

Committee: Scrutiny 1 – Community and Housing
Date: 20 November 2002
Agenda Item No: 5
Title: PFI Progress Report
Author: Kathy Chapman (01799) 510537 & Sarah McLagan (01799) 510560

Summary

- 1 This report provides an update on the progress of the PFI Project.

Background

- 2 Members will be aware that on 30 May 2002 the contractual documents for the PFI Project were all executed. A verbal report was made to the Scrutiny 1 Committee on 12 June 2002 and a written report was given on 18 September meeting.

Great Dunmow Leisure Centre

- 3 Pellikaan Construction (Building Contractor) have been working on the construction of the Artificial Turf Pitch and since the 18 September have prepared the area, put the base course and tarmac course in place, laid the shock pad and completed work on the fencing. The Artificial Turf is due to be laid during week beginning 18 November. Whilst the contractual date for completion of the pitch is 13 January 2003 it is likely that the pitch will be complete and ready for use by 1 December 2002.
- 4 The foundations for the new building have been excavated and concreted including the swimming pool. Erection of the Structural Steelwork has commenced.
- 5 The base course of the car park has been laid and the curbing provided.
- 6 The Council's Project Manager is liaising with representatives of Linteum (Uttlesford) Ltd, Pellikaan Construction and the Helena Romanes School with regard to the construction process and any related issues.
- 7 Three capital payments have been made by the Council amounting to £1,225,525 toward construction work at the beginning of September, October and November in accordance with the contract and following site meetings and confirmation from the Technical Advisor that relevant work had been completed on site.
- 8 The work is on target in relation to the program provided to Members at the 18 September meeting.

Stansted Leisure Centre

- 9 A Turf cutting ceremony took place on 2 October 2002 when work commenced on site.
- 10 The site has been cleared and the foundations excavated and concreted.
- 11 The Council's Project Manager is liaising with representatives of Linteum (Uttlesford) Ltd, Pellikaan Construction and the Mountfitchet High School with regard to the construction process and any related issues.
- 12 The first capital payment in relation to the work has been made and was incorporated within the third payment referred to under paragraph 7.
- 13 The work is on target in relation to the program provided to the 18 September meeting.

Lord Butler Fitness and Leisure Centre – Refurbishment

- 14 Work on the refurbishment will not commence until 2 December 2002 when Linteum Leisure Ltd takeover the operation of the Centre from D C Leisure Ltd. Detailed plans of the refurbishment and programming of the works have been prepared and approved by Officers.

General Operational Issues

- 15 On 9 and 10 September 2002 Leisure Connection (the Operator for the Linteum (Uttlesford) Ltd Consortium) made presentations to the existing Operators (D C Leisure Ltd) staff (who will have the ability to transfer to Leisure Connection under the Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment Regulations (TUPE)). Following these presentations individual meetings were held with staff on 7 and 8 October.
- 16 Regular meetings are held with representatives of the Linteum (Uttlesford) Ltd Consortium to discuss and agree the handover of the Lord Butler Fitness and Leisure Centre and the Dunmow Sports and Fitness Centre from D C Leisure Ltd.
- 17 The Council's Leisure PFI Project Manager and the Head of Community and Leisure are working together in relation to the various issues surrounding the handover of facilities and the operation of the new centres.

FOR INFORMATION

Background Papers: PFI Files and Contracts

Committee: Scrutiny 1 – Community and Housing
Date: 20 November 2002
Agenda Item No: 7
Title: Best Value Review of Housing Services – Draft Action Plan
Author: Councillor Mrs M A Caton and
Mr Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508
Member Reference Group: Councillors Mrs M Caton (Chairman), Mrs J
Cheetham, Mr M Hibbs and Mr W Gladman (tenant representative)

Summary

- 1 This report outlines what action has been taken regarding the Housing Best Value review and recommends that the committee notes and comments on the draft Action Plan, which will be submitted to the Health and Housing Committee in January 2003.

