

# HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

## Agenda Item 47

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Housing Management Service Improvement Plan update</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>7 December 2009</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Director of Adult Social Care &amp; Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Diane Freeland</b>	<b>Tel:</b> <b>29-3841</b>
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<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report informs Housing Management Consultative Committee of the progress made in the delivery of the Housing Management Service Improvement Plan 2009 – 12.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee notes the progress to date and the priorities for year two of the service improvement plan.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The Housing Management Service Improvement Plan, which is available in the members' room or available on request presents a programme for managing and maintaining council housing over the next three years. It has been developed with the overall objective of achieving excellent housing management services for council tenants and leaseholders in Brighton and Hove.
- 3.2 The priorities of the plan are:
- Improve services to an excellent standard, with residents at the heart of everything we do.
  - Improve the quality and sustainability of our homes and neighbourhoods.
  - Deliver Value for Money services and maintain a sustainable 30 year business plan.
  - Make best use of our housing stock to address housing need.
  - Ensure that social housing provides a platform for reducing inequality and creating opportunity.

3.3 The three year plan is being delivered through the operational business plan and the Housing Improvement Programme. The Housing Improvement Programme co-ordinates the delivery of all of the large improvement projects contained within the annual business plan and is overseeing the transformation of the housing management division. The delivery of the programme is overseen by the Housing Improvement Programme Board. The Programme is split into four core work streams:

- Housing Investment
- Access & Customer Care
- Diversity, Inequality and Sustainability
- Business Improvement

3.4 During year one of the service improvement plan the following projects are underway:

3.5 Delivering a 3 star service

The Audit Commission carried out an advice and assistance visit in March 2009 on our income management service, our arrangements for resident involvement and the business plan. Since this visit a project group have been reviewing how all of our services are performing. We have been identifying gaps in our service delivery and taking steps to meet these gaps. We will also be completing a self assessment on our service identifying our key strengths and more importantly our areas for improvement. We will seek feedback from residents to see whether they agree or disagree with our findings as it's vital that we know how well residents feel we deliver different services.

3.6 Financial Inclusion Strategy

By working in partnership with residents and local agencies we have been developing a financial inclusion strategy that we hope will have an impact on poverty by making sure residents have access to appropriate financial products and services and the opportunity, ability and confidence to make informed decisions about their financial circumstances. We have already made good progress towards promoting financial inclusion for our residents through a number of services and initiatives including eBenefits, Citizens Advice Bureau Money Advice and Financial Inclusion Health Check. The Income Management Working Group and the Financial Inclusion Project Group will be working with officers to finalise the strategy which is due for completion in December 2009.

3.7 Resident Involvement Strategy

Work is proceeding on the review of the Tenant Compact, the agreement that sets out the way tenants, leaseholders, councillors and officers work together and the resident involvement strategy. Within this will be the establishment of a Tenant Engagement Framework and this work is being carried forward for tenants by the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group.

The review is expected to be completed by spring 2010 with a new compact and strategy in place by summer 2010. The overriding aim of the work will be to ensure that customer priorities are central to the business planning process and that a variety of methods of consultation are in place to monitor achievement against undertaking.

### 3.8 Repairs and Maintenance Partnership

The Mobilisation of the new Repairs, Refurbishment and Improvement Strategic Partnership is now underway, getting everything in place for the contract start in April 2010. Mears have brought in an experienced team to organise and manage the mobilisation process from their side including experts in project management, procurement, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Human Resources (HR), transport fleet and buildings. These staff along with others from the Brighton & Hove branch will be working closely with council officers in order to plan and undertake the tasks necessary for a successful start to the new partnership.

Two Partnership Workshop events were held in October which involved staff from Mears and the council working with residents to look at how the partnership best meet their needs and aspirations. The workshops resulted in a Partnering Charter which clearly sets out the principles by which the partnership will operate and the partners work together.

### 3.9 Local Delivery Vehicle

The Local Delivery Vehicle, Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes, has been set up by the council to generate additional funding to invest in improvements to the council's housing stock. The 12 board members – including four council tenants appointed by Area Panels – have met regularly since December. Tenant board members have reported progress to all Area Panel meetings since February and attended to answer questions. A tenant board member is Vice Chair and all sit on three sub-committees recently established to look in detail at finance, legal and property matters.

- 3.9.1 The council has worked with board members and advisers to progress the draft legal documents, funding arrangements, how empty properties would be identified as suitable for leasing to the company up to the agreed maximum of 499 over five years and how they would be let and managed by the council after refurbishment. Board members have visited the 106 properties Full Council agreed should be leased to the company and reviewed planned works to convert them into self contained flats and bring them up to standard. The council has also involved board representatives in favourable discussions with banks interested in funding the project, and a high street bank has issued a letter of support. An update on funding and consents is included elsewhere on the agenda.

### 3.10 Turning the Tide

The draft social exclusion strategy 'Turning the Tide' outlines the aims and objectives to address anti social behaviour, intergenerational social exclusion and quality of life experiences for residents in social housing living in areas of multiple deprivation in Brighton & Hove. The strategy is a work in progress and comments and feedback from key stakeholders, partners and council tenants will be sought before presenting a final draft to council for approval later in the financial year. A pilot in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean is underway and a series of resident focus groups will be run in the pilot area to look at key themes and identify priorities for the local community. The pilot will last nine months with an evaluation completed by July 2010.

