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|--------------------------|---|---|--------------------|
| Subject: | Lettable Standard | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 11 February 2014 Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee | | |
| Report of: | Executive Director of Environment, Development & Housing | | |
| Contact Officer: | Name: | Satti Sidhu | Tel: 293219 |
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| Ward(s) affected: | All | | |

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report concerns the policy areas and specification of work that is carried out to council owned and managed homes when a property becomes empty.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

That Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee note the recommendation in this report and that Housing Committee approves:

- 2.1 That the revised Lettable Standard be applied for work to all properties becoming empty across the city.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Lettable Standard had not been reviewed since before the start of the contract with our repairs partnership with Mears, which started in April 2010.
- 3.2 Some proposals were made and included some additions to the previous standard. The revised standard initially led to Mears projecting an increase in cost per property to bring the home up to the revised standard
- 3.3 The full revised Lettable Standard was trialled in all properties that became empty from December 2012 until May 2013. Please see appendix 1 for the comparison between the old and revised standard.
- 3.4 Comparative costs were collected during the pilot and were measured against the costs for the same period the previous year.
- 3.5 The pilot also measured the quality of work carried out and how satisfied new tenants were with their new home.

- 3.6 A sample of empty properties had been post inspected to enable data to be gathered on the quality of the work carried out. This was completed through a new initiative of Resident Assessors that was also being piloted. A group of 10 residents, selected from the Asset Panel and from the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group, completed a post inspection check sheet. The Assessors were given training to enable them to decide whether or not work was of the expected quality.
- 3.7 A resident satisfaction survey commenced in November 2012 to gather tenant views on the standard of the property when first let. The surveys started prior to the revised Lettable Standard, to give some comparative data for analysis.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 It was not possible to investigate other options as we are contracted to work with our repair partners Mears.
- 4.2 A pilot to assess the implications of the revised standard was carried out to establish likely impacts.
- 4.3 Cost data was collected to determine the financial impact and the results are presented below.

Comparison of average monthly cost (rounded to nearest £)

| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 |
|-----------------|---------|---------|
| December | £1,790 | 1,460 |
| January | £1,700 | £1,800 |
| February | £1,500 | £1,150 |
| March | £1,810 | £1,090 |

- 4.3.1 New schedules of rates (the cost of work carried out) were not established for the additional elements such as hard wired smoke alarms. This has meant revising the standard to this point has not impacted on cost and has been absorbed by

| | 2011/12 | 2012/13 |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Number of properties | 539 | 384 |
| Total cost | £889,353 | £583,667 |
| Average cost per property | £1,650 | £1,520 |

the contractor under the previous schedule of rates.

4.3.2 It can be assumed, based on the cost data, that we have achieved value for money by improving the standard at no extra cost. Please see appendix 2 for further information on costs.

4.4 Data on new tenant satisfaction levels were collected for the first time as part of the revised lettable standard. The areas of focus that the questionnaire covered were:

- § How satisfied or dissatisfied a tenant was with the standard of their new property
- § What would improve their satisfaction
- § Did the tenant have to report any repairs themselves
- § What are the 3 most important improvements needed inside their home
- § What are the 3 most important improvements required outside their home
- § What are the 3 most important improvements needed in their new neighbourhood
- § What additions they would like to have seen in their new home

4.4.1 In total 23 survey responses were received out of 114. 8 responses were received before the pilot began and 15 during the period.

4.4.2 The overall result is positive with 22 of the 23 respondents either fairly or very satisfied with the condition of their new home.

4.5 A new initiative commenced as part of the lettable standard pilot. Residents had the opportunity to assess the quality of work completed whilst a property is empty.

4.5.1 The Resident Assessor initiative will now be fully implemented where residents are trained to inspect work carried by our partners Mears.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 A report and presentation was given at the November 2013 Area Panels. No further suggestions for change were made by residents at any of the meetings.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The reasons for the proposed change to the Brighton & Hove council property Lettable Standard, is to ensure consistency with the contract with our repairs partner Mears. It also ensures we have up to date specifications our contractors should work to.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Financial Implications:

- 7.1.1 The pilot data indicates that the costs of the new lettable standard can be met from within current Housing Revenue Account budgets. The costs associated with empty properties will continue to be monitored as part of the monthly Targeted Budget Management (TBM) process and any variances will be reported accordingly.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Monica Brooks Date: 30.1.14

7.2 Legal Implications:

- 7.2.1 Once a property is let to a tenant, the tenancy agreement and section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 impose various repairing obligations on the council as landlord. These include an obligation to keep in repair the structure and exterior of the property and installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity and drainage. The revised lettable standard will assist the council in discharging those obligations.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley Date: 31.1.14

7.3 Equalities Implications:

None

7.5 Crime & Disorder Implications

None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- 1 Comparison table
- 2 Cost data

Documents in Members' Rooms

none

Background Documents

none