

Committee(s): Residents' Consultation Committee Barbican Residential Committee	Date(s): 03 December 2018 10 December 2018
Subject: Landlord's Approval Process – six-month review	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
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Summary

This report is to update the committee on the six-month review of the new Landlord's Approval process.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In spring 2018, the Barbican Estate Office reviewed the approval process for Home Improvements in light of Grenfell Tower and ongoing conversations with the City's Fire Safety Advisor and our Fire Risk Assessors.
2. The old process was principally a desktop approval exercise and was reliant upon the Leaseholder gaining the appropriate approvals and inspections from the Planning Department and Building Control.
3. In March 2018, officers reported to the Residents Consultation Committee that a change to the approval process for Home Improvements would commence in April 2018 for a six-month trial period with the appointment of a temporary Property Services Officer.
4. In order to protect the fabric and integrity of the estate, Landlord's Approval is now issued at the end of any project and after an inspection by the BEO has concluded that the works agree with what was applied for and have been carried out in accordance with the conditions as laid out in the Home Improvements Pack.

5. The new process has now been in operation for just over six months and is laid out in Appendix 1. Officers committed to reporting back to committee, following a review of the new procedure.

Current Position

6. In the last six months the office has processed 60 applications. Some of these are still in progress.
7. A part time post has been temporarily created to review all applications on a technical level and inspect during the project; as well as upon completion, prior to issuing Landlord's Approval. This officer has worked on 15 to 20 hours per week in the first six months.
8. Additionally, this Senior Surveyor post has been involved in a number of related workstreams. These have included:-
 - a. Survey of Plumber's Duct Access (PDA) cupboards in a sample tower with regard to compartmentation issues from previous residents' projects.
 - b. Liaising with popular contractors on the estate about common methods and standards of work.
 - c. Adjustments to the ventilation specification, the Barbican Estate requires on bathroom and kitchen refurbishment projects.
 - d. Sharing best practice with contractors as to methods and standards of work.
 - e. A complete review of Home Improvements Handbook ready for a re-print and re-issue in early 2019.
9. The Senior Surveyor post has reported into the Resident Services Manager and this inclusion within the estate management team has worked well.
10. This post has also forged close links with colleagues in the District Surveyors Department who deal with Building Control. Together, they have reviewed and inspected a number of technically challenging projects and offered advice to Leaseholders where certain aspects have failed to meet the required standard.
11. The House Officer team have also been heavily involved with the new procedure and have noted an increased workload in this area. In the last six months the team have dedicated 10% of their time to Landlord's Approvals and associated workstreams. This has resulted in other longer term workstreams being re-prioritised and put on hold until additional resources are identified.
12. Further workstreams have also been developed. Most recently, leaseholders who completed their projects in 2016 and 2017 but are yet to receive Building Control sign off, have all been written to reminding them until this has happened they do not have Landlord's Approval for their project.
13. As stated at the beginning of the trial, all officer time spent on Landlord's Approvals during the six-month trial has been allocated to the Landlord's Account.

14. During the trial period, the BEO has repeatedly reminded residents about the new procedure with six articles related to Home Improvements. These have included articles on noise, waste and a reminder of the importance to submit all required documents.

Conclusion

15. Whilst the new process does involve extra officer time, the extra workstreams and changes to methodology demonstrate that this has been a worthwhile exercise and is helping to protect the fabric and integrity of our buildings.

16. Officers consider the trial to be a success and will establish a full-time Senior Surveyor post to review and inspect all leaseholder improvement projects. This will enable the House Officer team to re-focus on other duties that have been “on hold”.

17. In accordance with the lease and advice from Comptroller and City Solicitor, officer time in dealing with Landlord Approvals will now be allocated to the Supervision and Management Account.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Flow chart of Landlord’s Approval Process

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