

Cabinet

11 JANUARY 2010

**CABINET MEMBER
FOR HOUSING**
Councillor Lucy Ivimy

**FULHAM COURT ESTATE IMPROVEMENT
STRATEGY: PHASE 1: PHYSICAL
IMPROVEMENTS**

**Ward
Town**

**CABINET MEMBER
FOR CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**
Councillor Sarah Gore

This report sets out work being undertaken to formulate an Estate Improvement Strategy for Fulham Court and seeks approval to the implementation of phase 1 –physical improvement programme. The estate has suffered from a number of complex issues for a long time and a strategy is being developed to transform it and improve the quality of life for its residents. The strategy is being developed through a multi agency steering group which has worked through a process to understand the problems and to develop a vision for transformation. The strategy will seek to harness resources from numerous sources to create a deliverable programme of physical and social improvements over the next 3-4 years

**HAS A PEIA BEEN
COMPLETED?
YES**

CONTRIBUTORS
CSD/HFH/FCS/LS/
ENV/NHSH&F/CHSD/
RSD
ADLDS

Recommendations:

- 1. That approval be given to the implementation of a Children's Centre (subject to any necessary statutory consents and comprehensive resident consultation).**
- 2. To approve a programme of consultation with residents to evaluate the possibility of physical estate improvement.**
- 3. To agree to earmark £4.057m of funding from the HRA Disposal Receipts over the years 2009/2013 to enable the works**

programme to proceed, subject to detailed resident consultation and further approval, and to agree the provisional annual budgets across the 2009/2013 years as shown in the body of the report (subject to confirmation at tender approval stage) and that £0.450m of grant funding be applied regarding the provision of a Children's Centre.

- 4. To approve the delegation to H&F Homes of the responsibility for the development and delivery of the physical improvement programme, subject to detailed approval being sought to the final scheme from Cabinet.**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The development of Estate Improvement Strategies aims to contribute to the Council's objectives of creating a clean, green and safe borough to live in and a borough of opportunity for all its residents. Operating at an estate level, Estate Improvement Strategies will seek to improve services and improve the quality of life for residents. Whilst estate-focused, they will complement the outcomes of wider programmes of physical and social regeneration occurring in the borough.
- 1.2 This report updates Cabinet on progress towards formulating an estate improvement strategy for the Fulham Court Estate. It describes the methods that are being used; the emerging vision of what the estate could look like in the future, early achievements, and the next steps in the process of developing the strategy. It seeks Cabinet approval to implement the physical improvement programme for the estate.
- 1.3 H&F Homes will work closely with relevant Council Departments to further develop the following proposals. This process will be part of a full ongoing Consultation Programme with residents.

2. A PROFILE OF FULHAM COURT ESTATE – KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 A comprehensive profile of Fulham Court residents has been assembled by the Fulham Court Steering Group. The key facts about the estate and its residents are:
 - Fulham Court Estate is made up of 356 units of mainly family-sized accommodation. At the time of the last census in 2001, it had a population of 350 households and 955 residents.
 - Homes have benefited from the decent homes programme but no environmental improvements have been provided. Tenants report graffiti, vandalism and fly-tipping as big problems. The nine blocks, bounded by high walls and narrow gates, are physically enclosed and not integrated with the surrounding streets.
 - Almost a quarter of the population lives in a lone parent household, well above the borough average, which is 10%.

- It is a crowded place with a population density of 232 people per hectare; more than twice the borough average. 50 households are registered for a transfer because of overcrowding.
- The estate has a high adult to child ratio of 3:1 compared to a borough ratio of 4:1. Indications from more recent data are that the adult to child ratio is now closer to 3:2.
- It is not a popular place to live. There is a high number of transfer requests (25%) recorded for people already living on the estate and no transfers recorded on to it over the last year. The estate is cut off from the surrounding neighbourhood.
- The main rehousing source for Council tenants on the estate is the waiting list – 37.1%, which is a higher proportion than LBHF estates generally. 15.8% were formerly homeless households which is again higher than the proportion on LBHF estates generally. Given the waiting list and homeless acceptances were the source of the majority of lettings in 2008/09, the over-representation will continue if the current approach continues.
- The estate has suffered some particularly serious incidents of crime over the last year. Drug dealing and drug use are problems on the estate. In the 9 months up to December 2008 crime increased overall compared to the previous 9 months. The highest increase was in the number of common assault offences and in drug arrests. The police and Community Safety Division are of the view that the current physical layout of the estate aids crime and acts of anti-social behaviour.
- Many young people are in need. Almost a third of Fulham Court pupils have been recorded as having identified learning difficulties. The NEET population for Town Ward, that is young people not in education, employment or some form of training, is above average for the borough.
- The average income is very low (46% of households subsisting on less than £20K pa) with 61% of Council tenants on housing benefit.
- There are high levels of debt (12.4% of tenants are in rent arrears of 4 or more weeks (the average across HFH stock is 9.9%). 22, that is, almost half of all leaseholders are in service charge arrears.
- Employment levels solely for the estate are not available. However Fulham Court and Lancaster Court combined have one of the highest levels of worklessness in the borough at 26% for working age people. 11% of the working age population is on Incapacity Benefit, which is above the borough average, and lone parents account for 1 in every 3 of the working age population on some form of benefits (the borough average is 1 in 5).

