

Report to: Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee
Date: 9 March 2009
Report of: Head of Housing
Subject: Service Unit Performance Reporting – Housing Services
Ward: All

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The report is intended to provide members of the Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee with performance information in respect of East Durham Homes and the Housing Service for the 2nd quarter of 2008/09.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 In preparing this report I have consulted with the Council's Service Support Manager and staff in the Business Development Unit at East Durham Homes.

3.0 Background

3.1 Since the establishment of East Durham Homes (EDH) in April 2004 a detailed performance report in respect of the service areas managed by EDH has been presented to either the former Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee or more recently to the Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee.

3.2 From April 2006 the report has also contained relevant performance information in relation to the Council's Housing Service which include:

Housing Renewal
Housing Policy and Strategy
Supported Housing
Service Support

4.0 Performance to end of September 2008

4.1 All service areas managed by EDH and those in the Housing Service are subject to performance monitoring by way of either National Indicators or locally agreed indicators. These indicators are set out in Appendices 1 & 2 to this report and are identified as NI(National Indicators), EDH (East Durham Homes local indicators) or HOUS (Housing Service local indicators).

4.2 From 1 April 2007 targets have been profiled on a quarterly basis with the exception of those indicators that are only collated annually. This ensures a more robust performance monitoring system particularly in areas where there might be seasonal fluctuations or planned work at various times throughout the year.

4.3 In addition there is information included, where available, that shows the performance of EDH and the Housing Service in comparison to other organisations, provided by either the Audit Commission or HouseMark which is the Audit Commission's recommended benchmarking club.

4.4 Also included are the trends in performance from the end of the 2nd quarter 2007/08 compared to those at the end of the 2nd quarter 2008/09.

East Durham Homes

4.5 Performance Indicators

Item no.

There are 17 key indicators selected for monitoring purposes, which comprise 2 National Indicators and 15 locally agreed indicators. However, both of the National Indicators and 1 of the local indicators are only collated on an annual basis.

In summary, 8 (57.14%) of the 14 indicators were on target, 2 (14.29 %) were within the 5% tolerance and 4 (28.57%) were not on target.

In comparison to performance at the end of the 2nd quarter 2007/08 there was an improvement in 11 (78.57%) of the indicators and a reduction in 3 (21.43%).

Of the 4 indicators where benchmarking information was available 2 represent median quartile performance and 2 represent lower quartile performance.

Overall, there has been further improvement in performance in relation to the Key Indicators that are monitored. In particular during the course of the last year there has been a significant improvement in both the relet times and the number of long-term properties that are void.

With regard to the targets that were not met, appropriate explanations have been included in Appendix 1 to this report.

4.6 Complaints and Compliments

In the 2nd quarter of 2008/09 EDH received a total of 51 complaints of which 32% were upheld and 9% partially upheld. During the same period there was a total of 119 compliments received.

Of the 51 complaints received 32(63%) were generated regarding the Repairs and Maintenance Service. Although it should be noted that of the 119 compliments received 103 (78%) were in relation to this service.

Complaints about Choice Based Lettings have shown an increase in the 2nd quarter and have generated 8 (15%) of all complaints. The main issues revolve around customer perception of the unfairness of the banding system. However, a full review of the allocations policy in consultation with the customers is taking place at sub-regional level.

A full analysis of the complaints and compliments for the 2nd quarter of 2008/09 as well as the trend in complaints from 2006/07 is shown in the tables overleaf:

(i) Complaints

Service Area	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 1 st Quarter	2008/09 2 nd Quarter	% 2 nd Quarter
Repairs and maintenance services					
Repairs - East Durham Homes	127	69	14	15	29%
Repairs - Morrison FS	75	58	15	5	10%
Surveyors	1	3	0	5	10%
Gas & electrical services	19	22	6	5	10%
Aids and adaptations	1	1	1	0	0%
Capital Investment	26	21	2	2	4%
Housing management services					
Allocations	21	32	7	0	0%
Contact centre and outlets	2	20	1	5	10%
Estate Management	10	6	1	1	2%
Income Management (Rents)	4	4	0	1	2%
Choice Based Lettings	1	0	0	8	15%
Tenancy Enforcement	17	10	4	1	2%
Housing Management	0	0	0	2	4%
Tenancy Management	0	0	0	1	2%
Corporate services					
Leaseholder service	0	0	0	0	0%
Finance	0	6	0	0	0%
Communications	3	0	0	0	0%
Total	307	252	51	51	100%

