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| Committee: Housing Committee | Date: 12 th December 2022 |
| Subject: Chairs Update | Wards Affected: All |
| | For Information |

Resident Engagement

Officers have recently re-designed Resident Engagement in line with the Regulatory changes coming into effect in April 2023.

The housing team is aware that not every resident will have time or want to get involved therefore the new resident menu of involvement has something for everyone. This could be as simple as receiving a quarterly Housing Bulletin and occasional digital survey, through to sitting on one of the new resident panels.

Full information and sign-up forms can be found on the Council Housing 'How to get Involved' page.

In December Housing will also be opening our first 'Resident Living Room' in the newly renovated community room at Gibraltar House.

Created not just for Tenants and Leaseholders but available to any resident of the borough, the aim is to provide a warm, welcoming and safe space for residents to talk.

Working with external partners, we are looking to introduce workshops on a variety of prevalent topics as well as being able to invite Tenants and Leaseholders in to complete income and expenditure forms, discuss their Tenancy or simply request help where needed.

Currently open Wednesday's 10am until 1pm, we are hoping to increase these hours over the next few months as officers have more of a presence on estates.

Ordinary Council – Member questions

A number of members raised questions to the Chair of Housing at the Ordinary Council held on 2nd November which it was suggested in response either were or could be matters to be covered at Housing Committee on 12th December. For completeness, and for the benefit of members not attending the Committee, summaries of the questions and answers are provided below:

Reviewing Contract Performance – 2 questions

Cllr Davies noted that there were high satisfaction rates for the Capital replacement programme for kitchens and bathrooms and the work has been completed to a good standard.

However, there are high number of reports of poor performance and response times for emergency repairs but noted that when issued are raised with Officers they are immediately reviewed. Has there been a review of the emergency repairs performance.

Cllr Aspinall noted that Pilgrims Hatch have an overwhelming example of bad practice and workmanship from the repairs contractor and is not sure whether that is from direct employees themselves or from subcontractors they may employ but it is getting worse and some of them are very serious incidences. Would it be helpful to have a review of the Repairs contract.

Performance of all workstreams within the strategic asset management contract, including repairs, is monitored. In addition to this, an annual review of the contract is completed. We are reviewing the key performance indicators to improve what information is brought to this Committee and there is a report on tonight's agenda.

Contractor Behaviours – 1 question

Cllr Laplain raised that he had been approached by residents at The Gables which is a Sheltered Housing Complex regarding the recent planned works that were undertaken at the Block which included installation of communal doors and other maintenance works, particularly around the insensitive way Contractors were maintaining the areas such as dust across corridors which are very narrow. Is there a Policy in place around the support that is provided to residents.

Prior to any planned works commencing, our partnering contractor, Axis Europe, must provide risk assessments and method statements (RAMS). RAMS are an important health and safety document that is completed by the contractor to identify the steps to be undertaken to carry out a specific activity or task in a safe manner. The RAMS are utilised in conjunction with the risk assessment process. Risk assessments are used to record hazards identified for the project, assess the likelihood and severity of risks and to plan adequate control measures to eliminate or reduce those risks. For this project all cutting equipment used is fitted with dust shrouds to limit the release of dust when cutting the architrave on site. The works required do not generally cause an extensive amount of dust.

There is also a site management team which comprises of a Site Manager who visits site daily and a Resident Liaison Officer (RLO), for residents to contact throughout the working day if they have any concerns. In addition to the site management team, the specialist FRA Third Party Accredited subcontractor also have a building works supervisor, who attends the site every day. Periodic work in progress inspections are also carried out on a regular basis by the Cyclical Projects Co-ordinator.

Cllr Kendall – When will the sprinklers in Drake House and Chichester House be completed?

The sprinkler installation at Drake House is due to be completed before the end of this financial year. The design of the sprinkler system for Chichester House is being prepared. Once this is completed the project will be tendered with the aim to commence works early in the new financial year.

Fire Risk assessment capital programme

Drake House - Phase 2 of Drake House is now underway to install a sprinkler system throughout the block which has been approved by the Fire Service. Tenders have been returned and are being reviewed to ensure value for money is achieved. At present there is not sufficient money in the budget to complete this project in the current financial year due to the increase in costs across the construction industry this year. It will be included in next year's programme.

Chichester House – As with Drake House, a sprinkler system installation has been recommended for this block which has been approved by the Fire Service. A full design of the of the sprinkler system has now been commissioned to provide a revised specification of works. This will go out to tender once the the design and specification are completed.