The Scope of the Review

- 2 The review has required intensive examination of the Housing Need (how the Council uses its resources to deal with those people requiring some form of social/affordable housing), Homelessness (how the Council deals with the needs of homeless people presenting as needing help), Tenant Participation (how the Council engages its tenants regarding the services they receive) and Private Housing Sector (how the Council uses available resources to assist private sector residents) services.
- 3 The review has concentrated on the '4C's' which are: Challenge, Consult, Compare and Compete. This has been achieved by there being wide spread consultation on these services. This has included challenge events involving Members, staff and others, benchmarking with other Councils and Registered Social Landlords to compare services and inviting comments from tenants of the Council and other relevant agencies regarding the services provided. In addition officers involved in the review have discussed the issues with colleagues in other Councils. The services have been scrutinised in such a way to ensure that value for money remains a key factor in service delivery.
- 4 It should be noted that major factors which have been taken into account during the review have been the Homelessness Act 2002, which also requires fundamental changes to the Council's allocation policy, and forthcoming statutory changes to the Housing Grants arrangements.

The Current Service

- 5 The main areas that have been highlighted in the review which require change are as follows:-

Housing Need

- Council currently relies only on new social housing for rent on new sites being developed with Council grant (other than rural housing schemes).
- There is no shared ownership/equity Register.
- Housing Need is defined as 20 points and above
- Housing Need survey was last conducted in 1997 and another survey is currently being undertaken.
- No provision for key workers or a definition for this group.
- Current Housing Register requires a residential or work qualification in order for an application to receive active consideration. There is a non-active list.
- Current allocation scheme allows applicants to select only 3 parishes of choice.
- If an offer of accommodation is refused, application is put 'on hold' for 1 year.
- There has been no consideration of elderly persons' needs on new scheme developments involving Council grant since 1991.

Homelessness

- There is no dedicated officer dealing with the increasing workload of homeless people and their subsequent problems, unlike most other authorities.
- The Council only accesses Bed and Breakfast accommodation to rehouse homeless families in emergencies, at a few establishments.
- There is no private sector housing used to assist with the rehousing of the homeless.
- The Council does not currently have a specific plan or strategy to deal with homeless issues.
- The current charging policy for those placed into Bed and Breakfast has not been reviewed for a number of years. Some homeless families have felt under financial pressure because of the policy.
- There are no special arrangements to try and avoid families evicting their children who have their own family and are all staying in the same accommodation.

Tenant Participation

- There are two Tenant Panels with vacancies on both and the issues discussed are very similar.
- Tenant Panel representatives have not been involved in the past with preparation of the general information supplied to tenants (other than newsletters).
- Tenant Panel representatives hold office for one year elected at AGMs. There has never been a contested election. Attendance at AGMs is very poor.
- Meetings of tenants are only held within the district when specific issues arise. These meetings are then usually well attended.

- Tenant representatives may only claim travelling expenses when attending official meetings.
- Meetings of Tenant Panels are only held in evenings.
- Tenant Compact introduced March 2000.

Private Sector Housing

- Last Private Sector House Condition Survey carried out in 1993 at cost of £20,000. GO EAST has commented that this survey is out of date and needs to be repeated.
- There is no specific Empty Homes Strategy/Policy.
- Currently grants made to owners/tenants on low income to repair or adapt homes.
- Renovation grants for improving unfit homes can be granted subject to means testing.
- Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant is available to top up mandatory disabled facilities grant. This grant is subject to means testing.

Fundamental and Specific Questions

- 6 The Terms of Reference for this review posed a number of fundamental and specific questions. All these questions have now been addressed by the Member Reference Group. The questions are now reproduced with the final responses.

Question: What is the Council wanting to achieve in the future in relation to these services?

Response: Improved and more efficient services that meet the needs of residents. The services are needed and it has been concluded some can be provided in a way that delivers a better service.

Question: Does the Council have a statutory duty to provide all these services?

Response: Yes with regard to assessing need, dealing with homelessness, allocations, provision of mandatory grants and consultation with tenants.

There is no statutory requirement to provide Tenant Participation or any discretionary grants.

Question: If not should the Council cease to provide the service and if so what is the likely impact?

Response: It has been concluded that all the services under review should be continued with changes as proposed in the Action Plan. Removal of any discretionary service would be unpopular and could cause some hardship.

Question: If the services are to be continued, are there better alternative ways to deliver the services either in-house or by another agency?

Response: It is thought these services should continue to be provided 'in house' as they are complex and significant as part of the overall service provided. There is however scope for better partnership working regarding some of these services.

Question: Is the Council identifying the real extent of housing need within the district and, if so, is it providing those applicants in the most need with suitable social housing?

