



**South
Derbyshire**
District Council

South Derbyshire District Council

**'Making South
Derbyshire a better place
to live, work and visit'**

Housing Services Service Plan 2011-2012

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1.0 Introduction

This Service Plan brings together our priorities in relation to the Council's Corporate Plan 2009/14 and the Sustainable Community Strategy for South Derbyshire 2009/29

Our key priority outcomes in the Corporate Plan are to:

Deliver a range of housing provision and services that address community requirements

And,

To help the community reduce its environmental footprint

Housing Services will:

- maintain its position as one of the best social housing providers in the country
- positively contribute towards Council policies and procedures in the delivery of services
- deliver continuous improvements in the performance of the Council
- ensure compliance with relevant legislation
- have a 'customer focus' in what we do
- ensure a widespread understanding of the Council's core values, key aims, priorities and relevant performance measures, and encourage participation in their development
- ensure that data quality principles are applied in order to conduct its business effectively
- Support the Council's Investors In People programme
- Continue to measure itself against national standards and maintain its awards for Investors in Excellence, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, Telecare Services Association and Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies
- Encourage a positive health and safety culture

Head of Service . . . Bob Ledger

2.0 Scene Setting

2.1 Overview of the Service

Housing Services plays a key role in meeting the Council's strategic objectives for enabling people to feel '**safe and secure**' and contribute to '**Lifestyle Choices**'.

As a result, the Housing Department covers a number of services that directly impact on people and their communities, which are delivered in the following way:

Key Service Areas

We are the main social housing provider in the district with stock totalling 3,049 properties, comprising of 2,037 general purpose dwellings and 1,012 supported housing dwellings. We deliver services such as responsive repairs, planned improvements, homelessness advice and prevention, rent accounting, rent arrears recovery, tackling anti-social behaviour, Supported Housing Services, Careline and Telecare services, the administration of the right to buy scheme, a common housing register and Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system, mutual exchanges and transfers. In all of these we aim to involve our tenants through participation. The Housing Service also has responsibility for the management of the Civic Offices and the Council's Depot, as well as undertaking maintenance to all the Council's public buildings and meeting the wider strategic housing needs of all residents irrespective of tenure.

Our tenant services are funded from the Housing Revenue Account which is made up of tenant rental income. This account has an annual turnover of over £10m. Whereas most Council services are funded through the Council and general taxation routes most of our housing services are funded directly by local rental income. There is a legal 'ring fence' around this account to ensure that it only funds services which are in support of tenants themselves.

Customer Relationships

Our relationship with our customers is different from other departments within the Council as a result of the direct landlord role and other support functions. Through issues such as the allocation of property, the assessment of homelessness applications, the resolution of neighbour complaints, the operation of customer support plans by sheltered housing wardens etc we are involved in the detail of people's lives.

This different level of relationship is both the reason why customer care is vital in our role but also the reason that we will not always be able to deliver on people's expectations. We see our customers more often and their opinion of us is usually based over a number of interactions with us. According to our last survey figures, collected at the end of 2008/9 from our general purpose tenants, our customer satisfaction rating is very high at 87.9%. This represents clear top quartile performance (83% or above) and is the 4th highest satisfaction rating of 182 Local Authority or Registered Social Landlords in England. We are due to canvas satisfaction again this year following the government's scrapping of the Housing Sector wide survey in 2010.

Our commitment to quality customer service is evidenced by the award of our accreditation to the Investors in Excellence standard which assesses both customer perspectives of the organisation and actual customer performance measures.

Our satisfaction with day to day repairs and improvement works remained consistently high at 97% satisfied.

Housing Operations

Allocations and Homelessness: We have a statutory responsibility to manage and regularly review the waiting list, which currently stands at 1,899 applicants. We operate a district wide common housing register through our Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system, advertising and allocating all social rented housing in the district.

We work with partners to provide advice and prevent homelessness. In 2010-11 we received 227 'formal' homeless presentations ('presentation' is the legal terminology and places statutory responsibilities on the Council to investigate each presentation thoroughly before reaching a decision which needs to be formally notified).

