

# Report to the Council

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 1 November 2016

**Subject:** Housing

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor S Stavrou

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**Recommending:** That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.

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## **Review of approach to the provision of off-street parking schemes on housing estates**

Since 2009, some 182 off street parking bays have been created on housing estates across the District where there has been the greatest need for off street parking, free of charge. This has been at a total cost of around £800,000 to date, split almost equally between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). These schemes have generated very high resident satisfaction and have reduced the parking stresses in those streets.

However, as members are aware, the Council continues to face financial pressure and there continues to be a need to make savings within both the General Fund and the HRA in future years or, where possible, generate additional income.

At its last meeting, the Cabinet agreed that, for future off street parking schemes (with the exception of the schemes that have already agreed and committed), the Council will only provide off street parking where residents are prepared to pay to use the spaces, thereby generating an income to offset the high cost of constructing the bays. In addition, as is the case currently, following consultation exercises on proposed schemes the majority of the residents must be in favour of the proposal (and be prepared to state that they would be willing to pay to use the parking spaces).

The Cabinet agreed that charges for future off-street parking schemes will be either through renting dedicated parking spaces to residents, Residents Parking Zones or a Pay and Display tariff.

Where individual parking bays are to be rented, the spaces will be secured with a hinged lockable bollard, and the Cabinet agreed that an initial charge of £500 will be introduced for the first year of a new scheme being provided, to cover the cost of installing the lockable bollard, and £250 per annum thereafter. These charges will be reviewed annually.

It is unlikely that one approach will fit all situations. Therefore, an assessment will be made by officers and the most appropriate approach for each site will be determined by the Director of Communities, in consultation with me.

The Cabinet also agreed that, for the time being, only the schemes that are already committed will be constructed. Any new schemes will be added when the Cabinet next undertakes its annual review of off street parking in Autumn 2017.

## **Council Housebuilding Programme - Phase 1**

In September, the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee agreed the appointment of P A Finlay & Co Ltd for the completion contract of the construction works at Phase 1 of the Council's Housebuilding Programme in Waltham Abbey in the negotiated contract sum of £2,674,000. This followed the Council's decision to formally determine the contract with the

previous contractor, Broadway Construction Ltd, as they were failing to regularly and diligently progress with the works.

When pricing for the completion contract, P A Finlay & Co Ltd went to great lengths to engage with the whole of the design team and sub-contractors used by the previous contractor, and many have emerged as the preferred specialists that P A Finlay & Co Ltd intend to appoint, which has a number of advantages for the Council. Indeed, this is a significant step towards them being able to offer guarantees and warranties for the works already completed by Broadway Construction Ltd, from which the Council will benefit.

Nevertheless, a number of provisional sums - amounting to around £171,000 – have still had to be estimated and added to the contract to offset a number of items that P A Finlay were unable to price, due to uncertainty with the works completed by Broadway Construction until the completion works commence.

The net difference of PA Finlay & Co Ltd completing the works, compared to the position if the total works were tendered now, is between an extra £753,000 and £860,000. Effectively, this represents the premium that the Council has had to pay for a new contractor to take over the work of another contractor, with all the difficulties, risks and new set-up costs that this always involves.

### **Review of the Epping Forest Careline Alarm Monitoring Service**

The Council's Careline Service was introduced in June 1984. The service offers a twenty-four hour, 365 days per year, emergency alarm monitoring service to older and disabled people living within the District. The service currently monitors around 2,570 properties, including all of the Council sheltered housing schemes and private sector connections.

As the Careline Monitoring Centre has expanded in terms of the number of private sector connections, the management and operational aspects of the service have become more complex. In addition, there have been difficulties in recruiting staff, due to the nature of the work, the extensive training requirements and the salary level. This has led to additional pressures on existing staff that have had to cover, not only vacant posts, but also annual leave and sickness absences.

In 2011, the Careline Monitoring Service became accredited by the Telecare Services Association. The TSA is a nationally-recognised standards body for the delivery of technology-enabled care and support services in the UK. A new British Standard (BS8591) has recently been introduced which, in summary, states that there should be a minimum of two operators on duty in control centres at all times, whereas the Council's Control Centre only has one operator on duty during the "off peak" periods in the evenings and nights. All other Centres in Essex have either outsourced the service to a third party or have two Operators on duty at all times.

Although the Careline Service currently provides an excellent and reliable service to residents, with high levels of user satisfaction, it is considered important that a review of the future delivery of the Service is undertaken, to ensure its future resilience. The Communities Select Committee will therefore be undertaking a major review of the Careline monitoring service at its meeting on Monday 21 November 2016, which commences at 7pm in the two Committee Rooms, which all members are invited to attend.

The Committee will be asked to consider four main options for the future delivery of the service and to make recommendations to the Cabinet on a preferred option for early in the New Year.