

**REPORT TO:           HOUSING, DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES AND  
ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 25 OCTOBER 2010**

**REPORT ON:           HOUSING DEPARTMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS**

**REPORT BY:           DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**REPORT NO:           633-2010**

**1.       PURPOSE OF REPORT**

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

**2.       RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Committee:

- 2.1.    Note the progress on the implementation of the Improvement Plan up to August 2010.
- 2.2.    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 web-site.

**3.       FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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 for those items which were due for completion on or prior to August 2010.
- 4.2.    139 of the total 149 actions were due to be completed by August 2010. Of those which were due for completion:
  - 90 of the actions are now completed.
  - 32 of the actions due for completion are 75% complete or greater.
  - 13 of actions due for completion are 50% complete or greater.
  - 4 of the actions due for completion are less than 50% complete.
- 4.3.    There were nine items reported to the Best Value Review Group on 23 September 2010 as complete where on review some further minor work is required to ensure we are fully compliant.
- 4.4.    Details of the items completed between May and August 2010, are listed below. The key recommendations along with the summary of action within the Improvement plan can be seen in bold text.

**Item 3:**

**Recommendation:** Housing Options Guide to be made available beyond web.

**Action:** The Housing Options guide will be printed and distributed to partner agencies and be made available in main council receptions and libraries. Constantly updated and reviewed every 2 years. The effectiveness of the guide will be measured by: Monitor number of Hits on website. Survey applicants and partner agencies on information provided.

The Housing Options Guide has been updated and printed in July 2010. This has been distributed to council offices, libraries, housing associations etc.

**Item 49:**

**Recommendation:** No evidence of it using robust option appraisals to inform decision on sustainability and disposal of its own stock. Option appraisal remains underdeveloped

**Action:** Review of SHQS option appraisal undertaken which included turnover demand, management cost, repairs and maintenance, investment needs. These will be in context of need demand study for option appraisal analysis of the waiting list of void, turnover and investment need. Factors are weighted to identify most vulnerable stock to lack of demand. Link from stock info database into other corporate systems. Need & Demand Study used as guidance on future demand. Consult with tenants/focus groups.

Within the SHQS review options appraisal has been reported completed on the Council stock taking account of the Housing Needs Demand & Affordability Study and stock performance. The outcomes are reported within the SHQS review. There has been extensive consultation with tenants throughout the review.

An interim update on SHQS was submitted to the SHR in September 2010 and a full resubmission will be made in line with guidance in the summer of 2011.

**Item 51:**

**Recommendation:** Does not carry out regular tenant surveys to determine investment priorities

**Action:** Area forums meeting twice a year will present forthcoming investment priorities. Meet with RTO's for project meetings on individual programmes before work is undertaken. Review of SHQS Delivery Plan consultation with tenants and Focus Groups after satisfaction surveys returned in investment properties.

A Tenant Conference was held in June 2010 to look at the SHQS and agreed investment priorities. Focus Groups are now being held with interested tenants subsequent to satisfaction surveys.

SHQS Root and Branch review was agreed by Committee in August 2010.

Investment priority questions will be included in a comprehensive tenants' questionnaire, which will be issued in November 2010.

**Item 53:**

**Recommendation:** 12 continuing risks around its funding and efficient assumptions:

- £30m receipt from land sales
- Loan charges and debt rising faster than expected
- More void loss than expected
- expected reduction in management costs have become increases

**Action:** Risk matrix in place monitored monthly by Housing Capital Investment Management Team quarterly by SHQS project board. Within this:

- Receipts for land sales
- Prudential borrowing
- Needs and demand
- Management costs
- Contractor capacity
- Changing economic
- Risks controls identified
- Targets Progress monitor is to each CIMT as above. Link into SHQS delivery plan.

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.

A needs/demand monitor and management costs monitor are now in place. The SHQS Delivery Plan review was completed in August 2010.

**Item 68:**

**Recommendation:** The Council is considering extending ways to report repairs to include email and text messaging.

**Action:** Repairs can be reported through the website by email direct to the Housing Repairs Centre. An options paper will be prepared for the Repairs Management Board with options for reporting repairs, text messaging to be included.

A Report went to the Repairs Management Board on 28 June 2010. The Board agreed to promote the existing on-line services rather than look to introduce text messaging as a way of reporting a repair. However, it was agreed that text messaging would be more effective as an outgoing communication aid, for example in informing tenants that the tradesman is on his way to carry out the required repair, etc. Such applications are to be explored in greater detail. A further report is to be presented to the Repairs Management Board in January 2011.

Tenants can currently report their repairs through the website in addition to by phone, in person at district office, to wardens, concierge and by letter.

**Item 72:**

**Recommendation:** Right to Repair - significant weakness. It does not publicise the scheme annually.

**Action:** We will ensure that we meet our statutory duties on the right to repair. We will publicise the scheme regularly: Annually in Housing News, Information on the Website that will be updated regularly. Review DCC RTR leaflet and ready for publishing. Publish new list of contractors following Committee approval.

