

AUDIT COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS
Identified in Strategic Housing Inspection Report August 2010

Audit Commission Recommendation	Deadline set by the AC	Actions we will take	Lead Officer	Target Date	Expected Benefits	Progress to date
R1 Strengthen the service to customers and take steps to embed a customer-focused service						
Improve the range of and accessibility to information on private sector housing assistance and complaints handling (corporately)	Jan 2011	Review current leaflet/literature/website information Work with Communications Team on required updates Introduce new approach to complaints monitoring	Geoff Smith Adrian Webb/Corporate Team	Jan 2011 Jun 2011	Better access to services More accountable services Services that respond to the needs of customers	Complete - Website information has been reviewed and updated. New leaflets available on DFG's and HIA A pilot module has been created for FOI requests to ensure the concept and delivery methods meet the needs of the organisation. Once completed this will be developed to cover complaints
Involve customers and develop service standards for the private sector housing function	Jan 2011	Introduce enhanced local standards in consultation with users and partners	Geoff Smith	Apr 2011		Complete - Customer service questionnaires issued. Participating in ECC landlords accreditation scheme and

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						Residential Landlords network. Corporate service standards apply
Routinely monitor and publish performance across the range of service standards	Jan 2011	Develop effective monitoring systems to monitor strategic housing performance against service standards Include performance information in Housing Newsletter and website	Roz Millership	Jan 2011		Complete (Systems in place and monitoring is on-going) Performance against service standards also reported in new annual report to tenants
Introduce a systematic and consistent approach to measuring customer satisfaction across the strategic housing functions	Jan 2011	Undertaken review of customer feedback mechanisms Devise new processes to ensure all elements of strategic housing gather feedback information	Roz Millership	Apr 2011		New member of staff (Housing Development and Enabling Officer) introducing a range of methods for gathering feedback and reporting on this
Routinely monitor and publish performance on complaints handling	Jan 2011	Review the complaints procedure and enhance the system to ensure learning from complaints is used to improve services	Adrian Webb/ Corporate Team	Jun 2011		A pilot module has been created for FOI requests to ensure the concept and delivery methods meet the needs of the organisation. Once completed this will be developed to cover complaints

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R2 Improving the Council's approach to diversity and take steps to embed an equalities-focused culture						
Develop a SMART action plan for diversity, that incorporates statutory requirements and the needs of the community of Uttlesford	Apr 2011	Update current plan ensuring that it is SMART and incorporates the requirements of the Single Equality Act	Sue Locke	Apr 2011	Fewer barriers to services More accountable services Services that respond to the needs of customers and confirms a culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.	Following some cluster work that has been carried out with South Cambs D.C., Paul Williams who is the Equality and Diversity Officer and Policy Officer for South Cambs has agreed to give the Council some support From discussions that we have entered into with Paul, we have recognised that there is a need to develop and use a monitoring form, on the lines of the South Cambs model. This will give us the profile of who make up of the community and will help us measure how our services are delivered. From Paul's
Develop performance indicators that measure the delivery of the approach to diversity	Apr 2011	Work with performance team to develop meaningful PIs	Sue Locke	Apr 2011		
Develop comprehensive customer profiling information across the six nationally recognised diversity strands to monitor access to services and take action to remove barriers to accessing services	Apr 2011	Establish a system to capture monitoring information on protected characteristics for service access, take up and satisfaction Develop and maintain a thorough corporate understanding of the profile and needs of local people through continuing liaison with representative community organisations and robust research Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic by	Sue Locke	Apr 2011		

