

REPORT TO: HOUSING, DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 14 FEBRUARY 2011

REPORT ON: HOUSING DEPARTMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO.: 74-2011

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1. To report on progress on the Improvement Plan agreed with the Scottish Housing Regulator.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. It is recommended that Committee note the progress on the implementation of the Improvement Plan up to November 2010 and agree that, as part of the commitment to Public Performance Reporting, this report be added to the plans and performance section of the Council's website.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

4. MAIN TEXT

4.1. The Scottish Housing Regulator agreed the Council's Improvement Plan in September 2009. This report identifies progress up to November 2010. 104 of the 149 items have been completed up to November 2010 and are being audited by the Quality and Performance Unit.

4.2. There are 45 actions within the improvement plan where significant progress is being made but the items are not yet fully complete. These relate to issues requiring the outcomes from the comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey about to be undertaken, improvements in arrears management, improvements in delivery of the SHQS investment programme and ensuring value for money, improvements in delivering the reactive maintenance service and improvements in delivery of homeless services. For those items requiring information technology (IT) development i.e. homelessness, arrears and repairs, these are contained within an IT Project Plan which is managed by a Project Board including the Director of Housing and Head of IT.

4.3. The Housing Best Value Review Group agreed that subsequent improvement plan progress reports should focus on the remaining outstanding items.

4.4. Details of the items completed between September to November 2010 are listed below:

Item 4

Recommendation: No freephone facility for letting service.

Action: Consider a freephone number for the letting service.

A low cost telephone number has been introduced from November 2010.

Item 5

Recommendation: Not all its front line staff not given housing options and advice training.

Action: Raise standards of advice and information by developing a training programme for frontline staff.

Homepoint training complete within Homeless Services Unit, as well as planned team building and customer care training. Level 2 CIH Training has been completed by 27 staff. Level 2 CIH is to become core training for all frontline staff from September 2010. Management Development Training for Unit Managers and Team Leaders is now complete. Training plans have been completed as part of the Employee Performance and Development Review Process and a full report on training needs has been produced in November 2010. An induction Programme for all new recruits has been implemented from 1st July 2011.

Item 31

Recommendation: The Council does not have procedures for managing occupancy where it does not recover vacant possession of a house after it has been granted a repossession order.

Action: Procedures for ending tenancies where decree is not enforced to be amended.

Owing to proposed changes in the Housing Bill, which will not require landlords to start a new tenancy where a repossession order is not enforced, this item will not be progressed.

Item 41

Recommendation: pre-allocation of houses and start letting process sooner.

Action: Void management process has been reviewed in a lean service review.

Development of letting IT system allows:

- **The property attributes will be used to identify the top 10 applicants on the waiting list.;**
- **The top 10 will be reviewed prior to the termination date;**
- **Pre-terminations visits will gather property attributes information and house condition information.**

- **IT system will monitor refusal reasons, and will identify possible "available now" houses.**

Formal offer will be made once keys are available.

The Void Management process has been reviewed through a lean service review.

Pre-terminations visits are used to gather property attribute information and house condition information. The system allows property attributes to be specified to identify the top 10 applicants on the waiting list. The top 10 are reviewed prior to the termination date. Staff use this opportunity to clarify applicants' requirements and "clean up" the queue to make better first time matches. A formal offer will be made once properties have met the agreed relet standard. Numbers of offers per let have improved since the introduction of the system and are presently around two offers per let.

The IT system monitors refusal reasons and will identify possible 'available now' houses for advertising on the Council's website.

Item 44

Recommendation: No relet standard and review relet expenditure. Standard of relet poor/houses dirty.

Action: A working group is to be set up to develop and implement a relet standard:

- **Set Standards;**
- **Develop practice across the service to ensure void properties are dealt with efficiently and effectively;**
- **Consult with tenants groups and staff on relet standards;**
- **Develop staff training programme;**
- **Produce Information on leaflet/internet of set standards.**

A working group was set up to develop and implement a relet standard. Consultation has been carried out with tenants groups and staff. A staff training programme was developed and delivered to Housing and DCS staff. Refresher training was carried out before the end of 2010.