The list of updated contractors has now been approved by Committee, this list will be published in the next edition of Housing News in November 2010 and was also published in last years Housing News. This has also been updated on the website for tenants. As a result, all work on this action item is now complete.

**Item 77:**

**Recommendation: Monitor or report on performance in meeting the requirements for completing qualifying repairs.**

**Action: Performance indicators to be agreed by the Performance Monitoring Group, this will meet monthly and will monitor progress of these indicators. This will then report to the Repairs Management Board. Performance Group meets two weeks before the Board. Reporting framework will be agreed for RTR and reported to Board in October 2009.**

A performance monitoring framework has now been established for the Right to Repair Scheme. Performance indicators and reporting frequencies have all been agreed by the Repairs Management Board. Right to Repair performance indicators have been included within the Performance Report which is presented to the Repairs Management Board monthly and to the Repairs Partnership Board every quarter. In addition, a more detailed report on Right to Repair performance will be reported to the Repairs Management Board on a quarterly basis.

**Item 109:**

**Recommendation: Doesn't monitor requests for review on offers of temporary or permanent homeless accommodation. Information is not given about ombudsman or right to temporary accommodation if required during review process.**

**Action: All requests for review other than those relating to permanent accommodation are dealt with by Homeless Service Unit. No requests for review other than those relating to permanent accommodation were received. The Council will ensure Lettings Centre records any requests for review of permanent offer of accommodation. The numbers and outcomes will be reported to Homeless Services Unit who will collate and report number of all reviews, reason for request and outcome through performance reporting framework.**

**The Council will amend all decision letters to include information on the Scottish Ombudsman. The Right to Request Review leaflet contains information on the right to temporary accommodation but will be redrafted to improve clarity when leaflet stocks require to be replenished. Information on right to temporary accommodation will be added to all letters giving information on the right to request a review.**

An appeals monitor is now in place. New standard letters are in place. A new 'Right to Request a Review of a Homelessness Decision' leaflet has been produced.

**Item 143:**

**Recommendation: Poor communication between different teams.**

**Action: Staff rotation/shadowing scheme to be considered. Improve communication and working relationship between teams. Clarify roles and responsibilities. Examine the relationship of cross teams and develop positive working practices.**

Job Rotation has been completed by students completing the Level 2 CIH which has improved team working and communication.

As part of the Performance and Development Review, staff are being asked to consider Job Shadowing and clarification will be provided on roles and responsibilities.

The department's staff survey in May 2010 has shown improvement in communication. Indicators of job satisfaction in the survey has increased to 57% compared with 50% in the 2007 survey.

"Open House", a housing suggestion scheme, has been implemented along with a Director's Forum for staff to discuss issues with the Director of Housing which is held quarterly.

4.5. Details of progress of items not complete are listed below.

**Item 4:**

**Recommendation: No free-phone facility for letting service.**

**Action: Consider a free phone number for the letting service. Option appraisal to be carried out as part of the Council's corporate strategy for Customer Care.**

A freephone telephone number is to be introduced. This is due to be implemented by November 2010.

**Item 5:**

**Recommendation: Not all of its front line staff is given housing options and advice training.**

**Action: Raise standards of advice and information by developing a training programme for front line staff:**

Homepoint training is 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 front line staff and this is to begin at the end of September 2010.

Management Development Training for Unit Managers and Team Leaders is now complete. Training plans are now being completed as part of the Employee Performance and Development Review Process with a full report on training needs to be produced in November 2010 when the reviews are completed. An Induction Programme for all new recruits has been implemented from 1 July 2010

**Item 6:**

**Recommendation: Common Housing Register to be operational in 2009/10.**

**Action: Implementation of a Common Housing Register (CHR) linked with the development of the Letting IT system to enable implementation of the Council's lettings policy. CHR module is Phase 2 of the IT project.**

A common application form has been designed with the input of housing associations. This was piloted and is now being used by the Housing Department.

The design of the housing department's new letting I.T. system allows housing associations secure access to select applicants from the council's waiting list. This also allows associations to input their property details to select suitable applicants for nominations and section 5 referrals.

The system went live in April 2010. Staff from housing associations have received training on the system between April and July 2010 and all of the local associations are now using the system.

A meeting was held to discuss further progression of a CHR with HA's on 30 August. Further work is underway to explore cost sharing, service level agreements and management arrangements. An option/discussion report will be issued to the Associations in October 2010.

**Item 14:**

**Recommendation: Cancellation for 6 months after 3 offers is restrictive.**

**Action: Policy of suspension after 3 offers to be reviewed.**

**Number of applicants suspended for refusing 3 offers will be analysed and the policy will be evaluated 6 months after the new system is in place.**

The 3 offer rule was reviewed through a report to HBVRG and subsequently to Committee in January 2010. No change to the 3 offer rule was made but it was agreed that this should be subject to further review after 6 months operation of the new letting system (i.e. after September 2010).