- There is a disproportionately high level of acute or statutory services work with residents while there is a low take-up of early-intervention, information and non-crisis services.
 - Community involvement has been patchy, with poor attendance at focus groups and, until recently, no TRA on the estate in the last four years.
- 2.2 The emerging picture of the estate is its separation - both spatial separation from the surrounding, traditional 19th century terraced street pattern which characterises the urban fabric immediately adjacent to the estate boundaries and social and economic separation, illustrated by the evidence base of data on worklessness, ill health, education and exclusion from mainstream service take up.
- 2.3 The challenge and vision for the future is to reduce this "separateness", to physically connect the estate to the surrounding neighbourhood. Phase 1 of the strategy will break down the physical barriers of the estate in relation to the surrounding area and improve the layout of the estate and common areas as well as improve the quality of the landscape.

3. PHASE 1- PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

3.1 Development and scope of environmental work

- 3.1.1 Living Architects were commissioned by the Steering Group to develop a proposal to improve the environment of the estate. The architects have developed a proposal for a comprehensive improvement programme that could be achieved within a 3 year period and which tackles the challenges presented by the poor layout of the estate and its environment. See *appendix 2 'Fulham Court and Barclay Close Estates Environment Improvement Strategy outline brief dated November 2009'*. Numbers in brackets () below refer to page numbers of this document

The key features of the proposals are:

Facilitate better parking arrangements; improve street landscaping to reflect the look of nearby roads, provide better pedestrian access and possibly reduce access points into the estate, and utilise the arch on the Fulham Road entrance to create a new shop unit.

Which could be achieved by:

- *removal of the estate gates (2), (3) and redefining the street boundaries to the properties facing onto Shottendane Road so they respond to the street rather than turn their back on the street (4).*
- *Continuing existing roads into the present estate by removing the 'estate barrier' that currently exists.(2), (6), (7)*

- *The estate roads to be redefined with some roads being resurfaced to signify access for parking and service vehicles only, and other roads converted into Homezones. (6), (7), (14)*
- *Surface treatments enhanced to define highways and parking. (9), (14),*
- *Enhance refuse storage facilities (13)*

Integration of Fulham Court Estate and Barclay Close to create an enhanced neighbourhood and remove the physical divisions between the two communities which could be achieved by:

- *changing the physical layout so that Block J may be accessed off Barclay Close, (6),*
- *the existing walls, fences and tenant stores that form a physical boundary between the two estates to be removed (stores relocated), (8), (9), (10), (12),*
- *new parking areas formed to 'penetrate' between the two estates and new access routes opened up, (9).*
- *provide rationalised pedestrian routes (6)*

Improving the quality of landscaping to communal areas, including the three courtyards within the main blocks of the estate

Which could be achieved by:

- *developing a landscaping scheme throughout the two estates designed to specifically enhance the neighbourhood by appropriate selection of hard landscaping, low level and medium level planting and choice of trees.(5), (8), (9), (12), (14), (16)*
- *Additional work to boundaries to create living walls or green fences, (3), (4), (5)*
- *Breaking down of individual tenant boundary walls to be replaced with fencing and hedges to allow greater natural light into front gardens and additional greening of the environment at ground level. (4), (12)*
- *Courtyards to be specifically focused to serve the needs of the community with each courtyard having a different treatment. (15), (16), (17).*
- *Encourage greater 'ownership' of the courtyards by the tenants.*

3.1.2 Providing for a new Children's Centre (subject to any necessary statutory consents).

3.1.3 The proposals are ready to be presented to residents for their further refinement and development prior to implementation. Following this process, the Cabinet will then be able to consider the approval of a final scheme.

