



Notice of meeting of

Decision Session - Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Adult Social Services

To: Councillor Simpson-Laing
Date: Tuesday, 27 September 2011
Time: 4.30 pm
Venue: Guildhall, York

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:

10:00am on Monday 26 September 2011 if an item is called in before a decision is taken, or

4:00pm on Thursday 29 September 2011 if an item is called in after a decision has been taken.

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

Written representations in respect of items on this agenda should be submitted to Democratic Services by **5:00pm on Friday 23 September 2011**.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

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

- 2. Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2012.

- 3. Public Participation**
At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered their wish to speak at the meeting can do so. The deadline for registering is **5:00pm on Monday 26 September 2011**.

Members of the public may register to speak on:-

- an item on the agenda;
- an issue within the Cabinet Member's remit;
- an item that has been published on the Information Log since the last session. Information reports are listed at the end of the agenda.

- 4. Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report** (Pages 7 - 34)
2010-11

The purpose of this report is to ask the Cabinet Member to approve the 2010/11 Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report (attached at Annex 1) and agree that it be sent out with the Autumn edition of housing's quarterly newsletter, Streets Ahead, to ensure efficiency savings are made.

- 5. Review of Empty Homes Policy** (Pages 35 - 62)
The report outlines the proposed new approach to bring back in to use privately owned empty properties in light of the priorities of the new council administration and the New Homes Bonus.

- 6. Quarter 1 April - June 2011, Finance and Performance Update** (Pages 63 - 76)

The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Adult Services with an update on financial performance, progress against service plan improvement actions and performance measures.

- 7. Urgent Business**
Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Information Reports

No information only reports have been published on the Information Log for this session.

Democracy Officers:

Catherine Clarke and Louise Cook (job-share)

Contact details:

- Telephone – (01904) 551031
- Email Catherine.Clarke@york.gov.uk and louise.cook@york.gov.uk

(If contacting by email, please send to both Democracy Officers named above)

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting Catherine Clarke or Louise Cook Democracy Officers

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

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About City of York Council Meetings

Would you like to speak at this meeting?

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.

A leaflet on public participation is available on the Council's website or from Democratic Services by telephoning York (01904) 551088

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.**

Access Arrangements

We will make every effort to make the meeting accessible to you. The meeting will usually be held in a wheelchair accessible venue with an induction hearing loop. We can provide the agenda or reports in large print, electronically (computer disk or by email), in Braille or on audio tape. Some formats will take longer than others so please give as much notice as possible (at least 48 hours for Braille or audio tape).

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.

Every effort will also be made to make information available in another language, either by providing translated information or an

interpreter providing sufficient advance notice is given. Telephone York (01904) 551550 for this service.

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Holding the Cabinet to Account

The majority of councillors are not appointed to the Cabinet (39 out of 47). Any 3 non-Cabinet councillors can 'call-in' an item of business from a published Cabinet (or Cabinet Member Decision Session) agenda. The Cabinet 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 Cabinet 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

Who Gets Agenda and Reports for our Meetings?

- Councillors get copies of all agenda and reports for the committees to which they are appointed by the Council;
- Relevant Council Officers get copies of relevant agenda and reports for the committees which they report to;
- Public libraries get copies of **all** public agenda/reports.

City of York Council

Committee Minutes

MEETING	DECISION SESSION - CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH, HOUSING AND ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES
DATE	26 JULY 2011
PRESENT	COUNCILLOR SIMPSON-LAING (CABINET MEMBER)

7. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

The Cabinet Member was invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests she might have in the business on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

8. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last Decision Session of the Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Adult Services, held on 28 June 2011, be approved and signed as a correct record.

9. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting.

10. **HOUSING SERVICE'S SERVICE PLAN 2011-2012**

The Cabinet Member considered a report which outlined amendments that had been made to the Council's Housing Service's Service Plan following suggested changes to reflect Bereavement Services transferring into Asset Management. The report also included a review of performance indicators that had been undertaken, which showed that the number of indicators had reduced.

A group of Tenant Inspectors, from the Tenant Inspector Project, attended the meeting. The Inspectors were trained volunteers who had taken part in the project which assessed housing service's reception facilities and services. Their findings contributed to an improvement report and action plan, which was presented to the Cabinet Member.

The Tenant Inspectors informed the Cabinet Member of improvements to services that had been carried out as a result of their work, such as improved carpet cleaning in council properties. They felt that the project had been worthwhile and praised Officers for being receptive to their concerns.

RESOLVED: (i) That the changes to the wording of the outcomes for 'Your Place' and 'Your Service' be approved.

(ii) That the actions aligned to each of the five outcomes be agreed, and that these actions should translate into staff PDRs also be agreed.

(iii) That the performance indicators aligned to each outcome be agreed.

(iv) That the Cabinet Member receive quarterly update reports.

REASON: To ensure that Housing have a comprehensive improvement action plan which addresses issues raised through customer engagement, performance management and national and local priorities.

11. RESULTS OF ANNUAL HOUSING SATISFACTION SURVEY 2010/11

The Cabinet Member considered a report which provided her with the results of the Annual Housing Services Monitor (AHSM), a postal survey of City of York Council tenants undertaken during January 2011- February 2011, to which 947 responses from tenants were received.

The Cabinet Member asked Officers questions about the figures in the report which related to;

- Internal cleaning of blocks of flats
- Anti Social Behaviour Figures
- Council House Waiting Lists

The Cabinet Member was informed that automatic access to water was not always available for cleaning within housing blocks. Although non water methods had been used, issues remained over the effectiveness, and there was also an issue of staff cover during periods of leave and prolonged periods of sickness. It was reported that Officers were looking at ways this could be tackled by being more flexible with the remaining resources.

In relation to the Anti Social Behaviour(ASB) figures, Officers reported that a perception problem existed in what constituted this type of behaviour and the actions that Council Officers could take to resolved this. It was felt that the Council's role in tackling anti social behaviour needed to be clarified.

In regards to Council Housing, the Cabinet Member was informed that Officers were currently examining bidding trends for Council properties, in particular, why certain groups of vulnerable people were not bidding for a property.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that vulnerable individuals, such as those who had literacy problems may not be aware of support available for them to fill out application forms for Council Housing. Officers responded that any individuals were welcome to contact Housing Services by telephone or in person.

RESOLVED: (i) That the report be noted.

 (ii) That the Cabinet Member agree to continue to undertaking the annual satisfaction survey.

REASON: To ensure that the Council is fully aware of customer perceptions of the service and to use this information to improve the service.

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**Decision Session: Cabinet Member for
Health, Housing & Adult Social Services**

27 September 2011

Report of Assistant Director of Housing and Public Protection

Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report 2010-11

Summary

1. The housing landlord function is regulated by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). It is a statutory requirement that social landlords produce and distribute an annual performance report to their tenants by the 1st of October each year. The purpose of this report is to ask the Cabinet Member to approve the 2010/11 Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report (Attached at Annex 1) and agree that it be sent out with the Autumn edition of housing's quarterly newsletter, Streets Ahead, to ensure efficiency savings are made.

Background

2. In producing the report the TSA expects social landlords to adhere to the following:
 - Involve tenants in determining the content and appearance of the report – the process is considered as important as the content.
 - Inform the wider tenant body of the TSA standards.
 - Show honest, transparent year-end performance against those standards.
 - Provide tenants with relevant, easy to grasp information that supports their ability to scrutinise and challenge their landlord.
3. This is the second year of producing an annual report. Guidance and good practice identified by the TSA and feedback obtained from the Housing Quality Network have been drawn upon. In addition tenants' views gleaned from the 283 survey returns following distribution of last year's report have also been used to shape the new report. Whilst the overall response was positive, tenants wanted in particular to see savings made in producing the 2010-11 report.

Consultation

4. As outlined above, a key requirement in developing the report is the involvement of tenants in determining content and appearance. A

working group of 15 tenants have been involved in the production of the report. They set out a clear remit for the 2010-11 report which is aligned with the guidance and feedback referred to above:

- To retain the best of the 2009/10 report and build on it;
- To be shorter and focus on content that matters to tenants;
- To use the colour coded 4 housing outcomes throughout;
- To make significant cost savings;
- To have an introduction written by tenants, for tenants;
- To use photos that show all age groups, not just older tenants;
- To include contacts for key service areas;
- To limit comparison with other landlords, focusing instead on internal standards & targets.

5. York Residents' Federation have been kept informed of progress and will consider the annual report at their meeting on 15th September 2009. Verbal feedback from their meeting will be provided at the Cabinet Member Decision Session.
6. The tenant working group expressly want the limited space available to focus on content that directly affects tenants and leaseholders. A separate report will be made available (website only) to cover the strategic housing functions. As a set, the two reports will report on the full housing service.

Options

7. Option 1 – To approve the attached Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report 2010-11 and agree it is sent out with Streets Ahead.
8. Option 2 – Not to approve the attached Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report 2010-11. Agreeing Option 2 will delay the publication of the report resulting in failure to meet regulatory requirements and increased costs.

Analysis

9. The Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report 2010-11 is attached at Annex 1. Critical differences from last years report are the length which is much shorter (even allowing for 14 size font size) and the cost saving to be achieved by sending the 2010-11 report out to tenants with the Autumn edition of Streets Ahead. Table 1 overleaf sets out the savings achievable. By packing and posting both documents together, a saving of £5k can be achieved against last year's report.

Table 1 Cost comparison of dispatch methods

Delivery 8,677 copies	2009	2010
Streets Ahead post and packing	£3,453	n/a
Annual Report post and packing	£5,920	n/a
Both documents - post and packing	£9,373	£4,168

10. To achieve the £5k saving, both documents must be complete and with the printer by Wednesday 28.09.11. Failing to meet this date, will cause despatch costs to increase to the 2009/10 level. Following approval, the report will be made available on housing's website. Hard copies will reach tenants from 3rd October onwards.

Corporate Priorities

11. The production of the Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report 2010-11 supports the corporate priorities of being an Inclusive and Effective Organisation.

Implications

12. The implications associated with this report are:
- **Financial** – The cost of producing the Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report 2010-11, including alternative formats and distribution with Streets Ahead is estimated at £4,500 to be met from within existing budgets.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** N/A
 - **Equalities** – The report considers equalities information and will be made available in different languages and formats on request.
 - **Legal** N/A
 - **Crime and Disorder** N/A
 - **Information Technology (IT)** N/A
 - **Property** N/A
 - **Other** N/A

Risk Management

13. In compliance with the council's risk management strategy there are no direct risks other than failing to meet regulatory requirements.

Recommendations

14. The Cabinet Member is asked to:

- Agree Option 1 - To approve the attached Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report 2010-11 and that it is sent out with Streets Ahead.

Reason: To ensure that Housing meets its regulatory requirements, appropriate information is available to tenants allowing them to scrutinise Housing's performance and to achieve value for money.

Contact Details

Author:		Chief Officer Responsible for the report:			
Jo Harrison Service Development Officer 01904 554340		Steve Waddington Assistant Director Housing and Public Protection			
		Report Approved	Yes	Date	13/09/11
Specialist Implications Officer(s) <i>Financial:</i> Jayne Close <i>Accountant</i> Tel: 554175 Tel No.					
Wards Affected: <i>List wards or tick box to indicate all</i>					All <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
For further information please contact the author of the report					

Background Papers:

TSA - A New Regulatory Framework
Annual report to Tenants 2009/10

Annexes:

Annex 1 Tenants and Leaseholders Annual Report 2010/11

Tenants & Leaseholders Annual Report 2010-2011



Your Place



Your Property



Your Service



Your Say

Creating Homes, Building Communities

Tenants & Leaseholders Annual Report

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Welcome	1
Your Place This section tells you about your neighbourhood and what we're doing to make it a good place to live.	3
Your Property Find out about repairs and how we make sure your homes meet the standards required.	6
Your Service Setting service standards with you, letting homes, collecting rents and reducing rent arrears.	9
Your Say Consultation, events and opportunities for you to get involved and influence the services we offer.	12
Facts & Figures Measuring success, key contact details and your opportunity to tell us how we've done.	15

■ We work with partners to promote social, economic and environmental well-being

85% Tenants satisfied with the support from staff

■ We make sure all our homes meet the government's decent homes standard

94% Tenants satisfied with gas servicing

■ We let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way

86% Tenants found staff helpful

■ We provide tenants with ways to influence housing services and monitor our performance

1st Tenant and Leaseholder Open Day held in November 2010



Welcome

We're the tenants behind this year's report, so hello from us!

We want this to be the annual report that tenants really read. Some of us are from Residents' Associations and York Residents' Federation; some of us were involved in last year's report; some of us are Tenant Inspectors and some of us aren't involved in anything else (yet!). We all wanted to help create this year's report because, as tenants and leaseholders, we all share the same ambition – to benefit from the best housing services.

- 🏠 We got together several times and talked about what would make the report interesting.
- 🏠 We decided how it should look, what it should say and, as far as possible, which pictures to use.
- 🏠 Housing managers provided us with the facts and figures. We assessed how well they were doing.
- 🏠 This year, we've saved around £5,000 by sending you this report with Streets Ahead.
- 🏠 We're impressed with what we've achieved, we've had fun and learnt a lot.

