

Housing General Fund Service Plan – Monitor 2 update 2008-9

Critical Success Factors

The service plan identified three critical success factors for 2008-9 and progress with these is summarised below:

1. Ensure that the supply of affordable housing in York meets needs identified in the 2007 Housing Market Assessment.

121 homes have been completed up to the end of September 2008:

- 6 homes for rent at Thanet Road (Tees Valley)
- 12 homes at Northfield School site (3 rent and 1 discounted sale) Tees Valley
- 19 Housing corporation funded 'Homebuy' loans enabling purchase on the open market
- 2 eco homes for low cost ownership in New Earswick (Joseph Rowntree HT)
- 8 homes for rent at Victoria Way (York HA)
- 35 bedrooms at Arc Light (York HA)
- 8 supported flats at Shipton Road (York HA)
- 31 homes on the Gasworks site.

2. Analyse results of the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey

This information forms the evidence base for the Private Sector Housing Strategy which set out the strategy priorities, objectives and targets for the next 3 years. The draft five year private sector housing strategy is now complete and due to be considered members elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Development and Delivery of a new homelessness strategy

The 2008-13 Homeless Strategy is now completed and has been submitted to Government Office. The strategy has been published on the council website and copies have been distributed to key stakeholders. A steering group is in place to monitor delivery of the action plan.

Other Achievements

Housing Strategy

- Housing related targets agreed as priorities in the **LAA** (Local Area Agreement) include affordable homes delivered, the number of households in temporary accommodation and a reduction in fuel poverty
- The North Yorkshire Strategic Housing Board have agreed moving forward with a sub regional Housing Strategy. The broad objectives and themes of the strategy will be set on a sub regional level with local priorities and delivery actions. Consultation with stakeholders is proposed April 2009

- The draft timetable and project plan for the **2009-12 Housing Strategy** for York will complement the sub regional approach, above
- The assessment of **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation needs** in North Yorkshire has been approved by the North Yorkshire Strategic Housing Board. The research has been published and an Executive Summary and full copy of the research are available from officers. An action plan is being considered to ensure a strategic approach to developing services across York and North Yorkshire. The outcome of bids submitted to CLG for refurbishment and upgrade of sites outside of York, elsewhere in North Yorkshire are awaited.
- Sub regional research into the housing needs of Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and migrant workers has been commissioned and commenced during October with completion by April 2009

Access to Housing

- 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. Recruitment for a Project Manager is underway with interviews to be held at the end of November and this remains a priority to drive the project forward.
- 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 monitoring will be analysed at the end of 2008/9 and into 2009/10
- Work is underway on refining our approach to **Housing Advice** resulting in the establishment of a Housing Options approach being adopted.

Homelessness

- The new **Peasholme Centre** building at Fishergate has been delayed because the contractor became insolvent. The work has been re tendered and it is anticipated work should re-commence during November with completion likely during July 2009.
- The new **Arc Light** centre was completed in August with work continuing to ensure that the new service complements work of other projects to maximise the success of the resettlement process.
- The options appraisal being developed for the future of the **Ordnance Lane** site will be concluded early 2009.

Staff and Management

- During October all 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. 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 at Service Manager and Group Manager within Housing Services 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. Further inquiries are being made to explore whether CYC can apply for a grant to funding a number of additional places across the directorate and wider Council.
- A staff group has been set up to monitor and further develop the customer 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.

Housing Standards

- Following changes to the administration of the **Disabled Facilities Grant** (DFG), reported to Members in June, a further report outlining recommended policy changes is presented to members elsewhere on the agenda.
- The York Home improvement agency has been successful in securing the tender for the city wide handy person scheme and it has been agreed to renew the contract for a further year.
- A new temporary Business Support Post has been agreed and appointed to for a six month period and will be working towards providing a paperless working office and improve service delivery Work.
- **38 Home Appreciation Loans (HALs)** for owner-occupiers have been identified of which 10 have been agreed by the Regional Loans Service.

