

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	29th July 2013
3.	Title:	Shaftsbury House – Petition
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

A petition has been received from residents at Shaftsbury House, Shaftsbury Square, Rotherham. The petition is attached as Appendix 1.

The petitioners are requesting that the Council recommence door to door household waste collection arrangements. This arrangement involved the collection of waste bags by housing caretakers from the hallway outside residents flat doors and transporting the bagged waste to the communal bin room within the complex. This practice has been discontinued, with prior notification and reasoning to residents, following a review of caretaking service arrangements and due to health and safety concerns.

A letter of acknowledgement has been sent to the lead petitioner and all residents who signed the petition have been visited and the issues arising discussed.

Following consideration of the petition and discussion with residents, it is not proposed to recommence door to door collection of waste. However, checks have been made of individual residents circumstances to ensure that they personally, or with assistance, are able to take their household waste directly to the bin store. Work has been carried out to the bin store to improve resident access and the general standard of cleanliness within the bin room. Lift access is available from the first floor to ground floor level at the complex.

5. Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member,

- **Receives the petition.**
- **Notes the action taken in response to the petition.**
- **Supports the proposed arrangements for waste disposal**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Background

As a courtesy to residents, housing caretakers have periodically collected residents rubbish bags from the hallway outside their flats and taken the bags to the bin room within the complex. This is an arrangement that has only been practiced at Shaftesbury House and has not been provided at any of the other elderly persons housing complexes in the borough.

This arrangement was initiated when Shaftesbury House was a designated sheltered housing scheme and had a resident caretaker. The complex has since been re-designated as general needs aged persons accommodation. The resident caretaker provision has not been in place for some considerable time and caretaking services are provided by a mobile caretaker team. Despite changes to the designation of the dwellings, changes to service delivery and the resident dynamic at the complex changing, this aspect of caretaking provision has remained unchanged. As such, it has continued as 'custom and practice' rather than being based on formal service arrangements provided as part of the tenancy offer at the complex.

A review of the housing caretaker service was conducted recently. This was to ensure that caretaker resources were being deployed as efficiently as possible and to ensure that a fair and consistent service was being delivered for the benefit of tenants throughout the borough. The review considered the range of work being undertaken by the housing caretakers and how finite resources could be better utilised to maximise service coverage.

The decision to discontinue door to door rubbish collection within Shaftesbury House was made within the context of that review and in order to achieve fair and consistent service delivery. The decision was also informed by advice from the Councils Community Protection Unit (CPU), it was recommended the practice of collecting the rubbish from the corridors be ceased. This was because it was assessed as posing a significant fire safety risk, issues with odour, contamination of hallway carpets within the communal areas and the potential for rodent infestation.

Residents were therefore advised in advance that the Council would be discontinuing the practice and the reasons for that and that from 22nd April 2013 they would need to deposit their rubbish in the communal bin room.

Since notifying residents of this proposed change, a number have made representations to elected members, Sarah Champion MP and have approached the media. Despite responding to the issues raised, ongoing resident resistance to the change has culminated in the attached petition.

7.2 Action taken in response to issues raised by residents

7.2.1 Receipt of the petition

The lead petitioner was contacted to acknowledge receipt of the petition. Receipt of the petition was communicated to the Cabinet Member for Safe

and Attractive Neighbourhoods and Cabinet Member for Waste and Emergency Planning.

The Housing Officer for Shaftesbury House and the Area Housing Manager have held discussions with individual residents and residents collectively to deal with the issues arising. In summary:

7.2.2 Residents related concerns

Residents were concerned that a number of elderly or disabled residents would be unable to take their rubbish bags to the bin room. All residents have been visited to discuss their individual circumstances. Where necessary and with the prior agreement of residents, three referrals were made to Assessment Direct. This determined what individual care and support needs were required and incorporated into existing or new care packages. In reality this would, in most cases, mean existing carers placing the refuse in the bins as would happen where there are carers supporting residents in other types of accommodation across the borough. Assessments were completed and identified that the residents had sufficient help and support in place to manage disposal of their waste in the bin room.

Regular visits and contact with residents by the Housing Officer have indicated that residents' are adapting to the new arrangements. Residents have also been acting as good neighbours and been supportive towards the more vulnerable residents' by disposing of their neighbours waste on their behalf.

The complex is a two storey complex which is served by a lift and there is level access on the ground floor to the bin room.

7.2.3 Communal bin room

Following residents' concerns about the condition of the bin room, a deep clean was conducted to cleanse and sanitise the area. A deep clean will now be undertaken each month, with a general sweep and mop being conducted weekly.

Residents stated that the bin room door was difficult to manage. The bin room door has an automatic closer fitted to meet fire regulations. However, the door closer has been adjusted to improve access and egress by residents, without compromising fire safety.

7.3 Proposed response to the petition.

Having considered the issues raised by residents and having undertaken the actions above, it is proposed that residents are advised that:

- Reiterate the reasons why the practice of waste collection from internal corridors has been ceased.
- Advise that the disposal of household waste is the responsibility of individual tenants.

- Advise that waste should be bagged and deposited in the bins within the communal bin room at the complex.
- Advise that waste bags are not to be left within communal hallways for the reasons stated above. Should this continue to happen, this will result in enforcement action against tenants.
- Confirm the measures that have been put in place to improve the cleanliness and accessibility of the bin room, including additional bin capacity.
- Confirm that there is level access to the bin room, including first floor lift access to the ground floor.
- Confirm that individual circumstances have been discussed with residents and support needs assessed where necessary by Assessment Direct.

8. Finance

The costs associated with caretaking and waste disposal arrangements at Shaftesbury House budgeted for and charged to the HRA estate management budget.

The deep clean costs for the bin room are approximately £800 per annum. This is charged to the HRA neighbourhood centres budget and provision has been made for this.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There are environmental issues associated with leaving waste in corridors including significant fire safety risks, issues with odour, contaminating carpets and potentially attracting vermin.

The practice of waste collection from communal hallways is not operated anywhere else and leaves the Council open to potential challenge in relation to service consistency, as we do not offer the service to other vulnerable tenants residing in similar accommodation.

The practice of collecting bags from communal hallways utilised 7 man hours per week. This was not an efficient use of resources and impacted upon the ability of the caretaker service to provide a broader service offer to tenants generally.

Streetpride offer an assisted bin collection service. However this is a very different offer to the practice at Shaftesbury House. It is restricted to wheelie bins only from individual households and not the collection of bin bags from individual flat units.

Discussions with residents have identified individual needs and circumstances with regard to capacity to manage waste disposal within the bin room. Assessments have been undertaken where necessary. Further assessments of individual needs can be undertaken and will be referred to Assessment Direct as necessary.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Ensuring care and protection is available to those that need it the most.

People in need of care and support have more choice and control to help them live at home.

Helping to create safe and healthy communities. People feel safe and happy where they live.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Ward Members have been informed of the issues at Shaftesbury House and the action being taken.

Responses have been made to Sarah Champion MP following enquiries on behalf of residents.

The Petition received from Shaftesbury House residents is attached as Appendix 1.

Contact Name : Karen Milner, Area Housing Manager, Neighbourhood and Adult Services, (07717) 451142 karen.milner@rotherham.gov.uk