

Item

Estates Improvements Scheme 2019-2024



To:

Councillor Richard Johnson, Executive Councillor for Housing

Housing Scrutiny Committee 12/03/2019

Report by:

David Greening, Head of Housing

Tel: 01223 - 457997

Email: david.greening@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 As part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) medium-term financial strategy (MTFS), this committee approved £1 million per annum for 5 years of capital funding for estate improvements. These funds are available from 1st April 2019. An additional revenue resource of £100,000 has been ear-marked in 2019/20 to allow for any revenue investment required to support the programme.
- 1.2 The objective of this report is to introduce members and tenant and leaseholder representatives to the approach officers are taking to:
 - the identification of issues
 - the improvement proposal process
 - officer authorisation
 - prioritisation
 - consultation

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Endorse the approach taken by officers to establish the Estates Improvement Scheme (EIS) as outlined in this report.
- 2.2 Agree that officers will produce a written annual member briefing, outlining the progress made under this programme, to be sent to all members by email at each financial year end for the lifetime of the programme.

3. Background

- 3.1. Since the funding for the EIS was approved last autumn, officers have established a steering group led by Housing Services and chaired by the Head of Housing, but with representation from officers within Maintenance and Assets, Waste and Recycling, Safer Communities and Environmental Health. Officers from the Police's 'Designing Out Crime' team have also been regular contributors to the steering group and have accompanied officers on site visits.

Identification of estate issues

- 3.2 The Council has identified a number of key issues for local estates via a variety of means. The most notable of these is the introduction of an 'estate walkabouts' programme, which started in 2017 and has been led by the two Estate Champions working within City Homes. Tenants, leaseholders and ward councillors are all invited to attend these events and information is posted on the Council's website and in *Open Door*.
- 3.3 The estate walkabout programme has served to enhance existing methods for tenants and leaseholders to engage with the Council about their surroundings; namely, issues raised with tenant and leaseholder representatives, resident inspectors, environment and community days and the identification of complaint themes on estates.

The improvement proposal process

- 3.4 Proposals for works to improve the look and feel of Council Estates need to meet two fundamental principles:
 - The proposal will add value to the asset (the estate)

- The proposal should not act as a substitute for the planned maintenance programme but it may be prudent for the Council to consider including works from the planned programme where it makes sense to incorporate them.
- 3.5 The steering group has devised a set of additional criteria by which proposals are assessed. Any proposal brought forward as part of the EIS needs to meet at least one of the following objectives:
- Build out future cost (i.e. a spend to save initiative)
 - Design out crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Make a visible and positive difference to the aesthetics of an estate
 - Contribute to strengthening the community on the estate
 - Improve the health and safety and/or health and well-being of those living on the estate

Officer authorisation

- 3.6 Before proposals can be authorised by the steering group it would need to be satisfied that the following areas have been considered:
- Whether the scheme is currently earmarked for redevelopment or likely to be in the next 5 years
 - Health and safety assessments have been thoroughly conducted both before and after the improvement works are carried out
 - Whether or not it is appropriate to recharge leaseholders
 - Cross-referencing with the planned works programme to ensure that works are completed efficiently with minimal disruption for residents
 - Consultation with relevant internal and external services (for example, Finance, Legal, Procurement, Police)
 - Each proposal has the support of the community, evidenced through local engagement with residents and ward councillors.

Prioritisation

- 3.7 At Housing Scrutiny Committee in September 2018 a zero tolerance policy around storage in communal areas was approved. The policy's primary objective is to improve fire safety in blocks of flats.
- 3.8 Improvement proposals, which improve secure storage arrangements for residents will be prioritised to make it easier for Council tenants and leaseholders to comply with the zero tolerance policy.
- 3.9 The principle issues of concern for residents attending the estate walkabouts have largely been about anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping. Therefore, many of the proposals under discussion have focused on designing out crime and anti-social behaviour and waste storage re-designs.
- 3.10 The steering group is aiming to step up resident and ward councillor engagement via:
- Improved publicity around the estate walkabouts programme
 - Promoting opportunities via *Open Door* for tenants and leaseholders to submit proposals directly
 - A refresh of the Residents and Officers Asset Management (ROAM) is planned. The group was established to influence the planned works programme, review operational team reports (including responsive repairs and asset management), service development and key performance indicators.
 - Invite member ideas on proposals via the annual briefing referred to in 2.2 of this report as well as on the estate walkabouts
 - Communications to resident groups inviting ideas on proposals

4.0 Proposals to be started in 2019-20

- 4.1 At the time of writing this report there are 4 proposals that the EIS steering group is focusing on; one in the north of the city, one in the south and a city-wide scheme (split into 2 parts). These are as follows:

