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| REPORT TO: | COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE | AGENDA ITEM: 6 |
| DATE OF MEETING: | 4th MARCH, 2002 | CATEGORY: |
| REPORT FROM: | HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES | OPEN |
| MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT: | SANDRA WHILES (Ext. 5712) | DOC: c:\myfiles\pmw\commnserv\communityscrutinycommittee\04-03-02\housinginvestmentprogramme sw.doc |
| SUBJECT: | HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME (HIP) | REF: |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED: | ALL | TERMS OF REFERENCE: |

1.0 Recommendation

1.1 Members are asked to :

- note the report

2.0 Purpose

2.1 To advise Members of feedback from GOEM on the 2001 Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan and arrangements for the 2002 submission.

3.0 Content

3.1 New arrangements were put in place in 2001 for the HIP.

There is now an increased focus on local authorities strategic housing roles within the context of their wider strategic role, particularly in community planning.

3.2 The Housing Policy statement "The Way Forward for Housing" stressed the importance of authorities strategic housing role. The other key area of local authority housing activity is the landlord function for those authorities with Council housing. The Housing Policy statement made it clear that Councils should have clear and separate objectives for its strategic and landlord functions. This is reflected in the separate assessments of Authorities performance in these roles that has now been introduced.

3.3 The 2001 HIP was submitted to GOEM by the end of July.

- 3.4 We were notified of the assessment and our capital allocation in December 2001. The Council is still assessed as being "Below Average" and was advised that our Housing Annual Capital Guideline (ACG) was £782,000. A copy of the feedback from GOEM is attached at Annexe A.

Annexe B shows the assessments and allocations for the whole East Midlands region.

- 3.5 Officers are disappointed in the assessment and the quality of the feedback provided.

Some of the positive issues to emerge from the assessment include:

- Good response to Empty Homes survey
- Effective use of the available data to identify the key priorities for private sector renewal
- Significant achievements in private sector renewal work
- Progress in securing affordable housing through s106 agreements
- Rationalisation of methods for involving tenants
- Planned : responsive maintenance ratio is high
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- 3.6 **Key points to address from the feedback are:**

- the need to collect and effectively interpret data on housing needs and stock condition
- the need to strengthen and update the overall housing needs information for the private sector
- the need to complete the rolling programme of sub district housing surveys and then carry out objective needs and market trends analysis
- the need to obtain accurate stock condition data to set and meet decent homes targets for Council houses
- the need to urgently complete the housing needs survey in time for the next HIP round
- Decent Homes targets must be set in the 2002 HRA Business Plan
- the engagement of partners in joint funding arrangements to maximise the amount of investment in housing stock available
- the need for proper data analysis of on the levels of required investment to bring houses up to the Decent Homes Standard and maintain condition
- the need to urgently review IT requirements to meet new activities, eg rent restructuring

- 3.7 Officers do not accept that "Tenant Participation continues to be patchy." Recent work has seen an increase in the active involvement of tenants across the district on the Tenant Advisory and Consultation Team with local Tenants Groups now operating and an increase in the geographical and age spread of members.

The Council set up the HRA Business Planning Group in November 2001 to involve tenants and Members in setting future objectives for the landlord service and to appraise stock options for the future.

- 3.8 The work of the Best Value Review of the Housing Strategy is considering ways to improve performance on the Council's overall strategic housing role. The Review Team is due to meet on the 12 March to review the baseline assessment in order to identify the key issues for the review prior to option appraisal and the development of an improvement plan. The information from GOEM is incorporated in the baseline work.
- 3.9 Work is in hand to improve performance in the key areas identified by GOEM, namely :

★Setting Decent Homes Targets and appraising options to meet targets

With recent changes in funding arrangements and the introduction of Best Value and the Government's Decent Homes Standards (DHS), it has been necessary to review the Maintenance and Improvement requirements for the Council's Housing Stock over the next 12 months, with priority being given to completing on-going programmes and introducing new improvement programmes to ensure that at least one third of the Council's Housing Stock meets the Decent Homes Standards by 2004.

The Decent Homes Standard recently established by the Government is a high priority on their agenda to ensure that all social housing meet the following 'decent home' criteria by 2010:-

- a) Satisfy the housing 'fitness' standard.
- b) Are in a reasonable state of repair (mainly external components).
- c) Have reasonable modern facilities and services (mainly kitchens and bathrooms).
- d) Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

A full review of the Maintenance and Improvement requirements necessary to meet the DHS will be carried out and a 10-year programme produced on completion of the stock condition survey which is due to be completed by the end of June 2002. Interim results from the pilot stock condition survey will be available in March 2002.

The stock condition survey will collect all relevant information regarding 'decent home' criteria thus allowing the Council to determine the number of properties not complying. On completion, the Council will need to set a strategic, long-term approach to address the 'non-decent homes' and realign the planned maintenance programmes to ensure the stock continues to be sustainable.

Failure to comply with the Decent Homes Standards is likely to result in capital funding being reduced and the Council being rated as 'poor'.

★Improving the availability of information on housing needs and market trends

During 2001 all empty home owners of properties over five years old were contacted with a questionnaire regarding their homes status and future intentions. As a result of this an empty homes policy has been adopted by the council. 2.36% of the homes have been brought back into use to date. All empty homes will receive an inspection in the next financial year in order to identify need and priority for action.

The private sector House Condition Survey undertaken in 2000 indicated that the district had 118 Houses in Multiple Occupation. A reality check using the assistance of council tax records has revealed the figure to be 14. All of these properties will be inspected to identify housing need during 2002.

Overall Housing Needs are currently assessed using data from questionnaires sent out to residents across the whole of the area and utilising the latest demographic and economic information. The Melbourne area survey is complete and information will be analysed and be included in the housing needs document along with other reality checks as part of the 2002 strategy update.

★Tenants Involvement in stock options for the future

The work of the HRA Business Planning Group is developing future objectives for the Landlord service, which will then be appraised against the range of options available. Tenants are working alongside Members and Officers to complete this work in time to inform the 2002 Business Plan. The group has agreed an information strategy so that its work is made known to key stakeholders, including Members, tenants and staff.

3.10 Arrangements for the 2002 Submission

Officers from Housing, Environmental Health and Planning are meeting in March to map out the work needed to update and complete the 2002 HIP process.

The consultation strategy agreed by the Housing Best Value Review Team includes holding an interagency workshop to share information on need, debate priorities and inform the future direction of the Housing Strategy and the Private Sector Renewal Strategy. This will be arranged for May and will lead to an updated Housing Strategy and Private Sector Renewal Strategy which will be produced by the Head of Community Services and the Environmental Health Manager and reported to Members Committee in June.

The Housing Services Manager working closely with the Finance Services Manager and the HRA Business Planning Group will produce the HRA Business Plan. The HRA Business Plan will be reported to Members in July following wider consultation with tenants.

There is a significant workload in co-ordinating and completing the statistical returns that accompany the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan. The Housing Partnership and Strategy Manager and staff from the Secretarial Support team normally carry out this work. It is expected that external support may be needed this year in light of impending known staff absences.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None

