



HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services

A REVISED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2005/06 FOR THE HOUSING SERVICES DEPARTMENT

purpose of report

To seek approval of a revised performance management framework and performance targets 2005/06.

background

- 1 It has long been appreciated that a robust performance management system is at the forefront of a high quality public service. This has been highlighted repeatedly in Audit Commission housing inspections. It is an expected feature in any housing service like our own which is striving to attain a 2-star rating in inspection and subsequent ALMO status.

the present situation

- 2 It has been recognised that at present we are relying too heavily on various performance indicators that have been developed and refined over the past years. These are a mixture of best value indicators, ex-best value indicators and numerous locally developed indicators. There is no doubt that by monitoring and reacting to these over a long period we have succeeded in many service areas in improving performance. They show, in their own way, that in performance against repairs, void control and arrears for example we are working more economically and efficiently than we were in the past.
- 3 However, it has been estimated that the performance indicators represent only one sixth of an effective performance management framework. This report will outline the wider aspects that are required in an effective organisation.

vision

- 4 The first aspect of any performance management framework must be the development of an overall vision for the service in question. This must link in to the Councils overall objectives relating to: -

- Population

- Environment
- Economy
- Crime
- Health
- Life long learning

5 As a starting point the department has retained the services of the KSA Partnership to assist in this process. KSA are a consultancy service that recently assisted South Tyneside in addressing their CPA failings. As a result, they improved their rating from 'fair' to 'excellent'. A day-long session was held with the consultants, customer representatives, members and officers and as a result we are currently in the process of developing a revised vision and objectives for the department. This will be reported to a future meeting of the Housing Services Committee.

key lines of enquiry – (KLOES)

6 The key lines of enquiry were developed by the Audit Commission Housing Inspectorate in summer/autumn of 2004. They detailed what will be covered in inspections and the standards expected of fair and excellent authorities. KLOE's represent sets of statements or questions around either service or judgement specific issues which provide consistent criteria for assessing and measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of housing services. The KLOE's are as follows: -

- * KLOE 1 Prospects for improvement
- * KLOE 2 Strategy and enabling
- * KLOE 3 Stock investment and asset management including repairs and maintenance
- * KLOE 4 Housing income management
- * KLOE 5 Resident involvement
- * KLOE 6 Tenancy and estate management
- * KLOE 7 Allocations and lettings
- * KLOE 8 Homelessness and housing needs
- * KLOE 9 Private sector functions
- * KLOE 10 Supporting people
- * KLOE 11 Supported housing, including sheltered housing
- * KLOE 12 Leasehold management, shared ownership and right to buy
- * KLOE 13 Regeneration and neighbourhood renewal
- * KLOE 30 Access and customer care
- * KLOE 31 Diversity
- * KLOE 32 Value for money

7 They provide a comprehensive overview of the services provided by the department. The final three KLOE's are cross cutting elements, the requirements of which apply to all the others. The department is currently working through the details of the KLOE's to establish our current position in terms of the

requirements. A gap analysis is being developed which will enable us to formulate a revised improvement plan.

- 8 The KLOE's represent an essential tool in assisting us to improve the service. The inspectors will refer to them in determining both how good the service is (the star rating), and what the prospects for improvement are.

service standards and PI's

- 9 In order to achieve our objectives we need to develop service standards and performance indicators with associated targets for improvement.
- 10 The current service standards were developed in 2003. A group consisting of officers and customer panel representatives worked together to review these to ensure that they reflect any changes in customer needs and expectations. They represent the minimum standard that our customers can expect when they use our service. Targets have been developed against some of the indicators and these will be monitored and reported on a regular basis to ensure that the agreed standards are being maintained.
- 11 As part of the revision of the performance management framework it was recognised that the suite of performance indicators needed to be extended to more comprehensively reflect the work of the service. In this regard a fuller set of indicators was developed (See Annex 1) This contains not only performance indicators but also detailed indicators of both volume of work and costs across the service. This will allow us to more closely monitor the Value for Money aspects of the service which are essential under the current agenda. These will be used by management to ensure that efficiency and economy issues can be addressed quickly.
- 12 The customer panel have been consulted in the development of a selection of the performance indicators to provide a suite of higher indicators. (See Annex 2) Targets have been developed against all of these, again in consultation with the customer panel. Success in achieving these targets will ensure that we achieve top-quartile or best practice performance over the next three years. The indicators will be closely monitored and plans for improvement developed where performance is found to be failing. Customer Panel will also be invited to comment on performance against the indicators. These higher level indicators will be reported to the Departmental Management team on a monthly basis, and to Housing Services Committee quarterly.

personal development plans (pdp's)

- 13 The department has recently begun a review of the staff PDP's. These will be used to ensure that the staff are able to operate to the maximum benefit for the customers, themselves and the staff as a whole. Emphasis will be placed on ensuring that all staff are fully aware of where they fit into the overall vision and objectives as previously outlined. Personal targets are being developed and will

be monitored to ensure that staff are able to offer their best efforts on behalf of the organisation. The PDP's will also identify essential training needs that will feed into a comprehensive training programme which is to be developed later in the year.

the performance breakthrough model

14 To assist in the implementation of the new performance management framework, we have used the Performance Breakthrough Model (Annex 3) which has been developed by the Audit Commission. The conclusions made by the model are based upon real situations encountered in public sector organisations. By analysing these, the model suggests reasons why managing performance can be difficult. These are: -

- Leaders aren't interested
- There's no time to learn
- There are too many priorities
- People don't understand that what we DO has to change
- The system doesn't help
- Some people don't perform

15 The model then goes on to outline eight 'breakthroughs' that need to be achieved in order to address these issues. The breakthroughs can be summarised as follows: -

- Show staff you think performance matters
- Join up your thinking and learn
- Take action on what matters most
- Make national agendas work for you
- Sign up staff
- Find your own framework
- Measure what matters
- Help people to perform

16 We are currently working through the model initially to identify where we stand against the various aspects of improvement. This represents an essential level of the performance management framework. It takes us away from the purely empirical dependence upon performance indicators, and into some of the 'softer' issues which lead to excellence, e.g. effective leadership, ownership of the service, willingness to learn. Success in achieving these breakthroughs will undoubtedly lead to improved performance.

human resource implications

17 There are no human resource implications.

it implications

- 18 There are no IT implications as a direct result of the recommendation of the report.

legal implications

- 19 There are no legal implications.

financial implications

- 20 There are no financial implications.

conclusion

- 21 Performance management is one of the most important aspects in the efficient and effective running of the department. In an ideal organisation it is not a separate function, but simply 'part of the day job'. Nor is it simply about measuring performance indicators although this is important in ensuring that certain functions are operating effectively. It is about engaging all our stakeholders in ensuring that we provide service excellence for our customers.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee endorses the development of the revised performance management framework in the housing services department.
- 2 Committee approves the targets developed against the performance indicators.
- 3 Committee endorses the involvement of the customer panel in the development of the targets.

Officer responsible for the report	Author of the report
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Michael Laing Director of Housing Services Ext 281	Brian Abbott Performance and Training Manager Ext 294
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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services

DURHAM COALFIELD COMMUNITIES HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP

purpose of the report

To provide information in relation to the progress made by the Durham Coalfields Housing Market Renewal Partnership.

To agree a memorandum of understanding for the Durham Coalfields Communities Housing Market Renewal Partnership (copy attached - Annex 4).

To consider the recommendations arising from phase 2 of the Jacobs Babtie report commissioned by English Partnerships 'Durham Coalfield Communities Partnership, Phase 2, Sustainable Settlement Validation' and agree a preferred option to progress the work to a standard appropriate for an economic appraisal submission by English Partnerships to the Treasury (Key Findings and Executive Summary attached at Annex 5).

To consider supporting the establishment of a joint staffing unit to progress the initiative.

background

- 1 As a result of the work undertaken by the Coalfields Task force and in recognition of the severe housing demand problems in particular parts of County Durham, English Partnerships have encouraged partners to bring forward an effective partnership solution to the prevailing issues. Although the problem was identified as predominantly a low demand housing market issue the expected solutions will cut across the full range of regeneration disciplines (transport, planning, economic, housing, education, environment, health, crime) and localities within the sub region. The manner in which interventions take place may also differ from locality to locality. For example it may well be more appropriate to invest in environmental improvements and transportation initiatives to support the future sustainability of a settlement or an option to invest in housing improvements or redevelopment. This will depend on a range of determining factors that consultants are currently supporting the partnership to explore.
- 2 In 2003 District housing organisations in County Durham were given 2 very clear messages by Government Office North East (GONE). These were –

- There would not be a second round of Housing Market Restructuring Pathfinders. Newcastle/Gateshead would be the only one in the North East. The next priority is to be Tees Valley rather than County Durham. In addition, County Durham's former coalfields communities needed extensive market restructuring and therefore creative approaches to securing the resources required would need to be explored;
 - Any 'Pathfinder' type initiative would have to be arranged by housing organisations in County Durham using resources from themselves, English Partnerships (EP), ONE, GONE, the private sector and others where available. This approach could include the option to develop a cross boundary model of working.
- 3 By early 2003 a number of local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) met informally to discuss the best way to position County Durham to maximise resources in a realistic way. Since those informal meetings in 2003 the Durham Coalfields Housing Partnership Group has been established and progressed its understanding of the issues. This Committee previously agreed to participate in work in partnership with others in this area.

current position statement & options appraisal

- 4 Since the Durham Coalfields Housing Partnership was established a significant amount of work has been undertaken to gain a better understanding of the issues within the Durham Coalfield Sub Region. This has, to varying degrees, included work to understand the issues at the neighbourhood level within some of the Durham Districts.
- 5 The feasibility work that has been undertaken to date has included: -
- CURS Report (David Cumbernauld Study) – Identifying areas at risk of low demand across the sub region.
 - DTZ Pieda Study 2003 / 04 – Considered priority settlements within the 5 Districts of Derwentside, Durham City, Easington, Sedgefield and Wear Valley. This work recommended that local master planning exercises should be undertaken in priority areas to establish a better understanding of local conditions (baselines) and opinion.
 - Local master planning exercises have commenced in some of the priority areas within Easington, Sedgefield, Wear Valley and Derwentside. At present this work has progressed most comprehensively in Easington and Sedgefield.
- 6 English Partnerships have more recently commissioned (early 2005) Jacobs Babtie and Genecon Consultants to achieve the following: -

