

Report of: Executive Member for Housing and Development

Meeting of:	Date:	Wards:
Executive	21 April 2022	All

Delete as appropriate:	Exempt	Non-exempt
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SUBJECT: Thriving Neighbourhoods Programme - Investment in Estates and Neighbourhoods

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This proposal outlines options for suggested works to continuously improve the quality of services that we provide to our residents on our Housing Estates and create '**Thriving Neighbourhoods**' through an ambitious strategic capital investment programme of improvement works of £10 million over a three-year period. The proposals are developed on and around estates, with recognition that this may be adapted to include similar works in other public spaces depending upon priorities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the direction and development of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Programme.
- 2.2 For Homes and Neighbourhoods to work in partnership with Environment, Community Wealth Building and Fairer Together departments to:
1. Develop a detailed three-year programme of estate improvements, up to the value of £10m, which will be informed by consultation and engagement with council tenants and residents, and elected members.
 2. Agree with elected members, via ward partnerships or similar mechanisms, on which option (s) should take priority in their wards across the programme
 3. Adopt an evidence led approach and prioritise estates according to need/where issues have been highlighted including:

- Overcrowding in communal areas/walkways
 - Playgrounds/MUGAs in disrepair
 - Inadequate recycling facilities
 - High proportion of bike ownership on estates where bike storage is lacking or full
 - Ensuring estates work for disabled residents
4. Agree reporting and governance arrangements for the programme as set out in the report below.
 5. Estate Services in Homes and Neighbourhoods to work collaboratively across directorates and teams to focus on (i) developing and prioritising the programme, (ii) coordinating the involvement residents in the programme (iii) overseeing the co-ordination and management of the programme, (iv) ensure that new capital assets are well maintained.
 6. Collaboration between Homes and Neighbourhoods and Fairer Together to develop a resident engagement plan to inform and work alongside the capital improvement programme. The plan will effectively engage residents so they can influence the decisions affecting their local estate/spaces.

3. Background

- 3.1 These proposals aim to outline options for suggested works to continuously improve the quality of services that we provide to our residents on our Housing Estates, and to generate pride in our estates by creating '**Thriving Neighbourhoods**' - an ambitious strategic investment programme of improvement works of £10 million over a three-year period.

This improvement programme aims to contribute to achieving impact, be delivered at pace and underpin the Councils key priorities below:

- Children and young people have the best start
- Local jobs and businesses in a thriving local economy
- Everyone has a place to call home
- Cleaner, greener, healthier borough
- Communities feel safe, connected and inclusive

The proposals aim to:

- Provide storage solutions to overcome overcrowding/fire safety issues in communal areas
- Improve play areas/multi use games areas on estates, creating active and healthy environments for residents
- Align with the Islington Greener Together Programme to improve the estate environment through landscaping and designing out crime
- Revitalise estate-based housing community centres (where appropriate), ensuring that they are attractive, well-managed spaces, valued by the local community
- Empower residents to shape their areas and be involved in local decision making and improving the community, estate and area in which they live in
- Reduce any disparities amongst our estates
- Be inclusive and fair, enabling disabled residents and the whole community to contribute to improving the community where they live.

The menu of options below will be prioritised in local areas. Once options have been agreed and priorities established, the outcomes will be achieved through an annual programme of works across a three-year period, encompassing the option(s) agreed and to outline the plans of implementation for improvements. These improvements will include the greening of communal areas, landscaping, storage solutions, recycling, playgrounds and more on our estates. This programme will seek to complement and align with any ongoing capital programme schemes/initiatives taking place across the borough.

3.2 Options for investment detail

Table 1 exemplifies options to be considered in accordance with where the priority has been identified.

