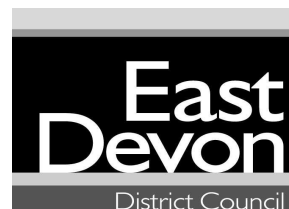


EXECUTIVE BOARD7th April 2004

JG/MH



Stock Options Appraisal Project – Scoping Report

Summary

This report scopes and explores the requirements of the Stock Options Appraisal process, which all local authorities that own housing stock are required to undertake in order to determine how they will meet the Decent Homes Standard. The report scopes the key elements of the Stock Options Appraisal project, suggests objectives for the project, identifies key themes and questions, and considers stakeholders involvement in the project. An outline timetable for the project is also proposed.

Recommendation

To approve the proposed approach to the Stock Options Appraisal project and agree :

- the main objectives of the project;
- the establishment of a Project Team;
- the establishment of a Task and Finish Forum;
- the advertisement for an Independent Tenant Adviser;
- the secondment or recruitment of a Project Manager;
- the outline timetable for the project.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To initiate the work required to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the future options for the ownership and management of the Council's housing stock.

b) Alternative Options

The project will generate housing stock options for consideration. The project itself can be undertaken in alternative ways provided the guidance is followed and the methodology is endorsed by Government Office.

c) Risk Considerations

The risk of not undertaking the Stock Option Appraisal is severe criticism and potential sanction from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the failure to determine the most appropriate future for our housing and our tenants.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The report is consistent with the Housing and Social Inclusion Service Plan and the budgetary implications (on the Housing Revenue Account) as known, are set out in the report.

e) Date for Review of Decision

The outcome of the Stock Options Appraisal will be reported back to the Executive Board on completion.



1 Main Body of the Report

1.1 Introduction

1.2 For many years social housing agencies have been working towards ensuring that residents are housed in good quality, affordable homes, suitable in size, and appropriately located. This aspiration should apply across all tenures. The Council is justifiably proud of the fact that its housing stock has been assessed as achieving the Decent Homes Standard and the vast majority of tenants are satisfied with their homes.

1.3 In February 2003 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published the policy document Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future. This contained a specific challenge – to ensure that all social tenants have a decent home by 2010 (a target established in 2000).

1.4 The Government's vision is to improve housing conditions across all tenures, to contribute to the creation of successful thriving and inclusive communities that will stand the test of time, and be communities in which people want to live. An aspiration we share for our residents.

1.5 A Decent Home should:

- Be above the statutory minimum standard (i.e. the fitness standard).
- Be in a reasonable state of repair.
- Provide reasonably modern facilities and services.
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

1.6 Further details of the Decent Homes Standard are set out in **Annex 1**.

1.7 The key actions section of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities Plan contains a statement on "Making the Improvements happen in Social Housing" (paragraph 1.10 page 18), this states that "we expect every local authority with stock to produce an objective and rigorous appraisal of investment options for Government sign-off by July 2005. We will provide support to authorities to do this, and to put viable plans in place, through the Community Housing Task Force".

1.8 The "Sustainable Communities in the South West" document states that "we will bring the homes of people living in social housing and vulnerable people living in the private sector to a decent standard by 2010. Local authorities will have to separate their landlord function from their strategic role and choose the right approach for additional investment in housing from three existing options:

- Stock Transfer;
- Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMO);
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

Tenants will be involved at all stages in the decision process".

1.9 I have set out in **Annex 2** the main features of the three main options, which will need to be assessed as part of the project, plus the fourth option of stock retention.

1.10 The South West Regional Housing Strategy 2002-2005 states that local authorities should consider options which may help them achieve fully decent homes and lists the options including the possible use of prudential borrowing to improve council housing (page 19).

