

DELIVERY PLAN

AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICES – TURNING RECOMMENDATIONS INTO SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Recommendations	Actions	Progress achieved/ Evidence of compliance/To Do
<p>1. Increase the customer focus of the service by:</p> <p>1.1 Refining, publicising and monitoring service standards in consultation with customers, where these are currently weak or absent, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • telephone call handling; • target times for each stage of the adaptations process; • the response to anti-social behaviour; and • the decorative condition when homes are re-let. <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Housing & Social Inclusion <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2009 	<p>Review and expand the service standards contained in the Housing Customer Charter.</p> <p>Publicise the updated service standards to service users and implement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practice in the housing sector researched in respect of service standards. • Examples from Carrick, Harrogate, Herefordshire etc. • Updated and refreshed Housing Customer Charter produced incorporating service standards in respect of the four service areas specified. • Plain English check undertaken on draft document. • Housing Review Board report 31st January 2008. • Disabled adaptations working procedure produced. • Telephone call monitoring reports are provided to service managers on a monthly basis. • Recently asked for recorded message to be added to repairs direct line number. • Performance data on key areas of service delivery is reported quarterly to the Service Management Team. • Corporate anti-social behaviour policy produced. • Void standard reviewed. • Estate Management procedures produced and currently being updated. • New Tenant & Council Partnership Agreement produced. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint an additional Estate Management Officer to deal with anti-social behaviour etc. • Sign up to the RESPECT standard for housing management. • Improve telephone answering in Housing Needs and Repairs to meet the corporate standard.

<p>1.2 Better training and application of the complaints system.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Services Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2009 	<p>Brief staff On the formal complaints system and distinguish this from service requests.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An internal review of the formal complaints procedure has taken place. Report to the Housing Review Board on 6th March 2008. Managers brief staff at team meetings. Complaints policy circulated to the Housing Review Board and staff. Service request description now being used in the service. Annual report to the HRB on formal complaints received. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone follow up assumed satisfied complainants.
<p>1.3 Improving the sensitivity of the service to the diversity of tenants by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meeting the CRE /CHR standard for housing; adopting a more systematic approach to assessing and meeting diverse needs; and ensuring that all staff, councillors and active tenants receive more sophisticated training on diversity. <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Strategy Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2009 	<p>Update our existing policy to comply with current standards.</p> <p>Complete the Tenant Profiling exercise.</p> <p>Organise and deliver advanced diversity training for members, tenants and staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Impact Assessment initial risk assessment undertaken on key housing policies. Diversity training discussed with Training and Development Manager. Equalities standard Level 2 being pursued. Pilot Tenant Profile exercise undertaken. Good practice on implementing CRE/CHR standard being researched. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver diversity training to staff, councillors, and active tenants. Equality Impact Assessments to be completed. Full Tenant Profiling exercise to be undertaken. Report to the Housing Review Board on diversity issues.

<p>1.4 Improving the choices that tenants have in improvements.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Services Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2009 	<p>Introduce tenant choice on major improvements-kitchens, bathrooms and doors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Review Board report 29th November 2007 outlining changes to the major improvement programme and extending tenant choice. Commence working on this in April 2008 Housing Review Board report 6th March 2008. Mentoring arrangement with Carrick Homes. Five year improvement and modernisation plan adopted. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce a tenant choice brochure for each element of the improvement programme to complement the new door brochure. Monitor tenant satisfaction with choices offered.
<p>1.5 Exploring with tenants the costs and benefits of the introduction of an appointments system for responsive repairs, taking account of its impact in other Councils.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Services Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2009 	<p>Discuss with partners and service users best practice for repairs appointments and suggest improvements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good practice in the sector researched. Future topic for Housing Repairs and Maintenance Group. Topic for partnering meeting with main contractors. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose amendments to the existing appointment system in an issues and options paper, together with an assessment of the implications of change. Consult tenants and contractors working with the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Group. Review and revise the Partnering Agreement to reflect any changes.

Recommendations	Actions	Progress achieved/ Evidence of compliance/To Do
<p>2. Improve the performance management of the service by:</p> <p>2.1. Reviewing the quality of targets and implementing the overall changes that are contained within the improvement plan.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Housing and Social Inclusion <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 	<p>SMARTen targets, prioritise and progress actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the Housing Review Board on 6th March 2008 on improving the Improvement Plan. Information and Analysis Officer reviewing the Improvement Plan, cutting duplication and completed items. Managers prioritising remaining actions/targets. Service Plan refreshed and adopted at HRB January 2008. New Housing Customer Charter adopted. Delivery Plan prioritised for action. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-present the modified Improvement Plan to the HRB. All targets to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound. Targets to be prioritised with those that make the most positive difference to tenants being actioned first.
<p>2.2 Improving the capacity and focusing the attention of the Housing Review Board on the key outcome targets.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Housing and Social Inclusion <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 	<p>Improve agenda management, provide HRB with further training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance report to the Housing Review Board and Tenant and leaseholder Customer Panel 17th December 2007. Housing Review Board report on governance 31st January 2008. Updated Forward Plan 6th March 2008. Shorter reports HRB 31st January 2008. HRB monitoring performance and outcomes. Delivery Plan reported to each HRB meeting since the inspection. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the May HRB on a tenant election scheme. Facilitate a HRB debate on key outcomes/targets. Produce a 2008 report on HRB activity. Undertake a survey of Board member opinions, views on

