

23 February 2023

Report of the Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee**Matters referred to Cabinet in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules****Exempt Information**

None.

Executive Summary

The following Committee has referred the following matter to Cabinet:

Scrutiny Committee	Title of Matter referred	Date of Scrutiny meeting
Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Leaseholder Charges Communication Working Group	8 th February 2023

Background

To update Cabinet and to make recommendations to it following consideration of the outcomes of the Leaseholder Charges Communications Working Group at the Committee's meeting on 8 February 2023.

At the Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8th February 2023, it was reported that there had been two meetings of the working group which comprised councillors M Cook, D Cook, C Cooke, S Goodall, J Harper and S People. The working group had sought and received information and data from Officers. Additionally residents had provided evidence and the working group had aimed to ensure they were involved as far as possible.

In terms of the numbers of properties impacted this had been confirmed as 44 leaseholder roofs and 72 roofs within council owned stock and the council was working through it's retained properties and that there would be further roofs to be considered over the coming years.

The process previously used for undertaking replacements was outlined which involved a mixture of pre inspection, condition surveys, age profiling and local knowledge based on repairs history to build up an annual list.

In respect of the properties focussed on by the working group, the process had involved s20 Consultation. It was reported that the way that stock condition assessments worked meant that a sample of around 20% of similar properties would be undertaken, followed by data analysis to determine the programme of works and timelines. Therefore, the council had potentially sent letters to leaseholders to notify them that their roofs could require replacement where an inspection of the specific roof, in advance of the notification letters being issued, had not been undertaken. It was the working group's opinion that prior to such formal notification, the council should write to request access to inspect to determine what works would be required.

The working group had reported that the procedure was a complicated and legalistic one and whilst the council had followed the procedure, it was possible that there could be some holes in the procedure which could be looked at. It was reported that currently the council consulted with leaseholders first and following that inspected the properties and that potentially this should be done the other way round. The working group also felt that the language used in communications was not sufficiently accessible and transparent to the leaseholders.

Following consideration of the feedback from the working group, the Committee agreed the recommendations set out below.

Recommendations

RESOLVED that the Committee recommended:

1. That the council look at using an independent assessor for works to confirm costs were correct.
2. That an assessment be done for all repairs in advance of leaseholders being asked to contribute to repairs.
3. To reinforce the council's communications when residents buy a council house, including what responsibilities and obligations were on the owner occupier.
4. That the communications relating to the leaseholder works be reviewed and simplified.
5. That the contractor hold at least two face-to-face consultation drop ins to enable residents to understand the process.
6. That the specific 44 leaseholder roofs be assessed straight away.
7. That the council consider a mechanism such that the affected 44 leaseholders were not faced with increased costs as a result of the delay in works being commenced.

(Moved by Councillor M Cook and seconded by Councillor S Goodall)

Options Considered

None.

Report Author

Councillor T Jay
Chair of Corporate Scrutiny Committee