

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Thursday 29 November 2012** at **10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor J Moran (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, B Arthur, B Graham, A Naylor, P Stradling, M Wilkes, A Willis

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Batson, Mrs A Harrison and Mr D Lavin

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Brunskill, C Carr, J Hunter, P Jopling, R Liddle, C Potts, J Rowlandson, Andy Turner, M Williams and Mrs O Brown and Mr A Kitching

Also Present:

Councillors M Dixon and E Tomlinson

A1 Declarations of Interest

Councillors B Arthur and E Tomlinson declared an interest in Item 3 as a Board Members of East Durham Homes and Dale and Valley Homes respectively.

A2 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

A3 Performance Reporting: Durham City Homes, Dale & Valley Homes and East Durham Homes

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Stephen Gwilym referred Members to the covering report within the agenda papers and noted that the format of the meeting would be similar to previous years, this being the third year that the Committee had received the Annual Reports from the Housing Organisations.

Members noted that the Chief Executives of each of the Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs), Dale and Valley Homes (DVH) and East Durham Homes (EDH), together with the Manager of Durham City Homes (DCH) would give a brief presentation and speak to the Committee as regards their Annual Report and performance.

The Chair introduced the Manager, DCH, Simon Bartlett to speak in relation to the Council's "In-House Housing Organisation".

Durham City Homes

The Manager, DCH explained that the Annual Report for DCH was developed in conjunction with Tenants, set out the performance in terms of the Tenants Services Agency (TSA) Standards, although while the TSA was no longer in existence, its remit was now with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The Committee noted that the Annual Report had been developed with input from the Tenants' Panel at workshops sessions; focus groups; questionnaires and input from Staff.

The Committee heard that in relation to "Tenant Involvement and Empowerment" DCH had recruited 15 Tenants to the "Reality Checkers" group, completed 5 Scrutiny exercises and held a Tenants Matter Conference, with over 200 attendees. Members noted that the statistics for satisfaction levels were down slightly, in contrast to performance statistics that had actually increased in general. The Manager, DCH noted that 69% of telephone calls were answered within 60 seconds noting that the more usual standard for similar organisations was within 20 seconds. Councillors noted that the implementation of new Housing Benefit systems had a knock-on affect with public perception, with delays and frustrations with that process having coloured opinion as regards DCH. The Committee learned that the target for satisfaction with how a complaint was dealt with was 6/10 with the actual figure being 5/10, and the satisfaction level for how customers were dealt with was on target at 7/10. Members noted that 93 complaints had been received and 17 compliments.

Councillors understood that the service provided a 24 hour, 7 day a week telephone contact and offered a text message service for the reporting of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and repairs. It was added that an updated complaints process had been implemented and that the second layer of automated menu selections had been removed from the housing telephone line, previously a source of frustration to users. Members noted that planned improvements included work to improve call response times, review of the complaints procedure and increasing capacity within the Estates Team. Councillors were reminded of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel that had been set up, Tenant involvement in looking at the Stock Options Appraisal (SOA) Project and an Equality and Diversity Guide for staff that had been developed. Members noted that improvements that were planned in relation to involvement included further development of Tenant Scrutiny, a Tenant training programme and a "Hard to Reach" involvement statement.

In relation to "Home", the Manager, DCH explained that all homes were at the Decent Homes Standard (DHS), though customer satisfaction with the quality of the works had fallen. The Manager, DCH explained that this could be a consequence of Tenants' misconception of DHS as being new kitchens, bathrooms and double glazing, rather than the official DHS criteria.

Members learned that changes in funding arrangements, moving from the grant system to self-financing would help to enable works to have all properties double glazed by next year, and also to work on issues with some combi-boilers. It was added that satisfaction with external painting had reduced and this was noted as an issue to be addressed.

The Committee were reminded that an Asset Management Strategy as well as a Decent Homes information pack and "Welcome Pack" had been produced. Members noted renewable energy works, for example installation of air source heat pumps, in conjunction with partners and of planned improvements including a review of the decoration voucher scheme and the affordable warmth strategy. It was noted that repairs performance was well above target with the percentage of repairs appointments kept being 98.5%, up from only 60% 5 years ago. Members noted that the number of repairs being completed correctly first time was 99.5% and the gas safety certificate figure was 99.9%. Councillors noted that there had been improvements to: the repairs and maintenance policy and fire safety, with further improvements planned relating to rechargeable repairs; the handy person scheme and improved communication as regards repairs and maintenance works.

