



HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

8 MARCH 2006

Report of the Director of Housing Services

HOUSING SERVICES DEPARTMENT – SERVICE PLAN 2006/07

purpose of the report

To seek Committee approval of the Housing Services Department Service Plan 2006/07.

background

- 1 Each year all departments are required to produce a service plan that gives a summary of the previous year and sets out actions for the coming year.
- 2 The service plan has been prepared taking into account the results of the indicative ALMO inspection. One of the main recommendations from the Indicative ALMO inspection was the need for one overall document for the whole service. This service plan will be that document.
- 3 A high-level action plan and risk register has been incorporated into the service plan.

human resource implications

- 4 The transfer of the day to day management to Dale and Valley Homes will have implications on human resource issues. A service level agreement has been drafted and will be agreed before 3 April 2006.

legal implications

- 5 There are no legal implications attached to the approval of the service plan. However, a service level agreement has been drafted and will be agreed before 3 April 2006.

community safety implications

- 6 There are no crime and disorder implications, other than those associated with specific actions.

equalities implications

7 The equalities implications are detailed within the Service Plan.

financial implications

8 It is anticipated that all actions identified in the service plan will be delivered within budget or grant allocations. The most important financial implication would be the loss of £26 million funding if we do not achieve 2 stars in the next inspection.

RECOMMENDED

1 Committee approves the Housing Services Department Service Plan 2006/07.

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HOUSING

SERVICE PLAN 2006/07

draft

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CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE	1
	2.1 Purpose of the Department	1
	2.2 Activities	5
	2.3 Resources	5
3.	REVIEW OF 2005/06	6
	3.1 Business Support	6
	3.2 Neighbourhood Operations/Property Services	7
4.	PRIORITY ACTIONS 2006/07	7
	4.1 Business Support	7
	4.2 Neighbourhood Operations/Property Services	8
5.	PARTNERSHIP PROFILE	9
6.	CUSTOMERS	14
	6.1 How we engage with our customers	14
	6.2 Current views of customers and citizens	16
	6.3 Consultation and engagement activities planned for 2006/07	17
7.	INSPECTION RESULTS	17
8.	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TARGETS	20
9.	CORPORATE MAPPING	25
10.	STRATEGIC ANALYSIS	26
	10.1 PEST analysis	26
	10.2 SWOT analysis	27
	10.3 Risk Management analysis	29
11	BUDGET INFORMATION	30
	11.1 Revenue Growth Bids	30
	11.2 Revenue Savings Bids	32
	11.3 Capital Bids	32
12.	MONITORING	32
	ACTION PLAN	34
	RISK REGISTER – Annex A	58

HOUSING SERVICES DEPARTMENT

SERVICE PLAN 2006/07

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Housing Service Department's Service Plan for 2006/07. Housing is a key service of Wear Valley District Council and as such plays a large role in achieving Community and Council objectives.

This Service Plan translates the wider priorities and objectives of the Council Plan into an action plan with targets and objectives for Officers working in the Housing Services Department. It is based on the guidance set out in the Council's Performance Management Framework.

Wear Valley District Council has established an Arms Length Management Organisation – ***Dale and Valley Homes*** that will go live on the 3rd April 2006. This service plan will therefore be an interim document to assist in the transition process. A separate service plan for Dale and Valley Homes will be produced using this document as its foundation.

The Council is committed to being open and honest in all its dealings and will therefore abide by the principals of the Freedom of Information Act.

2. DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE

2.1 Purpose of the Department

The Housing Services Department aim to provide the best service and improvements to customers to ensure all tenants have a decent home in a sustainable community. We will provide value for money through an efficient and effective service that responds to the needs of our customers and tenants.

Like every part of the Council the Housing Services Department is committed to treating all people equally with dignity and respect. The Housing Services Department fully supports the removal of all barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability. We are committed to ensuring that Council services are easily accessible by all irrespective of where they live, disability, age, gender, race, religion or sexuality.

The Council currently owns and manages 4622 homes and the Housing Services Department provides a range of housing management and general services, such as homelessness advice and support, debt advice and community safety projects.

The Housing Vision is:

“leading the way to the very best housing of choice for everyone that contributes to sustainable communities that learn and grow”

In order to support the vision a set of core values have been developed these are to:

- Provide the best and continue to improve
- Embrace equality and value difference
- Work with others and take personal responsibility
- Be honest and fair, caring and courteous
- Recognise the present and build the future

The Housing Services Department’s objectives come under six main headings, which have been divided, into two key areas they are:

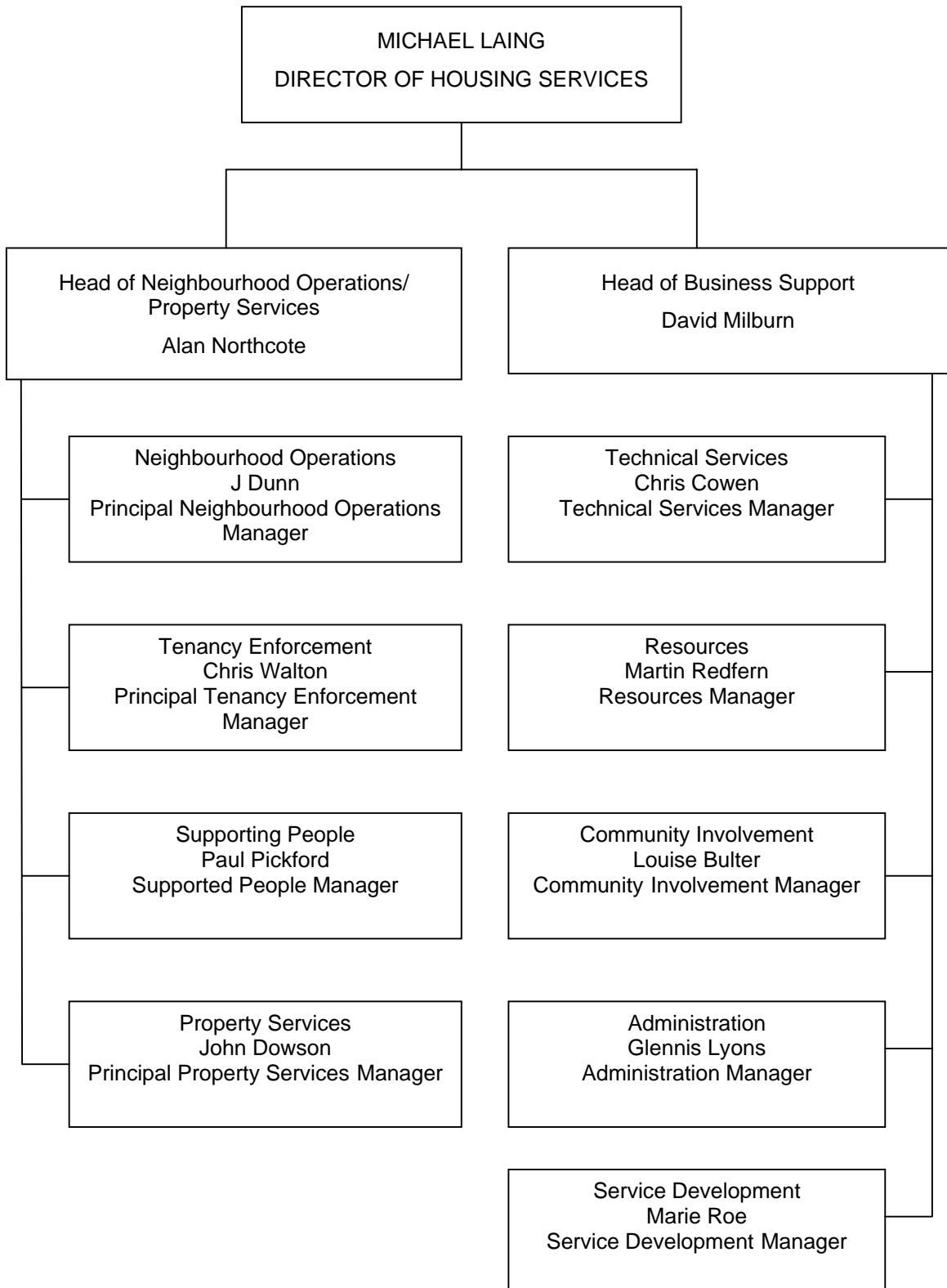
Service Objectives	Service
	Achieving an optimum balance and choice of housing
	Environment
Organisational Objectives	Delivering ever improving community safety and reducing fear of crime
	Delivering an ever improving greener, cleaner and healthier environment
	People and Community
Organisational Objectives	Developing people and communities who can work together, able to say what is needed and make it happen
	Strategy and Plans
	Shaping up the strategy and plans which people feel part of, value and believe will work
Organisational Objectives	Organisation
	Shape up the organisation to have a business like approach to stock management which is inclusive, impacts economically and is valued
	Culture
Organisational Objectives	Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement

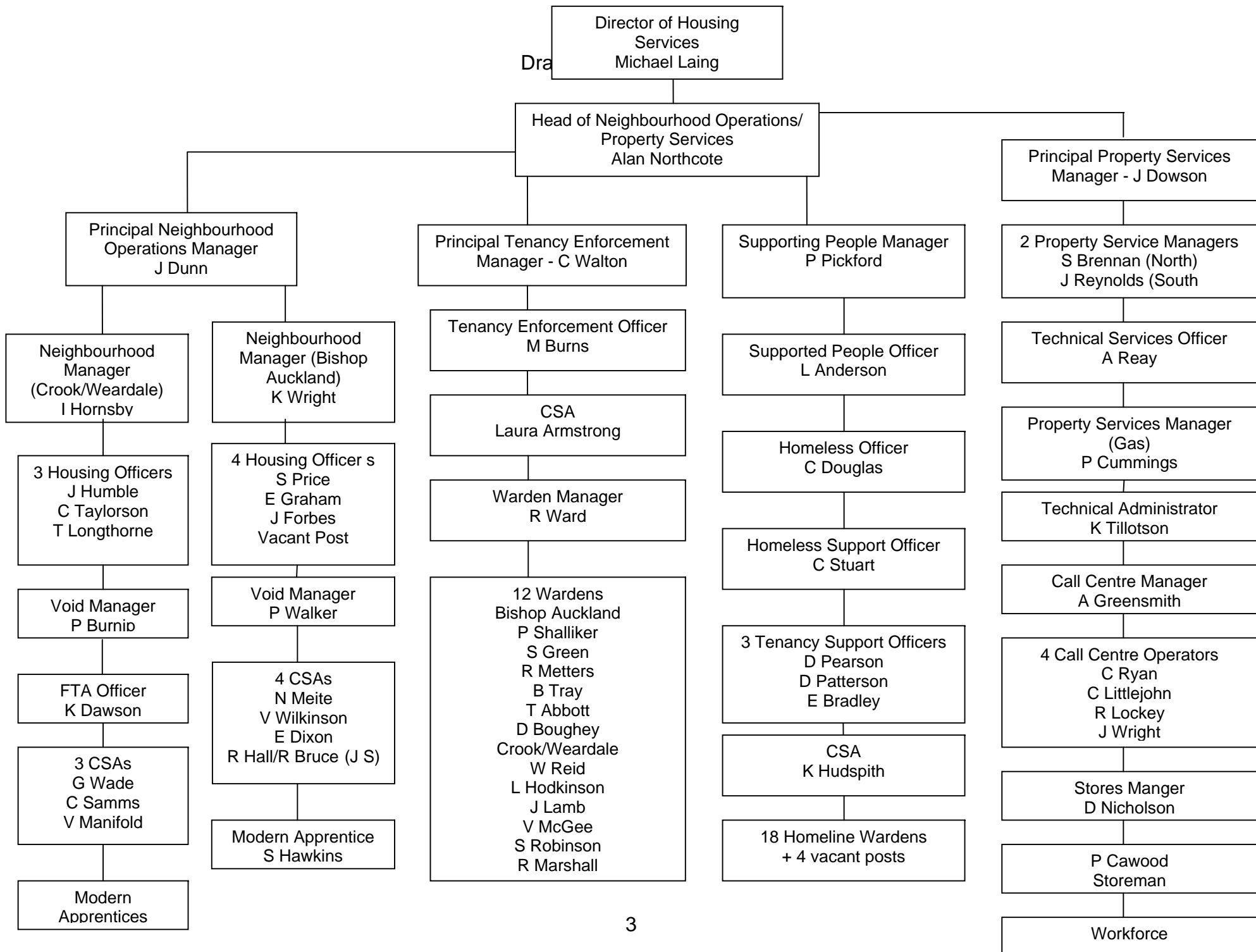
To ensure the adequate provision and management of well-maintained and affordable housing that meets the needs and aspirations of all the community the Department will:

