

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 6 October 2016

10

Title: Welfare Garden and Redecoration Policy Update

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Summary

1. This report updates members on how the revised Welfare Garden and Redecoration policy has been working since it was implemented in 2014.

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board:
 - a. notes the report
 - b. considers whether the charges for gardening and one off clearances should be raised in line with inflation annually from next year

Financial Implications

3. The new policy has raised some income for the Housing Revenue Account but the current charges do not cover the full cost of the service. Recovering the full costs of providing a welfare garden and redecoration service was not the aim of the revising this policy.

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	Tenants newsletter and council website
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	The proposed changes take into account the needs of vulnerable tenants It is considered that the proposed policy would assist disabled households who have no alternative means of cutting their grass or internally decorating their homes and therefore has a positive impact for equality and diversity EIA was carried out prior to implementation
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	N/A

Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	Housing staff

Situation

5. The revised Welfare Garden and Redecoration policy was introduced to ensure that these services were going to those most in need of such a service, rather than have ever increasing numbers using the service, many of whom did have alternative options for both looking after their gardens and decorating their homes.
6. The new amended policy was also designed to encourage tenants who are not suitably housed to consider moving to more appropriate accommodation whilst still helping vulnerable tenants who are not in a position to move and who still required some assistance to maintain their properties.
7. Prior to the revised scheme being introduced the Welfare Garden Service was cutting 154 tenants hedges and 161 lawns were being mowed. By August 2016 the numbers had fallen to 57 hedges and 53 lawns, equating to a reduction of just over two thirds. The charge for this service has remained at the original cost when it was first implemented of £3.60 per week.
8. The number of households having a room redecorated has also dropped since we stopped offering the service to those who are under occupying properties. This has allowed for those that are being completed to be carried out in a timelier manner.
9. It is felt that the balance within the service is correct and that it is now being provided to those most in need. There has also been no increase in complaints to housing officers of overgrown hedges or gardens. It is therefore felt at this time that the scheme does not require any further revision. There does however need to be the consideration as to whether the charges for gardening and one off clearances should be raised in line with inflation annually from next year.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Scheme becomes unviable due to ever increasing costs of delivering this service	2 – charges are currently not increased annually with inflation so gap between costs and income will increase further	2 – Added costs for the Housing Revenue Account	The charges are increased by at least inflation annually

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.