**Item 25:**

**Recommendation: The Council does not have a target for what proportion of lets should go to each group (nominations/section 5's) and it does not effectively monitor the performance of RSLs against the agreements.**

**Action: Monitoring framework for nominations will be established.**

- revise the nomination procedures
- agree procedure with HA's
- collect comprehensive data on nominations
- report nomination outcomes
- renegotiate section 5 and nomination targets with HA's

Nomination agreements and associated procedures were agreed with HAs in September 2009.

The target for nominations and section 5 referrals combined is 50% of net lets. Each HA had a target number of lets for section 5 referrals for 2009/2010. In 2008/2009 the target was 225 and HA's let 198 houses through section 5 referral. In 2008/2009 HA's let 218 houses to people nominated by the Council. The total net lets by HA's in 2008/2009 was 794 lets. Therefore the percentage of net lets by HA's going to nominations and section 5 referrals were 52%.

In 2009/10 Housing Associations were set the same targets. For nominations, net lets totalled 677 and 131 nominations were successful. In the same period 198 section 5 referrals were successful. Therefore, the percentage of net lets given to nominations and section 5 referrals totalled 329 or 48.6%.

Regular quarterly reporting of nomination/s5 performance is now available from the letting I.T System and will progress from October 2010

**Item 26:**

**Recommendation:** The Council does not make appointments with tenants to carry out new tenant visits, nor does it consistently monitor its performance in completing new tenant visits.

**Action:** New tenant visits have been built into the new Letting system. At sign up, an appointment will be made with the tenant, and a letter will be sent out to remind the tenant.

**This will generate a reminder for the Housing Officer to visit. A new tenant visit will be carried out for new tenancies within 4-6 weeks of signing tenancy.**

A system is currently in place for new tenant visits and to monitor performance. At sign up, tenants are advised of the New Tenant Visit process. A reminder is generated to the Housing officer to confirm an appointment/visit. A letter is sent to the tenant confirming the appointment. Success rates are monitored and reported to the District Manager.

A revised system has been process mapped and an IT specification developed to automate processes.

**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,

**IT system (Keybook and Rent Contact Centre Systems) to be corrected as there is no manual process which can be introduced for this. Staff to be trained.**

A scoping document has been distributed to the Rent Recovery, Rent Accounting Teams and the Housing Management Team for discussion. A detailed I.T specification is to be developed commencing September 2010, with a target completion date of March 2011.

**Item 34:**

**Recommendation:** The Council does not collect information on tenant satisfaction with its estate management service.

**Action:** Estate Management Survey to be drafted as part of overall review of Housing Dept Surveys. Survey finalised and ready for use and any training required.

**All Surveys/survey methods to be reviewed to ensure the appropriate method are used and the best return is achieved. An annual programme of postal surveys, telephone surveys, focus groups, forums, and tenant led inspections will be agreed through consultation with:**

- Tenants
- Service Managers
- Tenant Participation Officers

Distribution of a stand alone survey on Estate Management has been postponed until 2011 as the comprehensive survey includes questions on estate management. This will be issued to all tenants in November 2010.

Since 2009 Estate walkabouts with staff, tenants, councillors and partner agencies have progressed and issues raised are acted upon.

**Item 37:**

**Recommendation:** Doesn't check tenant's entitlement to HB before perusing legal action. Doesn't carry out financial assessments prior to repayment agreement, doesn't tailor approach to individual tenants needs.

**Action:** We will continue staff training in Welfare Rights. Welfare Rights training to be included as a core competency for rent recovery staff. Supervisor case checks on Court enrolments. Financial Assessment requires an IT solution to interface Housing Department, online pro forma with Welfare Rights poverty index returns to Scottish Government. Phone Coaching training for RRC.

Social Work's Welfare Rights training and phone coach training has been completed. All court enrolments are checked by supervisors. The Welfare Rights referrals process will make it easier (and more routine) to gather information from other sources as well as fostering the promotion of the use of joined up thinking within the Council.

**Item 39:**

**Recommendation:** The Council has a relatively high level of former tenant arrears and has written off substantial amounts of these in the last three years. It reserves the right to pursue FTA's for up to 20 years. The Council told us it will review this when responsibility transfers to its contact centre in 2009.

**Action:** FTA decrees being reviewed. RRC will assess once responsibility transfers to them.

The transfer of the former tenant arrears has been delayed due to IT resources being targeted on other Regulation & Inspection priorities. Currently decrees have a legal lifespan of 20 years therefore it is in the Council's interest to pursue any debts until the decree is no longer valid. This will maximise the value of revenue coming into the Housing Department. Debts not covered by decree will be written off under prescription legislation and cannot be pursued. The collection of former tenant arrears has been reviewed with revised letters and mechanisms being piloted to improve the collection value, this is due to begin in October 2010. Rent Accounting staff have visited Finance Revenues to review systems and approaches to debt recovery.

**Item 40:**

**Recommendation:** Lost rents; it took the Council the average on 71 days to let its empty houses and it let only 13.7% in 4 weeks. This represents a significant deterioration in its performance in 2005/2006, over the same period the national figure improved.

**Action:** A Lean service review of void process will be completed. This will look at changing working practices to speed up the process minimising void times. Experiments identified to look at time taken to relet properties and improve quality of relet process.

