REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE - 13 FEBRUARY 2012

REPORT ON: HOUSING DEPARTMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 66-2012

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

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

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1. It is recommended that Committee note the progress on the implementation of the Improvement Plan up to the end of November 2011 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**

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. The matrix attached at Appendix 1 to this report identifies progress up to the end of November 2011. By August 2011, 138 items had been completed and, as reported in September 2011, work has continued on the other items. A further 4 items have been completed since the last update to Committee on 12 September 2011, bringing the number of items completed to 142. These items are highlighted in pale grey shading within the matrix.

4.2. A summary of items completed since the last report follows:

- Item 69 Introduction of a Repairs Appointments System - an appointment scheme is in place.
- Item 99 Referrals of tenants at risk of eviction to Homeless Service - systems are in place so that referrals can be made at any stage in the process.
- Item 117 Failure to Drive Improvements - the Department has adopted lean service reviews, tenant led inspections and has introduced service improvement teams as mechanisms for driving service improvements.
- Item 139 Complaints - A combined audit of complaints and reinforcement and complaint handling good practice is being continued until improvement is maintained.

4.3.   Work is underway to complete the remaining 7 actions and completion dates are included in Appendix 1.

5.   **CONSULTATIONS**

5.1.   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.

6.   **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1.   This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

7.   **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1.   None.

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DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

JANUARY 2012

APPENDIX 1

	What the SHR said	Key Actions/ Milestones	Timescale	Key Outputs/Evidence	Update
6	4.7 CHR to be operational in 2009/10.	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. • Road test the design wording of the Common Housing application form with tenants/tenants groups/ RSLs and other interested parties. • New letting I.T system will incorporate a secure web based link available to HA's to access the housing waiting list for nominations and Section 5 referrals. • Develop Performance reports. • Deliver training to housing dept staff and RSLs staff for prospects advice, nominations and section 5 referrals.	Complete June 2009 IT system to be completed by November 2009 Management Info to be programmed January 2010. Commencing 12th October, completing 15th December	An agreed common application form. An operational letting IT system and web enabled common housing register A reporting framework agreed with local HA's. Completion of training and evaluation of effectiveness.	A common application form has been designed with the input of housing associations and has now been implemented. 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. Staff from housing associations have received training on the system. The IT platform is in place provides the basis for the development of a CHR with our RSL partners. We are now progressing a pilot with Hillcrest Housing Association. Hillcrest have agreed to adopt the Council's letting policy during the pilot which will progress in February 2012 for 6 months. Other Housing Associations may then incrementally join.
36	4.51 Arrears process doesn't identify people at risk at an early stage, few referrals to homeless service and specialist advice.	Referral procedures to Welfare Rights are to be reviewed, Staff to be trained. Referral process to be embedded in Rent Recovery I.C.T system - Housing Support Team/ Homeless Services Unit/ Welfare Rights	November 2008 Annual refresher July 2009 November 2008	Reviewed procedures. Trained staff. Updated IT System. Welfare Rights procedures are being actively reviewed with the IT specifications case	Staff are aware of the importance of the tenancy sign up process to identify tenants who may be vulnerable. New tenant visits can be arranged at an early date to pick up any problems. Officers can make referrals at any stage in the rent arrears process. A closer working relationship is being developed with the Welfare Rights team to assist tenants who are in arrears. Mandatory referrals are made at court enrolment. At this stage referrals will also be made to the homeless prevention team and housing support team. A suite of

		Team. Mandatory referral at NOP and Court stages. Also optional referral available at any other stage. Outcomes measurable within IT system and annually the profile of tenants at risk will be reviewed to inform us where our support needs to be concentrated	Report May 2009	referral to provide outcome results. Report to HDMT	performance management reports have been developed to help target rent arrears action. To improve our performance, we aim to improve profiling of tenants in arrears to help us determine where best to concentrate our resources in order to prevent arrears arising or to minimise arrears. This is to be dealt with within a rent recovery action plan. A Lean Service Review has been completed prior to the SHR coming on site. The Rent Recovery Action Plan has now been devised for implementation.
38	4.52 The Council plans to develop its ITC system to automatically refer tenants in arrears to its welfare rights and housing support teams.	Refer to item 37.	Refer to item 37.	Refer to item 37.	Refer to items 36 and 37. To be dealt with within rent recovery action plan.
52	5.10 Its reliance on information cloned across similar house types to cover the remaining 70% is a risk … but has no other firm plans to increase the coverage of its stock condition information.	Stock condition data is updated on completion of contracts on stock info database. In excess on 1500 properties will be updated per annum. IT brief completed on links to corporate systems. Carry out further stock condition surveys on cloned stocks.	Annually updated. March 2010 Proposal March 2010	Report to SHQS project board on number of surveyed properties - April 2010 and annually thereafter. Brief produced Report to committee on proposals - February. 2010	The stock information database is continually updated from roof roughcast surveys, ECM work, heating, kitchen, bathroom programme surveys and replacements along with all other work completed. Internal surveying resources have been identified to undertake additional survey work for external areas. Target for survey completion is March 2012.
69	5.30 The Council does not operate a formal appointment system. Does not monitor its performance in keeping appointments.	Explore options of appointment systems. Consult other Local Authorities to obtain relevant information re appointment systems Report to Repairs Management Board on options of appointments system. Once options have been agreed consultation with tenants. Options report to Repairs Management Board will also take into account DCS current rolling	 December 2010 December 2010 July 2011 December 2010	Reduction in the number of no accesses. More effective planning of work.	A Report was considered by the Repairs management Board in September 2011. An appointment system in place for gas safety checks and this system is extremely effective. Appointments are not made for emergencies. Appointments and access arrangements are made within the system for routine repairs. We now have a repairs appointments scheme, as confirmed by the Repairs Mgt Board prior to the SHR inspection, and this is publicised on the website **Complete**