- 1.11 The ODPM issued guidance in June 2003 titled “Delivering Decent homes – Option Appraisal Guidance for Local Authorities”. This document provides useful advice on how to undertake a detailed option appraisal on the housing stock. In producing this scoping paper, I have followed the guidance closely. I have also received helpful advice from the Community Housing Task Force who were established to assist local authorities through this exercise.
- 1.12 We are confident that all of our housing stock meets the Decent Homes Standard. However, that does not exempt us from the process and we do need to provide robust evidence to justify our assertion, and furthermore that we can maintain homes at or above the standard into the future.
- 1.13 The responsibility for delivering the decent homes target rests with individual local authorities. This must be addressed as an integral part of a business plan covering the medium and long-term objectives for improving the condition of the stock and the services provided. These plans need to set out:
- A clear picture of the current position, covering the condition of the stock;
 - Details of the priorities for investment and service improvements agreed with tenants;
 - An analysis of the likely resources available;
 - An action plan for delivering the identified priorities.
- 1.14 Tenants and leaseholders have to play a central role in the development and monitoring of these plans and should be engaged in all stages of the process, not just consulted on the outcome.
- 1.15 Option appraisal is seen as an essential element of business planning for housing services by looking at alternative ways of meeting identified objectives.
- 1.16 All stock-holding authorities need to look at the costs and benefits of the three main stock options set out in paragraph 1.8 as well as the option of retaining their stock. Those that cannot meet the costs of delivering the decent homes target without additional resources need to consider, with their tenants, the broad costs and benefits of each of the options before deciding which of them to pursue.

2. Setting up and carrying out the Stock Option Appraisal

- 2.1 There are a number of distinct stages in conducting a robust Stock Options Appraisal set out in Delivering Decent Homes – Option Appraisal Guidance for Local Authorities
- Defining the objectives;
 - Identifying the Key Stakeholders;
 - Managing the process;
 - Establishing information needs;
 - Resourcing the Stock Options Appraisal;
 - Establishing the base position of the Council;
 - Identifying a decision for the way forward.
- 2.2 A detailed project plan needs to be developed which indicates what will happen, when, and who will be involved in the project. The Community Housing Task Force has produced a useful 101-point project planning spreadsheet, which sets out the various stages in the project. This should be followed as a useful basis for producing a bespoke Project Plan for East Devon.
- 2.3 The main objectives of the Stock Options Appraisal project can be described as follows:

- To undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the options for the future ownership and management of the Council's housing stock;
- To ensure that the Council has robust plans to ensure that all of the housing stock meets, or exceeds the Decent Homes Standard and will continue to so;
- To ensure that tenants are fully involved in the Stock Option Appraisal project;
- To ensure that the Stock Options Appraisal has regard to the Council's corporate objectives and the wider housing market;
- To consider current and future housing needs, community, social inclusion, and estate management/improvement issues alongside the Decent Homes Standard;
- To report on the evaluation of the options and recommend a preferred option for the Council to consider.

2.4 The guidance on delivering decent homes sets out the assessment criteria used to evaluate the Stock Options Appraisal project. These provide a useful guide to the key stages of the project. I have reproduced the assessment criteria in **Annex 3**.

2.5 An outline timetable for the project was produced at the request of the Government Office and has been considered by the Tenant Customer Panel. I have reproduced this in **Annex 4**. This timetable only identifies the main stages in the process and will need to be refined into detailed a project plan.

2.6 To undertake a comprehensive Stock Options Appraisal in accordance with the guidance will involve a considerable amount of staff time and necessarily involve a significant number of officers. This will inevitably disrupt our existing work programmes, as we have no spare capacity within the Service to take on substantive new work. In order to make meaningful progress, I suggest that a project team should be established to meet the objectives of the project and undertake much of the information gathering and analysis. I envisage the following roles in the project team:

Project Leader:	Head of Housing and Social Inclusion
Project Manager:	(Secondment or recruitment)
Service Managers:	Client Services Manager, Contract Services Manager, Housing Needs and Enabling Manager
Staff Representatives:	(3 Nominations to be invited)
Tenant Representatives:	(3 Nominations to be invited)
Financial:	Head of Finance
Admin Support:	Team Support Officer

2.7 In order that Members are fully engaged in the project, I also suggest establishing a Task And Finish Forum to act as a Member Steering Group for the project. I would suggest that 6 Members are invited to work as part of the Forum (from the Communities Overview Committee). The Forum can guide the project and receive reports at key stages of the Stock Option Appraisal process. This will ensure that Members are immersed in the process and can influence the direction of this important project. Regular reports will be made to the Executive Board and the Communities Overview Committee on progress.

