

## **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Service Plan – Monitor 3 update 2008/09**

### **Critical Success Factors**

#### **1. Remaining on target to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010-**

We remain on target to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard by the deadline date of 2010, through delivery of the Council's Housing Capital Programme (progress with the Capital Programme is reported elsewhere on this agenda)

#### **2. Improved performance across Housing Services Functions-**

##### **▪ Income Management**

- Quarter three targets for both rent collection and rent arrears have seen slight increases in the level of arrears, particularly in low-level arrears. An action plan is being developed to ensure that we are in a position to respond to the impact of the economic downturn. This forms part of a wider review of the income management service.
- Housing Services are currently working with Resources to identify ways in which the two teams can work together to recover debts owed to the authority. Initially this involves identifying a small group of customers who are in debt to both departments, looking at solutions that will ensure the debts are recovered without over burdening the customer.
- Referral processes are being established with external agencies / partners to ensure that individuals who may experience a reduction in income as a result of job losses are identified to ensure that early support can be given to ensure debt is not accrued.
- Finally the department will be trialling a mobile solution in the income management team between April and July.

##### **▪ Void Management-**

- A new voids process was implemented in the summer, whereby all repairs are carried out *prior* to the tenant moving in. This significant change has had the effect of slightly increasing the turnaround time although average re-let times are still upper quartile. Monthly turnaround times are now close to the 2007/08 outturn, however the dip in performance is likely to result in the 2008/09 target not being achieved. The impact of the changes is being considered by the Repairs Partnership to ensure that improvements continue.
- A methodology to monitor the impact of the new void process is currently being developed. We have also introduced a void standard for empty homes, and quality-monitoring systems are in place.

- Satisfaction with the new standard will be measured via the 'new homes questionnaire' sent to all council tenants when they move into a new home and due to be re launched early 2009,

▪ **Responsive repairs**

- Following an end-to-end review of the service, a Pilot for changes emerging from the review commenced on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and has been closely monitored and managed by officers.
- The outcome of the process was discussed by members at the January EMAP meeting where changes to the repairs priorities for the city were agreed and which will be implemented from the beginning of the 2009/10 financial year.

▪ **Tackling Anti Social Behaviour**

- A new IT module has been developed to enable improved recording and monitoring of anti-social behaviour and nuisance issues. Staff members have been trained on this system, which went live at the end of 2008.
- During February, focus groups were held with customers who have experienced nuisance to gain their feedback on case management, and a survey has been developed to monitor satisfaction with the service provided by housing staff to customers experiencing nuisance and Anti-social behaviour
- Discussions are ongoing with Housing Associations in York about taking cases through the multi-agency Nuisance Action Group (NAG) as part of their efforts in tackling anti-social behaviour. Proposals exist for landlords to purchase services from the CYC housing Tenancy Enforcement Team, with the aims of reducing anti-social behaviour and ensuring a greater consistency of approach on multi-tenure estates.

**3. Consolidate our approach to customer services**

The Housing Quality Network has recently undertaken a Mystery Shopping exercise with a number of Housing Organisations across York, including CYC. The findings of this research have been considered by HSMT and improvement actions agreed to address the issues raised. Initial discussions have been held with RSL's who currently work in York to consider the potential for a York Standard for customer service, further shared work on customer service will continue, with any proposals to be agreed my members at a later date.

- The Strategy and Enabling Group are working to develop a Customer Engagement Strategy for Housing, a project team has been established the project is due to complete in June 2009. This will develop a strategic approach to customer engagement activity, including a review of current activities. Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) have been engaged to work with CYC to support the development of the Customer Engagement Strategy.

