

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP REPORT – DURHAM CITY HOMES
REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONSIDERED BY CABINET SEPTEMBER 2010.**

Review Recommendation	Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
<p>1. That the Cabinet note the work undertaken by Durham City Homes in understanding their customer profile and ensuring that the key improvement priorities detailed within the Improvement Plan mirror the aspirations of DCH customer base.</p>	<p>n/a</p>		
<p>2. That this report and the conclusions and recommendations detailed therein be used as evidence to support DCH in their forthcoming Audit Commission Inspection and to demonstrate the effectiveness of the DCH Improvement Plan.</p>	<p>The Council was advised by letter on 11 October 2010 that the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) had decided not to formally commission and proceed with an “advance notice inspection” of Durham City Homes Landlord Services at this current time. This means the inspection originally programmed and notified to the Council by the Audit Commission to take place in January 2011 would not now take place.</p> <p>The Council was informed that some form of inspection may still take place at a later date and accordingly the Overview and Scrutiny Review report and recommendations in relation to Durham City Homes will be retained as evidence should such an inspection occur.</p>		

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3. That Cabinet note the good progress being made by DCH against delivering a number of projects and initiatives identified within the Improvement Plan, particularly in respect of "Customer facing" improvements.	n/a		
4. The Enhanced Tenancy Involvement Initiatives introduced by Durham City Homes are to be welcomed.	n/a		

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<p>5. DCH should seek to ensure that take up amongst these initiatives is reflective of the Customer profile and that more work is undertaken to increase participation amongst younger tenants.</p>	<p>DCH continue to undertake comprehensive customer profiling and currently hold data for 73% of our tenants, with a target of 90% by year end. We will be producing an interim profiling report in December 2011 which will set out the information gathered to date on the profile of our tenants. In the meantime, we use information gathered through our annual satisfaction survey to gain an understanding of the make – up of our tenant customer base. This information will all be used to understand how the profile of our involved tenants compares to the profile of tenants as a whole.</p> <p>We have recently expanded the diversity of our involved tenants through the implementation of new involvement activities and are currently planning a “young person’s focus group” which specifically targets our younger tenants. In 2009/10 we commissioned the young people’s charity Centrepont to undertake consultation work with young people, training for our staff on working with young people and consultation with other agencies working with young people. This has resulted in an action plan to further develop young people’s involvement.</p>	<p>Service Improvement Team</p>	<p>December 2011</p>

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6. DCH should improve publicity and information provided to local Councillors and tenants when Estate Walkabouts are organised to ensure wide participation.	All Estate Walkabout timetables and information are provided in the "Tenant matters" newsletter which is sent to all tenants, leaseholders, elected members and Parish Council's. Posters with the timetable are put up in venues across Durham City and are on the Council's website.	Estates and Tenancy Team	Complete
7. The increase in staff resource for DCH is welcomed and will assist in ensuring the delivery of the Improvement Plan.	n/a		
8. Cabinet should note the problems that have been experienced in filling posts during a prolonged period of Local Government Reorganisation, with competing demands for HR support being evident from within the Regeneration and Economic Development Service Grouping.	n/a		
9. The move to a more unified, multi-disciplined housing team for Durham City Homes should be the subject of an early report to Cabinet.	Although no further report has been sent to Cabinet, work has progressed in this area. Service Level Agreements are in place for all services delivered to tenants by other teams across the Council and regular monitoring meetings take place to improve service delivery, performance and joint working and communication. In July, the Council agreed that the Durham City rents team would move from the Resources Directorate to become part of Durham City Homes.	Durham City Homes	Ongoing

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10. Cabinet note the progress made by DCH in developing a robust Performance Management system that feeds into the Service Grouping and Corporate Performance Management processes.	n/a		
11. DCH needs to supplement their existing Performance Management information with Benchmarking data which allow comparative performance to be assessed against other Housing providers nationally, regionally and locally.	DCH continues to improve its approach to benchmarking. The annual report, first published last year and sent to all tenants, contained comparative information, the annual Delivery Plan sets targets and reports performance compared to others and DCH has been an active member of the Housemark Benchmarking club for several years. We have just received our second annual benchmarking report, which compares our performance and costs to our peers, including the other two local providers.	Service Improvement Team	Complete

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<p>12. The working group:-</p> <p>(a) note the existing arrangements for reporting on DCH performance Management information (Performance Indicators - PIs) to the Service Grouping and the development of exception reporting to Cabinet; and that the relevance of the PIs will be reviewed as part of the Council Plan and MTFP processes.</p> <p>(b) The working group recommend that DCH performance Management information is also reported to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>(c) It is also recommended that regular comparator performance information should be developed for DCH (in house provider), Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes (the ALMOs) together with the Co.Durham LSVT's where appropriate and subjected to periodic reporting to Overview and Scrutiny.</p>	<p>All performance is reported through the RED performance management structure with regular attendance and participation in Housing Performance Clinics.</p> <p>The Economy and Enterprise O&S Committee has received performance management information on the 15th November, 2010 and it is planned that the meeting on the 14th November, 2011 will receive further performance management information.</p> <p>Comparator performance information was provided to the Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee on the 15th November, 2011 and it is intended that the meeting on the 14th November, 2011 will receive further performance information.</p>	<p>Service Improvement Team</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Team</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>To be reported annually.</p> <p>To be reported annually.</p>

