years. By setting the fees and charges appropriately, it will enable the Council to generate essential income to fund Council services and to be able to adapt to changing economic conditions.

The Chair sought clarification on the rent increase on traveller sites as Thurrock residents would be getting a 1% reduction in rent. The ADH confirmed this would be the case but the increase would be over a two year period and referred to site charges. The increase would be relatively low and this charge had not been in place before.

Councillor Potheary asked for a comparison on the rent costs of traveller sites on HRA land and rented council homes. The ADH confirmed that traveller site rents were based on plots of land. At the end of the two year rent increase from these, the sum would be equivalent to what some council tenants would pay for their rented homes.

The Chair expressed concern on the traveller sites rent increase as he felt it would be taking advantage of Housing Benefits. He did not think that the increase was even considered within general housing needs. The ADH said the yearly increase would be 5.8% which was due to begin in April 2018. Overall, the increase would not be so high. The Chair went on to ask if a consultation had taken place with the affected persons. The ADH confirmed that none had taken place and that a consultation would be progressed where there was a specific need to.

With the information given, the Chair felt he could not recommend an increase in rent unless a consultation had taken place. Travellers were still council

tenants in some form and should be given the same due diligence as the usual council tenants. Councillor Potheary also agreed with this.

Questioning the traveller site of Gammon Fields, Councillor Redsell asked if there were site officers to maintain the site. The ADH confirmed there was a dedicated team comprising of a manager and an officer who managed the sites intensively with frequent visits.

The Vice-Chair asked whether the rent would be split and if there were any additional fees to pay. The ADH said the rent was split and included service charges of utilities such as electricity. These were paid for along with rents with a swipe card. Councillor Allen questioned whether the cost was similar to some council rents and if the plot had council tax bands. The ADH answered that there was no council tax charge as the caravan on the sites were not permanent structures.

The Committee went on to discuss the removal of waste from traveller sites. A few fly tipping cases were brought up by Councillor Allen and Councillor Redsell. There was further discussion on the rent increase on traveller sites which Members felt needed more work to be done to show its feasibility. Officers agreed to address the issues brought up by the Committee and resolve before taking the report to the Cabinet Committee.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the revised fees, including those that were no longer applicable and that the Committee comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
- 2) That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that director delegated authority will be sought via Cabinet to allow Fees and Charges to be varied within a financial year in response to legal, regulatory or commercial requirements.**

22. Work Programme

An extraordinary meeting for 6th February 2018 would be setup to enable an important report on cases of mental illnesses and domestic violence within housing applications to be heard and considered by the Committee.

The meeting finished at 10.03 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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20 February 2018	ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Review of Garages	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Assistant Director: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing & Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

The Council as a social landlord maintains a large number of garages across the borough, the majority of which are no longer used for their original purpose but are used as storage spaces for both tenants and non-tenants. A high proportion of this stock is currently not in a lettable condition or in good decorative order.

In recent months the Housing service has conducted a review of these assets to arrive at a robust data-set (now incorporated into the main database system) and improve the efficiency of the processes for matching and letting the garages.

This report summarises the progress made and considers some future options, both for how the garage stock can be improved in the short term and how better use could be made of the housing land in question.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the information in the report, and on the options and forward actions described

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Council has a total current stock of 2505, of which 637 (25%) are currently void. Of the void units 85 are now fit to let, which will bring overall usage up to 78%. The remainder cannot be utilised at present for a variety of reasons. The service is working to break down this number into those that can be quickly be brought back into use, for example by lock changes and other inexpensive works, and those that will require significant expenditure before

being lettable. A housing officer is being tasked with this exercise as short-term project to ensure that revenue is maximised and the data-set is accurate to inform the consideration of longer-term options for each garage and area.

- 2.2 The 1,868 garages which are currently let provide a significant source of revenue for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The weekly rental charge is currently £9.61 for Council tenants and £11.53 for non-Council tenants (incorporating VAT). 887 (47%) of the units are let to non-Council tenants. The total rent collectible each year for the number of garages now in use is £985k. Estimated void loss for the garages not currently being let is £266k p.a. A fully utilised portfolio would therefore yield an annual sum of circa £1,250,000 before taking repairs and maintenance costs into account.
- 2.3 The rent increase for garages is agreed as part of the overall rent-setting for Council tenancies report and is implemented annually at the same time as the general rent variation, i.e. the beginning of the financial year. The Council also has a number of garage plots where the tenant rents the slab and erects their own garage, raising a further £25,400 p.a. The rent increase applied for 2017/18 was 3%, in line with the increase applied to established service charges such as caretaking for residential properties. There is no rateable value or capital value for garages stored on the housing management system and the rent-setting regime has not been revisited for some years.
- 2.4 The allocation of garages was previously a manual process based on checking the reported void garages against a spreadsheet which held details of those who had applied to rent a garage. All applicants' details have now been added to the housing management database, and we are moving towards a fully automated matching process linking applicants on the waiting list to garages becoming void in their area of preference. Manual intervention will be reduced to a minimum, and the matching and letting processes will be 'mainstreamed' into the Allocations and Tenancy Services teams to achieve the quickest possible turnaround for void units. A priority system will operate and vacant units will be offered in order of priority to a) homeless applicants requiring a space to store their belongings (saving third-party costs on the General Fund), b) secure and introductory Council tenants, and c) non-Council tenants who have registered to rent a garage.
- 2.5 Currently most of the garage lettings are in respect of storage as they are not suitable for the modern era of motor vehicles. There are certain garages such as some on the Flowers Estate in South Ockendon that are an exception. There is a disclaimer that the tenants sign which explains that the Council no longer carry out lock changes when the key(s) are returned from the previous tenant but grants permission for the new tenant to change the lock or add additional locks at their own expense. It also confirms that the garage is intended for the storage of a motor vehicle, and if it is used for any other storage tenants need to insure the contents themselves.
- 2.6 There is currently no planned maintenance programme in respect of garages and the only earmarked budget is an annual budget of £75k for breakdown

and repairs. The total spend against this budget in 2015/16 was £39,763.85. In 2016/17 total spend was £52,765.08. At the end of December 2017 spend to date in 2018/18 was £ 43,010.26 – the service will be ensuring that the whole allocation is used by the end of the financial year.

- 2.7 The garages were included in the recent independent stock condition survey - a sample of 10% were visited and the relevant extrapolations are included in the overall report. The information contained in the report from Baily Garner Ltd. is summarised below:-

The total estimated cost for works over a 30 year period equates to £22,362,449.05, excluding VAT, fees and inflation costs. The cost of works for Year 1 (2017) equates to £776,891.95 due to the high number of garages needing physical works to reach a lettable condition.

Garages

Element - Garages	£ estimate total	Backlog - 2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Basket Rate - per garage - overhaul	£1,311,927.87	£347,358.22	£72,413.44	£375,644.72	£0.00	£0.00	£386,959.32
Roof renewal	£816,480.00	£7,200.00	£25,200.00	£3,600.00	£3,600.00	£0.00	£253,080.00
Rebuild	£12,440,000.00	£80,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£3,648,000.00
Door Renewal	£2,002,000.00	£80,000.00	£0.00	£10,000.00	£20,000.00	£0.00	£426,000.00
Hardstanding Areas - repairs	£1,339,200.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£18,000.00	£0.00	£126,000.00
Access Equipement	£1,536,000.00	£161,000.00	£49,500.00	£168,500.00	£2,500.00	£0.00	£460,750.00
Sub Total	£19,445,607.87	£675,558.22	£147,113.44	£557,744.72	£44,100.00	£0.00	£5,300,789.32
Other							
Prelims at 15%	£2,916,841.18	£101,333.73	£22,067.02	£83,661.71	£6,615.00	£0.00	£795,118.40
TOTAL	£22,362,449.05	£776,891.95	£169,180.46	£641,406.43	£50,715.00	£0.00	£6,095,907.72

There is also a recommendation that a review of elemental renewal is undertaken in order to prioritise elemental replacements based on condition rather than age, especially in relation to rebuild costs.

This data and the additional information gather during the review has provided the service with a clear understanding of the condition and profile of the garages within the borough.

- 2.8 With the implementation of the new allocation process it is proposed that once all the fit-to-let garages have been let a more sophisticated approach to matching the remainder can be applied, so that applicants are matched to those requiring the lowest levels of expenditure to bring them into use for storage.
- 2.9 All previous garage applicants were contacted during the review and asked to re-register in order that the Council had an up to date list of those who were still interested in renting a garage – the backlog of people wishing to be registered has been cleared, and at the end of December 2017 there were 717 individuals loaded into the system. The registration process is now online,

and the garage process has been identified as one of the simpler Council process which might in future be completed through a Rapid Application Development product, allowing customers to apply using their phones, and to digitally track the process of their application.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The original 'analogue' garage project is now being replaced by the Northgate Housing Management System where all the applicants and void garages will be managed, including the matching process. The allocation of garages is in date order within the priorities previously mentioned in the report.