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		<p>actively involving the community in the decision making process</p> <p>Research customer profiles and how they access the service</p> <p>Use diversity information to improve services</p>				<p>assistance and guidance we will be able to develop performance indicators and comprehensive customer profiling</p> <p>We are currently developing a Single Equality Scheme which is out for consultation with various groups at the moment and will be part of the authority's response to the Single Equality Duty and the Equality Act</p>
<p>Enhance the delivery of equality impact assessments, through training and monitoring of their quality</p>	<p>Apr 2011</p>	<p>EIAs already completed for all Housing Service areas</p> <p>Training available to ensure staff have the skills to complete the EIA</p> <p>Staff Equality Group will support and scrutinise EIAs when completed</p>	<p>Sue Locke</p>	<p>Apr 2011</p>		

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R3 Strengthen the strategic approach to housing						
Develop robust monitoring arrangements to assess progress and delivery of the approach to strategic housing against the initial defined timescales and outcomes	Apr 2011	Provide quarterly updates to Housing Initiatives Working Group consisting of member and Tenant representation. Investigate role of tenant forum in monitoring of Housing Strategy at a local level	Martin Ling	Apr 2011	Increased accountability across the strategic housing functions Improved co-ordination across the strategic housing functions Sustained delivery of new sustainable homes	Current Housing Strategy to be reviewed following Government announcements on housing policy particularly around affordable housing and tenancy management in first half of 2011 Updates to be given to HITG and tenant involvement in development of strategy to be considered
Ensure private sector housing features as a strategic area of delivery	Apr 2011	In anticipation of private housing being featured prominently in 2012 Housing Strategy update, review current strategic issues, identify emerging issues and bring forward priority areas for delivery if appropriate Consult with existing private sector forums on emerging proposals	Martin Ling	Apr 2011		
Improve the co-ordination and promotion of sustainability in housing delivery	Apr 2011	Ensure minimum sustainable development policies and requirements are adopted on all schemes	Martin Ling	Apr 2011		

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		Work closely with delivery partners to identify how and where improved sustainability outcomes can be delivered				Wimbish Passiv Haus scheme is the first rural scheme of its type in the UK
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R4 Make better use of the existing and future housing stock and service arrangements						
Improve liaison arrangements with private sector landlords and identify and explore best practice with them	Jan 2011	Continue to hold regular landlord forum events and ensure that landlords are provided with up to date information	Judith Snares	Jan 2011		Complete
Develop information regarding housing association provision in the areas of lettings, decency, under-occupation and aids and adaptations, and utilise the provision to develop and support the better use of existing housing	Jan 2011	<p>Review existing information from CORE and other data sources to ensure the District has clear understanding of current RSL performance</p> <p>Open up a dialogue with Housing Association (HA) partners through existing liaison groups to identify best practice in ensuring all housing stock in the District is used to maximum effect</p>	Martin Ling	Apr 2011	<p>Improving the condition of existing housing</p> <p>Maximising the use of existing housing.</p> <p>Housing services which better meet local need and more effectively address health and safety</p>	<p>Some analysis done on demand for unit type to enable effective new development in line with housing need</p> <p>Regular 1:1 meetings with HAs every three months which feature effective use of stock. Review of HA provision to take place in context of development of Strategic policy on tenancies as require under Localism Bill. Initial discussion under way February 2011</p>

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Improve access to the HomeOptions Choice Based Lettings scheme for new applicants	Jan 2011	Survey new applicants	Judith Snares	Oct 2010		Surveys carried out for new applicants
Improve performance on re-letting Council homes and continuing the improvements in processing planning applications	Jan 2011	Improving re-let times - Improve voids systems & processes to improve service delivery taking into account best practice and feedback from residents Implement the revised void process to achieve a 28 day average key to key target by April 2011	Roz Millership Mike Ovenden	Jan 2011		Complete Changes to the void processes has resulted in a reduction in the average number of days a property remains void – figure currently stands at 22 days against a target of 28 days
Develop a strategic approach to proactively improve the condition of private sector housing, and return empty homes back into use, using all available options	Jan 2011	Introduction of empty homes monitoring and performance data	Geoff Smith	Apr 2011		Strategic approach to be developed in conjunction with Martin Ling see R3 above. Proactive work to improve PSH has resulted in increased uptake of PLACE scheme and approval of CPO for empty property
Improve the monitoring arrangements for the delivery of disabled facility grants (DFG)	Jan 2011	Engage with partners and review and develop a more streamlined process for the delivery of DFGs Introduce DFG monitoring and performance data	Will Cockerill	Jan 2011		UDC is a participant in the Right to Control Trailblazer project which aims to make the DFG process much more responsive to