3.2 Provision of a Children's Centre within the area (10)

- 3.2.1 The proposals also include providing a Children Centre to serve the central and northern Fulham Area. Children's Centres are one stop shops for parents/carers with children under the age of 5. The aim of the children's centre programme is to have a Children's Centre in every community by 2010. The word community is used to define an area which has approximately 800 children under the age of five.
- 3.2.2 Fulham Court has been identified by the Children's Services Department as a particularly important location for a Children's Centre due to its level of vulnerable families as evidenced in the resident profile and its close proximity to other local housing estates. It is currently serviced via a two area model Children's Centre where the majority of the activities take place at the Sands End Community Centre – with limited activities taking place on the neighbouring Vanston Estate and Fulham Primary School. Unfortunately families do not tend to travel to Sands End and as it is expected that activities should be within a reasonable pram pushing distance, a more northern Fulham location is ideal. It is important to note however that the centre is not for the exclusive use of the estate and is open to the wider community.
- 3.2.3 The proposed location of the new centre, which could also later accommodate a community centre for the area, will assist in breaking down barriers for local families and encourage wider use of the much needed facility. The preferred location has a road which leads directly from the Fulham Road and is within a short distance to the Cassidy Medical Centre, enabling easy access for residents from the local area to use the centre and reducing any perception that it is just for Fulham Court residents.
- 3.2.4 Replicating the successful model of combining a Children's Centre with a community centre similar to the centre developed on the Old Oak Estate will enable a seamless service to be delivered under one roof.
- 3.2.5 The centre will provide a range of appropriate activities for children and will also provide support, information and advice for parent/carers. This focuses particularly on school readiness for children, family support, parenting, health initiatives such as healthy eating, cooking on a budget, family learning and information and advice on back to work initiatives.
- 3.2.6 A decision to move ahead with the provision of a Children's Centre is urgent. The council has a capital allocation of £450,000 (which comes from the DCFS) available to provide a centre and this needs to be spent by the end of March 2011. DCFS revenue funding has also been confirmed until the end of March 2011. The revenue allocation for a

phase three centre is £100,000 per annum and the identified provider for this project is a voluntary sector organisation – the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

4. FUNDING PLAN

4.1 Revenue Funding:

4.1.1 The Strategy will be implemented using existing revenue resources; no additional council revenue is being sought at this stage. It is likely that the physical improvement scheme will result in the need for an increase in maintenance to the landscaping across the area. This will be met from existing budgets.

4.1.2 An allocation of £100,000 revenue to support the Children’s Centre has been confirmed by DCSF until 2011 and work is underway to develop the service from within the existing community centre for the time being during 2009/2010 to enable local users to help design and commission the planned new Children’s Centre.

4.2 Capital Funding:

4.2.1 The physical improvement proposal for phase 1 of the strategy is expected to cost £4.5m over a three year period. The majority of funding for this work will be provided through the HRA Disposal Receipts. The funding will be further supplemented by the DCSF allocation of £450,000 towards the Children’s Centre.

4.2.2 In summary the expenditure/ income profile for the physical improvement project is as set out below: Appendix 1 set out the illustrative costs of the components parts of the programme.

Capital Budget & source	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	Total
Funding from DCSF (Children’s Centre)	£ 70,000	£ 380,000			£ 450,000
Funding from HRA Disposal Receipts	£ 30,000	£ 771,000	£1,963,000	£1,293,000	£4,057,000
Total funding	£ 100,000	£1,151,000	£1,963,000	£1,293,000	£4,507,000

Proposed Expenditure	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	Total
Fees	£100,000	£ 95,000	£ 355,000	£ 77,000	£ 627,000
Works		£1,056,000	£1,608,000	£1,216,000	£3,880,000
Total	£100,000	£1,151,000	£1,963,000	£1,293,000	£4,507,000

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR LEASEHOLDERS

- 5.1 It is likely that some limited elements of the planned works would be chargeable to leaseholders living on the estate. There are only 50 leaseholders and of these only 2 are resident leaseholders. The precise detail of this will not be known until the project has been fully developed through consultation with all residents, including leaseholders. The Council will need to comply with Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended by section 151 of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002) in determining the charges for each individual leaseholder. Full details of the implications will be provided at Tender Approval stage. The programme to develop the physical improvement scheme includes provision to meet the statutory requirements for notification and consultation about the proposals prior to the project being put forward for approval.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

- 6.1 The Fulham Court Estate has its own community centre building, but it is at the end of its useful life. Some minor improvements have been completed recently to enable the emerging resident's group to use the centre for meetings and events. The centre will also be used to consult and involve residents in the further development of the strategy, but it may be possible to replace the building in a later phase of the programme.
- 6.2. The emerging strategy includes expansion of outreach services and the existing building would not provide sufficient fit for purpose space to deliver such services in the long term. It is currently proposed to provide a replacement community centre above the new Children's Centre and for the existing community centre site to be released for new build homes.
- 6.3 The principle of creating a flexible space with a broad variety of uses, which is accessible and attractive to the wider community and with the space fully utilised will underpin the development of a business plan for a new community centre. Phase 1 of the programme will create the

Children's Centre only. However, the building will be developed with the intention of being able to add a second floor for a community centre to be provided as part of a later phase. The design and use of such a facility will be subject to further detailed discussion with residents and service providers prior to establishing a proposal for implementation.

