

**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** No

## **Gravesham Borough Council**

**Report to:** Housing Cabinet Committee

**Date:** 15 November 2021

**Reporting officer:** Nicole Arthur, Service Manager (Housing Operations)

**Subject:** Climate Change in Housing and Digital Innovation.

### **Purpose and summary of report:**

To update Housing Cabinet Committee of the action plan in regards to Climate Change in Housing Operations and update on some digital innovations projects that are being progressed.

### **Recommendations:**

1. For Housing Cabinet Committee to note the contents of the report and action plan.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The UK Government released the Energy White Paper in December 2020 which sets out how the UK will clean up its energy system and reach net zero emissions by 2050. Within the paper, it outlines the target for homes to have an EPC rating of C by 2035.
- 1.2 On 25 June 2019, Gravesham Borough Council passed a motion at the full council meeting to declare a climate emergency and committed to taking a lead in achieving carbon neutral status by 2030. As mentioned in the GBC Climate Change Annual Report 2020, key deliverables for 2021 is to *'progress activity to improve the energy efficiency of council-owned homes'* and *'continue to promote initiatives and campaigns to residents intended to make their homes more energy efficient and securing savings in the supply of energy'*
- 1.3 The Compliance & Project Manager presented the Portfolio System at the Housing Cabinet Committee meeting on 6 September 2021 which clearly outlined the significant work and funding which would be required in order to achieve the net zero target by 2030.

## **2. Progress and action plan**

- 2.1 Over the last 2 months, the Service Manager (Housing Operations) has been developing an action plan for all the services within Housing Operations to capture a number of short, medium and long term measures which will assist with

improving the energy efficiency of council-owned homes as well as reducing carbon emissions within the Borough.

- 2.2 All of the employees within the service have had an opportunity to contribute thoughts and ideas around possible actions, as well as research in to the current thinking and best practice within the industry.
- 2.3 The action plan can be found at appendix 2 and will be a working document that will develop as time goes on, capturing new ways of working and new ideas.

### 3. Digital Innovation

- 3.1 As part of the action plan, a number of digital innovation projects are being trialled or developed across the service, which are outlined below:

- **Localz**- The repairs appointment system has been developed even further and in the coming months Localz will be introduced which will deliver live alerts so that tenants are kept fully up- to-date on their scheduled appointment. On the day of the appointment, tenants will:
  - Receive an automated text message reminder at the beginning of the day
  - Receive a further notification providing the tenant with a more accurate estimate of your engineer's time of arrival
  - Be able to track your engineer via a map view when they are en route to their appointment
  - Be able to message the engineer i.e. "Please use side gate."

There will be a number of benefits to Localz. As well as delivering an enhanced customer service experience, providing more timely appointment reminders it will also help to ensure people are at home when we come to visit and that the appointment does not go to waste.

- **Door Data System** - Under the new Building Safety Bill, Duty-holders will be responsible for creating and maintaining the golden thread of building information related to fire and structural safety. The golden thread will be held digitally to ensure that the original design intent and any subsequent changes to the building are captured. The accountable person will also be responsible for ensuring the information remains accurate and up to date.

In preparation for this all new Fire Doors will be installed with a unique door data tag which will feed in to dedicated compliance software, updating in real time when the tag is scanned for door inspection or maintenance. The system can be accessed by the relevant person to access critical information associated with the door such as manufacture and installation certification, registered components/parts list, making recall for future maintenance quick and efficient, ensuring the correct materials are sourced and used for remedial works.

- **EmRed**- Two sheltered schemes and two residential blocks are having EMRed installed to the emergency lighting. Currently the emergency lights are tested monthly by an electrician who would spend 10 hours a month on average undertaking this work at the four blocks. EmRed is a small

intelligent device that is programmed to carry out relevant checks to ensure the emergency lights are working and will remove the need for an electrician to attend site and undertake this work. The Emred will send all test results to a portal (which if the trial is successful will be integrated with the repair system) for any failed lights or those requiring preventative maintenance. The new system will allow for the check to be programmed in at a more convenient time, such as during the night, which will have less of an impact on tenants. Should the trial be successful there will be a return on investment within 17 months.

- **MultiDOT** Identifying the causes of damp and mould can be difficult, but humidity is a key factor. Humidity is typically influenced by three factors: tenant activity, failing building infrastructure and highly efficient building insulation upgrades without corresponding ventilation upgrades. Ten properties have been identified to trial MultiDOTS which allows real-time monitoring of property and humidity conditions to determine if a property is at risk of damp and mould to inform preventative maintenance and customer education. The MultiDOTS will be monitored via a portal which will be able to detect if someone isn't using their heating or may be turning it down which will also assist with identifying fuel poverty.
- **Digital noticeboard-** two digital noticeboards have been trialled, one at a sheltered scheme and another at a new build scheme. The digital noticeboards make communicating with tenants faster, easier, and more inclusive. It displays important information such as maintenance schedules or repair notices, as well as general announcements, via the secure online management system. The noticeboard is an efficient way to keep tenants informed that also reduces waste as it removes the need for paper-based notices and site visits. The noticeboard also has a unique survey feature which allows for a question to be posed to tenants who can vote by placing their key fob on to the reader.

#### 4. Background Papers

- 4.1 Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
<b>Legal</b>	There are no legal implications.
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	The digital solutions outlined within the report will generate a return on investment should the trials prove to be successful
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	N/A
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <a href="#">personal data</a> or <a href="#">special category data</a> or <a href="#">criminal offence data</a>? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner’s Office website via the above links.</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk">gdpr@medway.gov.uk</a>.</p>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No.</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. No.</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	<p>#1 People- Carbon Neutral Borough, create clean welcoming neighbourhoods and parks, and an attractive towncentre</p> <p>#3 Progress-Digital Innovation</p>
<b>Climate Change</b>	The action plan contributes to the Council's Climate Change agenda
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	The solutions outlined within the report contribute to the Council's digital agenda
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	N/A