



Notice of meeting of

Executive Members for Housing & Adult Social Services and Advisory Panel

To: Councillors Hogg (Chair), Sue Galloway (Executive Member), Sunderland (Executive Member), Bowgett, Fraser, Horton, Taylor, Wiseman, Mrs Mildred Grundy (Co-opted Non-Statutory Member) and Ms Pat Holmes (Co-opted Non-Statutory Member)

Date: Monday, 17 March 2008

Time: 5.00 pm

Venue: Guildhall

AGENDA

Notice to Members - Calling In:

Members are reminded that, should they wish to call in any item on this agenda, notice must be given to Democracy Support Group by:

10:00 am on Friday 14 March 2008, if an item is called in *before* a decision is taken, *or*

4:00 pm on Wednesday 19 March 2008, if an item is called in *after* a decision has been taken.

Items called in will be considered by the Scrutiny Management Committee.

1. Declarations of Interest

At this point Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in the business on this agenda.

2. Exclusion of Press and Public

To consider excluding the public and press from the meeting during consideration of Annex A to agenda item 7 on the grounds that it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). This information is classed as exempt under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 10)

To approve and sign the minutes of the last meeting of the Panel held on 14 January 2008.

4. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered their wish to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue within the Panel's remit can do so. Anyone who wishes to register or requires further information is requested to contact the Democracy Officer on the contact details listed at the foot of this agenda. The deadline for registering is Friday 14 March 2008 at 5.00pm.

BUSINESS FOR THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING

ITEM FOR INFORMATION

5. Results of the 2007 Annual Housing Satisfaction Survey (Pages 11 - 16)

This report provides the Executive Member with the results of the Annual Housing Services Monitor, a tenant satisfaction survey, and will be supplemented by a presentation to members.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

6. Housing Capital Programme Specification Change (Pages 17 - 22)

This report presents proposals for the adoption of a policy for the replacement of focal point fires in customers homes.

7. Gas Servicing Future Procurement (Pages 23 - 32)

This report presents details of the recent procurement exercise undertaken and suggests future direction for the gas servicing and maintenance service to council dwellings.

8. Former Tenant Arrears - Write off (Pages 33 - 38)

This report seeks agreement to write off a number of former tenants arrears over £2,000.

**BUSINESS FOR THE EXECUTIVE MEMBERS FOR HOUSING
AND ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES**

ITEM FOR DECISION

9. Financial Support to the Voluntary Sector (Housing & Adult Social Services) 2008/09 (Pages 39 - 50)

This report presents requests received from local organisations for financial support in 2008/09. The Executive Members are asked to agree the recommendations for financial support outlined in the report.

10. Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officer:

Name: Jill Pickering

Contact details:

- Telephone – (01904) 552061
- E-mail – jill.pickering@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

Contact details are set out above.

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If you would, you will need to:

- register by contacting the Democracy Officer (whose name and contact details can be found on the agenda for the meeting) **no later than 5.00 pm** on the last working day before the meeting;
- ensure that what you want to say speak relates to an item of business on the agenda or an issue which the committee has power to consider (speak to the Democracy Officer for advice on this);
- find out about the rules for public speaking from the Democracy Officer.

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Further information about what's being discussed at this meeting

All the reports which Members will be considering are available for viewing online on the Council's website. Alternatively, copies of individual reports or the full agenda are available from Democratic Services. Contact the Democracy Officer whose name and contact details are given on the agenda for the meeting. **Please note a small charge may be made for full copies of the agenda requested to cover administration costs.**

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If you have any further access requirements such as parking close-by or a sign language interpreter then please let us know. Contact the Democracy Officer whose name and contact details are given on the order of business for the meeting.

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The majority of councillors are not appointed to the Executive (38 out of 47). Any 3 non-Executive councillors can 'call-in' an item of business from a published Executive (or Executive Member Advisory Panel (EMAP)) agenda. The Executive will still discuss the 'called in' business on the published date and will set out its views for consideration by a specially convened Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC). That SMC meeting will then make its recommendations to the next scheduled Executive meeting in the following week, where a final decision on the 'called-in' business will be made.

Scrutiny Committees

The purpose of all scrutiny and ad-hoc scrutiny committees appointed by the Council is to:

- Monitor the performance and effectiveness of services;
- Review existing policies and assist in the development of new ones, as necessary; and
- Monitor best value continuous service improvement plans

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

MEETING	EXECUTIVE MEMBERS FOR HOUSING & ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES AND ADVISORY PANEL
DATE	14 JANUARY 2008
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS HOGG (CHAIR), SUE GALLOWAY (EXECUTIVE MEMBER), SUNDERLAND (EXECUTIVE MEMBER), BOWGETT, FRASER, HORTON, TAYLOR AND WISEMAN
APOLOGIES	MRS MILDRED GRUNDY AND MS PAT HOLMES (CO-OPTED NON-STATUTORY MEMBERS)

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

Cllr Hogg declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in the business generally, as his mother received respite care in City of York Council homes.

Cllr Fraser declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in any staffing issues referred to in agenda item 5 (Revenue and Capital Budget Estimate 2008/09), as a member of the retired section of UNISON.

47. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the Press & Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Annex A to Agenda Item 10 (Housing Capital Programme- Materials Procurement E-Auction) on the grounds that it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), which is classed as exempt under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Section 100A of the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006.

48. MINUTES

In response to an issue raised under Minute 39 (Housing and Adult Social Services 2007/08 Service Plans and Budget Second Monitor), Officers provided an update on their enquiries concerning the rent position of tenants of Discus Bungalows. The matter had been discussed with the York Housing Association and a full benefit check was currently being carried out in respect of all tenants. It was noted that the Council had no legal powers to assist tenants other than a general power to assist the

community, subject to a test of reasonableness. Details of this advice would be circulated to Members.¹

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Executive Members and Advisory Panel, held on 10 December 2007, be approved and signed by the Chair and Executive Members as a correct record.

Action Required

1. Circulate written advice to Members.

LE

49. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND OTHER SPEAKERS

It was reported that there had been two registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme, in relation to agenda item 5 (Revenue and Capital Budget Estimate 2008/09). There had also been two requests to speak on this item, on behalf of UNISON.

Rachel Barber, manager of the Early Intervention and Prevention Team at the Salvation Army, spoke on the potentially negative impact of the savings proposal to reconfigure the contract for the early intervention and prevention of rough sleepers (HSHS14), both on the service provided by her team and on other services such as the police, mental health and hospitals. She circulated written details to support her comments.

Sally Hutchinson, of Age Concern, spoke about the savings proposal to increase charges for day care (HSHS10), in relation to the Day Clubs run by Age Concern and funded by the Council. She circulated written details of the activities of the clubs, noting that they offered quality, affordable day services, for which there was an increasing need in the community, and often struggled for sufficient funding.

Liz Young, of UNISON, indicated that she would be speaking on behalf of both herself and Jean Churm, who had asked to speak but was unable to attend the meeting. She expressed disappointment at the proposals to reduce hours and amalgamate teams in the Home Care service (HSMS3-5), suggesting that this would increase pressure on the service and lead to increased car usage, environmental impact and mileage claims. On behalf of Jean Churm, she voiced concerns about savings proposals to increase eligibility criteria (HSH11A), close the CYC component of Sycamore House (HSHS2) and reduce the number of homeless casework / prevention workers (HSHS13), due to the effect of these measures upon customers and staff.

50. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET ESTIMATES 2008/09

Members considered a report which presented the 2008/09 budget proposals for Housing and Adult Social Services, including:

- the revenue budget for 2007/08, showing existing budgets (Annex 1)
- the budget adjusted and rolled forward from 2007/08 into 2008/09

- the provisional allocation of pay and price increases for the portfolio
- officer proposals for budget service pressure costs and savings options for the portfolio area (Annexes 2 and 3)
- fees and charges proposals (Annex 4)
- other revenue budget options for consultation (Annex 5)
- the existing approved capital programme (Annex 6)
- options for new capital schemes (Annex 7)
- the Housing Revenue Account (Annex 8).

