



To: Executive Councillor for Housing (and Deputy Leader): Councillor Catherine Smart
Report by: Sandra Farmer
Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Management Board 04/6/2013
Wards affected: All Wards

REVIEW OF GARAGES ACROSS THE CITY - UPDATE Not a Key Decision

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress made in the review of garages across the City following the June 2012 HMB committee report.
- 1.2 It highlights a garage site in the centre of the City where there are high void levels and a need of investment in this site to improve the area.
- 1.3 Outcomes from review:
Reduced void levels.
Increased income for the HRA
Improved lighting in garage sites
- 1.4 This report proposes a variable charging mechanism due to identified increased use of some garage sites by individual commuters and companies for low cost parking purposes. These are typically sites situated near the town centre.
- 1.5 As part of this review the garage tenancy agreement has been reviewed and updated by the working group following best practice making the garage tenancy conditions clearer for our garage tenants.
This tenancy agreement will become part of our existing garage letting and management policy and procedure, which is currently under review.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

- 2.1 To approve the implementation of the variable garage charges effective from September 2013 for all existing and future garage tenancies.
- 2.2 To approve the reviewed Conditions of Tenancy and Agreement for garage tenants.
- 2.3 To approve the recommendation to undertake a thorough and detailed cost appraisal of the St Matthews Street garage site and bring a report to a future HMB with the findings of the appraisal and recommended options based on this.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council garage stock consists of 1859 garages and 7 chargeable parking spaces.
- 3.2 Following June 2012 HMB a working group was set up comprising of Officers, HMB Resident representatives, Chair of HRP and Councillors to agree work to be carried out on identified garage sites across the City and to highlight any in need of further discussion at a future HMB.
- 3.3 The Estates and Facilities Principal Surveyor has drawn up a three-year garage Improvement Plan based on the comprehensive stock condition survey of all garage sites. This survey established the condition of both individual garages and the actual site and quantified the works and costs to improve them.
- 3.4 Garages identified in year one of the Improvement Plan have received improvement works based on a stock condition survey for each site, which established the condition of both individual garages, and the site in general and quantified the works and costs to improve them.
- 3.5 Works carried out to these sites where required include:
 - Removal of asbestos roofing and safe disposal.
 - Reroofing in steel, profiled sheeting.
 - Renewal of guttering and rain water down pipes in UPVC.
 - Repair work to structural concrete, if required.

Fitting of steel profile sheet cladding to concrete/brick end walls where damaged, and to intermediate piers to the front elevation of garages.

New 'up and over' garage doors.

3.6 Improvements to refurbished garage forecourts and lighting in identified blocks are scheduled to take place in the coming year.

3.7 Number of garages and related costs identified in appendix 1

3.8 Work continues to promote the garages across the City in the following ways:

- Advertise garages in identified areas to raise awareness of the availability of renting a garage.
- Mail shots to properties within the locality.
- Advertising on the Council's web site.
- Inform new tenants of garages to rent in their area.
- Future articles in Open Door.
- When letting a property placing information on available garages within the 'Welcome Pack'.

3.9 There is one garage block, which has proved more challenging and has a range of options to consider. Details as follows:

3.10 St Matthews Street:

3.10.1 This is a block of 82 garages of which 32 at the time of writing this report are void, 25 of which we cannot let due to the extensive repairs required.

3.10.2 Due to the high level of investment this site requires it is proposed to make arrangements for a thorough and detailed cost appraisal to be undertaken bringing a report back to a future HMB. The report would detail the findings of the appraisal and recommend options based on this.

