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| Title of Report | TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT: GARAGES AND GARAGE SITES | |
| Presented by | Councillor Roger Bayliss Portfolio Holder for Housing, Property and Customer Services | |
| Background Papers | None | Public Report: Yes |
| | | Key Decision: No |
| Financial Implications | The recommendations put forward by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel can be met by existing resources within the Housing Revenue Account budget. | |
| | Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes | |
| Legal Implications | No implications apparent | |
| | Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes | |
| Staffing and Corporate Implications | No implications apparent | |
| | Signed off by the Deputy Head of Paid Service: Yes | |
| Purpose of Report | To seek approval to implement the action plan developed by the Housing Service in response to the recommendations put forward by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel in respect of Letting Garages and Garage Sites | |
| Reason for Decision | To ensure garages and garage sites are leased fairly and in line with an agreed policy. | |
| Recommendations | THAT CABINET APPROVES THE ACTION PLAN PREPARED IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL'S INSPECTION OF LETTING GARAGES AND GARAGE SITES | |

1.0 CONTEXT

- 1.1 Cabinet approved the establishment of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) on 13 March 2012 in response to introduction of the Localism Act 2011. The Act heralded the focus for Housing regulation moving towards a culture of local co-regulation, with greater emphasis on locally determining standards and priorities.
- 1.2 The reforms have also provided social housing tenants with stronger tools to hold their landlords to account through tenant panels, or similar bodies, in order to give tenants the opportunity to carefully examine the services being offered and form judgements about the cost and quality of the services they receive.

- 1.3 Panel members were initially formally recruited in December 2012 and embarked on their first review in May 2013. To date, the panel have undertaken a further eight inspections with all recommendations approved by Cabinet.
- 1.4 The latest report issued by the Panel in respect of Letting Garages and Garage Sites is a product of the Panel's work during the 2020/2021 financial year and is the first inspection by the panel conducted entirely virtually.
- 1.5 The panel now consists of five volunteer members.
- 1.6 The Panel will next be inspecting The Resident Involvement service within Housing, with a report detailing their findings and proposed recommendations due to be considered by Cabinet in the 2021/22 financial year.

2.0 INSPECTION OF LETTING GARAGES AND GARAGE SITES

- 2.1 The Panel's full report, including five recommendations can be found in Appendix A. The list of recommendations can be found specifically under section 9. All recommendations have been accepted by the Housing Senior Management Team (SMT).
- 2.2 It is important to note that the report attached has been produced by the Scrutiny Panel themselves, in their own words.

3.0 RESOURCE COMMITMENTS

- 3.1 Recommendations will be implemented through an action plan which outlines actions proposed to address the issues raised. All actions can be undertaken and implemented within existing resources. The action plan can be found in Appendix B.

| Policies and other considerations, as appropriate | |
|--|---|
| Council Priorities: | Local people live in high quality, affordable homes. |
| Policy Considerations: | Repairs policy will be reviewed in light of the report |
| Safeguarding: | Not applicable |
| Equalities/Diversity: | Not applicable |
| Customer Impact: | Customer service will improve and the service will be more consistent. |
| Economic and Social Impact: | Not applicable |
| Environment and Climate Change: | Not applicable |
| Consultation/Community Engagement: | The panel regularly consult with other tenant groups and the wider community. |
| Risks: | Not applicable |
| Officer Contact | Head of Housing 01530 454780 chris.lambert@nwleicestershire.gov.uk |



**Tenant Scrutiny Panel
Report on:
The Leasing of Garages & Garage Sites**

March 2021

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1. Acknowledgements

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) gratefully acknowledges the support, guidance and assistance provided by the members of the Housing Team, including Amanda Harper, Andy Barton and Sarah Richards, The Resident Involvement Team (Justin O'Brien and Peter Warren) and Cllr Roger Bayliss.

2. Executive Summary

The TSP made the decision to inspect the procedure for renting a NWLDC garage / garage site as it was raised as an issue with no criteria for letting garages, an example was the report of a Leicester resident applying for a council garage so he could reduce his parking costs (the cost of renting a NWLDC garage is much less than a week's parking for work) and there being no guidance to inform if the application should be accepted.

3. Strengths

- 3.1. The TSP consists of a group of volunteers who are also tenants of NWLDC, each of whom has different skill sets and seeks to improve their skills and value to the group by identifying development needs and attending relevant training.
- 3.2. Each TSP member knows the importance of adopting a flexible attitude and displays a high level of commitment to their voluntary involvement in working with NWLDC to improve Housing services to tenants and streamline processes.
- 3.3. The TSP mission is to be a "critical friend" to the Council, facilitating service improvements for Council tenants.
- 3.4. The TSP uses differing methodologies to analyse data, collect evidence, report on outcomes and make recommendations to NWLDC to enable changes and improvements to be implemented.

4. Vision and Strategy

- 4.1 The topic of leasing NWLDC owned garages is a fairly uncomplicated one and the TSP were happy to have something they could tackle via on-line meetings during the period of Covid-19.
- 4.2 The TSP discovered that there is currently no policy in respect of this topic and therefore no qualifying criteria that would exclude the type of application that had been received.
- 4.3 In the view of the TSP the introduction of such a policy would make it clear to all whether or not they would be eligible to apply for a garage/garage site.

5. Report

The TSP has reported on its findings as factually as possible and without any bias. Our inspections have, on occasion, increased awareness of the complexity of the work done by NWLDC and other agencies. However our findings and subsequent recommendations may lead us to be critical of certain parts of the process of reporting/investigating policies and procedures in place.