A summary of the General Fund budget proposals was provided in Table 1 in paragraph 7 of the report. As proposals for savings/growth currently being considered by the individual EMAP meetings would not result in a balanced budget, Executive Members were required to consider alternative options. Members were asked for their comments or alternative suggestions, as part of the consultation process, on the proposals shown in Annexes 2, 3, 5 and 7, which would be considered by the Executive. Comments were sought in particular on the items listed for consultation in Annexes 5 and 7, which did not at present form part of the intended budget. Options had been shared in outline with representatives of users of adult social services and carers. They had expressed opposition to raising the threshold for eligibility for social care and to differential charging, and concerns over charging levels already being high in York.

Members sought clarity in particular on the implications of proposals to:

- Reduce Home Care hours (Annex 3, HSMS3, HSMS4, HSMS)
- Increase Discretionary Charges for Day Care (Annex 4)
- Increase eligibility criteria for care services (Annex 5, HSHS11A)
- Increase income from charges by removing the disregard of disability related benefit (Annex 5, HSHS9)
- Reduce the number of homeless casework / prevention workers (Annex 5, HSHS13)
- Reconfigure the early intervention and prevention contract (HSHS14)

In response to Members' queries and to issues raised under Public Participation, Officers confirmed that:

- Home Care did not include personal care and the reduced hours would not affect the service to customers. Detailed work on these proposals (including consultation with staff) was still ongoing.
- The increased Day Care charges would still be less than those charged by some other authorities – details would be circulated to Members.
- They shared the concerns expressed proposals HSHS 13 and HSHS14 but had been required to look at all areas to achieve savings.

The Labour Group Members indicated that they wished to reserve their position on the budget at this stage.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Members be advised to note and refer to the Executive the concerns recorded above, together with the following budget proposals:¹

- (i) the 2008/09 Base Budget as set out in paragraph 7 of the report;
- (ii) the service pressure proposals set out in Annex 2;
- (iii) the savings set out in Annex 3.
- (iv) the fees and charges set out in Annex 4.
- (v) the other revenue budget options for consultation set out in Annex 5.
- (vi) the options for new capital schemes in Annex 7.
- (vii) the Housing Revenue Budget set out in Annex 8

Decision of the Executive Members

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: As part of the consultation for the 2008/09 budget setting process.

Action Required

Refer budget proposals and Members' concerns re some of LE the proposed savings to Executive.

51. DIRECTORATE SERVICE PLAN

Members considered a report which presented the directorate and service plans for Housing and Adult Social Services (HASS) covering the period 2008-2011.

The plans, which were annexed to the report, comprised a Directorate Plan, linking the work of HASS to the Council's corporate objectives, and six service plans detailing the service aims, key objectives and performance targets.

It was noted that there were still a few amendments to be made to the Corporate Plan, including the addition of the corporate improvement priority which was led by HASS (page 3). Officers also agreed to check whether the figures for the landlord service (page 4) included tenancies managed on behalf of Housing Associations.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Members be advised to endorse and approve the Directorate Plan for Housing and Adult Social Services and the associated Service Plans.¹

Decision of the Executive Members

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: So that the Council's corporate and departmental objectives can be achieved.

Action Required

1. Confirm and begin to implement the Service Plan. LE

52. DRAFT HOUSING RENTS AND MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCES 2008/09

Members considered a report which set out the draft rent guidelines and the draft management and maintenance allowances issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government for 2008/09.

The Government had agreed a phased change in rents over 10 years in April 2002, to ensure that all councils and housing associations set their rents on a new, fair and consistent basis. The deadline for rent convergence, whereby similar properties would be charged at similar rents regardless of who owned the property, had been extended to 2016/17. The effect of the extension would be to reduce potential increases for tenants.

Consideration was given to the following options:

Option 1 - To continue rent restructuring with convergence in 2011/12 and increase rents by 6.28%. This would be against Government guidance on rent restructuring and would generate income above the level assumed in the Government's subsidy calculation.

Option 2 - To continue rent restructuring with convergence in 2016/17 and increase rents by 5.25%. This was the recommended option.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member be advised to agree Option 2 - to increase rents in York by 5.25% - and refer this to the Executive for approval.¹

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: In accordance with Government guidance, and to ensure a balanced Housing Revenue Account.

Action Required

1. Refer decision to Executive. LE

53. FUTURE OPTIONS FOR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ON ORDNANCE LANE, YORK

Members considered a report which outlined future options available to bring the temporary accommodation at Ordnance Lane, York, up to decent homes standard. An in-principle endorsement of a capital bid to Communities and Local Government for a resettlement project for young people through the Places of Change programme was also requested.

Key criteria that would relate to any Places of Change bid submitted from York were set out in paragraph 15 of the report. It was noted that a number of different options would need to be explored in more detail concerning the future of Ordnance Lane and that this would be necessary irrespective of the success of any bid. Proposals for the future could include any of the following options:

Option 1 - Demolish the existing scheme and replace it with a new build providing 25 x 2 bed self contained units for temporary accommodation, and a Places of Change/Foyer scheme of 20 x en suite units for 16/20 year olds.

Option 2 - Demolish the existing facility, re-build a 25 x 2 bed self-contained scheme for temporary accommodation and consider redeveloping the rest of the site for affordable housing.

Option 3 - Refurbish the existing buildings up to decent homes standards, acknowledging that there will be an element of shared facilities

Option 4 - Dispose of the current Ordnance Lane site on the open market and relocate the existing use with or without the Places of Change / foyer scheme to a new site.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member be advised to:

- (i) Endorse the expression of interest submission to Communities and Local Government for capital funding for a Young Persons Places of Change project.¹
- (ii) Agree to explore future options for Ordnance Lane temporary accommodation.²

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: This solution will provide people going through the homeless or resettlement route with accommodation that is fit for the 21st Century and which improves their life chances by providing training in trades and life skills which will also help to sustain future tenancies in the long term.

Action Required

1. Submit expression of interest to CLG by 8 February deadline. LE
LE
2. Begin to explore future options for Ordnance Lane hostel site.

54. REVIEW OF HARD WIRED SHELTERED STREET SCHEMES

Members considered a report which examined the options for the sustainability of the current hard wired street schemes that the council managed and sought approval to re-designate the properties to general housing needs.

The report related to the following hard-wired schemes:

Scheme	Numbers of Properties
Bell Farm Ave	16
Huntington Rd	4
Jackson Street	21
Lowther Street	17
March Street	9
Middleham Ave	3
Total	70

These Sheltered Housing Schemes had originally been built as general needs flats but had been re-designated for older people following a shortage of sheltered properties in the city. Difficulties were now being encountered with letting these properties. Members were therefore asked to consider the following options for their future management:

Option 1 – Convert from hard-wired to lifeline phones. This would involve disconnecting the hard-wired systems, offering existing customers a lifeline phone and removing the dedicated warden service. When vacancies occurred these would then be offered as sensitive general needs lettings.

Option 2 – Maintain the status quo. This was not recommended, as it would not resolve the current problems around letting these properties.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member be advised to:

- (i) Approve Option 1 - the conversion of the current hard wired street schemes to lifeline telephones.¹
- (ii) Approve the re-designation of the properties listed in paragraph 5 of the report to general housing needs.²

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To ensure that the properties remain popular and sustainable in the future.

Action Required

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Implement conversion to lifeline phones. | LE |
| 2. Re-designate properties to general needs housing. | LE |

55. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME - MATERIALS PROCUREMENT E-AUCTION

Members considered a report which presented the results of a procurement exercise undertaken for the supply of materials for the housing capital programme modernisation schemes.

From 2006, Partnering Contracts had been used for Tenants Choice and Central Heating programmes to achieve Decent Homes. At that time, the materials used had remained the same in order to maintain service for customers and ease the tender process. Attention had since turned towards the purchasing of these materials with a view to achieving efficiencies and refreshing customers' choice. It had also been judged beneficial to join the Northern Housing Consortium (NHC), a materials purchasing consortium of other Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords, in order to save time and achieve economies of scale which the Council could not manage on its own.

In alliance with the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), the NHC had undertaken a large procurement exercise aimed at Decent Homes materials. Member authorities had agreed the total tender package in terms of prospective volumes required and common standard specifications. Further details of the tender process were outlined in the report and a summary of the tender scores was provided in exempt Annex A. Members were asked to decide whether or not to use the supplier framework resulting from this process. It was recommended that they select Option 1 – to use the framework – as this would enable the Council to benefit from the savings achieved by the process, obviate the need to undertake individual tenders and enable customers to receive new ranges of materials from 1 April 2008.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member be advised to agree Option 1, to use the supplier framework and accept the kitchen supplier under Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT), as noted in paragraph 18 of the report.¹

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To secure quality and value for money on behalf of the Council's tenants.