Now we need you to read it and tell us what you think.



*Joanna. Julie Noel Barbara
Gordon D Smith*

Please send us the feedback card on the back page to say what you think of our efforts this year. You don't need a stamp. Just fill it in, cut it out and post it back.

Even better – come and get involved in creating next year's report!





Introduction

By Cllr Tracey Simpson-Laing

I'm delighted to start my contribution to the 2010/11 Tenants & Leaseholder's Annual Report by saying **a very big thank you.**

Thanks to the customer steering group who helped create this year's report. Thanks to those of you who work with us all year round in residents' associations, York Resident's Federation, as tenant inspectors and in other groups. Thanks to everyone who returned a survey or came to a focus group.

Let's make this year the year you get involved. Reading this report will show how customers' views and feedback influenced and shaped housing services.

Just use your feedback card to tell us you are interested in getting involved and we'll do the rest. By this time next year, we'll be thanking you too!

The Tenant Services Authority is the government agency that sets the standards for social landlords. In this year's report we tell you how well we are meeting these standards in York.

We've used these weather symbols as a guide again.




We meet the standard in full



We meet most of the standard



We meet some of the standard

This symbol will show you where we have made an improvement on last year 

We use Housemark, a national benchmarking club, to compare our performance with other council and housing association landlords.

For more information about either the Tenant Services Authority or Housemark, please contact us on (01904) 554379



Your Place

Safe, sustainable, thriving neighbourhoods



We're on site and on track to build our first new council homes for nearly 20 years at Lilbourne Drive, Clifton. Ready in spring 2012, these 19 homes will be easy on the environment and cheaper for tenants to run thanks to their high levels of energy efficiency.

Working with housing association partners, we added **282 affordable homes** – way over our target of 200 and the highest increase in York's social housing for ten years.

Do we meet the standards?



Keep neighbourhoods clean and safe



Work with partners to promote social, economic and environmental well-being



Work with partners to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in communities ⚡



Make the best use of housing



Plan for the future needs and ambitions of communities



York Mediation is now part of housing services.



8 out of **10** tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live. **84%**

Cleaner and greener

Our team of eleven estate workers added internal cleaning in blocks of flats to their work this year. We agreed service standards with customers and now display these in each block so customers can monitor the work.

We've been developing a composting scheme as a greener way to dispose of grass cuttings. If customers in the pilot areas like this option, we'll roll out the service to other areas in 2011/12.

8 out of 10 of tenants living in blocks of flats are satisfied with the estate services we provide.

You can see when your estate walkabout takes place and where to meet on our website which now also shows the actions highlighted during the walkabout.



Joining things up

We were delighted when the anti-social behaviour (ASB) strategy developed with customers last year was adopted city-wide. Together with North Yorkshire Police, the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU), housing associations and York Mediation, we provide a joined up ASB service that aims to work better for customers.

With housing association landlords, we developed a new ASB service standard. **“Our ASB promise to you”** sets out the service tenants in York can expect from their landlord, whoever it is.

Our ASB service is improving every year. Customers who used the service said they were satisfied with the support they received and how quickly we responded but we still have a way to go to before we are one of the best. You tell us the outcome of your ASB report is the most important thing and improving here is our main focus.

EPU's weekend noise patrol dealt with 1,247 night time noise nuisance complaints,

a **19%** increase.

York Mediation helped nearly **50 families** tackle problems with their neighbours.

▶ Creating homes

Working in partnership with Yorkshire Housing, we used a government grant to buy 14 flats to let to tenants wanting to downsize.

Customers' response to the new flats was positive;

“Beautifully well designed, I'd like to shake the designer's hand.”

The three and four bedroom houses they vacated were let to overcrowded families from the housing register.

3 went to homeless families;
11 to families who were overcrowded in private rented or council homes.



Of the 58 people who moved, 38 were children.


▶ Going through the roof

Using a one-off grant, we were able to convert five lofts to make extra bedrooms for growing families who were over-crowded.




That's five fewer families needing to move and good value for money at around £25,000 each.

This year we will...




Improve your estate by;

-  Increasing satisfaction with the internal cleaning of blocks of flats.

Improve your ASB service by;

-  Creating a new Neighbourhood Safety Unit, bringing council and police teams together in one location as part of the new Housing and Public Protection service.
-  Working with partners to deliver the ASB strategy.
-  Extending York Mediation Service to housing association tenants.
-  Developing an advice DVD with our ASB customer panel.

Make best use of housing by;

-  Improving services for young homeless people by redeveloping one of our hostels into a specialist, fully supported project for young people.
-  Completing and letting the 19 new council homes at Lilbourne Drive.
-  Delivering 171 new affordable homes with housing association partners.

Your Property

Sustainable, good quality, affordable homes



We completed a full review of repairs and invested in mobile smart phones and netbooks to create a more efficient service. Repairs staff now have direct access to jobs allowing them to work flexibly and meet demands as they arise. They can focus on the job in hand, using all their skills to complete the repair right first time.

As well as improving the service for customers, we expect to **save £250,000** over the coming year.

Do we meet the standards?



Ensure all our homes meet the government's decent homes standard by December 2010



Provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of and offers choices to tenants and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time



Meet all the statutory requirements for health and safety in the home

We completed **36,267** repairs in 2010/11

Over **97%** of them **on time**.

8 out of **10** tenants are satisfied with our repairs and maintenance service. **83%**

We just missed being in the top group of landlords by 0.8% this year!

The cold weather snap in December hit tenants hard and gave our repairs team a challenge when demand for urgent repairs doubled. By moving repairs staff from other jobs, including gas servicing, our priority was keeping customers warm at home.




In December we completed more than double the usual number of four hour and same-day repairs.

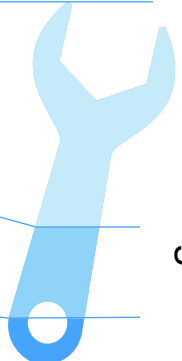
December '10
1,650
urgent and emergency jobs
99.7% within timescales

▶ Gas matters

Your safety matters so our target is a gas service in every home every year. We're improving and your satisfaction with the service is high.

Where necessary, we use warrants to force the issue – and the door – if customers won't let us in.

-  We applied for 471 warrants, 256 customers immediately made gas servicing appointments.
-  We made 215 warrant visits, 170 tenants immediately let us in.
-  We forced entry to 45 homes.



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As well as keeping everyone safe, this tough new approach discovered six abandoned properties and resulted in 18 suspected benefit fraud referrals.

Only 56 homes are without a valid safety certificate at the end of this year, down from 82 in 2009/10.



▶ Decent homes for everyone

We made it! We modernised our last 279 homes this year and hit the government's decent homes standard on time. **Every home now meets the York standard**, which is set at a higher level than the government requires.

Our challenge now is to maintain this standard through our Tenants' Choice improvement programme. You can see which streets will be modernised over the next two years on our website.



At our 2010 Tenants' Choice exhibition, **98% of customers** were **impressed** with the new decorating packs. Having higher quality products and greater choice works better for customers and saves over £30,000.

A big issue for tenants was living with the disruption whilst modernisation work went on. We now inform tenants much earlier when work will start and offer help, if needed. Because homes are better prepared, work takes only two weeks instead of three. We work more efficiently, customers are more satisfied and we've saved over £23,000.





You can also see our external painting programme online. We paint your homes every seven years; the painting programme goes up to 2023.

This year we will...



Improve gas servicing by;

-  Looking at how top performing landlords work to see what we can learn from them.
-  Using our Understanding you Better survey results to analyse refusals and to find better ways to contact those tenants.

Improve your homes by;

-  Delivering the Tenants' Choice improvement programme to keep homes up to date.
-  Implementing the Contractors' Code of Conduct developed with tenants and leaseholders.
-  Producing a Tenants' Choice DVD, with tenants.
-  Installing solar pv panels in 1,000 suitable homes, making them energy efficient and cheaper to run.

Maintain your homes by

-  Measuring the number of jobs completed right first time.
-  Starting our five year programme to install double glazed UVPC windows in 2,500 homes.

Your Service

Landlord of choice






Starting at our tenant and leaseholder open day in November and ending over 1,700 survey responses later, we agreed a set of eleven new service standards with you.


These new standards cover how we will deal with anti-social behaviour, repairs, customer services, resident involvement and rent collection. (The full set is available on our website or we can send you a copy.)



The Measuring Success section on pages 16-19 shows you how well we are meeting the standards so far. Look out for regular performance updates through Streets Ahead and our website.


Do we meet the standards?

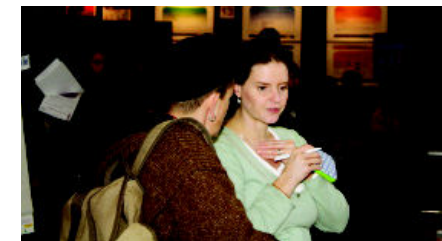
 Provide information, choices and communication that meets the needs of our tenants 

 Let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way

 Use the most secure form of tenancy agreement which helps promote communities:

 Treat all tenants with fairness and respect 

 Show how we understand the different needs of our tenants



8 out of **10** tenants are satisfied with our overall service.

86%

▶ More choice all round

It's all change on the lettings front as North Yorkshire **HomeChoice** went live in June 2011. As one of seven partners, we worked hard to re-register everyone, especially older and vulnerable customers, onto the new scheme. One application form and one housing register allows tenants and applicants to bid for available properties to rent throughout North Yorkshire.

We joined **Homeswapper**, a direct exchange service that helps tenants who want to move. The online advertising and matching service is free to use. With homes available from three housing associations, seven councils and Homeswapper, there has never been more choice.

▶ Down with rent arrears

We work closely with the Citizens Advice Bureau to refer tenants for free, quick debt advice. Together we helped over 600 households deal with housing related debt problems. By making affordable repayment agreements and offering benefit advice to tenants, we've **cut rent arrears by £40,000**. Compared to other landlords, this makes us **a top performer**. Especially in the current economic climate, we aim to help people manage their money and hold onto their homes.

▶ Gone but not forgotten

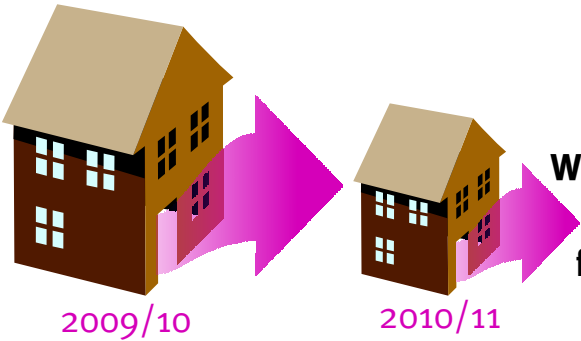
Tenants in arrears can no longer walk away from their debts when they leave their homes. It's easier for people to pay now we've added direct debits to the payment options. New arrangements to work with Council Tax and other departments will give us access to the same debt collecting agencies at no cost. Dealing with one agency makes it more manageable for former tenants and more efficient for us.

▶ Quicker relets

We are in the **top group of landlords again** this year for repairing and reletting empty homes which on average took 23 days.

Our **Golden Goodbye** incentive scheme rewards tenants for leaving a clean property, giving notice and allowing new tenants to view before they leave.

average of
23 days
to repair
and relet empty homes



We evicted 16 households for not paying their rent this year, down from 24 in 2009/10.



Understanding our customers

We are improving the way our services work to make sure they meet everybody's needs regardless of race, disability, gender, age or sexuality.

We are getting to know more about you, our tenants, through the **Understanding you Better** survey.

What do we do with your information?

- 🏠 Well, we use it to identify customers who might be interested in downsizing to a smaller home.
- 🏠 We can check that survey responses represent the views of all age groups.
- 🏠 We know we need only offer translations in two languages.
- 🏠 We can contact you in the way you prefer - by email, letter or mobile phone.
- 🏠 We can provide large print letters or other special requirements without you having to ask every time.

Just for leaseholders

We extended the Understanding you Better survey to include leaseholders this year. We've also arranged a service for leaseholders who are struggling financially. Based in York, the **Owner-Occupier Support Service** can help with benefits, budgeting, security and even training courses.

(01904) **477897** or **stonhamyork@homegroup.org.uk**.

This year we will...

Improve choice by;

- 🏠 Monitoring how well North Yorkshire HomeChoice is working, making sure all customers have access to the help they need to use the service.
- 🏠 Working with Tenant Inspectors to review the standards for letting a new home.

Improve rent collection by;

- 🏠 Implementing the actions from our review of current and former tenant rent arrears.
- 🏠 Collecting rent in advance when we let a new home.

Work with leaseholders to;

- 🏠 Provide better service charge information.
- 🏠 Explore whether our repairs and improvements service could be made available to them.

Assess our services to;

- 🏠 Make sure we give fair and equal access to all customers.
- 🏠 Reach the next level of the Equality Framework for Local Government.



Your Say

Customers are engaged, empowered and have choice



We know getting customers involved from the start is better than feedback or complaints after the event.