3.2 Consideration should be given to a two tier charging system whereby non-Council tenants are charged a more commercial rate than that charged for a Council tenant. There are currently 887 garages that are let to non-Council tenants and if there was a two tier charging system this could generate additional revenue. It is proposed that a 'quick/smart' benchmarking exercise is carried out to look at both the practices of other social landlords and the commercial rates for other storage options to arrive at an appropriate higher charge for non-tenants. .

3.3 A short term project could also be undertaken to bring the current garage stock up to a presentable and lettable standard and this would include external decoration, fascias and soffits and guttering and rain water pipes. This could be focussed on areas where there is a need to design out anti-social behaviour and ensure that these garages are safe and secure. The stock condition survey data would also inform the project so that spend was targeted on those garages where the investment would be best realised over the medium term.

3.4 Since the garages no longer serve their original purpose we will also look at the viability of demolishing them in order to make better use of the land on which they sit. Detailed modelling would be needed for each proposed removal of a garage to include the revenue from rents which would be foregone, the effect on density of adding more residential units, and the financial viability of the proposed new use. It may also be necessary to re-acquire plots and garages which have been sold, with these costs being met by the additional revenue to be provided by re-development of the space.

As with residential and retail units on regeneration sites, the Council can use legal action where necessary to facilitate re-development through demolition.

3.5 It is also permitted to use '1-4-1' capital receipts from the sale of properties through Right to Buy to buy back garages. 50% of buyback costs can be funded from these receipts. It is important to note however that under financial regulations only 6.5% of the overall 1-4-1 receipts can be used for buybacks. Any significant programme of demolitions would need to be based mainly on funding from elsewhere. A programme of small garage sites might for example be put forward to central government in bidding for any relatively

small 'pots' of additional money that might be announced following the recent decisions in the Budget to commit more resources to social housing and regeneration.

- 3.6 As part of a comprehensive review of garage sites consideration will be given to identifying potential locations where alternative uses may be a more efficient use of the land.
- 3.7 A review of sites considering the current vacancy levels and of use for parking, the existence and extent of any anti-social behaviour, the degree to which garage sizes remain suitable for modern vehicles and the extent of alternative parking facilities in the locality are factors amongst others which could be used to identify those sites which could potentially lend themselves to housing development. Following this initial assessment each site will be appraised against a range of considerations including planning restrictions around access, impact on the surrounding occupiers, potential overlooking, the impact of additional units on local density and local services, and suitability of access, including access for refuse and emergency services which are often limiting factors on sites of this nature.
- 3.8 Together with a financial viability assessment individual locations or a combined package of sites could then be identified allowing decisions to be made about taking them forward. Whilst garage sites often present common difficulties for development, such as the existence of drains or other utilities, they can provide a valuable option for developing new homes in underused or otherwise problematic locations and such 'windfall' sites can positively contribute to brownfield housing development targets. Modern methods of construction ('modular', off-site, etc.) could potentially be a cheaper and quicker option on some of these sites than more traditional building models.
- 3.9 In summary, the service is close to concluding the internal review which will provide the appropriate level of revenue from these assets in the short term and address the most glaring defects which mar the overall 'look and feel' of some of our estates. In the medium term a 'place-based' longer-term solutions will be developed for each block of garages, potentially as part of wider regeneration efforts in which members and communities will have the opportunity to fully participate.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The information contained above is based on the review of the current garage project and the implementation of the garage allocation process, moving from a manual matching process to an automated process using the current housing management system which contains all garages and applications.
- 4.2 The decision regarding the level of finance needed as detailed in the stock condition surveys provide the option to consider a two tier charge and the implementation of a focus 'uplift' capital works and maintenance program in the short term.

- 4.3 There is to be a concerted effort to let all the free to let garages and then concentrate of those that can most effectively be brought back to a lettable standard and matching them to suitable applicants.
- 4.4 More ambitiously, the clear view of these non-residential assets provided by this recent work will contribute to a series of assessments based on making better use of housing land, whether for parking or for additional homes.

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

- 5.1 No formal consultation is required for the actions set out in the report for the short term. In the event that disposals and/or demolition is identified as a viable option in future, consultation will take place in each area as required.

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

- 6.1 No specific implications identified.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

The revenue from the letting of garages contributes to the financial resilience of the Housing Revenue Account. Full consideration of the financial impact of any planned disposals or demolitions in the future will need to form part of the overall options appraisal for specific changes. The Council is legally obliged to balance the Housing Revenue Account in each financial year.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Chima Obichukwu**
Housing Solicitor

There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of the report. Where the Council may in the future wish to change its approach to the use of these assets, the legal rights of those individuals who are currently renting them, and those who have acquired a leasehold or freehold interest in garage plots and/or buildings, will have to be established and protected in each case.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

While there are no direct implications at present arising from this report, a Community Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out against any new proposals considered following the current review.

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

- No direct implications identified.

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:

John Knight
Assistant Director of Housing
Housing Department

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20 February 2018		ITEM: 6
Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
Repairs Policy		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Sue Murray, Housing Asset and Investment Delivery Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: John Knight, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

As part of the current housing review the Council's repairs function as a social landlord has been re-assessed in terms of both practice and policy. This report summarises this work and sets out some proposed changes to the published policy and accompanying documents.

There have been a number of positive developments in recent months reflected in higher performance by our main repairs contractor and reduced levels of complaints (both received and upheld). Data from the independent stock condition survey and other intelligence is being used to achieve a shift away from responsive repairs to a more systematic and focussed programme of planned maintenance.

As well as pursuing higher levels of efficiency and customer satisfaction we have focussed on seeking to empower tenants wherever possible. This is reflected in our aspiration to produce and publicise a clear and comprehensive written policy, and related communication tools including website content and a dedicated 'Frequently Asked Questions' document.

We have also sought to give greater autonomy to our tenants to carry out repairs and improvements in their own homes whilst ensuring appropriate safeguards and quality mechanisms are in place for safety and to protect the physical integrity of what remains the Council's asset as a social landlord.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the report and the current operation of the repairs function.

1.2 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the proposed changes to the published repairs policy and the other proposals for improvement which are set out in the report.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 In December 2014 Cabinet agreed a new policy and contractual framework for the delivery of responsive repairs and maintenance to council homes. The policy was designed around a number of principles, including the provision of an enhanced service for vulnerable residents, alongside reframing shared responsibility between tenants and the council once major capital investment through the Transforming Homes refurbishment programme had been completed.
- 2.2 The policy was implemented in February 2015. A report was submitted to the Committee in September 2015 which demonstrated progress on the implementation of the policy and made recommendations for improvements. The recommendations included transparent key performance indicators informed by resident feedback, alongside providing a service that provides both overall value for money for the Council and its tenants and added value through social value commitments set out as part of the contract.
- 2.3 As part of the larger housing review it was decided that a comprehensive review of the repairs policy be undertaken to ensure we have a robust, fit for purpose policy and to make additional improvements to the policy and associated communication with tenants and their representatives.
- 2.4 The review was undertaken principally by the Assistant Director for Housing, the Technical Services Delivery Manager, and the Housing Asset Investment and Delivery Manager with the lead responsibility for repairs contract management. In accordance with the overall approach to the housing review analysis and challenge was also provided by a member of the Business Improvement Team, which has no operational responsibility for this part of the service.
- 2.5 The views and experiences of our main contractor Mears Ltd. were also sought. Other stakeholders such as the Tenants Excellence Panel, and the growing number of functioning Tenants and Residents Associations, will be involved in the next stages of seeking feedback on the proposed new policy and raising awareness of its contents.
- 2.6 The overarching aim of the review was *‘to ensure the policy remains fit for purpose; that it address all current statutory requirements; that it enables the delivery of a value for money service for our tenants; and that it seeks to empower tenants wherever possible through access to information and the ability to be involved in the maintenance of their homes’*
- 2.7 Following the review we are proposing a number of improvements and amendments which were identified and are highlighted within the report.

- 2.8 Some of the main Performance Indicators for the Mears contract are set out below with year-to-date performance levels as at December 2015 and December 2017.

Performance Indicator	December 2015	December 2017
% of repairs completed within target	95.5%	97.35%
Average number of working days to complete a repair	15	4.5
Average number of days to hand back a void property	12.8	9
% of appointments kept	83%	97%
Satisfaction with repairs service	85.8% (93.5%)	91.9% (98.6%)
% of calls answered	87.5%	98.7%
Average call waiting time	1 min 12 s.	16 s

- 2.9 A number of other changes have been made to the partnership to improve the responsiveness and quality of repairs, including the introduction the specialist Damp & Mould team to provide comprehensive inspections and full housekeeping advice and support to tenants reporting damp and mould issues.
- 2.10 Further initiatives to improve further on the above performance and service we provide to our tenants are being developed by interrogating and analysing data we have received through the independent stock condition survey recently undertaken, as well as greater invigilation of our own data from the Northgate database, such as pinpointing the number of `repairs episodes` relating to a single reported defect/issue, as distinct from the `gross` number of repairs reported which includes multiple jobs raised to resolve one issue.
- 2.11 We are also aiming to implement more planned programme works and refurbishment programmes to reduce the need for reactive repairs. In this context we will seek to prioritise, where this can be supported by the data, those elements which are of the greatest current concern to tenants, members and other stakeholders. These in our view are damp & mould issues, replacing the remaining single glazed windows, and the programme for the installation of new boilers. This prioritisation will set alongside the necessary emphasis suggested by the survey on electrical works in particular, to achieve the right balance between compliance works and improvements.
- 2.12 We would also like to focus on encouraging tenants to undertake their own minor repairs and improvements to their homes. This can be achieved by assisting with offering tailored accreditation through the Mears Trades School. Mears have offered as part of their social value commitments to offer training courses on minor repairs, such as plumbing, carpentry and minor electrical works. This is to enable our tenants to make improvements where appropriate and supporting them in doing so.