- Establish a strategic context in relation to housing investment and a sub regional settlement pattern
 - Validation of previous studies undertaken by DTZ Pineda and CURS
 - Establish Area Development Frameworks for agreed study areas to determine proposed local interventions and establish costs and intervention methods
- 7 This will be with the aim of producing a spatial economic assessment that is robust enough for scrutiny by English Partnerships, the Treasury and the ODPM to enable the allocation of resources for the proposals.
- 8 The timetable for the above process is that completion of the study is due by mid Autumn 2005. This, however, is optimistic and also dependent on a number of critical factors. These primarily being, the requirement for the Sub Regional Housing Market Assessment to inform the economic appraisal and the requirement for Area Development Frameworks to be established for those settlements that is agreed to be approved within a first phase bid to support an implementation programme. As the timetable is already slipping it would be more realistic to assume that completion of this exercise will be towards the end of 2005 / early 2006. Irrespective of the completion date of the work it is not expected that significant resources will be obtained until satisfactory scrutiny of the proposal either from agencies such as English Partnerships in consultation with the ODPM and the treasury or Government Office North East in relation to the work of the Regional Housing Board. It might be the case that this work will be subject to consideration as part of the Government's next Comprehensive Spending Review.
- 9 This has determined the need for English Partnerships to commission Jacobs Babbie and Genecon consultants to undertake a study that will inform an economic appraisal for the sub region in relation to its former coalfield communities.
- 10 Therefore the primary purpose of the current study is to assist English Partnerships in developing a spatial rationale, which confirms the long - term role and function of settlements within a sub-regional context. This strategy will include validating the existing list of priority intervention settlements, which have been identified on housing need only, and the function of the 12 principle main towns contained in the County Durham Structure Plan. To complete this validation, it is necessary to assess the existing main towns within the context of all the coalfield settlements.
- 11 Once accepted by the Partnership, the validation study will be used as a basis to identify the scale of specific interventions within each of the agreed prioritised settlements. These interventions will then be taken forward for economic assessment. The study will be used as a process to agree areas that require a completed Area Development Framework (ADF) in the first instance. The ADF's

will aim to provide a template for securing public and private sector investment in settlements. The purpose of ADFs is to establish the role and function of settlement (vision), settlement requirements to fulfil such a function successfully, settlement development patterns (physical concepts), and priorities for investment. The content of which is required to be based around land and property values, numbers and conditions of properties, housing needs and environmental uses. This content will ultimately inform a proposed investment programme for settlements.

- 12 It is clear that the regional organisations within the partnership expect that the 'establishment of a strategic context in relation to sub regional settlements' is undertaken with the agreement of all of the Local Authorities within County Durham, irrespective of the delivery models and phasing of interventions that arise from future work. (This is reflected in the revised Memorandum of Understanding within Annex 4). Given that an increasing level of resources are to be distributed from regional partners based around regional policies, it would appear that an inclusive approach to sub regional housing issues is a necessity. Such an approach is also confirmed in the recently issued guidance on development of proposals for consideration by the Regional Housing Board, where the expectation is that proposals should be submitted on a sub regional partnership basis, linked to strategic policy themes within the Regional Housing Strategy.

wear valley implications

- 13 In relation to how this work relates to the local context there are several implications that are outlined below: -
- Throughout the feasibility studies that have taken place, Wear Valley settlements have demonstrated some of the strongest requirement for change in terms of need.
 - It was identified within the work undertaken by DTZ Pineda (2003/04) that local area frameworks for priority settlements would be required to be established to justify investment.
 - The emerging work (phase 1 and 2) of the Jacobs Babbie study has validated a number of priority settlements across the County, with the objective of becoming more balanced and sustainable in terms of their role and function. Other settlements within the County that are regarded as priorities in terms of but each might require different types and kind of intervention as outlined in the executive summary (see Annex 5). It is anticipated that the resulting methods to address housing market change may require reinvestment of values from one area to another across the Durham Coalfield programme area in a strategic manner. This is also likely to include investment from each of the participating Authorities. However, clarity in these principles would be ascertained through the final stages of the study work and the findings of the ADFs.

- 14 The ADFs are critical to this process and ultimately in securing resources from the Government sources of funding. The timescales are also critical and if a submission is to inform the forthcoming spending review the additional information required will need to be completed within six months from now. Currently the local authority partners are exploring the possibility of extending a contract that Sedgefield Borough Council have currently under commission to establish ADFs in areas where additional work needs to be progressed. DTZ Piedad is currently undertaking this with Llewellyn Davies on a partnership basis, both of which have extensive experience in housing consultancy work as well a knowledge of the local context within which this initiative is operating.
- 15 This commission would have the potential benefits of establishing consistency to the approach across District areas, provide economies of scale and better value, provide flexibility to build upon existing work, provide a greater capacity to manage the commission and provide continuity of understanding from consultants. A brief for this additional work to deliver two ADF statements will be drawn up to ensure that the process is closely managed and supervised.
- 16 The end result of an agreed ADF will provide both settlements with a framework for delivery for the future that will be set within a strategic context and therefore hopefully attract and better use resources and future investment.
- 17 As a consequence of this work, Council officers are mindful of ensuring that timetables are aligned as far as possible to achieve the required outcomes. Being cognisant of the timescales in relation to the work of the Housing Market Assessment (HMA) is vital, as this work will inform the details within the Area Development Frameworks, which in turn are integral to the Economic Appraisal. The HMA for County Durham is to be commissioned in the near future with an anticipated timescale of approximately six months for completion. ADF's are currently at different stages of development across the sub-region. The degree to which Authorities can complete this work within the timescales of the Jacobs Babbie/Genecon work is of concern, yet will need to be completed as fully as possible within the agreed deadlines. The critical path of this work is a matter that partnership members wish to keep under continual review.

staffing arrangements

- 18 The Partnership has considered how the momentum of this work can be carried forward in a more resourced manner. This is with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the Partnership in addressing the issues that it faces. There has been a consensus within the Partnership that recruiting dedicated staff support progress would be beneficial. County Durham Single Programme funds have been made available to support this in the first instance and agreement has been reached that Sedgefield Borough Council would be the employing authority of a Programme Director with administration support. Both posts would be accountable to the Partnership for their direction. In kind support or a direct financial contribution may well be required from Authorities within the partnership

to demonstrate commitment and establish the required degree of leverage stipulated by the appraisal process of the Single Programme. The host Authority is currently drawing up the Single Programme appraisal, Job Description and Person Specification. Initially staff will be employed over the single programme period 05/06 – 31st March 08. It would be the responsibility of the Director to establish an agreed business plan and to secure resources to drive forward the implementation of the housing programme across identified settlements or neighbourhoods.

- 19 The manner in which the staffing arrangements are configured has also been considered and although proposals have been based around the model of Tees Valley Living it is proposed that only a Project Director and administrative support are appointed initially. The Sub Regional Economic Partnership has allocated single programme funds for the period 05 / 06 to March 2008. This is to the value of £100k p.a. to support this approach. It is expected that this resource will contribute significantly to the salaries and overheads of the staff team.

options appraisal

- 20 It is of regional and sub-regional importance to agree a spatial context across the County for the future role and function of settlements. It is important to remember that establishing and agreeing an inclusive approach to such work is imperative due to a number of factors. These being outlined below: -
- 21 The alignment with other emerging strategic policy documents and decisions, including the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Regional Economic Strategy, the Northern Growth Strategy, the Local Transport Plan, Local and Area Development Frameworks, the Building Schools for the Future Programme, the Housing Market Assessment, County Durham Housing Allocations, Investment Policies of other Public Agencies and others.
- 22 The priority that regional bodies are prepared to give Local Authorities within the County Durham sub region may diminish if an inclusive approach is not undertaken. This would not only give rise to issues of credibility for the partnership in terms of progressing the Coalfield Housing agenda could also seriously compromise the level of investment that may be provided to County Durham Authorities for other housing or regeneration initiatives.
- 23 It is not considered therefore that anything other than a fully inclusive approach from all Authorities should be undertaken to establish a strategic settlement framework for the sub region.

memorandum of understanding

- 24 The latest draft of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been amended to reflect the approach required outlined in the above section. It also needs to be

recognised, however, that the MOU would be reviewed once delivery options are agreed upon to reflect the most appropriate arrangement.

- 25 The purpose of the MOU is to ensure that the partnership has adequate governance arrangements for its purpose. Initially this will be in the form of an agreed approach to joint working arrangements for the development stages of the strategic context and submission of the delivery proposals. It is expected that further revisions would arise as the process is expected to be dynamic in terms of establishing delivery processes in the future and is anticipated to change over time. This will involve all Authorities within County Durham in the first instance until a point where future delivery arrangements are established. It is also envisaged that wider stakeholders of the partnership will sign up to the agreement once Authorities have agreed. These arrangements will promote a commitment to addressing a common goal and support commitment to the processes of addressing low demand housing issues within the County.

economic appraisal and area development frameworks

- 26 Progressing the study to the stage of reaching the required standard for the Treasury to economically appraise proposed interventions raises some issues, namely: -

- The capacity of District Authorities to establish ADFs in the required timescales
- The timescales involved in aligning the HMA work for the County
- Addressing the current position, whereby the District Authorities are all at various stages of bringing forward ADFs for settlement options

- 27 There are several options available to redress this: -

- i) Allow Districts to progress ADFs within their own current capacities
- ii) Work to the pace of the slowest Authority in establishing ADFs
- iii) Commission consultants jointly to undertake the work
- iv) Commission consultants jointly to undertake the work whilst also negotiating and reviewing how future phasing of interventions may take place within the partnership (preferred option).