Table 1

OPTIONS	SPECIFIC PROPOSAL	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES / DEPENDENCIES
SECURE CYCLE STORAGE	Provide at least one secure cycle storage facility for each estate that does not have any.	Improved public health and personal well-being.	Staffing resources to scale up for additional workload, including audits, and increased pace of delivery.
	Add cycle storage on estates with multiple blocks where current cycle storage is full. Prioritise tall buildings for fire safety reasons.	Improved public health and personal well-being.	Need audit/assessment. Provision of more storage will stimulate new demand.
	Incorporate storage for cargo bikes, (small business start-ups) and three wheeler bikes (used by cyclists with ambulant disabilities.)	Meeting the needs of disabled residents	Assessing balance between current demand levels and likely future increased in demand. Liaise with voluntary sector organisations.
	Power charging option for e-bikes/mobility scooters	Meeting the needs of disabled residents. Increased social inclusion and improved public health and personal well-being.	
PRAM SHED/ GENERAL STORAGE	Provide at least one group of pram / storage sheds for each estate that does not yet have any.	More quickly achieve co-operation in clearing communal areas, for fire safety compliance	Resources to scale up for additional workload, including audits / surveys, and increased delivery.
	Repair / add storage on estates with multiple blocks where current storage is full or beyond cost –effective repair. Prioritise tall buildings for fire safety reasons.	More quickly achieve co-operation in clearing communal areas, for fire safety compliance.	Need audit/assessment. Provision of more storage will may stimulate new demand,

	Covert garages into groups of storage sheds, prioritising tall buildings and blocks with higher concentrations of known overcrowded homes.	More quickly achieve co-operation in clearing communal areas, for fire safety compliance.	Existing garage condition. Encourage use of facilities by offering incentives.
	Provide pram storage for Community Centre.	Encourage de-cluttering to maximise space within the home.	Requires audit, in liaison with centre management.
IMPROVED/ RENEWED PLAY AREAS/MUGAS /OUTDOOR GYMS	<p>Ensure main structures to playgrounds are secure and maintained.</p> <p>Repair playground surface areas and regularly maintain.</p> <p>Re-design play areas to encourage inclusivity, risky play and more pleasing to the eye landscapes</p> <p>Refurbish up to 40 ball courts and to provide a variety of exercise equipment/machines at 50 ideal locations</p>	<p>Improved playground areas for residents and local community</p> <p>Improves the overall appearance of our estates</p> <p>Increased social inclusion, opportunities for residents to improve health and well-being.</p>	<p>Scale up for additional workload, including audits, and increased pace of delivery.</p> <p>Requires a condition audit on MUGAS</p> <p>Future maintenance costs</p>
NEW / improved estate greenspace & recreational opportunities	Communal garden makeovers where most needed, with integrated cycle storage, garden cycle paths for children, raised vegetable beds that are accessible for wheelchair users, and information displays about local fauna and history.	<p>Aligns with Islington Greener Together</p> <p>Improved health, well-being.</p> <p>Increased social inclusion, integration and resilience.</p> <p>Food growing opportunities</p>	<p>Working with resident representative groups and across various teams in several departments.</p> <p>Future maintenance costs.</p>
	Link estate and public realm greenspace with directional signage, to create green corridors	Opportunities to promote new fitness and gardening clubs / groups.	
	Create Parklets, with planting and outdoor game equipment, in small areas of 'dead' land, such as unused roadway and parking bays	<p>Increased social inclusion, integration and resilience.</p> <p>Improved health, well-being.</p>	

Community led greening for estates	Establish new community gardening and food growing areas on estates where there is demand and suitable redundant space	<p>Opportunities for recreation, exercise, and therapy, which improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those involved and the wider community</p> <p>A catalyst for neighbourhood and community development</p> <p>Stimulation of social cohesion and social interaction, including intergenerational and cross-cultural connection</p>	
	Landscaping across communal spaces	Enhanced and improved horticultural landscape on estates, establish natural play spaces established Areas for residents to socialise outdoors.	
	Nature on the Doorstep - deliver biodiversity habitat enhancements to estates including meadow creation, wetland/reedbed habitats and tree planting	Improve access to wildlife	
	Tree planting – to increase opportunities for tree planting including build outs on estate roads to produce rain gardens.	Enhance biodiversity, improve air quality and resident wellbeing.	
	Green walls – to introduce green walls onto estates (example - Living Walls (scotscape.co.uk))	Enhance biodiversity, improve air quality and resident wellbeing	
Improving Recycling on Estates	<p>Engage with residents and housing staff to identify areas of dissatisfaction and for improvements</p> <p>Draw up proposals for improvements</p>	<p>Able to have more of a local insight into estate recycling needs</p> <p>Clearer indication of recycling behaviour on estates to support ongoing improvements on estates</p>	

