

APPENDIX B

PROPOSALS FOR REDIRECTION OF EXPENDITURE

Service Area	Fairer Future reference*	Indicative Allocation £'000
Look and Feel of the Environment:		
Door entry/security measures	2, 4	726
Sheltered refurbishment (FRA works)	6	900
External decorations/planned maintenance	4	1,000
Communal areas refurbishment/repairs service	4	480
Environmental estate improvements (Estate Action Days)	4	307
		3,413
Tackling Fraud and Abuse:		
Illegal occupation (sub-letting)	1, 2	250
		250
Invest to Save:		
Garage refurbishment	1	500
Underoccupation	1	400
Void re-let standards	1, 4	750
Repairs quality enhancement (Annual Property Check)	1, 4	750
		2,400
TOTAL		6,063

* Links for each item to the policy statement 'A Fairer Future for All' (see Background Documents).

Door entry/security measures

Door entry systems contribute to the safety, security and well-being of residents. There is a need for additional investment for the updating and renewal of existing systems, together with increasing demand for the installation of new systems to combat crime and anti-social behaviour on estates and a programme of priority schemes is being developed.

Sheltered refurbishment (FRA works)

Priority FRA works to sheltered units as part of a wider programme of refurbishment and modernisation over the short to medium-term.

External decorations/planned maintenance

Mini-programme of external decorations/planned maintenance works to be added to specific schemes already included in the existing 2013/14 Warm Dry Safe programme. The longer-term aim is to use this initial programme to establish a regular decorations programme that is undertaken as part of the ongoing major works investment programme.

Communal areas refurbishment/repairs service

The management of communal repairs is currently divided between a range of officers who undertake estate inspections. The approach is therefore fragmented and at times inconsistent. This proposal involves the introduction of Communal Repairs Compliance officers (CRCO) who will lead on everything related to communal repairs: estate inspections, s.20 consultation, contract management, pre and post-inspections, ordering, training and resident and member interaction. A full-time team of eighteen staff is proposed, six of which would be funded from existing resources and twelve from growth.

Environmental estate improvements (Estate Action Days)

Estate action days are very popular as they involve the intensive approach to dealing with communal repairs and housing management issues (via the mobile bus) in a single day. The frequency of estate action days has been doubled so each contractor delivers at least one planned estate action day each month. It is proposed that an enhanced level of repairs is completed including works to paving, lighting, painting and general communal repairs, including boundary fencing. Twenty-four EADs are currently proposed for 2013, which will continue to be met from existing resources.

Illegal occupation (sub-letting)

Over the last year the council has been successful in recovering a number of properties which were either sub-let or obtained fraudulently and for the prosecution of perpetrators. The council is committed to combating tenancy fraud and concerted action in this area remains a priority.

Garage refurbishment

The garage portfolio has for some time been neglected and under-utilised with a high volume of unlettable voids. However, managed properly it can be a valuable income generating asset for the HRA and over the last year, investment in the garage stock has delivered nearly 400 units back into use and is expected to exceed 500 by year-end. This represents an 'invest to save' opportunity as there remains significant scope to maximise the income potential even further through greater investment.

Underoccupation

The impact of changes in relation to social housing tenants who are underoccupying means they will lose a proportion of their housing benefit from April 2013, which is likely to have a knock-on effect on rent collection performance. To mitigate this impact for both tenants and the HRA, the existing scheme is being reviewed and proposals developed to increase the financial incentives to encourage tenants to downsize.

Voids re-let standards

Changes to the lettable standard are currently being developed to increase the desirability of the properties and reduce the level of refusals and subsequent complaints, which are both costly and time consuming. The introduction of a higher lettable standard should help to mitigate this without adversely impacting on turnaround times which are a critical measure of performance.

Repairs quality enhancement (Annual Property Check)

The annual property check involves combining the tenancy check, gas servicing visit (where it applies) and a property inspection into a single annual visit. The principle is to take a proactive, early intervention approach to identifying repairs early and tenancy compliance. The arrangement is already being piloted in the north of the borough for servicing and tenancy checks. A review of this pilot will be undertaken at the end of January 2013. Delivery is likely to be by RSOs and therefore costs for staffing will be within existing resources. The costs associated with early identification are not known and in many instances repairs may never be reported to the council until deterioration to the disrepair stage or when the property becomes void. Over time this is likely to lead to a reduction in disrepair claims/ costs and the prevention of more serious repairing needs down the line.