

Item 6	Date: 31 January 2018	To: Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny sub committee
Report title:	Ledbury Estate – Leaseholder Update	
From:	Director of Ledbury Estate	

Recommendation

1. Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny sub committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

Background

2. This report provides an update to the previous reports to OSC and Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny sub committee, respectively on 13 July 2017, 11 September 2017, 15 November 2017 and 4 December 2017.
3. As requested at the meeting held on 4 December 2017, this report specifically reports on the situation with leaseholders from the Ledbury Towers.
4. As previously advised, the four 14 storey towers (Bromyard, Peterchurch, Skenfrith and Sarnsfield) on the Ledbury Estate comprise of 224 properties in total, 76 one bedroom, 72 two bedroom and 76 three bedroom.
5. The blocks are large panel system construction, built by Taylor Woodrow between 1968 and 1970 and are former GLC properties which transferred to Southwark Council in 1982.
6. Since the last report to housing and community safety scrutiny sub committee, the automated fire alarms in the blocks are now live and the number of fire wardens in the blocks have been reduced from seven per block to two. At the same time the door entry system for each of the four blocks has been re-instated.
7. Following the completion of the emergency works, the team of officers solely dedicated to the Ledbury Estate has been reduced. At present the team is headed by the Director of Ledbury Estate, with staff from Housing Solutions and Resident Services. The office remains open 8am to 8pm daily and is staffed 24 hours every day to deal with emergencies.
8. There are 33 leasehold homes in the Ledbury Towers, 17 have absentee landlords and are rented out by the leaseholders concerned, and 16 are resident homeowners.
9. The leaseholders are engaged with the Officers in Ledbury Team and have raised a number of issues following two public meetings with them, to which they have been responded to. These are captured through the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Ledbury page on the Southwark Council website.

Emergency Works and Recharging

10. The Emergency works undertaken by the Council in the summer to deal with the gaps and cracks will not be recharged to leaseholders. Because these works were temporary to ensure that there were no compartmentation issues in the blocks, the areas where the cracks were have not been redecorated. This is a concern to

some of the leaseholders, however it has been explained that should the option to refurbish the Ledbury Towers be taken, further permanent works will need to be done to these areas, and in the long term they would need some form of access panels in these areas due to the need to periodically inspect them.

11. The other emergency work undertaken in the late summer was to replace the individual gas central heating system in each home, with a communal diesel fired boiler external to the blocks. This work was carried out in order to ensure that gas was completely removed from the blocks. This emergency work has not been recharged to leaseholders and due to the need to get a quick solution to providing heating and hot water prior to the cold weather, the diesel solution was the swiftest option. Diesel is much more expensive than a gas fired boiler and until this is replaced by an external gas fired system, both leaseholders and tenants will not be recharged the cost of providing heating and hot water.
12. All residents who had gas fuelled cooking, had the option to arrange their own replacement electric cookers or ovens and hobs or to choose from the options sourced by Southwark Council. Those who made their own arrangements were compensated up to £400 by Southwark Council.

Option to Move/Homeowner buy backs

13. As Members of the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny sub committee will know from previous reports, tenants residing in the four towers have had the option to move since the summer and as at Monday 8 January 2018, of the 191 tenants, 47 have moved and a further 29 have accepted new homes.
14. Leaseholders have also been given the option for Southwark Council to buy back their homes, so that they can move. The offer has been made on the basis that the homes are valued as if the current emergency situation has not happened and the leaseholders are compensated on the basis of losing their home if the home was subject to a regeneration scheme. This was agreed by Cabinet at their meeting in December 2017.
15. Therefore resident homeowners will be given 10% on top of the value of their home should they accept the offer made by Southwark Council to purchase their home and non-resident leaseholders will be given 7.5% on top of the value of their property.
16. Resident homeowners, will be provided additional financial assistance by compensating the costs related to their move including;
 - the fees of Carter Jonas and their own independent surveyor
 - both Southwark council's and the leaseholder's reasonable legal fees including stamp duty on the purchase of any new property
 - mortgage redemption fees where necessary and appropriate removal costs
17. Non resident leaseholders, will be provided financial assistance by paying incidental costs including;
 - the fees of Carter Jonas and their own independent surveyor
 - Southwark council's legal expenses and the leaseholder's reasonable legal fees including stamp duty to the value of the leaseholder's existing property

18. 16 leaseholders have shown an interest in Southwark purchasing their properties and the council's valuers have visited each of the properties. Valuations are due to be sent to the 16 by the end of January 2018.

Next Steps

19. A Resident Project Group which is made up from both residents and homeowners has been set up for the Ledbury Towers and, following the ARUP report which was published in November, they are currently working with officers on identifying the works that need to be costed for an independent consultant to carry out an options appraisal for the blocks. If following consideration of the options, the option to refurbish the blocks is chosen, leaseholders have been advised that they will not be recharged the costs of the works.

Conclusion

20. As reported at the November 2017 meeting of Scrutiny the situation at Ledbury Towers is constantly evolving and is being overseen by the Director for Ledbury Estate to ensure that there is a response to all of the operational issues captured by the locally based team, as well as the broader issues associated with the next steps of the options appraisal process.
21. The locally based team have been in place since the end of September 2017 and they have built up strong relationships with the residents. Their ethos is to ensure that residents have all the information and support they need to make their own decision about their future housing.
22. The information contained in this report is current at the time of writing, however officers will provide further updates at the meeting on 30 January 2018.