

# **HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

## **Agenda Item 11**

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Housing Management Service Improvement Plan Update</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>14 June 2010</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Director of Housing, Culture &amp; Enterprise</b>		
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<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 during year two of the improvement plan.

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

- 3.1 The Housing Management Service Improvement Plan 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 three year plan is being delivered through the operational business plan and 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 (for full details, see appendix 1):

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

3.3 In December 2009, a progress report for year one of the programme was presented to Housing Management Consultative Committee. This report provides a six monthly update on our progress towards meeting our priorities in year two.

### **3.4 Housing Investment**

#### Repairs & Improvement Partnership

3.4.1 The partnership got off to a good start on 1 April with Mears well prepared with additional operatives and van fleet. The new technology infrastructure worked effectively (ICT system, phone and data lines). All transferring council staff and operatives transferred successfully and are mostly positive about the transition.

3.4.2 Planning permission has been granted for a 'Supercentre' to house the partnership in the Fairway trading Estate on Moulsecoomb Way. This means we can now start work on this exiting development turning it into a state of the art operations centre for the partnership. The plan is to relocate the retained council staff to this building as well as Mears staff, and to be up and running during September 2010.

#### Local Delivery Vehicle

3.4.3 A formal commercial and financial offer was made to the LDV Board on 12 February 2010. The Board appointed financial advisors on the 24 May 2010 who will produce a business plan in order to hold negotiations with funders.

### **3.5 Diversity, Inequality and Sustainability**

#### Sustainability

3.5.1 A progress report on the work of the Energy Efficiency Working Group was discussed at Housing Management Consultative Committee in December 2009. Since then we have secured training through the Energy Saving Trust for tenant energy champions who will provide

energy advice on simple actions around the homes that everyone can take to reduce fuel bills. Further developments will also be taken through the Repairs & Improvement Partnership and Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) project.

### Turning the Tide

3.5.2 A report providing an overview of progress of the Turning the Tide pilot and strategy was considered by Housing Management Consultative Committee in March. The Social Exclusion Strategy is a work in progress, currently at the second draft stage. Feedback from key stakeholders, partners and council tenants will be sought before presenting a final draft to Cabinet for agreement later this financial year.

3.5.3 The pilot has focused on Moulsecoomb and Bevendean and has produced positive result so far. Successes include:

- Piloting the “surgery approach” to dealing with tenant enquiries at the housing office to re-dress the current 80/20 split of housing officer time between office based and community based work. Housing Management Advisors are now dealing with 95% of enquiries themselves with the remainder being passed onto Housing Officers to resolve
- Up-skilling Housing Management staff to be able to provide signposting and advice to tenants across a broader range of issues
- Working with other services and teams such as Homemove, the Lettings Team and supported housing providers to implement the Risk Factor Indicator List with new tenants. This triggers early intervention by Housing Management staff to prevent tenancy failure or negative behaviours impacting on other tenants and residents.

3.5.4 Next steps include:

- Continue to concentrate on the delivery of Housing Management services, with successful initiatives being rolled out to other housing offices from April 2010
- Amend Housing Management policies and procedures to reflect changes
- Improving resident participation and involvement
- Implementing the “Rate Your Estate” initiative and the Housing and Estates Forum; improving reporting information around estate inspections (“traffic light system”) repairs/maintenance to include profiling; use of Estate Development Budget and using the website to publish results etc.

### Financial Inclusion

- 3.5.5 The Housing Income Management Team has produced a draft financial inclusion strategy which was presented to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 29 March 2010. A series of staff workshops have been arranged in June 2010 to devise an action plan to support the strategy. A final draft will be brought back to Housing Management Consultative Committee.

### Home Ownership Strategy

- 3.5.6 A draft Home Ownership Strategy has been produced and consultation will be undertaken with the Leaseholder Action Group at their meeting on 13 July 2010. A copy of the draft strategy will be brought to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 27 September 2010.

## **3.6 Access & Customer Care**

### Customer Access Review

- 3.6.1 Work is underway on the second phase of this work stream to look at ways of improving the experience of residents contacting the Housing Management service. There are currently a number of telephone numbers, reception desks and teams that residents can contact about different issues. This project aims to ensure that it is clear who residents should contact about different issues and that their queries are resolved as quickly as possible when they do. The project should lead to an improved service to residents and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall service. Residents and staff will be involved in a variety of ways including through the resident 'Mystery Shoppers' and working groups.
- 3.6.2 The customer access review is also supporting the delivery of the council's accommodation Strategy which seeks to rationalise and make best use of office space and provide more flexible workspace. Opportunities to share access points and streamline access for joint customers are being explored to improve the customer experience by avoiding multiple contacts at different receptions.

### Website & e-access

- 3.6.3 A website survey was completed between January – March 2010 and 40 responses were received from residents. The feedback from this

survey will help inform improvements to the website, with the first set of changes planned for completion in July 2010.

### Resident Involvement Strategy

- 3.6.4 A draft strategy has been produced and the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group approved the draft for further consultation at their meeting on 27 April 2010. The strategy will be subject to comprehensive consultation with residents and an update on the strategy is included elsewhere on the agenda.

## **3.7 Business Improvement**

### 3.7.1 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Mo Lawless has been appointed project manager for the improvement of the housing ICT system. She is currently undertaking a scoping exercise to fully understand the ICT needs of the division. It is likely that this will result in improvements to the current system rather than a full replacement.

### Delivering a 3 star service

- 3.7.2 In March 2009 the audit commission carried out an advice and assistance visit on our income management service, our arrangements for resident involvement and the business plan. In June 2009 a report was presented to Housing Management Consultative Committee outlining the results of the visit and an action plan for delivering improvements. A progress report against this action plan is attached at appendix 2 for information.
- 3.7.3 Further work is currently now underway preparing the service for the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the production of an annual report and development of local offers. A report on our annual report and local offers preparations is included elsewhere on the agenda.
- 3.7.4 Work is also underway to prepare for the Audit Commission 'Red Flag' review of the Repairs & Improvement Partnership which will take place between May and July this year.

### Value for Money

- 3.7.5 A cost benchmarking project group has been formed to analyse and understand the costs involved in delivering our service. This group has been undertaking benchmarking (comparing the council's costs and

performance with similar organisations) to enable a value for money assessment of operations across the broad range of services provided. This group has initially focused on tenancy management and estates service costs. It is intended that we will share information in future with residents through our performance reports and working groups.

#### **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 describes the progress of the Service Improvement Plan within Housing services and therefore there are no financial implications arising from this report.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks*

*Date: 19 May 2010:*

##### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 As the report is for noting only, there are no significant legal implications arising from it. 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: 19 May 2010*

#### 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 programme will use the individual projects to help reduce carbon emissions from the service's operations and help improve the energy efficiency of resident's homes. The sustainability project includes the Housing Energy Efficiency Working Group which aims to identify ways of improving energy efficiency. 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 to effectively support the victims. Specific actions within the Service Improvement Plan aim to provide safer communities through a balance of enforcement and support, for example with the 'Turning the Tide' project which focuses on tackling anti social behaviour and its causes.

#### 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.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Programme Structure
2. Audit Commission Advice & Assistance Visit Action Plan

### **Documents In Members' Rooms**

1. None

### **Background Documents**

1. None