

**SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL CPA SELF-ASSESSMENT****MEETING THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD**

1. What is the Council trying to achieve in relation to standard? Does the Council know the condition for the housing stock and their compliance with the Decent Homes Standard?

1.1 What is the Council trying to achieve in relation to the standard?

- The Council has a housing stock of 3545 as at May 2003. A full stock condition survey was carried out in September 2002 by specialist consultants. The condition survey was carried out on 100% of external inspections and 25% of internal inspections and also included garages, pathways driveways, communal areas and boundary fencing. The survey showed that as at September 2002, 774 properties, equating to 21% of it's stock, were non-decent.
- The Council has purchased a database application specifically for recording, monitoring and forecasting against the Decent Homes Standard. The database holds all elemental information, including roofs, windows, doors etc along with SAP ratings and HECA details. ***It is recognised that a weakness relating to the known position of the housing stock is the absence of an Asbestos Register. Funds have now been allocated to commission an independent Asbestos Survey.***
- The survey has been validated and no material issues have been identified. The database is constantly updated to take into account programmed works and responsive repairs, by a dedicated Officer. A detailed project plan and methodology has been produced to validate the stock condition data on a quarterly basis. The Council believes that it has collated good base information on which to understand the condition of it's stock in relation to the Decent Homes Standard requirements.

1.2 How good is the base information to help the Council understand what needs to be done to meet the DHS?

- The Council has a clear understanding of the minimum standards required for the 2004 / 2010 deadlines, and the Council is confident that minimum standards will be achieved by these dates. ***The programmes currently in place do not concentrate directly upon achievement of the Decent Homes Standard, however, work is underway to correct this.***
- Future work programmes aimed at achieving the minimum standards are being formulated. Due to time constraints, the programme to meet the 2004 target of reducing the number of non-decent properties by one third, will only concentrate on meeting the minimum standards, although tenant choice around fittings and design of kitchens will be incorporated into this programme. ***The Council has ambitions to build in tenant aspirations into the 2004 to 2010 programmes for the Decent Homes Standard, although no methodology to achieve this has yet been formulated.***
- Elected members, tenants, RSL's and other stakeholders have been fully involved in other supporting housing strategies. ***However, it is recognised that there has been no tenant, contractor or other stakeholder involvement in the current development of work programmes aimed at achieving the minimum Decent Homes standards.***

### 1.3 Has the Council evaluated a range of options which would enable it to achieve the DHS and other objectives?

- In November 2001, a Business Planning Working Group was established to consider the future ownership / management arrangements of Council owned stock. The group consisted of Elected Members, Tenants and Officers and was led by Consultants with expertise in the area of Option Appraisal. Each option has been considered and scored against the Council's strategic and operational context for the Housing Service, the East Midlands Regional Housing Statement and the Housing Corporation's Regional Investment Strategy. There are a number of relevant objectives to these strategies and statements. These include working with stakeholders to improve the District's Housing Stock, maintain, modernise and remodel Council housing to bring all homes up to Decent Homes standard, work in partnership to secure funding for improved security to sheltered housing, work in partnership to invest in sustainable new homes, regeneration and supported housing which meet local and regional needs. Further expansion of the objectives can be found in the Housing Options Review Report, ( ch 3, pp 11 - 16. )
- The initial phase of a stock option appraisal has been completed and reported to Elected Members in March 2003. The appraisal included consideration of large and small scale stock transfers, Private Finance Initiatives, Arms Length Management Organisations, Selective Intervention / Mix Options and stock retention, against the minimum requirements of the Decent Homes Standard. Elected Members, especially those not involved in the Business Planning Working Group and Members newly elected in May 2003, are attending awareness seminars to consider the outcome of the appraisal work and to map the next stages of the process. The Community Housing Task Force is satisfied with the Council's methodology and progress to date, and is currently working with the Council to assist it through the next stage of the process. ***It is recognised that this initial phase of option appraisal has only considered the impact of meeting the minimum Decent Home requirements, and does not include any forecast of the inclusion of tenant aspirations.***

### 1.4 Are there robust strategies and plans in place to help the Council meet the DHS?

- There are a number of strategies and plans that will assist the Council to achieve the minimum Decent Homes standards. These include the Housing Strategy, the Corporate Plan, the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the Capital Strategy. ***The Council recognises that some strategies and plans, for example the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, could be more robust. There could be clearer and/or more specific links to other strategies, such as the Economic Development Strategy.***
- The Council has produced a Business Plan which includes a 30 year financial model for the last two years. Whilst the Government Office rating improved last year the Plan has not been rated Fit for Purpose. ***In recognition of this, the Council is working with the Government Office for the East Midlands in order to achieve Fit for purpose.***

