

Committee: HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item

Date: September 08, 2005

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Title: **GARAGE SITES UPDATE**

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Summary

This report updates the Committee on the review of Council owned garage sites and asks for approval to begin discussions with housing associations / developers leading to the donating / selling of sites suitable for development.

Recommendations

For sites where a development potential has been identified the Committee agrees:

1. that no further leases will be offered on these sites and that the current tenants are informed of this decision
2. that officers investigate alternative parking arrangements for any Council house tenants affected by this decision – eg possibility of creating off street parking within the boundary of the tenants property.
3. to approve discussions with housing associations/developers leading to the donating/selling of sites suitable for development.

For sites that have been identified as having no development potential the Committee agrees:

4. to approve a rolling improvement programme of these sites based on a division of available annual budget between lighting and resurfacing requirements
5. that the Council will offer new formal tenancy agreements to include good repair and maintenance conditions
6. to approve an increase in leasing charges to reflect the costs of the improvement programme

Background Papers

The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:

1. Report to Health and Housing Committee 6 January 2005

Impact

Communication/Consultation	There is a need to keep existing tenants of garage sites informed of the situation
Community Safety	Redevelopment of some of the sites could help to reduce some anti-social behaviour
Equalities	None
Finance	Expected to generate a capital receipt on some sites
Human Rights	None
Legal Implications	Need to ensure that leases are managed correctly
Ward-specific impacts	Will be district wide
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

1. This report is being presented to members as a follow up to a report submitted to the Health and Housing Committee in January which advised members of the options for investment and income relating to the Council's garage sites.
2. The report in January concluded that the 28 garage sites owned by the Council, on which car owners erected their own garage structures, had, to some extent, received little attention. Some of the sites are in prime locations and have development potential. This could be for affordable housing schemes where the value of the land could be the Council's contribution to a scheme. The Committee agreed that officers should:
 - Inform existing 'tenants' of the Council's new policy regarding garage sites
 - Prepare a programme of reviewing garage sites subject to staff resources
 - Accept no further lettings until a review of all sites has been undertaken
 - Begin a programme to review and update current 'tenancy agreements'. If appropriate for the site this will involve serving notice to terminate any implied tenancies and offering new formal tenancy agreements to include good repair and maintenance conditions.
 - Review charges to reflect the costs of the improvement programme.
3. The situation needs to be considered now as potential income from any private sales will need to be built into budget figures for 2006/07. It should be noted that a capital receipt generated from a private sale of this nature can be kept by the Council on the condition that it is used as a Capital Allowance against a regeneration project - defined as work to bring land or buildings into effective use. It is therefore important to identify a suitable regeneration project to make use of this money rather than handing it over to the Government. This could include the Council developing a garage site itself.
4. Existing tenants have been served notice to terminate their implied tenancies on all sites reviewed and will need to be notified if they are not going to be offered a new lease agreement. This will ensure that they have sufficient time to explore alternative parking arrangements before their leases expire in March 2006.

Targets

5. What we are trying to achieve is:
 - improving estates
 - providing new social housing
 - minimising outlay in management, repair and maintenance costs
 - generating a capital receipt which can be used as a capital allowance against a regeneration project elsewhere in the district
 - regularising leases, where offered, to include repairs and maintenance clauses

Options

6. Officers have surveyed 23 sites to date and a copy of the survey report is appended to this report for information. Of the sites surveyed the following have been identified as having development potential for affordable housing schemes, subject to planning approval:
 - Newton Grove, Great Dunmow
 - Waldgrooms, Great Dunmow
 - Burnstie Road, Felsted
 - Watts Close, Barnston
 - Broadfield, High Roding
 - Holloway Crescent, Leaden Roding
 - Broomfields, Hatfield Heath (site of disused scout hut)
 - Birchwood, Birchanger (Site 1) off Wood Lane
 - Birchwood, Birchanger (Site 2)
 - Birchwood, Birchanger (Site 3)
 - Globe Crescent, Farnham
 - Coney Acre, Rickling
 - Pinkneys, Chrishall
7. The following sites have been identified as having potential to be sold for private development, subject to planning approval, as the sites are too small to be of any economical interest to a Registered Social Landlord:
 - Woodview Road, Great Dunmow
 - The Gossetts, Margaret Roding
 - St Martins Close, White Roding
 - Birchwood, Birchanger (Site 4)
8. The following sites have been identified as having no development potential:
 - Rosemary Crescent, Great Dunmow
 - Church Lane, Little Canfield
 - The Moors, Little Dunmow
 - Chaffix, Felsted

9. There are a number of options that need to be explored further now that sites with development potential have been identified. Discussions should commence with housing associations to look at the feasibility of using the sites for social housing schemes where the value of the land could be the Council's contribution to a scheme.

Pay-Offs

10. maximises the use of a Council resource
11. regenerates areas that attract fly tipping and anti-social behaviour
12. potential gain in social housing

Penalties

13. could be local opposition to a proposed scheme
14. if no action was to be taken sites would remain under used

Risk Analysis

15. The following have been assessed as the potential risks associated with this issue.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
Local opposition to a proposed scheme could emerge	Low	Medium	Would carry out full consultation
Loss of garage/parking facilities creating estate problems	Medium	Medium	Feasibility study to ascertain the provision of additional off street parking