

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	All wards
REPORT TITLE Update on Caretaking and Estate Cleaning Review	
REPORT OF Director of Housing Management	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Housing Scrutiny Committee	DATE 9 September 2019
SUMMARY OF REPORT The report outlines the work which has been carried out to date, to review the Caretaking Service and propose a redesigned service to meet resident's needs and address the new and increasing demands on the service. The review has recognised that cleaning remains a major part of the service and is a key priority for residents, but increased environmental factors such as higher levels of anti-social behaviour, rough sleeping on some estates and new health and safety requirements particularly around fire safety make it necessary to redesign the service. The proposed changes will strengthen the service giving additional capacity to address issues such as increased workloads due to anti-social behaviour or urgent fire safety works whilst ensuring staff are not removed from their core tasks. In order to address residents wish for increased accountability and transparency new quality assurance roles will be added and cleaning standards will be agreed locally with residents The proposed insourcing of the cleaning of the external parts of estates to be delivered as a part of the new caretaking service will improve standards and accountability as requested by residents Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officer: Sharon Calvey, Head of Estate Services Housing Management Supporting communities London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG Tel: 020 7974 5665 E: sharon.calvey@camden.gov.uk	

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Housing Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the report

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M J McGowan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Date:

29/8/2019

1. Context and Background

- 1.1. The report to Housing Scrutiny Committee on 28 March 2019 set out the challenges being faced by the Caretaking Service in addition to the increased demands placed upon the service. Levels of anti-social behaviour and rough sleeping are increasing on some of our estates, and there is the need for more proactive work to ensure the health and safety of residents particularly in relation to fire safety. There is an imperative to meet resident's demands for improved cleaning standards, and more transparency relating to cleaning and consistency of standards and performance. In recognition that the scope of the Caretaking offer has changed and become increasingly complex, the review of the Caretaking Service presented the opportunity to address these issues.
- 1.2. Following a consultation with over 1600 residents during winter 2018/19, in addition to all staff within the Caretaking Service, a proposal for a new model of service was developed and consulted on with residents. The proposal also recommends bringing the external cleaning of housing estates in-house to be integrated as part of the new caretaking role. Negotiations are currently ongoing with the contractor to facilitate this process.
- 1.3. The proposals for the new service are subject to a Single Member Decision by the Cabinet Member for Better Homes, which is expected to be considered in September 2019.

2 The consultation process with residents

- 2.1 The first consultation with residents identified the need to improve the caretaking offer to tenants and leaseholders. Workshops with front line caretaking staff identified many of the same concerns about the need for a new model of service. Evidence of increased demand on the service confirmed the need for change.
- 2.2 Residents were clear they wanted improved standards of internal cleaning and litter picking of external areas, more accountability and transparency about performance and the delivery of a consistent and high performing caretaking across all Council homes receiving a Caretaking Service.
- 2.3 A new service model proposal has been developed as a result of the feedback from this consultation. A further consultation was undertaken in June/July 2019, that focused on the proposals to improve the Caretaking Service and outlined the potential cost of the proposed changes. Under section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 the Council has a legal obligation to consult its secure tenants on matters of housing management such as changes to the management, maintenance, improvement, or demolition of houses let by it, or changes in the provision of amenities.
- 2.4 In addition, given the nature and scope of the review it was considered that any consultation should meet the requirements of section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This requires every Best Value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in relation to its functions and one mandatory aspect of this duty is the requirement to consult with representative groups of

people falling within certain the category of stakeholders (i.e. those who pay for or use council services).

- 2.5 The council launched a public survey of its proposals for Camden’s estate caretaking service on Wednesday 5 June 2019. The survey was open for six weeks and closed on 21 July 2019. The survey which built on the preliminary survey, undertaken in the previous winter, utilised a wide range of channels so that council tenants and leaseholders, residents and businesses, were engaged directly or through their sector representatives, ensuring that the Council has a good understanding of public opinion with respect to the caretaking proposal and also that it has met its consultation and best value duty.
- 2.6 There was a good response with 860 responses received representing a mix of tenants, leaseholders and demographics representing a range of characteristics including protected characteristics such as age, disability, gender, religion and sexual orientation.
- 2.7 The survey posed four specific questions outlined below. Taking each question in turn the result is as follows:

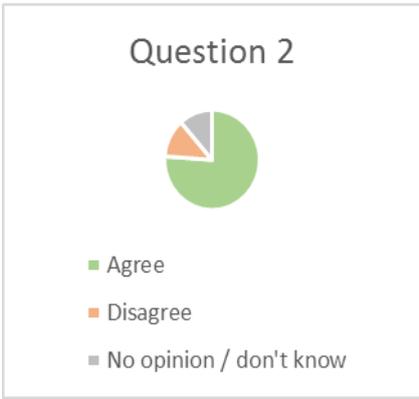
Q1. The new caretaking service will develop performance standards in partnership with residents and feedback on a regular basis. Do you agree that our proposals will allow for the continuous improvement of the service?

76.5% of respondents agreed with the proposal, 12.5% did not and 11.5% said they did not know or had no opinion. Council tenants were more favourable than Council leaseholders (79.5% vs. 74%).