(ii) Compliments

Service Area	July	Aug	Sept	Total	% 2 nd Quarter
Repairs EDH	1	7	58	66	55%
Repairs (Morrison FS)	0	0	25	25	21%
Aids and Adaptations	0	0	2	2	2%
Estate Management	0	1	4	5	4%
Contact Centre and Outlets	1	2	2	5	4%
Finance	0	0	0	0	0%
Floating Support	0	0	0	0	0%
Housing Management	0	0	0	0	0%
Choice Based Lettings	0	0	1	1	1%
Communication	0	0	1	1	1%
General	0	1	0	1	1%
Homelessness	0	1	0	1	1%
Service Improvement	2	0	2	4	3%
Tenancy Enforcement	5	0	0	5	4%
Utilities	1	1	0	2	2%
Warden Services	0	0	1	1	1%
Monthly Totals	10	13	96	119	100%

Housing Service

4.7 Performance Indicators

There are 35 key indicators selected for monitoring purposes that comprise 6 National Indicators and 29 local indicators. However, 5 of the National Indicators and 10 of the local indicators are only collated on an annual basis. In addition, there is no information available for 1 of the local indicators that is collated on a quarterly basis.

In summary, 13 (68.42%) of the indicators were on target, 2 (10.53%) were within the 5% tolerance and 4 (21.05%) were not on target.

Compared to the second quarter in 2007/08 there was an improvement in 8 (44.44%) of the indicators, no change in 5 (27.78%) and a reduction in 5 (27.78%). There was no information available for 2 of the indicators, 1 of these only being introduced in 2008/09.

Housing Renewal Team

4.8 Private Sector Housing

Phase VII of the Dawdon Group Repair Scheme started on site in January 2009. There are 60 residents in Wynyard Street and Cottages Road signed up to the scheme and works are due to be completed early summer 2009.

The Communities and Local Government (CLG) declared the Wembley area of Easington Colliery a designated Selective Licensing Area in November 2009. As there is a 3 month lead in period, the scheme will 'go live' on 10 February 2009. This means that from that date all private landlords who operate in the area will have to apply to the Council for a license.

We continue to tackle long-term empty property across the district by working with owners and, where necessary, taking formal enforcement action.

The Accredited Private Landlords Scheme continues to grow and there are now 101 landlords who collectively have 1003 properties.

4.9 Climate Change

The Council is working in partnership with East Durham Homes and National Energy Action to install solar water heating panels on 15 Council properties in Murton. The project is being funded by the Council's Capital Fund, N Power and we are hoping to secure further matched funding from the Government's Low Carbon Building Programme. As well as installing solar panels to heat domestic hot water, we will also be upgrading the existing heating systems in the properties.

4.10 Warm Homes Campaign

The Over 60's Free Insulation Scheme is funded by the Council and supplies free home insulation measures to homeowners in the Easington District who are aged over 60. Due to a rolling programme of publicity and door to door promotions in settlements, the scheme has a constant flow of applications for the free home insulation measures. Between April and December 2008 there have been 1,099 homes insulated under the scheme and there are now over 3,000 homes insulated in the district since the scheme was launched.

The Social Insulation Scheme is a rolling programme that provides cavity wall and loft insulation measures in Council properties. Settlements currently being targeted under this scheme are Easington, Blackhall and blocks of flats in Peterlee. Council tenants are also offered free energy saving light bulbs, advice on reducing fuel bills and obtaining the most competitive fuel tariff.

Housing Policy and Strategy Team

4.11 District Housing Strategy

We continue to deliver the 4 key priorities of the Council's Housing Strategy through active partnership working. A number of Area Based Grant bids were developed and submitted for funding to support the delivery of the priorities. These included:

- Extension of the Youth Build project
- Fuel Poverty Initiative
- Anti social behaviour intervention project
- Additional supported housing project at Stage II, Shotton

It is hoped that there will be a decision made in relation to these bids by the end of February 2009.

4.12 Area Renewal and Settlement Plans

Project plans for the regeneration areas have been produced and the delivery of the key actions is continuing. The target of reducing the number of non-lettable void properties to less than 100 by 31 March 2008 was achieved and at present the figure stands at 47.

Partner Development Schemes:

South Hetton

Phase 1 of the development for 9 bungalows at Argyle Place was completed in January 2009 and Phase 2 of the development for mixed tenure housing is now underway.

Easington

Durham Aged Miners Housing Association (DAMHA) commenced work on the Leech Court Site in February 2009 where 12 two bedroom bungalows are to be built.

The I.S.O.S scheme for 24 social rented houses and flats on the Welfare Close site is due to commence in April 2009.

Shotton Colliery

The Housing Corporation bid for King Street and Moore Terrace was submitted by Three Rivers Housing Association and it hoped the outcome will be known within a few weeks. This scheme includes 57 units and is a mix of family housing for rent and shared ownership.

Murton

Unfortunately, Phase 1 of the Watkin Crescent/Turnbull Crescent Site which consisted of 15 properties for rent and 14 HomeBuy properties has been postponed due to problems with the current housing market. Should housing market conditions improve then the application will be re-submitted to the Housing Corporation.