Our fully trained team of eight **Tenant Inspectors** are committed to making services work better for customers. For their first inspection of reception areas and services they surveyed tenants, interviewed staff and observed first hand how the service works. Their ten cost-effective recommendations have already improved things for customers.

Even better, their recommendations will help make our new offices, due to open 2012, more customer friendly.

Do we meet the standards?



Offer a wide range of opportunities for tenants to be involved in the management of their homes ⚡



Consult with our tenants about service standards ⚡



Provide tenants with ways to influence housing services and scrutinise our performance ⚡



Help tenants be more involved if they want to be and in a way they want to be



Have an open and clear complaints process

If you are interested in knowing more about Tenant Inspectors or, even better, would like to become one, please contact us on (01904) 554379.

8 out of **10** tenants are satisfied with being kept informed.

82%

We need customer feedback to show how our services are working. Every year, we ask 2,000 randomly chosen tenants what they think of our services. The results show us what areas need improving. You told us we are good at keeping you informed, your rent gives value for money and you are satisfied with housing's overall service.

In the 2010 Housing Satisfaction Survey, customers under 40 were consistently less satisfied with housing services. Starting with focus groups in November 2011, we will do more to understand why. It's thanks to our **Understanding you Better survey** that we can contact specific groups of customers, like the under 40s, when we need to work with them.

▶ Putting things right

When things don't go well, you can make a complaint in whatever way suits you best. 100% of customers responding to our feedback survey said it was easy to make their complaint.

Most of the 192 complaints this year were about repairs or tenancy services. We were late replying to 1 in 4 complaints, so meeting the 100% target agreed in our service standard is a priority.



York Residents' Federation trip to meet Leeds Federation.

▶ Spending the money

Tenants have direct control of how around **£170,000** of **Estate Improvement Grant** is spent each year. With all suggestions welcome, every tenant can vote for the ones they feel will best solve problems or improve their neighbourhood. Local decision making has provided off-road parking bays, fencing, security lighting, door entry systems and additional security measures. The solutions really are in your hands – or should that be in your voting slips!

There's even an extra **£30,000** that **York Residents' Federation** allocate later in the year as one-off grants. For the second year running, they voted to support the Family Intervention Project, a scheme that supports up to 36 families remain in their homes, reducing anti-social behaviour and truancy.



▶ Getting involved

Our 18 **Residents' Associations** provide a local focus for tenants and residents looking to improve their neighbourhoods.

Each Residents' Association elects a representative to attend **York Residents' Federation**. We consult them on all new housing policies or changes, so this group gives tenants a powerful voice to influence both services and priorities.

Our **Performance Panel** looks in detail at housing's performance. They decide which services to monitor, choosing the performance information they want to look at and how it should be set out. This process of close examination is known as **scrutiny**.

Our challenge this year is to involve more tenants in this scrutiny process. If you think this would interest you, just contact us you and we'll tell you more.

We've developed a long term plan to increase resident involvement called **Your Service, Your Say**. This sets out how we will support, train and develop customers so they can get involved and influence housing services in whatever way suits them best.

In 2011 we will recruit to a new post to lead on resident involvement and equalities work in housing.

This year we will...

Increase customer influence by;

- 🏠 Strengthening tenant scrutiny arrangements so that tenants can examine housing's performance and set priorities for improvement.
- 🏠 Involving more customers as Tenant Inspectors.
- 🏠 Completing at least two tenant inspections, including one of housing's website.

Involve more customers by;

- 🏠 Holding our second open day in November '11.
- 🏠 Promoting estate walkabouts better to encourage more customers to take part.
- 🏠 Setting up our leaseholder forum and completing the leasehold handbook.
- 🏠 Working with residents' associations to make them stronger and more independent.

Increase our understanding by;

- 🏠 Holding focus groups to listen and learn why tenants under 40 are less satisfied with our services.
- 🏠 Assessing the cost of each resident involvement activity so we know which give best value for money.

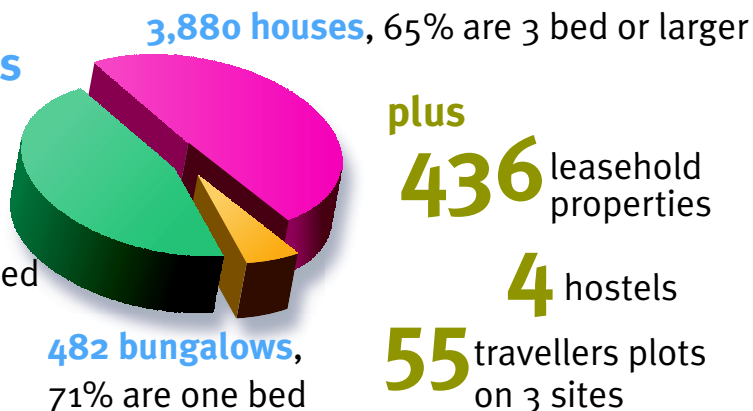
Facts and figures

at 31/03/11

About our properties

7,883
council homes

3,521 flats & maisonettes,
74% are one bed and bedsit



We let **506** homes

We had **2,705** customers on our housing register

as well as **603** existing tenants needing to move.

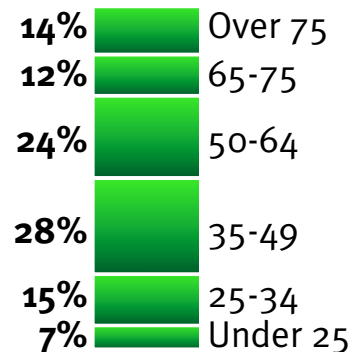
Of the customers on our housing register;

92.2% White British **0.7%** Dual heritage
0.6% Asian **0.5%** Chinese & Other ethnicity
0.9% Black **5.1%** Ethnicity not known

About our tenants

From those of you who responded to the **Understanding you Better survey**, this is what we know about our current tenants;

63% women  **37%** men 



98.4% White or White British
0.3% Asian or Asian British
0.3% Black or Black British
0.4% Dual heritage
0.3% Chinese & Other ethnicity
0.3% prefer not to say

There are just under 1,000 tenants whose ethnicity we don't yet know

How your rent is spent

Average weekly rent **£62.93**

£17.57 Major improvements to council homes

£15.99 Paid to government as part of subsidy scheme

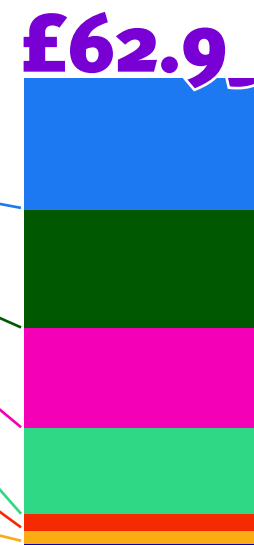
£13.22 Day to day repairs and maintenance

£11.53 Managing your homes

£ 2.22 Improving estates

£ 2.13 Servicing debt (interest payments)

£0.27 Tenant rent arrears



Your Place

This shows how well we met the service standards agreed with you for dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB) and managing your estates.

Dealing with anti-social behaviour

	2010/11 actual	2010/11 target	2009/10 actual	Top performing landlords
Tenants satisfied with overall handling of their ASB report ¹	80%	74%	69%	85%
Tenants satisfied with the outcome of their ASB report	57%	55%	44%	81%



Tenants satisfied they were kept informed about ASB



Tenants satisfied with the ASB action we have taken



Tenants satisfied with the ASB support from staff



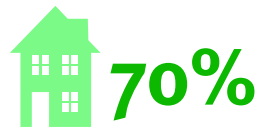
Tenants satisfied with how quickly we dealt with ASB



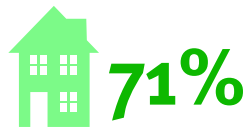
Tenants evicted for ASB

Managing your estates

	2010/11 actual	2010/11 target	2009/10 actual	Top performing landlords
Tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	84%	78%	76%	85%
Average number of days to remove flytipping	1.76 days	1 day	0.89	
Average number of days to remove graffiti	1.94 days	4 days	0.74	



Tenants satisfied with grounds maintenance



Tenants in flats satisfied with the internal cleaning of their blocks



Tenants satisfied with estate services (litter, communal repairs)

¹ The ASB tenant satisfaction figures are from our ASB survey sent out when we close a case.

All other tenant satisfaction figures are from our Housing Satisfaction Survey 2010.



Your Property


This shows how well we met the service standards agreed with you for day to day repairs, planned maintenance, gas servicing, adaptations and our modernisation scheme, Tenants' Choice.


Day to day repairs

	2010/11 actual	2010/11 target	2009/10 actual	Top performing landlords
Tenants satisfied with repairs and maintenance	83%	89%	87%	83.8%
How many days it took on average to do a repair	4 days	5 days	4 days	6 days
4 hour repairs completed on time (emergencies)	98%	95%	91%	
Same day repairs completed on time (urgent work)	99%	98%	97%	
20 day repairs completed on time (non-urgent work)	96%	98%	96%	

Planned maintenance

Tenants satisfied with the general condition of their home	83%	86%	85%	85%
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 **84%** Tenants satisfied with the overall quality of their home

 **90%** Tenants satisfied with external painting (Up 5% from last year)

Gas servicing

Properties with a valid gas safety certificate	99.30%	100%	98.90%	99.98%
Tenants satisfied with gas servicing	94%			

Adaptations

Minor adaptations to council homes completed on time	91%	92%	89%	
Major adaptations to council homes completed on time	40%	40%	34%	

Tenants Choice modernisation scheme

Properties meeting the decent homes standard	100%	100%	97%	99.6%
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95% Tenants satisfied with Tenants' Choice modernisation (Up 7% from last year)





Your Service

This shows how well we are meeting the service standards agreed with you for customer services, letting new homes and collecting rent.

	2010/11 actual	2010/11 target	2009/10 actual	Top performing landlords
Tenants satisfied that staff could deal with a problem	79%	83%	81%	82%
Tenants satisfied overall with the services we provide	86%	90%	89%	87%
Phone calls answered within 20 seconds	95%	97%	97%	

 **85%** Tenants who found staff helpful

 **71%** Tenants who were able to get hold of the right person

 **71%** Tenants satisfied with the final outcome of their query

Letting new homes


Average time to repair and let an empty property	23 days	21 days	23 days	25 days
Tenants satisfied we met the standard for their new home	69%	67%	66%	

Rent arrears

Rent arrears owed by current tenants	£431,241	£392,883	£462,883
Rent arrears owed by tenants who have moved out	£509,120	£419,914	£819,914

Collecting rent

Tenants satisfied they get value for money for their rent	84%	86%	85%
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 **89%** Tenants satisfied with how they can pay their rent

Your Say

This shows how well we met the service standards agreed with you for dealing with complaints and Your Service, Your Say, our resident involvement activities.

Complaints

	2010/11 actual	2010/11 target	2009/10 actual	Top performing landlords
Tenants satisfied with the outcome of their complaint ²	75%	70%	72%	73%
Tenants satisfied with how we handled their complaint	67%	70%	78%	78%
Complaints responded to in full and on time	71%	88%	73%	

Your Service, Your Say resident involvement

	2010/11 actual	2010/11 target	2009/10 actual	Top performing landlords
Tenants satisfied we take their views into account	67%	73%	72%	69%
Tenants satisfied with being kept informed	82%	80%	79%	
Tenants satisfied with how they can get involved in management and decision making	58%	64%	63%	

² This figure comes from our complaints survey which is sent out when a complaint is closed.

You asked;

“How many appointments are not kept by customers?” and
 “How many repairs do you get right first time?”

We’ll report on these questions next year, along with other new performance measures we’re developing.

If you have anything else you’d like to know about please contact us (details on page 21).



Key contact details

www.york.gov.uk/housing for more information and details

Your Place

Tenancy Enforcement Team (01904) 551204

Environmental Protection Unit Weekend Noise patrol

Friday & Saturday nights 9.00pm – 3.00am

text or call (01904) 551555

e-mail; environmental.protection@york.gov.uk

York Mediation Service (01904) 553838

mediation@york.gov.uk

Your Service

Rent or arrears queries 01904 551200 (option 2)

Citizens Advice Bureau 08444 111444

Benefits Advice Team (01904) 552252 or 552233

www.york.gov.uk/advice/Benefits

North Yorkshire Credit Union (01904) 676633

www.nycu.org.uk

Leaseholders

Owner-Occupier Support Service (01904) 477897

e-mail stonhamyork@homegroup.org.uk

Your Property

To place a **HomeChoice** bid for housing

www.northyorkshirehomechoice.org.uk

Use the automated telephone bidding line; 0300-011-2170

Send a text message; 07537 402495

Homeswapper direct exchange www.homeswapper.co.uk

Contents insurance - Direct Group 0845 6718172

Report a repair Monday to Friday 08.30 – 5.00pm

(01904) 551200 (option 1)

Reporting an emergency repair at all other times

(01904) 630405

For information about Tenants' Choice modernisation

e-mail; housing.assetmanagementadmin@york.gov.uk

or (01904) 553712/553711

Your Say

For more information about this report, becoming a **Tenant**

Inspector or other ways to get involved in housing services

e-mail; yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk

Tel: (01904) 554379

To find out about your **local residents' association** contact the


neighbourhood management unit on (01904) 551832


or e-mail; shapingneighbourhoods@york.gov.uk




You tell us

There are lots of ways to tell us what you think of this year's report so please;

 Use the feedback card opposite – snip it out and send it in – no stamp needed.