						<p>the applicant's wishes</p> <p>Internal Audit are currently looking at the administration of DFGs and we will implement their recommendations</p> <p>We participate in the ECC benchmarking scheme covering the whole DFG process from end to end. The DFG progress is actively monitored by EP&PSH Manager</p>
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R5 Improve the approach to value for money						
Develop and regularly review a comprehensive understanding of costs and how these, and service outcomes, compare with others	Jan 2011	Develop and implement a benchmarking strategy with particular regard to embedding VFM to drive service improvements	Adrian Webb	Apr 2011	Better understanding of the balance of cost and quality in service assessments Increased capacity through more value for money services	VFM toolkit for UDC has been developed and implemented in a number of pilot areas. VFM is now part of service assessments undertaken by the Corporate Team
At a corporate level, develop a strategic framework for value for money to ensure it is embedded consistently across the Council	Jan 2011	develop action plan to respond to identified poor VFM Implement effective procurement of all commissioned services and products	Adrian Webb Stephen Joyce	Apr 2011		
At a corporate level, develop a programme of service reviews to be led by the Business Improvement and Performance Team, that comprehensively prioritises areas for review	Jan 2011	Identify the cost of services and individual components Routinely review service cost performance alongside service performance	Adrian Webb	Apr 2011		Service reviews are now led by the Corporate Team looking at strategic solutions. The strategic solutions work has identified areas to be reviewed
Establish clear and measurable value for money targets in improvement plans	Jan 2011	Ensure all appropriate senior staff objectives have VFM targets within them and are reviewed at one to one progress meetings	SMB	Apr 2011		Decision yet to be made re how VFM targets are to be monitored
Carry out impact assessments of partnerships, services and	Jan 2011	Housemark and internal benchmarking to be used to determine priorities	Roger Harborough	Apr 2011		On going

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funding streams related to strategic housing services						
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R6 Strengthen improvement planning and performance management						
Review action plans and ensure that all action plans are SMART	Jan 2011	Commence a review of strategic housing action plans All action plans to be SMART	Roz Millership	Apr 2011	Improved monitoring arrangements and the ability to identify areas of weakness or delay	Current Housing Strategy and action plan to be reviewed following Government announcements on housing policy
Ensure a consistent and robust approach is in place to monitor the delivery of action plans, with reports that reflect progress against the initial defined timescales and outcomes	Jan 2011	Develop a performance management report which monitors all elements of the strategic housing service	Roz Millership	Oct 2010		Report format has been developed and utilised for quarterly reporting to SMB. The report incorporates risks, PIs and actions
Develop SMART objectives on improving the Council's improvement planning and performance management frameworks	Jan 2011	Review and further develop the performance management framework, with particular reference to the Government's intended changes to national indicators and amendments to the inspection regime.	Richard Auty	Apr 2011	The increased likelihood that targets and improvements will be met Improved services	The Government has produced draft single list to replace NI set. This list is yet to be finalised by Central Government
Develop the use of benchmarking, and setting targets that reflect challenging benchmarked performance	Jan 2011	Continued involvement in Housemark benchmarking programme (ongoing) Establish other appropriate benchmarking opportunities, with	Roz Millership Richard Auty	Jan 2011 Apr 2011		

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		<p>particular reference to the Government's intended changes to national indicators and amendments to the inspection regime</p> <p>Ensure benchmarking information is utilised in annual divisional plan development</p>	Richard Auty	Apr 2011		
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