### 3.11 Value for Money

As part of the council's value for money programme, a housing report was produced in October 2008 with value for money opportunities identified. Our progress against the action plan is attached at Appendix 1.

A cost benchmarking project group has also been formed to analyse and understand the costs involved in delivering our service. This group will be undertaking benchmarking (comparing our costs and performance with similar organisations) to enable us to make value for money assessments on our operations across the broad range of services we provide. We recognise that we need to link performance and cost and by doing so we can make efficiencies and direct money to services that residents want. Current work includes a review of our management costs and a review of estates service costs. We intend to share information in future with residents through our performance reports and working groups.

### 3.12 Website Review

We are currently looking at improving the accessibility and usability of our housing management website pages, with the aim of improving access to information and making it easier for residents to contact us and request services. This project involves researching examples of best practice, putting together proposals for improvements and reviewing the content to ensure we are providing relevant and clear information. An on line survey will be launched in December seeking feedback from residents on their views of our current pages and what residents would like to see on the pages in future.

### 3.13 Customer Access Strategy

A report was brought to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 12 October regarding the review of customer access arrangements for the housing management service. The project involves an analysis of previous work undertaken to improve customer access, a review of current arrangements, and the development of a new customer access model and strategy for the service. Residents need to be fully involved in the development of this strategy and issues will be considered at a meeting for Area Panel members. A further report detailing our findings will be brought back to Housing Management Consultative Committee in February 2010.

### 3.14 Sustainability

The housing energy efficiency working group was formed in March 2009 with the key aim to contribute to the sustainability agenda including reducing fuel poverty, encouraging change in individual behaviours and increase community action on climate change initiatives. Some key initiatives undertaken so far include looking at a reduction in energy consumption in both communal settings and individual properties and water billings. Projects to be taken forward include considering housing management's contribution to the 10:10 campaign (cutting 10% of our carbon emissions in 2010), identifying and training tenant energy champions and harnessing resident interest in growing, buying and preparing local food and supporting sustainable communities by engaging in activities on local land with their neighbours. Updates on the progress of the working group will be reported back to Housing Management Consultative Committee at six to nine monthly intervals.

### 3.15 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) – Procurement of a new housing management system

A project manager to oversee the purchase and implementation of a new ICT system for housing management is currently being recruited. The new system will enable the service to improve the way it manages properties, rents and related services.

3.16 Year two of the Service Improvement Plan will see us embedding the new repairs contract and making further progress in increasing the number of homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard. We will also deliver phase one of the customer access review, agree local priorities with residents and initiate the ICT project to procure a new housing management software system.

## 4. **CONSULTATION**

4.1 The Service Improvement Plan aims to meet the council's, strategic housing and resident priorities. The plan was developed with residents through the wide range of working groups to seek views on how we achieve excellence in service delivery. Ideas promoted by residents at citywide groups, monitoring groups, area panels, the city assembly and Housing Management Consultative Committee have also helped inform the priorities within this plan.

4.2 The plan has been informed by the Housing Strategy 2009-14. Extensive consultation was undertaken through a three stage process. Findings from this consultation and the strategy have helped inform our service priorities.

4.3 Residents will continue to be involved in the projects to deliver the plan and a bi-annual progress report will be brought to Housing Management Consultative Committee.

## 5. **FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

5.1 This report notes the progress to date and the priorities for year two of the Service Improvement Plan and therefore has no direct financial implications. Any

efficiency savings or service pressures identified as a result of the Service Improvement Plan will be included in the future HRA Budget reports and updated 30 year HRA Business Plans.

*Finance Officer Consulted Sue Chapman*

*Date: 10/11/09*

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report's recommendation. Any strategies developed as a result of the initiatives outlined will need to be scrutinised to ensure that they are legally sound, and have been formulated with due regard for the Human Rights Act.

*Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley*

*Date: 06/11/09*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the Service Improvement Plan. The Service Improvement Plan also directly aims to positively address inequality through priority five 'ensure that social housing provides a platform for reducing inequality and creating opportunity'.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The Housing Energy Efficiency Working Group aims to contribute to the sustainability agenda. Housing is also one of the 12 key objectives of the council's Sustainability Strategy which aims to ensure that everyone has access to decent, affordable housing that meets their needs. The Service Improvement Plan supports this aim.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Providing good quality housing and support is essential to help reduce anti social behaviour and other crime and support the victims. Specific actions within the Service Improvement Plan aim to provide safer communities through a balance of enforcement and support.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are no direct risk or opportunity management implications arising from this report.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 We recognise that the drive to achieve excellence in housing management will not be a success if carried out in isolation. It must recognise and address the needs and aspirations of the city and therefore the plan aims to support the priorities and aims of the Corporate Plan 2008- 11, Housing Strategy 2009-14 and the 2020 Community Strategy.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 To not have a Service Improvement Plan. However this is not recommended as the Service Improvement Plan was developed with the goal of providing excellent housing management services. Had the plan not been developed it would compromise our ability to deliver an excellent service and our core strategic priorities would not reflect the priorities and aspirations of residents.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 To provide Housing Management Consultative Committee with an update on our progress towards achieving the actions outlined in the Service Improvement Plan 2009-12.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

- 1. Value for Money Action Plan

**Documents In Members' Rooms**

- 1. Housing Management Service Improvement Plan 2009-12

**Background Documents**

None