Haswell

Plans and a grant application have been submitted to the Housing Corporation for 20 units of 2 and 3 bedroom family housing for rent at Front Street, Haswell.

Supported Housing Team

4.13 Care Services

The County Council's Supporting People Team reviewed the service in October 2008 and the final report is still awaited. Preliminary feedback seems to be positive and we are confident that we will be able to evidence improvement in the Quality Assessment Framework.

The number of Telecare users continues to increase and there are now 120 users receiving the service that enables and assists people to live independently and provides reassurance for families. There are a variety of devices installed such as fall detectors, gas shut-off valves, epilepsy sensors and wandering devices.

Telehealth monitors have been introduced in partnership with the Community Matrons. There are 8 monitors in the district that are fitted in residents' homes that enable them to monitor their long term conditions. The monitoring of the devices will be 'live' from 16 February 2009.

4.14 Homelessness and Housing Advice

Staff in the service are currently working in partnership on a number of initiatives including the following;

The Prolific and Priority Offender Scheme - a multi agency team set up to assist offenders to break the cycle of offending. Staff from the service are represented at a weekly meeting in order to assist with the rehousing and subsequent rehabilitation of offenders. It is widely acknowledged that without suitable housing a Prolific and Priority Offender has a greatly reduced chance of changing their lifestyle and then sustaining the change if settled accommodation is not provided.

The Freedom Programme - is a 12 week programme for any woman who feels they would benefit from learning how they can protect themselves, their children and others from harm. It also hopes to act as a support group for the women involved beyond the 12 week programme if they feel it is needed.

Service Support

4.15 Complaints and Compliments

During the 2nd quarter of 2008/09 there was 1 complaint and 3 compliments received in respect of the Housing Service.

In the 1st quarter of 2008/09 there were 3 complaints and 4 compliments received.

Staff in the unit continue to carry out regular monitoring, customer satisfaction surveys and quality assurance checks in respect of the services we provide and those that are provided by EDH. The feedback obtained is reported and addressed by service managers and this helps to ensure the services provided to our customers are improved on a continuous basis.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Policy Implications

There are no direct implications.

5.2 Legal Implications

The report complies with the reporting requirements contained in the Management

Agreement between the Council and East Durham Homes.

5.3 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications.

5.4 Risk Implications

A risk assessment has been completed and the necessary actions required to manage the identified risks will be implemented.

5.5 Communications

Appropriate monitoring information contained in the report will be communicated via the Council's Website, Infopoint, Tenants Newsletter and Notice Boards.

6.0 Corporate Implications

6.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities

The evaluation of performance by East Durham Homes will maintain an overview of the company's contribution to the Council's Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives.

The Housing Service Plan makes a direct contribution to the Corporate Objectives of Decent Homes For All, Building a Healthy Community and Quality Services For Our People.

6.2 Equality and Diversity

There are no equality and diversity implications.

6.3 E Government

There are no e-government implications.

6.4 Procurement

There are no procurement implications.

6.5 Local Government Restructure

The Council's Head of Housing and EDH Chief Executive are both involved in the LGR Housing 'Workstream' – a working group of Senior Officers who have been tasked with developing and delivering the policies, practices and structures for the new Authority's Housing Service from 1st April 2009.

Key achievements to date include reaching agreement through the County Council and Joint Improvement Team (JIT) to establish a core Housing Service within the new Regeneration & Economic Development Directorate from April 2009. This service will be responsible for Housing Policy & Strategy development, Private Sector Housing, Homelessness prevention & Housing Options, Supported Housing (including the Community Alarms & Wardens service) as well as the in-house provision of Housing Management services in Durham City and the strategic/performance management relationship with the existing public sector landlords operating across the County.

The new Authority will have 2 Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) – East Durham Homes, covering the current District of Easington area, and Dale & Valley Homes, covering the Wear Valley District Council area. In addition there will be an 'in-house' Housing

Management/Landlord function for what is the current Durham City Council area. The new Authority will also have strong strategic relationships with the 3 existing Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) landlords – Cestria Community Housing (the former Chester-le-Street Council housing stock), Derwentside Homes (the former Derwentside Council housing stock) and Teesdale Housing Association (the former Teesdale Council stock). The tenants of Sedgefield Borough Council recently voted in favour of 'stock transfer' of their homes to a new LSVT landlord and it is expected that this transfer will be complete before vesting day April 2009.

Work is currently ongoing to ensure that policies, structures and budgets are in place to deliver and effective performance management process within the new Housing Service and with the various ALMO and LSVT Landlord providers.

7.0 Recommendation

Members are recommended to note the information provided in the appendices to this report.

Background Papers/Documents used in the preparation of this report:

- Corporate and Performance Plan 2008/09
- Housing Service Plan 2008/09s
- Performance Files in Housing Service
- East Durham Homes Performance Files