2.8 The Tenant Customer Panel has identified an initial group of tenant representatives who want to be involved in the

project. We need to ensure that our tenants are intimately involved in all aspects of this project. As part of the project we have to produce a strategy to communicate with all tenants and a tenant empowerment strategy. We can use this as an opportunity to build upon our existing tenant participation work.

- 2.9 Many local authorities have engaged consultants to perform some or all of the tasks required as part of a Stock Option Appraisal. The project team may consider at its initial meeting whether there is merit in employing a consultant to assist in undertaking certain stages of the project. We are likely to update the Housing Needs Study (2001) as part of our work on producing and justifying a robust Local Plan Policy for affordable housing. This work will be undertaken by a consultant and will usefully inform the Stock Options Appraisal project.
- 2.10 I recommend that we organise a secondment of a member of staff that knows the service well, into a Project Manager post. This person can be free from their existing day to day responsibilities to work full-time on the Stock Options Appraisal. This arrangement will ensure that we make meaningful progress, the project team meets the deadlines to be identified in the project plan, and we maintain links with the Government Office and good practice advice. This appointment will need to operate for at least a year and commence as soon as possible. To reflect the importance of the work I propose that the post be graded ED 3. This can be funded from the Housing Revenue Account and I estimate the cost of this post to be £25,911 plus on-costs. We will likely need to backfill the post vacated for a temporary period to maintain services. If we are unable to second a suitable Project Manager I would like to recruit a suitably qualified person to this critical position.
- 2.11 Our tenants will need to appoint an Independent Tenant Adviser to assist them in the project and provide independent advice. This is a requirement of the process and tenants should be involved in preparing the brief and interviewing/selecting their Advisor. I have prepared a draft advertisement **Annex 5** and our Tenant Participation Officer is working with the tenant representatives to produce a specification/brief for the work of the Independent Tenant Adviser
- 2.12 A financial provision for the Stock Options Appraisal project has been made in 2004/05. A notional sum of £15,000 has been included. We do not know the full costs of the project at this stage, however any additional costs will be financed from the Housing Revenue Account.
- 2.13 The guidance indicates that every Council must have a Tenant Empowerment Strategy to help tenants work together, understand the issues that the Stock Option Appraisal raises, and take part in making decisions. Councils will be expected to review arrangements in their Tenant Participation Compacts for informing, consulting, supporting and involving tenants in strategic issues.
- 2.14 The aim of the Tenant Empowerment Strategy is to enable tenants to be active participants in the process, offered opportunities and support to take part in every aspect of decision making, however difficult or controversial.
- 2.15 We also need to produce a Communications Strategy to ensure that tenants and others are aware of the Stock Option Appraisal and are effectively consulted on the options generated by the process. It is essential that we keep all tenants, staff and Members informed of progress through a newsletter and reports at key stages of the project.

3 Information requirements

- 3.1 A significant element of the project is centred on information gathering and analysis. Essentially we need specific and up to date information on the condition of the

housing stock and the future life of key building elements; information on the future investment needs of the stock; robust and up to date housing needs data; information on the local housing markets; rent collection; void times; etc. All this information will need to be analysed as part of the project to assist in identifying the most appropriate option for the future ownership and management of the housing stock. It is likely that we will need to repeat the exercise every three - five years, but having completed the work once subsequent appraisals should be easier.

- 3.2 Detailed financial modelling will also be an essential part of the project to help inform the recommendations. Investment options will need to be assessed together with future Government subsidy projections, capital receipts etc. I have set out in **Annex 6** the key themes and main steps involved in the Stock Option Appraisal.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 This is an important project for the Council and some of the work is already underway. There are clear links with the Best Value Review of housing services, the Balanced Housing Markets Strategy, and the review of the Housing Strategy.
- 4.2 A comprehensive Stock Options Appraisal will be a demanding task for officers, members and tenants. However, we can make it a rewarding exercise, which will enhance our relationship with our tenants and identify the most appropriate approach for ensuring that we continue to maintain and improve the housing stock, housing services and meet the housing needs of our community.

