

Item

Housing Services Communal Cleaning

To:

Cllr Todd-Jones, Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee 22nd June 2021

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All wards

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the current and proposed future arrangements for communal cleaning services across the City Council's housing stock and bin cleaning services in sheltered housing and details options for how the service could be delivered once the current contract ends in March 2022.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

2.1 Authorise officers to explore the option of transferring responsibility for the cleaning of the Councils Category 2 Sheltered Housing Schemes back in house to the Council, and to delegate authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing, Chair and Vice Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee (HSC) and the opposition spokesperson, to make a decision on whether or not this should go ahead.

2.2 Following decision 2.1, delegate authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Executive Cllr for Housing, Chair and Vice Chair of HSC and the opposition spokesperson, to tender and award a contract for the communal cleaning of the Councils General Housing, Category 1 sheltered housing and, potentially, category 2 sheltered housing stock.

2.3 Approve delegated authority to the Head of Finance to amend both expenditure and income budgets in relation to the provision of communal cleaning services and bin cleaning in sheltered housing schemes in the HRA in line with prices received as part of the recent procurement exercises.

3. Background

3.1 The Council contracts for the provision of general communal cleaning services for just under 2400 tenants and leaseholders across approximately 450 blocks or communal areas with a number of different specifications outlined for the contractor.

3.2 The Council also contracts for the provision of cleaning in 12 of its 13 sheltered housing schemes. 4 of these are classed as category 1 schemes with individual flats arranged into blocks and front doors leading from external areas. The cleaning in these areas is provided in the same way and to the same specification as the general housing cleaning. There are about 270 residents benefiting from these services across 45 communal areas.

It also has 9 category 2 schemes, in which the individual flats are all under one roof and have front doors leading from internal corridors. These schemes all have communal lounge and kitchen areas and offices for the staff team. One of the 9 schemes is Ditchburn Place, which is also an extra care scheme with its own arrangements for cleaning and is therefore not included in this report. A map of the schemes locations can be found here: [Sheltered housing schemes - Cambridge City Council](#).

3.3 In 2020 the Council undertook a procurement process which sought to award contracts for 5 different areas of its cleaning requirements to new contractors. The procurement was carried out in lots, with the cleaning of the communal areas in the City Council's general and sheltered housing stock being included as lot 3.

3.4 The Council was not able to award a contract to a successful provider for lot 3, and therefore an agreement was reached with the current provider, Churchill, to extend the contract until March 2022. The contract can not be extended past this date, and so a decision is required as to how to move forward with the future of the contract. Advice from colleagues in procurement suggests that the process to re-tender the contract will need to commence by July 2021 in order to have a new provider in place ready for 1st April 2022.

3.5 Failure to appoint a new contractor has presented an opportunity for the Council to consider how it delivers communal cleaning services in the future. Following the transfer of care services at Ditchburn Place to Radis in 2020, the Council has created a small team of staff to continue provide the cleaning services on site. As this scheme has similar facilities to the category 2 schemes, consideration is being given to whether there may be benefits in expanding this small team to deliver cleaning services across all of the category 2 schemes. This would allow the authority to ensure continuity and provide more flexibility in its service provision for the vulnerable residents in these schemes. This option would involve the transfer of staff under the TUPE regulations from the incumbent provider Churchill, and therefore further exploration and a business case will be required.

3.6 At this point, officers do not consider it feasible to transfer the staff in relation to the cleaning for general and category 1 sheltered housing as these services are provided in multiple locations across the city, would require a fleet of vehicles and would require the employment of a management structure as well as the transfer of the staff providing the service currently. For these reasons, this is not considered financially viable.

3.7 A separate procurement exercise has been undertaken in 2021 for the continued cleaning of communal bins across category 1 and 2 sheltered housing following the previous contractor ceasing to trade. Prices received have exceeded previous costs and therefore the budget. In order to be able to award this contract there will need to be an increase in budget and corresponding increase in service charges to residents receiving this service, to the value of £5000 per annum.

3.8 The cost of the bin cleaning service is incorporated into the scheme premises charges, with charges varying between schemes based upon the costs and number of tenants in each scheme, but the average inclusion as part of the premises charge would be an estimated 56p per week under

the new contract. This will be an increase in costs compared to prior years as the bin cleaning service has not been delivered in full for some time. Historically tenants might have paid approximately 27p per week on average for this service.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

The costs of communal cleaning services are passed on in full to tenants and leaseholders in the form of service charges. By tendering this service the Council seeks to ensure best value for those paying for the service. Based upon the previous procurement exercise in 2020 the authority will need to consider an increase in budget for the provision of this service with the cost fully met in the form of service charges.

The decision on whether or not to bring the cleaning of category 2 housing in house will consider if this can be done within the cost envelope from the tenders of 2020 to ensure best value is still delivered.

b) Staffing Implications

If a decision is made to transfer the cleaning of the indoor sheltered housing schemes back to the City Council, this may result in the Council transferring staff currently employed by the contractor, into the organisation under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment). The staff would be managed within the current Supported Housing team structure.

Any staff employed by the current contractor may be eligible to transfer to a new contractor under TUPE.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) will be carried out as part of the work to explore the option to take the cleaning back in-house, and as part of the procurement process.

d) Environmental Implications

The climate change rating tool has been completed and concludes that there is a 'net nil' impact meaning there should be no increase in the environmental impact of delivering the services in the proposed way.

If the Council do take on the delivery of elements of the cleaning services, specialist advice will be taken to ensure environmental impact is minimised.

The procurement evaluation process will include evaluating environmental aspects of the service provision.

e) Procurement Implications

It will be necessary to undertake a procurement process in order to appoint a new contractor, as detailed in part 3 of this report. The Council's procurement team will be involved in the process from start to finish.

f) Community Safety Implications

There are no community safety implications for this report.

Any staff working for the Council or a contractor would receive the necessary training and information to report any community safety concerns they may encounter through the course of their work. Staff would be subject to any relevant employment checks (e.g. DBS checks in sheltered housing schemes).

5. Consultation and communication considerations

As part of the decision in respect of the category 2 sheltered housing, officers propose to consult with affected sheltered residents.

On-going consultation will be required with the leaseholders as part of the statutory process for tendering and awarding the contract to a new supplier.

Consultation with tenant and leaseholder representatives is an integral part of the housing scrutiny committee process.

6. Background papers

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

7. Appendices

None.

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Laura Adcock, Housing Services Manager – Housing Support and Performance, tel: 01223 457649, email: laura.adcock@cambridge.gov.uk.