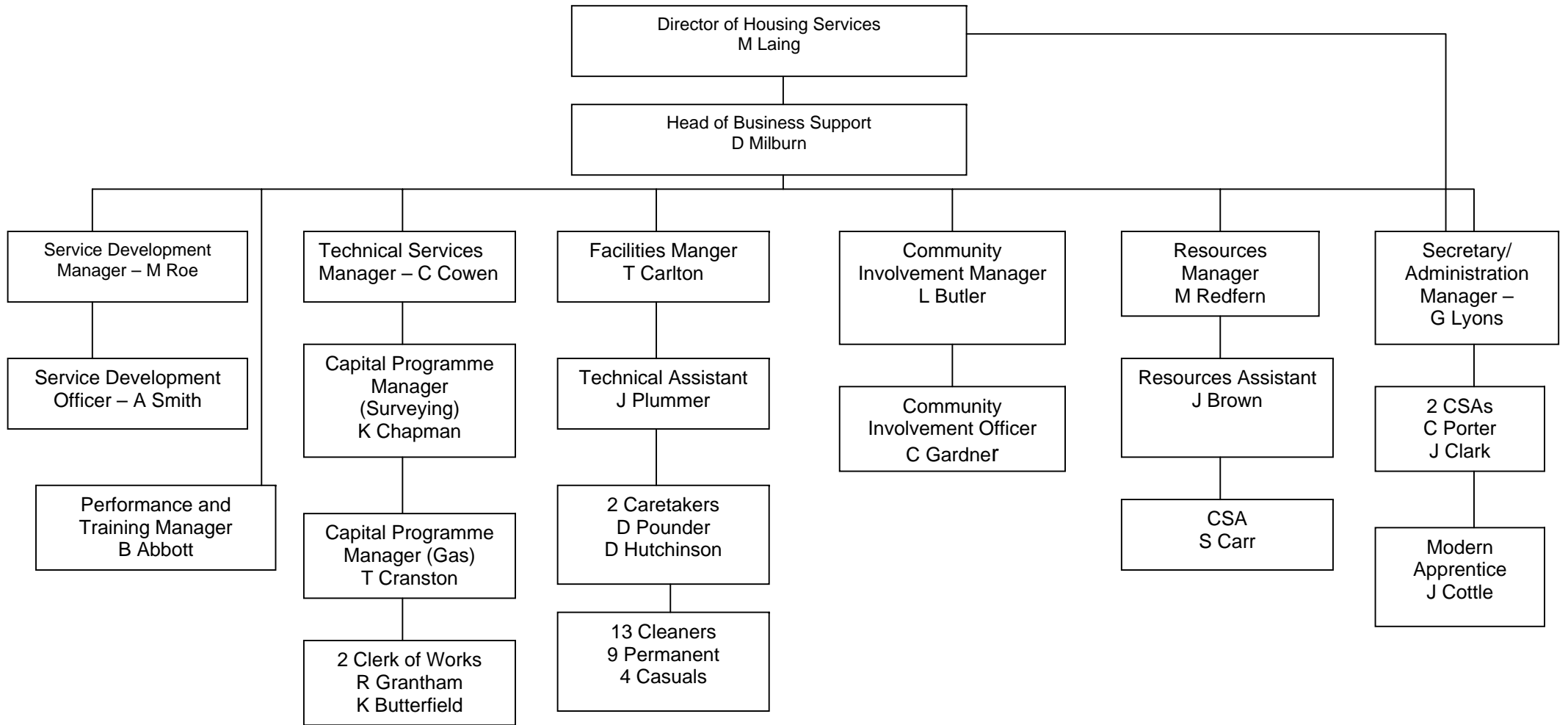
- Deliver the actions in the Action Plan, responding to areas of weakness identified in the ALMO Indicative Inspection undertaken in December 2005
- Develop strategies and policies to meet housing needs and attract investment for the regeneration of housing in Wear Valley.
- Demonstrate Best Value by achieving continuous improvement in the housing service.

- Provide a customer focused service that involves customers in service planning, delivery and monitoring.
- Ensure the long term financial viability of the Council's housing service.
- Ensure the housing service plays and active role in supporting sustainable communities and fosters social inclusion in partnership with other organisations.

In order to achieve these objectives the Department is structured in the following way.







2.2 Activities

The main functions of the department are:

- The development of housing strategies and policies for the Council.
- The management, repair and maintenance of the Council's houses.
- The management of investment into the Council's houses, to ensure they meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- Involving customers in service planning, delivery and monitoring.
- Contributing to the supporting people agenda and working in partnership to foster social inclusion and improve local quality of life.

2.3 Resources

The financial resources needed to deliver the Department's 2006/07 programme of work is presented below.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	(£000)
Supervision & Management	2,739
Repairs & Maintenance	3,174
Debt Charges	1,780
Housing Subsidy	2,812
Bad Debt provision change	100
Total Expenditure	10,605
Rental Income	(10,870)
Interest on balances	(50)
Total Income	(10,920)
Deficit/ (Surplus) to reserve balance	(315)

Capital Programme	Expenditure (£000)
Energy Efficiency	60
Demolition of Housing Stock	250
Asbestos Surveys	85
Major Repairs Allowance (MRA)	2,675
Estate Remodelling	500
Structural Repairs	77
Electrical Upgrades	285
Disabled Adaptations	174
DDA Works to Council Properties	140
Office conversions/repairs	48
Civic Centre Improvements	95
Security Improvements	150
Total	4,539

General Fund (GF)	Expenditure (£000)
Homelessness	68
CCTV	13
Estate wardens	142
Homeline (after SP receipts)	173
Depot & Vehicle nett recovery	(2)
Tenancy Support (after SP receipts)	(9)
Offices	429
Total	814

The Department has a number of major assets to consider these are:

Asset	Estimated Value (£000)	Usage	Services provided by asset	Replacement Strategy
4622 dwellings	110,000	Tenanted	Public rented accommodation	Upgraded by MRA & capital improvements
Other properties	3,191	Tenanted & Operational	Tenanted garages, Offices & Land	Upgraded by capital improvements
Raw material, fuel stock & sundry items	85	£420,000 turnover i.e 5 stock-turns p.a	Property repairs, fuel for vehicles & plant	Reorder based on usage.

3. REVIEW OF 2005/06

3.1 Business Support

During 2005/06 the Business Support section of the Housing Services Department was responsible of overseeing some major strategic and operational improvements; these included –

- Invested in over £3.6m on improvements to over 1200 council houses towards achieving the decent homes standard;
- Continued with the development and implementation of the web based Agresso system;
- Introduced a new system of performance reports agreed with customers;
- Successfully applied for inclusion on Round 5 of the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Programme and submitted Section 27 application;
- Increased the customer involvement membership and obtained excellent responses to test of opinion and election of board members for the ALMO;
- Continued to drive forward on the efficiency agenda; and
- Continued to develop and continually improve the Housing Service as evidenced in the 2005 Best Value Inspection.

3.2 Neighbourhood Operations/Property Services

During 2005/06, Neighbourhood Operations and Property Services continued to develop and improve the services we provide, including:

- Reducing the percentage of works classified as being an emergency
- Improving our rechargeable works performance
- Completing voids repair and improvements more efficiently
- Outsourcing the emergency alarm calls on the Homeline service to a neighbouring authority (Sedgefield Borough Council).
- Taking a lead role in Supporting People VIP on community alarms.
- Improved our processes for rent collection and other debts.
- Developed targeted investment programmes which are linked to Neighbourhood Profiles and the Sustainability Index
- Used purchasing organisation and consortia contracts for the procurement of and the supply of materials and services
- Working with other providers in seeking funding to pilot a Choice-Based Lettings Scheme
- Significantly improving KPI's, especially on repairs, rent collection, void rent loss and relet times
- Continued to maintain the level of gas servicing carried out in customers homes, and extended this to solid fuel appliances
- Improved access to customers, including texting and e-mail reporting of repairs
- Increasing resources within the Tenancy Enforcement Team to deal more effectively with lower-level tenancy breaches
- Mainstreamed and expanded the Street Warden Scheme in the District
- Commissioned the Northern Consortium to help us to develop a customer profile, to inform the design of our void marketing capacity
- Developed the use of the website to assist in housing applications
- Worked with London Boroughs to utilise the Move Up scheme
- Introduced a joint protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds, and a county wide homeless options service

4 PRIORITY ACTIONS 2006/07

4.1 Business Support

During 2006/07 Business Support will continue to provide the central support and development role to the Housing Services Department as well as delivering the housing capital programme. To achieve this we will be directed by a number of key plans and policies, both at a local and national level. These include the Council Plan, Community Plan, ODPM's Sustainable Communities agenda and the 2005/06 ALMO Indicative Inspection of Wear Valley's Housing Services.

To accomplish this task and to assist Dale & Valley Homes in achieving a two star rating Business Support have identified the following priority actions during 2006/07 -

Service – We will:

- Strengthen service user and resident focus by addressing the recommendations of the ALMO Indicative Inspection 2005
- ensure all information we provide is clear, plain-English checked and in the appropriate formats where necessary
- ensure housing issues are promoted within the LSP and Council
- pro-actively influence housing activity to reflect CPA requirements
- lead on the Council's response to sustainable communities

Strategy and Plans – We will:

- strengthen performance management by addressing the recommendations of the ALMO Indicative Inspection 2005
- agree a housing strategy to meet the needs of diverse communities and ensure it is 'fit for purpose'
- ensure the Housing service (and Dale & Valley Homes) meets level 2 in the Equalities Standard
- revise our plans to ensure resources are directed toward priorities to help deliver an effective and efficient service
- develop longer term plans for the management and improvement of the service
- introduce a Landlord Accreditation Scheme

Organisation – We will:

- respond promptly and agree a strategic approach to emerging issues for residents and landlords by addressing the recommendations of the ALMO Indicative Inspection 2005
- agree a procurement strategy to purchase housing services and commodities
- agree a value for money strategy and efficiency statement
- Invest in homes in sustainable areas to achieve the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 and beyond
- Reduce the number of unfit homes and increase energy efficiency to national standards by 2007

Culture – We will:

- strengthen and develop our skills through benchmarking and training
- use customer feedback from complaints and satisfaction surveys to improve our services
- comprehensively report performance against previous trends and agreed actions
- regularly update service improvement plans to take into account outcomes for residents

4.2 Neighbourhood Operations/Property Services

Neighbourhood Operations/Property services will assist Dale & Valley Homes in achieving a two star rating. To achieve this we will be directed by a number of key plans and policies, both at a local and national level. These include the Council Plan, Community Plan, ODPM's Sustainable Communities agenda and the 2005/06 ALMO Indicative Inspection of Wear Valley's Housing Services.