		key outcomes, training needs etc.
<p>2.3 Monitoring and managing communal areas and community rooms more effectively.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Business Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <p>March 2008</p>	<p>Managers and staff to implement the review of community rooms. Maintain communal areas to a higher standard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home Safeguard Manager has created a timetable to approach each Community Centre Social Committee to discuss and arrange the removal of items which are not compliant with Health and Safety regulations and replacement options. Committee representatives have been contacted by letter to make arrangements to meet. Improved cleaning from Street Scene of community rooms/areas has been implemented. Inspection of community rooms to be increased. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain feedback from tenants on the service. Routine inspections of communal areas to be introduced. Project Team for the future of the Weycroft Hall, Axminster to be established.
<p>2.4 Introducing expert sample checks of gas safety work.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Services Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 	<p>Contractors to undertake a 5% sample retest.</p> <p>2 checks (minimum) per engineer, per month</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Housing Review Board 6th March 2008 proposing an arrangement for undertaking a percentage of re-tests on gas appliances undertaken by our main contractors Westway Heating. Currently waiting for a quote from insurers. A specification is being agreed with Energy Serv. Received first report on re-test findings and addressing uncovered through the process with main contractor. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a monitoring system to evidence that the process is being undertaken effectively.

<p>3. Address weaknesses in specific services by:</p> <p>3.1 Seeking out a high performing organisation to act as a mentor.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Business Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 	<p>Identify an excellent housing organisation that is prepared to act as mentor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Housing Review Board 6th March 2008 outlining proposals for introducing mentors to aid our improvements in housing management services. Agreed mentoring arrangements with Devon and Cornwall Housing Association; Gloucester City Homes; Teign Housing; Carrick Homes. Contact and agreement with Teign Housing made and partnering with the TP section, Rents & Debt recovery Team, and Allocations Team (date for visits TBC). Initial contact made with Oxford Council, Bournemouth and Portsmouth made to date for similar. Corporate mentoring policy being implemented in housing. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan visits to mentors, including HRB members. Mentoring programme to be developed. Report on learning points.
<p>3.2 Improving contract management arrangements, with greater involvement of tenants.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Services Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 	<p>Establish a contract monitoring group with contractors and tenants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Repairs Group – detailed analysis of performance monthly figures for discussion at meeting held on 26th March. Procurement Plan for housing produced. Housing Review Board report on procurement 6th March 2008. Joined Procurement Working Group first meeting 20th March 2008 and then monthly. Housing Repairs Group meeting with contractors scheduled for 20th May 2008. Partnering Day planned for July 2008. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take our Improvement and Modernisation programme to the Devon Procurement Group and Procurement for Housing programme. Record instances of using modern procurement methods

		and achieving efficiency savings.
<p>3.3 Adopting clearer policies and practices for rechargeable repairs.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Services Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 	<p>HRB to adopt a policy and procedure on rechargeable works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the Housing Review Board on 29th November 2007 with draft policy. Leaflet is being produced explaining the policy. Website article included. Consultation with Housing Repairs Group. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply the policy consistently and fairly. Explain policy at tenancy 'sign up' stage. Record the amounts received and outstanding charges to be collected. Report annually on the activity.
<p>3.4 Investing sufficient time on sign-up arrangements and/or new tenant visits to reinforce the importance of tenancy conditions and the opportunities for involvement.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Needs Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 	<p>Produce a sign up checklist and amend the process to stress to tenants their obligations and how they can become involved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the Housing Review Board on 6th March 2008 setting out an extension of existing arrangements. Good practice in the sector researched. A working procedure to be produced and the 'sign up' checklist expanded. Tenant Handbook and Welcome Pack supports the 'sign up' process. Rental section involved in the 'sign up' process. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the new process is embedded in service delivery. Monitor customer satisfaction with the 'sign up' process.
<p>3.5 Improving the quality of preventive work on rent arrears.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Business Manager 	<p>Signpost tenants to effective debt advice earlier.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertisement placed in local press prior to Christmas reminding tenants about the need to pay their rent. Exploring what partner agencies can contribute – CAB, HomeMaker, DevonPound. Improve new tenancy 'sign-up' process and rent leaflet in Tenants Handbook. Rental section visit to Gloucester City Homes planned for February.

