

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 FEBRUARY 2019

Title:

GARAGE PROJECT – FURTHER DETAIL

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr King]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

Following the garage report presented 27 November 2018, the committee requested further information and detail on the locations of the garages across the borough including hotspots, let rates for each block, upgrade works past and future and details of waiting lists and demand. The committee also requested feedback on both the garage grounds maintenance plan and the solar light pilot study. This report presents the information requested.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The report supports both the People and Place Corporate priorities. Improving garage blocks and increasing lettings will impact on the aesthetics of neighbourhoods and increase in the Housing Revenue Account income.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications:

A three month temporary officer has been recruited, specifically to let void garages with a clear target to reduce voids, within staffing budget. Target income is achievable provided we successful promotion and uptake of garages.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

1. Background

- 1.1 Annexe 5 highlights the steady decline of garage occupancy over the last few years. Over the last few months, great efforts have been and continue to be made, to maximise revenue by letting the vacant garages. Annexe 5 shows a sharp spike in the last few months reaching 473 occupied garages at 1 January 2019. This is a direct result of the current garage project.
- 1.2 Annexe 6 shows the current financial situation as well as the maximum potential revenue. If full occupancy is achieved, a revenue potential of >£570k p/a could be reached. Annexe 1 shows the current status of all 682 of Waverley Borough Council garage stock. 473 garages (70%) are occupied and of these, 343 (73%) are licenced

to private residents while just 130 (27%) are licenced to Waverley Borough Council tenants.

- 1.3 Currently, there are 209 vacant garages and 189 applicants on the garage waiting list (Annexe 2), though the majority of these applications are for the same popular areas which have no, or few current vacancies. We call these hotspots.

2. Hotspots – High and Low demand

- 2.1 Waverley has a relatively even distribution of garages across the borough as a whole, however Farncombe, Farnham and Haslemere have the highest density, each having >100 garages (Annexe 3).
- 2.2 Annexe 4 summarises occupancy rates per block and by area. Sites with full occupancy include Bricksbury Hill, Owen Road, Latimer Road, Lion Mead, Sunbrow and Whitfield Close.
- 2.3 High demand hotspots are those that have far more applicants on the waiting list than there are vacancies. Specific garage sites in high demand include; Beaufort Road (one vacancy but 19 applicants waiting), Roman Way (no vacancies but 18 waiting) and in Godalming, both Latimer Road and Peperharow have no vacancies but have 30 and 35 people on the waiting lists respectively.
- 2.4 Alfold is a particular low demand area, with 4 vacancies at Brockhurst Cottages but no one on the waiting list. There are 6 vacancies at Clappers Meadow with just 2 on the waiting list.
- 2.5 Site specific waiting lists may appear misleadingly high, since applicants are able to apply to as many sites as they wish. For example there are 9 people on the Bardsley Drive list though these 9 people could also be 9 of the 19 applicants on the Beaufort Road list. Once all 9 are offered garages at Bardsley Drive, the waiting list at Beaufort Road may drop by 9 (Annexe 4). For this reason, the waiting lists tend to move quickly.

3. Private vs tenant

As can be seen in Annexes 1 and 2, the vast majority of current licensees (73%) and applicants waiting (80%), are non council tenants.

4. Grounds maintenance programme

Site specific information has been compiled to include information on; forecourt condition, drainage, surrounding/overhanging foliage, roof type and suggestions of maintenance frequency such as gutter and drain clearance. This data has been collated and passed to the Housing Asset Team to produce a maintenance programme.

5. Solar Light pilot study

5.1 Last year a pilot study of wall mounted solar lights were fitted to a garage block in Haslemere. No known complaints have been reported, regarding the lights since their installation. A telephone survey was carried out in January 2019 with the garage licensees of the block and we have received the following feedback:

- the lights remain in situ and are in working order
- the lights make licensees feel safer in the dark.
- the lights are only bright enough when they have been able to receive a full charge from the sun. They are not sufficient charged during winter months when sunlight is minimal.

5.2 We have agreement to carry out another pilot study, trialling a more powerful lighting product which will overcome the issue of the dark winter months, since it is during this time of the year that the lights are required most.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. notes the progress in garage lettings and revenue maximisation;
2. notes the distribution of garages across the borough including hotspots; and
3. notes that a garage block maintenance programme is to be developed by the Housing Asset Team.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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