## 2. Is the Council delivering its plans to meet the Decent Homes Standard?

### 2.1 Has the Council maximised its capacity to deliver the DHS?

- The Council has identified and considered all potential resources in order to facilitate meeting the Decent Homes Standard. The Council does not qualify for non-core resources such as NRF, SRB or NDC.
- The Council has chosen not to utilise the Supporting People 'windfall' at this time, as it believes the conflicting guidance from the ODPM and DWP may lead to housing benefit subsidy reclamation in the future.
- The Housing Options Review Report of March 2003, ( ch 8, pp 30 – 36 ), details that resources were adequate to meet the minimum Decent Homes standards in the short term, via the existing resources such as the Major Repairs Allowance. Whilst current Council Policy states that repairs and improvements are only funded via the Housing Revenue Account and Major Repairs Allowance, *the Council recognises that further review of the Capital Strategy is required, in order to determine the proportion of the Single Capital Pot that should be directed into the programmes to meet the Decent Homes Standard.*
- Joint working by Officers of the Housing Service and the Community and Leisure Development Department have led to the securing of funds to improve security to Council owned dwellings. This joint working is currently dependent upon the relationships developed by individual Officers and the system is therefore very ad hoc. *It is therefore recognised that planned approaches should be developed cross departmentally.*
- The Council has purchased an asset management IT system, which is administered by a dedicated member of staff, who works alongside a qualified Quantity Surveyor to procure works. *The Council has recognised the weakness in terms of inadequate IT systems across housing, and funding is in place to purchase an integrated housing management IT system, which will greatly improve the ability to provide timely and accurate performance and financial information.*
- Officers responsible for the delivery of the Decent Homes Programme have attended one day seminars in relation to the Decent Homes standard, partnering and asset management. The Council has a comprehensive Performance Development Review Programme to identify areas for development of staff, although limited resources and competing priorities, have not allowed for a more comprehensive approach to staff training in this area. *It is recognised that this is an area for improvement.*
- The Council has recognised the need for specialist advice and guidance, and has commissioned Consultants to carry out the stock condition survey and the stock option assessment.  
It is recognised that the Council has not entered into any partnerships specifically aimed at meeting the Decent Homes standards, however authority is developing a number of partnering initiatives, with the aim of delivering the Decent Homes Standard.

## 2.2 Are work programmes designed to meet the DHS and have these been delivered?

- The current work programmes are not constructed to specifically meet the Decent Homes standard, although current programmes have reduced the amount of non-decent stock from 21% to 20%. *It is recognised that this is a weak approach and work is currently underway to redesign work programmes, making the Decent Homes Standards the primary focus.*

## 3. How well does the Council monitor its progress and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?

### 3.1 How well does the Council monitor its progress towards meeting the DHS?

- Monitoring and performance management are under developed across the Housing Service. Whilst arrangements are in place to monitor performance against Best Value Performance Indicators, *it is recognised that the monitoring of other action plans is weak. No specific targets have yet been set in relation to the Decent Homes Standard. This will be made a priority, together with appropriate monitoring and reporting arrangements.*
- Monthly budget monitoring meetings in relation to the trading accounts of the Direct Services Organisation has been in place over the previous 12 months. Capital spending is monitored on a weekly basis by the Senior Quantity Surveyor, with monthly meetings of the Capital Asset Management Group being held on a monthly basis.
- The detailed awareness of technical and financial issues which can facilitate innovation, is limited to a small number of officers. *We need to extend these competencies through training, in order to support new ways of working which will achieve our goals.*
- The Council has a well developed Personal Development Review and Briefing process recognised by the award of Investors in People status. These processes are used to disseminate information and objectives to staff. Relevant staff are aware of the objectives of the Decent Homes standard.
- The Council believes that it clearly understands the risks associated with the failure to meet the Decent Homes Standard / targets, as demonstrated in the HRA Business Plan and the Housing Option Appraisal. *However, the Council recognises that further work will need to be undertaken once the outcome of the tenants aspirations has been identified.*
- *The Council recognises that there is no planned and consistent approach linked to researching best practice initiatives. The Council also recognises that it needs to link this work into structured research into best practice initiatives.*

### 3.2 How well does the Council learn from itself and from others?

- Tenants and Officers are involved in a range of service development areas, ensuring the Council is aware of the changing needs and aspirations of its tenants.

- The commissioning of a diagnostic review of the Housing Service clearly demonstrates the Council's objective to analyse performance and learn from others. The implementation of the Change and Improvement Plan has resulted in a culture changed geared towards driving up performance. This achievement has been recognised by the Government Office for the East Midlands via its award of an improved rating of 'average' for our housing strategy, and by the Audit Commission during the inspection of the Sheltered Housing Service, which now has promising prospects for improvement.
- A diagnostic of the Housing Service was commissioned and carried out by consultants. The aim of this diagnostic was to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Following analysis of this diagnostic, and Change and Improvement Programme was formulated and introduced. The programme includes the development of a Performance Management system, which is currently in its infancy, along with a programme to develop management competencies to ensure clear guidance and leadership across the service. Staff Performance Development Reviews and the Housing Service Delivery Plan, clearly reflect the objectives of the Change and Improvement Programme.

In summary, the key challenges arising out of this assessment are:-

- *With Tenants and Members, develop an ambition for the Decent Homes Standard*
- *Establish an Asbestos Register.*
- *Develop Planned Maintenance Programmes that are geared towards the delivery of the Decent Homes Standard*
- *Incorporate tenant aspirations into the planned maintenance Decent Homes Standard Programmes*
- *Develop Partnering arrangements that are linked to achieving the Decent Homes Standards / targets*
- *Develop Procurement Solutions that are linked to achieving the Decent Homes Standard / targets*
- *Develop monitoring and performance management arrangements to drive improvements*
- *Develop financial and technical awareness to improve the management of our business*