<p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2008 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional training needs being identified for existing staff for enhanced debt advice skills to be implemented. • Draft re-structuring of Rents Team to form a specialised Debt Recovery Team under negotiation and additional posts being considered. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the 'systems thinking' approach to rent management. • Introduce debt prevention initiatives following research into good practice. • Monitor reduction in tenant debt.
<p>3.6 Reviewing the use of non-secure tenancies for more than a year.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Needs Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2008 	<p>Produce the records of all non secure tenants and make secure where appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of non secure tenancies over a year old produced. • Report to Housing Review Board 6th March 2008. • Housing Needs Manager reviewed the 118 non secure tenancies in existence in March. • New Non Secure Tenancy Agreement produced. • Occupancy check on a percentage of non secure tenants 15th April 2008. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure and report on the changes in the use of non-secure tenancies.
<p>3.7 Improving the appearance of communal walkways to flats and better managing the cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Business Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2008 	<p>Ensure improved contractor performance through better liaison, supervision and Service Levels Agreements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Review Board report dated 29th November 2007 on the options for improving communal cleaning. • Notes of meeting with Street Scene to review the service. • Updated Communal Cleaning Specification. • Notes of monitoring meeting with contractor held on 16th January 2008 and 13th March 2008. • Further meetings have not been arranged but being pursued by Business Unit Manager with Estate Management Team to instigate. Business Unit Manager and Scheme based staff to attend future meetings and contribute to monitoring of current standards maintained for cleaning. • Initial meeting with Tenant Representative for inclusion in

		<p>process to review the garden maintenance contract and customer expectations for a future gardening service.</p> <p>To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect communal areas on a regular basis. • Conclude the review of communal cleaning options and propose changes. • Measure tenant satisfaction with the service provided.
<p>4. Improve the value for money of the service by:</p> <p>4.1 Setting clear improvement targets for each service and manager, based upon the findings of the benchmarking report.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Housing and Social Inclusion <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2008 	<p>Review benchmarking report and agree improvement targets for managers to action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service Plan reported to the Housing Review Board on 31st January 2008 contained targets for teams/managers. • Audit Commission monitoring report presented to the Housing Review Board on 6th March 2008 contained an annex with improvement targets. • Introduced the targets as part of the 2008 Performance Excellence Review. • <p>To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the one to one system to monitor achievements. • Undertake a further benchmarking exercise.
<p>4.2 Meeting and improving upon the efficiency targets contained within the partnering contract.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Services Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2008 	<p>Extract efficiency targets, monitor current performance and agree improved targets with partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be discussed by Repairs and Maintenance Group at next meeting and again on 26th March. • Partnership Agreement with 7 performance indicators and Partnering Charter circulated to the Group. <p>To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on how we have achieved the efficiency targets and improvements that are possible. • Have a robust audit trail to evidence achievement of this recommendation.

<p>4.3 Maintaining the progress on the average time it takes to re-let each home as it becomes vacant.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Needs Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2009 	<p>Maintain and improve upon the 30 day average relet target.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the Housing Review Board on voids 31st January 2008 showing 3rd quarter performance at 28 day average void time. January performance 24 days average. Report to Housing Review Board 1st May 2008 showing 2007/08 performance as 32 days average void time. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to apply priority to this area of work. Report on performance monthly.
<p>4.4 Implementing plans to improve the IT systems, including the introduction of direct debit.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Business Manager <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 	<p>Produce an I.T. improvement plan and pass to relevant manager to progress. Introduce Direct Debit as a rent payment option.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Board and SMT agreement that Direct Debit is a priority January 2008. The first meeting with the Anite consultant was held on 1st February 2008. Direct Debit module. Test data base and Test was successful. ICT have submitted papers to Lloyds TSB to set up BACS. Have a training module and registration access to complete. Testing on the live data base is scheduled to start on 3rd March 08. ICT Project Highlight report 14th February 2008 confirming action being achieved. 10 tenants using Direct Debit. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers to capture their current and future I.T. needs in a plan. Identify and purchase a software system of repairs, estate management etc.

<p>4.5 Reviewing the degree to which tenants may receive a 'one-stop' service from housing officers, thereby reducing traveling time.</p> <p>Responsible officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Housing & Social Inclusion • <p>Completion Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2008 	<p>Consider the options for generic working and encourage officers to work across teams.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to the Housing Review Board 6th March 2008 considering issues and options for generic working, reduced travelling and 'one stop' services. • Opening of Exmouth Area Housing Office and Mobile Support Officer's offices in Ratcliff House, Exmouth, Dunning Court, Honiton, Lymebourne Community Centre, Sidmouth. • Service Directory produced. • Joint working on estate walkabouts and Service Review Groups. <p style="text-align: center;">To Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the generic job description for new recruitment, where appropriate. • Develop the 'can do' culture of the service.