
REPORT TO:	Community Scrutiny Committee	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	26th March 2007	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	Mark Aiflat – Director of Community Services	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Lee Carter – Repairs and Improvement Manager	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Audit Commission Inspection of the Council's Housing Repairs and Maintenance service	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That members are made aware of the responses to the Community Scrutiny Committee recommendations, 12 October 2006, and the Housing Service continue to improve the service inline with the Audit Commission recommendations of June 2005.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To acknowledge members recommendations and highlight the positive progression housing services are making towards improving the service and therefore the current rating of the Repairs and Improvement section.

2.2 The detail section of this report clearly responds to the recommendations a to h made in the Community Scrutiny Committee recommendations, 12 October 2006.

3.0 Detail

3.1 To ensure the safety of our tenants regarding asbestos the new tenants handbook, due to be published in May 2007, contains advice and important information relating to their obligations and general safety relating to asbestos. In addition to the handbook a specific leaflet relating to the health and safety aspects of asbestos is to be published during April 2007, to compliment the existing housing leaflets.

3.2 A report detailing the progression of the Sheltered Housing 'Vision & Standards' was presented to the Housing and Community Services Committee 8 February 2007.

3.3 The recommended pre and post inspection targets are currently being monitored via the housing IT system (Orchard) and reported to the Repairs and Improvement Manager. Further works continue to ensure that the recommended 10% pre and 20% post inspections are adhered to and with full analysis of each inspection and the benefits that are gained through the inspection process.

- 3.4 Commencing April 2007 the repairs service has invested in a new schedule of rates, which is a nationally recognised and very well respected document full of comprehensive rates that can easily be benchmarked against similar housing providers. One of the many benefits of the new schedule allows a percentage reduction for works of a programmed and repetitive nature, works such as voids. It is proposed to have the voids work at 3% lower than the standard repairs rates, based on benchmarking from other organisations.
- 3.5 The Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) partnership work has continued to show continuous improvements not only in the delivery of the physical improvements/works but also in terms of the administration procedures. Derbyshire County Council have, after much encouragement from this authority, increased the number of Occupational Therapists (OT) to enable quicker assessments. Further talks between South Derbyshire and the County have streamlined some minor adaptation through the Single Point Assessment Team (SPA), who receive self assessments from individual tenants requiring such item as grab rails, lever taps and similar small but significant items. The SPA team then directly contact SDDC to undertake the improvements without the need to be assessed by an OT, therefore considerably shortening the process.

Major adaptations continue to be reported to be complete within the government's 42 week duration, and South Derbyshire continue to be the only provider to achieve this within the County of Derbyshire.

- 3.6 The review of opening hours is to be consulted upon in the next addition of Housing News to be distributed May 2007. Following the consultation process with the tenants the final proposal will be discussed with the Tenants Forum and the findings presented to the Housing and Community Services Committee, as this may have an effect corporately.
- 3.6 The focus of the repairs service is and should be to provide a prompt and efficient service to the tenants of South Derbyshire, ensuring that all performance targets are achieved. Currently our performance, as reported to the Housing and Community Services Committee, is medium to upper quartile. Once this performance culture is embedded 'capacity building' is a real prospect that will not only increase income for the repairs service, but will ensure a greater control of the DFGs and ensure VFM can be benchmarked against similar providers.
- 3.7 To ensure continuous improvement and demonstrate external validation an independent assessment of the housing repairs and maintenance service could be commissioned in line with the recommendations of the Community Scrutiny Committee.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications with this report

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 Full implementation of the Audit Commission report 2005 and continuous improvements being delivered in the Repairs and Maintenance section will greatly assist the authority with future CPA assessments.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 The principal beneficiaries of the continuous improvements are our customers, the tenants of South Derbyshire.

7.0 Background Papers

7.1 Community Scrutiny Committee 12 October 2006

7.2 Housing and Community Services Committee 8 February 2007

