

CABINET (SPECIAL) – 31 MAY 2011

Deputation Request: Residents of Jarman House and Canute Gardens, Hawkstone Estate

Comments of the Strategic Director of Housing Services

1. The low rise blocks on the Hawkstone estate are one of three areas identified within the cabinet report where further work is recommended to explore whether there are other options for improving the estate, such as regeneration or estate remodelling. This work is due to report back to cabinet in October 2011. The council has not yet reached a view on whether major works or regeneration are the preferred option and would want to work very closely with residents to decide the best way forward in terms of the long term future of the low rise blocks on the estate.
2. Within the current two year programme, a funding allocation of £6.5m was originally set aside for works to be carried out on the Hawkstone estate. £3m of this funding allocation has been identified for John Kennedy House and it is estimated that a further £11m is needed to bring the low rise blocks up to the government's decent homes standard and to make them warm, dry and safe. This means that there is a funding shortfall overall of around £7.5m in the current year in respect of the funds that we calculate are needed to complete the work on the low rise blocks.
3. The draft 5 year programme currently assumes that the work to bring the low rise blocks up to the government's decent homes standard and to make them warm, dry and safe will now take place in year 5 of the programme (2015/16). The low rise blocks have been moved to the back of the programme because the council believes that all the necessary works cannot be carried out with the residents in occupation and so a lead in time is required to achieve full vacant possession. The scheme has also been placed at the end of the programme due to the high cost of the work involved and overall resource availability.
4. We appreciate that residents living in the low rise blocks will be understandably disappointed with any delays to work to their homes and would stress that the 5 year programme that is being presented to cabinet tonight is a draft programme only at present and is subject to wider consultation before it comes back to cabinet to be finalised in the Autumn.
5. Residents on the Hawkstone will have the same opportunity as all the other residents in the borough to feedback their suggestions on programme priorities and timings and all feedback will be considered before the programme is finally approved by cabinet. There is also the potential for additional funds coming into the programme, which would be used to re-programme and bring schemes forward to carry them out earlier, wherever this is possible.
6. In all of our major works projects, we are keen to work closely with residents to get the best value for money and to only do work where it is needed. We will always review the specification and type of work before the scheme starts with residents to ensure that we are spending residents money wisely.

7. We are keen to explore new ways for the delivery of major works, including testing whether better value for money might be achieved by greater resident involvement in the specification of works.
8. We would be willing to explore with Hawkstone residents how best to support them to make choices about the level of investment to their homes, as long as the minimum warm, dry and safe standards are achieved. This could include setting up a special project group of residents supported by an independent expert resource, so that residents feel that they are in the driving seat regarding the specification of works to their homes. This may also help to alleviate any concerns regarding how best to deal with the asbestos panels.