 Give feedback on-line at www.york.gov.uk/housing.

 Phone us on (01904) 554379.

 E-mail us at yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk.

It doesn't matter how you do it – just let us know!

We listen to what you tell us and use it to improve our services.

We'd love to tell you about the other ways you can get involved and influence housing services. Put a tick in the box opposite and we'll get in touch to talk about what would suit you.



Tenant inspectors; mystery shopping; surveys; scrutiny panel; publications panel; Streets Ahead editors; estate walkabouts; residents' associations; York Residents' Federation.

Please complete this section. It tells us that feedback is from all our customers. There is a more detailed section available on-line, if you prefer.



Feedback card

I read all of it some of it none of it

Please give us a mark out of 5, where 5 is top and 1 is bottom to say whether you agree with each of the following;

I like how it looks 1 2 3 4 5

Content is interesting 1 2 3 4 5

Content is useful 1 2 3 4 5

What would you like to see more of in next year's report ?

Tell me more about how I can;

Get involved in next year's annual report

Get involved to improve housing services

(We'll need your contact details you if you say yes to either of these)

Name

Address

.....

Phone or e-mail

Please tell us about yourself by answering these questions

Male Female Do you have a disability yes/no

Age group 16 – 24 25 – 40 41 – 60 over 60

Ethnicity



No
Stamp
needed

Your Service, Your Say
Service Development Team
City of York Council
Communities & Neighbourhoods
10 – 12 George Hudson Street
FREEPOST NEW 13348
York
YO1 6ZZ

Tenants & Leaseholders Annual Report 2010-2011

Polish

To jest roczny raport z działu usług mieszkaniowych ukazujący osiągnięte przez nas wyniki oraz plany wdrożenia udoskonaleń. Niniejsze informacje mogą zostać dostarczone w Państwa własnym języku.


Turkish


Bu, konut hizmetlerinin performansımızı ve iyileştirme planlarımızı gösteren yıllık rapordur. Bu bilgiler sizin kendi lisanınızda sağlanabilir.


Cantonese

這是住房處年度報告，呈現有我們的績效和改善計畫。該資訊能以您的母語提供。

If you would like this information in an accessible format (for example in large print, on CD, by email or in another language) please contact us;

 (019014) 554379

 Yourservice.yoursay@york.gov.uk

Produced in partnership with **Neighbourhood
Management Unit** 



**Decision Session – Cabinet Member for Health,
Housing and Adult Social Services**

27 September 2011

Report of the Assistant Director of Housing and Public Protection

Review of Empty Homes Policy

Summary

1. The report outlines the proposed new approach to bring back into use privately owned empty properties in light of the priorities of the new council administration and the New Homes Bonus.
2. It recommends that a new strategy and action plan should be adopted and funded through the empty homes provision of the New Homes Bonus.

Background

3. The Empty Homes policy was last reviewed earlier this year (February 2011) highlighting the low levels of empty homes in the city. As part of that review we advised members that we would bring back a report advising them of the impact of the government's proposal called the New Homes Bonus (NHB) and their pledge to commit £100 million nationally over the next 4 years to tackling the problem of empty homes. This funding forms part of the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) and would be available for councils such as ours who still retained their own housing stock and other Housing Providers to bring back empty homes into use from April 2012. It was still unclear at that stage how the councils would be incentivised to bring private empty homes back into use.
4. The government has now implemented those changes and it is clear that there are some significant benefits to ensure that we reduce the number of empty homes year on year, as identified through council tax records and that those low levels are sustained.

5. The current levels of privately owned empty homes in the city continue to be low especially compared to local and national data.

Table 1

Area	Total dwellings April 2010	Vacant dwellings (total)		Private sector properties vacant for more than six months	
		Number	Vacancy rate	Number	Vacancy rate
York	84,738	1,470	1.7%	383	0.5%
North Yorkshire	356,239	9,200	2.6%	4,138	1.2%
Yorks' and Humber	2,311,547	92,819	4.02%	38,187	1.7%
England	22,899,298	776,554	3.3%	300,526	1.3%

Source: Empty Homes Agency 2010

6. We know that on the 1st October 2010 the council through their annual return to government advised that the number of empty homes which were currently empty were as set out in table 2:

Table 2

Year	All empty homes	Long term Empty Homes	Long term empty homes which if brought back into us meet the New Homes Bonus Criteria
1 st October 2009	1508	786	402
1 st October 2010	1470	632	383

Source: Empty Homes Agency 2010

7. In 2009 the council reported that 402 properties met the criteria for NHB by reducing this figure by 19 homes in 2010 the council generated approximately £45,000 in additional income each year for the next six years. It is therefore clear by focusing on empty homes which meet the NHB criteria, especially in the first two years of the six year programme; we can generate additional income for the council. We are aware that the government has set aside £1bn pounds for the first two years.
8. The allocation of NHB is based on a net position which takes account of both new homes and empty homes, if the number of empty homes increases the increase will be deducted from the new provision to give a net figure. It is therefore critical to ensure that the

number of empty homes reduces. For example between 1st October 2009 and 1st October 2010 the number of empty homes was reduced by 19 and 468 new homes were built giving an overall increase in housing supply of 487. If on the other hand the number of empty homes increased by 19 then the number of extra long-term empty homes would have cost the council 19 units worth of New Homes Bonus (468-19 = 449). There is an obvious incentive to ensure that not only new homes are built but that existing empty homes are actively reduced.

9. The National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) was launched earlier this summer by the Homes and Communities Agency. £100m is available, £30m in 2012/13, £30m in 2013/14, and £40m in 2014/15. The actual detailed bidding criteria will not be available until October, with the deadline for detailed bids in January. However we have submitted an expression of interest for this funding.
10. In addition the Government has also recently consulted on proposals to relax planning rules for space above shops to consider the potential change of use from commercial to residential use in an effort to increase housing supply. These proposals sit within a wider review of the national planning framework that will be based around a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This presents a potential opportunity for the city and we are particularly keen to explore these proposals in relation to vacant space above shops in the city
11. To take advantage of these funding streams for the city we are proposing a new Empty Property Strategy and Action Plan with 4 new strategic aims (see appendix A)
 - a) Maintain accurate information about the numbers of long term private empty homes to ensure that we can effectively target them.
 - b) To encourage owners of privately owned empty homes and owners of vacant property to bring them back into residential use
 - c) To target owners whose empty homes cause a significant detrimental impact to the neighbourhood.
 - d) To strengthen existing and develop new partnerships to reduce the number of long term empty homes in the city.

12. By adopting this strategy and action plan we will also be:

- reducing the risk of adding to the number of the long term empty homes by proactively working with a range of partners to encourage the use of empty homes in the city.
- targeting those empty homes which have the most significant impact on the neighbourhood.
- Using the wasted vacant space above commercial properties.
- increasing the number of homes for vulnerable people which can be let at an affordable rent.
- improving the general condition of the housing stock.

Consultation

13. This report was written following consultation with owners of empty homes. Some 110 questionnaires were sent during Summer 2011 asking questions relating to whether if the council adopted a more robust approach would it change their attitude to bringing back into use empty homes e.g. by using compulsory purchase orders. Whilst the response was disappointing with only 16 owners responding, the limited responses we received the proposed change to the policy could have a positive effect – see table below:

Question	Number of responses
Expressed an interest in a loan	2
The threat of enforcement action would cause them to seek assistance from the council.	3
The threat of enforcement action would cause them to bring the home back into use of their own.	9
The threat of enforcement action would not change anything and would fight any enforcement action.	0
No longer Empty	2

Options

14. There are 2 options which the Cabinet Member is being asked to consider:

- **Option 1**, to approve new Strategy & Action plan to deliver a new approach to bringing back empty properties and maximise the opportunities from new initiatives
- **Option 2**, to continue with the existing Empty Homes policy

Analysis

15. **Option 1** - The new strategy reflects the need for the Council to take a more strategic and proactive approach to bringing back into use empty homes and seeking ways of using vacant space above commercial properties. With the recent government cutbacks to the funding of new affordable housing, bringing empty homes back into use will become an important tool for increasing the supply of new affordable housing over the next few years.
16. There are clear opportunities for the council to develop through the new National Affordable Homes Programme. Officers are currently in discussions with the Homes and Communities regarding accessing this funding to bring empty homes back in to use.
17. The proposed new Empty Property Strategy will need the support of a dedicate resource to maximise the funding opportunities both through income generation (NHB) and through National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP). Currently bringing back empty homes into use forms a small part of the work in the Housing Standards and Adaptations team and there is inadequate time to take the proposed actions forward. There is a clear invest to save opportunity by adopting this strategy and action plan.
18. **Option 2** - The existing policy doesn't reflect:
 - a) The new council's priorities
 - b) The changes to the funding regimes and opportunities following the implementation of the New Homes Bonus and the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP)
 - c) The proposed changes to relaxing planning restrictions

Council Priorities

- 19 This report contributes to the following council priorities:

- **Build strong communities** by providing more housing to ensure that vulnerable people have supply to meet their needs.
 - **Protect the environment** by targeting those properties which have the most detrimental impact on the neighbourhood.
20. The proposed strategy/action plan will also contribute/support a number of regional and local housing strategies:
- *York Housing Strategy 2010-2015 Strategic Aim 2: making the best use of existing housing stock (Priority 2.2: tackling empty properties).*
 - *York Private Sector Housing Strategy 2008-2013 - Aim 4: maximise the use of existing housing stock to increase the supply of decent affordable homes in York & Aim 5: strengthen existing and develop new partnerships to support the private housing sector.*

Implications

21. The implications arising directly from this report are set out below.
- 22 **Financial** - There are a number of potential financial implications associated with the work to be carried out to reduce the number of empty homes in the city follows:
- **New Homes Bonus:** Successfully reducing the number of empty homes in the city will increase the level of New Homes Bonus that the Council can receive. However, on the other hand if the number of empty homes increases in the city, then this will reduce the amount of New Homes Bonus that the Council could receive.
 - **Staffing:** The recommendation requires the establishment of a part time Empty Homes Officer. Revenue funding for the post could be established through the extra revenue generated through the New Homes Bonus as a result of bringing empty homes back into use.
 - **Capital Programme:** An expression of interest bid has been submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency to access the

National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP). However to ensure that we maximise the number of properties that are brought back into use for affordable rent we are also seeking funding from our own capital programme to support empty homes to be brought back into use through offering an equity loan. We estimate using previous grant aided work that the average cost will be about £10-15K per property. As a loan this will be recycled when the property is sold.

- Enforcement Action: In cases where the Council needs to take enforcement action to tackle a particular empty property, there will be a cost, which on some occasions will be very considerable depending on the scale of the problem and type of action required. Whilst the Council will only use such action where necessary, it is possible that by taking a more proactive approach to dealing with empty homes, that there may be more instances where enforcement action is required and consequently increased costs. Where significant costs are anticipated and are outside of the current budget provision, an individual report will be presented to the Cabinet Member on a case by case basis.
23. By investing in this area of work there is real potential to bring both extra income into the council through the new homes bonus and to provide extra additional new homes to address housing need within the city.
- 24 **Human Resources (HR)** Bringing empty homes back into use is a difficult and challenging process, and requires considerable resource in order to be successful. At present it forms a very small part of the work of the Housing Standard and Adaptations team.
- 25 However, to proactively move this agenda forward there is a clear need to employ a resource to co-ordinate all activity required around empty homes. In particular, it has been identified that there are a number of Council services that deal with issues surrounding empty homes in various ways. A key focus of the along with pro-actively dealing with empty homes will be the co-ordination of activity across the council. Evidence from other Local Authorities has shown that the provision of a dedicated resource has had a considerable impact on reducing empty homes within their locality.

- 26 We have identified a number of specific tasks that the Empty Homes officer would undertake in relation to tackling the problem of empty homes in the action plan with an emphasis of having a more robust approach to empty homes.
- 27 **Equalities** - An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the strategy. Few implications were identified however it is clear that addressing housing need by increasing the number of homes by bringing empty homes back into use and using vacant space that more homes will be supplied to meet vulnerable residents needs.
28. **Legal** - There are no adverse legal implications associated with this report. The anticipated increase in enforcement activity may create a need for additional legal input.
29. **Crime and Disorder** - Whilst there are no direct crime and disorder Implications arising from this report, it is widely recognised that long term Empty properties attract anti-social behaviour and reducing the number of empty homes will reduce instances of anti-social behaviour. The aim of the strategy is to tackle those properties which have the most detrimental impact on their neighbourhood.
30. There are no **Information Technology (IT) / Property** implications.

