

THE EXECUTIVE

28 SEPTEMBER 2004

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND HEALTH

FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF GARAGES - FOLLOW UP REPORT		FOR DECISION
<p><i>This report is submitted to update Members on the current situation regarding void garages following the report considered by the Executive on 27 January 2004.</i></p>		
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report is to advise Members of the present position relating to empty Council owned garages following the changes to the policy agreed by the Executive on 27 January 2004.</p> <p>The report also requests Members to reconsider their decision in respect of the relaxation of the policy in relation to the use of garages</p>		
<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>That Members note the improvements that have been made in the reduction of empty garages and agree to relax the existing policy around garage usage to include the storage of certain household items, subject to a review after nine months if considered appropriate.</p>		
<p><u>Reason</u></p> <p>As a result of the decisions made by the Executive in January this year it has been possible to reduce the overall number of empty garages. However officers feel that further incentives are needed to encourage residents to consider taking on a garage which will further reduce the number of voids.</p>		
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1. Background

- 1.1 Members will recall that at their meeting 27 January they agreed to certain changes in policy around the letting of garages. As a result of their decision the changes were implemented and this has led to an increase in the take up of garage lettings. Members will also recall that a further report on the garage void situation was requested at a later stage to see if the changes had brought about a change in lettings trends. It was estimated that as a result of these changes, garage occupancy could be increased by 10% in the current financial year. At the end of July 2004, the total number of let garages had increased by 14% producing an additional weekly income of approximately £2000.

1.2 Appendix 1 shows the numbers of void garages on a monthly basis since March this year by Community Housing Partnership area.

2. Proposals

2.1 Recommendation 2 of the report dated 27 January was that Members agree to relax the policy around garage usage and delegate the decisions around this to the Director of Housing and Health in consultation with the Community Housing Partnership Boards.

2.2 Following some discussion around this matter, Members did not feel that they could agree to this proposal at the time. However officers would ask that Members reconsider this decision as it is felt that there is an opportunity to maximise garage rental income which could be channelled into making our garage sites more secure and therefore in more demand, which in turn could lead to higher rental income.

2.3 Garages are currently let on a weekly tenancy which can be terminated by either party giving 1 weeks notice. Garage tenants do not have any security of tenure and therefore if a tenant is found to be breaching the tenancy conditions it is a simple task to terminate the tenancy and change the locks.

2.4 Area Office staff regularly receive requests from residents who would like to have a garage for storing items such as gardening equipment, bicycles, decorating equipment and other household items for which they have no room at home.

2.5 With this in mind Members are requested to consider relaxing the current policy of allowing a garage to be used only for storing a motor vehicle, to permit additional uses as described in paragraph 2.4 above. The current Policy of **not** allowing garages to be used for commercial purposes or for the storage of dangerous or inflammable goods will continue.

2.6 Relaxing the current policy would create an opportunity to increase the income from garages with little risk as any abuse of the arrangement would be resolved immediately by terminating the tenancy.

2.7 If Members have reservations about this proposal, officers could trial the process for say 9 months and then report back to the Executive. During the trial process Community Housing Partnership Board Members could be asked to report any abuses of the relaxation of Policy to their Local Office for action.