2.13 Mears currently provide a Trade School for residents from aged 16-19 to participate on a 12 week course giving school leavers skills to be able to use throughout their lives and encouraging them to take pride and responsibility for the work projects they achieve whilst undertaking the course.

2.14 Where tenants are already skilled and/or qualified Mears can approve them through an accreditation process to carry out certain works which fall within their trade. This could be linked to the 'time banking' service coordinated through the community hubs, whereby residents offer their time and availability to each other for mutual benefit and are able to both 'deposit' and 'withdraw' time-banking units for tasks such as giving someone a lift in their car to an appointment, taking a neighbour's dog for a walk, etc.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 By reviewing the current published repairs policy we have identified a number of potential improvements which are proposed for implementation.

3.2 **Amend the wording within the document to make it more understandable and easier to read for our tenants** – We identified that the document was not easy to read and did not 'flow' in a logical sequence. We have edited and revised it to ensure that each section aligns and sits within its area of information being provided.

3.3 **To remove lease holder section** – We have made the recommendation for this section to be removed as it is not relevant to our tenants; in addition Leaseholders do not qualify for any of our repairs under our repairs policy and do not have access to the services provided through the policy. A separate document will be developed for leaseholders and for their sub-tenants.

3.4 **To add a specific Damp & Mould section** – The implementation of the new Damp & Mould team and other significant work in relation to the processes and support to tenants has been added to the policy.

3.5 **To refine the document layout** – We have made changes to the layout of the policy so that each section follows and is coordinated to the previous section. This is to make the whole document easier to read and follow and when looking for specific sections it will be easier to find.

3.6 **Strengthening the wording in relation to recharges and responsibilities** – This section has been amended to remove any ambiguities and reflect more clearly where a recharge is applicable.

3.7 **To align the repairs policy to 'Right to Repair' and have this as a separate appendix C** – We have removed the section relating to the statutory 'Right to Repair' entitlements of tenants and added this as an appendix. We have also amended the policy by improving our priorities against the right to repair priorities; each 3 day priority under the right to repair has been changed within the policy to 24 hours. In total there are 20 right to repair priorities, we

have improved on the timescale for 9 of these to ensure we meet our statutory requirements and give our tenants the best service possible.

- 3.8 **To add the tenancy agreement as a further appendix B** – The repairs policy references the Tenancy agreement throughout the document, so for easy reference for tenants we have now incorporated this as an appendix.
- 3.9 **To focus on tenants being more independent and allowing them to make improvements to their homes where appropriate.** The revised policy sets out how permission to perform some repairs can be obtained and monitored.
- 3.10 **Development of a dedicated Frequently Asked Questions ('FAQ') document.** Despite the changes above, as a comprehensive document setting out the full range of repairs and responsibilities the policy document is still relatively long and technical in nature. To complement it was have developed an FAQ document to go on to the website and to displayed in blocks etc., which provides clear and simple answers to the questions most often put to Call Centre staff, the Quality Assurance team and Tenancy Service staff in relation to repairs. This document in particular will remain under constant review and can be quickly amended to reflect any new issues as they emerge.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The draft repairs policy reflects our ambitions to
- deliver the responsive repairs service to a higher standard
 - make the published policy easier to understand by putting it into a more readable and easy to follow format for our tenants, setting out more clearly our expectations and what our tenants can expect from us as a Council and a modern social landlord
 - be more transparent and accountable through a dedicated FAQ leaflet and other awareness-raising exercises
 - continually improve the service through innovations such as Mears accreditation for tenants wanting to carry out their own repairs, and linking this permission to wider community models such as time-banking

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

- 5.1 No formal consultation is required but feedback will be sought from a range of partners and stakeholders (including the Committee) as set out in the main body of the report.

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

- 6.1 No specific implications identified.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

The cost of all repairs to tenanted properties carried out by the Council is borne within the Housing Revenue Account. The impact of changes to practice in this area will need to be carefully monitored in terms of their budgetary impact. The Council has a duty to balance the HRA in each financial year.

There are no financial implications.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Chima Obichukwu**
Housing Solicitor

The Council has a legal obligation as a landlord to maintain its rented properties in an adequate state of repair. As set out in the main body of the report these proposals are intended to enhance the service's compliance in this area.

7.3 Diversity and Equality **Natalie Warren** **Community Development Manager**

Whilst there are no direct implications arising from this report, the future emphasis on empowering tenants to undertake their own repairs, and to help others, has the potential to increase community cohesion amongst tenants.

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):

- The Right to Repair; <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/housing-repairs-and-maintenance/right-to-repairs>
- The repairs policy; <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/housing-repairs-and-maintenance/our-repair-responsibilities>

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix A – Draft Repairs Policy

- Appendix B – Right to Repair
- Appendix C – Tenant’s FAQ’s Document

Report Author:

Sue Murray

Housing Asset and Investment Delivery Manager

Adults, Housing and Health

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Housing Repairs Policy

1	Housing Repairs & Investment	2
1.1	Resident Focused Service for Effective Asset Management	2
1.2	Types of Repairs & Maintenance	3
2	Repairs Responsibilities	4
2.1	Our Responsibilities to You	4
2.2	Right to Repair	5
2.3	Your Responsibilities as a Tenant	5
2.4	Your Responsibilities as a Leaseholder	6
2.5	Extra Help for Vulnerable Residents	6
2.6	Pre and Post-Capital Works (Transforming Homes)	7
2.7	Tenant Improvement Works	8
2.8	When You May Not Receive a Repair	8
3	Rechargeable Repairs	9
4	Damp & Mould	10
5	How to Contact Us	11

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

1 Housing Repairs & Investment

1.1 Resident focused service for effective asset management

Thurrock Council has an ambitious housing strategy which supports the Council's vision that Thurrock will be "a place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish".

As part of this strategy, the Council takes a wide-ranging approach to meeting housing needs in the borough:

- Capital investment in housing stock: ensuring tenants and leaseholders have an improved standard of living – which may include new kitchens, bathrooms and external building fabric works including improved thermal efficiency measures.
- Efficient and effective asset management: delivering repairs and maintenance to ensure the long term value of Council assets while providing an improved service for residents.

Delivering this effective management of Council housing assets ensures that resources are focused on housing assets, issues and residents where need is greatest. It also delivers a service focusing on long term maintenance, extending the life of housing assets.

This Repairs Policy forms a key part of delivering effective asset management, setting out:

- **Our responsibilities to you** - What service we deliver in maintaining properties.
- **Your responsibilities as a tenant or leaseholder** - How tenants have a shared responsibility in maintaining their homes.
- **Extra help for tenants** - Where tenants have a disability or medical condition which means they can't carry out minor repairs, we provide extra support.

The Repairs Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Appendix A: Repairs Responsibilities
- Appendix B: Standard Tenancy Agreement
- Appendix C: Right to Repair Information

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

1.2 Types of repairs and maintenance

In delivering effective asset management and maximising value in funding, Thurrock Council has a range of delivery streams for asset investment, repairs & maintenance:

- **Responsive Repairs** - The responsive repairs service addresses all emergency, urgent or routine repairs.
- **Batch Repairs** - Where there are a number of repairs to the same property component, these may be combined into a batch repairs programme – this typically includes fencing, gutters and drainage repairs / replacement;
- **Communal areas** – The repairs service will also maintain communal areas to ensure these remain safe accessible areas. Elements covered will include but are not limited to:-
 - Estate roads
 - Shared gardens
 - Car park areas
 - Playgrounds
 - Boundary walls and fences on the estate and general areas you use with others
 - Community bin stores in a block or shared part of the estate, shared washing lines and posts
 - Lifts and lighting to shared passages, landings, staircases and other shared indoor parts of the estate.