A report was taken to the Housing Best Value Review Group outlining the Lean Service Review of the void process in February 2010. Many of the experiments have been implemented through the new relet system.



As a result of the lean review and ongoing improvements identified by the Void Management Group, a number of improvements have been made:

- Weekly contractor meetings take place and Improved communication with DCS has reduced the need for using "awaiting material" codes.
- Suited locks are fitted to properties for easier access to keys for contractors.
- A new re-let squad was introduced 16 August 2010.
- A new letting standard in consultation with RTO's and other key stakeholders has been implemented in August 2010.
- A Decoration standard has been implemented to improve the quality of relets.

Gaining access for pre termination visits is difficult, but efforts continue to be made to increase the numbers of tenancies where access is gained.

We expect to see significant change in performance once the new relet system is bedded in. Changes in definitions of low demand and non low demand stock will improve the accuracy of stock numbers in each category that we report as SPIs.

**Item 44:**

**Recommendation: No relet standard and review relet expenditure. The standard of re-let is poor and 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 will be 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.

A summary leaflet for prospective tenants is to be produced by the East District Housing Manager.

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 46:**

**Recommendation:**

**No strategy for difficult to let houses - "readily available" not being used. Council to re-introduce advertising and decommission low demand sheltered housing.**

**Action: Void management process is being reviewed in a lean service review and as a result of the review the following action is being taken: IT print kb 82 will identify "available now" houses earlier for let. "Available Now" list of sheltered and mainstream and decommissioned properties can now be accessed by tenants on internet, at district office and by telephone. Advertising of sheltered properties has commenced. If there is no interest in sheltered properties after they have been advertised, they are now being decommissioned.**

A comprehensive strategy for houses which are difficult to let has been drafted in September 2010. 'Available now' is one element of our strategy for difficult to let houses. Prospective tenants are aware of low demand sheltered vacancies through advertising. All 'available now' houses are being advertised online and in district offices.

A sheltered show flat has been piloted to generate interest and a display at our recent Tenant Fayre raised awareness of sheltered properties.

A Service Improvement Team consisting of officers and tenants is currently looking at developing an overall strategy for housing options for older people. It is due to report its findings in December 2010

Advertising on buses is currently being costed so a report can be taken to the Management Team.

Sheltered properties are being decommissioned. Decommissioning procedures are currently being updated to reflect the new IT system.

#### **Item 47:**

**Recommendation: No consolidated Asset Management Strategy**

**Action: Complete the current SHQS root and branch review. Devise risk management assessment. Re-submit SHQS standard delivery plan to Scottish Housing Regulator. Develop asset management strategy document.**

The SHQS root and branch review has been completed and approved by Committee in August 2010. A risk management matrix has been developed to manage the risks associated in meeting the SHQS. This is updated quarterly and monitored by the SHQS project board.

The Council will submit the updated SHQS standard delivery plan to the SHR in 2011 as required. The asset management plan will be developed in tandem with full submission of SHQS update to Scottish Government.

#### **Item 52:**

**Recommendation: The Council's reliance on information cloned across similar house types to cover the remaining 70% of the stock is a risk. The Council has no other firm plans to increase the coverage of its stock condition information.**

**Action: Stock condition data is updated on completion of contracts on the stock information database. In excess of 1500 properties will be updated per annum. An IT brief will be completed on links to corporate systems.**

The Stock Information Database is continually updated from roof and roughcast surveys, External cyclical maintenance work, heating, kitchen, bathroom programme surveys and replacements along with all other work completed.

The Council is currently considering a proposal for validation and additional survey work to boost stock information.

**Item 54:**

**Recommendation: The Council has not been effective in projecting spend to meet programme targets in each of the last 3 years.**

**Action: Capital spend is monitored on monthly basis by the Housing Capital Monitoring Team. The partnering framework is moving towards more predictable cost by the development of unit rates.**

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital spend is monitored monthly by the Housing Capital Investment Management Team and adjustments made to ensure that projected overall spend at year end is within acceptable parameters. HRA capital spend and variances are reported to Policy and Resources Committee each month. Housing capital spend is reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on a monthly basis detailing current forecasted spend versus budget and detailing any variances to budget. The SHQS project board also monitors this process at its quarterly meetings.

Unit rate pilots on 2 contracts have been completed and evaluation due in October 2010.

**Item 56:**

**Recommendation: Cyclical maintenance programme does not focus on areas where work most needed - a review of the approach is being undertaken.**

**Action: Cyclical maintenance review group set up -**

- **Look at priorities**
- **Stock info database**
- **Review the operation of cyclical maintenance to highlight critical maintenance items on a shorter cycle**
- **Re-evaluate developments in the City to provide larger contracts and hence improved value for money.**

The multi disciplinary External Cyclical Maintenance Review Group has been set up to review policy and procedures. Improvements implemented are the introduction of larger 'super developments' and increasing resource allocation to the ECM programme.