The relet standard was implemented in August 2010. This standard meets all relevant statutory requirements and reflects good practice in relation to safety and security. 100% of void properties are being post inspected to ensure void standards are being met.

Recent Customer Satisfaction surveys show 96% satisfaction. Also refusal analysis shows only 4% of refusals were based on the condition of the property. Average number of offers per let is reducing.

Item 113

Recommendation: homeless people not offered same quality of permanent accommodation as other applicants.

Action: The quality of Homeless lets compared with other lets will be analysed quarterly and an annual be prepared for HDMT. Quality to be defined as proportionate letting of medium/high demand house types and areas to homeless mainstream applicants.

The new lettings system has been programmed to ensure homeless people are offered the same quality of permanent accommodation as other applicants. The quality of homeless lets are analysed and reported to the City Housing Manager.

Item 118

Recommendation: We saw a lack of strong and effective management in the Council's Housing Department.

Action: A Housing Best Value Review Group (BVRG) has been set up to agree the Improvement plan and oversee implementation. Meetings have been set up to track implementation of this improvement plan.

We will measure staff buy in to improvement plan through staff survey. It is our target to achieve average Council performance in two years.

The Housing Best Value Review Group which comprises senior officers of the council, tenant's representatives, Shelter, trades unions and elected members meets every two months. Its purpose is to scrutinise progress against the improvement plan and our progress toward improvement. Update reports which are made to the Best Value Group are also submitted to the Housing Committee and minutes are published on the internet.

HDMT have carried out Roadshows on the improvement plan and this was also discussed at Team Meetings. Team briefings are issued every month covering performance and other key information.

The Housing Department completed a staff survey on issues of leadership and management in 2010. This showed a general improvement on the survey that was conducted in 2007 and we are now close to or exceeding the Council average scores we saw in 2007. The most significant positive changes are in staff views about:

- being encouraged to contribute to improvement;
- change contributes to improvement;
- the Department is open and gives opportunities for staff views to be known.

Item 121

Recommendation: We found confusion over roles and responsibilities, in part due to its recent restructuring of services

Action: Ensure that Job Descriptions are reviewed and specify core training/induction requirements for the job.

Roles and Responsibilities have been clarified as part of the Employee Performance and Development Review which provides staff with individual action plans which link to Unit Plan and Housing Services Plan. In addition three units have had job descriptions reviewed and updated to reflect changes in roles and responsibilities.

Item 127

Recommendation: Housing department staff, in comparison with the Council as a whole, were less likely to agree they have an effective management team and do not feel that change contributed to improvement or that encouragement and recognition given.

Action: Staff Charter to be reviewed through a staff representative forum (including consideration of staff suggestion scheme and staff recognition scheme). Measures of success to be devised and monitored through Performance Management Framework:

- **Focus Group Recruited;**
- **Staff Charter to be agreed;**
- **Review of success;**
- **Staff survey**

360 Degree appraisal to be implemented for Managers and Team Leaders.

Housing Department Service and Unit Plans were implemented in April 2010 and included staff within this process.

Housing Values were also developed by Housing Management Team and Unit Managers and were launched to staff by the Housing Management Team with a series of Roadshows along with information being circulated on the behaviours which support the values. A member of the Housing Management Team was identified as the Values Champion to drive forward our Values.

A staff communication group was formed with representatives from various sections of the Housing Department to look at how we further enhance our communication methods. This has led to the launch of a suggestion scheme for staff to email any comment/questions or possible efficiencies which will be passed to the relevant staff member. Summaries of the suggestions are reported to Housing Management Team. In addition to this a regular staff newsletter "staff matters" is produced which provides staff with updates from around all sections and recognising achievements within teams.

A Staff Awards Scheme (which recognises good staff performance and contributing to meeting our values) has been implemented and is presented at our annual Housing Staff Conference.