Response: The issue of housing need has been addressed during the review with regard to those people who apply for housing. Shared ownership/equity is now regarded as a real option and needs to be promoted. The results of a district wide Housing Needs survey will be available late in 2003 and will be fed into the 2003 Housing Strategy Statement.

Question: Do we make the best use of the private/voluntary sector in dealing with homelessness?

Response: Partnership working currently takes place with agencies such as Women's Refuges, Social Services and Housing Associations. These partnerships will be strengthened with the requirement to produce a Homeless Strategy. There is little interest to assist with rehousing the homeless from the private sector but further attempts are proposed to engage this sector.

Question: Can homelessness be avoided in more cases and does the Council deal with applications appropriately?

Response: There is a real need to consider whether the Council has adequate staffing resources available to deal with this client group following the Homelessness Act 2002. The action plan proposes that a full assessment is carried out and a report made to committee in mid-2003 on the resources needed. The draft action plan proposes further action to try and reduce the need of Bed and Breakfast and to try and widen the number of establishments used, to provide a better service.

Question: In view of the new legislation does the Council need to reconsider its criteria for applicants being accepted onto the Housing Register and are applicants given enough choice when being considered for rehousing, whilst accepting there is only a limited supply of available accommodation?

Response: The Homelessness Act 2002 is a major factor with regard to the review. The draft action plan proposes significant new criteria for acceptance on the Register and giving applicants much more choice. A new allocations policy identifies factors of real housing need.

Question: Can tenants be better informed and more involved in decisions affecting their homes, tenancies and their local environment?

Response: It is difficult to involve tenants regarding the services they receive. However, the draft action plan proposes changes to the structure of

Tenant Participation and new ways of involving tenants. It is proposed that Tenant representatives play a key part in the contents of the Handbook.

Question: Is the Tenant Compact still relevant, in particular, can formal arrangements for tenants' involvement in decisions be improved.

Response: It is thought the Tenant Compact is still very relevant, however, there is a need to review it in conjunction with Tenant Representatives. The Action Plan addresses the issue of streamlining the Tenant Panel structure in accordance with the Compact.

Question: Is the condition of the Private Housing stock at an acceptable level?

Response: Local knowledge suggests that housing conditions are fairly good. However, the Action Plan proposes that there is a need to consider a number of new proposals to deal with aspects of private sector tenures.

The Draft Action Plan

- 7 After detailed discussion of many issues relating to the Housing Services under review, the following list of proposed actions is submitted for the comment of the Committee. Appended to this report is a proposed new allocation policy which should be read in conjunction with the Action Plan. The details of this allocation policy have been successfully tested by Housing Officers. The allocation policy also conforms to the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002.
- 8 The emphasis of the action plan is on improving the quality of services provided. There is no likely savings in real terms.

No	Objective	Proposed Action	Target date	Financial implications
1	To provide a new form of tenure and maximise resources (financial and development opportunities)	Housing Need Include shared ownership/equity as part of new housing developments as a new option for applicants on Housing Register	Immediate	No Revenue Implications here. Redirection of capital funding through LASHG.
2	Create a Register for those applicants who do not want social housing for rent	Create a shared/ownership Housing Register, independent of normal Housing Register and actively promote this type of accommodation for local people when opportunities occur.	By April 2003	See para 9.
3	To identify those key workers in the district unable to	Work with other agencies (county council, health authority etc) to define a	By July 2003	Within existing budgets. (With an opportunity to

	provide their own housing	Key Worker policy as part of future Housing Strategies.		<i>attract funding from the Housing Corporation's Capital Challenge Pot).</i>
4	To identify applicants in need of housing in the district	Redefine Housing Need so that all applicants scoring any need points are regarded as being in need. (see attached Draft Allocations policy).	Policy by January 2003 – operational subject to IT	See para 9
5	To redefine who may be placed on Council's Register.	Introduce new Housing Register criteria. (See attached draft allocations policy).	Policy by January 2003 operational subject to IT	See para 9
6	To assess the Community's housing needs on a regular basis	Continue to conduct a full "Housing Needs Survey" every 5 years.	On-going	Budget in place for Survey in 2002/03 with an annual amount of £11,000 to be earmarked to fund future surveys (<i>minute RE4</i>)
7	To provide more choice for applicants in Housing Need	Introduce wider choice for applicants on Housing Register (see attached draft Allocations policy)	Policy by January 2003 – operational subject to IT	See para 9
8	To operate a fairer allocations policy	Abolish any penalties when applicants on Housing Register refuse an offer of accommodation. (See attached draft allocation policy).	Immediate	May impact on void levels.
9	To respond to the needs of the elderly and disabled with development opportunities	Consider the needs of elderly and disabled residents on all new housing development sites.	Immediate	No Revenue implications here. Redirection of capital funding through LASHG.
10	Respond to the new statutory requirements as imposed in the Homelessness Act 2002	Homelessness To assess the new workload entailed	By July 2003	It is too early to identify the financial implications (current recharge made from the HRA