Neighbourhood Operations/Property Services have identified the following priority actions during 2006/07 -

Crime - We will:

- respond to low level anti-social behaviour cases effectively
- respond appropriately to hate crime
- robustly enforce the tenancy agreement to tackle anti-social behaviour
- deliver services that reduce house burglary and contribute to a reduction in the fear of crime

Environment – We will:

- develop an estate inspection regime that improves the neighbourhood environment and improves satisfaction among our tenants

Organisation – We will:

- implement an Incentive Scheme to encourage residents to pay off arrears, pay by direct debit and abide by the terms of the tenancy agreement
- improve the Planned:Responsive repair ratio

Culture – We will:

- introduce a residents handbook
- profile residents needs and expectation to inform service design
- provide a comprehensive Lettable Standard
- involve hard to reach groups ensuring they have equal access to services
- visit new residents to discuss settling in issues
- develop a website for supporting people, tenancy support and interactive applications for housing

5. PARTNERSHIP PROFILE

The Council recognises that it cannot achieve its objectives in isolation and has developed the support of a range of partnerships with all sections of the community to achieve the best possible services for the District.

The Housing Services Department in particular works closely with a wide range of partners and continues to proactively develop closer links with the community, through the Customer Panel, Residents Associations and others. Some of our main partners are listed below.

Name of Partnership	Purpose	Monitoring Arrangements
Wear Valley Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Housing Thematic Group	To tackle issues facing Wear Valley in a coherent, joined up way and implement actions to support the delivery of the decent homes floortargets	Subject to monitoring by Government Office North East (GONE)
Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group	To reduce the number of incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour in Wear Valley	Monitoring action plan to reduce ASB

Name of Partnership	Purpose	Monitoring Arrangements
Hate Crime Group	Reduce the impact of hate crime	Monitoring action plan and reduction target
Domestic Violence Forum	Reduce the number of repeat victims of domestic violence	Monitoring action plan and reduction target
10 Residents Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodhouse Close • Henknowle • Sunnybrow • Stanley Way • South Church • Wolsingham • Stanhope • St. Helens • Dene Valley • Tottenham & Leeholme 	To help improve the life of residents living in and around these areas	Monthly / Bi-monthly meetings
Customer Panel	To promote customer involvement in the service	Monthly meetings
Co. Durham Gypsy & Traveller Forum	Raise awareness of the activities and work taking place with this community throughout Co. Durham	Monthly meetings
Community development Workers Forum	To network, update and share ideas with those working in a community development capacity within Wear Valley	Bi-monthly meetings
Bishop Auckland College	Help capacity build the residents within Wear Valley through the provision of training courses	Regular training meetings prior to and post establishment of training programmes
North East Tenant Participation Workers Network	To network, update and share ideas with those working in a Tenant Participation capacity within Wear Valley	Every 2 – 3 months
Wear & Tees Community Partnership	Reduce crime and disorder in Wear Valley	Quarterly performance report on crime statistics
Substance Misuse Task Group	Reduce substance misuse and related crime	Performance monitoring
Bishop Auckland Task Group	Address local problems with crime and disorder	Monitor action plan
ASB Panel	Consider intervention, enforcement relating to individual perpetrators of ASB	None
Joint procurement pilot programme with	Develop best practice for procurement prior to	Regular Project Board Meetings, Monthly

Name of Partnership	Purpose	Monitoring Arrangements
Teesdale District Council	implementing new procurement practices in both Councils	Project Highlight Report

Part of our work for the Council and local people is to support the Council's consultation activities to ensure that we listen to and take account of people's needs and wishes. Last year we consulted people on the following issues:

Subject	Who was consulted	Key findings	Action taken and links to the Service Plan
Repairs and Maintenance	Approximately 300 customers per month	Satisfaction levels of approx 85%. A group of officers has been established to examine results and drive service improvement	Appointment system closely monitored. Repair service has improved steadily. Helps us to retain our customers and ensure sustainable communities
New Tenancies	Approximately 90 new customers every two months	Satisfaction levels have improved to about 71%.	A more thorough cleaning service has been established. We also plan to install approx. 600 new bathrooms and 1500 new kitchens in our properties. Again this will help us to retain our customer base.
ALMO An extensive consultation process was undertaken using a number of methods	Customers, Staff and Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the setting up of an ALMO • Training would be required • Name agreed • Communication was vital at all stages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training programme for Board Members has been developed. • Name of ALMO (Dale & Valley Homes) agreed • TUPE consultations taking place • Risk Assessment undertaken • Customer Compact training delivered • Customer Panel ALMO Steering Group

Subject	Who was consulted	Key findings	Action taken and links to the Service Plan
			established <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates in Wear Valley Housing Matters
Hard to Reach groups (every 6-8 weeks)	Surestart Gypsy and traveller communities	Understanding of services provided by housing was limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness has been raised • A number of residents have been housed • Active engagement with hard to reach groups
BME Survey	Current BME customers	Cases of racial harassment do exist, however overall, BME satisfaction with the Housing Service is good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile of customers and neighbourhoods to be undertaken • Report on findings prepared • Focus Groups to be held with BME customers
Equality and Diversity Training	Staff	Different ideas of equality and diversity	Training successfully delivered to staff
Service Standards	Customers and staff	Standards need revising to reflect current legislation and customer needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service standards updated with full consultation. • To be promoted through Wear Valley Housing Matters
Repairs and Maintenance Focus Group	Customers and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council workmen preferred • Some complaints not being answered • Unable to contact office staff • Higher electrical sockets for disabled tenants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased customer involvement in the repairs service • Workers are becoming multi-skilled (CSCS Cards) • Re-introduction of satisfaction cards • Freephone and texting service available

Subject	Who was consulted	Key findings	Action taken and links to the Service Plan
Bishop Auckland Housing Exhibition	Customer Panel Representatives	Knowledge of appliances and services available to tenants was limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign existing literature • Improve promotional material • Investigate options for Customers to get involved
Wolsingham Show	Wear Valley Citizens	Over 600 people visited the Housing exhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a valuable forum for reaching citizens in the Dales • To be undertaken on an annual basis • Increased number of customers on Citizen Involvement database
Anti-Social Behaviour Focus Group	Customers, Citizens and staff	This is still an area for concern for many residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor and tackle Anti-Social Behaviour • Increase information to be given to customers
Value for Money Focus Group	Customers and staff	Value for Money is still an area with limited understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a Value for Money Database ▪ Improved awareness for customers and staff through improved reporting via Wear Valley Housing Matters
Capital Programme Focus Group Capital Programme Focus Group	Customers and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers were overall satisfied with the work undertaken. • There was confusion over 'Capital Works 	Clarification needed between the Capital Works programme and Major Repairs via publications and the provision of extra information

Subject	Who was consulted	Key findings	Action taken and links to the Service Plan
(cont)		Programme' and work carried out by the maintenance team.	
Lewisham Focus Group	Re-located customers, Lewisham staff and Wear Valley staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lettable Standard needs revising There were some sign-up issues 	Revise Lettable Standard and review existing sign-up process
Neighbourhood Wardens Survey	Tenants in Warden Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63.61% found the Wardens a helpful service Fear of Crime is falling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise profile of Wardens Continue to undertake regular surveys

6. CUSTOMERS

6.1 How we engage with our customers

Residents can meet with other residents from their area to discuss the issues that matter to them, they have the opportunity to represent their area as part of Wear Valley Customer Panel. Residents Associations also pass information from the Council to customers in their area via Housing Officers and other Housing staff regularly attending meetings.

Customer Panel

The Customer Panel consists of Residents Association and individual customer representatives who meet with Housing Services Department Staff once a month to discuss policy and strategic issues.

Focus Groups

Focus Groups are held on a regular basis (6 were held during 2005). The focus groups are held to discuss particular elements of the service such as repairs and maintenance, allocations and lettings and anti-social behaviour etc. Customers make recommendations about how to improve the services.

Public Meetings

Public meetings are held to discuss a particular issue or concern, e.g. setting up a tenants group, modernisation schemes etc.

Mystery Customer Scheme	<p>A Mystery Customer scheme was launched in October 2005. The scheme offers customers the chance to 'Mystery Shop' our Housing service via a number of methods such as visits to the office, by telephone, letter or e-mail. An incentive scheme is also included which offers customers a £5 gift voucher per 5 'Mystery Shops'. A Mystery Customer Working Group has been established which is made up of Housing Staff and customers.</p>
Open Days and Exhibitions	<p>Open Days and exhibitions are often held locally and give customers the opportunity to talk with representatives of the Housing Department and other local organisations. The Housing Department holds yearly housing exhibitions at Bishop Auckland and Wolsingham.</p>
Newsletters	<p>A newsletter containing information about the Housing Service, staff and tenants is produced 6 monthly (Wear Valley Housing Matters) which includes customer competitions and a letters page.</p>
Surveys	<p>Customer Satisfaction Surveys are carried out every quarter and the results fed back to Housing Services Committee and Departmental Management Team.</p>
Training Programmes	<p>A customer training programme is established yearly for all customers. The courses vary from food hygiene and health and safety to fundraising and child protection. A Customer Panel Training-Sub group have their input into the development of the yearly programmes.</p>
Customer Panel Annual Tour	<p>The Customer Panel holds annual 'tours' of the District handing out 'goodie bags' of gifts and information. Staff from Benefits and the Housing Department also travel on the tour bus to engage with the local residents by providing information and advice.</p>
Involvement Mechanism	<p>All the methods of involvement outlined are contained on an Involvement Mechanism. Customers can choose their preferred method of involvement and are then entered onto the Community Involvement Database. These customers are contacted as and when their preferred method of involvement takes place. The Involvement Mechanism is published in Wear Valley Housing Matters and is sent out with quarterly surveys.</p>

**Leaflets
Website
Freephone**

The Housing Services Department provides information to its customers using a number of formats. A wide range of leaflets has been produced and these are available in hard copy or through the website. The website provides comprehensive information on the Housing Services Department and this is due to be updated in the near future. A freephone has been provided for reporting housing repairs.

**Wear Valley
Housing Customers
Compact and Action
Plan**

The Wear Valley Customers Compact is written jointly by members of the Customer Panel and Council officers, in full consultation with staff, councillors and residents associations. The Compact sets out clear guidelines on how we will work with all our customers in Wear Valley, either individually or collectively. It sets standards that we will keep to on information, consultation, participation, resources and training for residents. The Compact is monitored regularly by the Compact Review Team that is made up of customers, Councillors and Housing staff. The Action Plan, which accompanies the Compact, outlines the methods of involvement which the Community Involvement Team will be developing over the coming year.

6.2 Current views of customers and citizens

At present we collect customer satisfaction information regarding our repairs and maintenance service, our service to new tenants, capital works and Street Wardens.

The repair service shows a satisfaction level of almost 85%. This has improved from 76% in 2002. The introduction of an appointment system, together with more flexible working arrangements have helped towards this.

