
REPORT TO:	COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM:	6 (a)
DATE OF MEETING:	26 NOVEMBER 2001	CATEGORY:	
REPORT FROM:	HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN PARAGRAPH NO:	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	SANDRA WHILES	DOC:	
SUBJECT:	BEST VALUE REVIEW –HOUSING SERVICES	REF:	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL		

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To advise Members of the progress made with the Best Value Review of Housing Services.

2.0 Content

2.1 A meeting was held with the Best Value Housing Inspector, Domini Gunn-Peim on 16 October 2001 to discuss the scope for this review.

2.2 The original intention of this review was to cover both the strategic housing and housing landlord functions. However, the Inspector recognises that the organisation does not have the capacity to effectively carry out such a large review by the original timescale of September 2002. Therefore, with the Inspector's agreement it is proposed that there be two separate Housing reviews.

2.3 Review one – Strategic Housing to include:

- Strategic Housing – assessing housing needs, supporting sustainable home ownership, raising the quality of social housing, increasing the availability of affordable housing, dealing with social exclusion.
- Private Sector Housing – supporting a strong and high quality private rented sector, administering housing grants, dealing with empty homes, home energy conservation.
- Homelessness and Housing Advice – strengthening protection for the homeless.
- Housing Allocations and Housing Register – promoting choice through lettings.

This review will build on and incorporate issues from the early work on the strategic housing review that was postponed in February 2001. These include:

- Working with partners.
- Methods for procuring maintenance of the Council's housing stock
- Consultation
- Gathering and analysing housing needs information
- Options for the future of the Council's housing stock.

2.4 Review two – Housing Landlord and Tenant Service functions to include:

- Repairs and maintenance (including procurement/delivery methods)
- Tenancy Management (including rent arrears and neighbour disputes)
- Tenant Participation
- Sheltered Housing.

This review will build on and incorporate issues from the previous Sheltered Housing Best Value Review and Inspection and will start late 2002.

2.5 The timetable for the Strategic review is to complete by November 2002. An initial project plan is attached at Annexe A.

2.6 A review team has been set up comprising of staff, stakeholders, tenants and members. A small Steering Group of Officers has also been set up with the responsibility for planning and co-ordinating the Review Team and providing information to the team.

2.7 The Steering Group meets fortnightly and the Review Team monthly. At the first Review Team meeting training needs and the scope of the review were discussed. Any further progress achieved prior to 26 November will be reported at the Committee meeting.

2.8 To compliment the Best Value review work it is proposed that a group be set up to develop the HRA Business Plan. It is intended that this group comprises of the Chair of Community Services plus three other Members, four members from TACT, the Head of Community Services, the Housing Services Manager, Housing Special Projects Officer, Building Maintenance Manager and the Tenant Participation Officer.

2.9 The proposed terms of reference for this group are to agree objectives for the Housing Services and examine and appraise the options available to the council to meet these objectives.

2.10 An initial project plan for this group is detailed in annexe C.

3.0 Financial Implications

3.1 None

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 Members are asked to approved

- Two separate reviews for Housing Services – Review One: Strategic Housing and Review Two: Housing Landlord and Tenants Services Functions.
- Setting up of a group to develop the HRA Business Plan.