- 28 Option iv) will enable all the District authorities to progress work relating to producing ADFs appropriately to their circumstances without jeopardising the process of submitting an economic appraisal within the required timescales. This process will require careful negotiation with English Partnerships, consider the

views of the consultants in satisfying the requirements of the economic appraisal and provide the required flexibility to progress the development of the intervention programme.

- 29 The options available to the Authorities are obviously numerous. However, the main considerations that have been undertaken by the partnership are outlined below: -
- i) Support the partnership with existing staff from its members
 - ii) Request contributions from partners to establish a core team
 - iii) Resource a core team from Single Programme Funds in the first instance to support the partnership in ascertaining a clear direction, whereby only a nominal contribution from Local Authorities maybe required (preferred option).

financial implications

- 30 The direct financial implications associated with this report relate to the financial requirements that may arise from contributions to staffing costs. It is anticipated that this is could possibly be up to but not exceeding 20% of the total staffing costs for all Authorities (approximate contribution - £3 - 4k p.a. of in kind or direct contributions per authority). It is unlikely that Authorities will be expected to contribute significantly during the 05/06 period due to the length of the recruitment process, although a degree of commitment may well be necessary to cover any required leverage associated with the submission. Final costs will be made available on the development of staffing and overhead budgets and completion of the single programme appraisal.
- 31 The financial implications that affect investment into the sub-region have been outlined in the report and although resources will not be allocated directly to this initiative until a full economic appraisal has been undertaken, English Partnerships, GONE, the Regional Housing Corporation and Sub Regional Housing Associations are all willing to invest significant resources if a full sub-regional partnership approach can be demonstrated.
- 32 Resources to complete the requirements of an Area Development Framework via consultants are to be sourced from the existing Strategic Housing Investment Programme Funding (SHIP 2005/06) and are anticipated to be in the region of £65 - £70,000 plus VAT for the work required within Easington District.
- 33 It is reasonable to expect that future financial commitments/commitments will be expected from the Authority nearer to the time a programme of action is forthcoming, this would be considered in future reports when appropriate.

legal implications

- 34 There are no legal implications in relation to this report, although future legal implications may arise in relation to the initiative. This would be reported at the appropriate juncture.

equality and diversity implications

- 35 The report has no additional implications for equality and diversity.

procurement implications

- 36 There are no procurement implications other than to agree a joint commissioning approach of consultants where it is appropriate for the Authority to do so (option iv). Any resources required to progress this work would be subject to a further report due to the specific nature of each Authorities position in formulating ADFs. It is envisaged that a joint commission of consultants is the most effective way of progressing ADFs within the timescales available. An extension of the existing contract that Sedgefield Borough Council is currently managing with a partnership of consultants would provide an immediate vehicle to progress this work. The partnership currently includes DTZ Pida and Llewellyn Davies, both of which have had experience within the Coalfield Housing Renewal Area and Area Development Framework preparation. Individual authorities will need to identify the appropriate resources to support the work that is required within their localities.

human resource implications

- 37 There are no human resource implications from this report.

community safety implications

- 38 The prioritised settlements have higher rates of crime linked to poor environment. The project will assist with the overall aims of the CRDP.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee agrees that the Council formally commits itself to the Partnership Memorandum of Understanding and supports the undertaking of establishing a strategic settlement assessment.
- 2 Committee agrees that the Council support the partnership approach to Commissioning consultants whilst also negotiating and reviewing how future phasing of interventions may take place within the partnership (option 4). Resources to complete the requirements of an Area Development Framework via consultants are to be sourced from the existing Strategic Housing Investment

Programme Funding (SHIP 2005/06) and are anticipated to be in the region of £65 - £70,000 plus VAT for the work required within Wear Valley.

- 3 Committee agrees that the Council contributes to the development of a staff team to support the development of the partnerships work and progress the implementation of any future work of low demand coal field housing across the sub-region (option 3).
- 4 Committee refers this report to Regeneration Committee for consideration.

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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services
MAJOR REPAIRS POLICY

purpose

To seek approval of Committee on the introduction of the attached Major Repairs Policy which can be found at Annex 6.

background

- 1 As Committee will be aware, the Audit Commission have published guidance on their revised inspection methodology, namely the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs). These KLOEs have been used by managers to raise self awareness and identify any gaps in services. Within the Capital Works delivery, it is recognised that clear and comprehensive service standards and procedures should be made available to customers in relation to major works.

proposals

- 2 It is intended to introduce, publish and adhere to clear best practice working procedures and service standards for all Major Works schemes as identified in the policy document, and develop further a strong focus on the service use.

consultation

- 3 It is important that customers are fully involved in the process of introducing a set of comprehensive procedures and service standards. To ensure this approach is adopted, the Major Repairs Policy has been circulated to the Customer Panel for comments and observations. Any comments received from the customers will be implemented where possible.

timescales

- 4 The major repairs policy is to be published on the Wear Valley District Council website and all procedures and service standards can be implemented immediately, following approval.

financial implications

5 There are no financial implications.

anticipated outcomes/service improvements

6 The introduction of this document will demonstrate higher levels of access, customer care and a strong focus on the service user as recognised in the Key Line of Enquiry number 30, and comparable with other best practice authorities, such as Carrick Housing and Hounslow Homes.

human resource implications

7 There are no human resource implications.

it implications

8 There are no IT implications other than publication of the policy document on the Wear Valley District Council website.

RECOMMENDED

1 Committee approve the introduction of the Major Repairs Policy.

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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services **DRAFT SERVICE STANDARDS**

purpose of the report

To inform Committee of a review of the Housing Services Department's service standards and request approval of the draft version of the service standards for further consultation with staff and customers.

background

- 1 Service standards set out specific delivery targets. They also describe what customers should expect to receive from our services, the way in which these services will be delivered and methods of redress should customers be dissatisfied with the level of service they receive.
- 2 Service standards are made up of four essential elements these are:
 - A description of the service provided
 - Service pledges, outlining the quality of service delivery customers should expect to receive
 - Delivery targets in relation to key aspects of the service such as timeliness, access and accuracy
 - Complain systems that customers can use when they feel standards have not been met.
- 3 A re-inspection of the repairs and maintenance service, undertaken by the Audit Commission in 2003, recommended that:

"The Housing Services Department develop a set of service standards which set out what tenants can expect from the repairs and maintenance service and publish this widely amongst tenants within 6 months."

- 4 The department worked in partnership with the Customer Panel to develop a set of service standards, which were published in 2003. The service standards included information on:
 - The lettable standard
 - Access to services
 - Standing up to anti-social behaviour
 - Customer care
 - Empty properties
 - Estate management
 - The housing register
 - Major works
 - Property services
- 5 The service standards did not include robust performance measures and were not linked to any performance management infrastructure within the Housing Services Department or the Council.
- 6 Recent changes to the inspection criteria mean that inspections concentrate on the quality of the service in relation to customer need. This requires councils to demonstrate that they understand the needs and aspirations of their customers and reflect these in the delivery of their services. An effective measure of this understanding is the development and proper monitoring of clear service standards.
- 7 Hounslow Homes, an ALMO in London, was awarded a 3 star “excellent” service in May 2005 and was commended for its understanding of customers and its wide publication of service standards. Hounslow’ service standards were developed in partnership with customers and were linked to a clear performance management framework, complete with formal processes for reporting performance. Hounslow actively involves customers in monitoring and reporting on the performance of services, using the service standards as guidelines.
- 8 Wear Valley District Council’s Housing Services Department’s existing service standards do not have adequate performance measures attached to them and they do not enable the active involvement of customers in monitoring and appraising services. Nor do the existing service standards reflect the ongoing changes in our customers profile and so the existing service standards are in need of review and redevelopment.
- 9 Throughout May and June 2005, the Head of Neighbourhood Operations, the Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager, the Service Development Manager and the Training and Performance Manager, have worked in partnership with representatives of the Customer Panel to revisit the service standards and redevelop them.

- 10 During the workshop sessions, this group have agreed that the service standards should be:
- Meaningful to customers, ensuring that the standards relate to aspects of the service customers find important and are written in a way which customers can easily understand
 - Based on consultation
 - Realistic and achievable
 - Owned by customers and staff, with the service standards being used as an essential tool in service delivery and its evaluation
 - Used to measure performance by constructing an action plan for the regular monitoring of service standards by staff and customers including mystery shopping and focus groups. These findings will be fed into the department's performance management process
 - Regularly reviewed and updated in accordance with the changing priorities of customers
- 11 A copy of the updated draft service standards is attached at Annex 7.

human resource implications

- 12 Extended consultation will be undertaken with staff to raise awareness of the service standards and their importance to performance management. Staff will be invited to comment on the service standards and amendments will be made should they need to be.

it implications

- 13 The draft service standards will be published on the Council's web-site as part of the consultation process with customers.

legal implications

- 14 There are no legal implications.

financial implications

- 15 It is estimated that it will cost £690 to produce 5000 colour copies of the service standards booklet and £950 for 7000 colour copies of the service standards booklet.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee approve the draft service standards.
- 2 Committee instructs the Director of Housing Services to undertake a period of consultation with staff and customers on the draft service standards.
- 3 Committee instructs the Director of Housing Services to publish the service standards widely once the consultation period has ended.
- 4 That in consultation with the Chair of the Housing Services Committee, the Director be instructed to make any amendments to the service standards once staff have had the opportunity to make comments.

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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF ALMOS

purpose of the report

To inform Committee of the background of the National Federation of ALMOs (NFA) and consider subscription to the NFA.

background

1. The NFA was established in April 2003, to promote the ALMO option and assist existing and prospective ALMOs to operate effectively. It is recognised by central government and other agencies as the national representative body for ALMOs and aspirant ALMOs.
2. The NFA aims to:
 - Secure a long term financial future for ALMOs
 - Persuade central government to take account of the interests of ALMOs
 - Establish a vibrant and innovative independent ALMO sector that will provide decent homes
 - Raise standards across the public rented housing sector
 - Achieve excellence in service provision
 - Promote tenant empowerment
 - Help deliver broader national and local policy priorities
3. The NFA lobbies on behalf of ALMOs and represents their interests at national level in negotiations with central government and other agencies. It works very closely with other housing sector agencies including TAROE, HouseMark, Northern Housing Consortium, CIH and LGA.
4. The NFA provides guidance on:
 - Establishing an ALMO Board
 - Preparing for inspection
 - Achieving continuous improvements in governance

The NFA also provides:

- A website containing details of ALMO and government announcements, standard documentation, examples of bids and ALMO inspection reports
- Events: Regional events are regularly held for NFA members, regional meetings are also held to enable ALMO officers to exchange information and experiences. Meetings in the north are serviced by the Northern Housing Consortium.

