

<b>Item No.</b> N/A	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 27 September 2019	<b>Decision maker:</b> Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Modernisation
<b>Report title:</b>		Changes to the Handypersons Service	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		Borough wide	
<b>From:</b>		Specialist Services Contract Manager	

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. That Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Modernisation notes the contents of this report and approves the increase in fees and charges for the Handyperson Service.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2. The Handyperson service was established in 2009. The service is tenure neutral and provides services to people aged 60 & over and those of any age with a disability and live within the borough.
3. The service is a low cost high impact service which works with the most vulnerable groups in the community. These can include older people, people with disabilities and mental health problems, often living on low income and in poor housing.
4. Many customers have complex needs and rely on the service to help support them with daily living through advice, information and practical help. The service plays a key role across housing, health and social care as part of the integration agenda and really does make a difference to the lives of vulnerable people.
5. Following the review/restructure of Asset Management in 2016, it was agreed to bring a broader range of services together under the umbrella of the Private Sector Housing & Adaptations Team.
6. Over the last few years the team has suffered with long term sickness and performance issues which led to resource problems and had a significant impact on the service. These issues were resolved in 2018 and the team are now fully staffed (from 10/9/2018). The performance has greatly improved with an increase in the number of people the service can help.
7. Since 2009 the service has been primarily funded by the HRA and General fund, with a small percentage of income from fees charged to customers using the service. During this period of time the fees and charges have remained the same with no increase.

8. The service is aware of the financial pressures on the council and that with the savings proposed taking the £150,000 allocated for the Handypersons service from the HRA that it will no longer exist. The service is aware that it needs to be more commercially focused when providing services to those customers who although may be vulnerable, can afford to pay and that ultimately the service needs to become self-sustainable via its income streams.

**REVIEW OF THE SERVICE AND CHANGES IMPLEMENTED IN 2018**

9. In 2018 the team has raised its profile across the council and promoted the service more widely to the community by:
- Attending team meetings across the council
  - The information leaflets have been refreshed
  - Organising leaflet drops and talks to community organisations
  - Putting in place regular meeting with health/falls prevention colleagues and the OT team to promote and encourage new referrals to the service
  - Attend joint training initiatives with other professionals which promoted the service
10. As a result, there has been an increase in volume of service requests and works completed in 2018-19, comparatively with the previous year.

Year	Vol of enquiries	Vol of completed jobs
2017-18	1751	1927
2018-19	2015	2460
2019-20 Qtr 1	667	661

11. A survey was carried out across 16 London Boroughs who provide similar handyperson type schemes to compare fees & charges. A copy of the fees charged by these London Boroughs is attached – **Appendix 1**. The survey shows there is little consistency with fees and charges. Each London borough has taken a different view on the scale of fees charged.
12. After considering the survey, through this report, the service is proposing a revised fees & charges structure to be approved by the Cabinet Member for Housing as part of the Council’s fees & charges report. A copy of the current and proposed fees & charges from 2019 is attached - **Appendix 2**.
13. The service has looked to increase and improve the way jobs are allocated/planned, which helps to reduce unnecessary travel and potentially complete more work.

14. The service is reviewing the way it takes payments. The current process is very complex and includes raising invoices through Finance.
15. The service is looking at the possibility of moving to card readers on the Handyperson's phones so that customers can pay by debit/credit card on the day the work is completed. This would reduce time and costs producing invoices for each job.

### **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

16. The Handyperson Service needs to establish the long term viability of the service. The fees and charges have remained the same since 2009. Costs have increased considerably over the years and therefore, the fees and charges need to reflect the increase in costs.
17. With the reduction in HRA funding over the next 3 years, Cabinet Member for Housing is asked to approve the proposed fees and charges in line with Appendix 2. This will ensure the service can continue at its current level.
18. The service will ensure it maintains the balance of supporting frail, vulnerable people as well as adopting a more commercial and realistic approach with regard to costs & services it provides to customers who can afford to pay.
19. Without the agreement to increase the fees and charges the service will not be commercially viable without the reliance on the HRA funding.
20. Housing, Health and Social Care and vulnerable, frail older people rely on the Handyperson service to deliver and support with crucial services to help with independent living, hospital discharge, help to reduce the risk of falls, small repairs and more. Any reduction in the Handyperson service would heavily impact on these key services.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

21. The essential features to recognise here are:
  - a. The housing strategy vision which includes becoming "more than a landlord" under principle 4 states "we will help vulnerable individuals and families to meet their housing needs and live as independently as possible."
  - b. The service helps to deliver on the council's Fairer Future Commitments theme of "A place to call home"
  - c. The Care Act 2014 - Within the Guidance to the Act, Handyperson Services are mentioned as a key mechanism in the delivery of primary prevention services.
  - d. As part of the Governments integration agenda for Housing, Health and Social Care, Handypersons Services have played a key role in delivering services and forming successful

partnerships across all 3 stakeholders, delivering independent living solutions, supporting hospital discharge teams, home safety, small repairs and more.