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

2. Repairs Responsibilities

2.1 Our responsibilities to you

Thurrock Council is required to maintain the structure and exterior of the property to a good standard of repair. The Council will also keep any installation provided by us for space heating, water heating, water sanitation and the supply of water, gas and electricity in good repair and proper working order. This includes:

- Cisterns, tanks, pipes, wires and drains in the property which also serve other properties, for example, soil stacks or rising mains.
- Gas and water pipes or electrical supply cables and wires into the block, up to but not including the meter or stopcock in your property.
- Outside and inside structural or party walls, but not the inside surfaces
- Any entrance doors and frames which open onto the outside of the building and not a landing or corridor.
- Outside window frames and sills.
- Roofs, chimney flues and stacks, gutters, rainwater and soil pipes, sewers, drains channels and watercourses.
- Balconies, passages, landings, staircases and other shared parts of the estate.
- Communal TV or radio aerials.
- Entry phone or door-entry system.
- Building foundations below ground.

For more detail on repairs we undertake and completion times please refer to section 3.1 and Appendix A.

In maintaining these elements of the Property, Thurrock Council go beyond the minimum statutory requirements. When required we offer additional levels of provision in repairs services for all residents, as well as extra help for those who need it (Please refer to section 2.5).

If we fail to carry out the repair within a reasonable timeframe you may be entitled to have repairs which are our responsibility carried out by another contractor. We will provide information about this if you ask us.

The Council has a responsibility to ensure that it meets the statutory requirements in relation to the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations 1998. We will comply with our statutory duty to check any gas fitting and the flues serving it in the Property at least once a year in order to minimise the risk of explosion or carbon monoxide poisoning. The Council will:

- Maintain gas appliances in good working order.
- Undertake an annual safety check by a Gas Safe registered engineer.
- Keep records of safety checks.
- Issue a certificate to the resident within 28 days of each annual check.

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

2.2 Right to repair

This repairs policy strictly adheres to the 'right to repair' legislation, this ensure emergency / urgent repairs that may affect your health, safety or security are completed within a set time frame. This legislation also sets out your rights as a tenant in relation to repairs undertaken by us a landlord.

Please refer to Appendix A & C for full details of applicable repairs and the right to repair process and legislation.

2.3 Your responsibilities as a tenant

Thurrock Council does not have any duty to carry out any repairs until such time as you tell us that they are required. You must notify us if any repairs are needed to the property or the communal areas which are our responsibility.

You must also allow us access to carry out the repair please refer to clause 3.8 in the Tenancy Agreement for further information.

When repairs are required, you are responsible for moving furniture and lifting carpets to allow repairs to be completed. If carpets have to be lifted to undertake a repair neither the Council or its contracted partners can be held responsible for any damage.

In maintaining assets as effectively and efficiently as possible, the Council must prioritise works for property repairs and residents most in need. At the same time, tenants are required to have shared responsibility in maintenance of the property. This means that Tenants have a responsibility to treat the inside of the property and all internal fixtures and fittings, as well as communal areas, in a tenant-like manner.

In light of the above you are required to keep the interior of the property in a good and clean condition and completing minor repairs around the home. Minor repairs you are expected to undertake but are not limited to include:

- Replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes and fuses.
- Sanitary fittings such as toilet seats, plugs and chains for baths, basin and sinks.
- Clearing minor blockages to drains or waste pipes caused by you or members of your household.
- Decorate all internal parts of the property as often as is necessary to maintain a good decorative standard.
- Undertake minor repairs to the property including the fixtures and fittings within the kitchen and bathroom areas. This includes all bathroom fittings and tiling, kitchen cupboards, drawers, handles and worktops.

You must also ensure that drains and waste pipes are not blocked by the disposal of unsuitable matter for example cooking oil, fat, nappies and sanitary items and to report to us promptly any problems with the drains and waste pipes.

More detail on repair responsibilities can be found in Appendix A.

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

As part of the shared responsibility for maintaining the property, tenants are also responsible for repairing damage caused to the property or our installations, fixtures and fittings or the communal areas by the tenant, their household or their visitors (please refer to section 3.0 rechargeable repairs).

You are responsible for the repair and maintenance of your own domestic equipment including supply from the connection point except where we have expressly agreed to take responsibility for repair and maintenance. This includes cookers, washing machines, fridges, freezers, doorbells and all other fittings and appliances supplied by you.

2.4 Permission to improve your property

Secure tenants have certain rights to make improvements in the property, with written consent from the Council. As an example, this may include a new kitchen or bathroom but excludes external decoration, alterations and additions to the installations, fixtures and fittings in the Property. The Council will not unreasonably withhold consent but will make it conditional upon the work being carried out to an appropriate standard. At the end of a tenancy authorised improvements may be left in place but unauthorised works to the property must be reinstated to its original state before the works took place. At the end of your tenancy you may have the right to be compensated for the costs of specified improvements you have carried out to the Property.

In deciding whether to give consent for improvements matters including the safety of the property for occupiers will form part of the considerations, along with any expenditure the Council may have to incur and the impact on the value of the property. Failure to seek our consent or to comply with any conditions will be a breach of your obligations under this tenancy.

In addition you will be required to reimburse us for any expenditure we incur in carrying out repairs to the property as a result of your failing to obtain our consent or failing to carry out the works in accordance with our conditions or other statutory requirements.

2.5 Extra help for vulnerable residents

Thurrock Council has an established protocol which considers the different needs of those residents that may be considered vulnerable. This includes those who:

- Have a mental health problem or mental illness including dementia.
- Have a physical disability.
- Have a sensory impairment.
- Have a learning disability.
- Are old and frail.
- Are experiencing a temporary illness.

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

In order to provide a housing repair & maintenance service which balances effective and efficient service provision with meeting needs of residents, Thurrock Council provides an additional level of service for those residents which fall into the above categories.

The additional level of service includes undertaking some repairs which may ordinarily be the responsibility of the tenant. The full list of responsibilities and additional offers is set out in Appendix A.

In providing this additional level of service, Thurrock Council are supporting the paramount principle of the Vulnerable People at Risk Protocol:

“The Council and its partners have an overriding duty to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of vulnerable individuals living in Thurrock.”

Thurrock Council has an established record of residents that are considered vulnerable under the above categories. However the Council has an ongoing programme to update and understand resident housing needs. If you think one of these categories applies to you or someone you know, please contact your Estates Officer.

2.6 Tenant conduct

The Thurrock Council Tenancy Agreement (Section 4) sets out the expected conduct of Tenants, their household and visitors in the property or the locality. Included within the agreement terms is the requirement that Tenants, their household, lodgers, and visitors:

“must not to do anything in the property or in the locality which causes or may cause a nuisance, annoyance or inconvenience to other persons residing, visiting, working or otherwise engaging in lawful activity in the locality, or to any of our tenants, agents, employees or contractors”

Including:

“Abusing, assaulting, threatening, harassing or obstructing our employees, contractors, agents, or Council members in person, by telephone, in writing or in any other way while they are carrying out their job, whether at the property or elsewhere (e.g. our offices).”

Where such behavior occurs the Council may limit access to the repairs service, except in the case of some emergency works.

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

2.7 Variations to repairs policy (Capital improvement works)

Thurrock Council will undertake more significant improvement and repair works through capital works programmes. These capital programmes may include replacement of key components such as kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and external elements such as windows and doors. Capital works will also include refurbishment and major improvement to community areas within the estates of Thurrock.

Where such works are programmed for your property, repairs responsibilities and completion time might vary. This may mean repairs to your property will be restricted to emergency or make safe repairs only until capital improvements are completed.

2.8 When you may not receive a repair

Right to buy

When we receive your right to buy application we will only carry out emergency or urgent works to your property. These are limited to:

- Repairing and maintaining the structure and exterior of the property.
- The landlord's heating and hot water appliances.
- Pipes and wiring within the property.

We will only place repair orders for repairs needed by law (please refer to section 2.2). Repairs that are not required by law will not be completed. Generally repairs outstanding or underway at completion of the sale will be cancelled.

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

3 Rechargeable Repairs

Tenants have a shared responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the property as set out in your tenancy agreement.

If you fail to adequately repair any damage caused to Thurrock Council property that you, a member of the your household, a visitor to the property or your pets cause and the Council have to carry out repairs. The assigned tenant must reimburse the Council for any reasonable costs the Council incurs in carrying out those repairs. This includes repairs to:

- The property.
- The internal fixtures and fittings.
- The installations or to the communal areas,
- The cost of cleaning any blockage to drains or waste pipes.

It is our policy to reclaim the cost of a repair, inclusive of VAT as applicable, from tenants if they, their family or visitors have caused damage deliberately, maliciously or through neglect. We can invoice you for these costs in which case any failure to pay will be treated as a breach of the Tenancy Agreement.

You must replace locks and/or lost keys where you lose your keys or to reimburse us for such costs if you ask us to do this for you.

Rechargeable repairs due to breakage and neglect

If you need a repair that has come about through breakage or neglect, we will tell you at the earliest possible moment of what it will cost.

- You will need to sign a housing repair recharge form stating that you agree to pay.
- If you do not accept the charge, the repair will not be undertaken unless the work defined as essential by Thurrock Council to maintain safety and the integrity of the property. In this instance works will be undertaken and the bill will be sent the person or persons defined in the Tenancy agreement.
- You can do the repair yourself, as long as it is to a standard we find acceptable.
- If you carry out a mutual exchange there are certain things you are responsible for. You will be asked to sign a works repair responsibility form at the time of your exchange.