The action plan informing the priorities for the review which is ongoing includes work streams on:

- value for money
- quality assurance
- differentiation in work cycles
- lifecycles
- scope of work

**Item 67:**

**Recommendation: Asbestos - The Council has not surveyed all common areas of its housing, but plans to ensure it has this done by 2010.**

**Action: A common areas survey programme is underway, linked with ongoing external cyclical maintenance (ECM) programmes as well as stand alone surveys. Proactive surveys in areas where it is suspected that asbestos exists.**

Surveys are carried out as part of the ECM and Controlled Entry Programme. Common area surveys are also underway in targeted areas. The common areas survey is 60% complete and relevant data cloning is under development.

**Item 74:**

**Recommendation:** Advise tenants of their right to compensation or pay this when it has not carried out qualifying repairs in the statutory timescale.

**Action:** Advise tenants over the phone or in person when reporting their repair of their rights. This will be followed up with a receipt in the post with the tenant's rights and all relevant information. IT specification to be drawn up for changes to system to allow reports etc to be generated. Weekly reports will be generated to show repairs that have missed their target timescale. Agree exceptions to scheme e.g. weather conditions, where specialist parts are required, under warranty to contractor. Compensation paid to tenants where required. A 20% sample of all calls to Repairs Centre will be monitored to ensure staff provide information required. Will investigate the feasibility of introducing appropriate telephone technology into the District Offices and the Out of Hours Service to audit a similar sample of calls at these locations.

Exceptions to the Right to Repair Scheme have been agreed by the Repairs Management Board. Since September 2009 weekly reports have been produced showing qualifying repairs that have missed their target timescales. Also, compensation has been paid to tenants from that date. The I.T. specification for the computerisation of the Right to Repair Scheme will be complete by the end of September 2010, with receipts able to be issued by November 2010, as per the It project plan. In the meantime refresher training was delivered to the staff at the repairs centre on 16 September 2010.

As part of the Employee Performance and Development Review process a sample of all calls will be checked to ensure accuracy of information given by Advisers.

**Item 76:**

**Recommendation:** Provide tenants with written confirmation of their rights when reporting qualifying repairs.

**Action:** Receipts to be issued for all qualifying repair

The I.T. specification for the computerisation of the Right to Repair Scheme will be finalised by the end of September 2010. As a result it will then be possible to have receipts for a qualifying repairs issued by November 2010 as detailed in the IT project plan.

**Item 80:**

**Recommendation:** We found no evidence that the Council had formally considered alternative contractor options for the procurement of its maintenance service or tested if it represents value for money.

**Action:** Direct comparison with private sector providers has been made, compared with other benchmarks (APSE). The procurement policy was reported to Housing Committee on 1 July 2009. Developing a procurement model for future partnering. Market testing across range of contracts by tender. Establish method to benchmark costs against peers.

The procurement policy was approved by Committee in June 2009. The procurement policy sets out partnering framework arrangements.

Market testing is completed annually for the HRA capital programme. Benchmarking spreadsheets are being produced and enquiries made via the SHBVN network. Approaches have been made to other Councils. There is difficulty in obtaining relevant benchmarking information.

Kitchen and bathroom contracts to assess efficacy of unit rates have been completed on site and evaluation is underway due for completion in October 2010.

Supply chain partnerships are in place with Worcester Bosch for gas central heating boilers and further supply chain partnerships now put in place for kitchens to ensure quality and value for money.

We are reviewing the required level of service provision in relation to the various programmes and have identified areas where it may be possible to obtain improved value for money.

**Item 82:**

**Recommendation: Increasing proportions of response repairs as emergencies - It has not analysed the reasons for this nor does it have clear plans in place to address this.**

**Action: The following options will be investigated to look at the reason for the number of emergency repairs: Training and induction for staff will be investigated to ensure staff are correctly informed on what is an emergency. Repeat repairs are also being investigated and work carried out to ensure repair is repaired at the first visit where possible. Repairs Development Group is also looking at what the Department currently classes as an emergency and reviewing this list. The Group also has involvement from tenants.**

A review of the Repairs Partnership Agreement was progressed in 2008/9 with the assistance of Avante consultants. Within the review emergency repairs were examined. The conclusion of this review was that there should be no change to the emergency repair categories. Service users were consulted in February 2009 and were in agreement. As a result, the original actions contained within the Improvement Plan are complete. However, since that decision was taken, circumstances have dictated that the Repairs Management Board look to achieving efficiency savings across the repairs service. As a result it has been agreed to revisit the issue of the level of repairs processed as emergencies. A report outlining the findings of this further examination is to be presented to Repairs Management Board by the end of the current financial year.

**Item 83:**

**Recommendation: No firm plans to reduce number of repairs cancelled due to no access. The Council does not monitor on the number of repairs it varies.**

**Action: The option of contacting tenants by telephone or letter will be investigated before repair is cancelled to establish whether repair is still required.**

The Performance Sub Group has reported to the Repairs Management Board on the variance between committed and billed costs. It was intended that control limits would be set and this would be reported to future Management Board meetings. However, since then there have been some significant changes both in presentation/format and content of what is now reported to the Repairs Management Board by way of performance.