Action Required

1. Confirm acceptance with NHC/OGC and progress the supplier contracts. LE

CLLR SUE SUNDERLAND
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING

CLLR SUE GALLOWAY
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

CLLR CHRIS HOGG,
Chair of Advisory Panel
[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.50 pm].

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HASS66

Meeting of Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services and Advisory Panel17th March 2008

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

RESULTS OF THE 2007 ANNUAL HOUSING SATISFACTION SURVEY**Summary**

1. This report provides the Executive Member with the results of the Annual Housing Services Monitor (AHSM): a postal survey of City of York Council tenants undertaken during November 2007. It will be supplemented by a presentation to the Executive Member and Advisory Panel at the meeting. For ease of reference percentages have been “rounded”.
2. Headline results from the 2007 survey are:
 - Overall satisfaction with the housing services has increased to 88%
 - 88% of tenants describe the council as a ‘very good’ or ‘good’ landlord
 - 87% are very or fairly satisfied with the condition of their home
 - 83% are satisfied with the repair and maintenance service
 - 70% feel the Council’s housing service takes account of their views when making decisions

Background

3. The Annual Housing Services Monitor is a tenant satisfaction survey which has been carried out in York every year since 1990. The AHSM is a tenant satisfaction survey which has been carried out every year since 1990. This year the survey was non-statutory (i.e. a year in which submission of Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 74 and 75 relating to tenant satisfaction is not mandatory) and in consultation with members was reduced in size.
4. City of York Council Marketing and Communications Group developed the questionnaire in conjunction with Housing Services. The fieldwork was outsourced to PCP research.

Methodology

5. During October/November 2007 a postal survey was mailed to 2000 City of York council tenants selected at random. A total of 995 tenants returned the questionnaire, which represents a good response rate of 50% of the sample. This compared to a 49% response rate in 2006 and is above the number required for statistical validity.
6. Prior to 2006 the survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews but for the last two years a postal methodology has been used. The change in data collection methods must be kept in mind when comparing results pre and post 2006. Results are accurate to within +/- 3.1% with 95% confidence based on 7767 occupied properties. Where percentages do not sum to 100%, this is either due to multiple responses or decimal rounding. The figures for each question have been calculated after the respondents who did not answer the questions have been removed from the bases.

Promotion

7. The survey was promoted using the *Streets Ahead* magazine for tenants, posters in housing offices and press releases. A prize draw with a top prize of £100 was also offered to help maximise the response rate.

Communication

8. A press release summarising the headline results was issued in January 2008, there is to be a presentation to the York Federation on March 20th, and a feature on the results of the survey will be published in the April edition of *Streets Ahead* magazine for tenants.

Consultation

9. The survey questionnaire was developed in partnership with Marketing and Communications. At the meeting of the Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services and Advisory Panel on 16th July 2007 it was agreed to the 2007 survey being a reduced version. This was also discussed with the York Federation of Residents' & Community Associations at their meeting in July 2007.

Options

10. This report is for information only – there are no options for consideration

Analysis

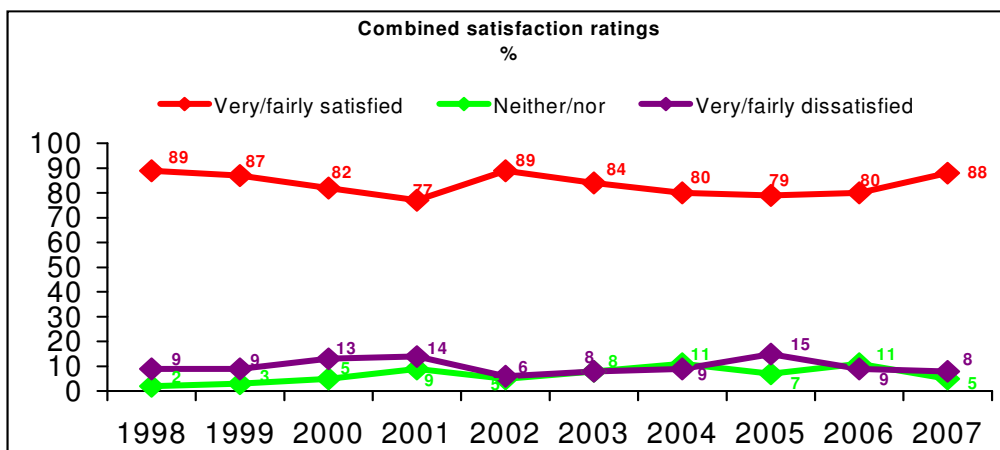
Profile of respondents

11. The majority of those who responded to the questionnaire were longstanding tenants of City of York Council: almost two-thirds (64%) have been a council tenant for over 10 years. Just under half (49%) are renting a house and a

lower proportion (40%) rent a flat. In terms of ethnic group, the sample was dominated by White British (98%) tenants.

- Over half (53%) of the households participating in the survey are made up of one adult. Families account for 20% of the sample whilst households consisting of two or more adults account for 27%.
- Over half (53%) of households included at least one tenant with a long-standing illness or disability and over four-fifths (83%) of these respondents explained that the illness limited this person's activities.
- Over two-fifths (41%) of the tenants are retired, over one-quarter (29%) are employed or self-employed, 14% are permanently sick or disabled and 7% are looking after the home and family.
- Over half (54%) of households receive all their income from benefits or pensions. Almost two-thirds (64%) of the sample receive housing benefit and 61% of these respondents explain that this benefit pays for all of their rent

Overall Satisfaction with the Housing Service



- Overall 88% of tenants state that they are very or fairly satisfied with the Housing Service: a significant improvement on 80% combined satisfaction in 2006. The same percentage describe the Council as a good landlord, with a sharp increase in the numbers strongly agreeing with this statement: 55% compared to 46% in 2006. Eighty-six per cent of tenants perceived their rent as value for money (up from 74%) Over 55's and those without children at home are the most satisfied in this respect.

Repairs & Maintenance

- Encouragingly, there has been an increase in satisfaction with the condition of the property up to 87% from 80 (though younger tenants 16-34 are less content with the service in this area – only 69% are satisfied compared to 93% of over 55s). Satisfaction with the way repairs are dealt with has increased to 83% from 79% last year, although again younger tenants are the least satisfied

with 67% satisfaction compared to 90% among the over 55s. Area based analysis indicates tenants on the city side are less satisfied than in Acomb, and this will be explored with the Repairs Partnership.

14. It is recognised that Repairs are a key area of concern to many tenants, and we have therefore recently revamped surveys sent out to all tenants after they receive repairs to their homes, so that we can track satisfaction continuously. Examples of good practice were sought by the Service Development team from other members of the Housing Quality Network, and this work generated sufficient interest at the network that a specific briefing paper on repair satisfaction surveys was issued recently. The results of the first two batches of surveys revealed satisfaction levels of 85.9% among tenants who received repairs to their homes in October 2007 and 87.2% in November. This data relates wholly to those customers who have recently reported repairs, whereas respondents to the Annual Housing Monitor may not have recent experience of the service, and enables ongoing analysis of customer satisfaction with the responsive repairs service.
15. An end-to-end review of the responsive repairs service using systems thinking principles is underway. The review looks at the process of repairs from reporting to completion, and changes undertaken to improve this process should also improve customer satisfaction

Resident Involvement

16. Eight out of ten respondents are satisfied with the extent the housing department keeps them informed about the things which might affect them as a tenant. However, under two-thirds (64%) are satisfied with the opportunities for participation in management and decision-making. Although this is a significant improvement on 57% satisfaction in 2006 and 55% in 2005, less than half of those with children and those aged 35-54 are satisfied. The Housing Customer Involvement Compact was launched in Autumn 2007 and work is underway to develop new methods of involvement such as customer expert panels. Just over two-thirds (67%) are satisfied with the extent to which the housing department finds out their views. Seven out of ten respondents (70%) feel that CYC takes account of tenants' views to some extent when making decisions.

Contact and Communication

17. Respondents were asked how much of the Council's quarterly magazine for Tenants (Streets Ahead) they normally read. Ninety-three percent of those receiving the magazine read at least some of it, however the number stating they read the entire publication has reduced too, with 57% (down from 62%) saying they read the entire magazine. More detailed work needs to be done with the Streets Ahead Editorial Panel to examine reasons for this, with consideration given to a readership survey or focus group.
18. Just less than three-quarters (73%) of the sample said they had contacted City of York Council Housing Services in the last 12 months (up from 63% in 2006). The main reason for contact (as in 2006) was about repairs: 70% cited this as the reason for their contact (66% in 2006). Contacting the service by telephone

is still the most popular method, although written and email contact both doubled from 1 to 2%. Officers are now including email addresses on letters, and this may increase the amount of email contact in future.

19. Importantly, getting hold of the right person has almost returned to the 2005 level of 74% (73%) from a drop to 61% in 2006. A possible explanation for the low figure last year was that it was due in part to the restructure of housing services in 2005-6 and the recovery this year would seem to back this up. Late in 2007 there was also the introduction of voice recognition dialling for external customers, which may have had an impact. Most tenants say their enquiry was dealt with, however 14% (the same as last year) are still citing that the person they spoke to was not able to deal with their enquiry. A revised training and development plan in preparation for housing, and a comprehensive overhaul of procedure manuals should hopefully improve this figure.

Variations in Satisfaction

20. In previous years satisfaction levels in most areas increased with age and length of tenancy. In 2007 there have been changes particularly in relation to length of tenancy. New tenants (of less than two years) are reporting higher satisfaction levels than those tenants who have lived in council homes for between two and ten years. This trend is apparent in overall satisfaction, where 90% (73%) of new tenants are satisfied compared to 89% (85%) of long standing tenants, and 83% (81%) of the middle group (figures for 2006 in brackets). New tenants are also most likely (91%) to perceive their rent as value for money compared to 79% of tenants of two to ten years standing, and 87% of long term tenants.
21. Satisfaction of new tenants has also improved in relation to repairs and maintenance increasing from 69 to 78%, the same level as those tenants with two to ten year tenancies.

Corporate Priorities

22. The findings from the survey can be used to identify actions to contribute to the delivery of the priority statement *'Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city'* by clarifying quality issues of concern to tenants.
23. Carrying out regular surveys of council tenant satisfaction reflects the councils Vision and Values in that it helps us in *'Delivering what our customers want'* and the findings are a way of *'Encouraging improvement in everything we do'*

Implications

24.
 - **Financial** No direct financial implications. The costs of the survey were met from existing research budgets in Housing. Some improvement actions taken in response to the survey may have financial implications.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** No HR implications

- **Equalities** Respondents are asked their age group, ethnic group and gender. It is possible to analyse and sort responses to assess the satisfaction levels of different groups, however in some cases the number of responses may be insufficient for statistical validity.
- **Legal** No direct legal implications
- **Crime and Disorder** No Crime and Disorder Implications
- **Information Technology (IT)** No IT implications
- **Property** No property implications

Risk Management

25. There are no direct risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

26. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to note the results of the 2007 Annual Housing Service Monitor and the proposed actions.

Reason: This report is for information only.

Contact Details

Author:
Alison Leech
Service Development
Manager
Housing Services
Tel No.01904 554362

Sophie Gibson
Research Officer
Marketing & Communications
Tel No. 01904 551022

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:
Steve Waddington
Head of Housing Services

Report Approved **Date** 26 February 2008

Chief Officer's name
Title

Report Approved *tick* **Date** *Insert Date*

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None – the report is co-authored by Marketing and Communications who commissioned the research

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Report to Housing EMAP 16th July 2007 Annual Housing Satisfaction Survey 2007.

Annexes - None



HASS67

Meeting of Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services and Advisory Panel

17 March 2008

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Housing Capital Programme Specification Change**Summary**

1. This report presents proposals regarding the adoption of a policy for replacement of focal point fires to customers homes.

Background

2. The majority of Council Dwellings have a focal point fire in the main living room area which compliments the central heating system, traditionally many of these have been gas fires. No direct policy governs the choices available to customers however for a number of significant factors officers present electric as the preferred option of choice and hence take up of electric fires is high.
3. Some customers however have specifically requested and been provided with replacement gas fires but the long term impacts of these installations often contradicts the Council's responsibilities to value for money and sustainability in terms of business and environmental aspects hence a request to implement a policy document is presented.

Consultation

4. There has been no consultation undertaken to produce this report.

Options

5. Option 1 - Do not fit any new focal point fires.
Option 2 - Replace all fires with electric
Option 3 - Give customers choice

Analysis

6. **Option 1 – Do not fit any new focal fire points.**

7. Due to improvements in modern central heating systems and general insulation levels to housing, focal point fires are not provided by numerous sections of the marketplace. This ranges from new build specification in the private and housing association sector's as well as private landlords. Heating systems are specifically calculated and installed to be the sole form of heating with any further form being supplementary.
8. Impacts of this will be a significant cost saving in terms of installation and future maintenance however a likely drop in customer satisfaction as the living room would have no focal point. Should a fault arise with the central heating system customers would also not have a secondary source of heat.

9. Option 2 - Replace all fires with electric

10. Modern electric fires are much more efficient and better presented than their early basic models hence their increased popularity. Running costs for customers of gas and electric fires are generally comparable however electric fires are 100% efficient as opposed to gas fires ranging from 40-60% efficient. This means 100% of the heat from an electric fire warms the dwelling where only 40-60% of the heat from a gas fire does so with the remainder escaping up the chimney.
11. The installation costs of electric fires are less than those of gas and they also require less maintenance and servicing over their lifecycle hence provide the Authority far better value for money.
12. With the use of electricity the City of York Council is promoting the use of cleaner fuels, reducing its carbon footprint (however carbon emissions are still emitted in the production of electricity) and dramatically reducing health and safety risks from carbon monoxide poisoning.
13. The majority of customers do currently choose electric fires and therefore it is not considered that customer satisfaction is likely to be significantly affected however the clarity of an adopted decision will greatly assist the works process. Customers receive a choice from a wide range of electric fire suites.

14. Option 3 – Give customers choice

15. All gas burning appliances require a flue or chimney to take combustion gases away from the dwelling. The lifespan of the flue is often the same or even less than that of the fire and hence must be a consideration in terms of installation costs/processes with failure of the flue often being the reason fires are changed. Proportionately therefore a gas fire/flue combination can be up to 3 times the cost of an electric fire. Also with Health and Safety legislation becoming even more stringent regarding working at height the installation cost for flue liners is only going to increase.
16. The lifecycle maintenance and servicing costs for gas fires/flues is considerable with the impact falling on the Housing Revenue Account.

17. Gas fires are open flued appliances and have the potential for the production of carbon monoxide should faults develop which in turn poses a serious health and safety risk to customers. There have been numerous occasions in York where elderly residents who have become unwell or simply have difficulties in getting upstairs have begun to sleep in living rooms in front of the gas fire. This is one of the highest risk categories for carbon monoxide related fatalities and should be designed out of the housing stock.
18. Electric fires are easier to operate for elderly or frail customers as the controls are rocker switches similar to light switches requiring less dexterity.
19. Currently customer uptake in the choice of gas fires is low with less than 10 gas fires renewed per year. This is mainly due to the increased aesthetic nature of electric fire suites over radiant gas fires. Due to the increased cost and carbon monoxide risk to 'real flame' affect gas fires only radiant effect models are offered. Thus the impact on customer satisfaction is likely to be low. Should members request gas fires become a valid option and the choice expanded to a wide variety of models this would increase the cost of installation and potentially the number of times gas is chosen by customers per year thus whilst this cannot be accurately predicted could have significant capital and revenue financial implications.

Corporate Priorities

20. This report contributes to 2 of the Council's Corporate Priorities
 - Reduce the environmental impact of council activities and encourage, empower and promote others to do the same
 - Improve the quality and availability of decent, affordable homes in the city.

Implications

Financial

21. **Option 1:** There is likely to be a reduction in capital costs of installation of new fires of £250,000 per annum as fires would not be replaced but simply removed, this saving could be realised annually for several years until the majority of fires have been removed.
22. Revenue costs of servicing are likely to reduce by £9,000 per annum as there would be less fires to service every year hence that saving increasing by a further £9,000 per annum year on year to a maximum saving of £104,000 based upon the total number of gas fires presently serviced. Revenue costs for repairs to fires will also reduce by approximately £47,000 per annum for several years until the majority of fires have been removed.
23. **Option 2:** There will be a reduction in capital costs of installations in the region of £5,000 per annum.