	<p>Manage engagement and behaviour change campaigns in support of the improvements on estates</p> <p>Manage monitoring of tonnage and residents' satisfaction before and after</p> <p>Document improvements and outcomes, learning lessons along the way</p>	<p>More opportunities for collaboration and partnership working with other council teams</p> <p>More consistent cost effective way of working</p>	
	<p>New bin stores / enclosures</p>	<p>Improves the overall appearance and cleanliness of the estates and landscape</p> <p>Complies with Health and Safety regulations</p> <p>Limits access for vermin</p>	<p>Finding suitable space available</p> <p>Behavioural change – having to encourage and persuade residents to use the new bin enclosures</p>
Signage	<p>Remove out of date sign. Install classic black & white street signs with maps in good print quality on aluminum signs.</p>	<p>Clear and pleasant building/block identity for residents and visitors.</p>	
COMMUNITY CENTRES	<p>Where improvements are taking place on an estate with a community centre establish if any improvement works can be incorporated into programme.</p>	<p>Improved centres that are at the heart of the community, safe, fit for purpose and welcoming</p>	<p>Some centres are in need of modernisation investment.</p>

3.3 Costs

The **Thriving Neighbourhood** programme aims to improve Islington Council Estates through an ambitious strategic investment programme of £10 million over a three-year period.

Indicative costs have been developed below. As the proposals are developed further with residents, more accurate costings will become available and the balance between priorities may shift.

- Secure cycle storage – 100 bike hangars, 18 sheds and charging points - £741k
- Pram sheds and storage – 145 new sheds and garage conversions - £311k
- Refurbishment of up to 140 playgrounds and ball courts - £4.595m
- Estate greenspace investment - £707k
- Improvements to recycling facilities on estates - £900k

- Signage across all estates - £993k
- Investment in community centres - £1.61m.

3.4 Resident Engagement

Resident engagement and participation lies at the heart of this programme. We are committed to working collaboratively with residents to identify needs and aspirations for the improvements across the estates. Resident engagement is about finding out what our residents and the community want and need, putting in place different options and mechanisms to give them the chance to have their say in decisions that affect their lives.

We recognise that residents want to be involved in decision making and we want to be as inclusive as we can; offering a “menu” of engagement that will promote and encourage residents to get involved. A menu of engagement to shape and inform this programme could include using social media, online and doorstep engagement feedback, discussion/focus groups, estate notice boards, resident newsletter, estate drop-ins, community events, tenants and residents’ associations, gardening groups, community centre committees. All engagement will be tailored to the needs and characteristics of individual estates and localities, with particular emphasis to ensure disabled residents can be involved.

Using other good practice models of consultation with residents across Islington, a detailed engagement plan will run in conjunction with the improvement programme, giving residents the opportunity to submit proposals for improvements on their estates. This will enable improvements to be prioritised alongside suggestions from Members and staff.

The draft timeline of this resident engagement plan is set out in the table 2 giving a start date from June 2022. There would be a continuous programme of assessing the resident impact following each phase of works.

Table 2

Action	Date of completion
Launch event	June 2022
6 week application open to receive first round improvement proposals from residents	June 2022
6 week for internal assessment and feasibility checks (including all form of resident engagement and consultation)	August 2022
Report to Housing Delivery Board and Community Wealth Building with recommendations	Sept 2022
Announce successful proposals and inform successful applicants	Sept 2022
Year one phase delivered	Sept 2022 - June 2023
Launch new applications for year two	April 2023
Evaluation and feedback captured	Ongoing and when improvements have been delivered and 3 months after delivery.
Annual report to Board with evaluations/learning and recommendations.	Oct 2023

All eligible ideas will be considered by local ward councillors.

The project team would work collaboratively with the communications team to develop a communications plan which would include:

- Dedicated landing page
- Use of all Islington social media
- Regular bulletins in tenants' newsletters
- Regular update to residents on estates where improvements to be made
- Regular reports to Housing Delivery Board.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications

The report details the estimated one off costs attached to each of the Housing Revenue Account investment proposals, totalling £9.857m. It should be noted that these are indicative costings at this stage, a more accurate assessment will be available once the survey works are completed. The intention is to roll out the programme of investment over a period of 3 years.

This HRA investment totalling an estimated £9.857m will be financed by swapping increased General Fund borrowing (£10m of which was included as part of the 2022-23 capital budget setting process) for strategic CIL over the next 3 years. In the event that strategic CIL is insufficient over the 3 period to fund the full cost of the investment programme HRA reserves can be used temporarily to cover any shortfall in strategic CIL with a view that HRA reserves used will be offset by an equivalent allocation to the HRA of strategic CIL from year 4 onwards.

