

CABINET - 19TH SEPTEMBER 2019

Report of the Head of Landlord Services Lead Member: Councillor Paul Mercer

Part A

ITEM 6 COMMUNAL AREA CLEANING SCHEME FOR COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION

Purpose of Report

To consider the introduction of a chargeable communal cleaning service to tenants and leaseholders living in Council accommodation served by communal entrances, stairways, landings and internal bin stores.

Recommendations

1. That the introduction of a communal area cleaning service to tenants and leaseholders living in Council accommodation served by communal entrances, stairways, landings and internal bin stores is approved.
2. That tenants and leaseholders receiving the service pay for it through a service charge levied weekly in addition to their existing gross rent.
3. That the administration of the service is not passed on to tenants and leaseholders but absorbed as part of the council's normal housing management service, met through existing housing revenue account (HRA) budgets.
4. That the frequency of cleaning be carried out according to the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken with tenants and leaseholders, and officers' recommendations.
5. That tenants and leaseholders receiving the service will be charged according to the frequency decided.
6. That there will be a one-off clean carried out initially, the cost of which will not be charged to those receiving the service, but met through existing (HRA) budgets.

Reasons

1. To keep communal areas at Council accommodation clean, and to improve the quality of life for tenants and leaseholders living in Council accommodation.
2. To recover the costs incurred through the contract to deliver the service.
3. To keep the cost of the service low at the point of introduction, reducing any potential financial stress placed on tenants through additional charges.

4. To carry out cleaning at a frequency which is in accordance with the wishes of tenants where possible, balanced against the need to bring the cleanliness of communal areas up to an acceptable standard.
5. To support a charging scheme that reflects the frequency of cleaning, whilst keeping costs low for all tenants and leaseholders receiving the service.
6. To not charge tenants and leaseholders due to receive the service for work to bring the communal areas up to an acceptable standard, when there has been no cleaning undertaken, in some instances, for some a significant period of time; and to reflect the views of the Housing Management Advisory Board.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Council's tenancy agreement states that tenants are responsible for keeping the internal shared areas and common parts adjacent to the property, such as stairs and landings, clean and tidy. Some of the communal areas are cleaned by tenants, however most are not. In some instances tenants may not have the physical ability to undertake a clean themselves.

The introduction of a communal cleaning scheme at general needs Council accommodation¹ will support compliance with the following regulatory standards:

- Under the Homes and Communities Agency Consumer Standard Regulations (2012) the Council has a responsibility to keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that it owns clean and safe.
- Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Council has to take all reasonable steps to ensure that its premises are made safe from fire.

The introduction of a communal cleaning scheme will support delivery of the following elements of the Corporate Plan:

- Corporate Plan 2016-2020 Theme *Every Resident Matters*, and specifically, corporate plan outcomes:
 - *Make Charnwood an attractive place for all, through investment in our housing stock...*
 - *Keep our residents safe through implementing a new Community Safety Plan, combatting ASB and investing in emergency planning, food safety and safeguarding*
 - *Listen to and communicate with our residents and act on their concerns.*
- Corporate Plan 2016-2020 Theme *Creating and Strong and Lasting Economy*, and specifically, the corporate plan outcome:

¹ The council directly employs cleaners at its sheltered accommodation. Sheltered accommodation does not fall within the scope of this report.

- *Take action to protect the environment for future generations and ensure a clean borough for all to enjoy.*

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The proposal to introduce a communal cleaning scheme at Council accommodation was considered by the Housing Management Advisory Board on 12th June 2019 (minute 37). The Board endorsed the recommendations 1 to 6 as detailed above.

Should Cabinet approve the implementation of the scheme, the next steps are expected to be as follows:

Action	Indicative Timescale
Procure contractor via a framework.	September 2019
Residents will be advised of the outcome of the consultation exercise and be told of the frequency of cleaning. The statutory four weeks' notice to tenants of the levying of the new service charge will take place.	September 2019
Contract mobilisation.	October 2019
Communal cleaning service implementation.	November 2019

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

The £7,329 cost for a one-off clean at the start of the contract will be met from existing HRA budgets.

