

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 29 th July 2003	MEETING NAME Executive
Report title:		Northfield House Deputation – Taskforce Update.	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		Residents of Northfield House – Livesey Ward	
From:		Councillors Caroline Pidgeon, Beverley Bassom, and Richard Porter	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the report is noted.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. On 20th May 2003 Executive heard a deputation from Northfield House residents expressing concerns about the future of their homes. Specifically: the level of investment in Northfield House; the decision to stop the contract to convert the kitchens and bathrooms; the level of consultation around that decision, and whether residents would be able to return to their homes once work was completed.
3. In response to these concerns Executive agreed to set up a small Task Force, Councillors Caroline Pidgeon, Beverley Bassom and Richard Porter, to review and direct progress as the Council attempts to resolve the situation.

KEY ISSUES

4. The Taskforce has agreed with the Strategic Director of Housing that no lettings will take place on Northfield House so that these may be used for internal moves if necessary.
5. Councillor Bassom has written to all residents in Northfield House on behalf of the Taskforce apologising for the situation.
6. Chris Brown, Head of Housing Management, is personally leading for Southwark Housing
7. Detailed investigations have taken place on the level of investment in Northfield House since the building was acquired; on the consultation that took place around the contract to convert kitchens and bathrooms and the constraints upon the Council with that consultation; and on identifying short and long term solutions to the present situation.
8. The Taskforce has visited Northfield House, met with residents and met with Council Officers.

Long-Term Solutions

9. The feasibility study addressing a long term solution has started and is progressing well and is expected to have been completed by the date of this meeting. Officers will be able to provide a brief verbal update on the outcome at this meeting.
10. Consultants carrying out the study have been directed to ensure that any proposals cause minimum disruption to, and displacement of, residents.

11. Officers have drafted a letter for all leaseholders explaining their obligations under building and safety regulations.
12. Further work is being undertaken on these options, including the possibility of rehousing those who wish to move away from Northfield House and using the vacated properties for internal transfers for those who wish to remain.

Short -Term Solutions

13. The Borough Solicitor has advised on the need to make the properties compliant as soon as possible and the Strategic Director of Housing has confirmed that only two options exist in the short term until a long term solution has been implemented: carry out “enabling” works to relocate cooking facilities into another room; or to rehouse the affected families.
14. Because of the urgency of complying with the landlord’s obligation under Health & Safety legislation the option to rehouse for the short-term works is deemed inappropriate by the Strategic Director of Housing because of potential delays and so officers have begun making arrangements to undertake the enabling works with immediate effect with a brief to cause as little disruption as possible.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Northfield House Kitchens and Bathrooms contract files	Acorn Neighbourhood Office	David Eatwell 020 7525 4752

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	Keith Broxup, Strategic Director of Housing.	
Report Author	Chris Brown, Head of Housing Management	
Version	Final Draft	
Dated	25 th July 2003	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Borough Solicitor & Secretary	Yes	No
Chief Finance Officer	No	No