Satisfaction with our service to new tenants has improved from 64% in 2003 to 72% today. As a result of customer feedback, we have improved our cleaning service to empty properties and are expanding the information we give to applicants whilst they are on the waiting list.

Satisfaction with the capital works programme currently stands at 91%. It is anticipated that with improved communication and opportunities for customer participation this can be higher.

Crime in County Durham is the one of the lowest in the country however 'Fear of Crime' is one of the largest. Fear of crime in the wardens' area has reduced from 77.69% in June 2002 to 58.37% in September 2005. Overall the number of fires in warden patrolled areas has reduced dramatically.

We are currently in the process of procuring an upgraded system that will enable us to survey customers regarding other service areas. This will allow

us to implement improvements on a much wider basis. We will also become actively involved in the development of a Corporate Consultation Group to help engage the citizens of Wear Valley.

6.3 Consultation and engagement activities planned for 2006/07

In addition to corporate engagement activities, which the Housing service will support and play an active role in, a number of specific activities have been planned for the Housing service. They are:

- Continuation of Mystery Customer Scheme
- 6 additional Focus Groups
- Production of another 4 Wear Valley Housing Matters newsletters
- The development of a Young People Housing Initiative
- Develop a Customer Editorial Panel for newsletters/other customer documents
- Training for staff, ALMO Board and Councillors on Community Involvement
- Develop a new Customer Compact
- Develop a new Community Involvement strategy
- Develop a new Equality and Diversity strategy
- Set up a Customers Resource Library
- Development of a Community Involvement DVD
- Neighbourhood Warden survey
- Repairs and Maintenance Satisfaction Survey
- New tenancies survey
- Housing tenants satisfaction survey

7. INSPECTION RESULTS

In 2001 the service was scored as a no star, poor service with unlikely prospects for improvement. The most recent inspection, December 2005 showed the service to be fair, one star, with promising prospects for improvement. Actions plans were developed to address the weaknesses found within the service and a huge amount of work has been undertaken to get to this point but there is still a lot more still to do.

The Audit Commission scored the service as *'fair'* because it has a number of positive features.

- Customers can access services in a range of convenient ways and service standards have been agreed with residents, who are involved in monitoring their delivery.
- Action is being taken to respond to the needs of diverse communities, including working with hidden groups such as travellers, making offices DDA compliant for people with disabilities, and providing support to people who are victims of domestic violence and have crime.
- Stock condition has been effectively assessed and this data has been used to inform property improvements to meet the decent homes standard, and residents have been involved in agreeing the specification of works and contractor appointment.
- There is an effective system in place to provide precise 15 minute appointments to residents for responsive repairs.

- Gas servicing is being carried out on time, and where access issues have occurred prompt action is being taken to resolve these, including through legal action.
- There are a variety of convenient ways for residents to pay their rent and comprehensive debt advice is available.
- Residents can register their preferred method of being involved in the activities of the Council, and this has been used to consult residents about services.
- Tenancy enforcement has been prioritised, resulting in successful legal action against perpetrators and the street warden service has been effective at reducing crime and the fear of crime; grounds maintenance is to a high standard and this has a positive effect on the appearance of estates.
- Modern procurement methods have been used to secure value for money through partnering arrangements and there is joint working through consortia to maximise purchasing power.

However, they identified a number of weaknesses including the following.

- The Council cannot demonstrate whether services are accessible to all residents, and whether there are any barriers for hard-to-reach groups, including residents living in rural areas.
- Customer satisfaction results are not being analysed to identify service improvements and complaints handling is poor.
- Resident requirements for information to be available in different formats and languages, to make it accessible, have not been assessed.
- Targets for lettings and staff levels have not been established to ensure they are representative of the local community.
- The level of responsive repairs, compared to planned repairs, is high and options to address this have not been explored.
- The lettable standard is only basic and provides insufficient information to residents on the standard of accommodation that should be available.
- Estate walkabouts are not always taking place, as agreed, in order to involve residents in identifying priorities for the area where they live, based on local knowledge.
- The management of low level anti-social behaviour cases is unsatisfactory, since cases are not always being dealt with on time or to an appropriate standard.
- There has only been a limited assessment of housing service delivery costs, so the Council has been unable to compare with other providers to assess value for money.

The service is considered to have '*promising prospects for improvement*' because of the following.

- There is a track record of improving performance, using performance indicators for a range of housing service areas.
- Most recommendations from previous inspections have been implemented.
- Investment needs have been assessed and used to inform stock options.
- There are effective business planning arrangements to agree priorities and targets.
- Plans are comprehensive and SMART.

- Leadership is effective and this has resulted in difficult decisions being made about the housing stock and staffing structures.
- There is learning from other providers through joint working.
- Training programmes are in place to address skills gaps and respond to emerging issues.
- Modern procurement methods are used to make efficiency gains.
- The Council takes advantage of external investment opportunities.
- There is evidence of savings being made through new ways of working.

However, the audit commission identified the following barriers to improvement.

- Housing services has not agreed its approach for procurement, and for achieving efficiencies and value for money.
- Plans are not always updated to assess progress and outcomes for residents.
- Strategies for some services are under-developed or absent, such as diversity and access.
- Customer complaints are not responded to effectively and they are not being used to identify service improvements required.
- Some key recommendations from the previous inspection of repairs and maintenance have not been delivered.
- Performance monitoring does not include sufficient information on previous performance to assess the direction of travel, and how this information is used to identify service improvements is unclear.

The inspection team made a number of recommendations which have been incorporated into the action plan in Section 13.

The expected benefits of these recommendations are that the service will:

- become more focussed on its customers, including the minority groups, their needs and responding to them at a local level;
- proactively monitor performance and base service improvements on customer feedback;
- have clear commitment to the development and delivery of housing services based on legislation, good practice and within the Council's guidelines and
- deliver all our services efficiently, effectively with no loss in quality.

Above all else by delivering the action plan we will have implemented the Housing Inspectors recommendations. This will vastly improve our prospects of getting 2 stars in October 2006. Getting 2 stars gives us access to the £26 million needed to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

All of our work in social housing is aimed towards this. It is a key corporate target. It will improve the quality of life for our customers.

The Council has established a strong and independent ALMO in Dale and Valley Homes. We want it to succeed. We will support it in every way we can.

The Council's performance is excellent in many areas. Housing finances are stable and capital is used wisely and well. By following the Housing

Inspectors advice in value for money, equalities and customer access the Council is confident Dale and Valley Homes will achieve 2 stars.

8. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TARGETS

The Housing Services Department collects performance information on many aspects of the service. Some measures are imposed upon us by Central Government, Best Value Performance Indicators. These reflect the local and national priorities for improving services and outcomes for citizens. Targets are set for the next three years, which should be realistic yet stretching.

A summary of the Best Value Performance Indicators we are responsible for can be found on the following pages.

8. Housing Department Best Value Performance Indicators

PI No.	HOUSING	Performance				6 month review 2005/06	Future Targets		
		2001/2002	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05		2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
63	Energy Efficiency – the average SAP rating of local authority owned dwellings	56	58	60.1	62.5	62.5	63	64	65
66a	Local authority rent collection and arrears: proportion of rent collected	95	96.8	96.2	97.1	96.8	98.5	98.8	99
66b	No of LA tenants with more than seven weeks of rent arrears as a % of the total number of council tenants				New indicator	3.66			
66c	% of LA tenants in arrears who have had Notices Seeking Possession served				New indicator	2.53			
66d	% of LA tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears				New indicator	0.07			
74a	Satisfaction of tenants of council housing with overall service provided by their landlord	-	69	71.7	72	N/a	74.4	77	80
74b	Satisfaction of ethnic minority tenants (excluding white minority) with the overall service provided by their landlord				-	N/a	-		
74c	Satisfaction of non-ethnic minority LA tenants with the overall service provided by their landlord				-	N/a	-		

Draft v4 - February 2006

PI No.	HOUSING	Performance				6 month update	Future Targets		
		2001/2002	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
75a	Satisfaction of tenants of council housing with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord		-	55.2	55	N/a	57.5	60	62.5
75b	Satisfaction of ethnic minority council housing tenants (excluding white minority) with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord				-	N/a			
75c	Satisfaction of non-ethnic minority council housing tenants with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord				-	N/a			
156	Percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people	4.8	4.2	10	30	36	40	50	60
164	Does the authority follow the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of practice in rented housing?	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
183a	The average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Draft v4 - February 2006

PI No.	HOUSING	Performance				6 month update	Future Targets		
		2001/2002	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
183b	The average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
184a	The proportion of LA homes which were non-decent at the beginning of the year	-	42	41.9	41.5	40	26	21	19
184b	The % change in proportion of non-decent LA homes in the year	-	21.4	0.23	6.4	6.4	16	19	21
185	% of responsive (but not emergency) repairs during the year for which the authority both made and kept an appointment	-	64	91.9	92.1	92.8	93.5	94	94.5
202	The number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the local authority			-	0	2	0	0	0
203	The % change in the average number of families, which include dependent children or a pregnant women, placed in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous year			-	0	-46.81	0	0	0
211a	The proportion of planned repairs and maintenance expenditure compared to responsive maintenance expenditure on HRA dwellings				New indicator	54			

Draft v4 - February 2006

PI No.	HOUSING	Performance				6 month Update	Future Targets		
		2001/2002	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
211b	Proportion of expenditure on emergency and urgent repairs compared to non-urgent repairs expenditure on HRA dwellings				New indicator	4			
212	Average time taken to re-let local authority dwellings	93	72.1	61.5	35.1	39	26	20	18
213	Number of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice service(s) and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation				New indicator				
214	Proportion of households accepted as statutorily homeless who were accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last two years				New indicator				

9. CORPORATE MAPPING

The Housing Services Department will support the Council's efforts to deliver the Council's corporate objectives, including:

- Set up and launch the Dale and Valley Homes Housing Association;
- deliver our contribution to the Council Plan;
- involve all our customers, including the hard to reach groups;
- work in partnership and;
- respond to external inspections and improve our performance.

The Department has been assigned the lead role on several specific Council Plan priorities. The key tasks are outlined below.

Environment priorities	4b	Review Bishop Auckland Town Centre Strategy
	4f	Establish Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to manage Council's Housing Stock and secure the investment necessary to meet the Decent Homes Standard
	4h	Coalfields Housing Study Proposals
	4j	Revise Local Action 21 Strategy
Health priorities	6b	Reduce the number of unfit homes and increase energy efficiency to national standards by 2007
	6g	Invest in the prevention of homelessness to meet the national good practice standard by 2007
Capacity to deliver our objectives	7a	Promote Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion in Wear Valley
	7d	Challenging ourselves

A large amount of work undertaken in the Housing Services Department contributes to all The Council Plan objectives specifically:

Population – The Council will use its statutory powers, resources and influence to help create a balanced, vibrant and growing population across the whole of Wear Valley and

Crime – The Council will design its services to increase community safety and crime prevention and work closely with key partners to improve crime reduction.

In addition to these actions and, in response to the initial assessment of the Housing Service in preparation for the ALMO, a departmental specific action plan has been developed and can be found in Section 13.

10. STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

10.1 PEST Analysis – reviews the external environment that may impact on the provision of the service.

Political

Issue	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in Government Policy • Housing Market Assessment • Regional Spatial Strategy • Northern Way • Local Government Re-Organisation • ALMO, Stock options • Best Value Review • Audit Commission • Inspections - Must achieve 2* • Decent Homes Standard • Gershon efficiency savings • Changes in Council Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep up to date with legislation • Implement inspection recommendations • Attend appropriate training/seminars/benchmarking forums • Utilise Service Development Fund to implement new ways of working • Undertake Peer inspection • Correct management of Capital Programme • Review existing practices • Improve Procurement • Ensure where applicable Wear Valley District Council have input to Consultation Documents

Economic

Issue	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gershon efficiency savings • ALMO Investment • Changes in housing market • Changes in interest rates • Northern Way • Unemployment rate (rise/fall) • Skills shortages • Changes in Right to Buy legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep up to date with legislation • Develop a marketing strategy • Develop existing staff skills • Recruit and retain appropriately skilled staff • Develop partnership working and share services with other authorities • Improve Procurement • Ensure where applicable Wear Valley District Council have input to Consultation Documents

Sociological

Issue	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to services • Social exclusion • Hard to reach groups • Equality and Diversity • Rural issues • Deprivation • Fear of Crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Equalities and Diversity Strategy • Use Decent Homes Standard to regenerate areas • Improve customer access • Investigate affordable housing • Profile Customers and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing population • Poor educational attainment in the District 	<p>neighbourhood and change services to reflect findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on actions in the Community and Council Plan
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Technical

Issue	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-government agenda • New communication technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep up to date with technology advances and legislative requirements

10.2 SWOT Analysis – review of the internal environment which may impact on service delivery

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong customer focus • Focus on customer delivery • Clear Capital Investment Plan • Stable and committed workforce • Strong local agenda for change supported by wide involvement • Incremental improvement in the performance of the housing service • Improved working relationships, underpinned by a 'culture of performance' • Commitment to service • Proven track record showing improvement • Clear focus on the way forward • Different skills of ALMO board members
Actions to optimise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Customer Profiling and change services accordingly • Appoint Access and Customer Care Manager • Provide support for ALMO board members and all staff • Further improve current working practices • Continue to monitor performance on a regular basis • Strengthen links between service planning, performance management systems and investment programmes to make the best use of resources

Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of change • Patchy equalities understanding • Performance management • Project planning • Housing Thematic Group for LSP • Value for money issues • Lack of adequate strategy documents • Lack of capacity and skills at 3rd/4th tier officers

Actions to improve

- Improve communication to assist in the change process and give clear information to all
- Direct efficiency savings into the development of new services that reflect the needs of the tenants and service users
- Develop strategy documents and review annually
- Raise the profile of the Housing Thematic Group, investigate joint arrangements with Teesdale District Council
- Improve the PDP process
- Develop existing staff to improve existing skills
- Strengthen links between planning and performance management

Opportunities

- Increased efficiency in service delivery
- Customer involvement at a deeper level
- Community Involvement Review
- Need to increase and build morale, through the recognition of success
- Strengthen aspirations
- Improve management and tenant relationships
- Improve effectiveness of medium and long term planning
- Develop appropriate strategy documents
- Improve skills of existing staff
- Appoint highly skilled staff under ALMO
- New governance arrangements of ALMO board
- Access to ALMO funding – achieving 2* score at inspection
- Strengthen working relationships between the staff
- Develop comprehensive Service Level Agreements
- Improved procurement practices
- Increased flexibility's

Actions

- Ensure service standards are robust
- Act on findings of Community Involvement Review
- Develop clear and easy monitoring arrangements for the effective and efficient delivery of services
- Become more pro-active in working practices, policy development and citizen engagement
- Appoint appropriately skilled staff to ALMO
- Undertake capacity building of staff, Board members and customers
- Develop a comprehensive training and development programme
- Focus on meeting the Decent Homes Standard
- Develop a database to monitor efficiency savings
- Promote choice and actively involve all who wish to be involved in service development
- Provide and promote an efficient, effective, accessible and inclusive housing service

Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to achieve 2* • Not having clear 'arms length' service • Unable to meet political agenda • Failure to retain staff • Staff motivation • New governance arrangements of ALMO board • No appointments made for senior posts within ALMO • Lack of clear ALMO structure • Council Re-structure
Actions to minimise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement robust reporting and monitoring mechanisms • Clarify ALMO structure as soon as possible • Start recruitment process for suitably qualified staff as soon as possible • Involve staff as much as possible in the transition process • Ensure governance arrangements are adequate and robust • Improve partnership working with other authorities, the private sector and the public • Involve the Unions to ensure processes, policies and new working procedures are acceptable • Feed into council restructure through unions

10.3 Risk Management Analysis

The Housing service is committed to risk management analysis. A high level risk management analysis is set out below.

TYPE OF RISK	RISKS TO THE DEPARTMENT	ACTIONS TO MINIMISE
Political	See preceding PEST analysis	
Economic		
Social		
Technological		
Managerial/ Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify capacity issues and formulate strategy to ensure current high standard are maintained
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People moving on (with key skills) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop team-based, outcome focussed working methods facilitating understand of each other's roles, and disseminate good practice to other departments
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failed growth bids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop bids that effectively demonstrate potential benefits of proposed activity and reflect the needs of the customers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious over/underspend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strong working practices that ensure projects and spend are monitored regularly

TYPE OF RISK	RISKS TO THE DEPARTMENT	ACTIONS TO MINIMISE
Legal Partnership/ Contractual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships with LSP theme groups, and the wider voluntary and community sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on existing good practice of partnership and joint working to achieve corporate objectives Improve collaboration and forge further links with voluntary and community sector Continue to develop citizen engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breaches of funding regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure funding regulations are understood and financial management regularly reviewed
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical environment (lifts etc) Accidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and adopt outstanding health and safety policies Adhere to policy and ensure accidents are reported and investigated
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to ensure that all staff conduct activities in a manner that considers and accommodates the needs of working colleagues
Legislative/ Regulatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FOIA Data Protection/Human Rights Act etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively communicate legislative requirements throughout departments through briefings and training (e.g. FOI briefings)
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of neighbourhood appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with investment in housing stock and undertake estate inspections
Competitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ALMO Best Value Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure actions are monitored and value for money can be evidenced
Customer/ citizen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reputation risk Equality and access to all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a marketing strategy and improve existing methods of communication Remove all barriers for hard to reach groups and ethnic minorities

A more detailed risk register has been developed to support this service plan and can be found at Annex A.

11 BUDGET INFORMATION

In addition to those resources shown in section 2.3 the following will apply.

11.1 Revenue Growth Bids

Title	Additional Growth (£000)	Comment
Establishing the ALMO	50	This is additional to the existing £100,000 in the budget. It will help the ALMO Board to recruit and fund the Officer Head of the ALMO and Company Secretary.

Title	Additional Growth (£000)	Comment
Tenancy Enforcement Officers	61	To fund 2 additional officers The additional posts could qualify for Safer Stronger Communities Funding.
Value for Money Manager (50% contribution)	17	To fund a corporate post focusing on the twin issues of procurement and value for money raised during the housing inspection
Peer Review Inspection	10	To pay for consultancy to check progress against Inspection recommendations in advance of re-inspection.
Diagnostic Repairs Reporting Software	20	To purchase web based software to assist in repairs diagnosis. This would contribute towards best practice in repairs reporting
Additional Rent Statement and consultation	6	To cover additional postage costs
Lettable Standards Improvements	8	To respond to observations made by inspectors about the standard of decoration of void properties
Equalities and Diversity (Customer Involvement)	7	Additional resources to allow more effective engagement with hard to reach groups
Call Centre Technology	5	To address issues raised in the inspection report
Tenant Incentive Scheme	3	To encourage tenants to maintain a clear rent account and increase the proportion opting to pay by direct debit
Access and Customer Care Manager	30	To address and improve our access and customer care issues
Service Innovation Fund	77	To create a fund to deliver small scale service innovations which arise in year in response to customer need, new legislation or best practice
HRA share of additional corporate posts	16	HRA contribution towards posts of Diversity and Equality Manager, Customer Care Manager and Safer Communities Manager
Total	310	

11.2 Revenue Savings Bids

Title	Saving (£000)	Comment
HRA Common Rooms	10	Closure and disposal of surplus facilities
HRA Property Services	70	To meet Gershon Efficiency target of 2.5%
Council House Security Market Testing	40	Improved procurement, better estate management and demolition procedures
Car Leasing	2.5	Car leasing scheme has ceased
Community Involvement Publications	2.5	Reduction in budget required
Tenancy Enforcement Office Equipment	1.5	Reduction in budget required
Total	126.5	

11.3 Capital Bids

Title	(£000)	Comment
Structural repairs	77	
Electrical upgrades	285	
Disabled adaptations	174	
Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Office	29	Property improvement
83 Proudfoot Drive	14	Property conversion to offices
Total	579	

12 MONITORING

This section identifies the monitoring and reporting procedures for the Department's Service Plan;

12.1 Best Value Performance Indicators

The Department has responsibility for 23 Best Value Performance indicators that are monitored and reported in accordance with our Performance Management Framework.

They are monitored on a six monthly frequency and reported to Management Team and Policy and Strategic Development Committee. In addition a number of indicators are reported monthly to Departmental Management Team.

They are also presented in the Council's Best Value Performance Plan, which provides comparisons with our targets and national performance data.

12.2 The Action Plan

The action plan presented in this Service Plan will be cascaded down throughout the Department and individual work plans, where appropriate. These will be regularly reviewed on a quarterly basis and reported at the Departmental Management Team and Section meetings.

12.3 Staff Development

Individual staff development and training needs are identified through the annual Personal Development Planning process.

HOUSING SERVICES DEPARTMENT

ACTION PLAN

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	1. SERVICE: Achieving an optimum balance and choice of housing				
PRIORITY	Achieving an optimum balance and choice of housing				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report / Self Assessment / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
1.1 We will progress a county-wide bid to the regional fund for Choice Based Lettings.	Approval of bid.	Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager	Neighbourhood Managers £500.00 Countywide Steering Group	Sept 2006	Inspection Report –Paragraph 206 Self-assessment – Allocations and Lettings Council Plan 1a
1.2 We will provide detailed information to applicants on the waiting list to enable prospects of an offer to be assessed.	Detailed, clear, plain-english checked information is available for applicants and in appropriate formats.	Neighbourhood Managers	Neighbourhood Operations Team	May 2006	Inspection Report –Paragraph 201 Council Plan 1a
1.3 We will expand the Move UK Scheme	Increased numbers of offers under the scheme.	Neighbourhood Managers		May 2006	Self assessment – Allocations and Lettings Council Plan 1a
1.4 We will work with the Regeneration Department on the implementation of the English Partnerships coalfield housing studies	Secure funding from NEHB Number of actions in the studies implemented within timescale	Director of Housing	£300,00 SHIP 1	2010	Council Plan 4h

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	1. SERVICE: Achieving an optimum balance and choice of housing				
PRIORITY	Position housing within sustainable communities				
Why are we doing this	Council Plan / KSA Report May 2005				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
1.5 We will integrate strategic housing activities within the Council's revised structure	Creation of an integrated team	Director of Housing Services	Mainstream resources Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	June 2006	Council Plan 7m
1.6 We will ensure housing issues are promoted within the LSP and Council	Development of housing as a regeneration tool in the Council and Community Plan Number of Committee reports produced Raising the Housing Thematic Group profile	Service Development Manager	Mainstream resources Housing Thematic Group	April 2007	Council Plan 7m
1.7 We will take part in the Regeneration Best Value Review	Housing issues are appropriately represented Good score on Best Value Review of Regeneration	Director of Housing Services	Best Value Review Team	October 2006	Council Plan 7m
1.8 We will pro-actively influence housing activity to reflect CPA requirements	Improved CPA score	Director of Housing Services	Management Support Unit	April 2007	Council Plan 7o
1.9 Lead on the Council's response to the Sustainable Communities	No of cross authority working groups/meetings/initiatives attended	Director of Housing Services			KSA Report – Future Building 1

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	2. ENVIRONMENT: Delivering ever improving Community safety and reducing fear of crime				
PRIORITY	Strengthen service user and resident focus				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report R1 / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
2.1 We will respond to low level anti-social behaviour cases effectively	No of cases responded to within agreed timescales. Decrease in fear of crime	Principal Tenancy Enforcement Manager	TET Street Wardens	May 2006	Inspection Report -R1.6 Council Plan 4b
2.2 We will deliver services that reduce house burglary	Develop and implement a programme of target hardening. Analysis of crime figures to identify a reduction in domestic burglaries in hardened areas A reduction in maintenance costs in hardened areas	Principal Tenancy Enforcement Manager	Street Wardens Capital Works Technical Services Manager Community Safety Co-ordinator	September 2006	Council Plan 5a

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	2. ENVIRONMENT: Delivering ever improving Community safety and reducing fear of crime				
PRIORITY	Strengthen service user and resident focus				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report R1 / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
2.3 We will respond appropriately to Hate Crimes.	<p>Combined ASB & Hate Crime policy passed by Committee</p> <p>No of hate crimes and incidents of racial harassment responded to within agreed timescales.</p> <p>Co-operation with the Hate Crime Forum. – No of meetings attended.</p>	Principal Tenancy Enforcement Manager	Tenancy Enforcement Team Street Wardens	September 2006	Council Plan 5a
2.4 We will deliver services that contribute to a reduction in the fear of crime	A reduction in the fear of crime among residents	Principal Tenancy Enforcement Manager	Tenancy Enforcement Team Street Wardens	September 2006	Council Plan 5a

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	2. ENVIRONMENT: Delivering ever improving Community safety and reducing fear of crime				
PRIORITY	Strengthen service user and resident focus				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report R1 / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
2.5 We will robustly enforce the tenancy agreement to tackle Anti Social Behaviour	<p>No of notices served on tenants breaching their tenancy agreement</p> <p>No of interventions</p> <p>Work in partnership to secure ABC's and ASBO's - No of ABC's made No of ASBO's made</p> <p>Support victims of ASB – No of follow up visits</p> <p>No of victims referred to Support Unit</p>	Principal Tenancy Enforcement Manager	<p>Tenancy Enforcement Team</p> <p>Street Wardens</p>	September 2006	Council Plan 5a

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	2. ENVIRONMENT: Delivering an ever improving greener, cleaner and healthier environment				
PRIORITY	Strengthen service user and resident focus				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report R1 / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
2.6 We will carry out estate inspections	Have an estate inspection regime that improves the neighbourhood environment and improved satisfaction	Neighbourhood Managers	Housing Officers	May 2006	Inspection Report – R1.9 Inspection Report – Paragraph 193 Council Plan 1a, 2a, 7b

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	3. STRATEGY AND PLANS: Shaping up the strategy and plans which people feel part of, value and believe will work				
PRIORITY	Respond promptly and agree a strategic approach to emerging issues for residents and landlords				
Why are we doing this	Inspection report R3 / Self Assessment / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
3.1 We will agree a Housing Strategy to meet the needs of diverse communities.	Implementation of agreed and approved needs strategy that meets the requirements of diverse communities. Successful implementation of access strategy	Community Involvement Manager Access and Customer Care Manager	Community Involvement Team Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager DDCRCE £10,000 approved budget	May 2006	Inspection Report – R3.1 Council Plan 7a, 1a
3.2 We will develop longer term plans for the management/ improvement of the service	Achieve 2 stars Improved prospects for improvement	Director of Housing	Officer Time Heads of Service Service Development Manager	Sept 2006	Inspection Report -R3 Inspection Report – Paragraph 250 Self Assessment – Strategy and Enabling Council Plan 4f

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	3. STRATEGY AND PLANS: Shaping up the strategy and plans which people feel part of, value and believe will work				
PRIORITY	Respond promptly and agree a strategic approach to emerging issues for residents and landlords				
Why are we doing this	Inspection report R3 / Self Assessment / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
3.3 We will link the Housing Strategy to the Local Development Framework.	The Housing Strategy is reflected in sub-regional and regional Housing and Economic Development Strategies.	Service Development Manager	Officer Time Regeneration Officer	April 2007	Inspection Report -R3 Council Plan 4a
3.4 We will ensure the Housing Service (& Dale & Valley Homes) meets level 2 in the Equalities Standard	Successful accreditation of level 2	Community Involvement Manager	CI Team DDCREC CRE	April 2007	Inspection Report – Paragraph 53 Self Assessment – Equality and Diversity Council Plan 7a
3.5 We will improve performance on resident involvement BVPI 74 and 75	Improved BVPI 74 Improved BVPI 75	Community Involvement Manager	Training and Performance Manager	January 2007	Self Assessment – Resident Involvement Council Plan 7c

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	3. STRATEGY AND PLANS: Shaping up the strategy and plans which people feel part of, value and believe will work				
PRIORITY	Implement the Coalfield Housing Study Proposals				
Why are we doing this	Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
3.6 We will produce a master plan / Area Development Framework for the Council's Priority Areas.	Completed Area Development Framework approved by Council.	Director of Housing	£300,000 SHIP 1 Regeneration Department	May 2006	Council Plan 4h

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	3. STRATEGY AND PLANS: Shaping up the strategy and plans which people feel part of, value and believe will work				
PRIORITY	Develop and implement a Private Sector Housing Strategy				
Why are we doing this	Council Plan/Self assessment				
3.7 We will update the Private Sector Housing Strategy	Production of a Private Sector Housing Strategy which is fit for purpose.	Principal Private Sector Housing Officer	Private Sector Housing Team / LDF Team	April 2007	Self Assessment – Private Sector Functions Council Plan 4a
3.8 We will introduce a Landlord Accreditation Scheme	The introduction and launch of a Landlord Accreditation Scheme No of landlords signed up	Principal Private Sector Housing Officer	Private Sector Housing Team / Landlords Forum	April 2007	Self Assessment – Private Sector Functions Council Plan 6b
3.9 We will bid to mainstream the Empty Property Officers post	Successful bid to mainstream the post	Principal Private Sector Housing Officer	£35,000	April 2006	Self Assessment – Private Sector Functions Council Plan 6b

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	3. STRATEGY AND PLANS: Shaping up the strategy and plans which people feel part of, value and believe will work				
PRIORITY	Develop and implement a Private Sector Housing Strategy				
Why are we doing this	Self Assessment / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
3.10 We will integrate the findings of the Housing Market Assessment into the Private Sector Housing Strategy.	The Housing Market Assessment findings can be clearly identified in the Strategy and can be shown to have influenced our approach.	Principal Private Sector Housing Officer	County Durham Housing Market Assessment	April 2007	Self Assessment – Private Sector Functions Self Assessment – Regeneration Council Plan 6g, 7n

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	4. ORGANISATION: Shape up the organisation to have a business like approach to stock management which is inclusive, impacts economically and is valued				
PRIORITY	Shape up the organisation to have a business like approach to stock management which is inclusive, impacts economically and is valued				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report / Self Assessment / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
4.1 We will implement an Incentive Scheme to encourage residents to pay off arrears, pay by direct debit and abide by the terms of the tenancy agreement.	Reduction in the number of residents in arrears. Increase the number of residents who pay their rent by direct debit.	Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager	Incentive Scheme Budget £3,000	April 2006	Inspection Report – Paragraph 150 Self Assessment – Housing Income Management Council Plan 71
4.2 We will profile residents in arrears, identify common reasons for arrears to inform income management initiatives.	The profile is used to inform management initiatives.	Neighbourhood Managers	IT Housing Officers	August 2006	Self Assessment – Housing Income Management Inspection Report – Paragraph 150

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	4. ORGANISATION: Shape up the organisation to have a business like approach to stock management which is inclusive, impacts economically and is valued				
PRIORITY	Respond promptly and agree a strategic approach to emerging issues for residents and landlords				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report R3 / Self Assessment / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
4.3 We will agree a procurement strategy to purchase housing services and commodities.	Implementation of procurement strategy agreed and approved by Committee/ALMO Board.	Head of Business Support	Corporate Procurement Officer Resource Manager	May 2006	Inspection Report – R3.2 Self Assessment –VFM Council Plan 7j
4.4 We will agree a value for money strategy and efficiency statement	Adoption of agreed and approved VFM Strategy and Efficiency Statement by Committee/ALMO Board.	Head of Business Support	Resource Manager Head of Finance	May 2006	Inspection Report – R3.3 Self Assessment - VFM Council Plan 7j

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	4. ORGANISATION: Shape up the organisation to have a business like approach to stock management which is inclusive, impacts economically and is valued				
PRIORITY	To ensure Value for Money & efficiency in the Repairs Service				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report / Self Assessment / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
4.5 We will address inefficiencies in the Repairs service through improvements in procurement	Annual Efficiency Statement No of Local Indicators improving	Head of Neighbourhood Operations	Head of Business Support Project Officer - Procurement	September 2006	Inspection report R3 Self Assessment – Value for Money Council Plan 7j
4.6 We will improve the Planned:Responsive repairs ratio	Improved performance indicators	Principal Property Services Manager	External consultancy S. Brennan Property Services Manager	May 2006	Inspection Report - Paragraph 104 Self Assessment – Stock Investment & Asset Management Council Plan 7j
4.7 We will extend the programme of electrical checks for Council Housing	Compliance with Part P as part of an external validation	Head of Neighbourhood Operations	Head of Business Support Electrical Services Manager £300,000 Capital Bid	April 2006	Self Assessment – Stock Investment & Asset Management Council Plan 6b

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	4. ORGANISATION: Shape up the organisation to have a business like approach to stock management which is inclusive, impacts economically and is valued				
PRIORITY	Establish an ALMO				
Why are we doing this	Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
4.8 We will help Dale & Valley Homes to achieve 2 stars	Dale & Valley Homes achieves 2 stars	Director of Housing Services	£150,000 ALMO Fund	November 2006	Council Plan 4f

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	4. ORGANISATION: Shape up the organisation to have a business like approach to stock management which is inclusive, impacts economically and is valued				
PRIORITY	We will achieve and maintain the decent homes standard by 2010 and beyond				
Why are we doing this	Self Assessment/Council Plan/KSA Report				
4.9 We will invest in homes in sustainable areas to achieve the decent homes standard by 2010 and beyond	Improved performance against BVPI 184a and b	Technical Manager	Capital Works Team Head of Business Support Customers	December 2010	Self Assessment – Regeneration Council Plan 4f KSA Report – Future Building 1
4.10 We will reduce the number of unfit homes and increase the energy efficiency to national standards by 2007.	Improvement in SAP rating. Reduction in unfit homes numbers.	Technical Manager	Regeneration (Miller Mitchell) LA21 Officer	December 2006	Council Plan 6b

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	5. CULTURE: Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
PRIORITY	Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
Why are we doing this	Improvement Report R2 / Self Assessment / Council Plan / KSA Report May 2005				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
5.1 We will strengthen our benchmarking skills and membership of benchmarking clubs to monitor VFM issues	Improved performance and value for money Annual efficiency Statement Database developed to monitor Value for Money	Performance and Training Manager	Possible costs/fees	July 2006	Improvement Report - R2 Self Assessment – Value For Money Council Plan 7g, 7l, 7j, 7k
5.2 We will develop strategic capacity and functionality	Improved Middle / Senior management qualifications PDP Process completed on time	Service Development Manager	Personnel Performance and Training Manager MSU	April 2007	Council Plan 7k, 7m KSA “Goal” – Future Building 3

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	5. CULTURE: Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
PRIORITY	Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
Why are we doing this	Improvement Report R2 / Self Assessment / Council Plan / KSA Report May 2005				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
5.3 We will develop staff through regular training, mentoring and job shadowing. This will be supported with a comprehensive training plan and the PDP Process	<p>Training identified</p> <p>% of training delivered</p> <p>% planned but not yet delivered</p> <p>PDP process complete</p> <p>New database complete</p>	Performance and Training Manager	<p>Training budget</p> <p>Staff time</p> <p>All staff</p>	January 2007	<p>Inspection Report -R2</p> <p>Self Assessment – Allocations and Lettings</p> <p>Self Assessment – Equality and Diversity</p> <p>Council Plan 7k</p>
5.4 We will help to improve the PDP process in partnership with the Council's personnel service	<p>Agreement of a PDP process that reflects the requirements of housing customers, staff and members</p> <p>New PDP process in use</p>	Resources Manager	<p>Personnel section</p> <p>Resources Manger</p> <p>Staff</p>	October 2006	<p>Self Assessment – Strategy and Enabling</p> <p>Council Plan 7f, 7m</p>

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	5. CULTURE: Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
PRIORITY	Strengthen Service User And Resident Focus				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report R1 / Self Assessment / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	
5.5 We will introduce a Residents Handbook	Handbook delivered to all tenants	Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager	£10,000 budget Neighbourhood Managers	May 2006	Inspection report -R1.1 Council Plan 1a, 2a
5.6 We will profile residents needs and expectations to inform service design	Provide evidence to show that the development of the customer profile has led to redesigned services	Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager	£30,000 budget External consultancy	May 2006	Inspection report -R1.2 Self-assessment – Access, Customer Care and User Focus Council Plan 1a
5.7 We will publicise service standards for responsive repairs, adaptations, lettings and income management	Service standards publicised for customers	Service Development Officer	Service Development budget Service Managers	May 2006	Inspection report -R1.3 Self-assessment – Access, Customer Care and User Focus Council Plan 1a

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	5. CULTURE: Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
PRIORITY	Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
Why are we doing this	Improvement Report R2 / Self Assessment / Council Plan / KSA Report May 2005				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
5.8 We will provide a comprehensive Lettable Standard	The standard is revised and available to all customers.	Neighbourhood Managers	Void Managers Housing Officers	May 2006	Inspection report -R1.4 Self-assessment – Allocations and Lettings Council Plan 1a
5.9 We will involve hard-to-reach groups in housing activities ensuring they have equal access to services	Equalities and Diversity Strategy approved and adopted	Community Involvement Manager	Budget £10k Community Involvement Team DDCREC	May 2006	Inspection report -R1.5 Inspection report –Paragraph 30 Self-assessment – Access, Customer Care and User Focus Council Plan 1a, 2a

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	5. CULTURE: Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
PRIORITY	Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
Why are we doing this	Improvement Report R2 / Self Assessment / Council Plan / KSA Report May 2005				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
5.10 We will visit new residents to discuss settling in issues	All new tenants are visited to an agreed timescale A signing-off regime that can be evidenced is in place Improve sustainability of tenants Respond to information provided and quarterly reports to Customer Panel and DMT provided	Neighbourhood Managers	Housing Officers CSA's	May 2006	Inspection report -R1.8 Inspection report – Paragraph 205 Council Plan 1a, 5a
5.11 We will provide more detailed rent statements detailing debts and payments	Tenants are provided with a detailed rent statement twice a year	Neighbourhood Managers	CSA's	April 2006 September 2006	Inspection report -R1.10 Inspection report –Paragraph 137

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	5. CULTURE: Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
PRIORITY	Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
Why are we doing this	Improvement Report R2 / Self Assessment / Council Plan / KSA Report May 2005				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
5.12 We will develop a website for supporting people and tenancy support	Web site available Personal 'log in' provided for tenants	Supported Housing Manager	MSU Tenancy Support Team	April 2006	Self Assessment – Access, Customer Care and User Focus Self Assessment – Homelessness and Housing Need, Supported Housing and Supporting People Council Plan 7d
5.13 We will develop and implement a Marketing Strategy	Number of voids reduced Improved demand for services	Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager	Marketing budget £30,000	October 2006	Self Assessment – Tenancy and Estate Management Council Plan 1a
5.14 We will introduce on-line interactive applications for housing	Ability to apply on-line	Neighbourhood Manager (I Hornsby)	MSU	June 2006	Self Assessment – Allocations and Lettings Council Plan 7d

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	5. CULTURE: Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
PRIORITY	Strengthen Performance Management				
Why are we doing this	Inspection Report R2 / Self Assessment / Council Plan				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
5.15 We will manage customer complaints within published timescales	Meet all timescales i.e. all customer complaints dealt with on time Improved customer satisfaction	Complaints Officer	Customer Care Manager Officer Time Budget	March 2006	Inspection Report – R2.1 Self Assessment – Access, Customer Care and User Focus Council Plan 7c
5.16 We will use feedback from complaints and satisfaction surveys to identify service weaknesses	Quarterly reports to DMT Develop action plans to improve service Improved customer satisfaction	Performance and Training Manager	Customer Care Manager Complaints Officer Budget New Visions Management System Officer Time	March 2006	Inspection Report – R2.2 Self Assessment – Access, Customer Care and User Focus Self Assessment – Homelessness and Housing Need, Supported Housing and Supporting People Council Plan 7c

SERVICE OBJECTIVE	5. CULTURE: Develop a culture of excellence, customer service and continuous improvement				
PRIORITY	Strengthen Performance Management				
Why are we doing this	Improvement Report R2 / Self Assessment / Council Plan / KSA Report May 2005				
ACTION (WHAT)	MEASURES	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Who)	RESOURCES	TIMESCALE (WHEN)	LINKS
5.17 We will report progress in resolving overdue gas servicing through access problems	Report monthly to Head of Neighbourhood Operations/ Property Services	Gas Service Manager	Officer Time	March 2006	Inspection Report - R2.3
5.18 We will comprehensively report performance against previous trends and agree action to be taken in response to poor performance and good practice identified.	Report trend analysis monthly Develop action plans to address poor performance Overall PI improvement	Performance and Training Manager	Officer Time Service Managers	March 2006	Inspection Report – R2.4 Self Assessment – Access, Customer Care and User Focus Council Plan 7g
5.19 We will regularly update service improvement plans to assess progress and outcomes for residents	Update plan quarterly	Service Development Manager	Service Managers Officer Time MSU	March 2006	Inspection Report – R2.5 Council Plan 7e, 7g

HOUSING DEPARTMENT RISK REGISTER

This is an initial draft document only, which will be amended and added to throughout the year

KEY

Probability of happening	Severity (impact on the service)
1 – Low	1 – Low
2 – Medium	2 – Medium
3 - High	3 - High

RISK	PROB'Y	S'VERTY	SCORE	ACTION TO MINIMISE RISK	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
PEST					
Failure to achieve 2* rating after inspection	2	3	6	Ensure all recommendations from indicative inspection are undertaken (Action Plan - all actions) Report regularly on Service Plan, Action Plan	Director of Housing
Risk of not meeting government targets	1	2	2	Develop a reporting mechanism and monitor on a regular basis (5.17, 5.18, 5.19)	Service Development Manager
Failure to keep in touch with Government initiatives leading to missing Government deadlines, not complying with laws and regulations, missing out on funding etc.	2	2	4	Raise awareness where ever possible (1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 3.1, 3.3, 3.7, 3.8, 3.11, 4.3, Share best practice and develop informal briefing sessions (5.1, 5.3, 5.4)	Director of Housing
Failure to apply specific legislation to Dale & Valley Homes	1	3	3	Ensure members, staff and board are kept up to date with changes in legislation through briefings sessions and sharing best practice (5.1, 5.3, 5.4)	Director of Housing

RISK	PROB'Y	S'VERTY	SCORE	ACTION TO MINIMISE RISK	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Failure to achieve Decent Homes Standard	1	3	3	Correct management of Capital Programme A programme of planned repairs (4.5,4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10) Develop longer terms plans to manager the service (3.2)	Head of Neighbourhood Operations/ Property Services
Inability to respond to Sociological Issues	2	2	4	Develop Equalities and Diversity Strategy (5.9) Align services to meet the needs of diverse communities (5.6, 5.9, 5.16) Reduce Fear of Crime (2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5)	Community Involvement Manager Principal Tenancy Enforcement Manager
SWOT					
Lack of strategic documents	1	1	1	Develop strategic documents (1.2, 1.5, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 4.3, 4.4, 5.8, 5.9)	Head of Business Support
Lack of capacity and skills at different levels	2	2	4	Undertake a review of current training needs/requests and develop a training register Align training needs with PDP process (5.3, 5.4)	Performance and Training Manager
Failure to achieve 'arms length' ALMO (Dale & Valley Homes)	2	3	6	Develop a better understanding of the role of the Council and the role of the ALMO Develop a robust action plan, reporting mechanism and clear lines of accountability.	Director of Housing
Unable to retain/motivate staff	2	1	2	Ensure communication is clear and timely Provide necessary training and support to help the transition process (1.5, 5.1, 5.2)	Director of Housing

RISK	PROB'Y	S'VERTY	SCORE	ACTION TO MINIMISE RISK	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Inadequate governance arrangements for ALMO board	2	2	4	Ensure arrangements are robust and review on a regular basis	Director of Housing
Failure to implement and follow performance management arrangements	1	3	3	Keep staff informed throughout the process Train all staff (1.5, 5.3, 5.4)	Performance and Training Manager
Failure to respond to falling performance	1	3	3	Monitor on a regular basis (5.17, 5.18, 5.19) Develop action plans where required	Service Development Manager
FINANCIAL					
Failure to agree and set adequate budget to deliver the service.	1	3	3	Have a clear budget timetable Meet deadlines	Director of Housing
Failure to achieve 2.5% savings	1	2	2	Monitor savings and potential future initiatives Develop a database of savings including officer time etc (5.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 5.3, 5.4, 5.17, 5.18, 5.19)	All staff
Failure to develop a Procurement Strategy	1	3	3	Continue to develop strategy, building on the corporate document ALMO Procurement Strategy approved at appropriate committee/board meeting (4.3)	Head of Business Support
Inability to integrate policy and procedures into departmental working	2	3	6	Develop service standards (5.7) Include as part of PDP process (5.3, 5.4) Adhere to policies	Service Development Manager

RISK	PROB'Y	S'VERTY	SCORE	ACTION TO MINIMISE RISK	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
HEALTH & SAFETY					
Failure to comply with statutory requirements of the H&S regulations	1	3	3	Continue to monitor all aspects of H&S Ensure representation at Safety Panel meetings	Head of Neighbourhood Ops/Property Services
Failure to report accidents	2	1	2	Report all accidents Adhere to policy Report on a regular basis	Head of Neighbourhood Ops/Property Services
Failure to investigate accidents	1	2	2	Investigate where applicable Report findings Adhere to policy	Head of Neighbourhood Ops/Property Services
Failure to undertake the necessary training	2	2	4	Ensure training is undertaken Develop training database linked with PDP's	Head of Neighbourhood Ops/Property Services
Failure to report sickness absence (stress etc)	1	2	2	Report and monitor sickness Adhere to policy Report at DMT on a monthly basis	Head of Neighbourhood Ops/Property Services
ACTION PLAN					
Website and associated services not available on time	3	2	6	Regular meetings and reports scheduled to discuss progress	Service Development Manager

RISK	PROB'Y	S'VERTY	SCORE	ACTION TO MINIMISE RISK	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
Failure to integrate strategic housing activities within the Council's revised structure	1	2	2	Ensure relevant meetings etc are attended	Director of Housing
Unable to deliver service to meet the customers needs	1	3	3	Develop a clear understanding of the customers and their needs (5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 5.6, 5.9, 5.16) Align strategies and policies accordingly (1.2, 1.5, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 4.3, 4.4, 5.8, 5.9) Continue to gather satisfaction data (5.15, 5.16, 5.18)	Head of Business Support
Failure to reduce fear of crime	2	2	4	(Although many factors are out of the Council's control) Continue to build on existing work (2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5) Monitor crime statistics on a regular basis	Principal Tenancy Enforcement Officer
Unsuccessful marketing strategy	1	1	1	Utilise all options available to publicise the services provided by the Housing Service (5.13) Understand the target audience (5.6)	Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager
Fall in customer satisfaction	2	2	4	Provide the best service possible at all times Deliver value for money (5.1, 4.3 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 5.3, 5.4, 5.17, 5.18, 5.19) Publicise success stories	ALL Staff



HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

8 MARCH 2006

Report of the Director of Housing Services

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – HOUSING VOIDS AND LETTINGS

purpose of the report

To advise Committee on the Internal Audit Report and the resultant Action Plan.

background

- 1 An internal audit review of the Housing Voids and Letting system was undertaken between June to September 2005 and the final report was produced on the 18th January 2006. Recommendations of this report are at Annex 2.
- 2 The report highlighted a number of shortcomings in respect of the Housing Departments' administration of the voids and allocations process.
- 3 Officers have met and agreed with Internal Audit an Action Plan to address these issues. The action plan is attached to the report at Annex 2.

proposal

- 4 It is proposed that the findings of the report and the agreed actions are noted, and that Neighbourhood Managers implement the recommendations contained in the Action Plan in accordance with the agreed timescales.

financial implications

- 5 Improved administration of waiting lists and void property procedure will improve monitoring processes and impact on relet times and will thereby support the Council's revenue streams.

equalities implications

- 6 The Council will consider the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the allocations system, for General Needs and Homeless applicants will be monitored in accordance with the CRE Code of Practice.

legal implications

- 7 Proper control and monitoring of the allocations and void procedure will ensure that the Department's statutory obligations are met.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee notes the conclusions outlined of the Internal Audit Report.
- 2 Committee notes that this Department accepts the findings of the report and the Action Plan.
- 3 Committee approves the Action Plan.

Officer responsible for the report	Author of the report
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Michael Laing Director of Housing Services Ext 281	Ian Hornsby Neighbourhood Operations Manager Ext 289
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AUDIT REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.4 Recommendation

A check of applications input onto the system must be undertaken on a weekly basis and must be recorded and retained.

2.2 Recommendation

- i) A periodic review of the access to the Housing system is established
- ii) A formal system is put into place to communicate any changes in access to the IBS System

4.6 Recommendation

The Housing Department reviews the method of calculating re-let time in accordance with the BV212 guidelines.

1.7 Recommendation

Applicants are informed in writing of their responsibility to inform the Authority when they are ready to move.

2.5 Recommendation

- i) The Housing Officers must be made aware that each step of the letting procedure must be documented and held on the tenancy file. This should be done uniformly across the department.
- ii) The department's procedures should state which documents are to be held on the tenancy files.

3.12 Recommendations

- i) the CSA s are re-trained to ensure that all information supplied on the application form is considered and that they input information correctly to avoid incorrect points being allocated.
- ii) Management checks are increased to improve the controls within the section.
- iii) A system is put into place to follow up police checks.

4.5 Recommendation

Letters confirming registration should be produced from the IBS system and should contain the information stated in the procedures.

5.8 Recommendation

- i) the allocation of management points should be included in the Department's policies and procedures
- ii) all allocation of points should be documented and kept with the application and fully noted on the diary.

- iii) The Neighbourhood Officers and the Homeless Officers should undertake a periodic review of all applications on the system with management points.
- iv) Housing officers should verify management points before an offer is made.

6.4 Recommendation

- i) that guidelines are issued relating to suspensions and they are added to the departments procedures
- ii) that the current suspended accounts are reviewed and the necessary action is taken.
- iii) The diary function must be used at all times to assist in knowing the history of the application.
- iv) a quarterly review of suspended applications should be undertaken.

ACTION PLAN

Para Ref.	Recommendation	Priority	Action	By Whom	By When
1.4	A check of applications input into the system must be undertaken on a weekly basis.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Manger	Jan 06
2.2(i)	A periodic review of the access to the Housing system is established.	High	Agreed	Principal Neighbourhood Manager	Jan 06
2.2(ii)	A formal system is put into place to communicate any changes in access to the IB system	Medium	Agreed	Principal Neighbourhood Manager	Feb 06
4.6	The Housing Department reviews the method of calculating re-let times in accordance with the BV212 guidelines.	High	Agreed	Principal Neighbourhood Manager- a review of the current system is to be undertaken.	June 06
1.7	Applicants are informed in writing of their responsibility to advise the Authority of any change in circumstances.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Managers	Jan 06
2.5(i)	The Housing Officers must be made aware that each step of the letting procedure must be documented and held on the tenancy file. This should be done uniformly across the Department.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Managers	June 06
2.5(ii)	The Department's procedures should state which documents must be kept on the tenancy files.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Managers	June 06

Para Ref.	Recommendation	Priority	Action	By Whom	By When
3.11 (i)	The CSAs are re-trained to ensure that all information supplied on the application form is considered and that they input information correctly to avoid points being allocated incorrectly.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Mangers	June 06
3.11 (ii)	Management checks are increased to improve the controls within the section.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Managers – See 1.4	Jan 06
3.11 (iii)	A system is put into place to follow up police checks.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Managers	June 06
4.5	Letters confirming registration should be produced from the IBS system and should contain the information stated in the procedures.	High	Agreed	Letter is now being produced by the IBS system.	
5.7(i)	The allocation of management points should be included in the Department's policies and procedures.	High	Agreed	Principal Neighbourhood Managers	April 06
5.7(ii)	All allocations of Management Points should be documented and kept with the application and fully diary noted.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Managers	June 06
5.7(iii)	The Neighbourhood Officers and the Homeless Officers should undertake a periodic review of all applications on the system with management points.	High	Agreed	The Housing Officers will undertake the check. The Neighbourhood Managers will be responsible.	Feb 06
5.7 (iv)	Housing Officers should check that the management points are still appropriate before making an offer.	High	Agreed	See 5.7(iii)	Feb 06

Para Ref.	Recommendation	Priority	Action	By Whom	By When
6.4(i)	The guidelines are issued relating to suspensions and they are added to the department's procedures.	High	Agreed	Principal Neighbourhood Manager	April 06
6.4(ii)	That the current suspended accounts are reviewed and the necessary action taken.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Managers	Feb 06
6.4(iii)	The diary function must be used at all times to assist in knowing the history of the applications.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Managers	Feb 06
6.4 (iv)	A quarterly review of suspended applications should be undertaken.	High	Agreed	Neighbourhood Managers – see also 6.4(ii)	Feb 06



HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

8 MARCH 2006

Report of the Director of Housing Services

CUSTOMER PANEL REPRESENTATIVES AS CO-OPTED MEMBERS OF HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE – CHANGE OF PERSONNEL

purpose of the report

To put forward a change of one Customer Panel representative as a co-opted member of Housing Services Committee following the establishment of Dale & Valley Homes.

background

- 1 Following the Audit Commission Housing Inspection Service (ACHI) inspection of the Housing Service in August 2001, one of the main recommendations was to ensure that customers are actively involved in the Housing Service.
- 2 This recommendation was implemented immediately through various mechanisms, including the inclusion of two Customer Panel representatives as co-opted members of Housing Services Committee.
- 3 In July 2003, Housing Services Committee formally agreed to the following two Customer Panel representatives being put forward as co-opted members of this Committee:
 - Edith Stobbs, Chair of Customer Panel
 - Roy Curtis, Treasurer of Customer Panel
- 4 The ACHI have praised this method of consultation and participation of customers in our Services at the top strategic levels, both during the re-inspection of the Housing Service in February 2003 and the most recent indicative inspection of Dale & Valley Homes in September 2005.

wear valley customer panel

- 5 Wear Valley Customer Panel has been formally established since 1999, with the implementation of Tenants Compacts. The panel comprises of two representatives from each residents group throughout the district and individual customers.
- 6 The Customer Panel meets once a month and works jointly with the Housing Services Department on many strategic issues.

- 7 The ACHI has repeatedly highlighted the fact we have a strong customer focus along with increasing and genuine tenant involvement as service strengths when they carried out an indicative inspection of the service in September 2005. Customer Panel representation on Housing Services Committee was praised within these findings.
- 8 It is, however, recognised that certain information will be confidential and that Housing Committee will have the right to exclude all members of the press and public from such debates in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972. The Customer Panel representatives will be bound by the regulations and constitution of Housing Committee at these meetings.

dale & valley homes tenant board members

- 9 In December 2005, Roy Curtis was elected by tenants to represent them on Dale & Valley Homes Board of Management as one of five Tenant Board Members.
- 10 In January 2006, the Customer Panel held a Teambuilding Day. One of the issues looked at was the resident involvement groups that Tenant Board Members should come off because of conflicts of interest. A protocol for Tenant Board Members is in the process of being developed by the Customer Panel.
- 11 The Customer Panel agreed that Tenant Board Members should not be on Housing Services Committee as Customer Panel representatives as they felt there is a conflict of interest. The Customer Panel also agreed to follow the same guidance and good practice as Councillor Board Members who were advised to withdraw from Housing Services Committee.
- 12 At the Customer Panel meeting in February 2006, another Customer Panel representative was requested to attend Housing Services Committee to replace Roy Curtis. Margaret Burdis put her name forward to attend Housing Services Committee as a Customer Panel representative.

financial implications

- 13 In accordance with the recommendations of the Remuneration Panel which were adopted at the Council Meeting of 17 December 2003, co-optees are allowed to claim a pro rate hourly rate of £10.00, subject to a minimum payment of £10.00 per meeting, plus travelling expenses. This cost can be contained within existing budgets.

equalities implications

- 14 Customer Panel representation on Housing Services Committee ensure that we are providing access to all in terms of consultation and customers.

human rights act 2000

- 15 Customer Panel representation on Housing Services Committee satisfies all requirements of the above act.

conclusion

- 16 Wear Valley Customer Panel has been established for seven years and has proven to be successful working with the Council on a range of strategic and service issues.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee agrees to the co-option of Margaret Burdis, Vice-Chair of Stanhope Residents Association as Customer Panel representative on Housing Services Committee.

Officer responsible for the report	Author of the report
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