The Performance Sub Group is now revisiting this to ensure that this information can be reported in the new format. A proposal on how this will be done will go to the Repairs Management Board in November 2010.

**Item 85:**

**Recommendation:** Lack of knowledge about corporate procurement strategy & strategy unclear about procurement for housing assets and maintenance. It is not embedded throughout its operations and that staff awareness of it across the Council's services is limited.

**Action:** HRA Capital programmes procured under Council Partnering Framework. Update HRA capital works procurement processes under the partnership agreement. Increase % of programme subject to market testing and examine mechanisms for benchmarking. Corporate procurement team does not currently have a role in procurement of HRA capital works. Work with Corporate procurement team as role develops. Arrange training for appropriate staff. For repairs and maintenance the Repairs Partnership Agreement is based around cost, quality, efficiency and value for money.

HRA capital procurement is carried out in line with the procurement policy. Annual market testing is completed. Discussions have been held with the Corporate Procurement Team and Architectural Services on relevant links in procurement of the HRA capital programme. The follow up on the McClelland agenda has not moved into the sphere of capital programme procurement. We will continue to monitor developments.

**Item 86:**

**Recommendation:** Council held little information to demonstrate how or why contractors or partners successful in procurement exercises, lack of evidence of best value - significant weakness.

**Action:** Procurement cluster as part of partnering framework will look at: Procurement policy, Audit trails, Transparency, Option appraisals to Committee, Pilot new selection process. Develop a system of unit rates linked to capital works to ensure best value and predictability for forward planning.

The Procurement Policy was approved in June 2010. There are audit trails and contract justifications in place to ensure transparency in work allocation. Option appraisal mechanisms have been developed and implemented. Contracts to pilot unit rates have been completed in 2010 and an evaluation will be completed for October 2010.

**Item 94:**

**Recommendation:** Council does not effectively monitor or fully evaluate contribution of these (partnership projects) in the context of increase in applications.

**Action:** We will produce an annual monitoring and evaluation report covering all Council funded partner projects. The findings of this exercise will be reported to HDMT.

Monitoring and evaluation information is being collected. Reports are to be produced annually and submitted to the Housing Department Management Team. An initial evaluation report is due in October 2010.

**Item 96:**

**Recommendation: Does not routinely monitor tenancy sustainment levels - a major weakness.**

**Action: Homeless tenancies to be included in monitor of all Council tenancies and reviewed on a quarterly basis to identify any trends in tenancy breakdown. Tenancy sustainment information to be gathered from RSLs and reviewed annually.**

Figures were produced for the year end for all tenancies that were reported as part of the Statutory Performance Indicators.

A detailed specification for gathering tenancy sustainability levels has been discussed with IT to produce quarterly and annual figures. This will identify trends and vulnerable groups. This work is presently under development. The East District Manager is to have a short term working group to oversee the process and analyse outcome information.

**Item 97:**

**Recommendation: The Council told us it thought its reported figures on repeat homelessness were an underestimate.**

**Action: IT system to be fit for purpose and reported HL1 information is accurate. First phase of this work is to introduce a web based Homelessness IT system which will ensure that information which was missing through the previous system is captured and reported through the HL1.**

Phase 1 of system now complete and HL1 information is now accurate, Scottish Government error reports now greatly reduced. Phase 2 IT development work has commenced.

One item is still to be finalised to link with the mainstream application form. This is to be completed as part of the IT development. Broad specifications were developed by Team Leaders on the 5 March for IT. Meetings were also held with Team Leader to discuss further. On site work started August with prevention staff to facilitate development of detailed specification, this has also involved work shadowing with the Prevention team, as well as the first of a series of meetings between the team and IT in September 2010. Further meetings are proposed for October.

**Item 99:**

**Recommendation: We also found the Councils housing management teams do not refer tenants it intends to evict to its homeless service. This is an area of significant weakness.**

**Action: Referral processes are to be reviewed and training delivered to area office staff and housing association partners.**

A referral system is in place with the Rent Recovery Centre (RRC) from July 2009. Weekly lists of tenants enrolled in court are being sent to the Prevention Team Leader by RRC Supervisor. The system is to be computerised as part of RRC ongoing IT development.

**Item 101:**

**Recommendation: The Council told us that it has serious concerns about the accuracy of some of the figures it reported in the past. The Scottish Government reported that the Council had been unable to supply it with some information. The council's patterns of assessment decisions are distinctly different to national figures.**

**Action: Report acknowledges that 2007-08 figures are correct and phase 1 of new IT system now in place to improve accuracy of figures. Further IT system development to be carried out to ensure all reported information is accurate.**

Phase 1 of the Homeless IT system is in place, HL1 information is accurate and all required Scottish Government information now submitted.

Further system development is to be carried out. We are now confident that HL1 information is accurate and assessment patterns are in line with national trends. One item still to be finalised is to create link with the mainstream application form. This is to be completed as part of IT development.

Distinctions drawn between those assessed as 'homeless' and those assessed as 'threatened with homelessness' have now been addressed through staff guidance and training.