We accommodate many applicants throughout the year in our own stock, which is brought to a 'fit to let' standard before being offered to prospective new tenants. We also assist customers in finding accommodation in the private sector through our Housing Options Service and Home Swapper schemes.

We work with Derbyshire Housing Aid to provide a weekly debt counselling service to both tenants and residents and also participate in the national Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

Income and Tenancy Management: We have a team of 5 Housing Officers who monitor and review the collection of rent payments from our customers to ensure that we meet our targets for rent collection. Their work is varied covering rent collection, tenancy enforcement and anti-social behaviour as well as offering support and resolving issues which impact on people's lives. This could mean liaising with other agencies to support a customer with mental health issues and or advising a customer that we are progressing a legal case in relation to a neighbour dispute.

Sheltered Housing: This service continues to provide housing and support to elderly residents through the Community Warden Scheme, Careline 24 Hour call centre and Lifeline Services. In the last 5 years we have invested over £1.1m to deliver the Sheltered Housing Vision to improve services. Our commitment to service provision has been recognised and rewarded with the Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies accreditation, and full achievement of the Telecare Services Association standards.

We are also assisting residents to remain in their own or current home by promoting and running a Telecare service for all tenures in South Derbyshire in both private and public sectors. This allows residents to receive a range of sensors and alarms, linked to our Careline service, to provide a safe and secure solution to living independently.

Responsive and Planned Maintenance: Our Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) carried out 7,215 responsive repairs last financial year; 788 as emergencies (within 24 hours), 1273 as urgent (within 3 days), and 5,154 routine repairs (within 20 days). Performance against targets is high with 99.6% of urgent repairs and 98.62% of

routine repairs completed on time. In total nearly 13,700 repairs were completed by us and our partner contractors over the year.

Within our planned maintenance service all our properties met the Decent Homes Standard by the Government deadline of December 2010, following a commitment spanning several years. Most planned and major work is carried out through partnerships with contractors which work extremely well. In 2009 we undertook a full stock condition survey to update our programmed works schedule. Current information however indicates we will have an issue maintaining the Decent Homes Standard beyond 2012/13.

Overall satisfaction in repairs and maintenance, as assessed through surveys completed following works, is exceptionally high at 97%.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment: We are keen to involve all our tenants in decision-making and reviews of our services. The past year has seen the introduction of a new tenant involvement structure following the recommendations of the regulatory regime governed by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) which commenced 1st April 2010.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment is a key element of the regulations and we are committed to providing greater opportunities for our tenants to have their say. A number of key events and reviews were held in 2010 across a number of service areas and tenant input was at the heart of these, allowing them to monitor and scrutinise our performance and be at the centre of decision making.

Over 100 tenants attended workshops to review our Allocations and Anti-Social Behaviour Policies. Our customers' own experiences were fed in to the review to make each policy truly reflective of the views. Our new Performance & Scrutiny Panel, made up of 10 tenants, will be taking on more and more responsibility to monitor our performance as the year goes on.

Performance and Business Support: The service is supported by its Performance and Business unit which provides administration support and functions such as rent accounting, former tenant arrears recovery, rechargeable repairs recovery as well as running and developing our own IT systems.

The unit also co-ordinates and leads on service improvement and performance monitoring by researching best practice, analysing and reporting performance data and driving through change to reach top quartile performance and improve the service received by our customers.

Key Aims

Housing Services has long established values, which are:

- Listening to and putting customers first
- Valuing staff commitment
- Constant performance improvement.

2.2 Workforce Information

Service Summary (Position as at 31st March 2011)

New Starters 2010/11	Leavers 2010/11	Sickness 2010/11 (f.t.e. days lost)
n/a	10.33 days per person	10.33 per person

Workforce priorities for 2011/12:

- Continue supporting the Apprenticeship scheme - 6 local young people have benefited from this project since its creation
- Support employees who have graduated through the apprenticeship scheme by enrolling them on 'Advanced Craft' courses to continue their learning and development
- Evaluate all training requests through the PDR process to ensure training delivered is appropriate to the role and development of employees
- Ensure a smooth transition of current Depot based staff and service delivery to the new location
- Explore ways of integrating Housing Services with Environmental Services
- Promote development and membership of professional bodies - 4 people currently studying for professional qualifications