A Housing Department Staff Survey was completed in May 2010. This demonstrated that staff felt a significant positive change in contributing and encouraging improvements at work also the results showed that staff felt more valued and that recognition was being given. Progress will be assessed again when the council staff survey results become available early in 2011.

360 Degree Appraisals were completed for all Housing Management Team, Unit Managers and Team Leaders with action points being included in the Employee Performance and Development Reviews.

Item 128

Recommendation: Housing Department staff, in comparison with the Council as a whole were less likely to agree they have an effective management team and do not feel that change contributed to improvement or that encouragement and recognition given.

Action: Ongoing staff communication and feedback through implementation of new systems.

After implementation and bedding in of the new systems ensure improvement in leadership through re-survey of staff after changes have been made to gauge improvements.

A Housing Department staff survey was completed in May 2010, this showed that staff felt a significant positive change in contributing and encouraging improvements at work and staff feel more valued and that recognition is given.

These issues will be re-assessed through the Council-wide survey which is expected to report early in 2011.

Item 133

Recommendation: We found it difficult to get accurate performance information from the Council and we were often given contradictory information.

Action: Service managers to bring forward proposals for a review of accuracy and continuous checking of information systems for: Repairs System.

The repairs system has been overhauled and in relation to gas safety a complete new policy and procedure has been introduced, along with an improved performance management framework. This improved performance management framework now provides up to date, accurate information about the gas safety system.

There is daily liaison between DCS and Housing where the figures are examined and interrogated. Any inaccuracies are highlighted and addressed.

There are five separate internal/external audit checks carried out of the gas safety system, part of which will be to look at performance information.

The information produced by the performance management framework is subject to more robust scrutiny at both the Repairs Management and Repairs Partnership Boards.

In addition, the Right to Repair Scheme includes a manual check of all compensation claims generated. This is done to ensure 100% accuracy all compensation payments made.

Item 141

Recommendation: Staff were reluctant to provide information or help to get information in areas that were not related to their own immediate responsibility.

Action: This will be tackled by a combination of the implementation of a new performance management system, induction training, customer service training and ongoing training and awareness sessions.

A competency framework has been completed and is part of the Performance and Development Review Scheme. CIH Level 2 has been completed by a number of staff, with this programme being rolled out to all frontline staff in coming months.

Support and coaching skills have been delivered to Unit Managers and Team Leaders. Job Shadowing is also being implemented as part of the Level 2 CIH along with staff using this as a mechanism for development.

Item 142

Recommendation: Poor signposting.

Action: This will be tackled by a combination of the implementation of a new performance management system, induction training, customer service training and ongoing training and awareness sessions.

Improve communication and working relationship between teams:

- **Clarify roles and responsibilities;**
- **Examine the relationship of cross teams and develop positive working practices.**

A competency framework has been completed and is part of the Performance and Development Review Scheme. CIH Level 2 has been completed by a number of staff, with this programme being rolled out to all frontline staff in coming months.

Support and coaching skills have been delivered to Unit Managers and Team Leaders. Job Shadowing is also being implemented as part of the Level 2 CIH along with staff using this as a mechanism for development.

Item 147

Recommendation: It does not have a clearly articulated contingency position if risks in its planned funding strategy for the SHQS materialise.

Action: Review our SHQS Delivery Plan. Review will;

- **Demonstrate value for money;**

- **A clear, measurable indicator (option appraisal and risk assessment).
Risk assessment/option appraisal to plan for contingencies.**

A risk management matrix and processes are now in place and monitored by the SHQS Project Board. Risk management have been addressed within the revised standard delivery plan. The SHQS Project Board scrutinises risks quarterly.

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environmental assessment, anti poverty, equality impact and risk assessment. There are no major issues.

6. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 6.1. The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director of Finance and all other Chief Officers have been consulted on this report. No concerns have been expressed.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1. None.

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DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

January 2011