The annual contract cost for cleaning is £75,908 and will be recovered from tenants and leaseholders via a service charge. The contract duration is two years, with the potential for a further extension period of two years. Annual price increases will be linked to the consumer price index. The value of the contract is therefore estimated at £319,258 over the four year period.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Contractor under or non-performance performance leading to expected improvements and value for money not being delivered, increased costs, and tenants and leaseholders being dissatisfied.	3 Likely	2 Significant	Moderate (6)	An on-site monitoring regime will be implemented. Performance indicators will be contained in the contract and monitored through contract management meetings. Break clauses will be included in the contract.
The service charge is not paid, leading to increased arrears and costs associated with recovery.	3 Likely	2 Significant	Moderate (6)	The new service will be publicised in the tenants' magazine and in the letter sent to tenants and leaseholders to advise them of the new charge. It will be highlighted that the charge is fully eligible for housing benefit or universal credit and that help and advice is available. Existing income recovery processes will be instigated.

Equality and Diversity

There is no anticipated adverse impact on any protected group. An equality impact assessment can be found at Appendix 1.

Crime and Disorder

The introduction of a communal cleaning scheme will support delivery of the Council's responsibilities under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), and the Council's legal requirement to undertake reasonable action to improve community safety in our Borough. This will be achieved through cleaning communal areas of litter, detritus, bodily fluids, and paraphernalia associated with ASB and drug and alcohol misuse.

Sustainability

Cleaning communal areas to an acceptable standard will advance the health and wellbeing of tenants, leaseholders, and their families.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Papers: None

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Part B

Background

1. The council currently owns 263 blocks (a number of dwellings served by a common entrance, stairway and landing) of general needs residential accommodation. 1,516 residents (Including around 200 leaseholders) live in properties that share communal entrances, stairs and landings.
2. The council does not provide a communal cleaning service at the common areas, many of which are in poor condition with a build-up of dirt and other substances / materials having accumulated over many years.
3. The Landlord Service receives regular requests from residents to clean up bodily fluids including blood, faeces and urine from shared areas, and to remove litter and drugs paraphernalia. One-off cleans are arranged on a responsive basis in respect of these problems. The poor condition of the blocks has also been highlighted by tenancy and estate management officers, elected members, and other agencies visiting the accommodation.
4. As part of its commitment to seek the views of tenants, in 2015/16 the council commissioned BMG Research to carry out a [STAR] survey to establish tenant satisfaction with different aspects of housing service.
5. In 2016 all respondents who lived in a flat were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the cleanliness of internal shared areas. Overall, 39% of general needs tenants living in a flat indicated satisfaction with the cleanliness of communal areas, and 50% indicated dissatisfaction.
6. Similar results were found in 2018 with 42% of general needs tenants indicating satisfaction with the cleanliness of internal shared areas, and 43% dissatisfaction.
7. It is proposed to clean all communal areas, including those currently cleaned by tenants / leaseholders. This will support a consistent standard across all accommodation that is not dependent on the capacity and goodwill of individual tenants / leaseholders. The process for setting service charges is set out in statute for both tenants and leaseholders, with charges calculated on an annual basis.

Costs to provide the service, and charges to tenants and leaseholders

8. A suitable contractor has been identified via a framework, and a quotation has been received.
9. It is therefore proposed that 52 schemes (a number of blocks with the same postal address e.g. Peel Drive or Staveley Court) will receive a monthly clean, and 16 schemes a fortnightly clean. Excluding the cost of the one-off clean at the start of the contract, the total cost per annum of the service on this basis is **£75,908**.

