

SUTCLIFFE HOUSE VIDEO ENTRY SYSTEM

Cabinet Member	Councillor Jonathan Bianco
Cabinet Portfolio	Finance, Property and Business Services
Officer Contact	Ed Shaylor, Residents Services
Papers with report	None

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	This report seeks to respond to a petition received by the Council with regard to installing a video entry system at Sutcliffe House, Addison Way, Hayes. The petition was received by Democratic Services on 11 th September 2013
Financial Cost	Nil
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Corporate Services and Partnerships
Ward affected	Townfield

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member:

1. **Notes the views and concerns of the petitioners and;**
2. **Discusses with the petitioners whether the measures taken to date have been effective in addressing the reported anti social behaviour;**
3. **Informs the petitioners that when existing door entry systems in the Council's housing estate require replacement due to malfunction or obsolescence, replacement with video door entry systems is actively considered in the housing maintenance programme.**
4. **Informs the petitioners that the installation of a video door entry system at Sutcliffe House is to be considered for inclusion in the planned works budget for 2014/15.**

INFORMATION

Council officers, Police and residents have worked together to deal with the issues at Sutcliffe House and some other blocks of flats in that area, but renewed efforts are regularly needed.

Stairwells and areas around the tower blocks have been used for drug supply and drug misuse. Drug paraphernalia, faeces, urine and vomit have been found in the stairwells of both blocks, and drug users have hidden needles behind signs on the landing and on the tops of the fire doors which presents a risk of injury and infection. After gaining entry, drug users and dealers wedge fire doors open to allow easier access throughout the day and night.

Examples of the work undertaken so far to address this problem are:

- Joint patrols by the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Investigations Team (ASBIT) and Hillingdon Police's Partnership Tasking Team have been carried out on a regular basis for several months, both during the day and at weekends and evenings
- Joint patrols provide a high visibility and reassurance presence and have the potential to disrupt the offenders' activities.
- The Council's Environmental Enforcement Team has started to patrol the area from time to time in the evenings and at weekends.
- Letters have been sent out to all residents reminding them not to let people in without checking identities, and to be more security aware.
- Random door buzzing has been undertaken, where officers attempt to gain entry by selecting door buzzers one at a time. Any address which grants entry without checking identity is then visited and given advice and a warning (it is in effect a breach of tenancy conditions). Considerable improvements were found on a second and third visit.
- Residents have been advised on visits to make sure that fire doors are kept shut.
- A case conference has been held with residents, Police, ASBIT and Housing and Caretaking services to discuss improvements.

Petitioners are requesting a video door entry system so that residents would be able to see who they are letting into the building from their property. As part of the housing maintenance programme, it is planned to install such a system in Sutcliffe House when the door entry system is due for replacement, which is likely to be in the next financial year.

Whilst such a system would be likely to increase residents' confidence in the short term, there is a risk that video door entry will not solve the drug issues in the tower block in the longer term. The area will still require monitoring in case a more comprehensive plan to improve safety and security in the area is needed.

The following issues would still need to be addressed:

- Offenders might wedge open other access points for unobserved entry.
- If there is a dealer resident in the block, evidence needs to be gathered to stop this activity.
- Residents would be able to see who is requesting entry may still feel intimidated.
- Some residents may still let people in despite being advised not to.
- Drug use may be taking place in the outside areas and park.

Reasons for recommendation

The effect of the anti-social behaviour on residents, many of whom have children, is self-evident and unacceptable. Considerable efforts have been made by residents, police and council staff to deal with the issues, which have met with some success. Installing video door entry security, when practical to do so, would provide additional reassurance and security for residents alongside continued vigilance to make sure the door entry system is not abused.

Alternative options considered

It has been considered whether it is possible to not install video door entry systems and rely on traditional audio door entry. This is not recommended, however, as the existing system has not proved to be effective in reassuring residents that they can adequately control who is entering the block.

Financial Implications

Access controls are planned maintenance activities included in the annual repairs budget of the Housing Revenue Account. There is a programme of works which replaces obsolete or uneconomical to repair equipment and video door entry will be actively considered when the system for Sutcliffe House is due for replacement.

Corporate Finance comments

Corporate finance has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial implications outlined above that the costs of the installation of any new system may be covered in full under the programme of physical improvements to the housing blocks.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The measures discussed, should reduce the impact on residents.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

Consultation has been carried out, with the lead petitioner, other residents and the Local Police Team.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Legal

There are no immediate legal implications arising from the report which recommends that a video entry system is considered in the future.

However, as landlord, the Council has duties under the tenancy agreements affecting Sutcliffe House to ensure that it manages the premises in a way that allows peaceable enjoyment. This could include a duty to tackle anti-social behaviour arising in the communal areas that the Council is in control of. In addition to the duties arising from tenancy agreements, the Council must have regard to its anti-social behaviour policies adopted pursuant to Part 8 of the Housing Act 1996.

Officers have advised legal services that Sutcliffe House is a Council owned, tenanted housing scheme. The costs of maintaining the existing entry system is met by the service charge administered by the Council. This service charge is paid for by the tenants of the development. Where the entry system is beyond economic repair, it is likely that the service charge clauses in the leases of individual dwellings will allow the Council to charge tenants for the costs of providing a new entry system on a like for like basis. However, if a more sophisticated entry system is installed, which is more expensive than the cost of a direct replacement, the additional cost may have to be met by the Council. The recovery of the costs of a new entry system is something that would need to be considered once a more concrete plan is in place.

The Council does have powers under Section 163 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to install surveillance apparatus in its area which would include a video entry system.

When formal proposals come forward, legal services should be consulted as to whether there are any specific legal requirements arising from the installation.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.