		out of mobile working for tradesmen.			
82	5.41 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.	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.	March 2010	Clearer guidance for staff. Jobs repaired correctly at first visit. Clear, agreed guidance on what is classed as an emergency.	This item is being progressed as part of the Changing for the Future Programme.
94	6.17 Council does not effectively monitor or fully evaluate contribution of these (partnership projects) in the context of increase in applications.	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.	June 2010	Annual monitoring report to HDMT.	The Homeless Strategy (which details partnering arrangements with the voluntary sector) is due for review and will be reviewed within the context of the Local Housing Strategy. Supporting People Service Reviews evaluate many of these partners against their contracts for providing support. These reviews are reported to the Supporting People Management Team (Social Work, Housing and Finance). An evaluation of partner projects has been undertaken and a report is being finalised for reporting to HDMT by February 2012.
99	6.21 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.	Referral processes are to be reviewed and training delivered to area office staff and housing association partners. Manual referral - RRC Supervisor. Mandatory IT system referral. Include Rent Recovery Team in	November 2009 November 2008 July 2009 Prevention Team	Referral System in place.	An automatic referral system to welfare rights is in place with the Rent Recovery Centre (RRC) and referrals can be made at any stage in the process. A manual referral process between Rent Recovery and Homeless Services is now in place and it remains our intention to automate referrals based on the new IT process recently introduced for Welfare Rights referrals. **Complete**

		Section 11 arrangements and identify appropriate referral point to allow early intervention. Referrals to be actioned by the Homeless Prevention Team.	in place July 2009. Referral system to be agreed and in place August 2009.		
117	7.3 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.	Refer to item 116. A Programme of Lean Service Reviews will be implemented and informed by the Service Assessment Programme. Lean Service Reviews have already commenced for: • Right to Buy • Kitchen and Bathroom Programme • Void Management	Complete October 2008, reviewed October 2009 January 2010 September 2009	Report to Best Value Committee/Improvement and Efficiency Board Report to Best Value /Improvement and Efficiency Board	A Lean Service Review of the Right to Buy process has been completed and this has resulted in reduction in the time taken to process an application 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 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. Further work on this was carried forward by the Voids Review Group. 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 A PSIF exercise with the Repairs Partnership has been completed and an action plan prepared. Item covered by ongoing approach of SITs/lean service reviews etc. **Complete**
134	7.10 Monitoring and reporting on service standards to be implemented.	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	Commencing December 2009, Completion in April 2010	Revised service standards. Monitoring framework in place. Performance against service standards will be reported through the key results to HDMT monthly. Tenants will be informed through the annual report.	Service standards have been reviewed in consultation with tenants in 2010. Service Standards are published on the Council's website and posters. Implementation of service standards is being measured and monitored through customer satisfaction surveys and other indicators within the department's performance framework. A report on performance against the revised standards will be issued by February 2012.

| 139 | 7.21 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. | Complaint responses to be reviewed by a sample audit by Quality and Performance Unit. Outcomes to be fed into annual performance Report and Performance Management Framework.

Provide a robust complaints system:
• Develop guidelines for responding to complaints
• Carry out annual analysis of responses to complaints | 2008/9 Review to be completed in June 2009.

Exercise to be done annually thereafter | Outcomes published.

Complaints guidelines.

Annual analysis. | Improvements have been made to the corporate complaints system which allows for better analysis. The system includes online guidance and help. All complaints are reported in the performance management framework.

Audits of complaints are now completed monthly. Training for staff has been implemented and will be regularly refreshed

Complete |

Note: LPT - Letting Project Team
HDMT - Housing Department Management Team
BVRG - Best Value Review Group
CHR - Common Housing Register
DCS - Dundee Contract Services
RTO - Registered Tenants Organisation
SHBVN - Scottish Housing Best Value Network
SHQS - Scottish Housing Quality Standard
VFM - Value for Money