3.11 Variable charges for garages.

3.11.1 It has been a number of years since a review of garage rents across the City has taken place. As a result it has been identified that we have:

357 garages at a weekly charge of £9.31

4 garages at a weekly charge of £9.44

4 garages at a weekly charge of £11.16

8 garages at a weekly charge of £11.34

- 3.11.2 75% of our garage users currently pay a weekly rent of £9.13 per week.
- 3.11.3 By bringing a consistent base charge of £9.13 per week to garages across the City there is an annual loss of £4,382
- 3.11.4 Approximately 62% of the garages let in Cambridge are currently let to non-council tenants. Adopting a differential pricing structure could potentially generate additional income to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 3.11.5 The proposed increased charges are lower than daily car parking rates within the City and should not have an impact on garages been used in this way in the future.
- 3.11.6 The table below shows the proposed new charging mechanism for Council garages and if agreed would take effect from September 2013 for all current and future garage tenancies. These rental charges will be reviewed as part of the annual of rent charges.
- 3.11.7 Council tenants and residents living within the neighbourhood of the garage site would not be affected by the proposed increased charge.

City Wide Garage review – Proposed Weekly Charges

Base = £9.13 Base + 1= £11.13 Base + 2= £15.40 Base + 3= £17.40

Non – Council tenants: VAT will apply in all cases.

	Priority	Cost Per week	Variable Charges	Use	Comments
Tenants of City Homes	1	Base (£9.13)	No	Vehicles	If for storage – commercial rates apply
Leaseholder/Resident ie Residents who live within half a mile walking distance of the garage site.	1	Base (£9.13)	No	Vehicles	If for storage – commercial rates apply
Other local residents ie All Residents who live within the Cambridge City boundary.	2	Base + 1 (£9.13 +£2.00 = £11.13)	Yes	Vehicles	If for storage – commercial rates apply
Other Public Bodies/Charities	3	Base + 2 (£9.13 + £6.27 =£15.40)	Yes	Vehicles	If for storage – commercial rates apply
Commuters ie someone who lives outside the Cambridge City boundary	4	Base + 3 (£9.13 + £8.27 = £17.40)	Yes	Vehicles or storage	If for storage – commercial rates apply

Please Note:

Base 1 set at £9.13 per week as 75% of our garage users currently pay a weekly rent of £9.13 per week.

Base + 3 (£9.13 + £8.27=££17.40) set at this level as this is the current commercial weekly rent for garages managed by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Bases + 1 and + 2 have been proportioned out between the above.

3.12 Review of Conditions of Tenancy. Appendix 2

3.12.1 The tenancy agreement is a legal contract between Cambridge City Council and each tenant. It defines the rights and responsibilities of both parties.

3.12.2 Although the Conditions of Tenancy has been revised, the majority of the terms and conditions are similar or substantially the same as those in the current agreement. The main revisions ensure that the document:

Clarifies the relationship between Cambridge City Council and the tenant.

The wording of the Conditions of Tenancy, wherever possible, are simpler and more customer friendly.

Production of a valid registration document and certificate of insurance is required when signing the tenancy agreement. Where a registration document is not available as in the case of mobility cars (a log book is held by owners of mobility cars) a copy of the tax disc should be provided along with two forms of ID.

Storage of bicycle and/or motorcycle in the garage added.

3.12.3 The working group has used best practice from other authorities to produce the revised Conditions of Tenancy for garages tenants.

Appendix 2: Revised Garage Tenancy Conditions.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

Variable charges for garages:

Annual loss of moving to a consistent weekly garage base rent of £9.13 would be £4,382. Details of the breakdown of this amount contained within point 3.11.1 of this report.

The identified £4,382 annual loss assumes that we do not increase rents for existing commercial tenants of which there are approximately 20. If we did increase these immediately it would generate an additional £7,939.20.

It is assumed that the identified annual loss will be more than offset by future commercial, commuter and storage lets being at the higher weekly charge of £17.40.

(b) Staffing Implications

No staffing implications identified.

(c) **Equal Opportunities Implications**

All work undertaken as part of this review will consider parking issues for disabled residents.

(d) **Environmental Implications**

All new lighting will be low energy and/or solar powered.

(e) **Procurement**

Not applicable.

(f) **Consultation and communication**

Affected garage users will be informed of the work being undertaken to their garage in advance of the work being undertaken.

(g) **Community Safety**

Improved lighting on garage sites will enhance the safety of the garage users.

5. Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Garage Refurbishment Costs

Appendix 2: Revised Garage Tenancy Conditions.

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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