Legal Implications

There are no apparent legal implications at this stage

Financial Implications

The full financial implications are unknown at this stage and will be determined as the project progresses.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

The suggested approach to the Stock Options Appraisal has been discussed with the Tenant Customer Panel, Government Office for the South West and Community Housing Task Force.

Background Papers

- ❑ Delivering Decent Homes – Option Appraisal Guidance for Local Authorities – ODPM June 2003.
- ❑ Tenant Participation Advisory Service – information sheet – Stock Option Appraisals 2003.
- ❑ Community Housing Task Force – Good Practice Briefing Notes 1 –9.

John Golding – Extension number 2364
Head of Housing and Social Inclusion

Executive Board
7th April 200

The Decent Homes Standard

A decent home is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. More specifically, a home meets the Decent Homes Standard if it:

A - meets the minimum Fitness Standard, set out in Section 604 of the Housing Act 1985. A home is unfit for human habitation if, in the opinion of the Council, it fails to meet one or more of these requirements:



- Is free from serious disrepair.
- Is structurally stable.
- Is free from dampness that could affect health.
- Has adequate lighting, heating and ventilation.
- Has an adequate piped supply of wholesome water.
- Has an effective drainage system.
- Has a suitably located WC for the exclusive use of the occupants.
- Has a bath or shower and wash hand basin, with hot and cold water.
- Has satisfactory facilities for preparing and cooking food, including a sink with hot and cold water.

B - is in a reasonable state of repair. A home will not meet this part of the standard if one or more key building components are old and need replacing; or two or more other building components are old and need replacing. Building components are the structural parts of a home (wall or roof, for example), other external elements (roof covering or chimneys) and internal services and amenities (kitchens and heating systems). Key building components are those which could cause the building to fall down, cause further deterioration, or have other safety implications.

C - has reasonably modern facilities and services. A home fails to meet this standard if it lacks three or more of the following facilities:

- A kitchen which is 20 years old or less.
- A kitchen appropriate to the size of the home with space and layout for all the required items (sink, cupboards, cooker space, worktops etc).
- A bathroom which is 30 years old or less.
- An appropriately located bathroom and WC.
- Adequate noise insulation.
- Adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for flats.

D - provides a reasonable degree of comfortable warmth, with efficient heating and effective insulation. Efficient heating is gas or oil programmable central heating, electric storage heaters, programmable LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas), solid fuel central heating, or similarly efficient heating system. Effective insulation for homes with gas or oil programmable heating is at least 50mm loft insulation, homes with LPG or programmable solid fuel central heating need at least 200mm loft insulation. Cavity wall insulation is needed too, if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively.

DIFFERENCES IN ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT OPTIONS

Feature	Stock Retention	ALMO	Transfer	PFI
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Stock affected	All stock	All or some of the stock	All of some of the stock	Some of the stock only
Resources for Stock Investment	Based on available resources only	Based on a bid (decent homes plus potential contribution to Environmental Improvements) and achieving 2* or 3*	Based largely on Stock Condition Survey and other investment needs.	Based on agreed bid largely on Stock Condition Survey and other investment needs.
Resources for current Operating Account	Based on existing business plan	Based on existing business plan subject to set up of ALMO	Based on resources from valuation agreed between Council/RSL	Resources dependent on PFI bids
Ownership	Council remains landlord	Council remains landlord	Choice of new or existing RSL	Council remains landlord
Non profit making	Yes	Yes	Yes	Would depend
Length of contract	Not applicable	Agreed for specified period	Permanent transfer	Usually 25-30 years
Management	Continue with existing arrangements	ALMO will takeover management of some services	RSL will take on overall management responsibility	PFI contractor will manage some local services
Change of tenancy	No	No	Yes – Assured but key rights e.g. RTB generally preserved – see below	No
Formal Ballot	Not required	Not required	Yes – as RSL becomes landlord	Not required
Rents	Controlled by the Council – but in line with government target formula	Controlled by the Council – but in line with government target formula	Controlled by RSL – but in line with government target formula	Controlled by the Council – but in line with government target formula
Tenant service charges	Subject to local policy	Subject to local policy	Subject to policy agreed with RSL	Subject to local policy
Regulator	Audit Commission	Audit Commission	Housing Corporation + Audit Commission	Depends on contractor
Other external reporting requirements	ODPM	ODPM plus Companies House Or FSA for ALMO	Companies House of FSA	Depends on contractor
Feature	Stock Retention	ALMO	Transfer	PFI