5. Full membership of the NFA entitles members to:

- Password protected access to a dedicated website
- Electronic briefings and advice on a range of issues
- Access to the Profile series on key characteristics of an ALMO
- Attendance at regional network meetings in London, the North and the Midlands

6. Membership of the NFA is open to:

- ALMOs with funding or conditional funding
- Local authorities establishing ALMOs
- Local authorities interested in establishing the ALMO option

7. Once the Section 27 application (1985 Housing Act) is submitted to the Secretary of State and is approved the membership of the NFA will automatically pass from the council to the ALMO with all the attendant voting and other rights.

timescales

8. The council should apply to join the NFA once an announcement of successful applications for a place on the ALMO programme is made by the ODPM.

human resource implications

9. There are no HR implications in joining the NFA.

it implications

10. There are no IT implications in joining the NFA.

legal implications

11. There are no legal implications in joining the NFA.

financial implications

12 The annual subscription to the NFA will be £2650 + VAT. This is discounted to £2150 + VAT for Housing Quality Network members. This payment will be made from the ALMO development budget.

RECOMMENDED

1. Committee instructs the Director of the Housing Services Department to subscribe to the NFA once an announcement of successful applications for a place on the ALMO programme is made by the ODPM.

Officer responsible for the report	Author of the report
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Michael Laing Director of Housing Services Ext 281	Marie Roe Service Development Manager Ext 345
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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services
CREATION OF A CUSTOMER PROFILE

purpose of the report

To seek Committee's approval to the approach to build up a Customer Profile.

background

At the Council Meeting on 18th February 2005, a budget of £30,000 to be used for the marketing of housing services was approved. This budget is to be used to build up a profile of our customers and to develop a marketing strategy to enable us to design future services according to our customers needs and expectations.

proposal

- 2 The first stage of the exercise is to build up a profile of our customers. The profile will include:
 - Characteristics of housing customers
 - Current housing needs
 - Current consumer needs, of the housing service
 - Future consumer needs, of the housing service
 - Access to services
- 3 Following the profile a Marketing Strategy will be prepared which will feed into the Housing Department's business planning.

timescale

- 4 The profile will be presented to the Housing Services Committee for approval in September 2005.

financial implications

- 5 A budget of £30,000 has already been approved.

legal implications

- 6 The implications of Data Protection and Freedom of Information will be fully considered throughout the exercise.

it implications

- 7 Departmentally consideration will be given to the ways in which we collect and store future information on our customers.

consultation

- 8 A report will be submitted to the next Customer Panel.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Housing Committee approve the approach to build up a profile of our customers
- 2 A report be submitted to Customer Panel for their approval to the approach

Officer responsible for the report

Michael Laing
Director of Housing Services

Ext 281

Author of the report

Joanne Dunn
Principal Neighbourhood
Operations Manager

Ext 203



WEAR
VALLEY
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Agenda Item No. 9

HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services **REVISED VOID PROCEDURE GUIDE**

purpose of the report

To seek Committee approval of the revised Void Procedure Guide.

background

1. Following the Housing Inspection in 2001 we have made significant improvement with Void Performance from an average turn around of 93 days in 2001 compared to 41 days in 2005.
2. The new Void Management Procedure (attached at Annex 8) has been developed in response to: the housing inspection, customer scorecards, consultation with housing and property services staff.
3. The procedure is a 'living' document and will be amended over time in accordance with changes in good practice and legislation.

amendments to the procedure

4. Amendments to the procedure are in bold.

the procedure

5. The procedure clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the void process, and establishes clear guidelines and targets for all Housing Services staff to achieve.

financial implications

6. There are no direct implications in the revised version.

human resource implications

- 7. There are no direct implications in the revised version.

crime and disorder implications

- 8. When the void period is reduced there should be a reduction in the fear of crime.

timescale

- 9. Following Committee approval and consultation with The Customer Panel the procedure can be implemented immediately.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. Committee is asked to receive the report and approve the revised procedure.

Officer responsible for the report	Author of the report
Michael Lain	Kath Wright
Director of Housing Services	Neighbourhood Manager
Ext 281	Ext 289



HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services

CUSTOMER PANEL - INSPECTING YOUR LANDLORD EXERCISE

purpose of the report

To inform Committee of the intention of the Wear Valley Customer Panel to undertake an 'Inspecting Your Landlord' exercise at Wear Valley District Council.

background

- 1 The idea of tenant inspections or 'Tenant Auditor Projects' was pioneered by a number of housing providers, agencies and resident associations throughout the country including The Wrekin Housing Trust, Mercian Housing Association, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and Sandwell Tenants and Residents Federation. The project saw tenants in these areas, along with help from TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) carrying out 'reality checks' of their landlords performance. Having completed these audits, the tenants collated the results and presented them formally to their landlords for comment.
- 2 The success of the tenant auditor project resulted in a feedback conference for those who participated. Other than sharing feedback, those present at the conference produced a toolkit to assist other organisations that are considering introducing such initiatives. The tenant auditor project received one of the first 'Innovation into Action' grants awarded by the DTLR (Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions).
- 3 The idea for an 'Inspecting Your Landlord' exercise at Wear Valley District Council stemmed from a training course which the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Customer Panel attended in February 2005. The course entitled 'Inspecting Your Landlord' was facilitated by TPAS and funded by the Community Involvement budget.
- 4 The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Customer Panel returned from the training course with some useful information including a practical inspection toolkit which was taken to the next monthly Customer Panel meeting on Tuesday 1 March 2005. Many of the Customer Panel representatives including those involved with residents associations, expressed an interest in undertaking an inspection exercise based on this information prior to the Housing Services Department's Indicative Best Value inspection in September 2005.

- 5 In order to prepare for the inspection exercise, the Customer Panel have been offered administrative support from The Community Involvement Manager and the Service Development Officer from the Housing Services Department.

planning

- 6 The planning for the inspection exercise has been broken down for ease into 3 planning stages:
- Methods of inspection;
 - Service areas to be inspected; and
 - Work allocation

methods of inspection

- 7 It was agreed by the Customer Panel that a diverse range of inspection methods should be adopted if an overall inspection and evaluation of the services provided by Wear Valley District Council was to be achieved. The inspection group has chosen 6 methods of inspection as follows:
- Questionnaires (staff and customers);
 - Mystery Calling – telephone;
 - Mystery Shopping – in person;
 - Management Interviews;
 - Spot checks; and
 - Bitesize Estate Inspections

service areas to be inspected

- 8 The chosen inspection methods outlined above are to be implemented to analyse the following service areas as chosen by the group:
- Homeline
 - Voids
 - Health and Safety
 - Tenancy Enforcement (including Warden Scheme)
 - Value for money
 - Capital Works and Best Value
 - Performance Indicators
 - Housing Allocations process
 - Customer access to information (formats and availability)
 - Access Points/ Reception Areas

work allocation

- 9 A wide range of service areas have been chosen to be inspected. It is believed that delegation of these areas and individual group working would be the best

approach in undertaking this extensive inspection. The service areas chosen were divided amongst the volunteers and are as follows:

Service Area	Inspection Method
Homeline	Questionnaire of sample users Staff interviews
Voids	Spot Checks
Health and Safety	Staff interviews
Tenancy Enforcement	Staff interviews Customer Questionnaires
Value for Money	Cross-cutting area
Capital Programme / BV	Customer Questionnaires Staff interviews
Performance Indicators	Cross-cutting area
Housing Allocations	Staff interviews
Customer Access to Info	Cross-cutting area
Access Points/Receptions	Spot checks Walk arounds

action planning – PS Consultants

- 10 Advice from PS Consultants who are currently facilitating the Customer Panel ALMO Steering Group training sessions was requested and the following Action Plan was devised. This will be used as a guide through the inspection process. The plan is as follows:

Date	Action
13 April	Agreement on Service Areas for inspection
26 April	Action Plan agreed
W/C 24 April – W/C 23 May	Background research into Housing Inspectorate / other guidance
W/C 23 May	Final agreement on methodology
W/C 6 June	Training / Preparation of participants
W/C 20 June – 29 July	Inspection Programme
W/C 1 August	Collation of information
W/C 8 August	Discussion of findings
W/C 15 August	Consideration of the Draft Report
1 September	Presentation of the Report to the Council

timescale

- 11 As can be identified from the action plan above, Wear Valley District Council will be inspected by the inspection group during the period Monday 20 June 2005 –

Friday 29 July 2005 and formal feedback will be given on Thursday 1 September 2005.

objectives

- 12 In undertaking this project the Customer Panel has identified objectives with regard to the development and improvement of the housing service, the development of the panel as representing the tenants of Wear Valley and the development of new and existing skills of members of the panel.

human resource implications

- 13 Partnership working between the Community Involvement and Service Development teams along with support and advice from PS Consultants are the main demands on human resource provision at the current time. One consequence of the inspection once begun will be the demand on staff time during interviews.

financial implications

- 14 The inspection exercise will incur only minimal costs. Expenditure will be based on print and photocopying costs regarding the provision of reading material for the inspection group which includes Audit Commission guidance, service and business plans and other relevant information.

conclusion

- 15 The Customer Panel has established an Inspection Group to manage and oversee a tenant inspection of the key areas of the housing service at Wear Valley District Council during June/July 2005. The aim of this exercise is to identify poor or weak service areas via varying inspection methods and research and through the recommendations of the Customer Panel, the Housing Services Department aim to improve and develop these services.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 That the Inspecting Your Landlord exercise be noted and approved.

