

5 February 2019		ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Garages Review – Phase 1 Progress Report		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Carol Hinvest, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest, Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report provides an update to Committee on actions taken since the report on this subject considered in February 2018. The report sets out next steps to take forward the garages project work.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the information in this report and the next steps described

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council has a current total stock of 2624 garages and garage plots of which 827 (32%) are empty of which 96 are ready to let. The remainder cannot be utilised at present for a variety of reasons e.g. we do not have keys, it is unclear if there are any items in some garages and these garages will need to be inspected.
- 2.2 This report was requested by the Committee to provide a progress update on the report received in February 2018 and reflects ongoing interest by members in ensuring we are utilising garages more effectively across the borough.
- 2.3 Since the last report was considered by the committee a gap analysis and garage audit have been carried out the results of which have informed this report. More analysis has been undertaken on the stock condition survey which has revealed that a more in depth survey is needed.

- 2.4 Demand for garages varies across the borough as shown in this table of data from Northgate on garage applications on the system. This shows the areas requested rather the number of applications as residents can request a number of different areas. This information will enable us to focus work on areas of greatest demand.

Garage Area	Applications
South Ockendon	376
Blackshots/Stifford Clays	249
Grays	236
Chadwell	220
Tilbury	196
Corringham	185
Stanford Le Hope	138
Purfleet	128
East tilbury	120
Aveley	118

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 A garage audit and gap analysis have been carried out within the Housing Service to ascertain the next steps to be taken to better utilise the garage stock.
- 3.2 It a project will be put together sponsored by the Assistant Director of Housing with project support from the Housing Quality and Business Improvement Team, involving the Strategic Lead, Housing Operations, the Estates Services Manager and a Garage Project Officer.
- 3.3 The project team will develop that an action plan to deliver the following outcomes:
- A full structural integrity survey of the garage stock to understand the current state of the garages and those that have a future and those that do not. The last such survey was undertaken in 2009 so ten years later would seem an appropriate time to review this data and undertake a new survey. We hope this survey would start in April 2019 and take approximately two months to complete. The stock condition survey was based on a review of 10% of the garages, this survey would review all the blocks and ensure that their structure is analysed. We are aware that a number of blocks have spalling concrete for example.
 - A programme of decoration of garage doors by the Community Payback team, this project has been discussed with the Community Safety Partnership Manager and has been agreed as a good project. This will commence once the weather has improved. This will improve the general outlook of garages which has been a key request of residents and members.

- Once we are clear which garage blocks have reached the end of their lives structurally and which have not the project will work with colleagues in Regeneration to assess sites that may be suitable for housing development either by the Council or by Thurrock Regeneration Limited.
- Another possibility for blocks that are no longer viable is to demolish the garages and create additional parking. There is a growing demand for parking spaces which can be hard to fulfil and can create issues between neighbours or health and safety concerns for the Council. Where possible additional parking spaces will be delivered.
- A review of the garage tenancy agreement with colleagues in Legal. As the previous garage report made clear many garages across the borough are no longer fit for purpose for storing cars and are used as general storage by residents. The garage tenancy agreement needs to be reviewed to reflect these circumstances and the issues around insurance on both sides.
- Review the rent for the garages consider the level at which a higher rent for non-Council tenants would increase income to the Housing Revenue Account without impacting on demand. Any proposals for changes to be made for garage rent setting for 2020/21.
- Implement the findings of the garage audit to bring garages back into use starting with those in the areas of highest demand.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The proposals contained in this report are based on the recent work completed within the Housing Service and seeks to take forward a set of realistic proposals to improve the garages that form part of the Council housing stock.

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

- 5.1 The Council will consult with residents as required by the outcome of individual parts of the report for example where garages are proposed for redevelopment.

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 and Development Accountant

The Council has an ongoing repairs budget of £75,000, in 2019/20 an additional £200,000 (we will have been allocated from the non-ring-fenced right to buy receipts subject to the sign off of the HRA Business Plan. This will support the delivery of the project outcomes.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Simon Scrowther**
Litigation Lawyer

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

Whilst there are no direct implications at present arising from this report Community Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out in future against proposals where required.

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

- None

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

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

Carol Hinvest
Assistant Director of Housing
Housing Service