- 6.4. After a long period of low levels of resident engagement on the estate, HFH, the Council, the Police and HAFFTRA have been actively engaged in discussions with residents in recent months. This has resulted in the development of a positive relationship with key residents who are being supported to enable a Tenants and Residents Association to be developed. The strategy seeks to continue to offer support to residents to facilitate their input into the future plans for the estate and to enable residents to directly provide feedback on service quality and delivery.

7. COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES)

- 7.1. Legal Services have not yet seen proposals for physical improvements to the estate and it would be advisable for them to be consulted in due course (particularly in the context of potential interference with public rights of way or rights granted to leaseholders or shop tenants).
- 7.2. The service charge provisions in the standard forms of right to buy lease entitle the Council to charge leaseholders for improvements to the estate (subject to the statutory requirement that the relevant costs have been reasonably incurred). Normally the Council has a duty to recover money in such circumstances and accordingly the Council should consult with and serve statutory notice on leaseholders in due course pursuant to Section 20 Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and regulations thereunder, so as to ensure that a valid demand can be made in respect of those items considered appropriate for re-charge to leaseholders.
- 7.3. Leases granted to leaseholders give them easements and rights in relation to the common areas of the estate, but they also reserve to the Council the right to make changes to the common areas including to their layout.
- 7.4. Secure tenants are not granted express rights over the common areas of the estate, but it will still be necessary to consult with them under Section 105 Housing Act 1985 (matters of housing management substantially affecting secure tenants).
- 7.5. Consent from the Secretary of State at DCLG will be needed under Section 12 Housing Act 1985 to provide a Children's Centre (and probably

also the replacement community centre in due course). As the centre will not exclusively serve Council tenants and leaseholders, it is possible the Secretary of State may require a financial adjustment in favour of the HRA.

- 7.6. Care needs to be taken in the context of estate improvement strategies to ensure that the level of resources devoted to any one estate is not disproportionate and can be justified as reasonable having regard to the needs of all estates in the borough.

8. COMMENTS FROM ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT (BUILDING TECHNICAL SERVICES)

- 8.1 The proposed improvements to the Estate will need to take account of the fact that a number of Council owned shops which front onto Fulham Road have rights of access for servicing over the rear of block A.
- 8.2 Also the current proposed location of the new Community facility may require part of Cassidy Road to be “stopped up” as the current design of the facility shows the property to be constructed on part of the road.

9. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES

- 9.1 **Capital Implications.** The report sets out proposed improvements (phase 1) to the Fulham Court Estate. The estimated capital cost is £4.507m of which it is planned to fund £4.057m from Council resources (the decent neighbourhoods ‘pot’) and £0.450m from government grant. The government grant relates to the provision, as part of the scheme, of a children’s centre and has to be used by March 2011. There are forecast to be sufficient resources within the decent neighbourhoods ‘pot’, which has been built up from the sale of HRA assets, to fund the council contribution to the scheme – the ‘pot’ stood at £12.8m at the start of 2009/10.
- 9.2 The net Council contribution will reduce in line with the recovery of leaseholder contributions. Such potential charges will need to be
- 9.3 Part of the scheme provides two sites for new homes through rationalisation of land use. The actual process through which the new housing will be delivered has yet to be agreed and will be subject to a further report.
- 9.4. **Revenue Implications.** The main revenue implications relate to the provision of the Children’s Centre. The centre will be managed by a

voluntary organisation who will receive government grant funding of £0.1m per annum (agreed until March 2011). The grant conditions set out guidelines as to the expectations of what the funding must be used for. For the Children's Centre at Bishop's it will be used for a 0.5 manager, a FTE outreach family support officer and provision of crèche staff plus admin. The outreach staff must contact all families with new born babies within 8 weeks. They will be expected to provide services 50 weeks per annum Monday to Friday and where necessary on Saturdays, for example to target fathers. The services are free of charge to residents. It is not anticipated that the grant funding will be sufficient for a rent to be paid for use of the Children's Centre.

- 9.5 As regards the HRA, there are no immediate important implications as the Phase 1 programme only involves environment works and does not involve any loss or gain in dwellings. There is a slight risk that grounds maintenance costs could be higher if the local community enterprise cannot contain the costs within budget.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	Fulham Court Resident Profile and Service Audit ; Fulham Court Practitioners' Workshop feedback	Riad Akbur Ext. 4043	Community Services/ 145 King Street
2.	'Choice for parents, better start for children'; Guidance documents: Phase 2 and Phase 3 Children's Centre	Pat Bunche Ext. 3772	Children's/ Barclay House