Officer responsible for the report
Michael Laing
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Author of the report
Corinne Gardner
Community Involvement Manager
Ext 299



HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services

HOUSING SERVICES DEPARTMENT DISABILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS SURVEY

purpose of the report

To inform Committee of the current position regarding the data collection and information sharing of data relating to disabled and special needs tenants.

background

- 1 Diversity is one of the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE). KLOE's represent detailed sets of questions/statements around specific service areas which are used by Inspectors as a mechanism for assessing and measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of housing services.
- 2 Statistical information is not fully representative of the total number of disabled or special needs residents living in the District. Many residents do not class themselves as disabled, and often do not take advantage of the care available via forums and agencies and therefore 'slip through the net'.
- 3 In 2003 a survey of Wear Valley District Council tenants was undertaken by the then, Head of Neighbourhood Operations, as part of the ethnic monitoring process. At the bottom of this survey, our customers were asked if they regarded themselves as disabled and if so, were asked to specify their disability. A total of 786 surveys were returned, out of these, 359 regarded themselves as disabled and listed a wide range of disabilities including deafness, blindness and mobility problems.
- 4 From the data collected from the survey information relating to ethnicity was registered on the appropriate systems. However, although it was considered no decision was ever reached as to how the disability information should be input or disseminated throughout the department.

current position

- 5 KLOE 31, Diversity - point 31.2 asks:

'Is there up-to-date information on the vulnerabilities of different service users which is easily available and used to provide an appropriate service?'
- 6 The information we have relating to our disabled and special needs customers is not up-to-date or easily available nor is it disseminated across the Housing Services Department.
- 7 Information detailing identified disabled/special needs customers is held on a spreadsheet which currently has 2 sets of customer data which has been shared with Wear Valley Housing Services Department by Social Services.
- 8 The repairs and major works section of the Housing Services Department have a paper file which consists of records of disabled adaptations since 1979. The information is divided into 'address', 'nature of work' and 'date of request'. There are no electronic files based on this data and no customer information.
- 9 The process of identifying disabled and special needs customers has been included through the introduction of Section 13 on the Housing Application form which asks the applicant to state if the following adaptations are required:
 - Stairlift
 - Wheelchair access
 - Flat-floor shower
- 10 Section 13 of the application also identifies those customers who have the following:
 - Learning difficulties
 - Mental health problems
 - Current experience or fear of physical abuse, harassment or domestic violence
 - Difficulties due to old age
- 11 The information from these applications is input into the IBS System and is used to allocate points and make referrals to other service areas such as Tenancy Support. This information is however, not linked into the IBS Reporting system and so is not widely shared or accessible throughout the Department.
- 12 As previously stated, the Community Involvement Team have a file containing 786 returned ethnic monitoring surveys which contain disability information for some of our customers, this information, although available on request, is in paper format and has not been input electronically into any monitoring system.

actions for excellence

13 KLOE 31, Diversity states:

'An organisation delivering an excellent service has a comprehensive database which sets out the preferred methods of communication for each resident. This addresses issues of language, literacy, hearing and visual impairment and support. This information is highlighted on computer systems for the benefit of all staff and provided to contractors where appropriate.'

14 As the previous survey to determine disability and special needs of our customers was carried out 2 years ago, it would be fair to say that this information is now out of date and a new, more detailed survey should be produced to accurately reflect the needs of our customers. This information should be made available via a database which is accessible to all staff where the necessary requirements of the customer may be highlighted.

15 A Major Improvement Survey has recently been sent to all Wear Valley customers. On the back of this survey equality and diversity issues are raised and may start the process of the Housing Services Department obtaining up-to-date information on our disabled and special needs customers. It has been requested that both the ethnic and diversity information provided by customers on these surveys be passed to the Community Involvement Team on completion.

16 The response to the Major Improvement Survey has been encouraging with 1800 surveys returned, this has been attributable to a prize draw which was also included on the survey. The Community Involvement Team are currently inputting the data from these surveys into a spreadsheet and until this is completed and we begin to analyse the data, it is not known whether a further individual special needs survey will be required.

17 There are advantages and disadvantages to both individual special needs surveys and combined surveys like the one above. An individual special needs survey could explain in detail what we mean by the term 'disability' (some customers who responded to the Major Improvement Survey ticked 'no' for 'Do you have a Disability?' and then outlined health problems which would affect their mobility) and could expand on the needs of our customers. A combined survey however would likely result in a higher return rate of surveys especially if combined with an incentive such as a competition or another service area in which our customers take most interest.

18 If it is decided that a new survey be undertaken, it is important that the survey defines the term 'disability' as encompassing not only visible disabilities but other non visible impairments pertaining to eyesight / hearing etc as this would help our customers understand the question fully. A further survey would incur cost and human resource implications.

cost implications

- 19 The database which would be maintained and updated by staff would be created in-house and so no cost implications would be incurred. Quotes for the printing of the surveys would be obtained and would form the expenditure for the section responsible. Postage/distribution costs would also need to be considered.

human resource implications

- 20 A distribution and print company could be used to undertake this work leaving only the design aspect for the appointed responsible officer, alternatively, staff from the Housing Services Department could envelope all surveys to post out.

21 timescale

The establishment of a database accessible to all housing staff would take a relatively short time to implement. The design, print and distribution of the survey however, would take 1, possibly 2 months to complete. The data received from these surveys would then need to be input into the database along with the disseminated information outlined above.

22 conclusion

The case for resurveying our customers to identify disability and special needs has been overwhelming, but we have recently made attempts to identify our special needs customers through partnership working and surveys and now have substantial data with which to use to improve our services for these customers. It is important that the information the Housing Services Department receives from surveys and other sources is made accessible to all across the department so we can ensure our services are efficient, based on the needs of our customers and open to all.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 The report on Housing Services Department Disability and Special Needs Survey 2003 be noted by Housing Services Committee.
- 2 Housing Services Committee approve a further Disability and Special Needs Survey as part of a wider survey with Neighbourhood Operations.
- 3 Housing Services Committee approve the creation of a 'Customer Need' database to be accessible to all Housing Staff.

Officer responsible for the report
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Author of the report
Corinne Gardner
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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services
6 MONTHLY ETHNIC MONITORING RECORDS

purpose of report

To provide performance management information to Housing Services Committee in respect of monitoring of ethnic records for the Housing Services Department between October 2004 and March 2005.

background

- 1 The data provided in this report satisfies both objective 5 of the Housing Services Department Race Equality Action Plan “to quantify and improve the Department’s performance in addressing equality issues” and objective 8 “introduce an ethnic classification system under which applicants for housing or housing services are asked to state their ethnic origin”.
- 2 This report will analyse the data collected between October 2004 and March 2005 from the performance management systems that are in place to monitor access, quality and service delivery as set down in good practice examples of other housing organisations and under the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice for Rented Housing – Strategies for Good Practice.
- 3 In May 2005, the CRE published a new code of practice on racial equality in housing. The new code replaces the existing statutory codes of practice in rented and non-rented housing that were issued by the CRE in 1990 and 1991. The code will recommend practical steps that housing organisations need to take to prevent unlawful racial discrimination or harassment, and to ensure equality of opportunity and good race relations in housing.
- 4 Marketing consultants, Social and Market Strategic Research, were commissioned in December 2004 to send a short equalities questionnaire to approximately 3800 customers asking for this information. The results of this survey have now been input by Customer Services Assistants and has resulted in the Housing Services Department now having 71% of current tenant ethnic data.

housing applicants by ethnic group

- 5 The number of housing applicants between October 2004 and March 2005 has been calculated and split into applicants by ethnic origin. These results are shown in the table below:

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
BME	14	1.19%
White	1154	98.30%
Refused	6	0.51%
TOTAL	1174	100%

- 6 The percentage of BME Housing Applicants over this 6 month period is 1.19% which is 0.39% higher than the total BME population in Wear Valley which is 0.8% (Census 2001).
- 7 The previous ethnic monitoring report analysed data from April 04 – September 04. If we compare the number of BME Applicants over this 6 month period (1.67%) to the data above we can see a 0.48% decrease in the number of BME applicants.
- 8 As Wear Valley has a only a small percentage of BME residents, it can only be concluded that eventually the number of BME housing applicants will decrease over time once re-housing has taken place.

housing applicants re-housed by ethnic group

Ethnicity	Number of Applicants	Number of Applicants Re-housed	Percentage of Applicants Re-housed
BME	14	3	21.42%
White	1154	255	22.09%
TOTAL	1168	258	22.08%

- 9 From the total number of applicants between October 2004 and March 2005, 22.08% were re-housed. The breakdown between White and BME applicants shows that 22.09% of the White applicants were re-housed and 21.42% of BME applicants were re-housed.
- 10 The figures above would indicate only a 0.67% difference in the number of white applicants re-housed compared to the number of BME applicants re-housed. However, as the total number of BME applicants is so small the figures above are not truly reflective.

age profile of re-housed customers by ethnic group

11 The following table analyses the age profile of our re-housed customers, this data has again been divided to illustrate ethnic origin.

Age (years)	16-25	26-45	46-60	60+	Total	Total %
BME	0	1	0	2	3	1.16%
White	57	93	56	49	255	98.84%
Total	57	94	56	51	258	
Total %	22.09%	36.43%	21.70%	19.77%		100%

12 The highest number of re-housed customers are in the 26-45 year old age group at 36.43%, however, only 1 of the 3 re-housed BME customers are within this age group with the further 2 re-housed BME customers within the 60+ age range.