Rechargeable repairs due to wear and tear or neglect.

At the start of every Tenancy, a number of things are provided in the property. However, these items fall outside of the repairs policy and tenants will be responsible for maintaining and replacing these items throughout their tenancy. These items are:

- Toilet seat, plugs and chains to sanitary ware, shower head and connecting hose, shower rail and curtain.
- Clothes drying facilities (excluding communal areas)
- Internal doors (except where unsafe) and furniture (locks, handles, hinges).
- Door entrance keys and fobs, a maximum of 2no keys or fobs will be issued for free at the start of the tenancy.

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

Please refer to appendix A for full details regards repairs responsibilities.

Repairs & damage due to burglary

Where damage is caused by burglary or attempted burglary and the incident is reported to the police and a crime reference number is obtained, then damage to the property will usually be repaired by us.

In cases of unreported burglary or attempted burglary or where repeated burglary may be a result of illegal or inappropriate tenant behaviour, we will have discretion to insist on a recharge being applied.

End of tenancy

All tenants are responsible for ensuring any unauthorized alterations to the property are rectified and it is reinstated back to the original condition that it was in at the start of the tenancy agreement. Any works that Thurrock Council needs to undertake to address unauthorized works will be recharged to the outgoing tenant.

4 Damp & Mould

Thurrock Council and their contracted partners will review all reported mould or dampness to a dwelling, depending on the severity of the issue one of the two following approaches will take place.

- For severe cases of dampness or mould growth within a property a survey will take place by a Thurrock Council Building Surveyor. Any required repairs identified by the Surveyor will take place as routine repair within the 20 Days target time.
- Minor mould growth caused by condensation and attributed to housekeeping will be addressed under a batch programme following a review by our contracted delivery partners.

All tenants have a responsibility to maintain the property to a good condition. This includes managing the environment in your home to prevent the occurrence of condensation related mould. If mould does occur you should clean this down using a fungicidal wash solution.

Advice on how to prevent the occurrence of mould within the home can be found at : <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/leaflet-preventing-mould> Insert new link to the online leaflet. Hard copies of the leaflet are also available, if you require a printed leaflet please contact your Estates Officer.

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

5 How to Contact Us

If you wish to contact the Council regarding the information contained in this Repairs Policy, please contact us on 01375 366145. Further details on the Housing Repairs & Improvements are available on our website thurrock.gov.uk/repairs.

To Contact Us

If you wish to contact the Council regarding the information contained in this Repairs Policy, please contact us on 01375 366145. Further details on the Housing Repairs & Improvements are available on our website thurrock.gov.uk/repairs.

Getting involved

Tenants and leaseholders are encouraged to get involved in steering how Thurrock Council delivers services, through a range of forums:

- Tenants Excellence Panel
- Sheltered housing forum
- Leaseholders' forum

More information can be found by visiting the Council's website:

thurrock.gov.uk/get-involved-as-council-tenant

Document Name:	Repairs Policy Document		
Date:	TBC	Release:	Version V.1.2 FINAL

Thurrock Council – Repairs Policy Document

Appendix A: Repairs Responsibilities, Rechargeable Repairs and Right to Repair

Timeframes: Emergency – 24 hours; Urgent – 5 working days; Routine – 20 working days; Batch Repairs – according to programme

Category	Description	Repair Notes	Responsibility	Priority	Rechargeable	Notes	Right to Repair
Emergency – 24 hours							
Bathroom	Repair / renew leaking toilet.		Thurrock Council	Emergency	Y		
Bathroom	Defective Flush - Only WC		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Bathroom	Blocked WC pan; blocked drain, stack or toilet, if there is only 1 toilet in the property	Where stack is blocked, rechargeable to all properties served	Thurrock Council	Emergency	Y		Right to Repair
Bathroom	Blocked Bath/Basin/Sink/Shower		Thurrock Council	Emergency	Y		Right to Repair
Carpentry	Rotten timber floor / stair treads		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Carpentry	Loose or detached bannister or handrail		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Drainage	Blocked / leaking drain	Rechargeable where drain is blocked or damaged by resident	Thurrock Council	Emergency	Y		
Drainage	Unstoppable leak from pipe, tank or cistern		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Electrical	No sockets working		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
Electrical	Unsafe power or lighting socket / switch or fitting	Rechargeable if tenant damage	Thurrock Council	Emergency	Y		Right to Repair
Electrical	Isolate electrics affected by flood or water penetration		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
Electrical	Extractor fan not working in kitchen and / or bathroom		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Electrical (Supply)	Partial loss of power (Internal only)		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Electrical (Supply)	Total loss of electric power		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Electrical (Supply)	Partial loss of electric power including freezer – cannot be plugged in with extension lead		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
External Buildings	Make safe dangerous structure		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
External Repairs	Make safe loose building components	i.e- Loose chimney pot(s), loose / dangerous roof tiles / slates. Loose / unstable brickwork	Thurrock Council	Emergency			

Category	Description	Repair Notes	Responsibility	Priority	Rechargeable	Notes	Right to Repair
External Repairs	Leaks or burst pipes outside the property		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
Gas (Supply)	Total or partial loss of gas supply		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
Heating	Total or partial loss of space or water heating		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Heating	Blocked flue to open fire or boiler		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Kitchen / Bathroom	Tap that cannot be turned on or off		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Lighting (Communal)	No lights to communal areas (including hall, stairs & landings)		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
Lighting (Internal domestic)	Total loss of lighting	No temporary lighting available	Thurrock Council	Emergency			
Security	Insecure ground floor window/door/lock stuck open		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Security	Ground floor door – Stuck closed but only point of access		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Security	Tenant locked in property due to a faulty lock		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
Security	Re-secure front / back door or window to the property	Rechargeable if tenant damage, crime reference number required if vandalism	Thurrock Council	Emergency	Y		
Water (Supply)	Total loss of water supply		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Water (Supply)	Partial loss of water supply		Thurrock Council	Emergency			Right to Repair
Windows (Communal)	Glass broken or badly cracked in communal area		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
Windows (Property)	Re-glaze – if single glazed or boarded up if unsafe		Thurrock Council	Emergency			
Windows (Property)	Re-glaze – if double glazed and both sinks broken or board if unsafe		Thurrock Council	Emergency			

Urgent – 5 working days

Bathroom	Defective shower	Thurrock Council only repair and maintain non electrical showers unless tenant is flagged as vulnerable	Thurrock Council	Urgent	Y	Electric showers in general need tenancies will be recharged to the resident	
Door Entry Systems	Fobs	Rechargeable item for lost fobs, defective fobs will be replaced free of charge, these <u>must</u> be returned to Thurrock Council on receipt of new fob or recharge will apply	Thurrock Council	Urgent	Y		
Door Entry Systems	Intercom / door entry system not working		Thurrock Council	Urgent	Y		Right to Repair
Drainage	Blocked / Leaking stack - not into dwelling		Thurrock Council	Urgent			Right to Repair

Category	Description	Repair Notes	Responsibility	Priority	Rechargeable	Notes	Right to Repair
Drainage	Containable leak from a pipe, tank or cistern		Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Electrical	Cracked/Broken light switch / socket		Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Electrical	Defective immersion heater		Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Electrical (Supply)	Partial loss of power (External)		Thurrock Council	Urgent			
External Repairs	Leaking roof	Excluding garage / shed	Thurrock Council	Urgent			Right to Repair
External Repairs	Communal TV aerials and cables		Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Heating	No hot water		Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Lighting (Communal)	Lamp columns (Estate lighting)		Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Lighting (Internal)	Total loss of lighting	Temporary lighting available	Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Lighting (Internal)	Partial loss of lighting		Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Security	Insecure window – first floor upwards if no access from outside walkway / extension		Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Smoke Alarms	Defective Smoke Alarm – Mains / Hardwired	Tenant to contact repairs line	Thurrock Council	Urgent			
Windows (Property)	Ease & adjust if windows cannot be opened or closed	Emergency priority where ground floor windows	Thurrock Council	Urgent			

Routine – 20 working days

Bathroom	Replace shower curtain		Tenant	Routine		Except aids and adaptations	
Bathroom	Defective shower unit/pump		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except aids and adaptations	
Bathroom	Replace baths, sinks, wash hand basins, Wc's	If element unusable Thurrock Council will repair/replace. Item maybe rechargeable	Thurrock Council	Routine	Y		
Bathroom	Repair cracked hand basin/bath		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Bathroom	Plugs and chains to sanitary ware		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Bathroom	Bath panels		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Bathroom	Replace WC seat		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Bathroom	Defective riser/shower head – non-electrical shower		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Bathroom	Defective shower hose –non-electrical		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Bathroom	Defective Flush more than 1WC in property		Thurrock Council	Routine	Y		
Carpentry	Repair / Replace Architraves & Skirting		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	