1. Kingsway flats

2. East Road estate

3. City-wide street lighting upgrade

4. City-wide communal lighting upgrade

Kingsway Flats

- 4.2 There are 5 blocks of flats at Kingsway and the current design allows for members of the general public to freely access floors 2 to 4 throughout the estate. This has provided a haven for anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. Officers have been working with the Designing Out Crime team and the Council's Fire Safety Advisor to draw up some proposals to divide these areas so that they are accessible by residents only and that movement between blocks is restricted.
- 4.3 At two Kingsway Community meetings, held on 9th November and 19th December 2018 the proposal was aired and received strong support from residents. A letter of consultation was sent to all 123 households on 11th January 2019 inviting responses by 1st February. The Council received 35 responses, which represents 28% of households on the estate. 30 residents expressed their support for increased security measures at Kingsway and 5 did not. A number of questions about the proposal were noted on the response forms, these have been recorded and will inform the next stage of the consultation. A further meeting at Kingsway took place on 20th February.
- 4.4 Ward councillors have also been consulted. All three councillors (Cllrs O'Reilly, Sheil and Todd-Jones) have expressed support for these proposals.
- 4.5 The project is now moving into specific scheme design phase. Until this is complete it is difficult to provide an accurate assessment of costs but, at this stage, it is anticipated that the works will cost around £200-250k.
- 4.6 Once more specific scheme design has been undertaken, further consultations will be organised with both residents and ward councillors.

East Road Estate

- 4.7 This proposal is also focused on tackling anti-social behaviour and designing out crime. Notable problems on the estate are fly-tipping, vandalism and free-running. The Council has plans to restrict access to areas where fly-tipping is taking place and to install security

measures to the bin store areas. Enclosing the area between the stairwell and the garages should address the free-running issue.

- 4.8 A rough sleeping issue has been noted in this area; street outreach services are working proactively with individuals found in this area and rough sleeping sites are being secured.
- 4.9 All 90 households of East Road estate were written to on 14th January 2019 and responses were returned by 5th February 2019. The Council received 20 responses, which is 22% return rate. 19 residents expressed their support for the estate improvements at East Road and 1 did not. A number of questions about the proposal were noted on the response forms; these have been recorded and will inform the next stage of the consultation
- 4.10 All 3 ward councillors (Cllr Blencowe, Cllr Green and Cllr Robertson) are supportive of the proposals and went on an accompanied estate walkabout on 11th January 2019 and were briefed on where the changes are to be made.
- 4.11 The project has been fully designed and quotations for the work are around £20k.

City-wide street and communal lighting upgrade

4.12 The lighting programmes will run as two separate projects; street lighting and communal lighting. The Council can use an existing contractor to carry out the street lighting works. The project is likely to take up to 2 years and involve considerable planning. The communal lighting programme is less advanced at this stage. There are customer and business drivers for delivering the upgrades. These are:

- Energy saving Light-emitting diode (LED) products with reduced maintenance costs
- Better night-time visibility for more vulnerable residents
- Better energy controls such dimming, light and motion sensors
- The new LEDs, with integral occupancy sensors will mean significant energy savings and improved lighting levels
- Cleaner, well-lit communal areas
- Improvement to the aesthetic appearance of buildings
- Reduced vandalism where lighting is failing due to age
- Site-specific lighting design to suit the neighbourhood
- Wildlife compliant fittings

4.13 There has been no consultation to date on this proposal but, given the economic benefits to the Council, the consultation will centre around the design and deployment rather than whether to go ahead with the upgrade.

4.14 The street lighting programme is expected to cost around £750k

5.0 EIS coordination

5.1 Aside from the three proposals cited earlier in this report there are a further 19 estate improvement proposals submitted for consideration by the steering group. None of these are sufficiently well advanced or consulted on to share in this report but will appear in the annual update reports as they come forward.

5.2 The number of proposals being developed will create a significant drain on surveyor and other technical resources in the Maintenance and Assets service. Additionally, projects such as the city-wide street and communal lighting upgrade will require detailed planning and the coordination of technical lighting expertise.

5.3 In the light of the above, the Maintenance and Assets service will be recruiting a surveyor to coordinate the EIS and this will be funded from the £100k revenue budget assigned to the programme.

6. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

There are no financial implications identified outside of the £5m capital sum and (one-off) £100,000 revenue sum already approved as part of the HRA budget. Revenue resources can be 'capitalised' from the £5m fund as long as the Council can clearly demonstrate that these resources are exclusively devoted to the EIS.

(b) Staffing Implications

Staff working within a number of services (as outlined in 3.1 of this report) are devoting time to this project. A surveyor will be required to coordinate the programme as outlined in 5.3 of this report.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

The proposals developed so far, and outlined in this report, should improve the safety and security of all residents but particularly the Council's most vulnerable residents. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out in 2019/20 and will be reviewed and updated annually in line with the review for members.

(d) Environmental Implications

There are key environmental improvements outlined on the East Road proposal (paragraphs 4.7 to 4.10 of this report). The street and communal lighting proposals will offer energy efficiency benefits.

(e) Procurement Implications

The works to Kingsway are above European Union thresholds and will need to be procured via competitive tenure. The street lighting programme can be delivered under existing contractual arrangements.

(f) Community Safety Implications

All 4 proposals highlighted in this report will have positive community safety implications.

6. Consultation and communication considerations

As outlined throughout this report.

7. Background papers

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

8. Appendices

None

9. Inspection of papers

If you have a query on the report please contact David Greening, Head of Housing Services, tel: 01223 – 457997, email:

david.greening@cambridge.gov.uk