2.3 Financial Information

Service Area	Detail	Total (£)
Housing Services	Revenue Expenditure Employment	2,212,985
	Revenue Expenditure Capital	
	Charges	55,762
	Revenue Expenditure Other	1,811,798
	Revenue Expenditure Running	
	Costs	3,287,597
	Total Expenditure	7,368,141
	Government Grant Income	(433,101)
	Revenue Other Grants	(20,350)
	Revenue Other Income	(11,822,520)
	Total Income	(12,275,971)
	Housing Net Total	(4,907,830)

Summary of Assets as at 31st March 2011

Asset	Estimated Value
Land	£387,500
Parking Areas	£17,750
Garage Plots	£62,5200
Shops	£112,500
Community Rooms	£673,500
Garages	£1,213,125
Stock	£89,932,785
Vehicles	£67,825

3.0 Service Performance**3.1 Key Achievements 2010/11**

- Awarded the Investors in Excellence standard
- Awarded RoSPA Gold for our work toward Health & Safety for the 4th year in a row
- Achieved the Decent Homes Standard on all of our properties by the Government's target of December 2010
- The Department for Communities & Local Government published customer satisfaction results with our tenants the 4th most satisfied of 184 English Local Authorities
- The Annual Benchmark report examining costs and performance across the service showed we demonstrate upper quartile, low cost performance
- Implemented the Tenant Services Authority's regulatory framework
- Introduced 'Local Offers' across 4 regulatory standards in consultation with our customers
- Set up a new Performance & Scrutiny Panel of 10 tenants to provide a formal route to scrutinise landlord performance and functions
- Set up a new 'Home' panel of tenants to monitor our work on repairs and improvements
- Set up a new Publications Panel of tenants to oversee and edit the content of publications
- Restructured the Sheltered Housing Working Panel to provide better outcomes from the group
- Issued our first Annual Report to tenants
- Held 2 'challenge days' with tenants to review the Anti-Social Behaviour and Allocations Policies which were amended and reissued following the feedback
- Introduced a new text messaging facility providing another form of communication channel for tenants
- Undertook a Business Planning Process through a Committee sub and stakeholder group
- Gained re-accreditation to the Telecare Services Association code of practice
- Piloted a revised warden service ahead of a full implementation
- Promoted 2 existing apprentices to full time permanent roles
- Taken on 2 new tradesmen apprentices as part of our continuation of support to the local apprenticeship scheme
- Assisted Derby University by holding 2 business workshops with their students
- Led on the 16/17 year old homeless protocol, providing training to all partners
- Developed the Move-On Protocol for supported housing leavers
- Work commenced on the unique Extra Care/Residential Scheme in Swadlincote

- Lead contributor on development of National Housing Policy
- Presented the Authority's work at national good practice seminars and Housemark Events
- Held up as best practice at Housing Quality Network (HQN) resident consultation events
- Resident elected to the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) tenant body

3.2 Key Strengths

- High Customer Satisfaction
- Low staff turnover
- Operate with integrity and with a customer focussed approach at all times
- Services are 'excellent' as per benchmarking data

3.3 Areas for Improvement

- The time taken to register applicants on the Choice Based Lettings system
- Performance and satisfaction levels with day to day gas repairs carried out by our partner contractor
- Condition of our garage stock and overall strategy for the future of garage sites
- Assessment of open spaces and neighbourhood renewal
- Addressing former tenant arrears collection and length of stay in temporary accommodation

3.4 Corporate Action Plan

The SMART Action Plan details our key actions for the year. Actions are broken down into quarters in order to enable us to monitor and manage our performance.

These actions directly contribute to our outcomes identified in the Corporate Plan, and as such are seen as essential for us to achieve if the Council is going to achieve its ambitions. Complementing these actions is a set of performance measures that are formed both from the National Indicator Set and locally agreed indicators. Whether we achieve the targets set against these indicators will tell us whether the 'business' we are doing is delivering the required outcomes and providing excellent services.

In some areas because changes will take place over a period of time and not measurable in a quarter, proxy indicators will be used. These are indicators that suggest the likely progress, whilst not measuring that outcome. The Service's key performance measures against Corporate Plan outcomes can be found at Appendix B

3.5 Operational Action Plan

Local performance measures are in place to monitor standards of service delivery across the Housing Service. See Appendix B for details.