Charitable status	No	Optional	Depends on RSL – optional for new RSL	Depends on contractor
Governance arrangements	Usually Housing Portfolio holder and any other local arrangements	ALMO governed by Board of Council/tenant nominees and independents	RSL Board can include Council/tenant nominees & independents	Would depend on contractor
Leaseholder Leases	No change	No change	Reassigned to RSL	No change
Staff transferring	No	Yes – some would transfer to ALMO under TUPE	Yes – some would transfer to RSL under TUPE	Yes – some would transfer to PFI contractor under TUPE
Scope for development	Limited at present	Limited at present – subject to new arrangements for 3*?	Yes with assistance	PFI contractor would be able to build (but SHG would depend on new legislation)
Right to Buy	Yes	Yes	Preserved Right to Buy for transferring tenants plus Right to Acquire for new tenants	Yes

Source: Delivering decent homes – Option Appraisal

June 2003

HOUSING OPTION APPRAISAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Criteria	Evidence checklist
<p>1. Tenant and leaseholder involvement from the outset of the option appraisal process and consultation with all tenants throughout.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Tenant Empowerment Strategy agreed with tenant representatives and CHTF. (b) Tenant Participation structure and level of representation from the beginning to the end of the process (including BME groups and disadvantaged and other hard groups to reach). (c) Input from tenants and authority's response. (d) Training and development – identifying gaps and provision. (e) Analysis of the quality of the tenant involvement criteria against Compact criteria e.g. timeliness, accessibility, clarity etc. (f) Arrangements for leaseholder consultation.
<p>2. Consultation</p> <p>A Communication Strategy covering all stakeholders should be agreed with CHTF at the beginning of the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Communications Strategy covering quality and use of different methods of information giving needs to be agreed with stakeholders and CHTF. (b) Level of member/staff engagement and involvement. (c) Method of briefing all staff throughout the process and assessing the level of understanding. (d) Approach to identification of other stakeholders. (e) Level of understanding amongst stakeholders of financial situation (especially where consultants used).
<p>Criteria</p>	<p>Evidence checklist</p>

<p>3. Financial Appraisal.</p> <p>Clear information about the financial impact of each option is essential (HRA and impact on the general fund). Where this is outsourced to consultants, tenants should be aware of the implications and assumptions behind these. The ITA will have a role in helping tenants understand and contribute to this process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Sensitivity analysis of assumptions and risks identified for all options or mix of options. (b) Consistency between the investment appraisal and latest business plan. (c) Analysis and consideration of the application of usable receipts and management cost base including recharges to the HRA. (d) The reasonableness of the financial assumptions including impact of planned possible changes.
<p>4. Stock Condition Survey.</p> <p>The authority must have robust, accurate and up to date data on which to base their appraisal. All stakeholders must be aware of this information and it should be externally verified. The level of backlog of repairs and improvements to meet decent homes must be clear. The investment gap should be identified.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) A recent stock condition survey commissioned on the basis of good practice contained within the guidance <i>Collecting, Managing and Using Stock Information</i>. (b) A lead member of staff to work with the external consultants to ensure quality and usefulness of outputs. (c) A robust in house system and database for properly updated information. (d) A clear picture of decency amongst the stock including newly arising need. (e) Testing of costings/assumptions against current tender prices and build cost inflation. (f) Comparison of stock investment programme from the survey against total resources.
<p>5. Analysis of Demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Future needs for affordable housing in the area. (b) Identification of low demand is it generic or localised? What are the key factors and possible solutions? (c) Identification of gaps in affordable housing provision and what are the best options for dealing with them.
<p>6. Mixed Solutions.</p> <p>Authorities should as part of the process look at mixed model solutions and partial options but only as part of an overarching strategy for the whole stock.</p> <p>(NB will not apply to all LAs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Analysis of the impact of partial options within the context of an overarching strategy. (b) A method for dis-aggregation of information to assess needs at a local level and right fit with options. (c) Levels of service area based solutions could provide. (d) Quality of the depth of consultation and involvement of tenants and other stakeholders in an area.
<p>Criteria</p>	<p>Evidence checklist</p>

