

Birmingham City Council

Concierge and Night-time Security Review

Consultation with tenants and leaseholders

What's included within this booklet.

The current service..... 4

Why we need to make some changes..... 4

Consultation 4

Options considered but not proposed 4

- Carry on as we are..... 4
- Stop providing the service..... 4

The Council's proposal 5

Universal Credit and what it means for you..... 5

- What benefits will be included in Universal Credit..... 5
- How will Universal Credit be paid to me?..... 5
- Further advice and guidance 5

How you can have your say..... 6

1. Information Sessions. 6
2. Give us your view online. 6
3. Email. 6
4. Text 6
5. Post..... 6

Key Information about the Councils Proposal..... 7

- Do I get a vote on this?..... 7
- When will the changes take place? 7
- I like having the same staff in my block every day, will this continue?..... 7
- How will tailgaters be managed? 8
- Where will the response staff be based? 8
- How can I contact the control room?..... 8
- What happens if I ring the control room and report a problem? 8
- What will happen if there is an emergency?..... 9

Information in other languages..... 10

The current service

The City Council currently provides a round-the-clock concierge and night-time security presence at 96 blocks of flats around the city.

These blocks also have a door entry control system, monitored by concierge and night-time security staff.

These services are charged at a citywide average of £20.96 above what you pay in rent. In addition, we know that the current service is very important to our tenants and leaseholders, with consistently positive feedback about it.

Why we need to make some changes

The Service that you currently enjoy cannot be maintained without significant investment. This is because the equipment provided e.g. the CCTV camera and door entry systems are coming towards the end of their working life.

The Council is also under great pressure to making savings and believes that that by making changes to the current service and reorganising its staff, savings can be made whilst reducing the service charge.

The Government's plans for welfare reform, particularly the introduction of Universal Credit, are likely to have significant impact on tenants and Leaseholders in receipt of benefits. The changes will also have an impact on how the Council manages its properties and collects rent. Under plans for Universal Credit, Claimants will receive their benefits directly and will need to make separate arrangements to make payments of rent and service charges to the council.

When Universal Credit takes effect, tenants and leaseholders will have to pay this cost directly from the payments they receive. Given that some benefit entitlements are falling and living costs are rising, the Council is required to consider the charges it makes and to consider whether they can be reduced without necessarily affecting the services we provide.

The Council believes that it can protect the interests of tenants and leaseholder by making sure that services we provide continue to deliver value for money. This means that we have act now before the service you receive starts to deteriorate and ends up costing more than at present.

Consultation

The Council is required to consult tenants and leaseholders before it makes a decision. The Council is seeking views on its preferred option which is set out in section 3.1 of the Conditions of Tenancy. Tenants and Leaseholders can make representations on options the Council has ruled out and these will be taken into account before we make a decision on the preferred option.

Options considered but not proposed

- **Carry on as we are.** This would mean that we make no improvements to the service and either wait for the equipment to stop working or continue increasing charges to meet rising maintenance costs. It is also clear that changes to welfare benefits will make it difficult for some tenants and leaseholders to meet the payments due.
- **Stop providing the service.** The Council has no statutory obligation to provide a Concierge and Night-time Security Service and we could stop providing it altogether. In fact, most of the blocks of flats around the city do not currently have this service in place, nor any form of CCTV or door entry control. However, we do not propose to stop providing the service, since we know our tenants and leaseholders value it highly – and our preferred option will keep a daytime presence, based in the blocks.

The Council's proposal

- Provide as much of the current service as possible whilst updating the technology and reducing the service charge to a level that our tenants and leaseholders will be prepared to pay. We know that our tenants and leaseholders really value the current level of service and our preferred option would be to retain as much of it as possible. Therefore, the Council proposes to:
- Continue to provide day-time officers, based at the flats, but with a new – broader – remit, reaching a wider neighbourhood and supporting tenants and leaseholders to access the City Council's services.
- Change the way that the night-time security element is delivered. Although there will no longer be a 24/7 presence on site, uniformed, trained mobile teams will provide a security service – proactively patrolling on foot and in vehicles within the neighbourhoods and responding rapidly to issues as they arise.
- Update the technology and provide a 24/7 remote door entry system to the flats. Cameras will be monitored from a control room based in the city centre and officers in the control centre will be able to contact staff in the neighbourhoods directly.

The Council believes this proposal will be better and more cost-effective than the current service. We also believe that this proposal will enable tenants and leaseholders to continue to feel secure and safe.

Although the details are still being refined, it is expected that a charge of approximately £7.35 per week, in addition to your rent, will be in place.

Universal Credit and what it means for you#

From October 2013, a new type of benefit called Universal Credit will be brought in gradually. It will mean that working age people on benefits will receive Universal Credit, paid monthly directly into a bank account, instead of separate benefits.

What benefits will be included in Universal Credit

The following benefits will be included in Universal Credit:

- Income Support
- JSA income based
- ESA income based
- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit

How will Universal Credit be paid to me?

Universal Credit will be paid monthly in arrears (like most people in work), and will be subject to the new Benefit Cap. It will be paid directly to you, so it will be up to you to budget and prioritise your bills. For most people this means that they will be directly responsible for paying the rent/service charge. Pensioners and only certain groups will continue to get housing rent paid directly to their landlord (Birmingham City Council or Housing Association).

Further advice and guidance

If you are a Birmingham City Council tenant, you can get advice on how you are affected by contacting the Rent Service on **0121 675 2006**. They can discuss the options available to you, or refer you to a free independent debt advice service. If you are **not** a Birmingham City Council tenant, you should contact your landlord directly.

For more details on Universal Credit, visit Birmingham City Council's web site:

<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/universalcredit>

How you can have your say

1. Information Sessions.

There will be information sessions happening in your area soon, and these will be advertised in your block, so look out for the posters!