13 The data outlined above reflects previous data in terms of highlighting the highest number of re-housed customers to be within the 26-45 age range (34.73%). Interestingly this percentage, unlike the last report, shows only 1 out of the 3 re-housed BME customers falling within this category. The remaining 2 BME customers were within the least popular age-group 60+.

length of time people wait for housing by ethnic group

Waiting Time (days)	0-20	21-40	41-60	60+	Total	Total %
BME	0	1	0	2	3	1.17%
White	30	31	23	170	254	98.83%
Total	30	32	23	172	257	
Total %	11.67%	12.45%	8.95%	66.92%		100%

14 The length of time that customers wait for re-housing is displayed above. The majority of customers, 66.92%, wait over 60 days for re-housing. The BME housing customers are distributed in the 60 days plus category and the 21-40 days category for length of time that people wait to be re-housed. This reflects the results from the data previously collated.

geographical area of re-housing by ethnic group

Geographical Area	BME	White	Total	Total %
Billy Row		5	5	1.94%
Bishop Auckland	2	83	85	32.94%
Coundon Grange		1	1	0.39%
Coundon		16	16	6.20%
Crook	1	34	35	13.56%
Eldon Lane		1	1	0.39%
Escomb		5	5	1.94%
Frosterley		3	3	1.16%
Howden-le Wear		3	3	1.16%
Hunwick		1	1	0.39%
Leeholme		10	10	3.88%
Rookhope		1	1	0.39%
Stanhope		4	4	1.55%
St Helen Auckland		12	12	4.65%
Sunnybrow		18	18	6.98%
West Auckland		14	14	5.42%
Willington		39	39	15.11%
Wolsingham		5	5	1.94%
Total	3	255	258	
Total %	1.17%	98.83%		100%

- 15 The top three areas that housing applicants were re-housed over the monitored 6 month period are Bishop Auckland, Willington and Crook. The BME applicants were re-housed in the areas of Bishop Auckland (32.94%) and Crook (13.56%). This is a slight change from the previous report which showed the BME applicants re-housed in Howden-Le-Wear and Crook.

satisfaction with repairs service by ethnic group – average score out of 10

- 16 A survey is sent to a random cross section of customers every month to ascertain their satisfaction with the service we provide when carrying out repairs. Since July 2004, this survey has also asked for equalities monitoring information from customers.
- 17 Satisfaction ratings with the repairs service are based on questions that are scored out of 10. Over the 6 month period between October 2004 and March 2005, 585 surveys were returned. All respondents defined themselves as White British, therefore we have no data to compare in respect of satisfaction with the repairs service for BME tenants for this period.

satisfaction with letting services by ethnic group.

- 18 A survey is sent to a random cross section of customers every month to ascertain their satisfaction with the service we provide when letting new properties. Since July 2004, this survey has also asked for equalities monitoring information from customers.
- 19 In the data from the periods:- October – November 2004 (39 completed questionnaires), December 2004 – January 2005 (26 completed questionnaires), February 2005 – March 2005 (32 completed questionnaires).
- 20 All respondents defined themselves as White British, therefore we have no data to compare in respect of satisfaction with the lettings services for BME tenants for these periods.

customer satisfaction with housing service by ethnic group

- 21 A survey is sent out to a cross section of customers who visit housing receptions or make a telephone enquiry to Neighbourhood Operations staff in the first week of every quarter. Since June 2004, this survey has also asked for equalities monitoring information from customers.
- 22 In both the December 2004 and March 2005 surveys all respondents defined themselves as White British, therefore we have no data to compare in respect of satisfaction with customer service for BME tenants.

new ethnic monitoring data

- 23 In the previous ethnic monitoring report, it was highlighted that data concerning other measurable ethnic records was not available. Some of this data has now been collected and is as follows:
- property type of re-housing by ethnic group;
 - Homelessness Applicants by ethnic group

property type of re-housing by ethnic group

- 24 The type of property into which tenants have been re-housed over the 6 month period can be identified below. This data has also been divided into ethnic groupings.

Type of Property	BME	White	Total	Total %
Bungalow	2	83	85	33.07%

First Floor Flat		8	8	3.12%
Ground Floor Flat		8	8	3.12%
House	1	138	139	54.08%
House with garage		17	17	6.61%
Maisonette		0	0	
Total	3	254	257	100%

25 The main type of property into which applicants are re-housed is into a house (54.08%). 2 out of the 3 re-housed BME tenants have been re-housed in a bungalow which was identified as the second most common property for re-housed applicants (33.07%).

homelessness applicants by ethnic group

26 Data is now available for the monitoring of homelessness applications by ethnic group. From the data retrieved, 100% of homelessness applicants classed themselves as White British and therefore we have no ethnic data. As this is a newly monitored category, it is envisaged that the next 6 monthly report will result in some comparative data.

information still to be obtained

27 Since the previous report, progress has been made in order to collect data on the homelessness applicants and the type of property into which our BME customers have been rehoused, this data has been highlighted above.

28 Efforts are still underway to obtain the following information:

- tenancy enforcement statistics by ethnic group;
- property type for all current tenants by ethnic group;
- rent arrears by ethnic group – former and current; and
- repairs completed by ethnic group

tenancy enforcement cases by ethnic group

29 The Community Involvement Team have been working closely with the Tenancy Enforcement team in order to ensure that ethnic monitoring of tenancy enforcement cases takes place. The Tenancy Enforcement Team have been supplied with the appropriate IBS ethnic monitoring codes in order to input the data received from the newly amended documentation, this will now include ethnic categories, which are compliant with the CRE Code of Guidance and Good Practice measures.

30 The next 6 monthly report to Housing Services Committee will include ethnic monitoring data from Tenancy Enforcement.

property type for all current tenants by ethnic group, rent arrears by ethnic group and repairs completed by ethnic group

31 Monitoring systems for these three sets of data are currently being developed by the Performance and Training Manager and it is expected that this data be available over the coming weeks.

legal implications

32 The Council has a legal duty to promote equality and prevent racial discrimination and harassment. It is also required to comply with the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice.

33 Through the monitoring systems implemented and consultation taking place, the Housing Services Department now complies with the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in Rented Housing.

34 This monitoring satisfies Human Rights Legislation.

conclusion

35 This is the second time that the Housing Services Department has monitored the service in line with the CRE Code of Practice for Rented Housing. The previous ethnic monitoring data produced did not include targets as it was examined as a base data exercise. As we now have 2 sets of ethnic monitoring data over 6 month periods identification of targets may now begin.

36 It is important to point out that when targets are developed they should not be confused with a 'quota', which is unlawful under the Race Relations Act. A quota is a fixed number or percentage which is imposed with an obligation to achieve it. A target is not an absolute maximum or minimum, as it may be over or under achieved.

37 Due to the small numbers of BME housing applicants we are dealing with (14 over the 6 month period monitored), it is prudent not to make assumptions in respect of re-housing.

38 From the ethnic monitoring records produced, the following conclusions can be reached:

- the percentage of BME housing applicants to date is slightly higher than the BME population in Wear Valley;
- over the monitored 6 month period 3 BME housing applicants were re-housed out of a total of 14;
- the age profile of BME re-housed customers is in the least popular category (60+) compared to White applicants who fall within the most popular category of 26-25;

- BME applicants wait for re-housing the same time periods as white applicants;
- BME customers were re-housed in the top three most popular geographical areas within Wear Valley;
- when dealing with small numbers of customers in random surveys (Repairs, Lettings and Customer Satisfaction Survey), it may often occur that either BME customers will not be included in the sample or they may choose not to respond.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee notes this report and ethnic monitoring data.
- 2 Committee agrees to ethnic monitoring data being produced six monthly for Departmental Management Team; six monthly for Housing Committee and publicly in Wear Valley Housing Matters.
- 3 Committee help set targets for future monitoring.

Officer responsible for the report Michael Laing Director of Housing Services Ext 281	Author of the report Corinne Gardner Community Involvement Manager Ext 299
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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services
QUARTERLY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

purpose of the report

To report to Committee the results of the Quarterly Customer Satisfaction Surveys carried out in December 2004 and March 2005, making comparisons with the same survey in September 2004.

background

- 1 The Government is increasingly emphasising the need for local authorities to provide services that meet, and indeed exceed, customer expectations.
- 2 One way of achieving this is through the engagement of customers in every aspect of service delivery, and one of the most cost effective methods of engaging customers is issuing regular satisfaction surveys to gauge opinion about the quality of our service.

customer satisfaction survey

- 3 The results highlighted below have been collated from the recent surveys carried out in December 2004 and March 2005. These results have been compared to figures from a previous survey carried out in September 2004.
- 4 The response rate to the September 2004 survey was poor, only 16 of the 211 surveys sent were returned (7.58%). The surveys undertaken in December 2004 and March 2005 show an improved response (13.75% and 11.40%). Along with the survey, an Involvement Mechanism is also sent to customers which lists various methods of customer involvement. Involvement methods range from joining residents associations and the Customer Panel to open days and surveys. Customers then choose their preferred method and these details are then input onto the Community Involvement Database. Currently we have the details of 690 customers on the database and this number is increasing.

survey results

- 5 The results from all customer satisfaction surveys carried out since September 2002 can be found in Annex 9.
- 6 The recent surveys showed that the preferred form of contact with the Council was via telephone (77% - December 04, 83% - March 05). These results are consistent with all previous surveys. The March 05 survey does illustrate however, a substantial increase in the number of customers visiting the Council offices (50%) compared to only 27% in December 04 and 12% in September 04.
- 7 Part 2 of the survey highlighted the main customer enquiry in both the September 04 and December 04 surveys as repairs (29%/59%). These results are again consistent with previous surveys. The March 05 survey however highlights re-housing as the main enquiry (50%) with repairs the second most common issue (40%).
- 8 Results for part 3 of the survey remain encouraging and consistent with previous surveys showing a high level of satisfaction regarding customers finding it easy to contact the right person to deal with their enquiry.
- 9 Parts 4 and 5 of the survey asks if customers found staff helpful and whether the staff were able to deal with their enquiry. Encouragingly, the response to both highlighted an increase in these aspects of customer service in both December 04 (86%/ 73%) and March 05 (88%/ 83%) surveys and are consistent with previous surveys.
- 10 Part 6 of the survey highlights high levels of satisfaction regarding opening times, with 86% satisfied in December 04 and 92% satisfied in March 2005. The September 04 survey supports this result highlighting 87% of satisfaction.
- 11 Part 7 and 8a relate to the physical environment of the Council building and the speed of our service. Satisfaction with regard to the reception area in terms of cleanliness, tidiness, lighting and access has improved throughout the 3 surveys, the December 04 and March 05 surveys show a gradual improvement in satisfaction from the September survey (50%, 19%, 31%), December results being 86%, 55%, 68% and March 05 results showing 92%, 54%, 63%.
- 12 There is again consistency across the 3 surveys with regards to which aspects of the service customers would like to change or improve across the 3 surveys. In the September 04 survey customers choose Quality of Information (33%), Repair Appointments (22%) and Payment Methods (11%) as those services they would like to see improved. In the December 04 survey the 3 chosen areas were Knowledge of staff (32%), Quality of information (18%) and Repair Appointments (14%). In the March 05 survey Repairs Appointments (42%), Quality of information (25%) and Knowledge of staff (17%) were the top 3 chosen issues.