- The Customer Panel Co-ordinator is now in post and a project plan is in place to deliver agreed priorities for focussed customer engagement work. This post links to the work undertaken by the Neighbourhood Management Unit on behalf of Housing Services and plans are being developed to develop a strategic framework in which to drive the engagement agenda forward. A Panel was also held to understand customers' experience of the recent piloted changes to the repairs system. Panels in general were promoted in the December Issue of Streets Ahead, the Tenants Magazine, and a database of customers interested in being involved in service improvements whether in person or by survey is being completed.
- A staff group has been established to monitor and further develop the working with customers and colleague standards and amendments have been made to ensure these are relevant to all areas of Housing Services. Work is taking place to ensure that these standards are embedded across the service, including being central to staff inductions.
- The results from the Annual Housing Satisfaction survey of City of York tenants were reported to EMAP in January 2009. Work is underway with staff and customer focus groups to develop improvement actions in response to the findings

#### **4. Other Achievements**

- **Service Improvements**

- Following issues during the piloting of mobile working using mini-laptop computers in partnership with [easy@york](mailto:easy@york) the department is looking at a solution using Kirona software (specialists in mobile technology) the aim is to have a pilot on income management and reactive repairs in place by the end of the financial year.
- It is anticipated that the programme of customer profiling of council tenants will commence during early 2009. The Questionnaire has been finalised and the data collection will run throughout at least the first two quarters of 2009/10 in order to manage the workload arising as a result of the returns.
- Work has commenced on a Service Improvement Strategy for the Housing Service, which will set out the performance management framework for the department and refresh our approach to improvement planning.

- **Staff and Management**

- During October Housing Services staff attended a second annual staff seminar. The seminars were held over three half days and were designed to build on the success of the first seminars held in 2007.

The key focus of these seminars was to engage staff in considering future priorities and direction for Housing Services and starting to assess the position of Housing Services in readiness for a move towards more flexible working, linked to the corporate accommodation project.

- Overall staff responded enthusiastically to the seminars and the priority for the Housing Services Management Team (HSMT) now is to ensure that the information gathered is used to inform future priorities and planning. HSMT is committed to ensuring that this valuable information is used in future and feeds into the next Annual Staff Seminar to take place in Autumn 2009.
  - All senior managers in Housing have either completed, are part way through or are enrolled on the IDEA Future Leadership training. Initial feedback from staff is that this course has provided a positive learning experience.
- **Estate Management-**
- Changes to the Estate Improvement Grants have been agreed and implementation will take effect in April 09.
- **Homelessness & Access to Housing**
- Work has recommenced at the new **Peasholme Centre** building at Fishergate it is anticipated the building will be completed in August / September 2009.
  - Work towards developing a sub regional **Choice based lettings scheme (CBL)** for the North Yorkshire sub-region continues, with a number of new partners coming onboard. A Project Manager has been appointed and work is now ongoing to develop the detail of the new sub-regional policy.
  - Following implementation of a system to monitor **nominations to RSLs (Registered Social Landlords)**, in order to maximise level of need met through nominations, continues by the RSL landlord group, and at individual meetings with RSLs. The results of this are being monitored.

## 5. Emerging Issues-

Integration of housing customer contact into the [easy@york](mailto:easy@york) programme was originally timetabled to commence in August 2008. The programme timetable has now changed and preparatory work will not commence until late 2009. However, linked to the work that Northgate Kendrick Ash are carrying out it is expected that the work on the Responsive Repairs service currently delivered via the Repairs Partnership will be brought forward and will commence in May / June.

## 6. Areas for Improvement

Progress continues to be made across Housing Services in delivering actions towards meeting the governments 'RESPECT' standard for housing management, however progress in delivering actions relating to improving multi agency working at a corporate level have not progressed. Work is underway on scoping an Anti-social behaviour strategy for the housing service.

Consultations with leaseholders about revisions to the service charging process have been delayed due to a process of re- prioritisation of customer engagement work.

The projected overspend on the Repairs Partnership continues to be a cause for concern. Detailed work on benchmarking the service and testing its value for money will be carried out over the coming months as part of the councils wider efficiency programme.

## 7. Financial Summary-

The table below sets out the variations in accordance with the financial regulations.