				to the General Fund in respect of this aspect of the service equates to the costs and overheads of 0.24 of a FTE post (£14,040 in the 2002/03 budget)
11	Prepare a homeless strategy	Complete the work in conjunction with partners	By July 2003	Estimated cost to the General Fund of £8,500. These costs to form part of the bid to ODPM for additional implementation funding (see para 9 below).
12	To introduce a fairer charging policy regarding applicants placed into bed and breakfast	Contribution to be £4 per adult per night and £2 per child. Exempt if on any state benefit other than child benefit or a child tax credit allowance.	Immediate	Costs likely to be neutral as the small increase in contribution would be offset by an increase in exempt applicants
13	To reduce homeless cases, following family disputes.	Enter into Homeless at Home agreements in very controlled circumstances.	Immediate	See point 15 below
14	To provide more good quality establishments when bed and breakfast is necessary.	Where bed and breakfast is unavoidable ensure a wider range of available bed and breakfast establishments is available.	By April 2003	See point 15 below
15	To endeavour to engage private housing sector regarding the rehousing of the homeless	Contact private sector regarding availability of accommodation for this group by the holding of a landlord's forum.	By April 2003	Potential to reduce costs of homeless accommodation (average net cost to the Council per household day in B&B accommodation in 2001/02 was £23.65)
16	To provide a better strategic structure.	Tenant Participation Create one strategic Tenant Panel.	By April 2003	Potential savings (HRA) of up to £1,000

17	To develop the democratic arrangements for TP	Term of office of new Panel to be 2 years commencing Oct 2003. Election by postal nomination and ballot.	By October 2003	Estimated cost (HRA) of £700 additional printing/postage.
18	To encourage more tenants to become involved in Tenant Panels.	Introduce a policy of paying a contribution towards child care and carer costs for tenants attending Panel meetings.	April 2003	Estimated cost (HRA) of up to £300. <i>(estimated as 30 hours per annum @ a maximum hourly rate of £10 per hour)</i>
19	To encourage more TP attendance at meetings.	Hold some Tenant Panel meetings during the day.	Immediate	Potential small savings (HRA) by reducing staff overtime costs.
20	To encourage Tenant Panels to engage Councillors in TP where appropriate.	To invite Councillors to attend meetings by invitation in order to assist TP development.	May 2003	Within existing budgets
21	To revise and update structure	Update Tenant Compact with Tenant Panel reps	June 2003	Within existing (HRA) budgets.
22	To ascertain tenant's views on services provided	Hold Tenant Forum meetings in main locations in district and invite tenants to attend to make views known and ask questions on service delivery.	First round of meetings by June 2003	Within existing (HRA) budgets.
23	To provide more information for tenants	Prepare a Tenant Handbook involving Tenant Panel representatives	By 31/3/03	Within existing (HRA) budgets.
24	To ensure that current information held by Council on condition of private sector housing is adequate	Private Housing Assess the adequacy of our information on private sector housing conditions in the light of the new national and regional data	April 2003	Within existing budgets.
25	To decide if new survey on private housing condition needs to be commissioned	Form an opinion when assessment above completed, as to whether a new survey represents value for money	June 2003	(It is estimated that commissioning a new survey would cost £30,000)
26	To achieve more	Assess the impact of	April 2003	Full

	private sector occupation	revoking the Council Tax discount given to long term empty homes		consideration will need to be given to any financial implications for the Council
27	To use local knowledge to see if more empty private sector accommodation can be utilised	Consult with town and parish councils on their knowledge of problematic empty homes in their areas	May 2003	Within existing budgets.
28	To encourage owners of empty property to bring them back into use	Use the Council Tax database to contact the owners of long term empty homes and start a dialogue on the types of support and advice that the Council can offer to facilitate the return of the property to occupation	September 2003	Estimated cost of £500 per run to generate and despatch letters to owners of empty property from CT database.
29	To consider implications of a new renewal grant policy in accordance with statutory guidance.	Report to Health and Housing Committee on proposals for an Uttlesford Housing Renewal Grant, repayable on sale of the property.	July 2003	Repayments of proposed UHRG would represent Capital Receipts.