Category	Description	Repair Notes	Responsibility	Priority	Rechargeable	Notes	Right to Repair
Carpentry	Internal door furniture (locks, handles, hinges)		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Carpentry	Internal doors (except where unsafe)		Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Carpentry	Door adjustment needed after floor covering laid or removed by tenant		Tenant	Routine	Y		
Damp & Mould	Damp or mould in property – refer to damp and mould info in section 4 of this document		Thurrock Council				
Doors External	Metal gates fitted to external doors	Thurrock Council will not maintain these, they will be removed if repair reported to Thurrock Council.	Tenant	Routine	Y		
Doors External	Door bells	Please see above for door entry systems	Tenant	N/A	Y		
Doors External	Renew wooden doors, front or rear	Only required when repair is not possible	Thurrock Council	Routine			
Doors External	Renewal of UPVC / Secure by design doors	Only required when repair	Thurrock Council	Routine			
Drainage	Clear minor blockage to drains and waste pipes.	Including cleaning of waste trap under sink	Tenant	Routine	Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Electrical	Replacement and maintenance of white goods		Tenant				
Electrical	Replace fuse to plug or in fuse board	Tenants must seek professional advice if they unsure how to replace a fuse	Tenant			Except vulnerable residence	
Electrical	Re-set trip switches	Tenants must seek professional advice if they unsure how to replace a fuse	Tenant			Except vulnerable residence	
External Buildings	Garage Door / Lock Repair		Thurrock Council	Routine		Except vulnerable residence	
External Repairs	Foot paths and paving	Thurrock Council will maintain a path / paved area to ensure safe access and egress to the dwelling to the front and back doors, these paths will be taken from the main highway to the front of the property. Thurrock Council will also only maintain a 500mm wide curtilage of the perimeter of the dwelling to maintain the integrity of the structure.	Thurrock Council / Tenant	Routine	Y	Thurrock Council will not maintain or repair any rear garden paths, paved / patio areas or driveways. If any of these areas become unsafe Thurrock Council will attend and make safe as deemed necessary. These works maybe rechargeable. Except vulnerable residence	
External Repairs	Individual TV aerials, dishes, cables		Tenant				
Garages	Lost Keys to garage		Tenant				
Garages	Faulty garage door lock		Tenant				
Garden Fencing / Walls / Gates	Repair fencing / Garden Wall	Boundary only	Thurrock Council	Routine			
Garden Fencing / Walls / Gates	Repair (Fencing or Garden Wall)	Boundary only	Thurrock Council	Routine			

Category	Description	Repair Notes	Responsibility	Priority	Rechargeable	Notes	Right to Repair
Internal Decorations	Internal decorations of whole rooms. Decorations to a single elevation (wall) or ceiling or skirting to which the repair relates		Tenant		Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Kitchen	Kitchen cupboards and drawers, catches / handles, worktops		Tenant		Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Kitchen	Connect washing machines		Tenant				
Kitchen	Connection of cookers	All tenants must ensure all electrical and gas appliances are connected by a suitably qualified engineer.	Tenant				
Lighting	Replacing light bulbs / Fluorescent tubes		Tenant		Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Plastering	Repairs to hairline cracks or plaster work less than 1m2	Works to be carried out as part of normal maintenance and decorations	Tenant				
Plastering	Repair plaster patch to wall or ceiling	Works up to 6m2	Thurrock Council	Routine			
Security	Replace lost or stolen keys		Tenant		Y		
Smoke Alarms	Defective smoke alarm - Battery	Essex fireservice carryout fire safety visits and install smoke alarms free of charge	Tenant				
Tiling / flooring	Replace loose floor tiles to kitchen / bathroom / WC	If damage is caused by a leak Thurrock Council will undertake repair	Tenant		Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Tiling / flooring	Wall tiling except where damage has been caused by a leak	If damage is caused by a leak Thurrock Council will undertake repair	Tenant		Y	Except vulnerable residence	
Windows (Property)	Secondary glazing – sub frame internal to window of property		Tenant		Y		
Windows (Property)	Reglaze – If double glazed and only one skin broken	Tenants will be recharged if damage is caused by misuse or vandalism	Thurrock Council	Routine			
Windows (Property)	Repair, replace loose handles, catches and mechanisms to windows	Tenants will be recharged if damage is caused by misuse or vandalism	Thurrock Council	Routine	Y		
Batch Repairs							
Damp & Mould	Damp or mould in property – refer to damp and mould info in section 4 of this document		Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			
Drainage	Gutters and rainwater pipe replacement		Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			
Drainage	Clear gutters and rain water pipes		Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			
External Repairs	Repair / Repoint Brickwork (make good)		Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			
External repairs	Repairs to paths or other paved areas provided by the council (outside property boundary)		Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			
Garages	Replace garage door and frame		Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			
Garden Fencing / Walls/ Gates	Fencing	Dividing only	Tenant		Y	Except vulnerable residence	

Category	Description	Repair Notes	Responsibility	Priority	Rechargeable	Notes	Right to Repair
Garden Fencing / Walls/ Gates	Replace Gates	Boundary only	Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			
Garden Fencing / Walls/ Gates	Replace (Fencing or Garden Wall)	Boundary only	Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			
Plastering	Repair plaster patch to wall or ceiling	Works over 6m2	Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			
Windows / Glazing	Blown double glazed unit		Thurrock Council	Batch Repairs			

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Right to Repair

The right to repair scheme is for council tenants. It makes sure that repairs that might affect your health, safety or security are completed quickly and easily. [By law](#) we must complete these within a certain time.

Type of repair	How long will it take	REVISED TIMES
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1 working day	1 working day
Blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack or – where there is no other working toilet in the property – toilet pan	1 working day	1 working day
Blocked sink, bath or basin	3 working days	1 working day
Door entry phone not working	7 working days	5 Working days
Insecure external window, door or lock	1 working day	1 Working day
Leaking from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern	1 working day	1 Working day
Leaking roof	7 working days	5 Working days
Loose or detached bannister or hand rail	3 working days	1 Working day
Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working	7 working days	5 Working days
Partial loss of electric power	3 working days	1 Working Day
Partial loss of water supply	3 working days	1 Working day

Type of repair	How long will it take	REVISED TIMES
Rotten timber flooring or stair tread	3 working days	1 working day
Tap which cannot be turned	3 working days	1 Working day
Toilet not flushing, where there is no other working toilet in the property	1 working day	1 Working day
Total loss of electric power	1 working day	1 Working day
Total loss of water supply	1 working day	1 Working day
Total or partial loss of gas supply	1 working day	1 Working day
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 30 April and 1 November	3 working days	3 Working days
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 31 October and 1 May	1 working day	1 Working day
Unsafe power or lighting socket, or electrical fitting	1 working day	1 Working day

Further information regarding Right to Repair can be found via the following link:

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/housing-repairs-and-maintenance/right-to-repairs>

Should the resident have any further queries regarding this, the resident should in the first instance be advised that further information can be found on the Council's website, as per the link above. Alternatively, if the resident still wishes to speak with someone further to discuss this, the call can be referred to Thurrock.

APPENDIX C

Civic Offices, New Road, Grays
Essex RM17 6SL

Housing Repairs Frequently Asked Questions

- Q.** How can I report a repair?
A. Repairs can be reported by telephone; 0800 074 0169 or via email: repairs@thurrock.gov.uk.
- Q.** Who carries out my repairs?
A. For routine repairs, the Council's partnering contractor is Mears Ltd. However, the Council do have some other contractors which are used for specialist repairs, such as Gas, Door Entry Systems etc.
- Q.** Why was my repair not fixed on the first visit?
A. The Council aims to complete repairs on first attendance, however on occasions, where parts or additional works may be required, this may result in a further appointment being booked in order to fully complete the repair.
- Q.** If I purchase my own materials for works which are not part of the repairs policy, will the Council complete the works?
A. It is not usual practice for the Council to undertake works for a resident, where this is considered out of scope of the repairs policy.
- Q.** Can I repair my property myself?
A. Should you wish to carry out repairs yourself, you may be able to do so, however you must request permission from the Council in the first instance, as per your Tenancy Agreement. Any permission requests should be sent in writing to the Housing Repairs Quality Assurance Team.
- Q.** Why is an emergency appointment a 24 hour timeframe?
A. Emergency repairs are offered a 24 hour timeframe, in line with the policy, however we always aim to attend as soon as possible. If attendance cannot be met during normal working hours, this is then referred to the Out of Hours service.
- Q.** When will the Council upgrade my single glazed windows to double glazed?
A. The upgrading of windows from single to double glazed will be considered as part of the Council's External Transforming Homes programme, which is scheduled to commence from 2019.
- Q.** Will the Council repair the fence to my property?
A. In line with the Council's repairs policy, the tenant is responsible for the repair and maintenance of dividing fences. Where a tenant is considered to be vulnerable, an enhanced repairs service will be offered. The Council does continue to repair and maintain boundary fences.
- Q.** My repair has been added to a batch programme, what does this mean?
A. Batch Programmes allow Thurrock Council to undertake necessary works by grouping together jobs that involve the same property element which enables us to ensure good value for money. To be able to group properties together, we must collate a list of properties which require similar works, these will then be considered and tenants will be updated regarding the decision.