**Item 110:**

**Recommendation: Not able to give reliable information on level or use of temp' accommodation (including partners) and time spent. Undermines confidence in B&B figures.**

**Action: The Council will develop its IT system to record when and where placements are being made in the voluntary sector. The Council will also monitor the number of placements and average length of stay in individual agency accommodation to assess the demand and throughput in all forms of temporary accommodation. Until further IT development time arranged existing IT will be used to record temporary accommodation placement. Negotiations with temporary accommodation providers to use the IT system will be completed.**

Our computer system shows voluntary sector accommodation on the system, to comply with HL2 requirements.

**Item 112:**

**Recommendations: Lack of comprehensive and robust monitoring of temporary accommodation is a major weakness.**

**Action: Develop IT system and monitors. Following full implementation of Homeless Services Unit restructure responsibly for placement of clients and recording of placements will be with the Temporary Accommodation Team.**

Our computer system shows voluntary sector accommodation on the system, to comply with HL2 requirements.

**Item 113:**

**Recommendations: 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 report 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 for the last two months have been analysed and reported to the City Housing Manager.

**Item 114:**

**Recommendation: No overall control of s5 and nominations to set targets, priorities and no monitoring**

**Action: The Council will move towards the Letting Centre making all S5 referrals and nomination to RSLs thereby standardising the process and having overall control of RSL target lets.**

Revised Nominations and Section 5 agreements have been signed with all partner HAs. Quarterly liaison meetings are held by the Homeless Strategy Team Leader and the Letting Centre Team Leader to discuss operational issues. The letting IT system is in place for HAs to standardise processes, gather performance data, and to set and allocate quotas/targets for nominations and section 5 referrals. The IT system will produce monthly figures relating to the numbers of lets made from October 2010.

**Item 117:**

**Recommendation: The Council had previously identified a number of weaknesses in its service delivery we highlight in this report, but it has failed to drive improvements in spite of this awareness. We saw a real disconnect between its strategic improvement work and its operational work.**

**Action: A Programme of Lean Service Reviews will be implemented and informed by the Service Assessment Programme.**

Lean service reviews are one way in which the Department seeks to review and improve service delivery. The voids lean service review has led to the implementation of a revised re-let standard, the introduction of a re-let team within DCS to improve the delivery of repairs to void properties, a new re-let standard and an improved standard of redecoration in re-lets. Lean service reviews in the kitchen and bathroom programme have led to the introduction of new supply chain partnerships e.g. for gas boilers and kitchen units. The Department has driven change in delivering the new Lettings IT system to support the introduction of the new allocations policy as well as introducing a new policy and associated procedures for the management of gas safety.

**Item 121:**

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

**Action: Ensure that all 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 122:**

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

**Action:** Conduct a Training and Development Review of all staff together with skills audit.

**Review of training database has been completed; update information on training needs and planned training will be taken from performance and development system being implemented in April 2010 and due to complete June 2010. CIH Level 2 successfully completed with 14 members of staff, the second class is due to complete June 2010. Unit Managers/Team Leaders.**

A review of the Training Database was completed. As part of the employee performance and development reviews training needs are identified and included in the plan which link to objectives and competencies. These will be consolidated into a training plan which will be communicated to staff. This is due to be completed November 2010. Level 2 CIH was introduced with 27 completing this qualification and further staff have been identified to take part in future courses.

Management Development Training was provided to Unit Managers and Team Leaders to develop skills and provide support to facilitate implementing change within the department.

**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 (Staff survey).

**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 Road Shows 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.

Staff Awards Scheme has been implemented and is presented at our annual conference and is based around different categories.

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.

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 130:**

**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:**

**Stock Information Database**

Proposals and Procedures for the administration of the Stock Information Database have been agreed with Internal Audit. Further input of real data to previously cloned addresses will continue to improve the overall accuracy of the database.

**Item 132:**

**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: Homeless System.**

This Item is to be addressed through Homeless IT system. IT development commenced in April 2010.

It is proposed that the Homeless Strategy Team have the ability to obtain and analyse HL1 figures prior to submission to the Scottish Government. This will ensure that performance information is accurate.

**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 5 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 134:**

**Recommendation: Monitoring and reporting on service standards to be implemented.**

**Action: Service Standards to be reviewed through Focus Groups and appropriate methods of measurement to be implemented. Publish our standards in a SMART format. Review existing standards. Develop new SMART standards. Set up system to report performance of standards.**

Service standards have been reviewed and subject to consultation with tenants during July and August. Standards are now expected to be published in November 2010.