	Approved Budget £'000	Projected Variation £'000	Variation %
Repairs and Maintenance			
Jobs General - main areas of overspend are plumbing and roofing	4,853	+351	+7.23
Estate Improvement Grant – underspend due to lower than forecast take-up	248	-15	-6.05
General Management			
Property Services charge – lower charge due to reduction in RTB work and reduction in QS charge	183	-60	-32.79
Housing Operations – savings mainly due to staff vacancies, reduction in legal fees and lower than forecast payments for the golden goodbye scheme	2,534	-92	-3.63
Asset Management- mainly due to staff vacancies	559	-50	-8.94

## Annex 1

	Approved Budget £'000	Projected Variation £'000	Variation %
Sheltered Housing – underspends on staffing and equipment offset by increased expenditure on utilities	734	-33	-4.50
Energy Costs – higher than forecast utility costs	58	+45	+77.59
Discus Bungalows Project – higher than forecast project costs, which will be repaid from capital receipt	184	+16	+8.70
Peasholme Hostel – saving on staffing through less use of relief staff	435	-16	-3.68
Grounds Maintenance – savings on gardening and day to day maintenance	366	-30	-8.20
Caretaking – saving due to vacancy	234	-25	-10.68
Lifts – ageing lifts needing increasing investment	39	+11	+28.21
Provision for Bad Debt – higher than forecast provision for rents bad debt, mainly for former tenant arrears.	96	+15	+15.63
Housing Subsidy Payment –  decrease in subsidy receivable due to lower than forecast interest rate	5,349	+8	+0.15
- offset by decrease in loan interest payable	1,171	-13	-1.11
Debt Management Expenses – reduction in charge due to change in allocation method	22	-18	-81.82
Dwelling Rents – mainly due to reduction in forecast RTB sales	-25,032	-56	-0.22
Non – dwelling rents  Lower than forecast void rates for shops and garages	-554	-35	-6.32

	Approved Budget £'000	Projected Variation £'000	Variation %
<b>Fees and Charges</b>			
Legal fees – reduced income (offset by reduced expenditure, see general management above)	-84	+20	+23.81
Cooker rental – lower number of cookers rented than forecast	-98	+36	+36.73
Sheltered Housing - mainly due to an increase in HRA contribution for transitional SP customers	-476	+22	+4.62
Supporting People – reduction in income lower than forecast	-869	-15	-1.73
Internal Interest – mainly due to higher than forecast working balance	-300	-200	-66.67
Recharges – forecast underspends in areas within HASS result in a reduction in the amount charged to the HRA (-£77k). This is offset by a reduction recharged to capital receipts (+£33k)	1,295	-44	-3.40
Other Minor Variations	1,815	-3	-0.17
<b>Net change in working balance</b>	<b>-7,238</b>	<b>-181</b>	<b>-2.50</b>

## 8. Performance Measures

<b>Customer Measures</b>			
<b>Description</b>	<b>2007/8</b>	<b>2008/9</b>	
	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Annual Target</b>	<b>Current Performance</b>
Urgent repairs completed within government time limits	90%	99%	93.5%
Average time taken to complete non-urgent repairs	7.97 days	8 days	7.01 days
Repairs partnership end to end measure	New	Measure in development	Measure in development
Local Authority Tenant satisfaction with opportunities for participation-	64%	78%	61%
% of external calls answered in 20 seconds (Housing Services)	96%	97%	96.3%

<b>Resource Measures</b>			
<b>Description</b>	<b>2007/8 Outturn</b>	<b>2008/9</b>	
		<b>Annual Target</b>	<b>Current Performance</b>
Percentage of rent collected	97.9%	98.2% (Quarter 3 target 96.51%)	96.3%
Rent arrears as a proportion of the rent roll	2.27%	1.92% (Quarter 3 target 2.67%)	2.60%
Rent lost through voids (all properties)	1.07%	1.09% (Quarter 3 target 0.82%)	0.71%
Rent lost through voids (excluding discus bungalows awaiting demolition)	0.6%	0.5% (Quarter 3 target 0.36%)	0.49%
Repairs partnership under/overspend	New	On budget	£350,000 over (Projected at year end)

<b>Process Measures</b>			
<b>Description</b>	<b>2007/8 Outturn</b>	<b>2008/9</b>	
		<b>Annual Target</b>	<b>Current Performance</b>
Average relet times for Local Authority Dwellings	19.37 days	18 days	21.77 days
% Planned services of council dwellings with gas fittings which have been completed –	New	100% (Quarter 3 target 95%)	92.5%
% Of minor council adaptations completed within 20 days (target subject to change to reflect new NIs)	77.6%	85%	90%
% Of major council adaptations completed within 60 days* (target subject to change to reflect new NIs) –	25.9%	50%	44%