- 9 It should be noted that it is estimated that changes to the allocations and points scheme will require an estimated £20,000 of IT work. This will be met by half being funded from the IT Capital budget and half from a bid to the ODPM for an implementation grant which is available for issues relating to the Homelessness Act.

Next Stage of the Review

- 10 The views of the Committee regarding the Action Plan will be taken into account and some further consultation will be undertaken. It is envisaged that a final Action Plan will be submitted to the Health and Housing Committee in January 2003. Implementation will take place as quickly as possible and target dates have been supplied in the report.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee accepts the report and indicates its support for the draft Action Plan, within the scope of this Review.

Background Papers: BVPP 2002/03
Best Value Review documentation for the review
(R Chamberlain file)
Reports to Scrutiny 1 Committee 2002/03

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Draft Allocations Scheme (commencing January 2003) which relates to dwellings being allocated on a secure tenancy basis

The Allocation Scheme

This allocation scheme has been adopted by Uttlesford District Council. The Council's Health and Housing Committee is responsible for policy issues relating to the scheme. The operation of the scheme will be the responsibility of the Director of Community Services and other appropriate officers within Housing Services.

The Scheme – Equal Opportunities

- The Council's allocation scheme will be operated strictly in accordance with Council policy and in accordance with the Commission of Racial Equality Code of Practice and irrespective of an applicant's ethnic origin, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age or disability.
- Applications will be held on a database and information will be subject to Data Protection legislation.

Assessing Housing Need

- The Council will operate a Housing Register. All applicants wishing to be considered for secure accommodation vacancies (either UDC and/or nominations to a RSL or Shared Equity Nomination) must complete a form and return it for assessment to the Director of Community Services, Housing Services, Uttlesford District Council, London Road, Saffron Walden.
- Should anyone have any difficulty in completing an application form, housing staff will assist.
- The register will include Council/RSL tenants who wish to move to alternative accommodation.
- The priority awarded to an application will be decided by a Housing Needs Points Scheme, following a home visit.
- Applicants will be required to provide details of their financial circumstances.
- No application will be considered for rehousing until completion of the Housing Investigation. Accordingly if an applicant has been asked to supply information and has failed to do so no action will be taken on the application until compliance.
- Should it be concluded that an applicant under normal state retirement age is financially able to secure alternative accommodation at market rent no points will be awarded.
- Owner occupiers over state retirement age would normally only be considered for sheltered housing.

Who will be included on the Register

- Anyone where a member of the family is aged over 18 years of age.

- Any applicant where the Council has accepted a duty to rehouse in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002 (this could include 16/17 years olds who are homeless).

Who will not be included on the Register.

- Persons subject to immigration control who are not eligible for an allocation of housing would include:
 - Registered with the Home Office as an Asylum Seeker,
 - Visitor to UK who had limited leave to remain in the UK.
 - Persons allowed entry to UK, but have no recourse to public funds.

Who will not be considered for an allocation

- Anyone, or a member of the family, who is regarded as guilty of unacceptable behaviour which would make the person or family unsuitable to be a tenant (this would be decided where there are good grounds for a Court to issue a Possession Order for eviction – not a suspended order).

The Points Scheme

Applications will be assessed in accordance with the following criteria.