24. Revenue costs of servicing are likely to reduce by £9,000 per annum as there would be less fires to service every year hence that saving increasing by a further £9,000 per annum year on year to a maximum saving of £104,000 based upon the total number of gas fires presently serviced. Revenue costs for repairs to fires will also reduce by approximately £25,000 per annum for several years until the majority of fires have been removed.
25. **Option 3:** As noted in paragraph 19 it is impossible to predict customers choices and hence impossible to predict the financial implications of a decision to offer such choice however officers can inform of the increased cost implications of 1 single gas fire over 1 single electric fire.
26. The increased cost to the Housing Capital Programme of installing a single gas fire is approximately £540 per fire with an increased HRA cost over its 30 year lifecycle of servicing and repairs of approximately £729 hence a cumulative impact of £1269 over the cost of electric fires.
27. Approximately 700 fires are expected to be replaced in 2008/09 therefore a dramatic change in customer choice or a request from members that models of gas fires be expanded could have significant financial implications beyond the current budget provision for this area of service.
28. The figures can be more easily displayed in the below table

	Average Installation cost to Authority	Average annual revenue cost to Authority	Suggested running cost to customer	Lifecycle cost over 30 years to Authority
Gas Fire and flue	£1090	£27.1	6p per hour	£1903
Electric fire	£550	£2.80	6p per hour	£634

There are no **Human Resources, Equalities, Crime and Disorder, Property or Information Technology** implications in this report.

Legal

29. It is a legal obligation to service all gas appliances in customers homes every 12 months, the less gas appliances there are in the stock the more efficient this process becomes.

Risk Management

30. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy there are no risks associated with Option's 1 or 2 of this report. The main risk that has been identified in this report is that of the installation of gas fires with specific reference to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning (physical).

31. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score has been assessed at 12. This means that at this point the risks need only be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the objectives of this report

Recommendations

32. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to agree Option 2 to adopt a policy to replace all focal point fires with electric in customers homes as set out in paragraph 9.

Reason: Electric fires offer value for money, are efficient and reduce health and safety risks to customers.

Contact Details

Author:

Mark Grandfield
Asset Manager
Asset Management
Tel No.3733

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Chief Officer's name
Steve Waddington
Title

Head of Housing

Report Approved

Date 26 February 2008

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *none*

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All Yes

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: None

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HASS 69

**Meeting of Executive Members for Housing
and Adult Social Services and Advisory Panel**17th March 2008

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Gas Servicing Future Procurement.**Summary**

1. This report presents the recent procurement exercise undertaken and suggests future direction for the gas servicing and maintenance service to council dwellings.

Background

2. In November 2003 the Housing Executive Member agreed a two-fold approach to this service with an external contractor undertaking all works in the City area and Neighbourhood Services (NSO) undertaking all works in the Acomb area under a partnering agreement based on the contract specification for the external contract. The external contract expires on March 31st 2008 and hence this report presents the future direction.
3. The majority of all other maintenance type repairs are carried out by NSO under the Housing Repairs Partnership agreed by the Executive in November 2004. This partnership was established to remove the traditional adversarial roles of client and contractor and promote a joint responsibility by both parties for the success of the partnership. This change has fostered a close working relationship that has made significant strides of improving performance to customers whilst reducing duplication in processes and also the management structure. This Partnership is based upon a charging mechanism of the actual cost to the authority of the works and does not include any profit.
4. In January 2003 the Authority signed up to a Service Procurement Strategy which included a Service Procurement Hierarchy against which procurement decisions could be made. With reference to this report it provides a framework within which to consolidate all of the works under a single contracting process using NSO as 'in-house provision with an improvement plan'. Hence it is the recommendation that the Housing Repairs Partnership be amended to include the gas servicing and maintenance service.
5. A period of evaluation was undertaken in the Autumn of 2007 to assess both NSO's performance and costs relating to gas servicing to ensure any

expansion in service would be achievable, provide value for money and satisfy procurement regulations.

6. Neighbourhood Services undertook a cost analysis of the works. Benchmarking of this was then undertaken against a range of external providers available to the Authority through a procurement route via the Northern Housing Consortium. Whilst NSO's costs were not the cheapest they were within the range of the external providers. (See confidential Annex A). It is considered that if the whole service is brought together under the Housing Repairs Partnership efficiencies can be delivered across the whole end to end process that will significantly reduce cost and increase performance.
7. Under government protocol a contractor that does not offer the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) must be formally approved by the Executive Member.

Consultation

8. Officers in Neighbourhood Services and Procurement have been consulted in producing this report.

Options

9. **Option 1** - Approve the amendment to the Housing Repairs Partnership to include the whole of the gas servicing for the city under MEAT protocol.
10. **Option 2** – Not approve the amendment to the Housing Repairs Partnership and request officers to undertake a formal tendering process for the servicing and maintenance of the Councils gas heating appliances in its homes.

Analysis

Option 1 – This is the recommended option.

11. The contract with the external provider is due to expire on the 31st March 2008. As part of the procurement process alternative options including external provision were considered. The Northern Housing Consortium, of which the City of York Council is a member, have a procurement arm aimed at developing consortium based procurement where members can achieve better rates as a result of bringing together their buying power. The costs of partnering with NSO have been benchmarked against the rates set out within the consortiums gas servicing contract and found to be in the range of external contractor costs, albeit at the higher end.
12. It was clear from this benchmarking process that the renewal of this contract would result in an increase in expenditure on this area of service due to above inflation increase of costs in the heating sector since this service was last procured. A growth bid for this increase in costs was therefore submitted to members as part of the 2008/09 budget process.

13. Managing external contractors requires a strong technical client presence and a significant amount of administration to administer the terms of the contract, manage performance and administer staged and invoiced payments. Bringing this service into the Housing Partnership allows for immediate efficiencies in terms of officers time on contract administration and payment processes. Management of the service will be undertaken by a single team with responsibility for both the traditional client and contractor roles, reporting to the repairs partnership board. In order to reduce job role duplication for both HASS and NSO staff there will be the requirement to redefine a number of officers duties. A single team will be operationally resourced to manage this area of service made up of officers from both HASS and NSO in order to speed up decision making and reduce duplication. Following evaluation of this trial period (which will include implementation of the new City area) it is expected there will be a permanent establishment recommendation through the appropriate channels. Adopting this approach will result in streamlining the processes and strip out duplication from the system.
14. The provision of the service by a single provider will remove the potential for different service levels to customers as a result of employing 2 providers. NSO have constantly proved to provide a level of higher customer satisfaction than external contractors including issues such as communication and reliability.
15. No direct customer satisfaction surveys are undertaken for the NSO heating team however the Annual Housing Monitor presented elsewhere on the EMAP agenda presents an improved satisfaction with the repairs service globally of which NSO undertake the majority of the works. The number of customer complaints made against NSO's heating team were also considerably lower than those made against the external contractor employed in the past.
16. When considering the potential for service improvements, the Housing Repairs Partnership has shown continual improvement since its launch in July 2005 with a reduction of all average repair response times since then as depicted below.

Average time to complete repairs	Current performance	2006/07 outturn	2005/06 outturn
Emergencies	0.47 days	0.95	3.53
P1's (3 working days)	3.69	4.15	7.65
P2's (25 working days)	12.9	14.31	17.61
Urgent repairs	1.79	1.94	3.86
Non-urgent repairs	8.75	9.68	13.90

17. The gas industry is heavily regulated with a large emphasis placed upon the interpretation of the provider. Having only one provider removes any difficulties associated with different interpretations of the regulations and the subsequent contractual difficulties that this can cause. Delivering the service via the repairs partnership also places the authority in a much stronger position regarding quality control, training and technical guidance with the customer being the focal point.
18. Current NSO performance is not top quartile and hence a time based improvement plan is proposed and is in the implementation stage operationally to ensure a proactive approach to service improvement (See Annex B).
19. By extending the Housing Repairs Partnership it allows for greater integration between the traditional client and contractor roles which should result in reducing the unit costs of providing this service to a more competitive position within the benchmark range of external contractors.

Option 2 - This option is not recommended.