Risk Management

29. Regular monitoring and reporting of progress should ensure early intervention to minimise non-delivery and as such there are no major risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

30. That the Cabinet Member:
 - Approves option 1 as outlined in Paragraph 14 to approve new Strategy & Action plan to deliver a new approach to bringing back empty properties and maximise the opportunities from new initiatives

Reason: To reduce the number of long term empty homes maximising the financial incentives improving the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city and protecting the environment.

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**Report
Approved**



Date 12th September
2011

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Empty Property Policy February 2011

Annex 1: Empty Property Strategy

Annex 2: Action Plan

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DRAFT

Empty Property strategy 2011-2015

Overview

This strategy sets out what we will do to minimise the number of empty homes in York and, when homes do become empty, what we will do to help return them to use as soon as possible.

Empty homes represent a significant waste of valuable housing. This is especially true at a time of both a severe affordable housing shortage and low rates of new housing supply.

Each empty home that can be brought back into residential use represents a gain to the housing stock. This is extremely important to a city like York that has very high levels of housing need¹. Empty homes can also have detrimental effects upon the condition and value of adjacent properties and on the amenities of the local neighbourhood. Usually the longer a house remains vacant the greater its disrepair, with an increased risk of vandalism and crime.

The York Housing Strategy 2011-15 sets out the strategic direction for housing in York. A key aim of the strategy is to make best use of existing homes given very high housing demand and constrained new supply. Ensuring homes do not remain empty is a key way to achieve this.

Policy Context

There is recognition from government that long-term empty properties undermine efforts to meet housing need and blight local neighbourhoods. Government figures suggest there are almost 735,000 empty homes in England, representing around 3 per cent of the housing stock. The vast majority are in the private housing sector². About 45 per cent of empty homes have been empty for longer than 6 months.

¹ ADD - Housing needs data (tbc SHMA) and housing waiting list data

² Owner occupied and privately rented homes

As a result, £100 million has been made available within the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) for 2011-15 to bring long-term empty homes back into use.

In addition, government is providing incentives to local authorities to increase housing supply through a scheme called the New Homes Bonus (NHB). For each empty home brought back into use councils receive a financial reward equal to the average council tax each year for the following six years. The bonus is based on achieving a *net* reduction in the number of empty homes each year. An additional bonus is paid if the dwellings are returned to use as affordable homes³.

There are a range of tax incentives available to encourage and support the renovation and conversion of empty properties such as up-front tax relief on capital renovation costs.

Government has also recently consulted on proposals to relax planning rules for change of use from commercial to residential use in an effort to increase housing supply. These proposals sit within a wider review of the national planning framework that will be based around a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Local authorities already have a range of powers that can give permitted development rights for change of use through local development orders.

This strategy seeks to build upon the opportunities presented by this new focus on empty homes and the measures in place to support it.

Empty Properties in York

The main source of data showing the level of empty homes in York is council tax records. On 1 April 2010 records show there were 1,470⁴, empty homes representing 1.7 per cent of York's total housing stock. Similar to the national picture, the vast majority of empty homes are within the private sector.

³ An affordable home is one sold or let at below market value

⁴ Empty Homes Agency based on council tax records 2010

Table 1.

Area	Total dwellings April 2010	Vacant dwellings (total)		Private sector properties vacant for more than six months	
		Number	Vacancy rate	Number	Vacancy rate
York	84,738	1,470	1.7%	383	0.5%
North Yorkshire	356,239	9,200	2.6%	4,138	1.2%
Yorks' and Humber	2,311,547	92,819	4.02%	38,187	1.7%
England	22,899,298	776,554	3.3%	300,526	1.3%

Source: Empty Homes Agency 2010

When compared with other areas we can see that the number of empty homes in York is comparatively low, and particularly so when we consider homes vacant long-term (more than six months) at 0.5 per cent of stock. This is representative of a very high level of demand for properties in this area.

Our records also showed there were fewer than 48 empty homes within the local authority sector⁵ awaiting re-let to new tenants and none of these had been empty for longer than 6 months. There were also a number of empty dwellings owned by other public sector bodies⁶.

Vacancy is a key indicator of the supply/demand imbalance in housing markets. A certain level of vacancy within a housing market is essential to ensure a healthy turnover (or churn) in order to keep the market active. Government guidance recommends that planning policy should look to accommodate a level of 3 per cent to ensure a healthy market. The overall vacancy rate for North Yorkshire stands at 2.6 per cent in 2009/10⁷.

Our knowledge of the extent of empty space above shops or redundant office/commercial space across the city is currently limited. Empty space above shops can be divided in to three distinct groups:

- Composite Premises – A single premise with both residential and commercial usage and a single point of access. Each area is rated separately so data on the number of empty residential units

⁵ Homes owned and let by the local council and housing associations at 1 April 2010 (HSSA)

⁶ There were 105 empty homes belonging to other public sector bodies in York in April 2010 (HSSA)

⁷ North Yorkshire Strategic Housing market Assessment 2011

within composite premises can be provided by council tax department.

- Residential Premises – Living accommodation which is above a commercial premise and with separate access. They are not linked to the commercial premise on the Council Tax database and may or may not have the same owner.
- Commercial Premises – No residential accommodation and no way of easily identifying such premises from computer records as very few owners request a 'partial occupation certificate for occupied/unoccupied parts'. Where issued these certificates give a discount of the rateable value of the unoccupied parts for a period of 3 months.

Further work is required to identify the potential for activity in this area. The Government has recently sought to encourage this through VAT reductions in the capital cost of refurbishment and proposals to relax planning rules.

Whilst the level of long-term empty homes in York is small compared to other areas, it is right that we continue to work with owners to return properties to use as soon as possible, concentrating on those that cause most detriment to local neighbourhoods.

The location of long-term empty homes/properties and their local impact

Long-term empty homes can be found right across the local authority area, though higher concentrations are to be found within the inner city.

When we assessed the environmental impact of long-term empty homes in June 2011 we found the majority of homes have a low impact. The average score per dwelling was 23 out of a maximum possible 80 (with 80 being the worst impact).

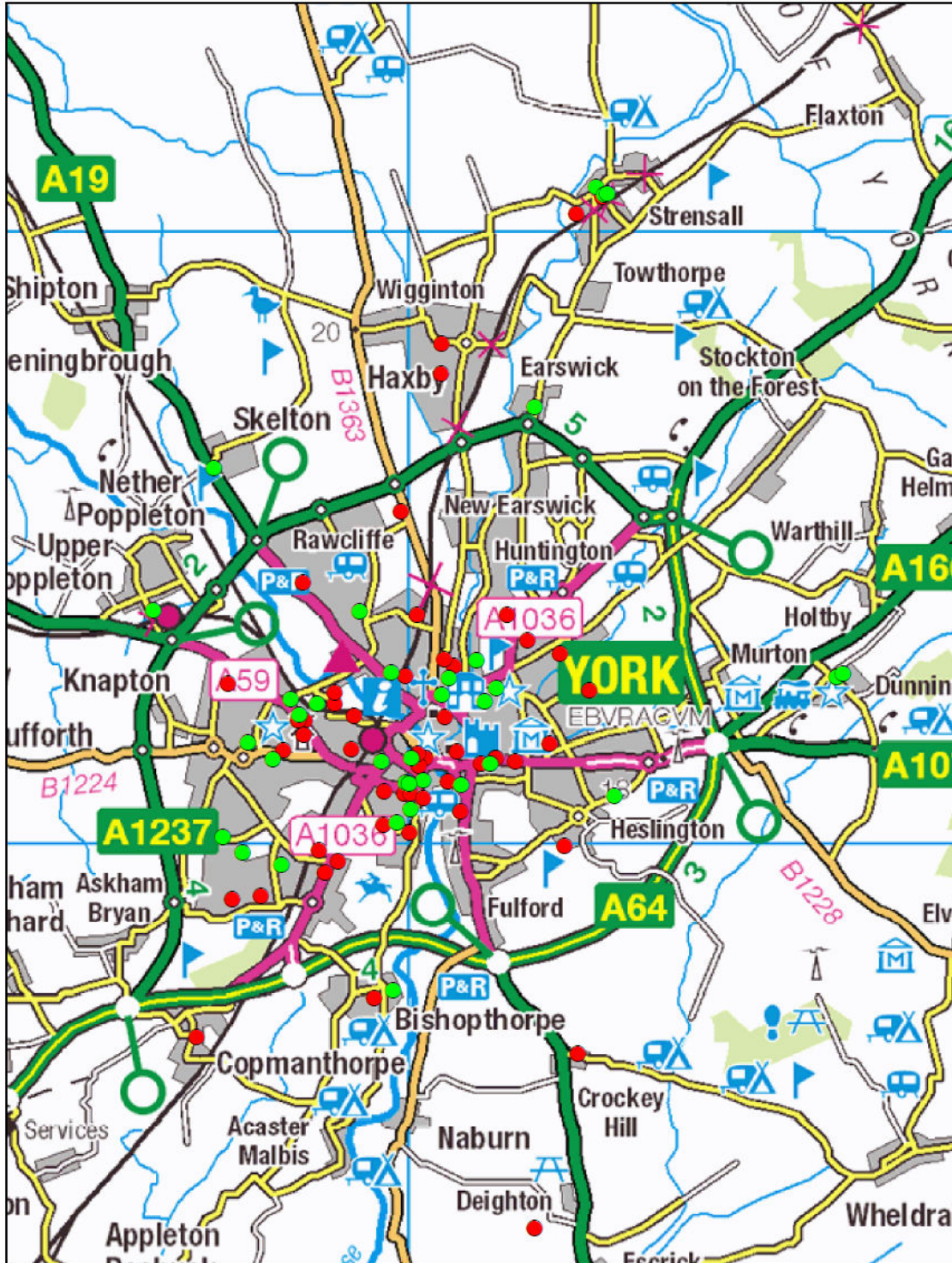
However, the survey identified a number of homes within the city that scored more highly and these are concentrated within inner city areas. Our strategy will be to target these properties first.

Table 2. Environmental impact assessment of long-term empty homes

Environmental impact Score	Number of dwellings
0-23	41

24 - 60	39
61-80	1

Map 1. Distribution of long-term empty homes



Long-term empty properties - York, August 2011
 Red – Below average impact
 Green - Above average impact

Why homes/properties are left empty

When we asked empty home owners why their properties have remained empty we were given a wide range of reasons. These include:

- Owners class them as second /holiday homes
- Owners had put the empty dwelling on the market for sale/letting
- Owners were repairing their property
- Owners inherited the property and hadn't decided what to do with it
- Owners had purchased the home in advance of their retirement

Similarly, there are many reasons why space above commercial property is left vacant. These include:

- General security concerns such as the need for a separate entrance
- Issues of significant general disrepair
- Safety issues such as lack of fire precautions
- Lack of knowledge about the help and assistance available to convert empty space into residential use

Returning long term empty homes/properties above commercial premises back into use can be a long intensive process involving initial identification of owners/managers, followed by sustained encouragement and support and in some cases enforcement action.

In 1998 the council worked in partnership with York Housing Association to convert unused space above shops on Micklegate into eight affordable homes.

Living Over the Shop schemes promote mixed use activity, contribute to the rejuvenation and safety of the city centre, reduce the demand for car usage, and help to reduce the pressure to build on undeveloped sites.

Case Study: Living Over the Shop, Micklegate, York

- York Housing Association negotiated with the owners of unused floors in a listed building on Micklegate for a 20 year lease.
- The council contributed £68,000 capital funding towards the conversion of the space for eight self contained one bedroom flats for social rent.

- The remaining costs of conversion were met by the buildings owners
- York Housing Association manage the flats and the owners of the building receive a guaranteed rental stream for 20 years
- The council receive 100% nomination rights for the period of the lease
- The scheme opened in January 1999

What we plan to do

The overall aim of this strategy is to minimise the number of long-term empty homes in York and, where homes do become empty, help return them to use as soon as possible.

Our key success measure/s:

- Return a minimum of 30 long-term empty properties into use per annum.
- Ensure the number of newly arising long-term empty properties per annum does not exceed the number of long-term empty properties returned to use (NHB).

Key aims and objectives of the strategy:

1. Maintain accurate information about the numbers of long-term empty Properties.

- Improve links with colleagues in Council Tax to ensure accurate information is maintained regarding the number, location and ownership of empty homes.
- Look at ways to further incentivise owners to report properties as becoming empty or occupied.
- Encourage residents and local representatives to advise the council about homes they suspect may be empty and develop approaches to make reporting easier.
- Update the information we hold through periodic audits of empty homes/properties to improve our knowledge and understanding to enable them to be targeted effectively.

2. Encourage owners of privately owned empty homes to bring them back into use.

- Provide timely advice and assistance to owners to enable them to improve and return empty properties back into use. This could include specialist guidance on inheriting a property or about repairs and maintenance.
- Continue to hold annual landlord conferences and publish a regular newsletter to raise awareness about empty homes, assistance available to return homes to use and the legal obligations and standards required of the property.
- Act as an introduction agency putting owners and landlords in contact with our social letting agency YorHome, who can assist with letting and leasing their empty properties where possible for an affordable rent
- Target loans assistance towards owners wishing to return their empty property for affordable rent.
- Explore opportunities to maximise the use of vacant property above commercial properties
- Look at opportunities arising from the NAHP and NHB to provide further incentives or assistance to owners to return properties to use.