2. Give us your view online.

You can complete the questionnaire at <https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/bcc-corporate-resources/concierge>.

3. Email: conciergeconsultation@birmingham.gov.uk.

4. **Text:** 07786200403. - Simply start a new message with the word 'Views' followed by a space (if you miss out a space your message will be lost), then add your comment. Please note you will not get a receipt for this message. Messages sent via this service will cost your usual network rate per message and are anonymous unless you put your name in the message.

5. Post:

Please use the pre-paid envelope to return the questionnaire. The address is Concierge and Night Security Review, Freepost MID22594, PO Box 16637, Birmingham B3 3BU.

Within the pack you will have received the letter explaining the review, this information booklet and the questionnaire for you to complete. If you have more questions about the review or would like some help with completing your questionnaire, you can also visit us at an information session in your area or call us on 0121 303 3969.

Key Information about the Councils Proposal

Do I get a vote on this?

There will not be a voting process. However, the Council has a legal obligation to take your feedback into account when coming to a decision and your response will be considered alongside feedback from the staff consultation and take into account any financial and technical information.

When will the changes take place?

No decisions about any changes have been made yet. The City Council is required by law to consult with all of our tenants and leaseholders for a period of 12 weeks, the consultation starts on 11th November 2013, and it will end on 3rd February 2014. Once the staff and tenant & leaseholder consultations end, a report will be compiled by an external consultant and a report will be posted on the Birmingham Council website. The report will go to Cabinet meeting in February 2014 where a decision will be made.

I like having the same staff in my block every day, will this continue?

The Council's proposal will mean that the daytime staff will be retained and will stay in a similar role to the one they have now – although they may have additional duties in the wider neighbourhood. The night-time security staff would no longer be based on site – they would be part of a mobile team of uniformed officers, actively patrolling the area and attending the blocks when required.

How will tailgaters be managed?

The management of the door entry system will be controlled 24/7.

Where will the response staff be based?

The daytime staff will still be based on site – but may have some new duties and a wider neighbourhood role that will take them outside of their building.

The night-time staff will not be based at the blocks but will have a remit to patrol a defined area in pairs.

How can I contact the control room?

You will be able to contact the control room the same way as you contact the concierge – by using the intercom in your flat.

What happens if I ring the control room and report a problem?

We are currently looking at new systems which will help staff to manage your call and have it dealt with quickly and effectively.

It is expected that all calls into the services will be logged, this will allow us to see how many calls we have taken and show if we have managed to answer them all. We can use this information to make sure that the staffing levels are correct and that the problem has been dealt with satisfactorily.

What will happen if there is an emergency?

If an emergency occurs such as a flood, fire or power cut, staff – daytime or night-time – will find out in the same way as they do now, through reports from tenants/leaseholders, alarm systems or equipment faults. The response will be the same as it is now, as staff would contact the necessary services.

If there is a security issue, staff monitoring your block from the control room will report it to staff to investigate or, in some circumstances, to the police.

Information in other languages

This information is about the Concierge service for tenants and leaseholders in Council flats across Birmingham. If you need this in your language or a different language phone **0121 303 3969**.

shqiptar (Albanian)	Ky informacion është në lidhje me shërbimin portier për qiramarrësit dhe qiradhënësit në Këshillin nëpër banesa Birmingham. Nëse keni nevojë për këtë në gjuhën tuaj ose në një telefon tjetër gjuhën 0121 303 3969.
العربية (Arabic)	هذه المعلومات حول خدمة كونسيرج للمستأجرين والمستأجرين في المجلس الشقق عبر برمنغهام. إذا كنت بحاجة إلى هذا في لغتك أو الهاتف لغة مختلفة 0121 303 3969.
বাংলা (Bengali)	এই তথ্য বার্মিংহাম জুড়ে কাউন্সিল ফ্ল্যাটের মধ্যম ভাড়াটীদের এবং নজিহোল্ডার জন্ম গ্রহণী সর্বো সম্পর্কে. আপনার ভাষা বা একটি ভিন্ন ভাষা ফোন 0121 303 3969 এই প্রয়োজন হলে.
中国简化 (Chinese simplified)	此信息的伯明翰理事会单位的租户，承租的礼宾服务。如果您需要在您的语言或不同的语言电话01213033969
中國傳統 (Chinese traditional)	此信息的伯明翰理事會單位的租戶，承租的禮賓服務。如果您需要在您的語言或不同的語言電話01213033969
فارسی (Persian)	این اطلاعات در مورد خدمات دربان برای مستأجران و رهن در شورای آپارتمان در سراسر بیرمنگام است. اگر شما نیاز به این را در زبان خود و یا به زبان های مختلف تلفن 0121 303 3969.
polski (Polish)	Informacja ta jest o usługi concierge dla najemców i dzierżawców w Radzie mieszkańców w całej Birmingham. Jeśli trzeba to w swoim języku lub innym telefonem języka 0121 303 3969.
اردو (Urdu)	یہ معلومات برمنگھم بھر میں کونسل فلیٹ میں کرایہ داروں اور پٹہ داروں کے لئے دربان کی خدمت کے بارے میں ہے۔ آپ کو آپ کی زبان یا ایک مختلف قسم کی زبان کے فون کی ضرورت ہو تو۔ 0121 303 3969 میں اس کی ضرورت ہو تو۔
Việt (Vietnamese)	Thông tin này là về dịch vụ Concierge cho người thuê và được thuê trong Hội đồng căn hộ trên Birmingham. Nếu bạn cần điều này trong ngôn ngữ của bạn hoặc điện thoại ngôn ngữ khác nhau 0121 303 3969.

This information is can be made available in easy read, large print, Braille and audio tape. We can also arrange for you to see a Sign Language Interpreter.