10. For tenants, not leaseholders, the service charge is eligible for housing benefit and universal credit subject to the claimant's status.
11. A number of charging options have been considered and are set out below. *Frequency of Clean* is the recommended option.
12. **Block** - the actual quoted cost to clean each block of accommodation would be split by the number of tenants / leaseholders in the block. Under this approach some tenants would be charged £0.91p for a fortnightly clean, and others £3.63. Generally speaking the fewer the tenants in a block the higher the charge to those tenants / leaseholders and vice versa. At Moira Street in Loughborough, some tenants would pay £2.72 more than their neighbour living in a different block. A similar variance exists for monthly cleaning on this basis.
13. **Scheme** - the actual quotes cost to clean each scheme of accommodation would be split by the number of tenants / leaseholders in the scheme. Under this approach some tenants would be charged £0.91p for a fortnightly clean, and others £2.72. A similar variance exists for monthly cleaning on this basis.
14. **Frequency of Clean** - the cost of the fortnightly / monthly clean is divided by the number of tenants / leaseholders receiving the service as set out in the below table.

	Fortnightly	Monthly
Total contract price	£39,125.00	£36,783.34
No. tenants	461	855
No. leaseholders	51	149
Weekly charge – tenants [48 weeks]	£1.59	£0.76
Weekly charge – leaseholders [52 weeks]	£1.47	£0.70

15. Charging by *Frequency of Clean* keeps costs (relatively) low for the majority, linking charging with the visible delivery of the service. This approach smooths out any variances in price due to the number of people occupying the block or scheme.

Consultation

16. As stated, the STAR surveys conducted in 2016 and 2018 indicated high levels of dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of communal areas.

17. The Housing Management Advisory Board considered the initial proposal for a communal area cleaning scheme at their meeting on 9th May 2018 (minute 37). The Board felt that the cleaning of communal areas was of prime importance to tenants and needed to be implemented immediately. They welcomed the report and the consultation. It was resolved that the proposal within the report be agreed and the consultation start as soon as possible.
18. Residents were consulted by a survey sent out to them in the post. The survey was issued in early February 2019 and the closing date was 13 March 2019. Residents were able to respond either by posting their answers or completing the survey online.
19. The survey consulted residents on a range of matters, namely:
 - residents' preferred frequency of cleaning;
 - their views on the current cleanliness of their block;
 - whether or not someone [resident] cleans their block currently;
 - their satisfaction with the arrangement that requires residents to clean their blocks;
 - giving residents the ability to make free-text comments at the end of the survey.
20. 239 responses were received, representing a response rate of around 16%. This would not be considered to be statistically reliable but nevertheless has provided a useful indication of opinion.
21. The results of the survey, along with a summary of free text comments made by tenants and leaseholders can be found at Appendix 2.
22. The results show that:
 - Nearly 49% of those responding feel that their blocks are not clean;
 - Over 60% of those answering the question currently live in a block where a resident cleans it;
 - Nearly 45% of those answering the question are dissatisfied with the current cleaning arrangement in their block;
 - These responses are broadly consistent with the STAR survey results of both the 2016 and the 2018 surveys.
23. Analysis has been undertaken on the 136 free text comments made by respondents.
24. The results are as follows:

- 26% were in favour of the proposals;
 - 42% were opposed to the proposals;
 - 32% were neither in favour nor opposed or raised other matters.
25. The majority of the positive comments made in favour of the communal cleaning were based upon the perceived current condition of the blocks. These residents welcomed the idea of having a regular cleaning service so long as the work was done to a high standard.
26. It is probable that residents taking the trouble to respond to the consultation were more likely to be those who were unhappy at being charged for something that they did already (i.e. the residents cleaned their block themselves). This is supported by the fact that of those who answered the question “Is your block cleaned currently”, over 60% answered “yes”. Council officers spoke to a number of residents on the phone, who wanted to discuss the proposals. Almost without exception they were opposed to the proposal because they already cleaned their block themselves. After explaining why the proposal was to carry out the cleaning through a contractor and why those currently doing the cleaning or benefiting from it could not opt out, most residents appeared to have understood the reasoning without necessarily changing their view.
27. In respect of the cleaning frequency, the results of the consultation were analysed on a scheme basis, thus giving residents the greatest influence over the cleaning frequency at a level that was both practicable in terms of contract delivery and charging and sufficiently local so as to give credibility and integrity to the consultation exercise.
28. As well as asking residents for their preferred frequency of cleaning, the tenancy and estate management team members were also asked for their views on the desired frequency of cleaning in order to compare their professional opinion with residents’.
29. In all schemes the majority preference was either fortnightly or monthly (be that four-weekly or calendar monthly).
30. The results of the consultation were presented to the Housing Management Advisory Board on 12th June 2019 (minute 37). Notably, it was resolved that:
- a) a recommendation be added to this report to include that the first cleaning to take place will not be charged to tenants; and
 - b) the board endorsed the recommendations that Cabinet have been asked to consider.