- e. Handyperson Evaluation report commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - The review found strong evidence about the impact of handyperson type interventions on improved wellbeing, independent living and easier access to appropriate services.
- f. One of the key recommendations within the Adapting for Ageing - Good Practice and Innovation in home adaptations Guide – written by A Centre for Aging Better and Care & Repair England, confirmed that Handyperson services are an effective way to provide low-cost, direct help with minor adaptations and related home repairs and should be made available in every local area.

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Service works directly with:

- 22. The health service to support hospital discharge (linking in with Smart) by installing key safes often on the same or next day of referral to ensure access for carers and nursing staff when visiting patients returning home.
- 23. Adult Social Care to fit grab rails within 1 day, when the main contractor is unable to complete the work.
- 24. The Service provides customers with information on falls prevention and home safety, reducing the risk and falls and incidents in the home. The Health service provided free refresher falls prevention training for the team as part of partnership working.
- 25. The handyperson service also provides a replacement light bulb service for older, vulnerable people to reduce potential accidents and falls in the home.
- 26. In some limited circumstances equality and health analysis will not be undertaken because of the nature of business to be conducted; these could include routine reports, such as deputation reports, standards reports and other issues where officers may state there are no specific equality implications.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 27. The service is aware that the HRA funding for the handypersons service has been put up as a saving for the sum of £150,000 and that this would lead to the service being terminated. Should the HRA funding be removed the service would cease to exist and the existing staff members made redundant.
- 28. It was agreed with Senior Management Team on 19<sup>th</sup> June that the HRA funding is reduced over the next 3 years to allow the service to increase its income through the proposed new fees & charges structure. The proposal is for the HRA funding to be replaced by income and fees from customers by 2020-21.

29. The following table details the increase in fees and charges required to replace the HRA funding. Also please refer to Appendix 2 for the current and proposed fee charges.

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Cost of Service</b>	<b>HRA Funding</b>	<b>General Fund</b>	<b>Income from Fees &amp; Charges</b>	<b>Savings to the HRA</b>
2019-20	£221,658	£100,000	£71,658	£50,000	£50,000
2021-22	£220,402	£50,000	£71,658	£98,744	£100,000
2022-23	£224,355	£0	£71,658	£153,697	£150,000

30. The withdrawal of the service would lead to the handypersons team being made redundant. The team is made up of the following;

- 1 senior handyperson
- 3 handypersons
- 1 handyperson team coordinator

## **CONSULTATION**

31. If approved, there will be no need for Trade Union consultation.

32. If approved, we will ensure that residents are notified by;

- Information sent to existing/repeat customers
- Local newspaper
- Area Forums
- Meetings/information updates through council services, health services (hospital discharge teams), GP Practices, District Nurses,
- Meetings/presentations through key stakeholders i.e .Age UK, Community Groups/lunch clubs
- Meetings/information updates to Citizen Advice Bureaus, Libraries, Post Offices and other key organisations.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE CONCURRENT**

33. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes the report and the recommendations of the Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes that in order to respond to the reduction in financial support from the HRA, the service has responded by reviewing the framework for charging residents for services, benchmarked against similar services provided by other London Boroughs. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance recommends that this framework is regularly reviewed to ensure the actual costs of delivery are recovered. Strategic Director of Finance and Governance also recommends that the progress towards achieving the income target is regularly reported within the Housing and Modernisation service and that the likelihood of achieving future income targets is annually reviewed in order to take appropriate corrective action.

### **Director of Law and Democracy**

34. The council has no express duty or power to provide handyperson services. However, the general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 enables the council to do anything that individuals may do, and provides a basis for offering these services.
35. Section 3 of the Act allows charging for the provision of services under section 1, provided that, taking one financial year with another, the income from charges does not exceed the costs of providing the services. The table at paragraph 29 above addresses this for the current financial year and two subsequent years. The council will need to keep the charges under review and ensure that the charges in each subsequent year do not exceed the cost of providing the service. The decision maker should have regard to the comparison with similar fees in other boroughs when determining whether it is reasonable to impose the proposed charges.
36. Decisions relating to new fees and charges are reserved to full cabinet under Part 3C of the Constitution, whereas changes to existing fees and charges can be made by an individual cabinet member under Part 3D. The proposal includes fees and charges for carrying out certain individual tasks that previously have either not been provided or have been provided free of charge. However, it is reasonable to look at the proposal as an amended package of charges for a single service, and thus for the decision to be taken by an individual cabinet member.
37. This is a key decision, as it is a decision to set fees and charges, and has been included in the forward plan.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
n/a		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Comparison With Handyman Fee Charges Across Other London Boroughs
Appendix 2	Current and Proposed Fee Charges

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Keith Kiernan, Specialist Services Manager	
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<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	27 September 2019	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes