



**SPECIAL HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**29 MARCH 2006**

Report of the Director of Housing Services

**THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE SECTION 27 APPLICATION**

**purpose of the report**

To report and seek approval of the Government's response to the Council's Section 27 Application.

**background**

- 1 The Council submitted a Section 27 Application to the Government in January 2006. This was the final state in the process of setting up Dale and Valley Homes. The Section 27 Application seeks permission from the Government to delegate housing management to Dale and Valley Homes.
- 2 The Section 27 Application consists of a management agreement, articles of association, delivery plan and two lever arch files of supporting information. This is closely scrutinised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

**government's response**

- 3 The Government raised 9 questions on the Section 27 Application. The Council's response is attached at Annex 1. The civil servants at ODPM managing the process of scrutiny have said that they are satisfied with these responses.
- 4 Subsequently, the Council has received formal approval of the success of the Section 27 Application.

**legal implications**

- 5 The approval of the Section 27 Application allows the Council to delegate services and implement the associated legal mechanisms and procedures.

### **financial implications**

- 6 Setting up a successful ALMO, which gained 2 star status in the forthcoming inspection will give access to £26.9 million additional funding to meet the decent homes standard.

### **human resource implications**

- 7 Staff transferring to Dale and Valley Homes have been identified and are in the process of transferring.

### **it implications**

- 8 Dale and Valley Homes will use the Council's IT services on the basis of a service level agreement.

### **community safety implications**

- 9 Dale and Valley Homes will be a key partner in reducing crime and keeping neighbourhoods safe.

## **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Committee notes and welcomes the response to the Council's Section 27 Application, which will allow the Council to delegate housing management to Dale and Valley Homes.

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<b>Officer responsible for the report</b>	<b>Author of the report</b>
Michael Laing	Michael Laing
Director of Housing Services	
Ext 281	

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**SPECIAL HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**29 MARCH 2006**

Report of the Director of Housing Services  
**ACCESS AND CUSTOMER CARE TEAM**

**purpose of the report**

To seek approval to establish an Access and Customer Care Team in the housing service.

**background**

- 1 The Housing Indicative Inspection identified a number of areas for improvement in our customer care and access practices, drawing on Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) 30: Access and Customer Care and KLOE 31 Diversity. The Housing Inspectors recommended that we –
  - Strengthen our resident and user focus;
  - Profile our residents' needs;
  - Provide better information;
  - Manage and use customer feedback and complaints; and
  - Meet the needs of a diverse community.
- 2 Councillors, employees and customers have also made suggestions about how customer care and complaint handling can be made better.
- 3 As part of the budget cycle 2006/07 it was agreed to put forward a bid to Housing Services Committee to establish a team consisting of an Access and Customer Care Manager and Customer Services Assistant (CSA).

**duties**

- 4 The main duties of the post are related to the implementation of KLOEs 30 and 31. They are critical to achieving 2 and more stars in October 2006. The postholder will improve our performance in –
  - Customer focus and involvement in service evaluation;
  - Responsiveness to service users;
  - Access to the services;
  - Customer profiles and needs;
  - Handling and learning from surveys and complaints;
  - Feedback mechanisms;

- Statutory duties relating to equalities; and
  - Service process in vulnerability and harassment.
- 5 A job description for the post of Access and Customer Care Manager are attached at Annex 2. The CSA post will have the generic job description and person specification currently in use in the Department.
- 6 The position of the team within the service is shown at Annex 3.
- 7 It should be noted that these posts will be transferred to Dale and Valley Homes.

### **financial implication**

- 8 The cost of the team is £49,785. This is made up of the cost of the Manager Post (PO 1-4) and CSA (Scale 2) plus 28% on costs. The Head of Finance confirms that this funding is available in the HRA.

### **legal implications**

- 9 The housing service has a number of legal duties relating to equalities and diversity. The team would assist in monitoring the services' compliance with these legal duties and the quality of response.

### **human resource implications**

- 10 These new posts will be appointed in accordance with the Council's personnel policies and procedures.

### **it implications**

- 11 The team will require IT support and this is budgeted for as part of the costs.

### **equalities and diversity implications**

- 12 This team has a vital role in improving the way in which the service engages with hard to reach groups, deals with equalities issues and is pro-active in making sure the service is fair.

### **community safety implications**

- 13 The team will work on improved customer access and care in the community safety activities.

## RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee approves the creation of the Access and Customer Care Team.

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<b>Officer responsible for the report</b>	<b>Author of the report</b>
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Michael Laing Director of Housing Services Ext 281	Michael Laing
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## RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS – 3 MARCH 2006

Question		Response
1	Can you clarify how many demolitions you are planning up to 2010 and, if possible, could you identify their location? Are you anticipating using ALMO funds to finance the cost of the demolitions?	<p>The number of demolitions proposed is indicated in the building cost model and this follows the assumptions made by HACAS in Wear Valley's original Business Plan. The proposals are for 100 properties to be demolished per year during the first 3 years (2006, 07 and 08) and 25 properties per year thereafter. Demolitions will continue in those less sustainable areas, such as Woodhouse Close and Coundon, where demolition is seen as the tool to kick-start regeneration.</p> <p>The cost of demolition was included in the BCM and, as such, ALMO funds will finance demolition. The ALMO will however seek to continue to bid for additional funding for demolition works from the Councils capital pot.</p>
6	How many staff will be employed in the LA housing department after the ALMO goes live?	102 – See attached lists as <b>Question 6</b> (62 Workforce)
7	How much and what type of planned high level interaction and communication will there be between the Council and its ALMO?	<p>There will be two types of interaction between the Council and Dale &amp; Valley Homes.</p> <p>Structured interaction is described in the Section 27 Application, page 10. Dale &amp; Valley Homes most senior officer will meet with the Chief Officer with housing responsibilities in the Council on a quarterly basis. Annually the Board of Dale &amp; Valley Homes will present a Performance Plan to Council.</p> <p>By necessity the Chair of the Board and senior councillors, such as the Leader and Chair of Housing Services will meet, supported by officers, throughout the year to discuss –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementing the delivery plan;</li> <li>▪ Budgets;</li> <li>▪ Capital allocations; and</li> <li>▪ Performance and strategic planning.</li> </ul>

Question		Response
	Question 7 continued.	<p>This contact is described in part in Part C, Section 7 of the Agreement</p> <p>Since his election, last week, discussions have been held with the Chair of the Board about the appropriate level of frequency of contact on a regular, if informal, basis. At the moment it would appear that the Chair and Chair of Housing Services will meet fortnightly. Officers may be invited to attend.</p> <p>The chair and the Chair of Housing Services plan to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attend the Customer Panel and make joint presentations;</li> <li>▪ Attend residents groups and the LSP together; and</li> <li>▪ Undergo joint training</li> </ul>
8	Can you provide confirmation that your rent setting plans will facilitate convergence by 2011?	I do confirm this.
9	According to your BV Implementation Plan, your procurement exercise will start in October 2006. Are you still on track to meet that date and are you satisfied that the planned improvements will not be too late for the inspection the following month?	<p>Attached (<b>Question 9</b>) is the proposed timescale for procurement of the repairs contract. As can be seen the report identifies the need for a new contractual arrangement to commence on 1 April 2007. Whilst it will obviously be difficult to illustrate <i>actual</i> improvements to service delivery, the procurement exercise will show the inspectors a number of factors –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We are actively pursuing value for money;</li> <li>▪ Contractors selected provide evidence of excellence in service delivery and customer focus;</li> <li>▪ Customers have been fully involved at all stages of the process; and</li> <li>▪ Council, Dale &amp; Valley Homes and the contractors will be developing a process of continual improvements with the focus on local outcomes.</li> </ul>
10	Given the ongoing work required to establish a permanent senior management team please provide evidence that the ALMO services, governance and organisational framework will be ready for the November inspection	Service Plan attached

Question		Response	
11	It was suggested in the bid that the Customer Panel would assist in the development of service standards with the ALMO. Has this happened?	Service Standards are with the Customer Panel now. Will be discussed at their meeting on 7 March 2006. From the Services Standards a range of performance reports and information leaflets will be developed. Dale & Valley Homes performance in the implementation of the Service Standards will be reported to the Customer Panel	
12	Are there any plans to further consult residents on future plans?	See attached information sheet ( <b>Question 12</b> )	
14	How often will Board meet prior to 1 April? Is the training programme ongoing for Board members?	Dates of Board Meetings 16 January 2006 23 January 2006 21 February 2006 14 March 2006 21 March 2006 12 April 2006	Dates of Board Training 9 February 2006 (Independence) 15 February 2006 (Team Building) 1 March 2006 (Governance) 20 March 2006 (Housing Finance) 10 April 2006 (Housing Management)



## Question 6

### List of staff who will remain with the Council – Deferred TUPE

Role	GRADE	NAME
Director	C.O Grade	Michael Laing
<b>Business Support</b>		
Role	GRADE	NAME
Head of Business Support	HPO2	David Milburn
Administration Manager	SO1	Glennis Lyons
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Carol Porter
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Vacant
NVQ Administration Trainees	Sc2	James Cottle
Service Development Manager	PO6-9	Marie Roe
Service Development Officer	Sc4	Alex Smith
<b>NEIGHBOURHOOD OPERATIONS</b>		
Role	GRADE	NAME
Head of Neighbourhood Operations/Property Services	HPO 2	Alan Northcote
Principal Tenancy Enforcement Manager	PO1-4	Chris Walton
Tenancy Enforcement Officer	Sc 4-5	Mick Burns
Tenancy Enforcement Officers	Sc ?	Vacant Posts (2)
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Laura Armstrong
Street Warden Manager	SO1	Roger Ward
Street Wardens (Bishop Auckland)	Sc2 X 6	Peter Brown Steven Green Roger Metters Wayne Reid Barry Tray Deborah Boughey
Street Wardens (Crook and Weardale)	Sc2 X5	Trevor Abbott Louis Hodgkinson John Lamb Venessa McGee Sarah Robinson
Homelessness Officer	SO1	Craig Douglas
Homelessness Support Officer	Sc4	Carolyn Stuart
<b>PROPERTY SERVICES</b>		
Principal Property Services Manager	PO1-3	John Dowson
Property Services Manager	Sc6	Shaun Brennan
Property Services Manager	Sc6	Paul Walker
Property Services Manager	Sc6	Paul Burnip
Property Services Manager	Sc6	John Reynolds
Property Services Manager (Gas Safety)	SO1-2	Phil Cummings
Technical Assistant	Sc4	Kim Tillotson
All of the Workforce	X62	
Vehicle Maintenance	X3	
Purchasing Stores	Sc4	Dennis Nicholson
Purchasing Stores	Sc2	Peter Cawood

#### Schedule 4/ Part 1: Proposed Transferring Employees

Set out in the following table:

<b>BUSINESS SUPPORT - Technical Services</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Technical Services Manager	PO 1-4	C Cowen
Capital Programme Manager (Surveying)	Sc5-SO1	Kevin Chapman
Capital Programme Manager (Gas)	SO2	Terry Cranston
Clerk of Works	Sc4-5	Keith Butterfield
Clerk of Works	Sc4-5	Richard Grantham
<b>BUSINESS SUPPORT – Resources</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Resources Manager	PO1-4	Martin Redfern
Resources Assistant	Sc3-5	Joy Brown (Mat)
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Sue Carr
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Joy Clark
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2 (P/t)	Vacant
<b>BUSINESS SUPPORT - Community Involvement</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Community Involvement Manager	PO 1-4	Louise Butler
Community Involvement Officer	Sc 4/5	Corrine Gardner
Access and Customer Care Manager	SO 2	Vacant
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Vacant
<b>BUSINESS SUPPORT - Service Development</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Performance and Training Officer	SO2	Brian Abbott
<b>Neighbourhood Operations/Property Services</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager	PO4-7	Joanne Dunn
<b>Tenancy Enforcement</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NAME</b>
<b>Neighbourhood Management – Woodhouse Close</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Neighbourhood Manager	SO1	Kath Wright
Housing Officer	Sc4-6	Terry Longthorne
Housing Officer	Sc4-6	Jill Forbes
Housing Officer	Sc4-6	Liz Bradley
Housing Officer	Sc4-6	Liz Graham
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2 (P/T)	Robert Hall/Rebecca Bruce
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Val Wilkinson
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Eileen Dixon
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2 (temp)	Natasha Meite
Estate Caretaker	Sc2	Charles Lyons
<b>Neighbourhood Management – Crook/Willington/Dales</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Neighbourhood Manager	SO1	Ian Hornsby
Housing Officer	Sc4-6	Julie Humble
Housing Officer	Sc4-6	Sally Phillips
Housing Officer	Sc4-6	Christine Taylorson
Money Advice Worker	Sc4	Louise Oswald
Former Tenants Arrears Officer	Sc4	Kevin Dawson

Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Clair Ord
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Craig Sams
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Gemma Wade (Mat)
<b>Neighbourhood Operations – Call Centre</b>		
Call Centre Manager	Sc5	Angela Greensmith
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Joanne Wright
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Claire Littlejohn
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Rachel Lockey
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Claire Ryan
Technical Assistant	Sc4	Angela Reay (Temp)
<b>Supporting People</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NAME</b>
Tenancy Support Officer	Sc4-5	Damian Pearson
Tenancy Support Officer	Sc4-5	Dawn Patterson
Tenancy Support Officer	Sc4-5	Vacant
Customer Services Assistant	Sc2	Keith Hudspith

**DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**18 January 2006**

Report of the Director of Housing Services

**TIMESCALE FOR PROCUREMENT OF REPAIRS CONTRACT**

**purpose of the report**

To outline a draft programme for procurement of the responsive repairs contract.

**background**

- 1 One of the early decisions that Dale and Valley Homes will take is likely to concern the procurement of a repairs service. It has been suggested a new arrangement should be established to commence on 1 April 2007.
- 2 Dale and Valley Homes staff and board members need to be aware of potential workload resulting from the procurement exercise and this report will seek to provide draft indications of requirements.

**procurement exercise**

- 3 It is envisaged the procurement of the repairs service will be a 'two stage' process. The first stage being a pricing exercise probably based on a schedule of rates, followed by the second stage, the 'beauty contest' whereby quality aspects are assessed.
- 4 The timescale on the procurement exercise is dictated by European procurement regulations and both the Council and Dale and Valley Homes need to abide by these requirements.

**timescales**

- 5 To achieve a contract commencement date of 1 April 2007, the draft timescale is:-
  - Document preparation and market communication 1 February 2006 (5 months to establish options, legal situation, market needs etc)
  - OJEU notice of tender 1 July 2006 (2 months to return requests/information and to shortlist for tendering)
  - Contract out to tender – 1 September 2006 (with a 2 month tender period)

- Bids returned 1 November 2006 (allows a 3 month evaluation period of financial and quality aspects)
- Contract award 1 February 2007 (allows a 2 month lead-in period)
- Contract start 1 April 2007

6 It can be seen from this timescale that works need to commence at a very early opportunity.

### **legal implications**

7 EU regulations are applicable to this contract as the tendering threshold will be exceeded. Accordingly, the procurement exercise must follow the EU established timescales and requirements. The timescale outlined above complies with these requirements.

### **human resources implications**

8 Currently the annual expenditure under this contract is approximately £2.5m. The new Dale and Valley arrangement is likely to be a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 10 years, and is, as such, a high value contract is seen as at the forefront of Dale and Valley Homes' engagement with customers. It is therefore important that the procurement exercise is well managed to result in the very best contractor providing economic and efficient services.

9 To achieve this, Departmental Management Team should consider the establishment of a working/procurement group to oversee the exercise. Discussions are required to establish potential human resource implications to deliver the requirements of the timetable. Consideration should also be given regarding the potential for joint procurement with Sedgefield Borough Council.

### **summary**

10 This is a very tight timescale and it is important that the procurement exercise is fully resourced in order that the best service provider is selected to carry out this vital front line service.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Departmental Management Team notes and agrees to the timescales within this report.
- 2 Departmental Management Team discuss and draft an establishment for a working/procurement group that will oversee this contract.

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**Officer responsible for the report**  
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**Author of the report**  
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## **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

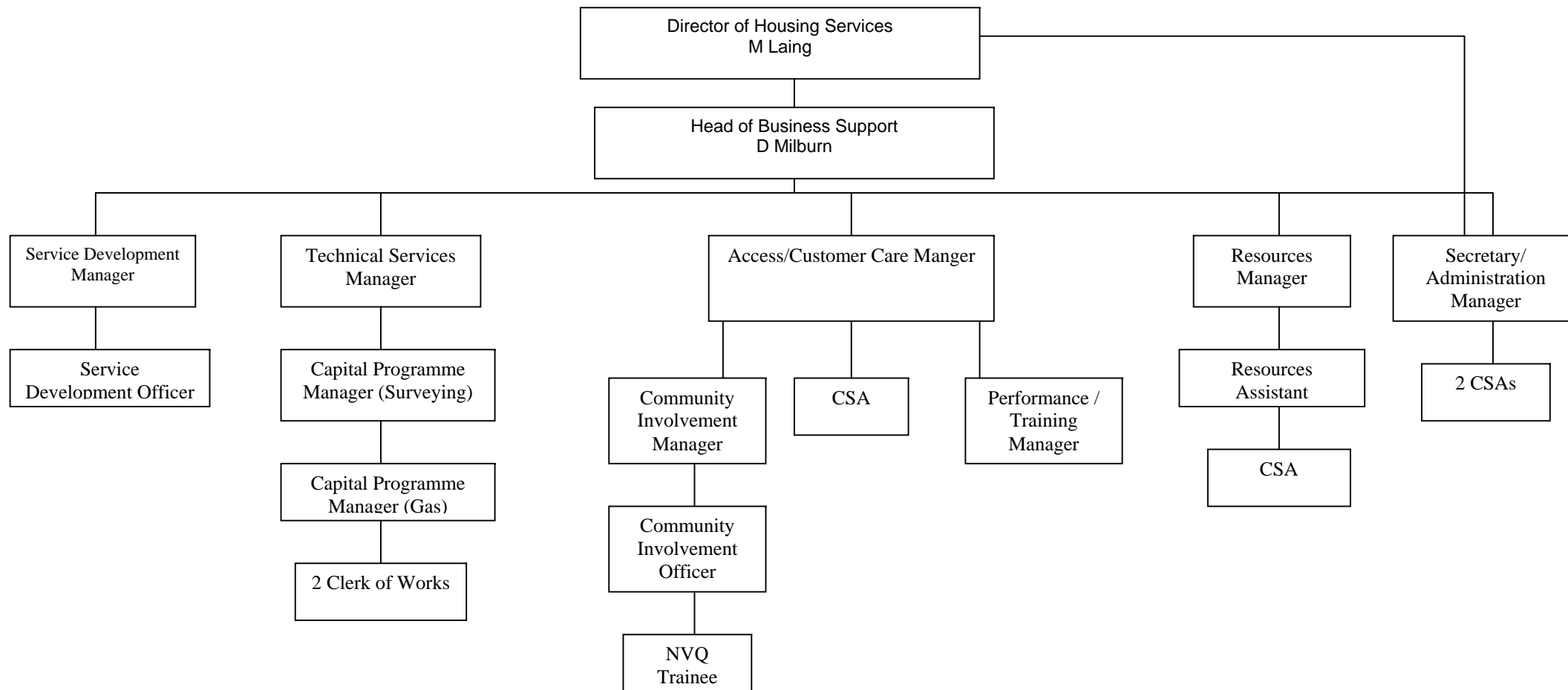
<b><u>PLEDGES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT 2006/07</u></b>		
<b>PLEDGE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>
ONE	Training for staff, councillors & ALMO board on community involvement	Jul-06
TWO	Continue work with mystery customers	Sep-06
THREE	Explore concept of setting up a young people housing education initiative	Sep-06
FOUR	Provide more information to customers on getting involved in ALMO services	Oct-06
FIVE	Hold a minimum of 6 focus groups on ALMO functions	Dec-06
SIX	Produce two newsletters, ensuring information is provided to all customers on the services that Dale & Valley Homes provides	Feb-07

## JOB DESCRIPTION

<b>Post</b>	Access and Customer Care Manager
<b>Department</b>	Housing
<b>Salary</b>	PO 1-4 £25,437 - £27,411
<b>Purpose of Post</b>	to improve customer access and care and the approach to equality and diversity in line with KLOEs 30 and 31
<b>Responsible to</b>	Head of Business Support
<b>Key Duties &amp; Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop and implement strategies, policies and procedures which give the service a clear customer focus</li> <li>● Involve service users and stakeholders in service evaluation, the determination of standards and improvement priorities</li> <li>● Present reports to the governance structures on customer access and care and equality and diversity issues</li> <li>● Assess and improve arrangements for customer access to the service including the removal of barriers to the service</li> <li>● Develop and monitor service standards</li> <li>● Ensure that information is provided to a high quality and in an appropriate format that meets customers needs</li> <li>● Manage the complaints service including using customer feedback to improve</li> <li>● Ensure that feedback mechanics are effective, take account of local context and are used to drive service improvement</li> <li>● Promote equality and diversity and community cohesion within the service and partnerships and contracts</li> <li>● Compliance with statutory duties and good practice in equality and diversity</li> <li>● Maintain up to date information on customer vulnerability, monitor that information and use it to improve services</li> <li>● Lead the services strategic and policy response to domestic violence and harassment</li> </ul>
<b>Other Responsibilities</b>	



### Annex 3



**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

POST:	Repairs Contract Manager
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DEPARTMENT:	Housing
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**ESSENTIAL****DESIRABLE**

<b><u>QUALIFICATIONS</u></b> Relevant Maintenance, Construction, Housing or Business Management qualification Valid Driving Licence Good technical knowledge of construction and maintenance including gas, solid fuel and electrical safety	
<b><u>EXPERIENCE</u></b> Wide knowledge of deal with the public and customers Management, motivation and development of a diverse workforce Delivery of projects to a stringent timescale set by a client and adhering to the clients required quality standards Working with customer Managing health and safety Housing inspection process	Practical experience of industrial relations and negotiation Familiarity with contract documents Minimum of 5 years working in a housing/construction/maintenance environment Working in a customer focussed environment
<b><u>SKILLS / ABILITIES</u></b> Excellent communication and presentation skills Ability to meet deadlines and targets Ability to work in a hands on capacity with local people from a variety of backgrounds Good IT skills	Ability to maintain good relations with external organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors
<b><u>SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE</u></b> Knowledge of current housing and local government best practice about housing-related services Procurement of goods and services Value for money	
<b><u>PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES</u></b> Must be flexible and self motivated High degree of professional integrity Commitment to best value and the provision of quality services Shows resilience and toughness under pressure Must have a current driving licence or means of mobility support A commitment to equality and diversity	

## JOB DESCRIPTION

<b>Post</b>	Repairs Contract Manager
<b>Department</b>	Housing
<b>Salary</b>	PO 1-4 £25,437 - £27,411
<b>Purpose of Post</b>	To develop the strategic and business practices of the service to achieve a three star rating.
<b>Responsible to</b>	Head of Neighbourhood Operations and Head of Business Support
<b>Key Duties &amp; Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce and sustain best practice from other service providers and practitioners</li> <li>● Develop modern, cost effective business methods</li> <li>● Achieve value for money</li> <li>● Operate the performance management system</li> <li>● Improve the balance between planned and responsive work</li> <li>● Identify good procurement practice and develop partnerships</li> <li>● Improve supply chain management</li> <li>● Advise on the use of resources to best effect</li> <li>● Ensure compliance with all provisions, statutory or otherwise, governing and relating to health and safety, good practice and relevant technical issues</li> <li>● Ensure that training requirements, appropriate to the service excellent are identified and implemented within available resources</li> <li>● Support and assist the Heads of Service where required</li> <li>● Liaise with other departments and agencies and attend meetings as required, representing the Council to a high professional level</li> <li>● To work with the colleagues to ensure that continuous improvements and value for money are achieved, and that our services meet and indeed exceed customer expectations.</li> <li>● Consult and communicate with customers as appropriate</li> <li>● Provide and arrange cover for colleagues as necessary</li> <li>● Any other duties as required by the Heads of Service</li> <li>● Supervise and manage the day to day operations and performance of the repairs service including emergency out of hours work.</li> <li>● Maintain a safe working environment for employees</li> <li>● Be responsible for the implementation, development and statutory compliance of the gas, solid fuel and electrical safety in the housing service. This includes responsibility for gas, solid fuel and electrical servicing programme in accordance with statute and guidance.</li> <li>● Manage the repairs budget</li> <li>● continuously improve customer care and access to the service</li> <li>● ensure the service is delivered with due regard to equality and diversity issues.</li> </ul>

## Managerial Structure

### Director of Housing Services