Homeless

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepted by the Council as a vulnerable household, in priority need and vulnerable (shortly to be homeless or actually homeless – including applicants placed into Bed and Breakfast by the Council). | } | 15 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra points if applicant or tenant is or likely to be a victim of violence/racial harassment (granted only if being dealt with as a homeless applicant) | } | 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above but in temporary accommodation or subject to a Homeless at Home Agreement which was found or provided by the Council. | | 10 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledged by the Council as homeless or shortly to be homeless, but not in priority need or not vulnerable or not intentionally homeless. | | 8 |

- Current Notice of Seeking Possession/Notice to Quit/Court summonses 5
- Intentionally Homeless

(Note: the Council will endeavour to assist such applicants if it has the available resources)

5

Rent Agriculture Act

- * Where the Council has accepted a statutory duty to rehouse 5

Unsuitable housing

- Lacking bath or shower facilities 2
- Lacking kitchen 3
- Lacking inside WC 3
- Lacking cold or hot water supplies 4
- Lacking electricity 4
- Lacking adequate heating 3
- Lacking appropriate garden facilities for children 1
- Lacking a bedroom or overcrowding (points to be awarded if parent(s) other adult members of the household, opposite sex children (where one is aged over 7 years) or more than 2 same sex children sharing an appropriate sized room) 2 (for each element of bedroom deficiency)
- Sharing living room 1
- Sharing kitchen 1
- Sharing bathroom/WC facilities 1
- Property in disrepair (where applicant not responsible) 1 or 2
- Property unfit (follow Environmental Health advice) 3 or 5
- Property has poor internal/external arrangements for the applicant (eg access to WC, difficult stairs etc). 1, 2 or 3
- Elderly people under occupying accommodation. 1

Medical Grounds

- Discretionary points to be awarded taking into account an applicants medical or welfare needs (as disclosed by the applicant and where alternative accommodation would benefit). Consideration to be given to letters from GP's and other agencies etc. 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5
- Extra points if medical condition is regarded as urgent. 2

Hardship/Welfare

Discretionary points to be awarded taking into account an applicants social welfare and employment needs (where alternative accommodation would benefit). 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5

Violence/harassment

Any applicant or tenant, currently living in accommodation where there is a risk of them becoming a victim of violence or harassment (including racial) where alternative accommodation is required, but where a homeless application **has not** been made to the Council. 10

UDC Tenants and Nominated Tenants to RSL's

UDC tenants or RSL Tenants (where UDC have nominations rights) requesting more suitable accommodation resulting in better use of the Council's stock (in addition to other points awarded)

Need to move. 8

Request more suitable accommodation 5

Note: No tenant or RSL tenant will, unless there are very exceptional grounds, be awarded any points if the management of their existing home is unsatisfactory due to tenant neglect or if a possession order has been granted, including rent arrears.

Local Connection with UDC

In the event of an Uttlesford resident's application scoring any points on the above further points will be added to the application as follows:

- Permanent resident in UDC 4
- Extra if permanent resident in UDC for more than the last 2 years prior to application 2

Other connections as follows:

- If a non-resident of UDC scores any needs points extra points will be added if they have Full time employment in the Uttlesford District 1
- Strong family connection within the Uttlesford district. 2
- 15 years previous residence in Uttlesford as a juvenile 4

*Note all initial points allocations will be carried out by a Housing Officer and will be agreed with a Senior Housing Officer.

Housing Need

All applications scoring any points will be regarded by the Council as being in housing need. This means that the Council would like to rehouse if it had the resources available. Any applicants awarded 0 points will be regarded as not being in need. Housing Need will be recorded as a global number and highlighting the number resident in Uttlesford.

Housing Choice

- The district will be split up into eight 'Rehousing Areas'.

These areas will be based on the following areas.

- Area 1 Saffron Walden
- Area 2 Saffron Walden (rural)
- Area 3 Great Dunmow
- Area 4 Great Dunmow (rural)
- Area 5 Stansted
- Area 6 Stansted (rural)
- Area 7 Thaxted

Area 8 Thaxted (rural)

- Applicants may select, in order, any or all of the 'Rehousing Areas'.
- Applicants may request NOT to be considered for certain parishes or streets within each area (it is the responsibility of applicants to ensure their preferences are noted).
- Applicants will be assessed for the type of accommodation for which they qualify.
- Applicants can request consideration for other types of accommodation but priority will be given to those categories of applicant who qualify for the vacancy.
- As a general principle the vacancy in question will be made to the highest pointed applicant who requests and qualifies for that vacancy. Any exception to this would require authorisation by the Director of Community Services or Head of Housing with a full reason being endorsed on the papers.
- Applicants can only be considered for one vacancy at a time. This will be decided by the priority given by the applicant to the 'Rehousing Areas'.
- When an offer of accommodation is made, the applicant must respond within 7 days or the offer will be automatically withdrawn.
- Members of the Council, who so request, will be notified of the proposed allocation of any vacancy (including dwellings used for rehousing the homeless) which occur within their ward.