St Georges Court/Elizabeth House – The flat entrance fire door replacement programme has now been agreed following negotiation with Axis to use an alternative manufacturer who can manufacture and install their own door-sets to avoid delays in lead time for doors that had previously been experienced in Phase 1 of the FRA (Fire Risk Assessment) project. Currently the programme of work is being prepared by Axis. An issue has been identified at Elizabeth House where asbestos insulation board (AIB) has been detected within the panels of the suspended ceilings. These will need to be removed before any FRA works including the flat entrance fire doors can be completed.

Scooter Stores – Sheltered Schemes – Following the implementation of the Mobility Scooter Policy, and in consultation with the Council's Fire engineer to construct scooter stores within five of the sheltered blocks across the borough the Council's FRA technical Consultant has been commissioned to provide the design/specification together with pre-tender estimates for this work to be carried out in the next financial year.

Commercial Heating Major refurbishment works Capital Programme

St Georges Court - Works are nearing completion with the project completion expected by the end of December 2022.

Victoria Court – Works are progressing well, with the commercial heating refurbishment due to be completed in February 2023. The boiler house roof replacement is scheduled to be undertaken by Axis in April 2023.

Kitchen & Bathroom Capital Replacement Programme

The Council's kitchen and bathroom programme which commenced on the 11 April 2022 will see 215 homes received a kitchen and/or bathroom improvement. Resident satisfaction remains high. This year's programme is expected to be completed by the end of January 2023.

Service issues

We were notified of an equipment failure of our Tunstall Careline equipment which had affected 35 Sheltered Housing Properties in Danbury Close, Georges Drive and Ongar Road on 17 November 2022. The Housing team were on site for much of the day to reassure and discuss any individual concerns residents had and to carry out safety checks to the property. Tunstall Engineers were also on site and had managed to reinstate the supply to Danbury Close overnight, but unfortunately the system failed again the following morning. Engineers continued to try to detect the cause of the fault, which the indications are that it could be due to the heavy rain we have experienced which may have caused defects to the underwired cabling. As a precautionary measure due to the uncertainty as to whether we can fully reinstate the supply ahead of the weekend, the Housing Team along with Axis visited every affected property to check the secondary hard wired smoke detectors and where necessary have been fitting additional alarms where there is no 2nd alarm. All residents were also offered a disbursed alarm to be installed as a short-term measure until the hard-wired system is operational, however all residents have currently refused this option. There were a small number of residents that we could not carry out the additional checks due to them being away or on holiday and letters were hand delivered to these properties to advise them of the issue and asking them to contact us on their return.

As a wider precautionary measure, the Housing Team had also been carrying out further pull cord checks on Sheltered Properties in the Pilgrims Hatch area to check that no additional properties were affected by the issue which has confirmed that the issue is limited only to the 35 properties above.

Tunstall Engineers remained on site that day however, we are advised that it unlikely that they will be able to fully reinstate the equipment until next week. Our sheltered Housing Duty Officer was aware of the situation should there be any further difficulties over the weekend.

Access was required to a specific property in Danbury Close to enable the fault to be rectified. Arrangements were made with the resident for Tuesday 29 November and Tunstall replaced cabling from Danbury Close to Ongar Road. Checks were completed on the system in Danbury Close, Ongar Road and Georges Drive which confirmed the system was working.

Housing Needs update

Congratulations to the Housing Options Team who were part of a team that won an award at the Essex Housing Awards 2022 in November for their partnership working with the Mid Essex Rough Sleepers Initiative Outreach service which includes Essex County Council, Essex Partnership Foundation and nine District Councils, including Brentwood, Braintree, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Harlow, Rochford, Tendring and Uttlesford District Councils. The aim and objective of the Partnership is to solve rough sleeping and single homelessness within its boundaries, providing interventions that build positive relationships with new and entrenched rough sleepers and hand hold them off the streets and into sustained accommodation. The service also links rough sleepers to support services and provides employment and training support.



Raingardens

Essex County Council will be putting in Raingardens at Cherry Avenue and the Thrift wood estate. They have identified the area as a persistent flood risk and following successful schemes elsewhere they are rolling it out.

A raingarden is a series of specially designed verges that will alleviate the flooding of roads and houses and reduce pressure on local drains and water sources.

They are aware that at Cherry Avenue there is already concrete verges for parking and they will be upgrading these to be permeable and allow for a greater capture of water.

Two consultations were held on Thursday 10th November.

The intention is for works to begin in March 2023 and last for around 2 to 3 months. The full consultation pack for these works is available at Appendix 1.