Q2. The new caretaking service will develop performance standards in partnership with residents and feedback on a regular basis. Do you agree that our proposals will allow for the continuous improvement of the service?

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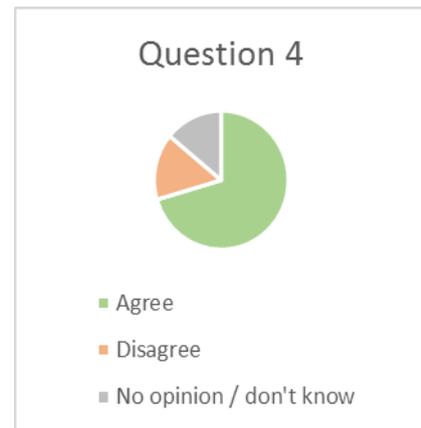
Q3. The council is proposing more and better-paid caretakers, strengthened supervisory arrangements and a dedicated safer housing caretaking



team (giving additional capacity to the service to reduce the impact of fire safety work and antisocial behaviour on residents). Do you agree that these proposals will improve the lives of residents by making their homes safer and cleaner places to live?

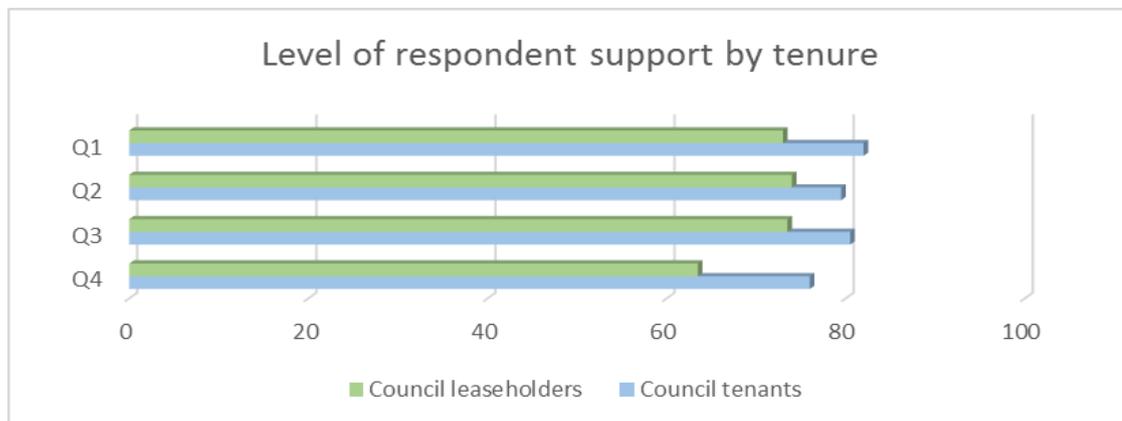
76.5% of respondents agreed with the proposal, 14% did not and 9.5% said they did not know or had no opinion. Council tenants were more favourable than Council leaseholders (80.5% vs. 73.5%).

Q4. The council believes that the proposals will mean we have a more effective and efficient caretaking service by combining the external and internal cleaning, increasing the numbers of caretakers and improving quality. Do you agree that these proposed improvements are value for money?



70.5% of respondents agreed with the proposal, 14% said they did not know or had no opinion and 15.5% did not agree. Council tenants were more favourable than Council leaseholders (76% vs. 63.5%).

2.8 The consultation results show support from a strong majority of residents for the proposals the Council has put forward to improve its cleaning and caretaking offer.



2.9 Comments from residents in the survey were generally positive and reflect the potential of the proposal to improve the service. There are some concerns that management may not be able to achieve this potential and a recognition that residents have a part to play too in making the new service work.

2.10 Residents are keen that closer communication links are developed between them and the service and they are listened to, to ensure service standards can be set at the right level. They are also clear that they want to have effective feedback on what is being achieved.

- 2.11 The consultation response indicates that there is a high level of support for the proposed new service model and there is a general consensus, that the proposals are value for money.
- 2.12 Narrative comments from responders to the consultation are also generally supportive of the proposal to insource external cleaning and to the proposed modernisation. A number of comments received indicated a view that the service should be sufficiently resourced to support the objective to improve standards.
- 2.13 Some examples of comments and feedback include:

'I think bringing the service back in-house is absolutely the right thing to do. We don't need a huge new supervision network or process for caretakers, but better pay and conditions which will mean more commitment and engagement from a workforce who feel valued. This is a really positive step!'

'These proposals seem to address the issues. Residents absolutely need cleaner and safer estates.'

- 2.14 The proposal for the re-organised and modernised service was set out and consulted on as part of the consultation exercise. Indicative costs for the new approach to caretaking were provided within the consultation. This represented a possible increase in service charge to residents receiving the service, of between 85p and 95p pence per week.
- 2.15 In the consultation, residents indicated favourably that a proposed cost increase of service charge of this level represented value for money.
- 2.16 Proposals for the Modernisation and Reorganisation of the Caretaker Service are well supported by respondents to the survey. In general, over 76% of respondents felt the proposals would improve the local environment, contribute to continuous improvement of the service and make homes safer and cleaner places to live. Just over 70% of respondents felt the proposals represented value for money.