**Item 137:**

**Recommendation: Tenant groups generally unhappy with council's approach to consultation and participation - too much reliance on DFTA.**

**Action: A revised Tenant Participation Strategy which addresses issues raised in the Peer Review and Inspection has been agreed by the Council. Implementation of this will be overseen by a group of key housing staff and tenants' representatives. The strategy includes:**

**A consultation strategy which timetables major consultation events.**

**An annual survey of tenants groups to gauge satisfaction with our approach to tenant participation.**

**At least one tenant led inspection per year.**

**A minimum of two Area forum meetings per year.**

**Annual consultation on Rent and Service Charges.**

**Production of a Code of Practice on Communication with umbrella groups, tenant organisations, individual tenants.**

**Joint assessment of resources required for RTOs and training plan for tenants and RTOs.**

**Tenant Open Day and Forum and minimum of 2 Tenant Bulletins published per year.**

**Quarterly meetings between Director, Management Team and DFTA.**

**Set up of Senior Staff/ Tenants' Reps monitoring Group.**

**Review of Strategy.**

Survey results in 2008/2009 displayed 90% satisfaction from RTO's to our approach to participation. In 2009/10 satisfaction fell to 83%. This was reported to the Tenant Participation Strategy Monitoring Group and actions to address the concerns raised were agreed.

A Tenant led inspections in Relets and in estate management have been completed. A Tenant led inspection of Advice and Information Teams has started in October.

A Tenant Fayre was held in July 2009 and August 2010, the latter jointly with Housing Associations. A tenants meeting on rent consultation was held December 2009.

A Code of practice for communication with umbrella groups was completed in 2009 and it has been agreed with the Tenant Participation Strategy Monitoring Group that all codes of practice will be incorporated into the Tenant Participation Strategy at its review in 2010.

Assessment of resources for RTO's was completed as part of rent consultation in 2009. This will be reviewed in 2010.

A tenant's training plan has been drafted and will be published in October 2010.

A Consultation Strategy was completed in 2008 and this is to be reviewed in September 2010.

**Item 139:**

**Recommendation: Complaints system good but examples of where there were poor responses to complaints, and offered little information or assistance to help address the concerns of the complainants.**

**Action: Complaints which proceed to stage 2 are recorded in the performance management framework. A report on an audit of complaints was made to Housing Department Management in May 2010. This will be repeated in September 2010.**

Improvements have been made to the corporate complaints system which allows for better analysis. The system includes online guidance and help. Complaints which proceed to stage 2 are recorded in the performance management framework.

A report on an audit of complaints was made to Housing Department Management in May 2010. This report recommended a number of improvements for complaint handling. Another Complaints Audit will be repeated in October 2010.

**Item 141:**

**Recommendation: Staff were reluctant to provide information or help to get info 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 front line 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 144:**

**Recommendation: Weaknesses in SHQS Delivery plan and repair/investment programmes don't demonstrate value for money.**

**Action: Review our SHQS Delivery Plan. The Review will demonstrate value for money and include risk assessment/option appraisal to plan for contingencies.**

A review of the SHQS standard delivery plan has been completed, reported to Committee and approved in August 2010. The SHQS Project Board meets quarterly and a risk management matrix has been developed.

A new procurement policy was approved in June 2009. The policy outlines the partnering arrangements used by the Council, market testing and value for money arrangements. Records are maintained for capital contract allocations. Further work is currently being finalised on developing unit rates. There are difficulties in obtaining appropriate benchmarking information and the Department is continually seeking to improve the information it can obtain for this purpose through benchmarking clubs and from other relevant organisations.

The Department seeks through the processes above and through annual budget and rent increase setting to drive efficiencies through the Department by focusing on reviewing costs in line with service delivery priorities.

**Item 146:**

**Recommendation: Generally poor service outcomes and variable levels of satisfaction. No clearly articulated VFM or efficiencies strategy for the housing service.**

**Action: Improvements in service outcomes are planned by the actions outlined within the improvement plan and Department Service Plans. Value for money and Efficiencies Strategy - a working group to be set up to investigate the scope and outputs of such a strategy. This to be built into the department's service planning framework.**

Service Plans and Unit Plans have been completed. Actions and Performance indicators are reported monthly or quarterly. Service Improvement Teams have been developed to review specific services/operations in the housing team.

Value for Money and Efficiencies Groups have been set up for SHQS programme focusing on unit rates and market testing. Benchmarking work is also underway and includes services provided by architects.

Efficiency Statement has still to be prepared to collate savings in all units. This is due to be implemented in December 2010.

**Item 147:**

**Recommendation: The Council 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. The review will demonstrate best value and include 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.

**Item 149:**

**Recommendation: Council cannot demonstrate a focus on VFM in procurement for repairs or investment.**

**Action: Value for money and Efficiencies Strategy - a working group to be set up to investigate the scope and outputs of such a strategy. This to be built into the department's service planning framework.**

Service improvement teams have been set up to look at key areas part of this includes value for money. Housing Investment Unit has been completing work on unit rates, marketing testing and benchmarking to establish VFM. Repairs partnership performance report has been reviewed and is going to include target and benchmarking information. Efficiency Statement has still to be prepared to collate savings in all units. This is due to be implemented in December 2010.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environment Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Assessment.
- 5.2. There are no major issues.

## **6. CONSULTATIONS**

- 6.1. The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director of Finance, Assistant Chief Executive and all other Chief Officers and the Housing Best Value Review Group have been consulted in the preparation of this report. No concerns were expressed.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1. None.

**ELAINE ZWIRLEIN**  
**DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**OCTOBER 2010**