

Housing Estate Improvement Policy (Housing, Maggie Ward)

Synopsis of report:

This reports request approval to carry out a consultation with tenants on a new Estate Improvement Policy.

The policy aims to bring forward improvements that are outside the usual reactive or planned maintenance programmes enabling resident to request improvements and ensuring the budget for these is allocated in a fair, transparent, and beneficial way.

Recommendation(s):

Members approve an 8 week consultation exercise with tenants and leaseholders on the draft Estate Improvement Policy (appendix A).

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 Historically there has been a limited budget for estate improvements with additional works being carried out through the reactive and planned maintenance programmes. This policy and an increased budget will enable a more focussed and planned approach to estate improvements enabling residents to be involved in the process and giving more priority to communal areas and estate environments.

2. Report

- 2.1 A draft Estate Improvement Policy is attached at Appendix A. This will enable an improvement pipeline to be drawn up, encouraging proposals from stakeholders, and ensuring that the budget is apportioned geographically across the stock. Estate works may need to be tendered and a longer-term plan will ensure procurement of some approved projects early in each fiscal year ensuring the full budget can be spent.
- 2.2 When assessing proposals consideration will be given to:
- Urgency of work
 - Anticipated cost of the proposal
 - The scope for the proposal to be funded from another source.
 - Benefits of the proposal, including the number of residents who would benefit.
 - Feedback from tenants impacted by the proposal.
 - Severity of issue that proposal aims to address.
 - Projects that have been undertaken or are currently in progress in the location.
 - Ongoing cost of maintenance and upkeep of the improved area and whether this has an impact on service charges.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 Runnymede Council's Corporate Business Plan 2022-2026 has 5 key objectives, one of which is Empowering Communities: To support groups and societies with initiatives to strengthen their communities and to represent and advocate for our residents' interests
- 3.2 The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan sets out an objective to have Well managed neighbourhoods where the exterior and communal areas of our homes will be well maintained through investment.
- 3.3 The Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2021-2026 targets an increase in the number of tenants and groups actively involved in improving their estates and neighbourhoods as a key performance measure.

4. **Resource implications**

- 4.1 There is an existing annual budget of £200,000 which will be utilised for these works.

5. **Legal implications**

- 5.1 Under the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 housing authorities are empowered to provide housing and expend funds on the land which surrounds such housing provision. The proposal which is being consulted on would fall within the powers granted to the Council as a Housing Authority.

6. **Equality implications**

- 6.1 Monitoring of the Estate Improvement budget with a clear and transparent process will ensure that residents, ward members and officers are able to propose improvements which are then assessed using consistent criteria and are scheduled over a multi-year programme increasing the time available for consultation and resident participation.

7. **Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

This policy will ensure that these implications are given due consideration and promoted within estate Improvement programme.

8. **Consultation**

- 8.1 An eight week consultation is proposed with the results to be brought back to this committee with a final draft to a future meeting of this committee.
- 8.2 Consultation to focus on tenants and leaseholders of properties with internal and external communal areas.
- 8.3 A dedicated webpage where residents can share their thoughts on this policy.

9. **Conclusions**

Members approve a consultation with stakeholders on the draft Estate Improvement Policy.

(To resolve)

Background Papers – none