<p>7. Tenant Management and tenant led solutions.</p>	<p>(a) Engagement with existing and potential tenant management organisations. (b) Promotion and awareness of use of Section 16 funding to explore options for local tenant led options. (c) Information on stock condition and the housing market made available to local level organisations.</p>
<p>8. Wider strategy for neighbourhood renewal.</p> <p>An authority's option appraisal should show clear links to initiatives such as low demand pathfinders, Local Strategic Partnerships, Health Improvement Plan and New Deal for Communities.</p>	<p>(a) Links with other initiatives and funding on neighbourhood level. (b) Awareness amongst key partners of option appraisal process. (c) Details of wider consultation and methods, with feedback. (d) Assessment of the potential contribution of each option to local regeneration.</p>
<p>9. Objective robust evaluation of options.</p> <p>Value for money, sustainable decent homes, improving services, tenants priorities, deliverability, local priorities, regional, national priorities.</p>	<p>(a) Establishment of clear, defined objectives with a balance of local and national priorities. (b) Early involvement of stakeholders. (c) Housing service priorities and current performance. (d) Objective evaluation of costs and benefits of each option, including choice of landlord within the stock option, against agreed criteria.</p>
<p>10. Decision making process.</p> <p>Tenants should be at the heart of the decision making process. Support should be demonstrated for the chosen option by tenants and councillors.</p>	<p>(a) Feedback from tenant representatives and other tenants involved in the process. (b) Clear audit trails of tenant influence and involvement in decision making. (c) Political commitment to the outcome.</p>
<p>11. Change management process.</p> <p>Focusing on staff, unions ,resourcing leadership, capacity and skills.</p>	<p>(a) Clear change management plan in place. (b) Work with Community Housing Task Force and other to gather and implement best practice.</p>
<p>Criteria</p>	<p>Evidence checklist</p>

12. Management of the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Establishment of a project team and working group with representatives from stakeholders.(b) Level of resources made available, early assessment of capacity and skills to deliver.(c) Timetable agreed with Community Housing Task Force and Government Office.(d) Member involvement and engagement in the process.
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Stock Options Appraisal – Outline timetable

Stage	Action	Completion Date
1	Scoping report to Members and Tenants setting out the suggested approach, key tasks, and timetable. Recommend a Member/Officer Task and Finish Forum and terms of reference.	April 2004
2	Define and agree the role and refine the objectives of the Stock Option Appraisal Task and Finish Forum (staff, members, tenants, and external advisers). Produce a Project Plan	May 2004
3	Appoint an Independent Tenant Adviser.	June 2004
4	Agree a Tenant Empowerment Strategy.	July 2004
5	Agree a Communication Strategy	July 2004
6	Define the information needs; undertake a capacity and skills assessment.	July 2004
7	Collect, analyse and model house condition, housing needs, financial, housing maintenance etc data.	September 2004
8	Identify and evaluate the future stock ownership and management options. Report on the option appraisal exercise and recommend a preferred option.	December 2004
8	Decision by the Council and tenants on preferred option and way forward.	January 2005
9	Government Office 'sign off'.	March 2005

Expression of Interest

Appointment of an Independent Tenant Advisor

The Tenant Representatives at East Devon District Council invite Expressions of Interest for tendering for the appointment of an Independent Tenant Adviser to work with tenants and ensure that tenant consultation and involvement in the Stock Options Appraisal is fair and wide reaching.

