

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

**DATE:** 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR INFORMATION**

#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES GARAGE LICENCE REVIEW**

1. **Purpose of Report**

A report to update the Panel on action taken by Neighbourhood Services to review licence agreements for use of garages and parking bays as described in the Garages Strategy endorsed by the Panel on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015..

2. **Recommendation**

The Committee is requested to note the information on activity to review and update garage/parking bay licences within the report. An update report on the licence review will be provided in 12 months time.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The adopted Garage Strategy includes an overview of how the licence arrangements for letting garages will be refreshed. In general the strategy requires work to identify garage sites that provide a popular and well-managed community facility and sites that are no longer required and can be considered for the provision of new social housing.

The strategy therefore contributes towards the SJWS priorities in the following areas:

- Housing – by identifying opportunities for the decommissioning of non-viable garage stock, the development of new, council-owned, social housing units and reviewing licence agreements for people using the garages.
- Safer communities – by implementing inspection and management processes that inspects garage sites on a regular basis and delivers prompt responses to incidents of anti-social, fly-tipping and other behaviours affecting residents' perception of safety and security. This includes reviewing details of people who rent garages from us and ensuring that we have robust licence agreements in place.

### 3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes

- There will more homes in the borough, with quality improving across all tenures to support our ambition for Slough through the development of new social housing sites. The licence review will allow us to audit current demand for garages that will inform the development of new social housing sites.
- Slough will be one of the safest places in the Thames Valley by the reduction of anti-social behaviour and enviro-crime and improving the perception of retained garage sites and decommissioning sites with no long-term viability. The licence review will allow us to identify garages that may have been sub-let and being used without our permission.
- The Council's income and the value of its assets will be maximised by the decommissioning of loss-making assets, returning sites into more productive community use and ensuring correct charges are made for the rental of garages.

### 4. Other Implications

#### (a) Financial

There are no financial implications of proposed action. The licence review does not include increasing rental charges, however, if the review identifies that a customer has been charged an incorrect VAT amount this will be rectified.

#### (b) Risk Management

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
Review and update licence agreements for garage rental.	<p>Not carrying out this action creates a risk that we don't have a clear, robust and common legal agreement with all customers who use these facilities.</p> <p>Not carrying out the review creates a risk that customers continue to be charged the incorrect rate of VAT.</p> <p>Not carrying out the review creates a risk that we don't identify garages that are being used illegally.</p>	<p>To terminate and reissue all parking facility licence agreements to harmonise various agreement types and ensure they are all covered by the same terms and conditions. The new licences will be issued by April 2017.</p> <p>To audit usage of garages will allow us to identify garages being used illegally and we can then take appropriate action to reduce any associated crime and disorder. The audit will be complete by February 2017.</p>

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

None.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no changes to customer-facing aspects of the garage management service so new Equalities Impact Assessments are not required.

5. **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 In September 2015 Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel endorsed the council's new Garage Strategy. Section 2 of the Garage Strategy includes a section called "Rental Agreements" and this highlighted that the licence review would be carried out:

*"It is proposed that in February to March 2016, an exercise is undertaken to terminate and reissue agreements using the new licence agreement to ensure all renters are covered by the same licence terms and conditions."*

- 5.2 Planning for this exercise identified a number of issues (i.e. co-ordinating timescales with Rent Accounting to send information to customers, programming time for Legal Services to review the new licences) that meant the start of the programme would be delayed until August 2016 for completion by the end of 2016/17.

- 5.3 The licence review exercise is following this timescale:

July 2016:

- Information about the review of all parking facility licences managed by Neighbourhood Services was sent out in Rent Account statements.
- Everyone who is currently paying for a garage or parking bay managed by Neighbourhood Services was sent a form asking them to update their contact details. This would allow us to update our records and ensure we were sending new licence agreements to the correct people at their current postal address.

July 2016 to December 2016:

- New licence agreements will be sent out to renters for them to sign and return to Neighbourhood Services. Once the new, signed licences have been received we will terminate the old agreement and start the new one.

December 2016 to February 2017:

- Final reminders will be sent to renters. If new licences aren't signed and returned we will terminate the old agreement and the parking facility will be returned to the stock of vacant garages.

5.4 Customers will be receiving new Direct Debit mandates with their new agreements so they can move their monthly payments to their new garage account. Any new customers who start to rent a garage from July 2016 will be required (unless there are exceptional circumstances which will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis) to pay 8-weeks payment in advance. Customers who are transferring from old licences to new licences are not required to pay anything in advance.

5.5 Slough Borough Council is part of the National Fraud Initiative and this obliges us to take steps to confirm the identity of people using our facilities, including garages. As part of the new licence agreement we are requiring customers to provide us with their name, date of birth and National Insurance number so we can carry out the necessary identity checks. We now need to carry out identity checks every two years.

## 6. **Comments of Other Committees**

This report is not required by other committees.

## 7. **Conclusion**

The Panel is asked to acknowledge the steps taken to fulfil the commitment in the Garage Strategy to carry out a garage licence review.

## 8. **Background Papers**

Garages Strategy 2015 - 2020