

Report of CHIEF EXECUTIVE EAST NORTH EAST HOMES LEEDS

Report to INNER NORTH EAST AREA COMMITTEE

Date: 18 JUNE 2012

Subject: ALMO TARGET HARDENING PROGRAMME

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Chapel Allerton, Moortown, Roundhay.	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

Domestic burglary continues to be a significant issue within Leeds with one of the highest rates nationally. Weaknesses within the original eurocylinder locks fitted to many replacement UPVC doors contribute to the problem within Leeds. Safer Leeds has developed a Burglary Reduction Strategy which sets out how the partnership will work to address the problem. This report details ALMO capital investment in 2012/13 which is contributing to the Crime Prevention and Standards of Security priority within the Strategy by target hardening of Council properties, particularly by upgrading eurocylinder locks.

Recommendations

Inner North East Area Committee is asked to note the investment programme across the Leeds ALMOs to target harden Council properties and consider a request for financial support to extend the programme to vulnerable and/or elderly owners in the three Wards making up the Inner North East Committee area.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To note the city wide ALMO and BITMO (Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation) capital investment programme in 2012/13 to upgrade eurocylinder locks and target harden properties working initially with CASAC (Community Action and Support Against Crime) and consider whether the Inner North East Area Committee might want to support the programme by contributing to lock replacements for elderly and/or vulnerable owners in their area.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Domestic burglary levels in Leeds continue to be unacceptably high. A recent joint inspection by the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary highlighted a number of concerns particularly in relation to how Leeds compares with similar cities and towns. Whilst recognising progress that has been made recently the inspection report makes a number of high level recommendations on actions that need to be taken. Safer Leeds has produced a multi-agency Burglary Reduction Strategy which sets out key objectives to address burglary within the city. The Leeds ALMOs and BITMO contribute to the Strategy primarily through the Crime Prevention and Standards of Security priority.
- 2.2 One of the main issues for Leeds is the inherent weakness in the eurocylinder lock barrel fitted to many replacement UPVC doors over the last few years. These locks can easily be bumped, drilled or snapped and this is common knowledge amongst Leeds burglars and is contributing to increased burglary rates across the city. Whilst action has been taken to ensure that any replacement locks being fitted by ALMO Contractors meet the Sold Secure Diamond Level standard (anti bump, drill or snap) there are thousands of locks that have previously been fitted that remain susceptible to attack. However access through attacking the lock is only one method of entry by burglars and other target hardening measures are generally required to adequately protect homes from burglary.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The Leeds ALMOs/BITMO contribute to the 'crime prevention and standards of security' priority through a number of joint working arrangements, notably with West Yorkshire Police, with increased target hardening generally across the housing stock having a beneficial impact. However recent media interest in the weaknesses in eurocylinder locks require those arrangements to be extended and expanded as a matter of urgency to both reduce burglary and fear of burglary within communities. A city wide capital scheme has been agreed for 2012/13 to undertake a programme of target hardening of Council properties, on a worst or highest risk first basis, initially through CASAC (Community Action and Support Against Crime) then through a Contractor selected through a competitive tendering exercise.

3.1.1 SOLD SECURE DIAMOND LEVEL LOCKS

The Eurolock cylinder which is fitted as standard to most UPVC doors is known to be a weak point and susceptible to attack as a point of entry for burglars. Thousands of these lock cylinders have been fitted as old wooden doors have been

replaced with UPVc doors through replacement programmes over the last few years. Whilst these doors are more thermally efficient the locking mechanism has an inherent weakness and entry can easily be gained within a matter of seconds by drilling out or snapping off the Eurolock cylinder to expose the mechanism. This contributes significantly to burglaries across all tenure types within the City.

New products have been developed which meet the national Sold Secure Diamond Level (SSDL) standard for locks which resist drilling and snapping to retain security. A procurement exercise has secured favourable terms for supply of the only currently approved SSDL lock cylinder – the ABS Avocet. This lock has been adopted as standard replacement for Eurolock cylinders within the Council's housing stock. However locks are only replaced when required due to damage, lost keys etc and there are thousands of vulnerable locks in place across the city that are not being replaced at present.

To tackle this issue a proactive programme of lock replacement and target hardening work is now being undertaken across the city through CASAC. CASAC are a third sector organisation who specialise in community safety work. The new city wide programme expands on a scheme already underway within ENEHL where a CASAC engineer visits properties within those areas deemed to be high risk (as determined through TASKING meetings) and arranges to upgrade locks, undertake other basic target hardening work (such as sash jammers) and give crime prevention advice at no cost to the tenant. Previously production of replacement keys was problematic as only two licensed Locksmiths in Leeds were able to cut them but CASAC now have the capability to cut extra or replacement keys at a significantly reduced rate.

At this stage it is difficult to estimate how many old style eurocylinder locks are in place but besides asking CASAC to target burglary hotspots we will be asking them to set up a hot line on which worried Tenants can report old style locks and have them programmed for change. ALMO staff undertaking annual tenancy checks will also be trained to identify old style eurocylinder locks and report them for change either through CASAC or existing repairs Contractors. CASAC can offer a lock change service to private sector tenants and owners at a fixed fee.

There will be additional costs if the crime prevention survey identifies that sash jammers are required but that would be relatively minor.

Locks on non UPVC doors are all be specified as five lever deadlock/sashlock which meets current BS3621.

3.1.2 BURGLAR ALARMS AND SECURITY LIGHTING

Over the last few years there has been some ad-hoc installation of burglar alarms and security lighting mainly linked with pre-Decent Homes improvement programmes or as target hardening in a limited number of areas. Some of these installations have attracted a Service Charge (£0.50 a week) whilst others are provided free of charge. Alarms are a known deterrent to Burglars and it is felt that a more rigorous approach to provision together with a consistent approach to charging will have beneficial effects in discouraging burglaries.

Funding has been made available by ALMOs and BITMO to install alarms and security lighting as part of target hardening initiatives in repeat victimisation cases and for vulnerable households in consultation with the Police and/or Safer Leeds. At this stage the Council has not taken a decision on whether to make a service charge for provision of alarms and so installations would be at no cost to the tenant until this issue is resolved. A requirement or request for burglar alarms and/or security lighting identified by CASAC or requested by the Tenant would be reported back for approval and then fitting by CASAC, the Council's Property Maintenance Team or other approved Contractor.

3.1.2 LAMINATED GLASS

Many domestic burglaries involve access through windows to the rear of a property by breaking the glass. Many Council properties now benefit from UPVC double glazing which comprises a sealed unit with toughened glass outer leaf and standard glass inner leaf. Although double glazing units are more difficult to break than standard single glazing the toughened outer leaf will completely shatter into small fragments if it is hit hard enough with a sharp object. Using laminated glass on the outer leaf makes the unit more difficult to break and even when broken the glass will stay in place rather than shatter and fall out. This makes it more difficult for the Burglar to gain access.

In future in all cases where a window has been broken due to a burglary or attempted burglary to the rear of a property then replacement glazing is specified with a laminated glass exterior pane rather than standard toughened glass. This type of glass is used on windows adjacent to doors that have to have an internal thumb turn lock for emergency egress (typically Sheltered units). Laminated glass is slightly more expensive than toughened glass but this is outweighed by the impact it can have on crime reduction.

3.1.3 AREA COMMITTEE CONTRIBUTION

In the last financial year ENEHL worked with CASAC on a pilot programme to target harden properties in Burmantofts and Richmond Hill (BRH) Ward which at that time had the highest rate of domestic burglaries in the city. The programme was coordinated through Tasking on a 'worst first' basis focussing on streets with the highest level of burglaries. Safer Leeds supported the pilot through a financial contribution of £7500 which enabled CASAC to change locks to private rented and owner occupiers properties whilst they were doing the work to Council owned properties. Advice and guidance on crime prevention was also provided when locks were being changed and notices affixed to properties to deter burglary attempts. Any additional work required by either the owner or landlord was funded directly by them. A similar pilot was undertaken in Chapel Allerton with a further £7500 being contributed by Safer Leeds and these programmes have helped to contribute to a substantial reduction in burglaries in the areas over the last twelve months.

Whilst some further funding is being made available by Safer Leeds in 2012/13 this is likely to be focussed on priority areas that are recording high burglary levels. Additional funding would enable the ALMO programme to undertake work in

medium and lower risk areas, particularly vulnerable households such as the disabled and elderly owners, to minimise displacement once high risk areas are tackled. Area Committee are asked to consider if they could make a contribution of £1500 for each of the three Wards in the Inner North East area from their 2012/13 Well Being Fund to extend the cross tenure programme to all areas to enable locks to be changed for vulnerable and/or elderly owners, with the programme coordinated through local Tasking.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 There has been extensive dialogue with Safer Leeds partners about the most effective approach to target hardening with lock replacement being seen as the most cost effective way to produce the biggest impact.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Equality monitoring will take place to ensure that benefits are applied equally and fairly across and within all communities although there will be a focus on vulnerable households who are less able to undertake their own lock replacements.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, particularly burglary, is one of the City's highest priorities.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 Funding for the lock replacement programme has been earmarked from within the 2012/13 Housing Capital Programme utilising additional funding available from 'HRA Self Financing' reforms over and above the former Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) allocations. Locks are being purchased from the sole supplier at a negotiated price which is well below recommended retail price due to bulk purchase discounts.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 CASAC are a Council approved Contractor but their work value is capped at a level below the value of this programme. They will be allocated work up to the level of their cap whilst a competitive tendering exercise is undertaken to select a Contractor to deliver the remainder of the work (CASAC have indicated they will be submitting a tender).

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 There is a risk of challenge from other Contractors if we go direct to CASAC with all of the work hence the need to undertake a tendering exercise. However it will be a one year programme, is not something that would be undertaken by existing repairs or improvement Contractors and supports a local third sector organisation.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Undertaking target hardening work on Council owned properties will make a significant contribution to reducing burglary within that sector but consideration needs to be given to how support can be given to tackling the problem in the private rented and owner occupier sectors.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that Inner North East Area Committee note action taken to tackle burglary in Council properties by target hardening of locks and associated work and to consider making a contribution of £4500 in 2012/13 to support the programme in providing replacement locks for vulnerable and/or elderly owners in the Chapel Allerton, Moortown and Roundhay Wards.

7 Background documents

- 7.1 None