Appendices

Appendix 1	Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 2	Consultation Results

CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

'KNOWING THE NEEDS OF YOUR CUSTOMERS AND EMPLOYEES'

Step 1 Introductory information

Title of the service	Communal cleaning contract
Name of lead officer and others undertaking this assessment	Andrew Staton - Landlord Services Manager
Date EIA started	8 May 2019
Date EIA completed	20 August 2019

Step 2 Overview of service/function being assessed:

Outline: What is the purpose of this service? (Specify aims and objectives)
The proposal is to introduce a cleaning service for tenants and leaseholders living in the council's accommodation served by communal entrances, internal halls, stairways and landings. The service will be introduced following unacceptable STAR survey dissatisfaction levels (2016 and 2018) over the cleanliness of these areas. The service, when introduced, will be paid for by levying a service charge on affected residents, calculated on the total contract price but according to the frequency of cleaning (fortnightly or monthly), established through consulting residents over their preferred frequency.
What specific group/s is the service designed to affect and what is the intended change or outcome for them?
All current and future tenants of council-owned dwellings serviced by internal communal entrances, stairways and landings
Which groups have been consulted as part of the creation or review of the service?
All affected tenants and leaseholders

Step 3 What we already know and where there are gaps

List any existing information/data do you have/monitor about different diverse groups in relation to this service? Such as in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc.
Data/information such as:

- Consultation
- Previous equality impact assessments
- Demographic information
- Anecdotal and other evidence

A range of diversity information is available from our records and held in QL (our housing management system) for all those customers receiving or potentially receiving [applicants] housing management services. This includes information on age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. The range of information is limited in relation to certain characteristics (e.g. sexual orientation).

What does this information / data tell you about diverse group? If you do not hold or have access to any data/information on diverse groups, what do you need to begin collating / monitoring? (Please list)

This information enables support to be directed to the most vulnerable tenants, and also shape our services to meet the needs of vulnerable people across a range of diverse groups.

Step 4 Do we need to seek the views of others? If so, who?

In light of the answers you have given in step 2, do you need to consult specific groups to identify needs / issues? If not please explain why.

Staff in landlord services teams have been consulted as well as affected tenants and leaseholders.

The proposal has been endorsed in principle by Charnwood Housing Residents' Forum and the Housing Management Advisory Board.

Step 5 Assessing the impact

In light of any data/consultation/information and your own knowledge and awareness, please identify whether the service has a positive or negative impact on the individuals or community groups (including what barriers these individuals or groups may face) who identify with any 'protected characteristics' and provide an explanation for your decision (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

	Comments
Age	There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group
Disability (Physical, visual, hearing, learning disabilities, mental health)	Disabled people could be affected adversely by this service if appropriate health and safety procedures (e.g. signage) were not practised by the contractor.
Gender reassignment (transgender)	There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group
Race	There will be no adverse effect from this service on this

	protected group
Religion or belief (Includes no belief)	There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group
Sex	There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group
Sexual orientation	There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group
Other protected groups (pregnancy & maternity, marriage & civil partnership)	There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group
Other socially excluded groups (carers, low literacy, priority neighbourhoods, health inequalities, rural isolation, asylum seeker and refugee communities etc.)	There will be no adverse effect from this service on this protected group

Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/ or barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise all negative impact or discrimination.