3. Target owners whose empty homes cause a significant detrimental impact to the neighbourhood.

- Using improved knowledge and mapping of long-term empty homes, target interventions and enforcement action at those areas/properties/owners that create the most detrimental impact or promise the greatest return on investment in addressing housing need.
- Work closely with colleagues in Safer York Partnership to minimise nuisance to neighbours, such as securing properties against unauthorised access using of s29 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982

- Work closely with colleagues in Planning Enforcement to make best use of s215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1925, where a property is deemed to be detrimental to the amenity of the area.

4. Strengthen existing and develop new partnerships to reduce the number of long-term empty homes.

- Establish an empty homes liaison group to include both internal and external partners that can oversee delivery of the strategy and help relevant agencies and stakeholders play their full part.
- Develop a reporting/monitoring system that links into local ward committee, so that local communities are more aware of level of long-term empty homes in their area and the assistance available to tackle them.

A more detailed action plan showing what we hope to achieve by when is attached as Annex 2.

Funding and resourcing the strategy:

National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP):

In April City of York Council submitted an expression of interest to the Homes and Communities Agency for a slice of the £100m targeted investment through the NAHP. If successful funding would be available from April 2012 and will be targeted at long-term empty properties that would not come back into use without intervention. The outcome of the bid will be known later this year.

The New Homes Bonus:

The NHB provides a potential source of funding for ongoing empty property work.

The scheme provides the council with a financial reward equal to the national average for the council tax band on each additional property and paid for the following six years as a non ring-fenced grant. There is an additional enhancement of £350 per annum if the dwelling is returned as an affordable home.

Bringing a council tax band D property back into use would deliver £1,439 per annum in NHB reward grant or £8,634 over six years. Grant

for an additional band E property would be around £1,759 per annum or £10,553 over six years.

In 2009/10 the council helped return 19 long-term empty properties into use, generating £45,000 of NHB per year for the council. Over six years the total grant received will be £270,000.

Table 3.

Year	All empty homes	Long-term empty	Long-term empty homes which if brought back into use would meet New Homes Bonus criteria	Potential level of NHB 'reward' per annum	Total reward grant (over 6 years)
1 October 09	1509	786	402	N/A	0
1 October 10	1508	710	383	£45k	£270,000

It is important to remember that any overall increase in the number of long-term empty homes in an area would result in reduced NHB grant received from delivering brand new homes. For example, if 100 new homes were built in the local authority area the council would receive 100 x NHB. However, if at the same time there were 100 additional long-term empty homes the net result would be £0 NHB for that period. This makes it extremely important that the city prioritises empty homes work as every additional long term empty home will reduce the NHB received.

Staff resource:

It is proposed that the establishment of an Empty Homes Officer post would take forward and support this work.

The rationale is that bringing empty homes back into use is a difficult and challenging process, and requires considerable resources in order to be successful. There is a clear need for an officer to co-ordinate all activity required around empty homes. In particular, it has been identified that there are a number of council services that deal with issues surrounding empty homes in various ways. However, there is currently little co-ordination of their activity, leading to action being taken by one service without the knowledge of other services who may be dealing with the same property at the same time.

We have identified a number of other specific actions that the empty homes officer would undertake in relation to tackling the problem of empty homes in particular in relation to taking more rigorous enforcement action in line with our Enforcement Policy. The empty homes officer will focus on those empty homes which have been identified as being having a detrimental impact on the neighbourhood.

Evidence from other councils has shown that the provision of a dedicated resource has had a considerable impact on reducing empty homes within their locality.

This work would directly help ensure that the NHB funding is sustained.

Monitor and review

We are committed to ensuring this strategy is delivered. We will report progress against our objectives annually and undertake a formal review within 2 years.

We would welcome your views on any aspect of this strategy at any point so please get in touch.

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Strategic Aim 1. Maintain accurate information about the numbers of long term empty homes					
Objectives:	Why	Baseline position	Target/date	Resources	Lead*
Maintain, and where possible improve the accuracy of data held by the council regarding the number of empty homes	To ensure that the action is targeted at those homes which are causing the most detrimental impact on their neighbourhood and which will positively impact on the new homes bonus	Number of private sector Homes empty at the 1st October 2010 1470 .Number of Private sector homes empty for more than 6 months at the 1st October 2010 632 . Number of homes which meet the new homes bonus criteria at the 1st October 2010 383	to reduce the number of properties to 200 by 1st October 2011	Existing and Empty Homes Officer *tbc	CYC Housing/Resources
Actions towards this objective will include:					
Through an annual audit of empty homes					
Develop good working relationships with owners of empty homes - to encourage them to be brought back in to use					
Effective partnership working with colleagues in Resources (see strategic aim 4)					
Encourage residents to inform the council of long term empty homes	To ensure that action is targeted at those homes that have the greatest detrimental impact on their neighbourhood.	Number of referrals are low. Between 1st April 2010 - 31st March 2011.	To increase number of referrals by 10%	Empty Homes Officer *tbc	CYC Housing
Actions towards this objective will include:					
Press releases on an on-going basis regarding enforcement action and properties brought back into use					
Effective communication with residents through ward newsletters and liaison with Neighbourhood Management Officers and Street Environment					
Improve the information available to residents through the council website and leaflets - development of an electronic report form for the website					
To encourage owners of property to advise the council when the property is occupied	To ensure that action is targeted at those homes that have the greatest detrimental impact on their neighbourhood and to maximise the amount of new homes bonus .	The empty homes audits have established that many homes were not empty (approximately 50%)	To ensure that all homes which have been reoccupied by the 1st October are recorded accurately	Empty Homes Officer*tbc	Resources
Actions towards this objective will include:					
Development of standard letter templates that mention the benefits for empty home owners of keeping the council informed of changes in circumstances					
To establish protocols with other departments					
To carry out annual audits of all empty homes					

Strategic Aim 1. Maintain accurate information about the numbers of long term empty homes					
Objectives:	Why	Baseline position	Target/date	Resources	Lead*
KEY: tbc = To be confirmed / CYC = City of York Council					

Strategic Aim 2. To encourage owners of privately owned empty homes and owners of vacant property to bring them back in to residential use					
Objectives:	Why	Baseline position	Target/date	Resources	Lead*
To encourage owners to bring empty homes back in to use through a range of information and advice	Empty homes are a waste of resources and by targeting empty homes it maximises the new homes bonus	Limited Information on the website	To review all information provided by the council by March 2012. Then every six months by stakeholder group - see strategic aim 4	Empty Homes Officer*tbc	CYC Housing
Actions towards this objective will include:					
Provide access to free advice and information for owners					
To provide an Empty homes leaflet					
Publish a list of trades people for empty property owners					
Work with landlords and letting agents (see Strategic Aim 4)					
To encourage and support greater access to home appreciation loans and equity release products to fund repairs and maintenance to bring back in to use the empty homes	Empty homes are a waste of resources and by targeting empty homes it maximises the new homes bonus	9 homes have been directly brought back in to use through financial help from the council.	to bring back into use 5 empty homes per year	Empty Homes Officer and capital resources *tbc	CYC Housing
Actions towards this objective will include:					
Targeted marketing of products available to empty home owners					
To provide technical support (site surveys and technical advice)to home owners to ensure that homes are brought back in to use quickly					
Review assistance policy regularly to ensure that it continues to support objective					
Where empty homes are brought back in to use to encourage owners to rent them at an affordable rent	To increase the number of affordable empty homes in the city	2502 households on the waiting list as of May 2011	To bring back into use 5 empty homes per year linked to YorHome	Empty Homes Officer *tbc /YorHome	CYC Housing
Actions towards this objective will include:					
To work closely with YorHome manager					
Review assistance policy to maximises opportunities					

Strategic Aim 2. To encourage owners of privately owned empty homes and owners of vacant property to bring them back in to residential use					
Objectives:	Why	Baseline position	Target/date	Resources	Lead*
To explore opportunities to bring back in to vacant commercial properties	vacant commercial properties are a waste of resources and by exploring new opportunities we can maximise this resource	Explore the governments new initiatives	By March 2012 exploring with partners ways of maximizing the use of vacant commercial properties.	New formal liaison group *tbc	CYC Housing/city Strategy
Actions towards this objective will include:					
Provide access to free advice and information for owners					
To provide an Empty homes leaflet					
Publish a list of trades people for empty property owners					
Work with landlords and letting agents (see Strategic Aim 4)					
Continually investigate funding opportunities to maximise the opportunities available	Empty homes are a waste of resources and by targeting empty homes it maximises the new homes bonus	Homes and Communities Agency expression of interest submitted June 2011	To bring back in to use 5 homes per year linked in to YorHome	Housing Strategy Manager and Senior Officer (housing standards and adaptations) . Capital resources *tbc	CYC Housing
Actions towards this objective will include:					
To work with the Housing Strategy manager to prepare bids to the Homes and Communities Agency to access the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) £100m programme					
To seek complimentary funding from City of York Councils own capital programme.					
KEY: tbc = To be confirmed / CYC = City of York Council					

Strategic Aim 3. To target owners whose empty homes cause a significant detrimental impact to the neighbourhood					
Objectives:	Why	Baseline position	Target/date	Resources	Lead*
To encourage residents to inform the council of long term empty homes	To ensure that action is targeted at those homes which are causing the most detrimentally impact on their neighbourhood.	Number of referrals are low	To increase referrals by a minimum of 10%	Empty Homes Officer required *tbc	CYC Housing
Actions towards this objective will include:					
Development of an effective publicity strategy					
Effective communication with residents through ward newsletters and liaison with Neighbourhood Management Officers and Street Environment					
Improve the information available to residents through the council website and leaflets - development of an electronic report form for the website					
To bring empty homes back in to use through a mixture of enforcement action where they score more than 40 using the empty property impact matrix and meet the criteria of the enforcement policy	To tackle problems of environmental nuisance ,ASB and blight to neighbourhoods caused by long term empty homes where the owners has not engaged with the council	Limited use of enforcement action is used to bring back properties in to use due to lack of resources	to bring back in to use 20 empty homes per year	Empty homes officer required *tbc	CYC Housing
Actions towards this objective will include:					
To ensure that all long term empty homes are scored using the empty homes matrix					
To utilise the most appropriate enforcement tool to tackle the issue					
KEY: tbc = To be confirmed / CSCI =					

Strategic Aim 4. Strengthen existing and develop new partnerships to reduce the number of long term empty homes in the city					
Objectives:	Why	Baseline position	Target/date	Resources	Lead*
Maintain clear strategic leadership	To help all stakeholders with a role maintaining and reducing the number of long term empty homes	Strong links developed with resources	To establish formal liaison group with key internal partners (YorHome, Environmental Health, Building Control , Street Environment Officers and Neighbourhood Management Unit) by December 2011	Senior Officer (Housing Standards and Adaptations)	CYC Housing
Actions towards these objectives will include:					
To meet quarterly to ensure that the homes which are causing the most detrimental impact on their neighbourhood are identified and the options to bring them back into use are found.					
Analyse and share findings from future research projects with key stakeholders					
Disseminate best practice and facilitate learning					
Continue and strengthen partnership between sub regional empty homes officers	Sub regional partnership is an important arena for sharing good practise and bring investment in to the city	North Yorkshire Empty Homes Practitioners group established	Maintain programme of quarterly meetings sharing good practise from across the Region and country	Senior Officer (Housing Standards and Adaptations)	CYC Housing
Actions towards these objectives will include:					
to maximise any funding opportunities					
Regular progress reviews for key stakeholders					
Greater use of shared protocols and agreed principles for joint working					
Establish better partnerships with organisations					
Develop links with Housing Providers, developers, leaseholders and landowners	To increase the number of affordable empty homes in the city	The current Housing Association Liaison Group. Private Sector Landlords Association	Use existing programme of meetings to share ideas and review opportunities for investment bids	Housing Strategy Manager with support from Senior Officer (Housing Standards and Adaptations)	CYC Housing
Actions towards these objectives will include:					
Use annual landlord conference to share good practise and to ensure that empty home owners are supported and have access to information					
By obtaining a more detailed understanding of the role private sector landlord /letting agents role to ensure that empty homes are brought back in to use quickly					
KEY: tbc = To be confirmed / CYC = City of York Council					



**Decision Session: Cabinet Member for
Health, Housing and Adult Social Services**

27 September 2011

Report from the Assistant Director – Housing and Public Protection

Quarter 1 April – June 2011, Finance and Performance Update

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Adult Services with an update on financial performance, progress against service plan improvement actions and performance measures. Status cards for actions and performance measures are attached at Appendix 1 and 2.

Financial Performance

2. The Housing general fund portfolio is forecast to fully achieve its £286k in year budget savings target. Savings are being achieved through a challenging programme of service reviews and service improvements. The approved 2011/12 revenue budget for the Housing portfolio is summarised as follows:

Housing General Fund (GF)	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Variation £'000	Forecast Variation %
<u>Building Maintenance</u> – A budget overspend is forecast due to the non-recover of overheads linked to a reduction in income. An overall £438k efficiency saving has been achieved across the whole of Building Maintenance. This has not yet been disaggregated between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. This will result in the current forecast variation reducing.	-181	+300	+165.75

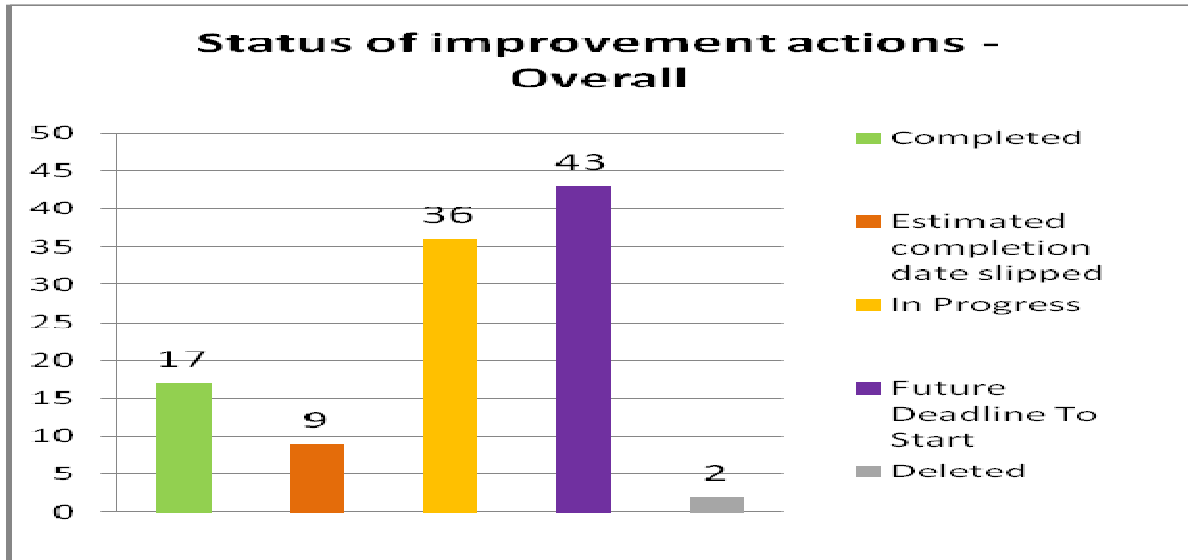
<u>Housing Services</u> . Travellers Sites - mainly continued overspends on repairs	1,241	+94	+7.57
Total Housing General Fund	1,060	+394	+37.17

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Variation £'000	Forecast Variation %
<u>Special Services</u> : Discus Bungalows - under spend due to lower than forecast costs as project nears conclusion	115	-24	-20.87
<u>Special Services</u> : Grounds Maintenance - lower than forecast uptake on the elderly persons garden scheme	379	-27	-7.12
<u>Housing Subsidy</u> - decrease in the negative subsidy payment due to higher than forecast interest rate	7,746	-52	-0.67
Other variations	24,968	0	0
Total Expenditure	33,208	-103	-0.31
<u>Dwelling Rents</u> - Higher than forecast void level ¹	-27,669	+90	+0.33
<u>Non Dwelling Rents</u> - Higher than forecast occupancy for shops	-595	-22	-3.7
<u>Charges for Services and Facilities</u> : Leaseholder Charges – higher income due to increased level of recharged works	-90	-47	-52.22
Other variations	3,999	0	0
Total Income	-32,353	+21	+0.06
Change in the in year (surplus)/deficit	855	-82	-9.59
Change in the working balance	-9,543	-82	-0.86

Service Plan Actions and Performance Indicator Headlines

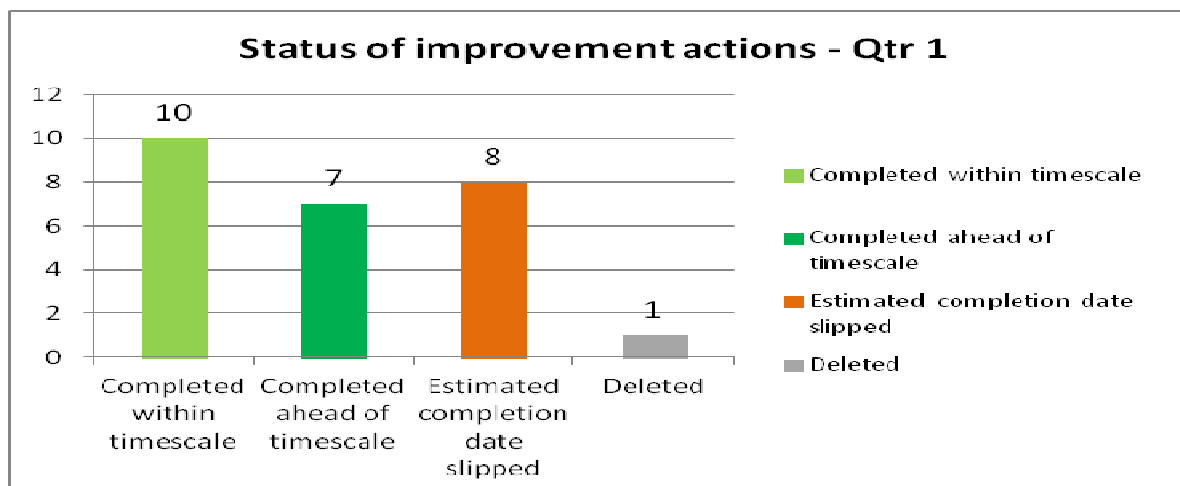
¹ A number of key issues have resulted in the increase in the void turnaround time, specifically the high number voids as a result of the downsizing schemes, temporary problems associated with new working practices. A full action plan is in place to address the problem and ensure for the 2nd half of the financial year the target is achieved.

- As part of Housing Services commitment to deliver excellent services the service set a very challenging service improvement plan for 2011/12, with 107 actions to be completed by March 2012.



Quarter 1 Service Plan Action update

- For quarter 1 - 19 Service Plan actions were due to be completed by June 2011 of which 10 have been completed. However a further 7 actions have been completed ahead of schedule bringing the total for completed actions to 17. There are 8 actions where the estimated timescale for completion has passed, however all these actions are in progress with the majority of them expected to be completed by October 2011



5. There are no actions where the deadline has passed and work has not commenced. One action is deleted - Review, promote and incentivise staff suggestion box - This has been superseded as the Leader of the Council has introduced a staff suggestion scheme.

Examples of Completed Actions within quarter 1 (including those ahead of schedule)

- The council's planning policies have been reviewed as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) process to ensure they support the move to lifetime homes and neighbourhood standards
- Staff consultation has taken place on Housing's Organisational review with the next steps focusing on the assimilation process
- Choice Based Lettings, a partnership between seven local authorities, is up and running
- The first Tenant Inspection project looking at reception areas and customer access has been completed and recommendations are being implemented
- A reception checklist has been implemented to ensure standards are maintained
- Service standards have been agreed across the city for tackling Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) to ensure consistency
- A financial assistance policy for homeowners, private tenants and landlords was agreed by members in June 2011.
- A review of information leaflets has been undertaken and corporate leaflets for reception areas has been agreed.
- A policy for supporting and advising private sector homeowners to maintain their own homes has been agreed
- A revised Houses in Multiple Occupation Licensing Policy to improve energy efficiencies measures has been agreed.
- Representation on the Strategic Health Board has been agreed with the Cabinet members for Health, Housing and Adult Services being represented on the board.

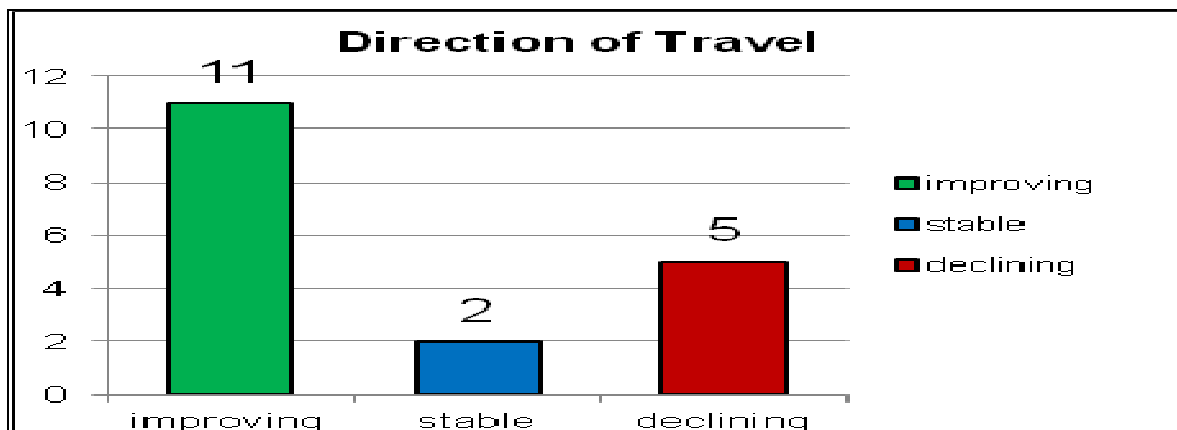
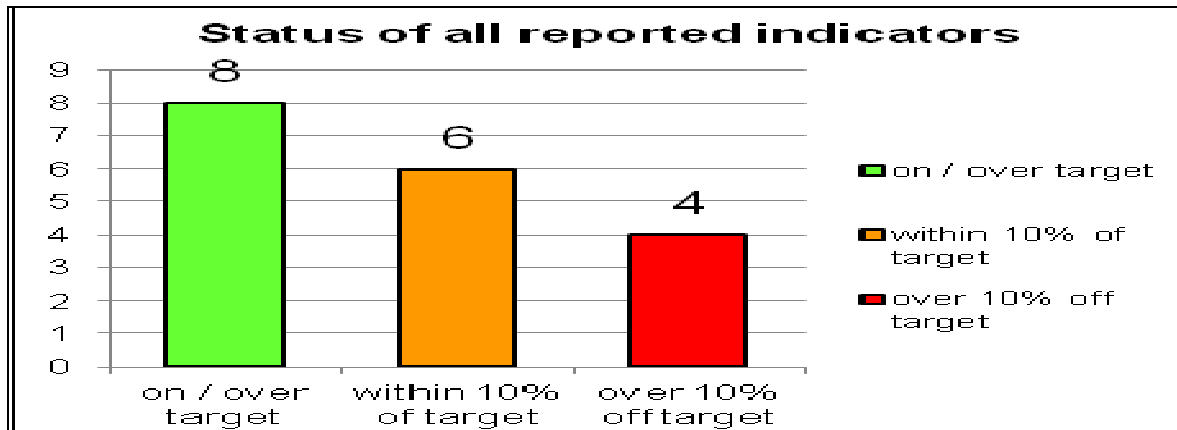
Service Plan Actions To Watch

6. The table below outlines those actions which are in progress together with comments concerning expected completed times.

Action	Comments
Develop proposals to ring fence New Home Bonus receipts to develop affordable housing	Whilst the deadline has slipped discussions have been taking place between Housing and City Strategy a report is to be submitted to Cabinet in October 2011
Implement Organisational Review	The deadline for implementation of the review has passed however considerable work has taken place and it is expected that candidates will be in post by October 2011 and the expected savings will be achieved.
Ensure Choice Based Lettings (CBL) is linked to the promotion of advise and support such as help with work and training	The construction of a key section of the CBL website has been completed. IT to endeavour to complete the link to work and training by December 2011
Extend Housemark benchmarking to specialist areas	Data submission is not required until Sept 2011. It is therefore requested that this deadline is extended
Provide ASB data for the HouseMark Specialist areas	Data submission is not required until Sept 2011. It is therefore requested that this deadline is extended
Develop a protocol to ensure information on the intranet and internet is up to date, comprehensive and relevant	Development of Homeless & CBL web pages has taken place which has taken more time than anticipated. The protocol is still to be developed and it is requested that the deadline date is revised to September 2011.
Review Commission Racial Equality (CRE) compliance and identify gaps	The deadline for this has slipped due to intensive work on the equality frame work assessment and revisions to existing website pages. The Tenant Inspectors will provide feedback and this has been programmed into their work programme for September 2011
Recruit and support customers to provide feedback on housing's revised website	The deadline for this has slipped due to intensive work on the equality framework assessment and revisions to existing website pages. The Tenant Inspectors will provide feedback and this has been programmed into their work programme for September 2011

Performance Indicators

7. There are 63 measures in Housing service plan, 29 measured quarterly, 18 reported at Q1. Of those not reported, 5 have temporary delays in reporting and 5 are new and awaiting or under development. 4 are new indicators in the repairs service. Reporting of these indicators is dependent on a decision on IT infrastructure for mobile working, to enable development work to commence.



8. Areas excellent performance in quarter 1 to note are:

- Homelessness Service has had a very busy quarter and staff have worked exceptionally hard to achieve all three indicators on target and improving – number of households in temporary accommodation, number of preventions, number of 16-17 year olds accepted as homeless.
- Timeliness of completion of both major and minor adaptations has improved and is on target.