Right to Review

- Any applicant has the right to ask for a review of any aspect of this policy. Any request must outline the grounds why a review is thought appropriate.
- Any review and any subsequent review will be dealt with by an officer(s) or appropriate person(s) not involved in the previous decision.

Committee: SCRUTINY
Date: 20 NOVEMBER 2002
Agenda Item No: 8
Title: HOUSING SERVICE – 6 MONTH PERFORMANCE REPORT
Author: ROD CHAMBERLAIN (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee of the work position for the Housing Service for 1/4/02 – 30/9/02.

Background

2 Best Value Performance Indicators

The half year (April – September) performance figures for the Housing Service as measured by the Best Value Performance Indicators 2002/03 are as follows:-

Performance Indicator and Reference	Target	6 Months Outturn	Comments
a) Energy Efficiency – the average SAP rating of local authority owned dwellings. (BV 63)	68.8	No half year figure available	This figure is calculated annually
b) Local authority rent collection and arrears: proportion of rent collected (BV 66a)	97.4%	95.16%	Historically the half year figure is lower than year end figure
c) Satisfaction of tenants of council housing with the overall service provided by their landlord. (BV 74)	N/A	No data available	Next survey due 2003/4
d) Does the authority follow the Commission for Racial Equality code of practice in rented housing. (BV 164)	To achieve in 2002/3	Achieved	Target met
Performance Indicator and Reference		6 Months Outturn	Comments
e) The average length of stay (weeks) in bed and breakfast accommodation which include dependant children or a pregnant woman and which are	2.3	5.8	Sharp increase in homeless cases in

unintentionally homeless and in priority need. (BV 183a)			early part of year and shortage of vacancies.
f) The average length of stay (weeks) in hostel accommodation of households which include dependant children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need. (BV 183b)	0	0	Council does not currently use hostels.
g) The percentage change in proportion of non-decent LA homes between 1 April 2002 and 1 April 2003. (BV 184b)	N/A	N/A	New Indicator. Information will be available at end of financial year.
h) Percentage of responsive (but not emergency) repairs during 2002/3, for which the authority both made and kept an appointment. (BV185)	67.3%	79.76%	Well ahead of target.

In addition, the Council measures against a target the void period (time a Council vacancy is empty) as a crucial local indicator as follows:

Performance Indicator and Reference	Target	6 Months Outturn	Comments
Period Council Property empty (unless major works being undertaken)	2.7 weeks	3 weeks	Higher number of referrals and higher number of elderly person vacancies.

3 **Best Value Reviews**

The Housing Service has undergone three years of Best Value Reviews. In 2000/1 the Housing Management, Estate Management, Rents, Allocations, Repairs/Planned Maintenance and Leasehold/Right to Buy services were reviewed. The Sheltered Housing Service was reviewed in 2001/2. With regard to both of these reviews, all aspect of the Action Plans will have been addressed by the end of the current financial year. This includes the preparation of a Tenants Handbook and new Conditions of Tenancy. In the current year Homelessness, Housing Need, Private Sector Housing and Tenant Participation services are being addressed and their services are the subject of another report to this Committee. The review is on target and the final Action Plan is expected to be submitted to the Health and Housing Committee in January 2003. Page 19

4 **Other Specific Work**

In addition to BVPI's and Best Value Review work and normal day to day services being delivered, a number of other specific area of work are currently being undertaken within the Service as follows:-

- Preparation for the new 'Supporting People' arrangements (to commence April 2003)
- Transfer of Oakroyd House, Great Dunmow to Swan Housing Association (due to be completed November 2002)
- Awaiting results of Decent Homes and Housing Needs Surveys in order to feed the results into the ongoing Housing Strategy 30 Year Housing Business Plan process
- Rent Convergence (a long term statutory programme for LA and RSL rents to converge by 2012)
- Maximising Local Authority Social Housing Grant to provide more social/affordable housing (55 units in 2002/3)
- Encourage more Right To Buy applications (policy priority) – 21 sold and 15 further cases with Legal which are likely to result in sales.

5 **Recommendation**

That the Committee note the report

Background Papers: BVPI's
Best Value Review 2000 – 2002/3