The Manager, DCH noted for "Tenancy" that the satisfaction level of new Tenants was on target and the average re-let time had improved from the previous year, however was still below target, and it was added that only 8% of tenancies lasted less than 12 months a good indicator of the sustainability of the tenancies. Members noted that 86% of Durham Key Options (DKO) applications were registered within 28 days. It was explained that there has been several achievements including: improved Tenancy Agreements, a Tenants Handbook; "Smarterbuys", enabling Tenants to access low cost household items; and the setting up of the Tenancy Sustainment Team. The Committee were reminded of improvements that would need to be completed, including: Welfare Benefits advice, an "easy read" version of the Tenancy Agreement; and a review of the Lettable Standard.

Councillors learned that in relation to "Neighbourhood and Community", DCH had traditionally a high level of satisfaction; however, there had been a slight fall in satisfaction, though still 83% of Tenants were satisfied with their neighbourhood. Members noted that 5 ASB Contracts had been established, and there had only been 1 eviction as a result of ASB. Members noted that there was a Neighbourhoods Policy and Garage Strategy in place and communal areas were robustly managed. The Committee noted planned improvements included: an increase in the capacity of the Estates Team; more Neighbourhood meetings; ASB profiling and a "customer support reference map".

The Committee noted that in respect of "Value for Money", DCH had joined the North East Procurement Group, giving savings of approximately £500,000. It was added that the introduction of services charges was being developed to give transparency on the quality of the services being provided. The Manager, DCH explained that existing Service Level Agreements (SLAs) had been reviewed and 2 sheltered accommodation properties had been closed, as they were no longer fit for purpose. Members were reminded that DCH's Value for Money Working Group continued to operate to ensure matters were looked at and kept on track. Members noted that the rent collection level was 97.1% and £52,000 of former Tenant rent arrears had been collected. Councillors noted that 15 Tenants had been evicted for rent arrears and the current level of rent arrears was £623,000.

The Manager, DCH explained that whilst the “Governance and Financial Viability” strand was not technically applicable to DCH, the Annual Report did set out the information for clarity. Members were reminded that the Council’s Cabinet was the actual decision making body, with the DCH Non-Executive Board that would the pass reports to DCC for decisions, with the Tenants’ Scrutiny Panel undertaking an important governance role.

The Committee noted diagrams setting out the Revenue and Capital funding for DCH over 2011/12 and it was reiterated that there would be a move away from Government grant funding to self-financing. Councillors noted that the majority of the capital budget was in respect of decent homes works.

The Chair introduced the Chief Executive of DVH, Peter Chaffer to speak in relation to the performance and Annual Report for DVH.

Dale and Valley Homes

Members were reminded that DVH was set up in 2006 and was responsible for over 4,000 properties, employing 70 people the majority of which lived locally.

The Committee noted that the DVH Vision was to “Provide homes and neighbourhoods that our customers want to live in and are proud to live in”, with 4 key strategic objectives having been established to achieve this:

- Delivering Excellent Services
- Delivering and Maintaining Decent Homes
- Running our Business Well
- Sustaining Local Neighbourhoods

The Chief Executive, DVH explained that there was considerable work undertaken in respect of engaging with stakeholders, through the Wear Valley Customer Panel, Scrutiny Group and working and resident groups. Members noted that the DVH Board included Tenants, with the Vice-Chair being a Tenant in addition to one of the 3 Committee Chairs also being a Tenant. Members were reminded of the work ongoing with DCC in relation to the SOA Project; Tenancy Strategy; choice based lettings (DKO); and complaints handling. The Committee noted that DVH worked with Esh Property Services and Gentoo to raise standards in the housing stock and achieve the Decent Homes standard.

Members noted that the Annual Report had been distributed to all customers, with customers having played a key role in deciding the format and content of the report. Councillors noted that performance in 2011/12 was good, with 96.4% or responsive repairs being completed on time against a target of 98.3%. Councillors learned that Decent Homes works had meant that 97.7% of homes were now decent and the level of satisfaction with the works was 93.3% against a target of 91.5%. Members noted that 100% of DVH properties had a valid gas safety certificate and that the current level of rent arrears as a percentage of the rent due was 2.07% compared to a target of 2.00%. It was added that the rent lost from empty properties as a percentage of the rent due was 1.1%, with the target having been 1.2%.