The nature of the expenditure is likely to be a combination of revenue and capital and whilst we will need to classify the expenditure correctly for accounting purposes, the use of Strategic CIL to finance the programme means that it is not restricted to capital expenditure and can be used equally to finance revenue expenditure.

It has been estimated that this investment will lead to an ongoing maintenance cost impact to the HRA of £60k per year.

Finally, consideration as to the extent to which we are legally required to pass on any of these costs to leaseholders and the extent to which the Council wishes to pass on these costs of projects/J to leaseholders will to be considered. However, it should be noted that leaseholders make up around 25% of the residents on HRA estates as such the potential recharge could be in the region of £2.5m

4.2 Legal implications

- (i) Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 requires the council to consult its secure tenants, in accordance with its published arrangements, on matters of housing management which they are likely to be substantially affected by.

However, the proposals set out in the report are not likely to require the council to engage in s105 consultation but this should be kept under review.

Furthermore, the proposals provide for resident engagement and if s105 consultation is required, the resident engagement arrangements could be tailored as necessary.

- (ii) The proposals include food-growing areas on estates. The council will need to consider if formal allotment status is to be granted as allotment holders are provided with security of tenure. In addition, the council would need consent from the Secretary of State to dispose of the land which will only be granted if the Secretary of State is satisfied that replacement allotment land will be provided or that there is no need for allotments in the Borough.
- (iii) The council will be able to recover the yearly revenue costs for maintenance as part of tenants' service charges.
- (iv) Further legal advice will be provided on any potential recharges to leaseholders.

4.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

The council is committed to working towards making Islington net zero carbon by 2030.

Through these proposals, the council aim to build the green economy. By developing London's low carbon sector and green our broader economy. This will be achieved through the delivery of new and improved greenspace areas on our estates.

The proposal aims to support the work around net zero carbon and offsetting emissions through the improvement of recycling as the overall recycling rates on estates are approximately 25%, compared to around 45% for street properties. This will have a long term positive impact on the overall reduction of water and air pollution.

The new and improved outdoor playground areas will encourage more children and young people to play outside. Taking consideration on the impact on climate change over time, as this could impose risk on human health, in particular children, young and elderly adults, as they are of higher risk of heat strokes and heat related illnesses. The council will need to ensure clear signage and communications are in place to encourage residents to monitor exertion and hydration when using the outdoor facilities. These measures will help to avoid any harm to health and wellbeing. The choice of location for these new playground areas will be chosen based on health and wellbeing of our residents, the most beneficial location on the estate and positioning of sunshine to avoid direct heat.

With the introduction of road changes, increase of cycle storage sheds and the security of sheds across our estates, we aim to see a significant reduction in emissions in the borough caused from vehicle transport. As part of this proposal, we aim to work with local suppliers to reduce the CO2 emissions in the borough through a detailed programme of works. Consideration will need to be given to ensure resident engagement has been well deliberated when implementing such works.

4.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and

those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The proposed Thriving Neighbourhoods programme aims to address disparities by investing in council estates. Equality impact issues will be designed into the resident consultation and engagement mechanisms, and the programme aims to ensure that proposals developed have had the involvement of a diverse and representative group of residents, reflective of the lived experience of residents living on council estates. An Equalities Impact Assessment is appended.

5. Reason for recommendations

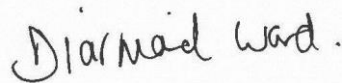
- 5.1 The proposal details plans to invest £10million to create '**Thriving Neighbourhoods**' through an ambitious strategic capital investment programme of improvement works over a three-year period. The proposals are developed on and around estates, with recognition that this may be adapted to include similar works in other public spaces depending upon priorities.

Appendices: Equalities Impact Assessment

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



Executive Member for Housing and Development

Date: 4 April 2022

Report Authors: Billy Wells (Homes and Neighbourhoods) and Liza Durrant (Fairer Together)

Tel: 020 7527 5314 / 020 7527 7471

Email: billy.wells@islington.gov.uk / liza.durrant@islington.gov.uk

Financial report Author: Lydia Hajimichael

Tel 020 7527 5160

Email lydia.hajimichael@islington.gov.uk

Legal report Author: Marina Lipscomb

Tel: 020 7527 3314

Email: marina.lipscomb@islington.gov.uk