20. The provision of the service via external contractors was considered when discussion were first held within Housing Services during 2007. At this point in time, the Northern Housing Consortium published the outcome of their consortium procurement process for gas servicing which gave us actual tender prices for the work in question. Following discussion within the service, it was felt that external contractors could provide the service, but many of the efficiencies and improvements in customer service would be difficult to achieve as we would still have the traditional client / contractor roles.
21. If this option is chosen, giving the timescales linked to the end of the current service provision by the external contractor, it is likely that we would have a position where we wouldn't have sufficient cover from 1st April. This would impact on our statutory responsibility as a landlord to ensure that all our gas heating appliances are serviced on an annual basis. It is possible that emergency cover could be brought in, however, past experience has shown that this would be very costly.

Corporate Priorities

22. This tender exercise contributes to the Council's corporate priority to "Improve the quality and affordability of decent, affordable homes in the city".

Implications

23. Implications arising from this report are:
24. **Financial** - The cost of the service to the HRA in 2008/09 is estimated to be £1,326,370 which represents an increase of £250,000 over current costs, however as noted in paragraph 12 an increase was expected and considered by members as part of the 2008/09 budget process.

25. Improvements made to managing and overseeing the service will be expected to impact on and reduce the actual cost of the works to see a reduction in actual job cost (inflation aside) over time.
26. **Human Resources (HR)** - Due to the current moratorium on restructures it is not possible to embark on implementing the proposed structural changes. In order undertake the pilot it will be necessary to assess the remuneration applied to the additional duties undertaken by staff until such time as it is possible to consult on permanent changes to the cross directorate teams. Any proposed changes will be undertaken in accordance with the City of York Council's Management of Change Policy and Procedures and full consultation will be required.
27. **Legal** - Noting and approving this report would amend the Housing Repairs Partnership and under MEAT recognise that NSO were not the Most Economically Advantageous Tender.
28. **Information Technology (IT)** - Retaining the service in-house would allow all ordering, management and invoicing processes to remain within the authorities IM&T systems further reducing the time and cost implications of marrying up to an external contractor.
29. There are no **Property, Equalities** or **Crime and Disorder** implications arising out of this report.

Risk Management

30. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified are those which could lead to the inability to deliver services (Operational) as this is an expansion of works to NSO leading to financial loss (Financial). With any works relating to gas appliances in customers homes there is also the (physical) risk to health from carbon monoxide poisoning/explosions that could lead to non-compliance with legislation (Legal & Regulatory) should there be an avoidable accident.

Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, all risks have been assessed at less than 16. This means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the objectives of this report.

Recommendations

31. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to note the exercise undertaken and to agree Option 1 to approve the amendment to the Housing Repairs Partnership to include the whole of the gas servicing for the city under the MEAT protocol.

Reason: To secure service quality and value for money on behalf of the council's tenants.

Contact Details

Author:

Mark Grandfield
Asset Manager
HASS
Tel No.Ext 3733

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Steve Waddington
Head of Housing Services

Report Approved

Date 26 February 2008

Specialist Implications Officer(s) List information for all

Implication: Finance
Name: Debbie Mitchell
Title: Head of Housing and Adult
Social Services, Finance
Tel No.:Ext 4161

Implication: HR
Name: Claire Waind
Title: HR Officer
Tel No: Ext 4519

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: Annex A - Gas Servicing Future Procurement (Confidential)
Annex B – NSO Gas Servicing and Maintenance Improvement Plan

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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HASS 69 - Gas Servicing Future Procurement

NSO Gas Servicing and Maintenance Improvement Plan

Number	Task	Timescale
1	Recruit to staffing levels required to undertake all obligations	Apr-08
2	Integrate structural changes to management and reporting lines	Apr-08
3	Fully integrate Management Information processes for recording of servicing access and no access rates	Apr-08
4	Implement feedback mechanisms from engineers on appliances to inform on address list for future boiler replacement	Apr-08
5	Complete training package for supervisors and agree core targets for service delivery	May/June 08
6	Review and implement any changes to quality control procedures including agreement and delivery upon supervision, work audits, feedback, directed training and re-evaluation and records management.	May/June 08
7	Continue to build upon the recently open Jewsons facility including cost reconciliation processes, management information on waiting times and timetables for van stock reconciliation.	ongoing
8	Roll out handheld technology and mobile working procedures following testing to target productivity increases in operatives working time and swift data transfer	ongoing
9	Implement outcomes of Housing Repairs Review	ongoing
10	Increase engineer training packages to keep abreast with modern technologies and regulations	ongoing
11	Improve communication links with Project team to ensure efficient communication and delivery of replacements, etc	ongoing
12	Review of end to end Servicing, repairs and replacement process to improve efficiency of service.	ongoing
13	Develop robust performance management and management information system to improve the understanding of how the Heating Servicing and repair process is performing	ongoing
14	Review of the Legal process for gaining access to Service appliances.	ongoing
15	Develop a publicity campaign to warn of the importance of customers having their fires services regular	ongoing
16	Develop closer links with Corgi to ensure that the service meets the required legislation and standards	ongoing

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HASS68

Meeting of the Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services and Advisory Panel

17 March 2008

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Former Tenants Arrears – Write off

Summary

1. To seek agreement to write off a number of former tenants arrears.

Background

2. The district auditor requires existing balances to be examined and uncollectable debts to be written off each year. In the Audit Commission's Housing Inspection report dated October 2002, the need to write off bad debts more promptly was highlighted.
3. Former Tenant Arrears (FTAs) have had a significant affect on the additional contribution made each year within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) towards bad debts. This has had an adverse affect on resources available for expenditure.
4. Where a debt is written off this does not mean that it can never be recovered. The debt is written back on to a rent account if the customer is located. This may be because the customer has made contact with Housing Services. Debts are written back on each month and this is reported on monthly. In December 2007 £2467.14 was written back on to rent accounts.
5. In addition to this Housing Services has implemented two improvements in this area. The management of former debt for customers in temporary and permanent accommodation has been simplified and a formal system for checking on debts owed by newly accepted homeless customers has been implemented. In addition, a system for doing periodic traces on customers who have had their debt written off is now in place.
6. Officer delegated powers are restricted to writing off debts of £2000 or less.
7. As previously agreed by EMAP, write off reports will be brought to EMAP every 6 months. This will assist officers and members in the monitoring process and should give a clearer view on performance throughout the year.

8. FTAs are monitored weekly. The level of activity involved in recovery is based on the size of the debt. The Authority makes use of a tracing database which conforms to Data Protection requirements to locate former tenants. Where a former tenant is found efforts are made to recover the debt in traditional ways, including ;letters, phone calls and visits. Legal action is taken in appropriate cases. The Authority also employ debt collection agents to chase debts from people who have moved away from York.
9. Details of individual cases are set out in Annex A

Consultation

10. None

Options

11. **Option A:** Maintain these FTAs on accounts. This would lead to an increase in the bad debt provision and would go against good practice as commented on in the Housing Inspectors report of October 2002.

Option B: Write the debts off on the understanding that if necessary they can be reinstated at a later date.

Analysis

12. It is recommended that FTAs are written off totalling £30,209.95. This represents 0.126% of the total debit. These are cases where Housing Services have attempted a number of traces but have been unable to obtain a forwarding address or any information on the whereabouts of the former tenant. It also includes cases where the tenant has died and there were insufficient funds in the deceased's estate.

Corporate Objectives

- 13 This report supports corporate objective of improving the organisational effectiveness of the council through good financial management.

Implications

14. The implications arising from this report are as follows:
 - **Financial** - These write offs can be contained within the bad debt provision of the Housing Revenue Account. The current provision is £1,206,675
 - **Human Resources (HR)** - None
 - **Equalities** - None
 - **Legal** - None

- **Crime and Disorder** - None
- **Information Technology (IT)** - None
- **Property** - None
- **Other** - None

Risk Management

15. Writing off debts that can not currently be recovered will help reduce the bad debt impact on the HRA. This reduces high risk financial implications for the HRA.
16. The risk of these debts never being recovered is high but has been improved due to the use of a tracing IT package and more robust systems on checking for former debts when customers want rehousing

Recommendations

17. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to approve Option 2 which involves writing off FTAs of £30,209.95 as detailed in Annex A

Reason: This is in line with the recommendations of the audit report detailed in paragraph 1 and also for the financial implications listed above.

Contact Details

Author:

Denis Southall
Income Management Team
Leader / Support Services
Manager

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Steve Waddington
Head of Housing Services

Report Approved

Date 26 February 2008

Tel No. 1277

Specialist Implications Officer(s) - None

Wards Affected: None

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: Annex A: List of individual debts over £2000 to be written off

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HASS62

Meeting of Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services and Advisory Panel

17 March 2008

Report of the Director of HASS

**Financial Support To Voluntary Organisations 2008/2009
(Social Services and Housing)****Purpose of Report**

1. This report presents requests received from local organisations for financial support in 2008/2009. The Executive Members for Housing and Adult Social Services are asked to agree the recommendations for Financial Support contained within this report.