4.0 Key National, Regional & Local Strategies

There are a number of national, regional and local strategies which influence the work of Housing Services, some of which we need to respond to and others which we are involved in developing.

National/European

Housing Revenue Account Self Funding – From April 2012 this determines how Housing Services is funded in the future. We need to borrow £55-£65m before April 2012 and pay the money over to government.

National Welfare Reform – This sets out how welfare benefits will be calculated and delivered which will have an impact on income management and tenancy management

Regional

Supporting People Framework – Sets out the programme for funding, planning and monitoring of housing-related support services

Local

Housing Strategy 2009/14 – Sets out the District's strategic housing priorities

Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007/12 – Sets out the District's actions for homelessness provision and prevention

5.0 Partnerships

Our significant partnerships are outlined below:

Partnership	Main Purpose
District Wide Choice Based Lettings Scheme	To provide a common housing register for the District
Supporting People Framework	To deliver housing support services and telecare solutions to vulnerable residents in the District
Derbyshire Housing Aid	To provide a range of housing advice and support services, including debt management

6.0 Consultation & Communication

We have a structured approach to consultation with our tenants and customers. Where a policy is to be reviewed or service to be restructured we will always consult with our customers to obtain feedback and experiences of current services. This may take the form of project boards or one day workshops.

We have a number of panels set up with volunteer tenants to scrutinise and monitor services and discuss issues. These meet on a regular basis throughout the year and are supported by Housing Services' Staff.

Appendix C contains the following:

- Summary of the consultation and communication undertaken in 2010/11 and proposals for such activity in 2011/12.
- Communication activities/campaigns planned for 2011/12, along with details on how success will be measured.

7.0 Service Review/Transformation Programme

The services and costs of delivery are continually under review. Most of rent income is spent on repairs and improvements (£4.xm), closely followed by negative subsidy (£4.1m) and the rest is spent on running the service.

The Housing Service is operating with fewer staff than it did in the previous year and proposals are progressing to reflect a similar position next year. However the introduction of the self financing regime and the opportunity to viably project the Housing business over the next 30 years with increased levels of investment, suggests that we should take stock over the next 12-18 months and reassess the balance between services and the costs of delivery. The background to this is that benchmarking data suggests that the service is already low cost. In addition a third of the management costs are not direct costs of the service but relate to corporate and Northgate on-costs.

Early in the new corporate year it is proposed to submit a new HRA Business Plan to Committee which will cover the issue of costs and income in some detail.

In 2011/12 the following external contracts; Day to Day Gas Servicing, Day to Day Sub Contractor, Replacement Heating, Day to Day Electrical Maintenance and several minor contracts including materials supplier will be retendered or reviewed and the current state of the building and construction industry means that prices are likely to be very competitive. However the balance with the quality delivered by external contractors is also vitally important and we will seek to ensure that service to customers is always our number one priority even when the work is being delivered by partners.

The series of tables at Appendix D represent the next three years actions for the Council. The actions will form a key part of the authority's medium term strategy for both delivering the outcomes that communities want and need; and delivering its efficiency savings. The Northgate partnership review of the Housing Service was undertaken in 2010/11 and reflected positively that customers are in receipt of good service and performance. There were some proposals made by Northgate to cut management costs although most of the issues raised were already being considered by the Service.

The implementation of these proposals in full needs to be weighed against the biggest change the Service has faced since its creation with the advent of self financing. As described above it is proposed to reduce operating costs this year but to also stock take on where we are on the service/cost equation following the implementation of self-financing. The Housing Service has worked hard over a number of years to establish a social housing service and reputation second to none. The Partnership though with Northgate Public Services through the 'Retained Services Transformation' programme is expected to achieve cashable savings for this service

8.0 Managing Risks

The process set out in Council's Risk Management Strategy, which was approved in March 2010 has been followed. The risk registers for the service area can be found at Appendix E.

9.0 Monitoring and Review

This plan will be monitored quarterly as part of the performance management framework and will be used throughout the year to manage service delivery.