
REPORT TO:	Housing and Community Services Committee	AGENDA ITEM:	9
DATE OF MEETING:	18 th November 2004	CATEGORY:	Delegated
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	OPEN	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Bob Ledger (ext 5775)	DOC:	
SUBJECT:	Developing the role of member involvement in Housing Management	REF:	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE:	HCS01

1. Recommendation and purpose of report

- 1.1 To approve the establishment of a member working group to assist in both the preparation for the Audit Commission inspection, the formal process of which starts next March and culminates in the inspection on site next June, and the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) Business Plan.

2. Detail

- 2.1 The delivery of Council Services is subject to external inspection by the Audit Commission. The housing services delivered by Councils and RSLs (Registered Social Landlords – mainly Housing Associations) are subject to specific and additional inspection through the Commission i.e. there is a housing inspectorate within the Commission. The Audit Commission have stated that they have programmed an inspection of our Housing Service and specifically our Repairs and Maintenance function in June 2005. The formal part of the process will commence in March 2005 when we will be required to submit copies of policy, practice and performance documents.
- 2.2 The Audit Commission summarise their findings through awarding stars from 0 (poor) to 3 (very good) and by stating how likely the housing organisation is to improve in the future. Some members will recall that the last Audit Commission inspection focussed on the Sheltered Housing Service. This originally took place in 2001 where no stars were awarded and was reinspected the following year where 1 star was awarded and the authority was assessed as having promising prospects for improvement.
- 2.3 The Audit Commission has a detailed matrix which it uses to assess services but have already additionally stated that they will be emphasising on the forthcoming inspection issues of value for money and governance.

2.4 Against this latter point it is proposed that a member monitoring group be established to oversee the preparation process and become more involved in housing issues. It is anticipated that the group could gain that broader understanding of housing issues by also becoming the nucleus of the group overseeing the preparation of the Housing Business plan over the same time frame.

2.5 It is proposed that five members of Council be nominated to the group.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 As formally constituted group, members travelling expenses would be payable for attendance at meetings. At this stage it is proposed that the group would meet once a month until June although it may choose to meet more frequently particularly as the inspection approaches.

4. Corporate Implications

4.1 Involving members in the inspection and business plan processes provides for a more collective approach to these important pieces of work.

5. Community Implications

5.1 The overall aim is to improve the quality and cost effectiveness of our services provided primarily to the tenants of SDDC