

REPORT TO: COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM: 8
DATE OF MEETING: 10 JANUARY 2002 CATEGORY:
REPORT FROM: HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES OPEN PARAGRAPH NO: N/A
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT: SANDRA WHILES (5712) DOC:
SUBJECT: BEST VALUE REVIEW –HOUSING SERVICES REF:
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WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL TERMS OF REFERENCE: CS 01

1.0 Recommendation

1.1 Members are asked to :

- Approve two separate reviews for Housing Services – Review One: Strategic Housing and Review Two: Housing Landlord and Tenants Services Functions.
- Note the action plan for the review of strategic housing

2.0 Purpose

2.1 To advise Members of the progress made with the Best Value Review of Housing Services.

3.0 Content

3.1 A meeting was held with the Best Value Housing Inspector, Domini Gunn-Peim on 16 October 2001 to discuss the scope for this review.

3.2 The original intention of this review was to cover both the strategic housing and housing landlord functions. However, the Inspector recognises that the organisation does not have the capacity to effectively carry out such a large review by the original timescale of September 2002. Therefore, with the Inspector's agreement it is proposed that there be two separate Housing reviews.

3.3 Review one – Strategic Housing to include:

- Strategic Housing – assessing housing needs, supporting sustainable home ownership, raising the quality of social housing, increasing the availability of affordable housing, dealing with social exclusion.

- Private Sector Housing – supporting a strong and high quality private rented sector, administering housing grants, dealing with empty homes, home energy conservation.
- Homelessness and Housing Advice – strengthening protection for the homeless.
- Housing Allocations and Housing Register – promoting choice through lettings.

This review will build on and incorporate issues from the early work on the strategic housing review that was postponed in February 2001. These include:

- Working with partners.
- Methods for procuring maintenance of the Council's housing stock
- Consultation
- Gathering and analysing housing needs information
- Options for the future of the Council's housing stock.

3.4 The review will consider in particular the crime and disorder implications of the councils housing work and the Community Safety Officer will be involved in the challenge aspects

3.5 Review two – Housing Landlord and Tenant Service functions to include:

- Repairs and maintenance (including procurement/delivery methods)
- Tenancy Management (including rent arrears and neighbour disputes)
- Tenant Participation
- Sheltered Housing.

This review will build on and incorporate issues from the previous Sheltered Housing Best Value Review and Inspection and will start late 2002.

3.6 The timetable for the Strategic review is to complete by November 2002. An initial project plan is attached at Annexe A.

3.7 A review team has been set up comprising of staff, stakeholders, tenants and members. A small Steering Group of Officers has also been set up with the responsibility for planning and co-ordinating the Review Team and providing information to the team.

3.8 The Steering Group meets fortnightly and the Review Team monthly. At the first Review Team meeting training needs and the scope of the review were discussed.

At the second meeting the Review Team set up two sub groups to develop the consultation and benchmarking plans for the review. Members of the Review Team have also organised themselves into four teams to work with officers in carrying out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of existing service provision.

3.9 To compliment the Best Value review work a group has been set up to develop the HRA Business Plan. This group comprises of the Chair of Community Services plus three other Members, four members from TACT, the Head of Community Services, the Housing Services Manager, Housing Special Projects Officer, Building Maintenance Manager and the Tenant Participation Officer.

3.10 The terms of reference for this group are to agree objectives for the Housing Services and examine and appraise the options available to the council to meet these objectives.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None

