
REPORT TO:	Housing and Community Services	AGENDA ITEM:	17
DATE OF MEETING:	17 th November 2005	CATEGORY:	DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	OPEN	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Bob Ledger (ext. 5775)	DOC:	
SUBJECT:	Audit Commission Inspection of the Repairs and Maintenance Service	REF:	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE:	HCS01

1. **Recommendations**

- 1.1 That the findings of the audit commission inspection of Housing's repairs and maintenance service be accepted and actioned by the Housing Service.

2. **Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To inform members of the outcome of the audit commission inspection carried out in June of this year and that reported on the 13th of October.

3. **Detail**

- 3.1 The Audit Commission is responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively and delivers high quality local and national services for the public. In terms of Housing this is achieved through the branch of the Audit Commission known as the Housing Inspectorate.
- 3.2 The formal inspection of the Repairs and Maintenance Service of South Derbyshire District Council commenced in April with the submission of the self assessment pro-forma alongwith some 200+ attached documents.
- 3.3 The on-site part of the inspection was undertaken in the week beginning 6th June. The inspection team comprised four inspectors. The first draft report was produced in mid-July and following a series of further meetings and drafts the final report was published on the 13th of October 2005.
- 3.4 It is a requirement of all such reports that the findings are reported to members and tenants and leaseholders. The most recent edition of the

tenant newsletter, Tenant's Extra, contains a summary of the report's findings.

- 3.5 The overall assessment of the current repairs and maintenance service was assessed as 'fair' on a four point rating of poor to excellent and our prospects for improvement were assessed as 'promising' on a four point scale from poor to excellent.
- 3.6 A consistent theme in the inspection assessment was that service had improved significantly given that the 'starting point' was assessed as such a low base. It is only two and half years since the Council's own consultants stated in a report that additional investment in direct staffing and consultants of £600,000 may be needed to improve the service. It is just over two years since critical procedural failings were identified in the repairs and maintenance service. Not only did we not make the £600,000 investment, some managers left the service and at the same time we restructured the unit i.e. over the last two years the responsibility for managing and improving the service fell on a small number of key individuals. Two of the three Principal Officers in the Repairs and Improvement Unit are less than 6 months in post.
- 3.7 Therefore a scoring assessment of a 'fair' service does not fully describe the scale of the achievement in getting to that standard. The auditors also specifically state that; "Managers at the Council are suitably skilled and experienced to enable delivery of improvements.....those recruited externally are knowledgeable and able to introduce new approaches to service delivery".
- 3.8 The assessment as having 'promising prospects for improvement shows that the Housing Service's plans for continued improvement are sound. The fact that the auditor's recommendations do not identify any new issues for us is further evidence of this. Our intention is to be an excellent housing service within the resources available.
- 3.9 The summary and recommendations to the report are reproduced for member's information at appendix 1. A copy of the full report is of course also available. Should any member require a full copy please contact Bob Ledger.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no additional financial implications arising out of the auditor's report which cannot be contained within current estimates.

5. Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The achievement of a fair rating and promising prospects for improvement should have a positive impact on future Comprehensive Performance Assessments particularly given that in the Assessment carried out in January 2004 it was reported that there was a "high risk of service or function failure and /or poor outcomes".

6. Community Implications

- 6.1 The inspectors recognised that the Housing Service is on a journey of improvement and has made significant strides forward and has firm plans to improve further. The principal beneficiaries of these improvements are the service users, our customers.

7. TACT View

- 7.1 TACT have commented that the Housing team had done extremely well to get to the current position and should be congratulated on the improvements made.