

## COOMUNITY & SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

18<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013

### REPORT OF HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

#### 'WORK IN DEFAULT' ON FILTHY & VERMINOUS PREMISE

##### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of an emergency 'work in default' carried out with regards to a filthy & verminous premise occupied by a vulnerable householder. A charge will be placed on the property so the Council should re-coup the funds when the property is sold.

##### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **To notify Members of spending of approximately £6,000 to cover the cost of a 'work in default' to clear the property of a vulnerable hoarder in the Borough, which will be met from existing resources due to the charge on the property.**

##### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 At the beginning of July 2013 one of Warm Homes Officers became aware of an 82 year old woman whose own house was inaccessible through her recent hoarding. We subsequently found out that she had had two major traumas in her life which probably triggered this. The woman is hard of hearing so accessing the property has been difficult. Unless she is expecting you she currently will not hear when someone is knocking at the door.
- 3.2 On July 10<sup>th</sup> 2013, we managed to gain access as three women from a Widows Group she attended were at the property to try and help. On our arrival at the property, the three women were distressed that they could not assist very much due to the sheer quantity of the hoard. In addition we become aware that there was a mouse infestation in the property and a water leak which had brought the ceiling down in a couple of rooms.

The occupier was climbing over this mound on a daily basis to get access to various spaces she had left herself, a chair in the living room, standing room in front of the cooker and standing room for the shower (although this was no longer being used).



Figure 1



Figure 2

- 3.3 It was agreed with the occupier that we would engage with Social Care Services

and serve a notice under the Public Health Act (Filthy & Verminous Premises). This technically requires the occupier to cleanse the property within a specific time frame or Melton Borough Council would carry out work in default and place a charge on the property. This is what has subsequently happened. Between the period of the Notice being served and work commencing, two estimates were obtained and there was regular liaison with the occupier, to ensure that she understood what was going to happen. LCC Social Care also agreed to install devices to assist the hard of hearing on completion of the works (i.e. a door bell which flashes a light rather than a sound).



Figure 3



Figure 4

- 3.4 The work in default commenced on 19<sup>th</sup> August with the occupier in attendance. Numerous mouse nests were found and the leak had soaked carpets throughout the property. LCC Social Care Services arranged for respite care in [REDACTED] for a minimum of two weeks during the clearance. This also enabled an assessment to be made of the occupiers' ability to look after herself on completion of all works.
- 3.5 Clearance took three days, filling one roll-on /roll-off container per day for each of the days. The total weight of the property taken for destruction was approximately 16 tonnes.

The finished property is barely recognisable and a mini grand piano was found in the living room.



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Although repairs could have been completed with Warm Homes funds. Heating could have been installed with the last of the DECC funding. However as a result of this process and in liaison with Social Care Services the occupier has successfully bid for sheltered housing with some elements of care in [REDACTED]. It is hoped that this will be a turning point for her and will break the hoarding cycle. She can begin a new life in a better environment and it is now likely the original property will be sold in its current state..

#### 4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy and corporate implications arising from this report.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The cheaper of two quotes was chosen and a charge will be placed on the property so that we can re-coup the funds on subsequent sale.

#### 6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 Section 83 of the Public Health Act 1936 enables a local authority to serve a notice to cleanse and where this is not complied with allows the local authority to carry out

the works themselves and recover reasonable expenses incurred.

**7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no Community Safety implications relating to this report, the safety aspect was to the occupier herself.

**7.0 EQUALITIES**

7.1 There are no Equalities implications relating to this report

**8.0 RISKS**

8.1 *To consider and give any Risks related to this report and if there are risks to complete the tables below. If there are no risks identified, then delete the table*

**Probability**  
↓

Very High A				
High B				
Significant C				
Low D				
Very Low E	1			
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic

→ **Impact**

Risk No.	Description
1	The property is not sold and we cannot recover the funds.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE**

9.1 There are no climate change implications relating to this report

**10.0 CONSULTATION**

There was liaison with Social Care Services throughout the process. They arranged temporary respite care and are progressing the application with sheltered housing.

**11.0 WARDS AFFECTED**

11.1 The property is in [REDACTED] Ward.

Contact Officer  
Date:

Victoria Clarke  
2<sup>nd</sup> September 2013

Reference :

X : Committees\CSA 18.09.13