

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 74

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Mobility Scooter Storage Pilot Proposal
Date of Meeting: 1 December 2010
Report of: Strategic Director Place
Contact Officer: Name: Robert Keelan Tel: 293261
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Key Decision: No
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 There has been a steady increase in the number of mobility scooters kept in common ways of flats. Brighton and Hove city council is working with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service to keep communal landings as safe as possible.
- 1.2 The council is obliged under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to carry out risk assessments in our common ways. These assessments have highlighted mobility scooters to be a fire hazard. The fire service and the council are working together to ensure that anything that can catch fire or be a trip hazard in a smoke filled environment is removed. This includes mobility scooters.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To authorise a pilot project to build external stores and convert internal storage space for the storage of mobility scooters at Leach Court and Clarke Court.
- 2.2 To use the pilot to determine the actual service charges required to cover costs.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Officers and tenant representatives have explored a number of storage options for residents to ensure residents have access to mobility aids whilst ensuring that neighbouring residents are safe in a fire.
- 3.2 A report for comments was taken to Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) on 27th September 2010. (please see appendix 1 attached for full report) This was broadly agreed but there remained some outstanding questions about the recommended service charge of £4.50 p/week

- 3.3 The estimated service charge has been calculated based on the cost of electricity supply and to recover the cost of the capital investments required to build storage units and maintain them over a life-time of the stores.
- 3.4 The service charges could be further reduced by offsetting the cost of building new stores against the average costs of converting indoor spaces. There would therefore be a standard service charge for both indoor and outdoor storage which would reflect overall costs. This would ensure that there is not a two tier system for charging for mobility scooter storage space.
- 3.5 We intend to explore reducing service charges further by arranging for electricity key metres to be installed.
- 3.6 These options would be explored as part of the pilot and in this way we would be able to ascertain the final service charge. We will be aiming to include the final service charges in the HRA Budget Report in February 2011.
- 3.7 Working with tenant and resident representatives on the Mobility Scooter Working Group we have identified two buildings where tenants with mobility scooters would be happy to be involved in the pilot project and would pay up to £4.50 service charge. These buildings are Leach Court and Clarke Court where up to 14 individual stores would be piloted at first instance.
- 3.8 We will also be able to use the pilot to work through other issues of concern to residents who use mobility scooters, such as movement from the front door to the store.
- 3.9 The results of the pilot will be brought back to HMCC for discussion before a city wide rollout is started.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 A short term project working group was established with representatives from the tenant disability network and the sheltered housing action group. These groups nominated two representatives each to this sub-group but they have not been formally elected through area panels. The group has met three times and agreed all of the proposals in this document.
- 4.2 A mobility scooter report was discussed at the housing management consultative committee on 27 September 2010.
- 4.3 There has been a mobility scooter presentation at City Assembly 15 May 2010 and City Assembly 20 November 2010

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 Funding for the pilot schemes at Leach Court and Clarke Court will come from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme 2010/11 which includes £100,000 for scooter storage solutions. The pilot schemes

will enable a detailed costing exercise to be carried out in order to calculate service charges

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 03/11/10

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Council is entitled to make reasonable charges for services. The proposed pilot will provide objective information on which to base future charges. The Human Rights Act forbids the council from acting in a way that is incompatible with Convention rights. It is not considered that any individual's human rights will be adversely affected by the report's recommendations

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley

Date: 04/11/10

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The report seeks to gain a balance between the safety of all residents and those who have age or physical mobility restrictions and their wish to keep a scooter outside of their property in the common ways.

Before building any stores for scooter users, scooter users would be visited by their Housing Officer to look at their needs, whether they would be able to use the store and whether there are any internal rooms in the flats that could be adapted. Housing Officers can also discuss Housing Options should the mobility of the tenant be such that they need to consider more supported accommodation. The solution of where to store a scooter will be tailored to the individual.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The proposed stores are made from concrete with re-enforced steel doors which reflect the value of the items kept inside.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There have been attempted thefts of mobility scooters on our estates. The report follows from arson attacks in Rugby this year where mobility scooters were set on fire.

The choice of building materials will need to deter crime and stores will need to be secure.

Internal Storage units would also need to be secure to deter crime.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications

- 5.6.1 The risk of failing to run a pilot is that following a city wide building programme the service charges will either be prohibitively high and prevent take-up. This

would waste resources and could ultimately mean that the council makes a financial loss.

- 5.6.2 The pilot will also provide us with the opportunity to gather data to inform our policy on mobility scooter storage.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The council's plans regarding fire safety and mobility scooter storage have already been shared with the city-wide Social Landlords Forum. No other landlords who attend this forum are dealing with these issues as yet. We will continue to keep them informed.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The council could decide that there will be no service charge for the provision of scooters. However this would mean that the cost of provision of scooter storage would be subsidised from elsewhere in the HRA and ultimately by residents who do not use scooters.
- 6.2 The council continues to explore other options for meeting the increased demand for mobility scooters. Two sheltered schemes have mobility scooters that are accessible by all residents. We are working with Shopmobility who are actively looking for citywide storage bases. If we can provide free storage, they will run a scheme from it where users can hire a scooter for a small charge.
- 6.3 The Shopmobility scheme would run alongside individual storage options to promote freedom of choice.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To authorise a pilot scheme to ensure that the city wide roll out of such a significant investment project is successful and will meet the needs of our tenants and residents.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. HMCC Mobility Scooters Report 27th September 2010.

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None
- 2.

Background Documents

1. None