Background

2. The budget for Financial Support for the voluntary sector has been set at £70,530 for social services and £8,630 for housing related services. This is in addition to the approximate £5.0 million that the Council invests in commissioning social care services from the voluntary and Independent sector.
3. Applications for Financial Support have been received from 7 social care organisations, totalling £62,696 and one from a housing organisation with a request for £8,933.
4. Criteria for the awarding of financial support is listed at **Annex One**.
5. The arrangements for financial support for voluntary organisations aim to be simple and explicit. They are focused on a single application form which is considered by the relevant Executive Member.
6. It is proposed that over the next twelve months a further review is undertaken to analyse and assess the strategic relevance and outcomes delivered by services funded through this financial support with a view to integrating Financial Support Agreements within overall Commissioning Budgets. This would save organisations having to make an annual application and officer time in administering the process.

Consultation

7. Officers from the Council where appropriate have met with, or discussed, the applications with the organisations listed within this report. The process and timetables for applications was publicised by the Council in September 2007.

Options

8. Option 1 – To award Financial Support as indicated in paragraphs 37 - 39 to all organisations on one year Service Level Agreements
9. Option 2 – To award Financial Support to all organisations as detailed at paragraphs 37 - 39 on one year Service Level Agreements with the exception of The Independent Care Group and the York Blind & Partially Sighted Society where it is proposed that Three Year Agreements are awarded.

Analysis

York Citizens' Advice Bureau (Housing)

10. The York Citizens' Advice Bureau assumed responsibility for the Bond Guarantee Scheme in December 2002 from the Detached Youth Work Project when that project closed much of its services. The scheme works with young people who are homeless, sleeping rough or in temporary or insecure accommodation. The project has a deposit guarantee scheme where bondholders' underwrite a fund to enable young people who haven't enough money for a deposit to secure a tenancy. The grant application is for finance to administer the Bond Guarantee Scheme, identifying landlords and setting up the Guarantee with customer and landlord. The Bond Guarantee scheme is accessible to staff within Housing & Adult Social Services to support young people. There is also a financial contribution to the scheme via the Supporting People Programme
11. During the past six months the organisation has received 175 referrals and secured 20 tenancies (the target per annum is 30), with a total of 63 current tenants.
12. The organisation has requested a total of £8,933 Financial support in 2008/9, having received £8,420 in 2007/8. It is proposed that Financial Support of £8,630 including inflationary award is awarded which is the total budget available to the Executive Member in 2008/9.

York Community Furniture Store (Social Care)

13. The York Community Furniture Store is a non profit making organisation that aims to relieve real needs through the provision of low cost and donated furniture and electrical appliances to individuals and families on low incomes. This service has developed and grown over a number of years and continues to provide a much appreciated service for customers. During the 9 months to December 2007, 1343 customers accessed the store and over 95,000 KG of unwanted goods that might otherwise have gone to land-fill, with a significant cost saving to the authority, have been recycled. The establishment of a Limited Company has meant that they can sell goods at a higher price to the public and lower price to those in need and this has resulted in a significant increase in income. A Membership card scheme has proved successful with referred customers getting a card for a 12 month period, which means they can purchase more furniture throughout the period without having to be re-referred.
14. Members will recall that the Store was predicting a deficit at this stage in 2007/8, however through the steps it has taken, it has stabilised and is both a sustainable and viable operation. They are looking to improve the capacity of the store which will mean an increase in the stock available and should have a further impact on

the turn-over of the store. The organisation has requested a total of £10,000 Financial support in 2008/9 having received £10,000 in 2007/8 and it is proposed that Financial Support of £10,000 is awarded.

York Blind and Partially Sighted Society (Social Care)

15. York Blind and Partially Sighted Society advocates, develops and provides services for blind and partially sighted people, their friends, relatives and carers. The Society successfully manages a range of services for customers on behalf of City of York Council. The Society operate a Resource Centre (to be re-named Equipment & Information Centre) which the Financial Supports assists with the provision. Along with many charities they have had to deal with funding reducing in recent years but have been relatively successful both in attracting additional funding and controlling expenditure. The charity has approximately 1000 people on it's database who have impaired sight but are not registered as blind. They have recorded an increase of 11% in the numbers of people accessing the services during the calendar year ending October 2007 with 1370 people accessing the Centre which also receives approximately 1500 telephone enquiries a year.
16. The Society has moved premises during 2007/8 which are now accessible to customers with a ground floor location and will allow the Service to offer more activities and support. There has however been a significant increase in rent and service charges as a result of the move. The organisation has made bids to several charitable bodies for support and has successfully raised significant sums towards the increased revenue costs but has requested an increase of an additional £3,000 in Financial support as a contribution from the Council. The North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust also fund the Centre (currently £16,000 per annum) and they have also been asked to increase funding by the same amount.
17. The organisation has also requested that the Council consider a longer-term funding agreement which would assist in their strategic planning and provide more options in seeking alternative grant funding. The organisation meets the Council's criteria for a longer term service level agreement (see paragraph 50) and it is proposed under option 2 of this report that a three year Service Level Agreement is awarded.
18. The Society was awarded Support of £16,621 in 2007/8 and has requested £20,036 in 2008/9. It is recommended that Financial Support is provided to York Blind and Partially Sighted Society of £20,036 including an inflationary award for 2008/9 but that officers review the increase during the first year of the Service Level Agreement following the outcomes of the Societies bids to other charitable bodies.

York Deaf Society (Social Care)

19. York Deaf Society provide a range of social, spiritual, sporting, educational and welfare services and activities for deaf people in York, their families and children. The Society has worked in close collaboration with staff from City of York Council HASS and the Social Policy Research Unit at York University to establish the views of Deaf People through surveys and discussion groups. The organisation received £5,000 in 2007/8 and have again requested £5,000 for 2008/9.
20. It is recommended that Financial Support of £5,000 is awarded for 2008/9.

York MIND (Social Care)

21. York MIND promote mental health services for persons experiencing emotional and mental distress. They also promote and encourage awareness of mental health issues amongst professionals and the general public with advice, information and support. They have a contract with City of York Council and North Yorkshire & York Primary Care Trust to provide advocacy services for people with mental health problems and also provide a Carers Advocacy Service to the Council. In addition to this service, the areas where MIND has the most requests for help are in information and support and counselling services. Financial Support provided by the Council assists in providing a supported volunteering scheme, self-help groups, information and advice services to both customers and carers and additional counselling support.
22. The organisation is looking to expand services further into befriending and has made applications to the Big Lottery and other charitable bodies for funding.
23. In 2007/8 they received £8,406 in financial support and have requested £8,660 in 2008/9.
24. It is proposed that financial support of £8,660 including an inflationary award is provided to York & District Mind in 2008/9.

Alzheimer's Society (Social Care)

25. The Alzheimer's Society provides carers groups and social activities, a 24 hour help line, an advice and information service and a sitting service to people suffering from Alzheimer's and their carers. The Society also provides a Befriending Service for carers of those with Alzheimer's under contract to HASS and a carers education service funded by the Carers Grant.
26. In 2007/8 they received £3,500 in financial support and they have applied for £3,700 in 2008/9.
27. It is proposed that financial support of £3,580 including an inflationary award is provided to the Alzheimer's Society 2008/9.

