
Housing Revenue Account Garages

To: **Cabinet – 11 September 2014**

By: **Cllr Nicholson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing & Planning Services**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **All wards**

Summary: **To approve the Director of Community Services to have delegated authority to acquire garage leaseholds and freeholds on Housing Revenue Account land.**

For Decision

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 Thanet District Council has undertaken an audit of all the council owned garages across the district. There is currently a 50% vacancy rate across all of these sites. Some of the sites have development potential to provide new affordable homes, which is in accordance with the objectives of the Corporate Plan 2012-2016 and the Housing Strategy 2012-2016. Sites which have development potential now have planning consent to deliver up to 40 new affordable homes which will be retained by Thanet District Council and let to households on the housing register.

2.0 The Current Situation

2.1 In order to develop the sites, we need to purchase back some of the leaseholds and freeholds of garages which have previously been sold along with properties in the HRA through the Right to Buy.

2.2 As part of the planning application process the leaseholders and freeholders on the application sites were notified that a planning application had been submitted. They were given the opportunity to contact the council to discuss the application and their options to potentially sell their garage back to the council.

2.3 The current delegated authority of the Director of Community Services does not include the buy back of garages on Housing Revenue Account Land. Due to the timescales of delivering the new build homes, it would be more efficient for delegated authority to be granted for this project to allow negotiation and the purchase of the leaseholds and freeholds to be undertaken at an officer level in conjunction with the portfolio holder.

3.0 Options

3.1 For Cabinet to agree for the Director of Community Services to be granted delegated authority to purchase back leaseholds and freeholds of garages that have previously been sold.

3.2 For members to choose to make the decision on the purchase of each garage, but this will create delays to the new build programme.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 Negotiation can commence with the owners of the garages. Across the sites we are currently looking at there are 9 garages to purchase back in total. Some of the owners have already been in contact and would like to sell their garages back to the council.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 Financial and VAT

- 5.1.1 There are no envisaged VAT issues arising from the proposal. Funds have been secured for the buy-back, however individuals may wish to refuse sale and as a result Compulsory Purchase may become an issue, possibly further inflating the costs.

5.2 Legal

- 5.2.1 There will need to be care taken to ensure that the price paid is reasonable following valuation as this will be a requirement for the end of year audit. It needs also to be borne in mind that acquiring land with a view to redevelopment does not guarantee any right to redevelop the land and any proposal will be subject to obtaining the relevant planning and other permission.

5.3 Corporate

- 5.3.1 Building new affordable homes has strong links with the ethos and priorities of the Corporate Plan. In particular Priority 7: "We will plan for the right type and number of homes in the right place to create sustainable communities in the future." Other priorities such as Priority 2: "We will tackle disadvantage across the district" feature housing issues such as tackling empty homes and also Priority 4: "We will make our district a safer place to live" in terms of good housing design and creating sustainable communities. Also, by redeveloping the sites, issues such as antisocial behaviour and fly tipping which are linked with disused garages, are being tackled.

5.4 Equity and Equalities

- 5.4.1 Purchasing back garages which have previously been sold, does not negatively impact on residents of the district. The new build programme aims to improve housing opportunities in Thanet and make better use of our Housing Revenue Account assets to benefit residents. Garage sites were included in housing developments from the 1960's to the 1980's and in most cases have a lack of natural surveillance that attracts ASB and fly tipping. By redeveloping these sites we are removing these problem areas and making best use of council owned land. The housing will be allocated to households on the housing register in accordance with the Allocations Policy, for which an Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 For members to approve the Director of Community Services to have delegated authority to acquire garage leaseholds and freeholds on Housing Revenue Account land.

7.0 Decision Making Process

Contact Officer:	Ashley Stacey, Strategic Housing Manager Ext 7280
Reporting to:	Madeline Homer, Director of Community Services

Annex List

None	N/A
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Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
None	N/A

Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance	Matt Sanham, Finance Manager (Service Support)
Legal	Steven Boyle, Interim Legal Services Manager & Monitoring Officer
Communications	Hannah Thorpe, PR & Publicity Manager