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13. The previously agreed capital and Revenue investment into DCH is to be welcomed and will ensure that the Improvement Plan initiatives are fully funded and that DCH will meet Decent Homes standard by the end of 2010.	All homes managed by DCH achieved the Decent Homes standard on 31 st March 2011. We were the first social housing provider in the County to achieve this standard and implemented our own "Durham Plus Standard".	Decent Homes Team	Complete
14. More work is needed to review Services' costs in providing the responsive repairs service and elements of the Capital Programme to ensure that DCH receive Value for Money.	<p>Significant work has been undertaken to ensure DCH delivers good VFM.</p> <p>In September 2010 we commissioned with Direct Services an independent VFM review of our repairs service which resulted in the implementation of an action plan leading to savings and VFM improvement.</p> <p>We have also become active members of the North East Procurement Network and have made significant savings in delivery of our capital programmes, which we have been able to re-invest in tenants' homes.</p>	<p>Decent Homes Team</p> <p>Repairs Team</p>	Complete
15. Additional work in developing Service Level Agreements for the provision of Corporate Support Services to Durham City Homes should be subject to early review to ensure that they are robustly performance managed and also provide Value for Money.	DCH are currently in the process of reviewing existing Service level Agreements with internal providers and establishing new ones with the aim of improving value for money and service delivery.	Manager, Durham City Homes	November 2011

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<p>16.To support the developing work being undertaken in respect of the financial modelling of the Government's Housing "offer" and its implications for Durham City Homes, the proposed Stock Options appraisal and condition survey be progressed and the earmarking of reserves to finance this is supported.</p>	<p>The Stock Options Appraisal process is being progressed and has been reported to scrutiny.</p>	<p>Housing Directions Team</p>	<p>December 2011</p>
<p>17. The proposed timeline and project plan for the Stock Options work be reported to Overview and Scrutiny periodically.</p>	<p>The Economy and Enterprise O&S Committee considered a report detailing the timeline and project plan for the Stock options Appraisal at it's meeting on the 4th February , 2011.</p> <p>A further update was provided to members at the meeting on the 15th July, 2011 in relation to the progress made , stock options available and next steps. It was decided by members that a special meeting should be held on the 28th , 2011, providing an opportunity for members to discuss with the consultants, the various stock options highlighted in the report.</p>	<p>Overview and Scrutiny Team</p>	<p>Until the conclusion of the Stock Options Appraisal.</p>

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<p>18. The Working Group recommends that the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee be engaged in the proposed options appraisal work in respect of the future provision of Housing services within Durham City.</p>	<p>At a special meeting of the Economy and Enterprise O&S Committee held on the 28th September,2011, members received a presentation from the Consultants focusing on the stock options available . Comments made by members at that meeting were then feed into the ongoing consultation process.</p> <p>A further update will be provided to the committee at the meeting on the 14th November,2011.</p>	<p>Overview and Scrutiny Team</p>	<p>Until the conclusion of the Stock Options Appraisal.</p>
<p>19. DCH should improve publicity and information provided to local Councillors and tenants when Estate Walkabouts are organised to ensure wide participation.</p>	<p>All Estate Walkabout timetables and information is provided in the "Tenant matters" newsletter which is sent to all tenants, leaseholders, elected members and Parish Council's. Posters with the timetable are put up in venues across Durham City and are on the Council's website.</p>	<p>Estates and Tenancy Team</p>	<p>Complete</p>

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<p>20. DCH need to ensure that they have a robust communications plan in place when tenants are faced with Capital Works and a potential degree of upheaval and disturbance to ensure that they can make a informed decision whether to remain in their property whilst works are undertaken.</p>	<p>We provide all tenants with at least 21 days notice of capital Works and ensure that tenants are contacted by the relevant project supervisor for this work. We will be launching our new and revised Decent Homes Information pack in October 2011 which will ensure that tenants have more effective information about the capital works being undertaken in their home.</p> <p>The capital programme is published annually in the tenants newsletter and is available on the Council's website.</p>	<p>Decent Homes team</p>	<p>October 2011</p>
<p>21. That those issues raised by Age Concern in respect of customer access problems into Durham City Homes be referred to the "Customer First" project Group for consideration.</p>	<p>Representatives from DCH and the Council's Housing Solutions Team have met regularly with Age Concern to improve support for older people who are wishing to move home. Services to assist people to bid for properties through Durham Key Options continue to improve, with greater support being offered.</p>	<p>Durham City Homes and the Housing Solutions Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>22. DCH must ensure that where service improvements and developments are introduced, they are communicated to service users by way of a robust Marketing and Communications plan.</p>	<p>We have a robust communications and marketing plan and ensure that all tenants are informed through a combination of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants Matter Open Day • Tenant Matters newsletter • Durham City Homes Website • Annual Report • Press Releases • Flyers and posters within contact centres 	<p>Service Improvement Team</p>	<p>Complete</p>

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<p>23. DCH develop a relationship with Age Concern Durham County to ensure that the more vulnerable and elderly tenants will have a mechanism through which their voice can be heard and that Age Concern Durham County be invited to participate in Service Improvement and Engagement activity and initiatives.</p>	<p>We have developed effective working relationships with Age UK Durham to ensure our more vulnerable tenants have an opportunity to influence service delivery. As one of our partners Age UK are invited to participate in our improvement and engagement activities, including the recent "Stakeholders Conference" in July, designed to enable a range of partners to hear more about our services and comment on areas of improvement.</p>	<p>Lettings Team</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>24. The report's conclusions and recommendations be considered by Cabinet against the context of the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review and be used as evidence to support Durham City Homes during the planned Audit Commission Inspection in January 2011.</p>	<p>The planned Audit Commission Inspection did not occur due to re-organisation issues within the Audit Commission and Tenant Services Authority. We have commissioned 4 mock inspections of our services and have developed action plans for improvement within these areas.</p>	<p>Service Improvement Team</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>25. A review of these recommendations be brought back to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee within six months.</p>	<p>It is intended that a further report detailing progress against recommendations will be considered at the Economy and Enterprise O&S Committee at the meeting scheduled for June 2012.</p>	<p>Overview and Scrutiny Team</p>	<p>June 2012.</p>