

Subject:	Security in High Rise Accommodation in the Kemp Town area.		
Date of Meeting:	1 April 2014		
Report of:	Executive Director for Environment, Development & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Richard Jordan - Penswick	Tel: 294650
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Ward(s) affected:	Queens Park		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 There have been a number of unauthorised intrusions into council owned high rise accommodation which has given rise to a review of how such intrusions can be prevented and recommended actions to address the situation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the information set out in the report be noted; and
- 2.2 That Housing Officers be requested to undertake the actions identified in paragraph 4 of the report below and to report back to the respective Area Panels as necessary.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 There are problems of misuse of the common ways of a number of blocks in Kemp Town. The main concerns are regarding St James House, Warwick Mount, Hampshire Court car park, St John's Mount, Wiltshire House, Hereford Court and Ecclesden. The degree of the problems varies from block to block and over time. At present the clear focus of incidents is St James House, High St.
- 3.2 Problems are unauthorised intruders using drugs and or alcohol or rough sleeping and drug litter. Similar problems have been identified in other high rise blocks across the city. Intruders tailgate residents unchallenged or are let in by residents some of who could be users or dealers. Residents do not feel confident in challenging strangers.
- 3.3 A number of agencies including Sussex Police, Safe in the City, housing teams, residents and their representatives have been gathering information and the issues of misuse of the common ways appear to fall into two areas: residents

causing the problem by suspected drug dealing and allowing drug users into the block, and opportunistic use by unauthorised intruders.

- 3.4 Housing management officers use appropriate robust legal interventions where there is evidence that a tenant is engaging in drug related activity that breaches the terms of their tenancy agreement. This may include applying to the county court for an injunction to address such behaviour and obtaining specific prohibitive terms in possession action in order to reduce, minimise and end incidents.
- 3.5 Housing works closely with Sussex Police and shares information on drug related issues in housing managed properties. Housing has supported Sussex Police in their applications to close down properties where there have been high levels of drug activity e.g. in 2012 a housing officer worked with Sussex Police providing witnessed statements from residents and attended court regarding drug nuisance in Tyson Place and the court ordered two properties in the block to be closed down and possession action followed.
- 3.6 It has been identified that the principal problem regarding misuse is that of members of the general public accessing blocks in order to take drugs or rough sleep and that whilst a number of agencies are undertaking extensive work this is insufficiently coordinated through Housing
- 3.7 It has been established that individual blocks may experience upsurges in incidents at different times. At the present time the primary concentration is taking place at St James House.

St James House

- 3.8 Officers within the Cleaning and Neighbourhoods teams report regular discovery of drug related debris in common ways and occasional disturbance of individuals sleeping in or engaged in drug related activity in the common ways.
- 3.9 On the morning of 11/2/14 at the bottom of the stairs by a south fire exit door, a Neighbourhood Officer spoke to individuals who were using a stairwell area to inject drugs. They ran to get away and pushed him aside as they left which caused him to stumble down and against the stairs.

St James House car park

- 3.10 The car park is managed by corporate parking although the building is owned by Housing. The car park has been used by rough sleepers and drug users causing noise and disturbance. There has been a considerable amount of drug related litter found in the area. Multi agency working has agreed major works to start soon to brick up or fence off small spaces insufficient for car parking, relining the car park and installation of a police box. Lighting has already been upgraded. Sussex police regularly patrol. Visible rough sleeping has decreased and the number of complaints to the police has markedly reduced but high levels of drug use litter continue. Security sweeps of the car park are currently being carried out every 3 hours day and night and the problem monitored.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

St James House

4.1 Key areas of concern were the ways in which individuals accessed the block and how to reduce this:

- Fire door – it was identified that a ground floor external fire exit door was catching and wedging on the ground leaving it open and allowing access to intruders. Housing have now repaired the door and no one can now access the block via this route. The door and external railings will be upgraded in the longer term with the installation of a much more powerful magnetic lock.
- A nearby door to the front of the building leads into an external area with static railing creating a corral. This door will be fitted with a lock so that residents do not use it but the cleaners can sweep the corral area.
- Trade access The front door trade button appears to operate from approx 8am to 1pm. Housing will discuss restricting trade access time with the residents association
- Tailgating. The double entry door/ lobby has a slow entry door close time allowing people to more easily tailgate residents. Housing will discuss the possibility of restricting the door closure time with the Tenant Disability Network and the residents association.
- Housing will remind all council staff and contractors to wear identifying name badges.
- Meter cupboards meter cupboards in the block have been fitted with locks and keys have been distributed to residents to stop the problem of the cupboards being used by unauthorised individuals.
- Security interventions Housing have authorised a security company to carry out regular sweeps every three hours to check for, and resolve, situations of misuse and unauthorised individuals. This arrangement will be reviewed in week commencing 24th March. Sussex Police will be asked to increase their level of patrols for a period of time
- CCTV / fixed image cameras Housing will investigate the possibility of extending the CCTV system to other areas within St James House
- Fob access Housing will investigate the possibility of installing fob access to internal doors and lifts to restrict the ability of unauthorised individuals to move around the block
- Staff visits council staff will visit in pairs until further notice

Essex Place, Warwick Mount, Hereford Court, Wiltshire House, Tyson Place, St Johns Mount, Ecclesden

- 4.2 The proposed interventions at St James could be used as a model for interventions at another block should this become necessary.
- 4.3 Housing is undertaking a security survey of the external routes into each block.
- 4.4 Security sweeps day and evening are being undertaken on a short term basis in some of the blocks as this intervention deters intruders but moves the problem to other blocks. The target blocks change as the drug and intruder problem moves from block to block.
- 4.5 Housing is currently investigating the costs of a longer term solution of a roving day and night patrol in blocks which report higher levels of activity.

Longer term capital interventions

- 4.6 Consideration needs to be given to the potential of introducing concierge service and an integrated city wide CCTV system. Both of these options are likely to be very costly and a feasibility study and cost benefit analysis would need to be undertaken.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Officers from Housing visited all residents in St James on 27/2/14 to discuss the situation and offer information and reassurance. Those residents who were not at home were provided with an information letter and contact details.
- 5.2 Housing will meet with High Rise Action Group to consult and inform them of intended actions. Housing will contact the St James House tenant association to inform and consult regarding trade access and external door opening times.
- 5.3 Housing will meet with the Tenant Disability Network to consult regarding reducing external door opening times

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The proposals will reduce crime and disorder and improve the security within high rise accommodation in the Kemp Town area.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The costs of the security sweeps at St James' House and St James' car park are estimated at £1000 per month. For the remainder of 2013/14 financial year, these costs can be met from forecast underspends elsewhere in the HRA. For 2014/15 the on-going effect of these costs will be monitored as part of the monthly Targeted Budget Monitoring (TBM) process. If service pressures arise then a cost reduction plan will be needed to ensure that the HRA does not overspend. It

is hoped that the security sweeps will have a deterrent effect and costs will reduce over time.

- 7.2 Staff are currently gathering financial estimates for the key fob system and extra CCTV installations and also the possibility of introducing a concierge service to blocks. These projects have wider implications and the costs are likely to be more significant. Prior to expenditure being committed, budgets will need to be identified and approvals sought (using a business case) from senior officers and/or members as necessary.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 012/03/14

Legal Implications:

- 7.4 Section 2 of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 imposes a duty on the council as an employer to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees. The council's secure/introductory tenancy agreement provides, "All residents, visitors and businesses have the right to enjoy the city, live peacefully in their homes and neighbourhoods, feel safe, and enjoy the resources and culture that the city has to offer, free of concerns for their well-being. Brighton & Hove City Council, together with its partners, is committed to tackling nuisance and anti-social behaviour in the city." The measures outlined in the report will assist the council in both discharging that duty and meeting that aspiration. It is not considered that the measures taken/being taken adversely affect any individual tenant's Human Rights Act rights.

Lawyer Consulted:

Name Liz Woodley

*Date:*20/03/14

Equalities Implications:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out as the proposals are a set of security measures applicable to all residents within St James House and high rise accommodation in the area

7.3

Sustainability Implications:

7.4 Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 In 1998 the Crime and Disorder Act, imposed a duty on local authorities and the police to "do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area".

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1.

2.

Documents in Members' Rooms

1.

2.

Background Documents

1.

2.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

1.1

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

1.2

Public Health Implications:

1.3

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

1.4