REMAP (Social Care)

28. REMAP provide technical equipment for Disabled People. The local York REMAP panel founded in 1990 is one of 109 throughout the country. The local organisation receives support but is not funded by the National body and makes specialist devices for disabled people that are provided free of charge.
29. The work undertaken by them is mainly in York but a majority of their members live out of the city and REMAP continue to find difficulty in re-imbursing travel costs. They have requested Financial Support of £300 to cover the travel costs of work undertaken for York customers in 2008/9. This is the first increase the organisation has requested in several years of being funded by the Department and is due to increased volunteer costs for mileage and materials.
30. It is proposed that financial support of £300 is provided to REMAP for 2008/9

Independent Care Group (ICG) (Social Care)

31. The Independent Care Group (ICG) represent Residential/Nursing and Home Care Providers in the City of York and are committed to helping care providers give the best possible service to the vulnerable people they care for and working with the Council and other partners to make this happen. The Council has asked that the ICG apply for continuation of previous funding through the Financial Support Process alongside other Voluntary Sector Partners.
32. The following are benefits that the Council achieves from working with the ICG;
 - A representative body with whom it has established a partnership working relationship as recommended in “Building Capacity and Partnership in Care” to assist in the development and improvement of Services.
 - A representative body with whom it can consult over strategies for care provision in the City.
 - A representative body with whom it can negotiate over fees, contracts and service development options.
 - Provide valuable feedback and research from care providers on several issues.
 - The ICG will work in partnership with the Council on a number of strategic issues
 - A representative body which actively promotes best practice and keeps Care providers informed of latest guidance and current issues.
 - Ensure effective feedback, objective and representative consultation on all appropriate developments and issues affecting social care in York.
 - Liaise with HASS and all other relevant organisations to discuss matters of mutual interest including training, service development and innovation in care
 - Work with statutory agencies to create the best possible environment for supporting a range of outcome based service provision.
 - The ICG is seen as a key partner in promotional campaigns within care and improving the health for residents within care settings. These would include an active role in promoting issues such as Hydration and Nutrition.
33. The ICG will ensure that up to date information is distributed amongst it’s Members on a number of issues including, Safeguarding Adults, Mental capacity Act, Nutrition & Hydration, Dementia Care. Training, Dignity, CRB, Employment law, Regulation and Inspection and Medication.
34. Currently 65% of all York Care Homes are members of the ICG and 3 of the 4 main locality home care Providers are Members. The aim during the next year is to increase the Membership but the figure is already double the national average of Membership levels of similar organisations. The organisation maintains links with it’s Members via newsletter, weekly updates, regular meetings and the annual conference/presentation it organises.
35. The organisation has requested a sum of £15,000 in Financial Support and has also requested that the Council consider a longer-term funding agreement which would assist in their strategic planning and provide more options in seeking alternative grant funding. The organisation meets the Council’s criteria for a longer

term service level agreement (see paragraph 50) and it is proposed under option 2 of this report that a three year Service Level Agreement is awarded.

36. It is proposed that Financial support of £15,000 be awarded in 2008/9

Corporate Priorities

The award of financial Support will help to deliver the following of the Council's 13 priorities:

- Improve the health and lifestyles of the people who live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest.
- Improve the way the Council and its partners work together to deliver better services for the people who live in York

Implications

Financial

37. £8,630 is available to the Executive Member for Housing to provide Financial Support to the Voluntary Sector in 2008/9. It is proposed that this funding be awarded to the Citizens Advice Bureau for the continued provision of the Bond Guarantee Scheme.
38. £70,530 is available to the Executive Member for Adult Social Services to provide financial support to the voluntary sector in 2008/9.
39. If the Executive Members were to agree to the proposals listed above, the financial implications for 2008/9 are:

Organisations (Social Services)	2007/8 Award	2008/9 Request	2008/9 Proposed Award OPTION 1	2008/9 Proposed Award OPTION 2
York Community Furniture Store	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
York Blind & Partially Sighted Society	£16,621	£20,036	£20,036	£20,036
York Deaf Society	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
York Mind	£8,406	£8,660	£8,660	£8,660
Alzheimer's Society	£3,500	£3,700	£3,580	£3,580
Remap	£200	£300	£300	£300
Independent Care Group (ICG)	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Provision for small One-Off grants during financial year	£5,000	Nil	£7,954	£7,954
TOTAL	£63,727	£62,696	£70,530	£70,530

Organisations (Housing)	2007/8 Award	2008/9 Request	2008/9 Proposed Award OPTION 1	2008/9 Proposed Award OPTION 2
Citizens Advice Bureau (Bond Guarantee Scheme)	£8,420	£8,933	£8,630	£8,630

Totals for Social Services & Housing	£72,147	£71,629	£79,160	£79,160
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Human Resources

40. There are no Human Resource implications arising from this report.

Equalities

41. All applications were from a wide range of organisations providing Services to Older People, People with a Learning Disability Physical Disabilities and Customers with a Mental Health problem. The proposals are intended to ensure they receive the service they require in the best possible way.

Legal

42. There are no legal implications arising from this report

Crime & Disorder

43. There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Information Technology

44. There are no IT implications arising from this report.

Property

45. There are no property implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

46. The potential risks in grant funding external bodies range from failure of the organisation to deliver the agreed service at the appropriate standard, to the closure of the organisation as a whole with consequential loss of funds.

47. These types of risks have been considered and are dealt with through the application, assessment and agreement process put in place by the Council. This includes a financial assessment of the organisation and a requirement that organisations meet the relevant standards for their type of service and that appropriate insurances are held.

48. It should also be noted that funding is not released to an individual organisation until a service level agreement has been agreed and a signed copy returned to the Council, payments under the agreement are also made monthly in arrears.

Service Level Agreements

49. In order to ensure that the money which the Council spends on supporting voluntary sector activity is spent wisely and on activities and services which York people want, each grant paid in 2008/9 will be dependent upon the organisation agreeing to, and signing, an appropriate service level agreement with the Council. Each service level agreement will spell out, in clear and plain English:
- the services which the organisation provides - showing number of customers, characteristics of customers and quantifiable outcomes wherever possible;
 - the services which the council's funding supports;
 - the number of paid staff employed and the number of volunteers who are active in the organisation;
 - key performance standards for the organisation's services and activities - with targets set and achievement of targets reported regularly;
 - specific objectives or tasks for the year - with timescales for achievement and the names of partners clearly stated.
50. Longer term Service Level Agreements of up to three or more years may be offered where organisations meet additional criteria specified by the Council. A summary of the criteria is listed below;
- The Council has confidence in the organisations ability to deliver good quality services to local people over a period of time
 - The Council has identified the need for the particular service to be provided by the organisation within a statutory or local Council strategy or plan throughout the period of the agreement
 - The Council is a major partner in the provision of the service in terms of it's investment.
51. If the organisation does not wish to agree to a service level agreement they will not receive financial support from the Council.

Partnerships With Health

52. Officers have met with representatives of the North Yorkshire & York Primary Care Trust to discuss organisations jointly funded by both parties. These are relatively few in number and the Trust has indicated that it is likely to "roll over" existing funding commitments for 2008/9. During 2008, the Trust is conducting a review of it's voluntary sector funding and the Council will have an input into this process. One of the areas under consideration from the Trust is the introduction of 3 year funding agreements. The Council is looking to further develop partnership working with the Trust and this may lead to changes in the Financial Support process in 2009/10.

Recommendation

53. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Members to agree with Option 2 and award Financial Support as detailed in paragraphs 37 to 39 of this report.

Reason: To continue Financial Support to the Voluntary Sector.

Contact Details

Author:

Gary Brittain
Commissioning & Contracts Manager
Housing & Adults Social Services

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Bill Hodson
Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

**Report
Approved**

Date

26 February 2008

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Financial
Debbie Mitchell
Head of HASS Finance
554161

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Financial Support files held by the Commissioning & Contracts Manager.

Annexes: Annex 1 Criteria for Financial Support

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Annex One

CRITERIA FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Housing and Adult Social Services

Housing and Adult Social Services' funding objectives are guided by the various social care and housing strategies adopted by the Council. They are aimed at helping disadvantaged people throughout the City of York Council area.

Adult Social Services directs resources to organisations that provide services for:

- older people
- people with physical or sensory impairments
- people with learning difficulties
- people with mental health problems

Adult Social Services will prioritise new applications as follows:

- Short-term grants which enable the applicant to develop or provide a service which complements the priorities of Housing and Adult Social Services, and which may become subject to a contract in future years
- Grants which will allow the applicant to help other organisations to provide effective services which meet identified needs
- Funding for services provided in partnership with Housing and Adult Social Services.

Applications for funding for an organisation's core services will be considered, providing that these services meet the social care objectives laid down in the various social care strategies adopted by the Council. These objectives must be clearly identified, spelt out in service level agreements and effectively monitored. Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief may also be made under these same criteria.

Housing Services will direct resources to organizations which address housing needs in York and which can measure progress in meeting those needs.

Priority will be given to applications which help to address social care as well as housing concerns. This will complement the focus of the Council's Housing and Adult Services directorate, which seeks maximum benefit for residents by combining housing and social care activities.

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