- 13 Part 8c of the survey asks the customer if they had access to all the relevant information in the reception area. The December 04 survey illustrated that 55% of the customers felt they had all the relevant information, this is a decline in satisfaction in relation to the September 04 survey which showed 75% of customers were happy with this information. By March 05 however, the response to this question showed an improvement since December resulting in 71% of customers being satisfied that they have access to all relevant information.
- 14 Part 9 of the survey relates to Council staff and their interaction with our customers. The time-scale in which phone calls are being answered (Between 20 seconds and one minute) is consistent throughout the September 04, December 04 and March 05 surveys (44%, 36%, 38%) as too are the results for staff introducing themselves on answering the telephone (56% - September 04, 63% - December 04 and 63% - March 05).
- 15 Part 10 of the survey asks customers to express their overall satisfaction with the service we offer. Encouragingly, results from all surveys undertaken since September 02 illustrate a significantly high percentage of satisfaction. (September 02 – 80%, December 02 – 85%, December 03 – 85%, March 04 – 85%, June 04 – 85%, September 04 – 75%, December 04 – 82%, March 05 – 71%)
- 16 A new section was added to the Customer Satisfaction Survey in June 2004 which aimed to identify the ethnic origin of those customers who take part in these surveys. The Equalities Monitoring section has highlighted that since June 04 all customers who have responded to these surveys regarded themselves as White British.

conclusions

- 17 The need to engage customers in service delivery and development cannot be underestimated. The Community Involvement Team work tirelessly to ensure that all customers are given the opportunity to have a say in the decisions that affect their area. Customer views are important to us in developing our services and meeting the needs of these customers.
- 18 The Department needs to link its performance indicators with its service standards. This needs to be achieved through Business Planning, Performance Management processes and customer consultation.
- 19 The department must act upon the results provided from all forms of consultation with customers including those from questionnaires and surveys and aim to improve those areas which have shown a decline in satisfaction. The department can act upon these results by targeting the areas identified as in need of improvement and implementing action plans to resolve these issues. This has already been achieved within the repairs and maintenance department and is reflected in recent survey responses from our customers.

- 20 The Department must also continue to monitor and evaluate the process relating to the engagement of our BME communities and other hard-to-reach groups. Hopefully, the introduction of the Equalities Monitoring section on the survey will help us in this process.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 That the Housing Services Committee note and endorse the report on the quarterly customer satisfaction surveys.

Officer responsible for the report

Michael Laing
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Ext 281

Author of the report

Corinne Gardner
Community Involvement Manager
Ext 299



HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services
SECURITY PROTECTION TO VOID COUNCIL HOUSES

purpose of the report

To inform members of the progress in obtaining value for money and seek to agree to the use of consortia contracts for future provision of security protection.

background

- 1 The provision of security protection includes the installation, upkeep and removal of security screens and alarms to void properties to prevent damage from vandalism or theft.
- 2 In 2001 the Council established a six month trial period to assess the most economic service provider. Two contractors, SPS Doorguard Ltd and Orbis plc, were asked to provide security protection to council properties, with SPS Ltd being allocated properties on Woodhouse Close Estate and Orbis the remainder of the district.
- 3 Due to changes in staffing and responsibilities, the pilot was not fully evaluated in terms of cost and quality until June 2004.

evaluation

- 4 The evaluation showed that the quality of the service, in terms of call out times, fixing and removal times were broadly similar between both firms.
- 5 The evaluation of cost considered the cost of both screens and alarms. Orbis charged a single unit cost per week per property for either alarms or screen, depending upon which was installed. SPS Ltd charged an 'agreed' flat rate weekly amount for screening. In addition, SPS Ltd also charged single unit cost per week per property for those properties being alarmed. The evaluation of the service considered that this was not a cost effective method of security provision.

- 6 Obviously, this did not represent value for money and SPS Ltd were requested to remove their screens by August 2004. SPS Ltd subsequently requested they be allowed to 'review' their pricing structure in light of the evaluation. However, this request was refused. Orbis plc were requested to provide security services to the whole of the district until the situation was resolved.

challenge

- 7 SPS Ltd contacted the Council's External Auditors claiming that the Council had acted unfairly. External Audit however, accepted the Council's stance that the screens were being provided on a pilot basis, that was to be subjected to assessment. It was also agreed that the Council were not receiving best value for money from SPS Ltd.
- 8 External Audit did recommend that SPS Ltd be invited to tender for any subsequent work, as they had achieved the required standard levels of service delivery. The Council could, however, also consider the results of the previous cost evaluation in assessing any subsequent tenders.

tendering rules

- 9 The value of the security works to void properties has reduced in the last few years as a result of demolitions and reduction in the void period. This current financial year's budget is £180,000. This amount exceeds the European tendering threshold of £153,000 for provision of services. Any services that exceed this amount should, according to European Law, be advertised within the European Community using accepted European procurement rules.

proposals

- 10 A fully compliant European procurement exercise will have resource implications on the Council, as detailed specifications will need to be drawn up, advertisements placed, contractors evaluated, tenders evaluated and contracts agreed. At present, the Housing Services Department does not have the available capacity.
- 11 One of the procurement options available to the Council is the use of consortia contracts. The Council's contract standing orders permit the use of consortia arrangements under Clause 3.4.
- 12 It is proposed that the Council consider using a consortia contract for the provision of security services. This has a number of advantages –
- Compliance with E.U. procurement rules can be illustrated
 - Savings to the Council in the costs involved with an EU procurement exercise

- Ability to ‘buy-in’ expertise in specification and contract control on security protection, and
 - Cost advantages realised through bulk purchasing.
- 13 It is further proposed that the Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) agreement be used by the Council to establish a long-term, 3 year contract based on the agreement. Beneficially, Orbis plc are the preferred contractor on this contract, which again has a number of advantages –
- Ability to negotiate ‘local’ price against the consortia pricing structure to obtain best value for Wear Valley
 - Evidence of value for money as the consortia contract is used by large housing providers, such as Sunderland Housing and Gateshead MBC, and
 - Illustrates the Council’s ability to jointly procure services with other authorities, thus further showing efficiency gains in line with the Government efficiency agenda; and
 - Continuation of service delivery.
- 14 The Northern Housing Consortia tendering exercise included the evaluation of a submission from 13 companies including one from SPS Doorguard Ltd. SPS Doorguard Ltd were shortlisted by the NHC, but withdrew from the exercise prior to final submission. It could, therefore, be illustrated that by using the NHC exercise, SPS Ltd were invited to tender for Wear Valley’s work. The evaluation of all submissions resulted in two companies being appointed. However, the agreement with one of the companies was subsequently terminated leaving Orbis plc as the sole provider.

financial implications

- 15 Last financial year, the cost of security was approximately £198,000. The costs are likely to be less this financial year as the number of long term voids has reduced and also the cost of security has decreased by using Orbis plc as the sole supplier.
- 16 As a consequence of establishing a long term contract, Orbis plc have indicated ‘local’ arrangements will be agreed with the Council, that will result in security services being supplied below the NHC tender prices. This again will result in savings on this current year’s budgets.
- 17 Utilising the NHC procurement exercise negates the requirement for the Council to undertake similar procurement exercises. This realises savings of approximately £4,000 in staff costs in drawing up specifications, advertising and evaluating contractors and evaluation of tender bids.

legal implications

- 18 The Council must comply with standing orders and European procurement legislative on all procurement exercises. Attached in Annex 10 is a copy of a letter from the NHC that clearly indicates they have complied with European legislation. The Council's Standing Orders allow the use of consortia procurement following consent of the Head of Legal Services and Director of Central Resources. This consent has been approved as part of this process.

crime and disorder implications

- 19 The provision of a well managed security service is central to ensuring Council owned properties are not subjected to vandalism or theft. This contract will seek to build on current relationships and look towards development of the security and estate management service.

timescale

- 20 It is proposed that the new arrangements commence within the next month in order to achieve maximum benefit.

conclusion

- 21 The use of the NHC agreement to establish a 3 year contract with Orbis plc represents good value for money. This is evidenced in terms of efficiency gains in staff time and also a reduction in the cost of security provision.
- 22 The NHC procurement exercise fully complies with EU procurement regulations and has been undertaken in a fair and transparent manner allowing all security providers the opportunity to bid for the works.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee agrees to the use of the Northern Housing Consortium arrangement for the provision of security protection.
- 2 Committee agrees to appoint Orbis plc as the preferred supplier for the provision of security protection for the next three years subject to satisfactory performance.

Officer responsible for the report
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Director of Housing Services
Ext 281

Author of the report
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Head of Business Support
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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources
SERVICE PLAN 2005/06 – RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

purpose of the report

1. To seek Member approval for an update to the Departmental Service Plan in relation to Risk Management.

background

2. Part of the governance arrangements within the Authority relates to risk management in that the Authority should be aware of key business and operational risks and put in place arrangements to manage such risks. Each department has produced a register of its key risks in order to demonstrate to CPA Inspectors that the Authority is starting to embed a risk management culture into the day to day workings of each department.

housing services department risk register

3. Attached at Annex 11 is the register for the department which shows the key business and operational risks. It also shows the response and proposed action along with the lead officer who is responsible for managing the risk. The risk register has been produced in conjunction with the Central Resources Department.

monitoring

4. The risk register will be monitored in line with the rest of the Departmental Service Plan.

financial implications

5. The cost of managing risks will partly be met from existing staff time/internal resources, however where this is not the case, risk management costs will need to be considered corporately as part of the budget setting process.

human resources implications

- 6. Staff within the department have undertaken risk awareness training provided by the Council's external insurance providers as a means of ensuring risk management is taken forward on a departmental level. Refresher courses are to be provided within the coming months.

legal and it implications.