6. Methodology

- 6.1 Reviewed all relevant NWLDC documentation in respect of garage /garage site rentals
- 6.2 Reviewed NWLDC Asset Management Strategy

- 6.3 Interviewed Sarah Richards to ascertain the problem and discuss the way forward.
- 6.4 Scheduled TSP working meetings as required to review new information and status of report.

7. Aim of the Exercise

To investigate garage leasing procedures and identify recommendations to improve how NWLDC deal with this aspect of their services to tenants.

8. Findings

1. There is currently a procedure governing handling of applications to lease (on a lifetime basis) the garages or garage sites belonging to NWLDC.
2. This document sets out the procedure of leasing a garage to anyone living in NWLDC area using current IT systems; however, installation of a new IT system is well under way and is expected to go live in 2021. Consequently, this document will be redundant.
3. There is no policy document for the allocation of garages and no direction as to what eligibility criteria needs to be met in order to initially ascertain and advise any interested party whether they are eligible to apply for a lease.
4. The panel reviewed the Asset Management Strategy and note that is due for renewal. The strategy indicates that the Housing Service was going to decommission all garage sites by 2018 and this should happen in conjunction with a review of overall parking provision.
5. NWLDC currently has 382 garages managed through the Housing Management Team by Housing Assistants. These are distributed across NWLDC district with the majority being in Measham, Ibstock and Thringstone.
6. The garages are divided by geographical area into North and South patches in line with the areas allocated to Housing Officers.
7. Average rent roll for both patches is c£75,559 per annum.

9. Recommendations:

1. The TSP strongly recommends that NWLDC seek to simplify the system and avoid confusion by drawing up a policy relating to the lifetime leasing of garages. This should include a qualifying criterion along the lines of NWLDC garages form part of its property portfolio and the leasing of these will require that applicants fulfil eligibility criteria which should be prioritised as follows:
 - a. Residents living within half a mile of the garage.
 - b. Residents living within a mile of the garage.
 - c. Residents living further than a mile from the garage.
 - d. Length of time on the waiting list should also be considered.
 - e. There is no right of assignment of garage leases.
 - f. NWLDC may implement a local leasing policy if it is deemed necessary.
2. TSP recommends that:
 - a. All existing garage lifetime leases are respected and maintained until such time as the licensee no longer requires it.
 - b. New applicants for the garage will be considered in accordance with the new criteria.

- c. In the event that an existing licensee is found to be in contravention of the terms of their lease (i.e. that it is not being used only for the storage of a vehicle) then they will receive Notice to Quit to terminate the lease. It should be made clear in the new policy that the licensee is responsible for ensuring their vehicle fits in any garage leased.
3. The TSP recommends that NWLDC include the criteria on its website and also publishes details of garages that become available online along with the new application form and this is linked to the new IT system.
4. It is recommended that policy is reviewed after 12 months.
5. The panel also recommend that the Asset Management Strategy is reviewed and updated and should be informed by the councils parking strategy and include future intentions for garages and garage sites.

Janet Higgins, Chair, On behalf of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel

NWLDC/TSP/2021 Reports: Garage / Garage Site Leasing

Tenant Scrutiny Panel Action Plan: Garages and Garage sites

Recommendation 1: The TSP strongly recommends that NWLDC seek to simplify the system and avoid confusion by drawing up a policy relating to the lifetime leasing of garages. This should include a qualifying criterion along the lines of NWLDC garages form part of its property portfolio and the leasing of these will require that applicants fulfil eligibility criteria which should be prioritised as follows:

- a. Residents living within half a mile of the garage.
- b. Residents living within a mile of the garage.
- c. Residents living further than a mile from the garage.
- d. Length of time on the waiting list should also be considered.
- e. There is no right of assignment of garage leases.
- f. NWLDC may implement a local leasing policy if it is deemed necessary.

| Ref | Task | Lead | Target Date | Status |
|-----|---|-------------------------------|--------------|--------|
| 1. | Develop a new policy and procedure to include all the points highlighted in the above recommendation. | Senior Administration Officer | Q. 3 2021/22 | |

Recommendation 2: TSP recommends that:

- a. All existing garage lifetime leases are respected and maintained until such time as the licensee no longer requires it.
- b. New applicants for the garage will be considered in accordance with the new criteria.
- c. In the event that an existing licensee is found to be in contravention of the terms of their lease (i.e. that it is not being used only for the storage of a vehicle) then they will receive Notice to Quit to terminate the lease. It should be made clear in the new policy that the licensee is responsible for ensuring their vehicle fits in any garage leased

| Ref | Task | Lead | Target Date | Status |
|-----|---|-------------------------------|--------------|--------|
| 2. | Ensure the above points are clarified in the new policy | Senior Administration Officer | Q. 3 2021/22 | |

Recommendation 3: The TSP recommends that NWLDC include the criteria on its website and also publishes details of garages that become available online along with the new application form and this is linked to the new IT system.

| Ref | Task | Lead | Target Date | Status |
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| 3. | To create a webpage on the council website detailing where garages are in the district, how to apply and the application criteria. | Senior Administration Officer (with support from a web editor) | Q. 4 2021/22 | |
| Recommendation 4: It is recommended that policy is reviewed after 12 months. | | | | |
| Ref | Task | Lead | Target Date | Status |
| 4. | Review policy in Q.1 of the 2022/23 financial year | Senior Administration Officer | Q. 1 2022/23 | |
| Recommendation 5: The panel also recommend that the Asset Management Strategy is reviewed and updated and should be informed by the councils parking strategy and include future intentions for garages and garage sites. | | | | |
| Ref | Task | Lead | Target Date | Status |
| 5. | Update and review the Asset Management Strategy ensuring to include the future plans for all garages and garage sites | Housing Assets Team Manager | Q. 3 2021/22 | |

