

**Decision Session - Executive Leader
(incorporating Housing and Safer
Neighbourhoods)**

23 January 2017

Report of the Corporate Director, Health, Housing and Adult Social Care

Replacement of the Estate Improvement Grant with the Housing Environmental Improvement Programme

Summary

1. The report seeks approval to replace the Estate Improvement Grant (EIG) Scheme and introduce a Housing Environmental Improvement Programme (HEIP). Both are funded from the Housing Revenue Account and must directly benefit council tenants by improving housing assets.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Leader (incorporating Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods) is asked to:

Agree to the Housing Environmental Improvement Programme (Annex A) and spending criteria (Annex B) from April 2017

Reason: This scheme takes a more strategic approach to environmental improvements, it is less bureaucratic, can combine with other funding schemes to provide better schemes that reflect the needs across the whole council stock.

Background

3. The Housing Revenue Account is ring fenced by financial regulations. Money from this can only be spent on council housing land or assets.
4. The current EIG scheme has been in operation in excess of 25 years. It has traditionally been available to council housing areas where a Resident Association (RA) existed but has been

administered between housing and community involvement staff. The number and efficacy of RAs has fluctuated year on year leaving some council areas without access to EIG funding.

5. Over the last few years Housing staff have operated a complimentary system with the budget surplus to deliver on issues identified by housing staff and colleagues as well as residents. These have included improved storage and improved parking.
6. Over time the number of council tenancies in all council estate areas has fallen meaning that these areas are now mixed tenure. This is particularly the case in areas where there is a preponderance of houses rather than flats.
7. RAs have sought the views of tenants annually to determine what the funding will provide. The number of tenants participating in this process has been low (Annexe C). Some RAs have struggled to spend budgets due to lack of proposals in a particular year. The proposals can often be vague leading to confusion over exactly what the proposal involves.
8. Many longer term schemes such as security fencing or parking improvements for areas are high value capital schemes which have had to be done annually and were dependent on funding being agreed year on year via the proposal and voting process.
9. More recently CYC has worked with RAs and the Federation of tenant and residents association (FED) to make them more independent and constitutionally robust in representing tenants in their area. The current scheme (Annexe D) and spending criteria (Annex E) which requires RAs to organise and administer the EIG proposal process. Previously most of the administration was done by Council staff. Most RAs have an active EIG programme as they have met the deadlines.
10. In addition to the EIG a 'pot' of £30k is administered by the FED annually. RAs make bids to this. Often this is to top up funding for schemes included in the substantive EIG programme for that year. This is also on an annual basis.

Consultation

11. Staff have been consulted on, and have given feedback on, the EIG process over a number of years. They express dissatisfaction with the overly bureaucratic, short term nature of the current system and

believe it does not really deliver for customers. The longer term benefit of some schemes is acknowledged such as improved security measures, extra storage in and around blocks of flats and the provision of dropped kerbs.

The proposed scheme was taken to the Federation of Resident Associations (Fed) in July 2016. Responses to the proposal from the Fed and Foxwood RA are attached respectively at Annex F & G.

Options

12. Option one: Retain the existing EIG scheme

Option two: Adopt the HEIP scheme and criteria.

Analysis

13. Option one: The current EIG scheme over time has delivered real improvement on estates for residents and is currently administered and determined solely by RAs and is very focused on tenants issues. There is rarely consideration given to wider ward or council priorities and the funding opportunities linked to these. The funding is annual and therefore the scheme does not lend itself to long term planning with secured and consolidated funding for capital projects. The process is bureaucratic and administered by non technical staff. RAs have taken more of a role in organising EIG proposals and spending and the performance on this has been mixed.
14. Option two: This proposal takes a longer term view of schemes to improve areas for all residents, it has the potential of combining funding streams and linking in with wider schemes to deliver for all residents to make a bigger impact and realise economies of scale. The proposal focuses on combining technical and organisational expertise with consultation and decision making through the ward system. The ability to bring forward / pool funding in one year should make the scheme much more effective in delivering on local priorities. RAs can link in to the ward and scheme decision making processes on behalf of residents so that the voice of council tenants is heard.

Council Plan

15. This proposal helps deliver the Council Plan in a number of ways:

A council that listens to residents to ensure it delivers the services they want and works in partnership with local communities

With a focus on cost and efficiency to make the right decisions in a challenging financial environment

16. Implications

. **Financial** The funding available would be £200K this would include £30K that would continue to be administered by the FED. The criteria for HRA funding still applies.

- **Human Resources (HR)** No implications
- **Equalities** The scheme should better reflect the priorities of all sections of our communities.
- **Legal** No implications apart from those arising from individual schemes.
- **Crime and Disorder** The HEIP scheme has the potential to help reduce this through the application of more impactful initiatives across funding streams.
- **Information Technology (IT)** No implications
- **Property** No implications
- **Other** None

Risk Management

17. The schemes should combine funding streams and take account of programmes happening across services therefore reducing the risk of duplication or missed opportunities.

If no local priorities for spending are identified, individual communities may miss out of HEIP funding.

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**Report
Approved**



Date 11 Jan 2017

Specialist Implications Officers:

Isabel Jones
Accountant

Wards Affected: Several wards – listed in annexes

For further information please contact the author of the report

Abbreviations used in report

| | |
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| EIG | Estate Improvement Grant |
| FED | Federation of tenant and residents association |
| HEIP | Housing Environmental Improvement Programme |
| RA | Resident Association |

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

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| Annex A | Housing Environmental Improvement Plan Proposals |
| Annex B | Housing Environmental Improvement Programme spending criteria |
| Annex C | Estate Improvement Grant Returns 2015-16 |
| Annex D | Estate Improvement Grant Process |
| Annex E | Estate Improvement Grants – Criteria |
| Annex F | Reply to Housing Environmental Improvement Plan Document |
| Annex G | Comments on Estate Improvement Grant Proposals |