Your role will be to:

- Provide independent advice, information and support to tenants on future housing options.
- Make sure that tenants have a real voice in the Stock Options Appraisal process.
- Validate the information about Stock Options put out by the Council and its consultants.
- Work with tenants on the details of any preferred option.
- Conduct or advise on tenant surveys and focus groups.
- Meet regularly with tenants, leaseholders, Council Members and officers to review the progress of work undertaken.

Your core tasks will be to:

- Gather information to make sure tenants' priorities are addressed.
- Support individual tenants' groups involved in the Stock Option Appraisal process.
- Help tenants develop their skills and knowledge and interpret information provided and developed by the Council and its consultants.

You will need to show:

- A thorough knowledge and understanding of the Stock Options Appraisal process as detailed in Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's guidance.
- A proven track record in this or a similar field.
- Experience of working in diverse communities, particularly rural areas.

We will need two references from other local authorities, two references from tenant groups, information on the proposed methodology and availability to carry out the project according to an agreed timescale and details of anticipated costs. The Council aims to complete the Stock Options Appraisal by March 2005.

A shortlist of suitable applicants will be drawn up and invited to tender for the work.

Please return submissions to The Tenant Participation Officer, East Devon District Council, Knowle, Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 8HL, by May 2004.

Key themes and main steps in the Stock Options Appraisal

The Stock Options Appraisal project will need to address the following **key themes** :

- Can we evidence full compliance with the Decent Homes Standard?
- Can we continue to meet or exceed the Decent Homes Standard?
- What are the future investment needs of the housing stock?
- To what extent can we exceed the Decent Homes Standard ?
- Will we be able to meet housing needs in the future?
- Are there other housing options we should consider?
- What do our tenants want to achieve?
- What do our stakeholders want to achieve?

Having regard to the guidance and advice available the Stock Option Appraisal project will need to cover the following **main steps** :

- Establish contact with the regional Government Office and the Community Housing Task Force to obtain agreement on a timetable for the project and the process to be undertaken.
- Draw up a project plan explaining how the whole process will work, including how tenants will be involved.
- Identify partners, with tenants involved from the start. Other partners should include Councillors, the Local Strategic Partnership, Housing Associations, Black and Minority Ethnic groups and voluntary sector organisations with an interest in housing. The roles of the various partners should be defined, and tenants must be “at the heart of the decision making process”.
- Set up a working group including tenants, with clear terms of reference, to oversee the whole project.
- Carry out a “baseline assessment” of tenants’ capacity to take part in the Stock Options Appraisal.
- Appoint an Independent Tenants’ Advisor (ITA) to support tenants through the Stock Option Appraisal.
- Review arrangements in the Tenant Participation Compact and produce a Tenant Empowerment Strategy and a Communications Strategy.
- Agree the aims of the housing service and the objectives of the Stock Options Appraisal including:
 - identifying the standard of housing that will meet tenants’ aspirations in future.
 - identifying how to bring sufficient investment into the housing stock.
 - improving the standards of service delivery.
 - contributing to neighbourhood renewal strategies, where appropriate.
 - putting more emphasis on local strategies and tenant participation in housing management.
 - dealing with issues around choice of landlord, including new community-based options such as “Community Gateway”.
- Collect reliable information on the basic facts of the current situation including:

- a stock condition survey to identify the repair needs of the housing stock and how well it meets the Decent Homes Standard.
 - a forecast of future income and expenditure on the housing stock (revenue and capital).
 - a “housing market assessment” predicting the supply of, and demand for, Council homes in the future.
 - data on Council housing management performance.
- Carry out a clear, balanced evaluation of how well each of the four housing investment options meets the aims of the housing service. Start with the Council’s “base position” of carrying on as now with no extra resources, then assess each of the housing investment options in turn. Think whether more than one option would be best, but always as part of a single overall strategy.