Housing Development

- A workshop of key stakeholders was held in November to explore ways of maximising the delivery of affordable housing in the city. This included ideas around optimising the use of existing stock as well as ideas for increasing the affordable housing stock
- The role of the Rural Housing Enabler continues to develop with priorities including work with City Strategy on revising population levels that define rural settlement and bringing forward sites at Knapton and Strensall
- The New **Growth Point submission** for York was not approved by Government; however representation has been made to re consider York North West and a new submission as part of the Leeds City Region has submitted for an urban eco settlement.
- The planning applications for the **Discus Bungalows** sites were approved at the 20th November planning committee.

Emerging Issues

Housing Market Conditions

The effects of the “credit crunch” and overall economic recession are now being seen in falling house prices, a marked slowdown in house building, the withdrawal of affordable credit and an increase in mortgage repossessions and levels of debt. For HASS the market conditions are presenting significant challenges but some emerging opportunities too. The most immediate challenge is to maintain our affordable housing programme at a time when a large percentage of private sector new build developments are being delayed. This has meant increasing uncertainty when considering the timetable for the delivery of affordable housing that has already been negotiated for sites as well as a slow-down on the number of new sites coming to the market. The affordable housing programme that is part funded by the Housing Corporation continues to be on target for delivering 47 homes on 6 sites in 2008/09. The 2008/09 LAA target for additional affordable homes (165) is also still on target to be met.

A difficult private housing market is, however, leading to some emerging opportunities. The fall in house prices has positive effects for some purchasers in that affordability is improved. Private developers have also begun to offer additional homes to housing associations, which, if the quality, type and location of the homes are acceptable, will be a welcome boost to affordable housing supply in the city. Thirty-two additional homes on one site are currently being negotiated.

Other emerging effects of the credit crunch are an increased level of possession orders on mortgaged homes. In response, the Golden Triangle Partnership will launch a mortgage rescue scheme in December 2008/January 2009 and we are keeping a close watch on the development of a national mortgage rescue scheme and on other initiatives that may be launched by the Government to kick-start the housing market

Financial Summary

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

	Approved Budget £'000	Projected Variation £'000	Variation %
<u>Private Sector Grant Fee Income</u>			
Increased income due to providing a higher number of grants than forecast	-93	-23	-24.73
<u>Howe Hill Hostel</u>			
Saving due to employee vacancies (-£17k) and lower repair costs (-£15k) offset by increased expenditure on utilities and equipment (+£8k)	335	-24	-7.16
Higher occupancy than forecast	<u>-257</u> 78	<u>-49</u> -73	-19.07
<u>Removals and Storage</u>			
Higher levels of belongings in storage relating to corresponding high occupancy levels in temporary accommodation	38	+14	+36.84
<u>Homeless Advice Team</u>			
Mainly due to staff vacancies	427	-33	-7.73
<u>Travellers Sites</u>			
Mainly due to increased repair and utility costs	213	+31	+14.55
<u>Other Minor Variations</u>	757	+10	+1.32
Total Housing General Fund	1,404	-74	-5.27

Performance Measures

Customer Measures			
Description	2007/8 Outturn	2008/9 Annual Target	Current Performance
Number of Households in York assisted into home ownership via the Golden Triangle Homebuy Scheme in partnership with Northern Counties Housing (Paul Stamp)	11	11	5 Completions to Oct 08. 5 more on target to complete by year end.
Number of households living in temporary accommodation NI 156 (BW)	209	170 (Quarter 1 target 205)	192
Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (gross) NI 155 (Paul Stamp)	51	165	121
Average length of time to complete a HAL (Ruth)	New	New not set	Available at end 2008/9 outturn
% Of external calls answered in 20 seconds (Housing Services) Dennis	96%	97%	96.4%

Process Measures			
Description	2007/8 Outturn	2008/9 Annual Target	Current Performance
Number of households presenting as homeless where casework resolved * Note there was a change of definition in 2008-9 (M.I) (BW)	278	305	119 (to end Sept)

Resource Measures			
Description	2007/8 Outturn	2008/9 Annual Target	Current Performance
Take up of HALs (Ruth)	None	6	10 approved