3 The proposed new service model

- 3.1 Staff have been consulted extensively on the proposals having shaped the direction of travel for the service in a number of workshops before the formal consultation started.
- 3.2 We have designed a new caretaker role as part of the proposal, which has been re-evaluated and resulted in caretakers having an increased grade and salary, in recognition of the increased requirements of the role. New cleaning systems are proposed to be introduced following an extensive training programme. All caretakers will have access to email and new online reporting systems. New health and safety training will be delivered on resident safety and there will be an increased expectation that caretakers will address residents' concerns at an earlier stage. Work such as supporting vulnerable residents and safeguarding are recognised in their new job description

- 3.3 Residents wanted greater accountability and the ability to escalate issues when they were unhappy with performance and consistency. A new role of Caretaking Manager is proposed to replace the estate supervisor role. The grade has increased to reflect the new responsibilities and is now more in line with other similar roles within the organisation. The intention is that these local officers can be autonomous decision makers and will work at an early stage with residents to agree standards and address issues. This new role will be pivotal in delivering the proposed new service.
- 3.4 A new role of Caretaking Support Manager has been proposed to be responsible with the Head of Service for driving and coordinating the changes residents have asked for and developing the quality and consistency of the new service. They will also have line management responsibility for a number of the proposed new roles.
- 3.5 A new Safer Housing Caretaking Team consisting of six additional posts is proposed to assist the front line service to deliver when increased demands occur such as acute incidents of anti-social behaviour. The intention is that additional resources can be pulled in as necessary to prevent the caretaker being taken away from essential cleaning and other duties on their agreed workload.
- 3.6 In order to address concerns from residents about the window cleaning service additional resources have been proposed to enable an improved and more consistent service. A new Window Cleaning Team of four officers is being proposed.
- 3.7 There is a need to address quality assurance issues within the service. Whilst all caretaking staff will have a key role to play in improving quality and standards there is a need for additional resources to support the development of a new quality assurance system for the service. It is proposed that a Project Officer and two Quality Assurance Officer posts are created for a two-year period. They will develop a new quality assurance system and standards in conjunction with residents. In order to improve communication and support safety reporting requirements a new Administrator role will be created under the proposals.
- 3.8 In order to ensure a comprehensive service to residents the two Meter Reader posts have been made permanent positions within the establishment after the pilot demonstrated the need for this service for residents. The proposed new model also recommends the insourcing of the external cleaning of estates in response to resident's requirements for improved service standards in this area, the sweeping of these external areas will be absorbed into the wider enhanced caretaker role. Negotiations are currently ongoing with the contractor with a view to facilitating this process.
- 3.9 Staff have largely been supportive of the proposed approach and model, and happy that their input and valuable contributions have been reflected in both the proposed new roles and structure. They have particularly welcomed the opportunities for career progression within the proposal, and our proposed new

approach to review our performance and continuity of standards across the borough with the support of the Caretaking Support Manager and their team.

- 3.10 A robust programme of training has been designed to support the staff and ambitions for the proposed service. This will ensure that all staff receive mandatory training in a variety of areas specific to their roles that will focus on the improvement of cleaning operations. Training in IT, in preparation for the roll out of emails for caretaking staff in addition to learning how to use the new and updated App reports used to report repairs, missed refuse collections, anti-social behaviour and fires safety reporting etc.
- 3.11 A plan is in place to manage the recruitment process for new and existing staff within the proposed service. The opportunity to recruit locally, particularly existing tenants and other Camden residents will be an integral part of the proposed recruitment drive.

4 ICT developments and improvements

- 4.1 New ICT and Business process requirements are being developed to meet the requirements of the proposed new service. This will be complimented further by the development of new administrative processes to promptly capture enquiries and complaints and resolve them effectively. These processes will include the way we collect and share cleaning performance standards and data with residents. There will be ongoing resident involvement in the development of any proposed new reporting systems.

5 Links to Our Camden Plan

- 5.1 Caretaking Services play an important part in contributing to the success of Camden 2025, in particular, 'safe, strong and open communities.' The Caretaking Service provides the first point of contact for residents. It represents the face of the Council to many residents. With a daily presence, caretaking staff can provide reassurance to many residents, particularly where they are experiencing the impact of antisocial behaviour outside their homes.
- 5.2 The ambitions for the new proposed service will ensure continuity, less fragmentation of responsibilities and an enhanced service to keep our residents safe. In the spirit of Camden 2025 we want to take a "shared endeavor" approach to the development of the proposed new service; working with residents, Officers are also considering how the new service can contribute to local employment opportunities and steps will be taken to ensure that caretaker roles are attractive and accessible to local residents.

6 Legal Comments

- 6.1 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and comments are included within this report

7 Finance Comments

7.1 The Executive Director of Corporate Services has been consulted and has no comments to make on this report

8 Timetable for Implementation

8.1 If the proposals for the new service are agreed by the Cabinet Member for Better Homes in the Single Member Decision to be presented to him in September 2019, it is anticipated that a new Caretaking Service will be ready to deploy from Autumn 2019.

REPORT ENDS