Please note:

- a) If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately.
- b) Additionally, if you have identified adverse impact that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people.

Any potential adverse impact on disabled people will be mitigated by the insistence on rigorous and legally-compliant safety measures and procedures being practised by the contractor when cleaning the blocks. As part of the contract implementation process, full risk assessments and method statements will be required and compliance against these will form part of the contract monitoring quality control process.

Other than above, there is no anticipated adverse impact from this new service other than a financial one that will affect every resident. The service charge will be eligible for housing benefit and universal credit in full.

Summarise your findings and give an overview as to whether the service will meet Charnwood Borough council's responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

The service will meet the Council's responsibilities in relation to quality and diversity. There is no adverse impact on protected groups that is not sufficiently mitigated against.

Step 6 Monitoring, evaluation and review

Are there processes in place to review the findings of this assessment and make appropriate changes? In particular, how will you monitor potential barriers and any positive/ negative impact?
After twelve months' service duration we will assess the impact that the additional charge has had on arrears [to see if they increased arrears] indicate any bias towards those not able to claim benefits.
How will the recommendations of this assessment be built into wider planning and review processes? e.g. service reviews, annual plans and use of performance management systems.
No recommendations have been identified in this assessment.

Step 7 Action plan

Please include any identified concerns/actions/problems in this action plan:			
Reference number	Action	Responsible officer	Target date
1.	Review impact of introduction of cleaning scheme to identify any adverse impact on protected groups.	Andrew Staton – Landlord Services Manager	March 2021

Step 8 Who needs to know about the outcomes of this assessment and how will they be informed?

	Who needs to know (Please tick)	How they will be informed (we have a legal duty to publish EIA's)
Employees	✓	Team meetings
Tenants and leaseholders	✓	Publication on the council's website
To ensure ease of access, what other communication needs/concerns are there?		None identified.

Please delete as appropriate

I agree with this assessment / action plan

If *disagree*, state action/s required, reasons and details of who is to carry them out with timescales:

Signed (service head):

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. C. T.', is written in the signature box.

Date: 20/08/2019

Please send completed & signed assessment to Suzanne Kinder for publishing.

Results of Communal Cleaning Consultation

Percentage figures are based on those answering each specific question, not on the total number of responses received:

Preferred Frequency of Clean	No. responses	% (approx.)
Weekly	6	3.25 %
Fortnightly	23	12.5 %
Three-weekly	6	3.25 %
Four-weekly	39	21.0 %
Monthly	112	60.25 %

	Opinion on existing cleanliness of block		Currently cleaned?		% Satisfaction with current arrangement	
	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
Very clean	22	9.7%				
Clean	93	41.2%				
Unclean	65	28.8%				
Very unclean	45	19.9%				
Don't know	1	0.4%				
Yes			135	60.5%		
No			70	31.4%		
Don't know			18	8.1%		
Very satisfied					36	17.6%
Satisfied					46	22.6%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied					49	24.0%
Dissatisfied					39	19.1%
Very dissatisfied					32	15.7%
Don't know					2	1.0%

A summary of resident comments made through the consultation is below.

Positive comments

- that many elderly residents are not able to clean the blocks owing to health and age-related problems;
- that people may take [more] pride in the areas where they live;

- that blocks will look more welcoming;
- that a positive outlook on certain areas will be achieved.

Negative comments

- that the price was too high;
- that the block is already cleaned by the residents;
- that the cleaning goes against the tenancy agreement as tenants are expected to clean communal areas;
- that work will not be done to a good standard as with all council contracts;
- “it’s another council money-making scheme”;
- “why should tenants who make the effort to clean areas be asked to pay”;
- “tenants who don’t clean communal areas should be reminded of [their] tenancy agreement”;
- that they couldn’t afford to pay for the service.

Neutral comments

- that repairs to the block should be a priority;
- who will oversee the quality of the work[?];
- that tenants who constantly cause mess in blocks need to be told what is expected by the council;
- that blocks should be upgraded with new paint, new flooring and lighting.