

Subject:	Brighton & Hove Property Standard: Additional Information		
Date of Meeting:	30 April 2014 Housing Committee		
Report of:	Executive Director of Environment, Development & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Janine Healey	Tel: 293314
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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 as part of the planned programme of improvement work.
- 1.2 These improvements ensure all Housing Revenue Account (HRA) managed properties meet and exceed the government's Decent Homes Standard (DHS), and is known locally as the Brighton & Hove Property Standard.
- 1.3 At Housing Committee on 5 March 2014 it was agreed that some additional information would be provided around cost implications for hearing loops and external lighting.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

That Housing Committee agree to the following recommendations being incorporated into the Brighton & Hove Property Standard, from April 2014:

- 2.1 External security lights be fitted to all properties with a street entrance receiving an electrical rewire or upgrade as part of the planned programme and empty property works.
- 2.2 A programme of hearing loop installations, where required, to communal lounges in sheltered housing schemes and community meeting rooms within HRA properties.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The recommendations in the original report were as follows:

3.1.1 That all individual sheltered homes with a street entrance be offered an external security light, when upgrading the electrics to that property.

3.1.2 That all sheltered housing schemes with communal lounges have a hearing loop installed when upgrading electrics to communal areas.

3.2 This was based on the following information:

3.2.1 **Sheltered lighting and hearing loops:** External lighting to sheltered properties with a street entrance will incur an additional cost of around £115 per install. Hearing loops cost approx £500 to £600 to install. There are 23 lounges in sheltered schemes, ten of which already have hearing loops. A programme of 13 installs would cost £7,800 plus an annual service of around £55 per system.

4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & OPTIONS

4.1 Security Lighting: The existing specification for external lighting to a dwelling when having a full rewire is as follows:

4.1.1 Vandal resistant low energy bulk head lights will be supplied and fitted to the principal entrance door position switched from inside the property.

4.1.2 All properties that have their own street entrance have an external, switched light fitted as standard as part of a full rewire.

4.2 Homes that are having an electrical upgrade (consumer unit/ fuse board) do not currently have an external light fitted.

4.3 During April 2013 to February 2014 there were 410 full rewires plus an additional 261 upgrades.

4.4 A similar level of empty properties are expected during 2014-15, and this would have a potential increase in costs of £30,015 (261 upgrades x £115).

4.5 Hearing Loops: Loops are not currently installed as part of the decent homes programme of work.

4.6 The Repairs & Improvement Partnership with Mears does allow for installation of products for the disabled. The Sensory & Electrical contract with Housing Adaptations & Occupational Therapy Team does not include fitting hearing loops.

4.7 The Equality Act 2010 requires local authorities to ensure their public meeting and community rooms are accessible. This provides an opportunity to include in the programme the installation and maintenance of hearing loops in up to 27 non-sheltered meeting rooms within HRA owned properties.

- 4.8 This would bring the total number of installations to a maximum of 50, with install costs of £30,000 plus annual servicing of £2,750.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

5.1.1 **External Security Lights.** The original report to Housing Committee on 1st April recommended fitting external security lights to **sheltered properties only** when an upgrade/rewire was due. These costs could be met within current budget resources. However, costs of fitting external security lights to all external properties as they are due a rewire/upgrade will cost an estimated £30,015 during 2014/15 which has not been built into the capital programme. This extra cost will need to be met from the current rewiring budget for of £0.95 million for 2014/15 which may mean that less rewires will be undertaken in 2014/15 than originally planned. This will then be reviewed at budget setting with the aim of including this expenditure in the capital programme for 2015/16 and beyond.

5.1.2 **Hearing Loops.** The original report to Housing Committee on 1st April recommended fitting a hearing loop in a **sheltered block only when an upgrade/rewire was due.** These costs could be met within current budget resources as they would be spread over a few years. However, this report recommends a programme of fitting hearing loops to communal lounges in sheltered blocks and community meeting rooms during 2014/15. This is estimated to cost £30,000 of capital expenditure, with annual maintenance costs of £2,750. The HRA does not currently have any budget in 2014/15 for this. Therefore, savings/underspends would have to be identified elsewhere in the HRA to pay for this during 2014/15. This could be monitored as part of the TBM process. If some or all were delayed until the following year, then provision of hearing loops could be built into the 2015/16 capital and revenue budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Monica Brooks Date: 04/04/2014

5.2 Legal Implications:

5.2.1 The installation of external security lights is not a requirement under either the council's standard tenancy agreement, or the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. As mentioned in paragraph 4.7, a duty is imposed on the council under the Equality Act 2010 to take such steps as is reasonable to avoid any provision which puts a disabled person at a disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled. The installation of hearing loops in communal lounges in sheltered schemes, and community meeting rooms, will assist in discharging that duty.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley Date: 15/04/14

5.3 Crime & Disorder Implications

5.3.1 None