The Chief Executive, DVH explained that “Customer Guarantees” had been introduced in April 2011, consisting of 43 guarantees with 72 measures assigned to them. Councillors noted that 39 of the measures were on target, 28 were within 10% of target and 5 were further than 10% from target. The Committee noted that the guarantees had been reviewed and customer care training had been given to all staff and contractors. Members noted an improved performance in respect of satisfaction with complaints handling being 92.3%.

It was explained that DVH had helped in the SOA Project with involvement from customers and with the secondment of a member of DVH staff, Marie Roe, to be the Manager for the SOA Project. Members learned that a Tenant led Scrutiny Group was established in 2011/12 and they had reviewed the reporting and logging of repairs, and the complaints process, which had led to changes that had reflected in improved customer satisfaction. The Chief Executive, DVH explained that DVH had achieved the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) on its first attempt in June 2012. It was added that the CSE had recognised the emphasis placed on developing customer insight, understanding the customer experience and the robust measurement of service satisfaction. Councillors were asked to note a quote from the CSE Assessor: “The Scrutiny Group are excellent... a class above the rest”.

The Committee noted that DVH had almost achieved the Decent Homes Standard across all its properties; however, Members were reminded that there were levels of works undertaken to ensure that the “DVH Standard” or “Decent Homes Plus” was applied and this was on target to be applied to all homes by September 2013. Councillors noted that the level of investment in properties over 2011/12 had been approximately £6,827,000, making 567 homes up to the DVH standard. The Chief Executive, DVH was proud to note that 67 new homes had been built for DVH, with 46 being apartments, 4 being bungalows and 17 being 2/3 bedroom family homes. Members noted that the scheme at Greenside Place was completed on time and within budget, and had a high degree of customer satisfaction. It was added that the final phase of development at Park Avenue Court was completed in August 2012.

Members were asked to note that in relation to “Tenancy”, DVH had identified customers that were affected by the changes to benefit as a result of Welfare Reform and these customers were being offered help and support. Councillors noted that another strand of support being offered was that of an extension to the contract for Citizens’ Advice Bureau (CAB) to provide a Money Advice Service for DVH customers. It was noted that DVH had worked with DCC as regards under-occupation and 6 Tenants had been successful in downsizing from their previous property. Councillors were informed that 2 new services had been introduced, a Garden Maintenance Service and an Intensive Housing Management Service, both of which were generating additional income for DVH and delivering high levels of customer satisfaction.

The Chief Executive, DVH explained that customer satisfaction with the quality of their neighbourhood had improved to 87% and added that it was hoped that the SOA Project may offer the opportunity to help move the figure beyond 90%. Councillors noted several regeneration schemes and the continuation of the “Better Homes, Better Lives” fund which provided grants of up to £500 for community groups with support from DVH, the Esh Group and Gentoo.

Members noted that the efforts of customers and partners in helping to improve the neighbourhoods within the DVH area were recognised through an awards process.

Councillors were asked to note that in respect of “Value for Money”; a saving of £200,000 had been achieved within the contract with Gentoo, with indications from customers being that performance had not suffered in making efficiencies. Members noted that repairs workers no longer worked from a centralised depot, they worked from home, with the process managed from the DVH offices.

Councillors noted that bids for funding for Painting Pads, a social enterprise, and Energy Advisors had been successful, with the impact of Welfare Reform and rising energy costs being the 2 areas of highest concern. It was added that it had been possible to reduce the management fee of DVH by £400,000 and that this money could then be released to support the final stages of the Decent Homes works.

The Chief Executive, DVH reminded Members of the success of DVH in being noted within the Sunday Times Top 100 Employers, with an improvement in every aspect of the assessment year on year. It was noted that DVH achieved a 3 Star “extraordinary” rating and that DVH was the highest rated company within the North East across all sectors and the highest performing ALMO nationally. Members noted that DVH was the only ALMO to achieve 3 Stars and ranked 11th nationally in the “not-for-profit” category. Councillors noted that this was felt to be through high levels of employee engagement and that early indication from the recent Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey demonstrated significantly higher levels of customer satisfaction across all service areas.

