

Committee(s): Barbican Estate Residents Consultation Committee – For information Barbican Residential Committee – For Information	Dated: 04 September 2023 11 September 2023
Subject: Barbican Estate Transformation Programme and Action Plan	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4,8,9,10,12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information
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Summary

Following the independent review of the Barbican Estate by Altair, an action plan was developed to drive the transformation of the service delivery to the Barbican Estate. This report presents, for information, an update on the action plan and an overview of progress against the actions scheduled to complete in September 2023. It also details other areas of work ongoing to improve the service to residents.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. An action plan has been developed to capture all the recommendations from the Altair review and to demonstrate progress against each action with timescales.
2. The delivery of the action plan is overseen by the Barbican Estate Transformation Programme Board which meets every two weeks to review progress. In addition, there are associated workstreams focussing on distinct areas of service improvement which are also being captured in the plan.

Current Position

3. The review recommendations were approved by the Residents Consultation Committee on 7 August. The review is due to be presented for approval to the Barbican Residents Committee on 11 September as a meeting scheduled to take place in August to consider the review was inquorate.
4. The Barbican Transformation Board has been established and has taken responsibility for the oversight of the effective delivery of the plan.
5. The evaluation of the new role of the Head of Barbican Residential Estate (BRE) is due to take place week commencing 4 September. In the meantime, meetings have been held with 4 prospective head-hunter recruitment agencies who have been asked to submit a proposal for the recruitment of the new Head of BRE by 5 September 2023. An indicative recruitment timetable has been agreed which should culminate in the appointment of a successful candidate by beginning of November 2023.
6. A brief for additional support for a temporary role of Service Improvement Manager has been developed and will be recruited to, to support the interim Head of the Barbican Estate Office and Programme Manager to deliver the actions in the plan. The Organisational Transformation Team have also been asked to support and advise.
7. The line management arrangement for the Rents and Service Charge Manager will move from the Assistant Director Housing & Barbican to the interim Head of BRE in mid-September 2023.
8. All actions to complete or start in September 2023 are on track.
9. In addition to the actions included in the plan, it has been agreed to undertake an independent audit of energy charges pertaining to the Barbican estate. An independent audit will establish whether the costs are accurate and will give trust and confidence that the process for determining the costs of energy usage is correct going forward. The audit is being commissioned by the Energy Team and members of the Service Charge Working Party have been advised. A brief

has been prepared to inform the audit and the Chair of the RCC has provided input from the resident perspective.

10. Separately, it is good practice to carry out an annual audit of service charges, again to ensure that the process is sound, but also to ensure that costs are properly being attributed to leaseholders or the Housing Revenue Account. This has not been carried out in recent years in the City of London, and it has been agreed that this should now be embedded in operational practice for the current year and future years. Finance has agreed to commission the audit, and a brief has been prepared using a technical guidance note from the Institute of Chartered Accountants, which is the industry standard for the management of service charges.
11. We are reviewing how to improve the look and ease of deciphering service charge bills to make it easier for residents to understand the costs and any variation from year to year, and exploratory meetings are taking place with external companies who have worked with large local authorities and housing associations to produce their service charge information, to see whether this might be of benefit to the City of London's leaseholders. Essentially, an organisation's raw data is turned into clear customer focussed communications.
12. Ensuring best value for money, particularly around the cost of repairs is an ongoing area of concern and particularly the cost of one-off repairs, which could be packaged into larger programme of works, and potentially achieve better value for money. This relates particularly to window replacement programmes at the Barbican estate, where urgent window repairs have been procured individually. It has been agreed with the Service Charge Working Party that a window replacement programme will be procured to ensure that economies of scale are achieved, and costs reduced.
13. As service charges continue to be impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, particularly rising energy and construction costs, and delays in the supply chain, we recognise that many residents are facing financial hardship in being able to meet the rising cost of bills. There are already payment options available for major works, which allow residents to spread the costs of their contributions over longer timescales. Firstly, we have agreed to publicise these payment options more widely and to learn from other landlords to ensure that the widest range of options are available. We are also reviewing what options can be made available to help residents pay annual service charges as it is recognised that these have increased substantially year on year.
14. The Transformation Programme Board has also asked whether there is comparative benchmarking data that could be used to provide a view around value for money of the services received by Barbican residents. Although there are few comparable estates within the UK, initial conversations are being held with the management company for Park Hill, a private architectural housing development, in Sheffield, which was completed in the 60s and built

in a similarly Brutalist architectural style to see whether there is any learning which can be shared.

15. Finally, at the last RCC meeting, members supported a motion that both the repairs and major works functions for the Barbican Estate should report to the Head of the BRE. Officers have been reviewing the practicality and validity of a proposal to bring the repairs and maintenance service and the major works programme under the direct control and management of the Head of the BRE.
16. The review is considering the pros and cons of the proposal, the financial implications for the Barbican Estate budgets and the Housing Revenue Account, staffing implications and the requirement for, and impact on, support services both internally and corporate wide.
17. The proposal will be considered by the Barbican Transformation Programme Board in September 2023. The outcome of these considerations will be reported back to the next RCC.