- The Quarter 1 target to reduce Former Tenant Arrears has been exceeded

Performance Indicators to Watch

9. The table below outlines where performance has not been achieved.

Indicator	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 To-date	2011/12 Target
Overall re-let time	21.86	31.33	21
Rent lost through voids as % of rent due	0.58%	1.12%	0.56%

10. The overall re-let time has been continuing to increase month on month since December 10. There was an increase in the number of voids in this period, coinciding with reduction in resources for void repairs, which affected time taken for void works and hence re-let times and void rent loss. An Action plan is in place, including actions to improve planning and communication between Housing managers and building maintenance; to adjust resourcing on void work to speed turnaround; and to streamline the processes to facilitate access and inspection of void properties. Weekly meetings are taking place to monitor progress, and address arising issues.

Indicator	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 To-date	2011/12 Qtr 1 Target
Percentage of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	0.23%	0.09%	0.05%

11. Although evictions for rent arrears (7 in Q1) are above the same time last year (4) and above target levels (0.09% against profiled target of 0.05%), such small numbers have inherent variability and this performance does not indicate that the ambitious year end target equivalent to 15 evictions will not be met. The income teams continue to work to manage arrears and prevent eviction where possible.

Indicator	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 To-date	2011/12 Qtr 1 Target
Reduce average number of days sickness absence per employee	14.41	2.63	2.25

12. Staff sickness levels for Q1 are 2.63 days per FTE, with 82% of this being long term absence. Managers are continuing to proactively monitor and manage absence within their teams.

Council Priorities

13. Reporting on Financial Performance and Service Improvement support the Corporate Theme of 'Effective Organisation'.

Implications

14. The implications arising from this report have been considered within the body of the report.

Conclusion

15. This report has provided an update on Quarter 1 Performance.

Recommendations

16. The Cabinet Member is asked to note the progress that has been made and agree the revised timescales for those actions that are in progress but where the original estimated timescale has slipped for completion.

Reason: To ensure that those actions where the estimate timescale has slipped are completed within the revised timescales without detriment to the quality of action taken

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Report Approved



Date 19th August 2011

Appendix 1 Status Card for Quarter 1 Service Plan Actions

Appendix 2 Status Card for Quarter 1 Performance Measures.

Action Owner	Action description	Milestone	Deadline/ 2011/12	Progress Status	Quarter 1
P L Stamp/Ruth Abbott	Deliver new homes including maximising affordable homes	Make departmental case for proportion of New Homes Bonus receipts (especially the £350 affordable housing enhancement being ring fenced for the further delivery of affordable housing and improvements to private sector decency	Apr-11	Estimated completion date slipped	Deadline for completion has slipped because discussions were taking place between City Strategy and Housing on suitable options for taking this forward. It is proposed that a report is submitted to Cabinet on 9th of September 2011.
P L Stamp	Support independent living	Review the council's planning policies to ensure they support the move to lifetime homes and neighbourhood standards	Apr-11	Completed	This Forms part of LDF core strategy proposals approved by Cabinet on 30 June 2011, subject to inspection
K Grandfield	Improve Housing IT systems	Ensure a clear and resourced ICT work plan is developed annually in partnership with the ICT team. Plan linked to the development of the ICT Strategy	May-11	Completed	Complete. Now handed over to BSU under MD. Will continue to work with MD on this to ensure Housing needs are met
S Waddington	Implement Org Review	Implement year 1 of the organisational review and generate identified savings	Jun-11	Estimated completion date slipped	Whilst the deadline for completion has slipped the review is on going and the assimilation process is currently underway. It is expected that staff will be appointed by the beginning of October . The review should generate identified savings.
S Waddington	Support and Develop Staff	Ensure staff are fully aware of the impact of structural changes following the organisational review on their work both within and outside the directorate	Jun-11	Completed	Staff consultation has taken place and informed the review, following implementation of structure further communication with staff will take place
J Whitehouse	Support and develop staff	Review , promote and incentivise staff suggestion box	Jun-11	Deleted	This has been superseded as the Leader of the Council has introduced a staff suggestion scheme.
K Grandfield	Support independent living	Introduce Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme	Jun-11	Completed	CBL system introduced July 2011
K Grandfield	Support independent living	Ensure sheltered accommodation advertised through the choice based lettings (CBL) system incorporates customer support needs as part of the assessment and eligibility process	Jun-11	Completed	Customers are assessed as to whether they are eligible for affordable housing under CBL.
K Grandfield	Support independent living	Ensure CBL is linked to the promotion of advise and support such as help with work and training	Jun-11	Estimated completion date slipped	The construction of a key section of the CBL website has been completed . IT to endeavour to complete the link to work and training by 31 July 2011 .
R Abbott	Deliver Value for Money services	Investigate the opportunities of using the proceeds of the Crime Act a regulatory tool	Jun-11	Completed	A protocol has been agreed with Trading Standards to assess each case against relevant criteria. No actionable cases to date.
A Davies	Deliver Value for Money services	Extend Housemark benchmarking to cover specialist areas	Jun-11	Estimated completion date slipped	Data is not required to be input until Sept 2011. It is requested that the deadline for this action is changed to Sept 2011

Action Owner	Action description	Milestone	Deadline/ 2011/12	Progress Status	Quarter 1
A Davies	Improve access to advice and services	Develop a protocol to ensure information on the intranet and internet is up to date, comprehensive and relevant	Jun-11	Estimated completion date slipped	Development of homeless & CBL webpages has taken place which has taken more time than anticipated. The protocol is still to be developed and it is requested that the deadline date is revised to Sept 11.
P Morrison	Improve access to advice and services	Review phone contact and availability of estate managers in order to improve contact by tenants	Jun-11	Completed	Staff are being asked to be available on Monday mornings where possible as it is the busiest part of the week, also duty sessions have been extended to the full week
A Davies	Embed equalities and diversity within Housing	Review Commission Racial Equality (CRE) compliance and identify gaps	Jun-11	Estimated completion date slipped	Due to the Business Support review and preparations of the Equality Frame Assessment it has not been possible to undertake this action within timescale. However an assessment is underway. It is requested that the deadline for this action is revised to Sept-11
T Brittain	Implement Tenant Inspector 10 recommendations to improve reception service	Take ticket machines out of use immediately until monitors are installed	Jun-11	Completed	Local standards agreed between Housing and Registered Social Landlords across the city for tackling ASB to ensure consistency
S Brown	Widen and Extend Resident Involvement	Carry out extensive benchmarking of the cost/quality and overall value for money of resident involvement	Jun-11	Completed	As part of the Business Support review a review of community engagement has been undertaken and clarity given to which service area is responsible for different levels of engagement activity. This has resulted in some savings to the HRA.
A Davies	Widen and Extend Resident Involvement	Recruit and support customers to provide feedback on housing's revised website	Jun-11	Estimated completion date slipped	The deadline for this has slipped due to intensive work on the equality frame work assessment and revisions to existing website pages. The Tenant Inspectors will provide feedback and this has been programmed into their work programme for September 2011
Jo Harrison	Widen and Extend Resident Involvement	Continue the development of the Tenant Inspector Project to enable trained tenants to inspect aspects of housing services and make recommendations for service improvements	Jun-11	Completed	First inspection of reception services & facilities completed April 11. Tenant Inspectors delivered their report, findings & recommendations to operational staff to HSMT June 11 and many of the recommendations have been implemented.
A Davies	Effectively deal with ASB	Provide ASB data for the HouseMark Specialist ASB module to enable further analysis of performance and the identification of best practice examples	Jun-11	Estimated completion date slipped	
T Brittain	Implement Tenant Inspector 10 recommendations to improve reception service	Ensure reception standards are consistently maintained	Jul-11	Completed	Reception check list has been put in place

Action Owner	Action description	Milestone	Deadline/ 2011/12	Progress Status	Quarter 1
P Morrison	Effectively deal with ASB	Develop clear ASB policies and procedures and effective case management for carrying out enforcement across the social housing sector to ensure consistency	Aug-11	Completed	Local standards agreed across the city for tackling ASB to ensure consistency
R Abbott	Make the best use of housing assets and improve decency	Explore new options for financial assistance policy for homeowners , private tenants and landlords	Sep-11	Completed	Policy agreed for 2011/12 with members in June
T Brittain	Implement Tenant Inspector 10 recommendations to improve reception service	Provide useful, accessible information leaflets	Dec-11	Completed	Corporate leaflets for reception agreed, list available
R Abbott	Make the best use of housing assets and improve decency	Identify new ways of supporting and advising private sector home owners to maintain their homes	Mar-12	Completed	Policy agreed for 2011/12 with members in June
R Abbott	Make the best use of housing assets and improve decency	Implement the revised Houses in Multiple Occupation Licensing Policy to improve energy efficiency measures in these properties.	Mar-12	Completed	Policy agreed and being implemented
S Waddington	Improve partnership working	Ensure senior Housing representation on the Strategic Health Board	Mar-12	Completed	New Cabinet Member for York sits on Y&NY Housing Board. Also sits on joint LCR/HCA Board

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PERFORMANCE - HOUSING SERVICES

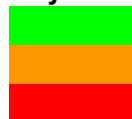
Summary of Performance Indicators

Current performance as at Q1 2011-12 (to end June 2011)

Performance status

on or exceeding profiled target
 less than 10% outside profiled target
 more than 10% outside profiled target

Key



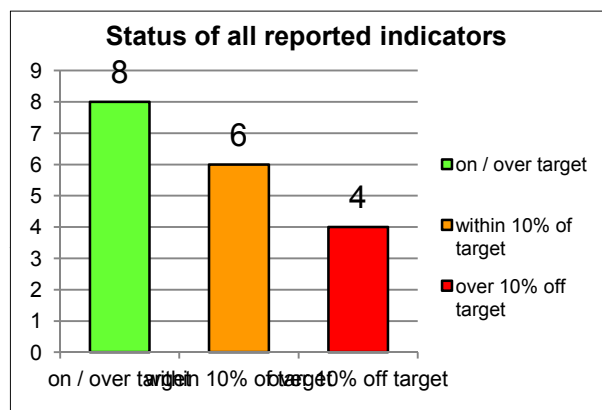
Direction of travel

↑ Improving
 ↔ Stable
 ↓ Declining

* compared to 10/11 year end (or 10/11 Q1 if profiled)

Performance Indicator	Top Quartile Threshold Value	Date of latest 2011/12 data	Current Performance & Status	In-year target where profiled	Annual Target	Comparator for Direction of Travel*	Direction of Travel
NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	-	April to June (Q1)	55		171	52	↑
Number of households prevented from homelessness	N/A	April to June (Q1)	240	166	663	134	↑
NI156 Number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation	N/A	April to June (Q1)	89	93	90	94	↑
Number of 16-17 years olds accepted as homeless	N/A	April to June (Q1)	3	7	28	12	↑
Percentage of minor adaptations completed within 20 days of assessment (council tenants)	N/A	April to June (Q1)	95.5%		93%	91.4%	↑
Percentage of major adaptations completed within 60 days of assessment (council tenants)	N/A	April to June (Q1)	66.7%		41%	40.2%	↑
Average number of calendar days to complete all repairs (excluding pre-inspection)	6.39	April to June (Q1)	4.60		6.00	4.44	↓
Percentage of all repairs completed on time	98.3%	April to June (Q1)	96.79%		98.5%	96.65%	↔
Rent lost through voids	0.92%	April to June (Q1)	1.12%		0.56%	1.15%	↔
Percentage of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	0.15%	April to June (Q1)	0.09%	0.05%	0.19%	0.05%	↓
Current tenant rent arrears as % of annual rent due	2.23%	April to June (Q1)	2.19%	2.09%	1.40%	2.36%	↑
Former tenant rent arrears as % of annual rent due	0.80%	April to June (Q1)	1.90%	1.97%	1.01%	3.23%	↑

Performance Indicator	Top Quartile Threshold Value	Date of latest 2011/12 data	Current Performance & Status	In-year target where profiled	Annual Target	Comparator for Direction of Travel*	Direction of Travel
% rent collected (including current arrears brought forward)	97.40%	April to June (Q1)	91.33%	92.09%	98.90%	90.50%	↑
% rent collected (excluding current arrears brought forward)	99.90%	April to June (Q1)	97.05%	97.77%	100.46%	96.93%	↑
Average number of days to re-let empty properties (overall)	-	April to June (Q1)	31.33		21	21.86	↓
Reduce average number of days sickness absence per employee	7.60	April to June (Q1)	2.63	2.25	9	2.5 est	↓



All Indicators

Color	Description	Count	Percentage	Direction of Travel	Count
green	on / over target	8	44.4%	improving	11
amber	within 10% of target	6	33.3%	stable	2
red	over 10% off target	4	22.2%	declining	5
		18			18

Reasons for non-reporting of indicators

35	Indicator not reported quarterly	77.8%
5	New - development work required	11.1%
5	Temporary data/reporting issue	11.1%
45		

Benchmarking

3	Top quartile	30.0%
7	not top quartile	70.0%
10	indicators where actual and benchmark available	