The Committee learned that DVH invested in the training and support for its staff as demonstrated by an increase in investment from £5,000 for 2006/07 to £62,000 for 2011/12. Members noted that in 2012, the 4th Masters Degree had been achieved by a DVH staff member and a further 5 first Degrees were being studied for, with a variety of subjects being studied including: Management and Leadership; Project Management; Finance and Risk; Construction and Coaching and Guidance. It was explained that there was a correlation between the investment made in training and a reduction in the external consultancy budget which fell from £135,000 for 2006/07 to £30,000 for 2011/12.

The Chief Executive, DVH explained that apprenticeships had been a valuable investment and had provided much success for the business. Councillors noted that 1 in 3 members of staff had formerly been apprentices, 1 in 10 members of staff were currently undertaking apprenticeships and DVH had been recognised as a Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer in 2012. It was added that DVH had achieved North East Medium Employer of the Year and the Customer Insight Manager; Clair Ord had achieved an Inspirational Mentor of the Year Award and Apprentice Champion with the Chief Executive, DVH being voted as Inspirational Leader of the Year.

Members noted that challenges for the future included impact of the Welfare Reform Act and rising energy prices and a continued need to make further efficiencies. Councillors noted that there was a need to complete the Decent Homes programme and also to implement the recommendations of the SOA Project. It was explained that there was also a need for deliver further savings and efficiencies for DCC and to continue to improve performance.

The Chair introduced the Chief Executive of EDH, Paul Mains to speak in relation to the performance and Annual Report for EDH.

East Durham Homes

The Chief Executive, EDH noted that the Annual Report for EDH was customer centric and was developed in conjunction with a Tenants' Editing Panel.

Members were reminded that achievements had not been made in isolation, there had been partnership working with several organisations including: DCC; the East Durham Area Action Partnership (AAP); The Housing Partnership; Kier; Keepmoat; Wates; Morrison; Durham Constabulary; and the County Durham Credit Union.

In respect of Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, it was noted that the new DCC Customer Access Point had been opened at Seaham and new local offers had been developed with customers and EDH had been successful in retaining its Customer Service Excellence award. Councillors noted that there had been 103 service improvements made and the contact centre received around 10,000 calls per month, with 97% being answered and 96% of those being dealt with at the first point of contact. It was added that the 4% that were passed on to back office staff for resolution were tracked and that, on average, complaints were dealt with in 7.5 calendar days.

The Chief Executive, EDH explained the Customer Scrutiny Panel had looked at 3 services areas, made 59 recommendations and had spoken at several national events receiving national acclaim. Councillors learned that there were "MAD" (Making a Difference) days involving Thornley Primary School and Blackhall Guides and also activities at Westlea Grove Community Centre. Members understood that "quick fix it" grants totalling £4,800 had been awarded to 13 community projects. The Committee were asked to note that actions had been taken to ensure that services were tailored to the needs of individuals: including different formats for information; interpretation and translation; use of Plain English; Typetalk and Browsealoud; induction loops and customer care kits to support customers. Members noted that there had been improvements to the accessibility of outlets and the Annual Customer Service Day had provided a valuable conduit by which to receive feedback from target groups. Councillors were made aware that EDH had been awarded "best practice" by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS).

The Committee learned that there had been £23.7 Million spent on decent homes works, delivering 1,288 decent homes, with the non-decency rate having reduced from 77% to 61% and customer satisfaction being 9.01 out of 10. Members noted that fuel poverty and rising energy prices were issues that were affecting more and more Tenants and that in response to this a scheme of heating replacement works had been undertaken, and in Castle Eden where there was no mains gas supply 8 homes had been fitted with air source heat pumps in order to help reduce energy bills. Councillors noted that within the 2011/12 Capital Programme for EDH, a number of Decent Homes works were undertaken to empty properties, helping to get these properties back into use.

Members noted that in conjunction with East Durham AAP an Environmental Scheme had been instigated at Peterlee, joint funded with Local Councillor budgets, that had enabled 5 apprenticeships opportunities and it was added that each partner organisation involved had offered a full-time apprenticeships going forward.

It was noted that there was support for Social Enterprises and that it was hoped that in conjunction with the AAP, around 20 would be in place in the next few years.

