

## **CHANGES TO CLEANING CONTRACT**

Report of the Director of Investment and Regeneration

### **1. SUMMARY**

This report outlines improvements being made to the cleaning of flats and further improvements that require the support of the Local Housing Boards.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Local Housing Board supports ongoing changes to increase the cleaning of blocks of flats and the aim to make that a standard based on weekly cleaning.
- 2.2 The Local Housing Board recommends that the Council introduces a new cleaning service for flats that are currently only cleaned fortnightly. The new service to be based on weekly cleaning with a revised service charge to recover those costs.

### **3. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION**

#### **Adding blocks of flats to the cleaning contract**

- 3.1 It's often assumed we clean the communal areas of all flats, but many are left to the residents to clean – about 80 blocks. This joint responsibility of all residents often isn't practical, leaving flats in an unsatisfactory condition.
- 3.2 To add a block to the cleaning contract does not require approval from the Council or the Local Housing Boards. It's an established process that has been happening for years, either because residents request it or because we have to step in due to the poor condition of a block. The cost of cleaning is recovered from all residents in the block as a service charge.
- 3.3 However, until very recently it has been a few years since any block has been added to the cleaning contract, even though there really was a need to do so. The reason was that although the Council would receive the additional service charge income from extra blocks, it wasn't given to Derby Homes to spend on cleaning. That situation has now been resolved.
- 3.4 The first group of blocks was added in April 2010, which were the ones housing officers rated the worst. Housing officers are now recording regular inspections of all blocks and identifying those where residents are not keeping them to a satisfactory standard. Residents are notified and given a chance to improve cleaning standards, otherwise the block is added to the cleaning contract.

- 3.5 Even where residents are keeping their block clean, we are going to ask if they want to be added to the contract. Their choice and a simple majority decision.

### **Changing blocks from fortnightly to weekly cleaning**

- 3.6 Another big problem is that most of the blocks on the cleaning contract only receive a fortnightly service – about 80 blocks. This simply isn't realistic, as the communal areas are used by many residents and visitors, coming in and out in all weather. In between our fortnightly visits, the residents are jointly responsible for keeping the communal areas clean. We need to do more at these blocks.
- 3.7 We propose to move fortnightly blocks over to weekly cleaning. This would effectively be a new service, which as standard would include regular stripping/polishing of vinyl floors, window cleaning in communal areas and some caretaking work to bin stores, drying areas, etc. A new service charge for each block would be calculated based on actual costs and shared between residents.
- 3.8 Although very few people would disagree with increasing cleaning to weekly, it's actually harder to do this than adding a new block because it is a change to an existing service charge. The Council wants a recommendation from the Local Housing Boards and this report seeks that recommendation. Support has already been received from the Local Housing Board South.
- 3.9 We've written to all fortnightly blocks to say we don't consider our service to be good enough, proposing to move them to the new standard weekly service with additional work. We provided residents with a revised cost for their own block.
- 3.10 Obviously many agree but a fair number aren't so supportive. A negative reply typically questions why they should pay when it is other irresponsible residents who are to blame. We will discuss the situation with those who don't support the change, pointing out that somehow we have to ensure communal areas are kept to a satisfactory standard. We think many people will be persuaded.
- 3.11 But where we still don't achieve agreement, housing officers will identify which blocks are being kept to a good standard by residents in between our fortnightly cleans - and those which are not. Residents of unsatisfactory blocks will be notified and given the chance to improve things, but if they fail to do so we propose to move the block to the new weekly cleaning service.

## **4. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS**

Where we propose changing the service to weekly, we are consulting all residents and encouraging them to give feedback either over the phone or by reply slip. We are following up any negative reply.

## **5. FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

Service charges are calculated for each block to recover actual costs, shared between all residents. The Council has agreed that any additional income will be added to our cleaning budget so that we can fund the improved service.

## 6. LEGAL AND CONFIDENTIALITY IMPLICATIONS

As the landlord of the building, Derby Homes and the Council have both a right and a responsibility to take action to ensure communal areas are kept in satisfactory condition. Where unsatisfactory we have a responsibility to all the residents to take action. To achieve this we can introduce new or revised services where necessary and recover the cost through service charges. As well as our responsibility to residents, keeping the communal areas of flats in a good condition also helps reduce turnover and makes flats easier to let, so increasing the sustainability of the block and the area.

**The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report:**

- Personnel
- Environmental
- Equalities Impact Assessment
- Health & Safety
- Risk
- Policy Review

**If Board members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact the author, or the Chief Executive, [phil.davies@derbyhomes.org](mailto:phil.davies@derbyhomes.org) - Tel 01332 711010**

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**Background Information:** None

**Supporting Information:** None