- 7. There are no direct legal and I.T. implications and arising from this report.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That Members endorse the risk register shown at Annex 11.

Officer responsible for the report	Author of the report
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Director of Housing Services	Director of Central Resources
Ext 281	Ext 227



HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of the Director of Housing Services
PRINCIPAL SERVICE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

purpose of the report

To propose the establishment within the Housing Services Department of a post of Principal Service Development Manager within Neighbourhood Operations to focus on driving improvements in the repairs service.

background

- 1 In March 2005 the Repairs Efficiency Review by the Head of Business Support identified a number of areas that required attention in order for the repairs service to show value for money and to achieve the required efficiencies against the background of the Gershon Review, "Rethinking Construction" and the Audit Commission Key Line of Enquiry 32 – Value for Money. This report also highlighted the possibility of serious financial penalties if regulations in procurement were not adhered to. We must also pay regard to Key Line of Enquiry 3 – Stock Investment and Asset Management, to collect and use accurate information about service costs, alongside what our customers tell us, to design a modern, effective and efficient repairs service.
- 2 In this is the need to select suppliers and to enter into partnerships with contractors in accordance with Standing Orders, European legislation and good procurement practice.

current situation

- 3 Since the restructuring of the Housing Services Department in 2001, the focus over the last three years has been on improving the measured performance, and this has been done with some significant successes. However a number of skills that were previously vested in the former Technical and Works Departments have been redeployed or were not established within the Repairs service. These skills are now fundamental to achieving value for money and business efficiencies in one of the major services. They include the knowledge and ability to examine and improve current business practices, to identify and implement improvements, review the schedule of rates, compare costs, examine the organisation of work, improve the balance between planned and responsive work, introduce best practice and achieve best value in procurement.

- 4 It is now appropriate to introduce these skills to deliver improvements for our customers, which will assist in the achievement of a three star rating from inspection of the proposed ALMO.

human resource implications

- 5 This will be a new permanent post responsible to the Head of Neighbourhood Operations. The salary of PO1 – 4 is felt to be appropriate in order to reflect the strategic importance of the position, and the need to attract candidates of a sufficiently high calibre and ability.

financial implications

- 6 It is proposed that the post be created on scale PO1 – 4. The costs would range from £31,796 - £34,264 inclusive of national insurance and pension. The current salary budget, having been reduced in line with reductions in management posts in Property Services in recent years, does not support the creation of this post. However within Property Services the sum of £100,000 has been set aside as legal fees to meet claims for disrepair against the Council. So far this year, only one such claim has been received, and although we may successfully resist it, it is estimated that if we cannot defend it the cost could be in the region of £5,000. Of the 5 outstanding claims from last year, it is thought unlikely that we will have to meet them. It is therefore proposed, with the agreement of the Director of Central Resources, to vire the sum of £31,796 in line with financial regulations support the creation of the new position. This would result in a reduction of the budget for legal fees to £68,204, and would allow sufficient contingency for the remainder of the year and subsequent years.

outcomes for customers

- 7 Our customers will benefit from service improvements and efficiencies, from the identification and application of good practice, from improved business processes, and increased value for money. It is also anticipated that the work of the postholder will significantly contribute to an improvement in the Department's performance in Inspections, which will benefit service users.

legal implications

- 8 The risk of financial penalties should the Council breach Standing Orders in procurement of suppliers and contractors has already been highlighted, as well as the threat of external challenge. The implications for this could mean severe penalties in loss of funding that could be critical for the Authority.

conclusion

- 9 It is therefore proposed that a post be created of Principal Service Development Manager, within the Property Services section of Neighbourhood Operations, and directly responsible to the Head of Neighbourhood Operations, at scale PO1 – 4. The cost of the post would be funded by transfer from other budgets. It is also anticipated that these costs will also be offset by efficiencies and the avoidance of incurring financial penalties.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee approves the creation of the post of Principal Service Development Manager at scale PO1-4, to carry out the duties detailed in the report.
- 2 That the amount detailed in the report be transferred from the legal fees budget to the wages budget in Property Services to support the post.

Officer responsible for the report	Author of the report
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Director of Housing Services	Head of Neighbourhood Operations.
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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

12 July 2005

Report of Director of Housing Services

WOODHOUSE CLOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

purpose of the report

To advise Committee on the completion of the Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Profile and to seek approval of the Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Plan.

background

- 1 The Sustainable Communities Plan, produced in 2003 by the ODPM, challenged local authorities to:-
 - to ensure that all social tenants have a decent home by 2010;
 - to improve conditions for vulnerable people in private accommodation;
 - to ensure all tenants, social and private, get an excellent service from their landlord; and
 - to ensure all communities have a clean, safe and attractive environment in which people can take pride.
- 2 Housing Services Committee recommended in November 2003 that the Sustainability Index and Neighbourhood Profiles be approved and that Woodhouse Close would be the first area to benefit from the application of the Sustainability Index and neighbourhood profiling.
- 3 Following the Sustainability Indexing it was recognised that Woodhouse Close was in decline and unsustainable. The Neighbourhood Profile (Annex 12) outlined in greater detail the characteristics of the estate and the attendant economic and social problems that were prevalent.
- 4 Based on the Neighbourhood Profile, a series of consultation exercises have taken place involving residents, stakeholders and ward members. This consultation highlighted the problems that most concern these groups and individuals. Following this exercise a discussion group was formed to analyse the results of the consultation process and to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

proposal

5 The following Neighbourhood Plan has been developed using six specific action areas to drive improvement

- neighbourhood management techniques
- marketing initiatives
- investment
- demolition
- sale
- redevelopment

Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Management Techniques

Problem	Proposed Action	Lead Agency/Officer	Proposed Timescale
Environmental Issues.(general condition of common areas and void properties)	Use of estate caretaker	WVDC –Housing Services Neighbourhood Manager	August 2005 (the proposed recruitment of an estate caretaker will be the subject of a detailed report to the HSC for Members consideration. Should that proposal be adopted, then the recruitment timescale is by end August 2005.
Anti-social behaviour/fear of crime/drug use.	Development of multi–agency estate management group	Lead agency – WVDC Housing Services (Neighbourhood Manager)	Initial meeting August 2005 Review October 2005
Under-occupation of 3 bedroomed properties	Undertake full analysis of extent of under occupation and develop strategies to reduce this.	WVDC – Housing Services (Neighbourhood Operations local team)	Immediate Review October 2005

Low level of involvement of elderly residents in Community activities.	Crime reduction and Community Involvement initiatives	1. Multi –agency Neighbourhood Management Group 2. Community Involvement Team	1. August 2005 2. Immediate. Review October/November 2005
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Marketing Initiatives

Problem	Proposed Action	Lead Officer/ Agency	Proposed timescale
The estate is stigmatised.	Robust marketing of estate and properties highlighting positive factors.	WVDC (Neighbourhood Operations local team and Marketing team)	Immediate
Low demand for one bedroomed bungalows.	1. In depth analysis of extent of underoccupation. (as above) 2. Improved marketing of bungalows to encourage elderly to consider relocation.	WVDC – local Neighbourhood Operations Team	Immediate

Investment

Problem	Proposed Action	Lead Officer/Agency	Proposed Timescale
Local authority properties perceived as low standard accommodation	1. Capital programme. (ongoing) 2. ALMO funding (dependant on a number of factors) 3. Use of Estate caretaker to improve appearance of void properties	WVDC – Housing Services 3. Estate Caretaker	Decent Home Standard - 2010 Proposed August 2005 (this appointment is subject to consideration by the Housing Services Committee)

Demolition.

Problem	Proposal	Lead Officer/Agency	Timescale
Completion of demolition site – Lower West Lane area	Completion of demolition programme on this site	WVDC and partners	October 2005
Further adhoc demolition	Long term void bungalows at Archer Avenue and 3 bed houses at junction of Douthwaite/Lowther Road/Price Avenue area.	WVDC – Housing Services	November 2005

Sale

Problem	Proposal	Lead Officer/Agency	Timescale
Sale of land at demolition site	That the land at West Lane/Cheesmond Avenue site be disposed of to regenerate this part of the estate	WVDC –Housing and Legal Services	To be agreed

Redevelopment

Problem	Proposed Action	Lead Agency/Officer	Timescale
Provision of youth facility	Provision of all weather facility at Ford Way	Woodhouse Close Community Action Group	On going consultation
Single Parent unit	Tees Valley Housing Group developing site at Coney Avenue	Tees Valley Housing Group	January 2007

financial implications

- 6 Should the Neighbourhood Plan be approved then the cost to the authority would be in the provision of an Estate Caretaker. A more detailed analysis of establishing this post and the financial implications will be presented to a future Committee for consideration.

- 7 The cost to the authority of all other items outlined in the plan can be contained within existing budgets.

human resource implications

- 8 The human resource implications, again, would be in the provision of an Estate Caretaker.
- 9 It is anticipated that other proposals outlined in the plan could be incorporated into the current human resource structure.

crime and disorder implications

- 10 It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan will contribute greatly to crime reduction on Woodhouse Close Estate. The plan will address issues such as anti-social behaviour, crime and fear of crime and help reduce drug use. Allied benefits would be an improvement in the general perception of the Estate and an improvement in the sustainability of the area.

timescale

- 11 Timescale for the delivery of each item is outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan.

outcomes for customers

- 12 The Neighbourhood Plan is the result of full consultation with customers and stakeholders. The Neighbourhood Plan is based on customer aspirations and priorities.
- 13 The successful delivery of the plan will lead to an increased quality of life for all residents living on Woodhouse Close estate.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee approves the Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Plan and endorses the implementation of the proposed actions, with the exception of the creation of an Estate Caretaker, as this will be the subject of a further report to Committee for consideration.

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