APPENDIX C

- Q.** Can I be added to the assisted decoration programme?
- A.** Eligibility for the assisted decoration programme is based on tenant needs. If a tenant has not already been identified as being eligible, arrangements will be made for an assessment to be carried out by the Tenancy Management Team.
- Q.** I am a leaseholder/private resident and have a repair within my property, will the Council complete this?
- A.** The Council does not undertake repairs to private properties, this is residents responsibility. However, if you are a leaseholder within a block, the Council will repair and maintain any external/communal areas.
- Q.** Why have I been recharged for my repair?
- A.** In line with the repairs policy, where a repair is required due to accident/neglect, works are considered to be rechargeable to the tenant.
- Q.** I have removed wallpaper and the wall requires plastering repairs, will the Council complete this work?
- A.** Cases are assessed on an individual basis and are dependent on if the works are deemed to be decorative only and if permission had been granted by the resident prior to removing the wall paper, in line with the tenancy agreement.
- Q.** Why will the Council not repair internal doors?
- A.** In line with the repairs policy, internal doors are considered to be the responsibility of the tenant to repair and maintain. However, where a tenant is deemed vulnerable, an enhanced repairs service will be offered.
- Q.** Does the Council install carbon monoxide alarms?
- A.** The installation of carbon monoxide alarms is the responsibility of the tenant; it is not a statutory requirement for the Council to install these.

Please see below links to the repairs section of the Council's website, this includes the repairs policy and information regarding Right to Repairs.

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/housing-repairs-and-maintenance/our-repair-responsibilities>

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/housing-repairs-and-maintenance/right-to-repairs>

6 February 2018	ITEM: 7
Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
Homelessness Reduction Act Update	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non Key
Report of: Lorrita Johnson, 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

Following the report to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny board on 17th October 2017, there have been a number of further developments affecting the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA17), which takes effect from April 2018.

As set out in that report the HRA17 originated as a private member’s bill tabled by Bob Blackman MP, based on changes made to the Welsh homelessness legislation in 2016, and was fully endorsed by government during its passage.

The thrust of the Act is to create a series of new duties for Councils to prevent homelessness wherever possible through early intervention, working with applicants to arrive at a Personal Rehousing Plan, and brokering solutions with private sector landlords, the voluntary sector and others to resolve the housing problems of applicants without accepting the full range of rehousing duties associated with previous Acts (temporary accommodation followed by permanent social housing). The new duties apply to all applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, while the more substantive existing duties still only apply to households who are a) in priority need and b) not intentionally homeless.

Since the previous report there has been confirmation of the ‘new burdens funding’ allocation for Thurrock, and the publication of a new draft Homelessness Code of Guidance for consultation, to which we have contributed.

This report provides a summary of the updates generated from central government, and the Housing Solutions service’s progress in preparing for implementation through a re-modelling of the service, the acquisition of a new bespoke system for casework and statutory returns, work to strengthen existing partnerships, data

analysis and staff training and analysis to ensure the service is fit for purpose at implementation.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee comment on the information provided on the introduction of the Act and the continued work of the Housing Solutions Service in preparing for implementation.

2. Government updates

2.1 Thurrock has received our individual allocation from the total of £72.7 million transitional 'new burdens' funding given to authorities in England to support the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA17). The total sum allocated to Thurrock is £242,544. This will be distributed as follows:

£81,700 -2017/18

£74,837- 2018/19

£86,007- 2019/20

An additional grant of £9,202 (one off payment) has been awarded in year one to cover the upgrade of IT systems. The 'new burdens' funding is ring-fenced to specifically resource the provision of homelessness prevention services.

2.2 Thurrock has also provided an individual response to the consultation of the draft revised Homelessness Code of Guidance. This consultation closed on 11 December 2017 and the final version of the Code is expected to be published in spring this year. The draft Code provides some helpful clarification on the range of new legal duties established by the Act, and fleshes out some of the government's expectations around the provision of an effective prevention service, including the creation of a personal rehousing plan for all applicants who are eligible and homeless or threatened with homelessness.

2.3 The 'trailblazers' projects in a number of local areas, which were awarded £20m by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly DCLG) to pilot the new prevention duties, have completed a year of trialing the prototype service. Southwark Council as a trailblazer borough has been sharing its experience to inform other local authorities at a number of workshops days, one of which was attended by managers and staff from the Housing Solutions service in Thurrock.

3. Housing Solutions Team - Update

3.1 The Housing Solutions service pilot in Thurrock continues, and has given an insight into how the service can be further re-designed to meet the new anticipated demand and apply the new ways of working created by the Act. The current service model offers a clear division between the prevention and statutory homelessness enquiries functions.

- 3.2 Essentially the team currently operates in a two-function system where 60% of staff focus on the prevention of homelessness, carrying out initial assessments of the circumstances and needs of all eligible applicants who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, in accordance with the HRA17 framework. This extension from the previous specified period of 28 days is intended to provide more time for effective prevention casework (something Thurrock already undertakes on an extra-statutory basis), and aligns with the notice period for Assured Shorthold Tenancies in the private sector. During this period the Council must take 'reasonable steps' to prevent homelessness – again this puts into law the approach already followed by the service in negotiating with landlords, mediating with parents in 'family exclusion' cases, referring older people for sheltered housing, etc.
- 3.3 As the priority need and intentionally homeless tests in the legislation are not applied at this prevention stage, this also means that single applicants in particular must be provided with a meaningful casework service, rather than 'turned away' or provided with minimal information, on the basis that even if homeless they will not be entitled to direct provision of accommodation. Our 'offer' to single applicants with no apparent priority need will be enhanced to reflect this requirement.
- 3.4 The initial assessment by Options Advisors incorporates the circumstances leading to the customer's homelessness or threat of homelessness, their housing needs and wider support needs. Following the assessment a Personalised Housing Plan is drawn up setting out the 'reasonable steps' the authority and the applicant will take to assist in preventing the homelessness. Officers make real efforts to assist applicants to stay in their current accommodation; this often involves negotiations with the current landlords, mediation with friends/family, robust review of tenancies agreements/contracts, advising applicants of their security of tenure and close working with the Private Sector Housing team where harassment and/or disrepair has been alleged.
- 3.5 As an example of pro-active prevention, an enhanced partnership is in progress with Children's Services where families with children have received notice to leave their accommodation, either from the Council itself as a social tenant or from a private landlord, and are at risk as a result of being found intentionally homeless. Staff in the Multi Agency Service Hub ('MASH') with responsibility for children's welfare are now being notified at an early stage that a negative decision on a homeless application may be upcoming, allowing them to assess the need for a social services intervention at an early stage and avoid a late 'shuttling' of homeless families from one service to another. Similarly, joint working is being developed to utilise the skills of housing staff to identify suitable private accommodation where families can be placed under the Children Act if they have no right to be accommodated under homelessness legislation.

- 3.6 Where an applicant is homeless on approach, or all efforts at prevention of homelessness have been unsuccessful, the statutory homelessness assessments are conducted by the Homeless Caseworkers who carry out detailed homelessness enquiries within the guideline timescales, in accordance with the legislation, having regard to the Code of Guidance and relevant case law. On completion of assessments they issue formal homelessness decisions (section 184 notifications) and where an accommodation duty has been triggered they make the necessary recommendations for the provision of temporary accommodation.
- 3.7 A new Reviews Officer has been recruited on an interim basis to manage reviews and all initial legal challenges of section 184 decisions. This follows the winding-up of the previous arrangement under which a Reviews Officer in Basildon fulfilled this duty for Thurrock, but is still compliant with the legislation as the officer is senior to the officers making the 'first instance' decisions and has no involvement in those decisions, coming afresh to the case after a review has been requested.
- 3.8 Work is underway with St Mungo's outreach team and local faith groups to establish a Homelessness Forum in the borough which would include third sector and voluntary organisations to combine efforts to identify and tackle homelessness at earlier stages. This will steer the 'no first night out' agenda where rough sleepers are identified on the day of bedding down and provided with options to relieve their homelessness and eradicate the potential for an applicant to become 'entrenched' as homeless.
- 3.9 The Housing Solutions Team is also participating in a free trial of a new bespoke IT system which has been built and tailored to the requirements of HRA17. This will help to capture and accurately assess applicants at the first point of contact and also streamline the process for gathering data for the new quarterly statutory return, Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) – this replaces the current 'P1e' return for homelessness statistics which is used to produce the government's 'statistical release' on homelessness. The first HCLIC return will be for the period from April to June 2018. The new system has been demonstrated to staff who have received it enthusiastically, and will interface with the main database so that all key transactions are reflected on both systems.
- 3.10 A full programme of internal staff briefings and training has been developed to provide awareness and knowledge of the new Act. The primary aim is to increase the cross-service prevention culture, highlighting each team's role in preventing homelessness. The additional "referring duty" of the HRA17 places a duty on public services to notify a local authority if they believe someone is homeless or likely to become homeless. This requires management of the interaction between a number of agencies and public bodies. In light of this, staff from Adult Social Care were included in training provided by the National Practitioner Support Service on the changes in the Act.

