

Strategic Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods comments in respect of Item 6 Deputation on behalf of Maydew House Tenants

- 1 While the views of all consultees provide a welcome and valuable contribution to informing the decision making process, it should be noted that the deputation from Maydew House tenants dated 6 July 2010 represents the views of tenants in 7 of the 144 flats (currently 96 secure tenancies in the block).
- 2 A range of options for the future of Maydew House has been, and continues to be considered in consultation with residents. Unfortunately, whichever option is finally decided upon, it will be necessary for existing residents to relocate.
- 3 Maydew House requires extensive updating and refurbishment works for the council to meet its statutory landlord obligations and the requirement to achieve Decent Homes. The deputation states that Maydew House currently meets the Decent Homes standard as the flats are warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities. This ignores the Decent Homes requirements to meet statutory minimum standards for housing, and for key and other building components to be in a reasonable state of repair; this is not the case as major works are required. One of the main issues is the condition of life expired pipe work, causing leaks and floods in the past, and the difficulty in resolving this due to extensive asbestos.
- 4 The proposed works are based on advice from a team of appropriately qualified consultants who have extensive experience of decent homes work for a number of local authorities. The consultants surveyed the condition of the block as well as inspecting the services. Most of the works are essential upgrades to services and amenities within the block such as electrical rewiring, structural repairs, roof renewal, lift replacement, communal ventilation, renewal of water mains, works to refuse chutes and plant equipment renewal.
- 5 While left un-disturbed the asbestos in Maydew House is perfectly safe. However, specialist advice has confirmed that there is an unacceptably high risk to residents and contractors that the extensive works would cause the release of asbestos. To manage this risk they have recommended that the asbestos be removed prior to undertaking the decent homes works. They have also recommended that residents should be moved out of the building for the duration of the works. The health and safety of tenants is paramount and this specialist recommendation limits the options available to the council as a responsible landlord.
- 6 The council's advice is that given the single stairway, and the scissor type construction of the block, it is difficult to compartmentalise the work or to do it in sections, with residents remaining in occupation. Phasing of the works is unlikely to be practical, would be inconvenient to residents, involve significant construction programme difficulties for any contractor, is likely to compromise health and safety regulations, extend the work programme, and increase the cost of the contract. In any event, residents would still have to move out while work is done to their own flat for a lengthy and protracted period.
- 7 Maydew House has a historical problem with leaks, mainly due to corroded services located behind asbestos partitions in the bathroom areas. Ad-hoc asbestos removal took place to localised areas affected by the leaks but this did not provide a long term solution.
- 8 During 2001 the council commenced a major works programme which included the removal of internal asbestos partitions to bathrooms and airing cupboards. To remove

the partitioning, hot and cold water services needed to be drained down and isolated, and baths, toilets and wash hand basins removed. By August 2001 numerous leaks had occurred resulting in the council undertaking further surveys to properties where partitions had been removed. It was subsequently found that the original galvanised tanks were severely corroded and in many cases perforated. Defective pipe work was also found, being perforated with dry joints that either leaked or burst when disturbed. Works were carried out to 27 homes but for both practical and potential legal reasons it was not considered feasible to extend this to the remaining 117. It was believed that the works would cause considerable distress and disruption to residents in addition to the considerable risk of leaks to their flats due to the condition of the pipe work and isolation valve arrangements.

- 9 The disproportionately high costs of the works required at Maydew House in relation to the available borough wide funding (more than 25% of the annual Decent Homes budget) has made it necessary for the council to consider the option of disposal. While the council is committed to retaining its housing stock to meet local housing need, disposal may be considered in very exceptional and agreed circumstances; and where they are part of either a broader regeneration initiative or an agreed council strategy to generate funds to re-invest in the council's housing stock. No decision has yet been made on the future of the block and residents' views will play an important part in making this decision, alongside other considerations such as affordability and cost and our overall borough wide strategy for making all council homes warm, safe, and dry.
- 10 As mentioned in paragraph 4 above, the feasibility study has been supported by a team of independent consultants who have extensive experience in undertaking decent homes work. The cost estimate they produced has been quality checked by the officers who manage the Southwark decent homes programme. It should be noted that the actual costs cannot be verified until full tendering takes place but the council is satisfied that the estimate is not exaggerated.
- 11 Other options being considered include the council carrying out the works and demolition of the block to enable redevelopment of the site, also potentially generating a capital receipt for the housing investment programme.
- 12 The residents express concern that sale to a private developer could create a negative social division within the area with the possibility of increased crime. Social cohesion and the reduction of crime are council priorities and any such a development would be subject to the planning process where these and any other issues would need to be addressed. It is council policy to encourage the creation of inclusive and mixed communities.
- 13 The residents have raised the issue of storage space given that some of them will be vacating 2 bedroom properties (some with rented sheds and garages) and moving into 1 bedroom properties - if that is their assessed housing need. This needs to be considered within the context of the council's responsibilities to maximise the use of the available social housing stock locally so that it helps those most in need. If the allocation of properties is not based on assessed housing need, those on the housing register have to wait longer.
- 14 The council's policy on all new decant projects is to match those households to those properties that meet their current housing needs and not to move households to properties which are too large for their needs. This will, understandably, be disappointing for some

residents who are under occupying their current property and are looking for a like for like move.