Councillors were informed that in 2011/12 890 properties had received adaptation works and all properties had undergone an annual safety check.

In respect of repairs and maintenance, it was explained that over 33,000 repairs had been undertaken; 99.15% of appointments had been made and kept; 95.87% of repairs were completed right first time; and 99.95% of emergency repairs had been completed on time.

The Chief Executive, EDH explained that 757 properties had been re-let after repairs, with the re-let time now being 17 days (23 at the time of the Annual Report). Councillors noted improvements in respect of support of Tenancies with the introduction of the DKO Housing Wizard, important in the climate of Welfare Reform, 80% of applications were made via the internet; the "homeswapper" service; the "Smarterbuys" scheme for the purchase of furniture and white goods at a reasonable price and rate; and support of the Credit Union. Members noted an agreement with the Illegal Money Lending Team as regards helping to prioritise those fleeing violence from loan sharks and free welfare and debt advice that had helped 1,644 customers, identifying over £500,000 of housing and welfare benefits for those customers. The Committee understood that a Vulnerable Applicant Officer had helped 304 people access DKO and that 60 charitable fund grants worth £8,000 had been secured. It was added that 148 young people had been helped by the Sustainable Employment Team's "Life Line" scheme as regards developing important life skills.

Members were reminded that estate walkabouts had been undertaken, 160 in 2011/12, there had been 17 environmental improvements as a result of the walkabouts, and 149 customers receiving help from the Handy-person service. The Committee were informed that 2 Estate Apprenticeships had been set up, studying for NVQ Level 3 over 2 years; students in schools had been appointed as "Junior Estate Officers"; and there had been a number of "community clean up" days that had been successful.

The Committee noted that there was still a challenge in respect of ASB with low-level incidents dealt with by the Estates Team, escalating to the ASB Team where issues were more serious. It was explained that there had been 446 reports of ASB in 2011/12 and 93% of the reports had been successfully resolved. Members noted that in response to a rise in domestic violence, 42 front line staff had been training in reporting domestic violence and hate crimes and EDH had received an award to Victim Support from TPAS. Councillors learned that there had been 146 referrals to support agencies and there had been workshop sessions delivered to local schools on the issue of ASB, together with football tournaments for 14-16 year olds.

The Chief Executive, EDH noted that in respect of value for money the Customer Involvement and Inspection Panel and Value for Money Panel had helped drive savings of £855,993, with that being made up of:

- £322,441 from repairs and maintenance
- £159,320 from aids and adaptation contracts
- £19,079 via new banking arrangements
- £17,000 when renewing the insurance policy

Councillors noted that this had allowed an additional £800,000 to be invested in providing Decent Homes works.

In relation to Governance arrangements, it was explained that Margaret Oswald had been shortlisted for the Housing Heroes Award for “Inspirational Board Member of the Year” and the Chair’s Charity had raised £2,314 for the County Durham Society for the Blind, as well as around £5,000 for Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Members noted that the Board undertook assessment set against the National Housing Federation “Code of Governance”.

The Chief Executive, EDH referred Members to the financial information within the presentation, highlighting that a surplus of £142,712 and reserves of £2,134,052 had been reported for 2011/12. Members noted the several awards that EDH had achieved including:

- Action for the Blind – See the Capability not the Disability Award
- NFA Board Director of the Year 2011
- CIH Housing Heroes – Inspirational Board Director of the Year
- Finalists in Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group (SLCNG) for partnership with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service
- Better Health at Work Gold
- Shortlisted for TPAS “Best Practice for Supporting People”
- Annual Constructing Excellence North East Awards – Client of the Year
- TPAS Award “Excellence in Equality and Diversity”
- Tenant of the year nomination
- Tenant / Resident Liaison Officer of the Year nomination

The Committee noted that there were challenges for the future, with a need to focus on customer experience, introducing a customer knowledge module to give appropriate training. Members noted there would be the launch of the Self-Service Portal and also development of options for customers to be able to buy furniture. It was added that it was hoped that the “Leader in Diversity” status would be achieved and that work would continue to develop a “buddies” scheme for victims of ASB and hate crimes. Members noted that there would be 1,500 Decent Homes delivered in 2012-13 and that customers would be supported in the wake of Welfare Reform. Councillors noted that it was hoped that the EDH Board would achieve an “Excellent A+” rating; further efficiencies would be developed and that SOA process would be completed.