- 3.11 A service Team Plan has been developed to specifically target essential tasks and actions required in implementing the requirements of the new Act. This includes the development of robust policies and procedures for staff to refer to when assessing applications at the new 'prevention duty' stage.
- 3.12 A Landlord Forum has also been arranged on 31st January 2018 to build on our dialogue with private sector landlords and lettings agents as to how we can better work together and deliver in the new context of the Act.

4. Further considerations on potential impact of the Act

- 4.1 The HRA17 will place greater statutory obligations on local authorities to prevent homelessness for all families and single applicants from April 2018.
- 4.2 For local authorities, partnership working is essential to tackling homelessness. The assistance of a wide range of partners from the statutory, private and the third sectors through the provision of temporary accommodation, settled housing and access to diverse sources of advice and support is central to local efforts to tackle homelessness.
- 4.3 However, there are recent policy developments and market trends that risk undermining these activities and partnerships, including:
- An ongoing undersupply of social and other affordable as recognised nationally in the Housing White Paper (*'Fixing the Broken Housing Market', 2017*) and subsequent Budget announcements.
 - The ongoing need for efficiencies and savings in local government (although the new burdens funding for the Act will offset this general trend for the first 3 years)
 - Increased financial pressures on Housing Associations and stock-retaining local authorities as a result of the mandatory 1% rent reduction policy.
 - In the context of an increasingly deregulated environment, Housing Associations) are required to be more business minded and this may lead to
 - some reluctance to house people perceived to be high risk in terms of welfare
 - dependency and their ability to maintain a tenancy without ongoing/intensive support.
 - A tendency to "cherry pick" tenants who are perceived to be low risk also applies to a large proportion of private landlords. Recent research from the National Landlords Association (NLA) indicates that the proportion of landlords who say they are willing to let their property to Housing Benefit claimants fell to 20%, down from 34% at the start of 2013. This supports the view that Universal Credit, now being fully rolled out in Thurrock, may make private landlords more risk averse to people dependent on benefits.

- The Localism Act 2012 gave Local Authorities the power to discharge applicants into the private rented sector; many authorities continue to use their budgets to offer landlords cash incentives ranging from £2,000 to £6,000 in some cases.
- The effect of this on Thurrock has been an increase in ‘out of borough’ placements of applicants by other local authorities, particularly London boroughs exercising the power to discharge into the private rented sector. Geographically the location of Thurrock makes it a good target for London boroughs to meet its statutory duties as market rents are relatively cheaper, coupled with adequate amenities, and transport links connecting to London areas.

5. Local context

- 5.1 The estimated number of homelessness approaches in Thurrock – i.e. customers approaching with a new episode of actual or threatened homelessness in Thurrock - has been steadily rising in recent years. In 2013/14 the figure was 1252, rising to 2,600 in 2016/2017. As a result the number of households owed the full housing duty is also increasing, although in recent months it has reduced as a percentage of all applications as achieved preventions have increased. The increase is also reflected on the housing register where the level of agreed homeless priority cases, placed in band 3, as a percentage of all applications, has increased from 0.5% in 2013 to 2% in 2017.
- 5.2 It is envisaged that potential advice and prevention case load will increase- the London Borough of Southwark trailblazers pilot found an increase of approximately 50% in homelessness applications.
- 5.3 It is likely that Thurrock will experience a similar impact. It is estimated that if Thurrock did not effectively respond to the changes the number of homeless approaches could rise to over 10,000, the number of booked housing options and homelessness appointments could rise to over 2,040, and the number of homeless decisions could also increase to over 300.

The likely effects of the main changes in the new Act on levels of demand in Thurrock are as follows:

- I. The meaning of ‘threatened with homelessness’ extended from 28 days to 56 days – duty to attempt to prevent homelessness in every case

Cases presenting at the Civic Offices earlier with a longer prevention window

- II. Duty to ‘relieve’ homelessness for all eligible customers (not just those in priority need & unintentionally homeless)

Homelessness applications to rise by up to 50% (estimate derived from experience in LB Southwark) as non-priority cases are newly eligible for support planning

- III. Duty to assess and agree personalised housing support plans for all eligible cases

Significant increase in casework, and need for closer working with other Thurrock Council departments, and public/community organisations

- IV. Duty to give notice to people who do not cooperate or follow their agreed support plans.

Requirement for extended casework times and longer legal processing of challenges (reviews) – although it is encouraging to note that Southwark’s reviews reduced from 106 in 2016/17 to 60 in 2017/18, partly due to the fact that they did not issue formal non-compliance notifications.

- V. Duty of all public authorities to refer people to council housing services

Increased levels of referrals in to the service – in Southwark’s case this impact was apparent but mitigated in part by the a partnership with certain external agencies tasked with completing Personal Housing Plans, helping to reduce the service volumes

- VI. Duty to make reasonable efforts to help secure accommodation, regardless of priority need level or if intentionally homeless

Significant increase in demand on service, officer time, and greater dependence on the private rented sector

6. Reshaping the service post the Code of Guidance

6.1 A further key feature of HRA17 is the duty placed on local housing authorities to make reasonable efforts to prevent or relieve homelessness for all applicants who are a) eligible for assistance and b) homeless or threatened with homelessness, irrespective of whether or not they may have a priority need for accommodation. If a housing authority is unable to prevent an applicant from becoming homeless, or to help them to secure accommodation at the ‘relief’ stage, they are required to reach a decision as to whether the applicant has a priority need for accommodation.

6.2 There is a case for aligning the current allocations policy with the HRA17 assessment framework. Currently, the banding structure means that agreed homelessness applicants are recognised for increased priority banding where a section 193 main housing duty is owed by the authority (‘reasonable preference’ must be given to this group under the Housing Act 1996). The new Act recognises and places a duty on the authority where an applicant is threatened with homelessness within 56 days, thus commencing the prevention duty. If unchanged there is a risk of not fulfilling the requirements of the HRA17 by creating a sub-set of homeless applicants favoured by the allocations policy, and excluding a large group of applicants who may be able to gain a tangible option through the housing register and/or an intervention to prevent them

becoming homeless. Subject to consultation it should be possible to award an equivalent priority to prevention cases so that they do not lose priority by not pursuing a homeless application.

- 6.3 The Housing Solutions Service has been preparing intensively for the challenges of the Act including the anticipated new levels of demand with a focus on early intervention, prevention and targeting of the key cohorts driving the demand.
- 6.4 In summary, as set out above the service is preparing for the range of potential impact through changes to the service structure, the acquisition of a bespoke IT, intensive work with landlords and other agencies assisting with prevention. The actual impact of the new framework will be actively monitored, and further initiatives will be considered as trends in demands and outcomes become known over the first 6 months from April 2018.

7. Reasons for Recommendation

- 7.1 Required as part of statutory service to provide homelessness service, assessing needs and providing resolutions.

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

- None

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

- Review of the Allocations Policy as highlighted above.

10. Implications

10.1 Financial

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

The service intends to meet the majority of the increased demand through the new ring-fenced `new burdens; grant as set out in the main body of the report. As this is for a transitional period only work will be undertaken to ensure that reliance on this funding reduces over time. Following confirmation of the allocation of funds, the service will continue with the regular monitoring to ensure the viability of forecasts and spend.

10.2 Legal

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

It is expected that the service would need 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.

It is expected that the service would need to be familiar and competent 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. It is prudent that Thurrock Council has recruited its own Review Officer to deal with additional legal challenges and casework that will be posed by the HRA 2017 when it comes in to effect.

10.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

The new MHCLG 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.

10.4 **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.

11. **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

12. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

Lorrita Johnson

Housing Solutions Manager

Housing Department

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		
HRA Business Plan and Budgets (2018/19 – 2048)	Roger Harris/ Julie Curtis	Officer
Fees & Charges Pricing Strategy 2018/19	Roger Harris/ John Knight	Officer
Stock Condition survey	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer
Ground Maintenance Service Charge Review	Roger Harris / John Knight	Officer
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
Extraordinary Meeting - 6 February 2018 - CANCELLED		
Mental Health and Domestic Violence within Homelessness Case Reviews	Roger Harris / John Knight	Members
20 February 2018		
Review of garages	Roger Harris /John Knight	Members
Repairs policy	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer

Work Programme

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
Homelessness Reduction Act Update	Roger Harris/John Knight	Officer
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
24 April 2018 – POSSIBLY CANCELLED TBC		
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
Discretionary Housing Payments	Roger Harris / John Knight	Member
Housing Allocation Review	Roger Harris / John Knight	Officer
Estate Regeneration	Steve Cox / Keith Andrews	Officer
Private Sector Licensing update	Roger Harris /John Knight	Officer

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