The Chair thanked the three speakers and asked Members if they had any questions.

Mr T Batson noted that the three reports were excellent and wondered if Town and Parish Councils could relate to the Housing Organisations, accepting that there were representatives on the AAPs and so on. Councillor E Tomlinson noted that in his capacity as a DVH Board Member, he could feedback to that Board in this regard.

Councillor P Stradling asked what would happen to furniture packages that were given to customers should they move on or buy furniture themselves. The Chief Executive, EDH explained that any hired furniture would be returned should the customer no longer pay, and that alternatives such as obtaining low cost finance via a Credit Union were being suggested.

Councillor M Wilkes noted the work needed to complete the Decent Homes programme for EDH and appreciated the progress made so far, however, it was added that the schemes enabling people to access furniture packages or obtain fair finance via a Credit Union was far preferable to many high street lenders and furniture shops that had interest rates that were disgracefully high. Councillor M Wilkes also noted that there had been a fall in standards as regards grass-cutting in the Durham City area and wondered whether this was an issue related to how DCH was obliged to use DCC in-house services while the ALMOs were able to access whatever service they felt was appropriate and asked whether it would be possible to have a breakdown of the costs for each of the works being carried out by the 3 organisations.

Councillor B Graham asked whether there was a “standard” as regards adaptations works. The Manager, DCH explained that DCH was well resourced in this regard, and a backlog from 2009 had been cleared with the waiting time having been reduced from around 1 year for a walk-in shower down to zero. The Chief Executive, EDH noted that about 4-5 years ago, the waiting times for adaptation works were around 18 months, now the turnaround was in the upper quartile and the investment made in this area had been cost effective, with quicker turnaround and works being completed “right first time”. The Chief Executive, DVH noted that the resources allocated matched the need for adaptations and cases were prioritised accordingly.

Councillor M Dixon noted a story of a Tenant purchasing furniture from a high street store at high interest rates and then pawning the item in order to buy food, adding that these types of issues would only be resolved by working in partnership.

Councillor B Arthur asked for further information as regards the issue as regards combi-boilers breaking down. The Chief Executive, EDH noted that a particular model had been noted over time as being particularly problematic, notwithstanding it was manufactured by a well respected company. It was added that these particular boilers had been targeted for replacement as this would help to ensure longer term savings by reducing repair costs. The Manager, DCH noted the boilers DCH had experienced problems with had been the earlier versions of the technology and that there had not initially been any indications that problems would arise though these boilers would be replaced, again in order to provide longer term savings.

Councillor A Naylor asked why rent arrears can be allowed to get to quite significant levels. The Manager, DCH noted that last year there were some issues as regards the Housing Benefits system, moving from several systems pre-Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to one for the new Unitary DCC. Members heard that there was a “carrot and stick” approach taken, with Information, Advice and Guidance provided as regards help that can be given regarding rent arrears problems from Tenancy Support and Benefit Advisors, and also external organisations like the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), together with Tenancy Enforcement action where appropriate. The Chief Executive, DVH noted that there was a legacy issue as regards Housing Benefit, however, over time the level of arrears was reducing. The Chief Executive, EDH added that it was Welfare Reform had the potential to increase problems at least in the short term.

Councillor M Wilkes noted that the format and layout of the DVH and EDH reports was very user friendly and perhaps the DCH report could benefit from being set out similarly.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted that the Members would recall a report as regards implications of Welfare Reform had been reported to Cabinet in May and it was added that workstreams were ongoing with involvement from Housing Partners as regards the potential impact of Welfare Reform. Members were asked to note that the SOA Project was ongoing, with the Committee being familiar with the Housing Stock Options Manager, Marie Roe who had spoken to Members on several occasions. It was added that the SOA Report would be going to Cabinet and that further feedback from the Housing Stock Options Manager, including any impact on how Overview and Scrutiny would review performance would be reported back to the Committee, with the figures still being within the usual performance monitoring reports. The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer reiterated the message that all 3 Housing Organisations had evidenced that there had been improvement as regards the Decent Homes Standard since LGR.

Resolved:

That Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the Annual Reports and presentations in respect of Durham City Homes, Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes.