

## **BOROUGH OF BARROW-IN-FURNESS**

### **HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM**

Meeting: Thursday 3rd March, 2011  
at 2.00 pm (Committee Room 4)

Group Meetings at 1.15 pm

## **A G E N D A**

### **PART ONE**

1. To note any items which the Chairman considers to be of an urgent nature.
2. Admission of Public and Press

To consider whether the public and press should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the agenda.

3. Disclosure of Interests

A Member with a personal interest in a matter to be considered at this meeting must either before the matter is discussed or when the interest becomes apparent disclose

1. ***The existence of that interest to the meeting.***
2. ***The nature of the interest.***
3. ***Decide whether they have a prejudicial interest.***

A note on declaring interests at meetings, which incorporates certain other aspects of the Code of Conduct and a pro-forma for completion where interests are disclosed accompanies the agenda and reports for this meeting.

4. Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 20th January, 2011.
5. Apologies for Absence/Changes in Membership.

### **FOR DECISION**

#### **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

- (D) 6. Tenant Services Authority (TSA) – The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2010

#### **OPERATIONAL**

- (D) 7. Cumbria Housing Partners (CHP) Investments 2011 - 15.
- (D) 8. Review of Anti Social Behaviour Policy and Procedures.

- (D) 9. Arrears Prevention and recovery: Policy.
- (D) 10. Homeswapper UK.
- (D) 11. Electrical, Gas, water Services Policy and Procedures: Housing Service.
- (D) 12. ASB Action Ltd.

**NOTE:** (D) – Delegated to the Executive Committee  
(R) – Referred to the Council

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM MEMBERS:**

Councillors: T. A. Biggins  
J. D. Heath  
L. Hammond  
M. Irwin  
D. V. James  
R. J. Pointer  
J. Waiting  
J. Richardson

Tenant Representatives: Mrs. P. Charnley  
Mrs. M. Burgess  
Mr. N. Hird  
Mrs. K. Hotchkiss  
Mr. A. McIntosh  
Mr. T. Slater  
Mr T Wilson  
Ms. C. McFadyen  
Mr W Ward (substitute)

**For queries regarding this agenda, please contact:**

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Published: 23rd February, 2011

## **HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM**

Meeting: 20th January, 2011  
at 2.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Biggins, Hammond, Heath, Irwin, Pointer, Richardson and Waiting.

**Tenant Representatives:-** Mrs P. Charnley (Chairman), Mrs M. Burgess, Mrs K. Hotchkiss, Mr A. McIntosh, Miss C. McFayden and Mr W. Ward.

### **36 – Disclosures of Interest**

Mrs P. Charnley declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 6 – Housing Revenue Account (Minute No. 42) as she was Chairman of the Four Groves Associated who leased a garage. She remained in the meeting due to the general exemption regarding housing.

Councillor Waiting declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 6 – Housing Revenue Account (Minute No. 42) as she rented a garage from the Council. She remained in the meeting due to the general exemption regarding housing.

### **37 – Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December, 2010 were agreed as a correct record.

### **38 – Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor James, Mr Hird and Mr Slater.

### **39 – Housing Maintenance Investment Programme 2011/12**

The Housing Manager submitted the report to agree the spend profile for the Housing Services Investment Plans for 2011/12. The expenditure profile and priorities were based on the five year Asset Management Plan agreed on 26th August, 2010.

The 2011/12 investment Programme was funded from the Housing Revenue Account or from the Major Repairs Allowance.

The principles adopted in drafting the proposals continued with the previously agreed targets and sought to ensure:

- (i) The Council achieved the Decent Homes standard;
- (ii) The aspirations of tenants were considered and incorporated within plans;  
and

- (iv) To work collaboratively with other housing providers and contractors to improve delivery of planned and responsive repairs services.

In addition they sought to reflect the priorities of the five Year Asset Management Strategy to:

- (i) Increase the percentage of bathrooms less than 15 years old from 40% to 60% by 2012;
- (ii) Increase the percentage of kitchens less than 15 years old from 40% to 60% by 2012; and
- (iii) Achieve and maintain a 60% (planned works) and 40% (routine works) split of the revenue funded investment budget.

Properties identified for improvement had been completed on a “worst first” and “just in time” basis. Programmes of delivery reflected the need to satisfy Decent Homes requirements and had been based on the results from the independent Stock Condition Survey completed in March 2010. Properties scheduled for investment during 2011/12 were considered.

#### 1. Progress during the Current Year 2009/10

The Housing Manager reported that all planned investment works had progressed satisfactorily during the year.

Investments through Cumbria Housing Partners (CHP) had continued to be an effective delivery method in terms of value for money, compared with historical costs. Additional efficiencies had been made through improved delivery by providing a streamlined approach to the management, administration and monitoring of the contracts.

Progress on delivery would continue to be reported to the Forum on a regular basis through the Information Report.

The table below provided an indication of the number of properties that had benefited from the more significant Investment Plans and would be updated where appropriate at year end.

<b>Type of Work</b>	<b>No of Properties due for improvement in 2010/11</b>	<b>No of Properties Completed at 31/12/2010</b>
Kitchens	300	258
Bathrooms	159	94
Central Heating	275	180
Rewires	147	82
Painting	400	400
Minor Adaptations	N/A	124
Major Adaptations	N/A	70

As a result of the investment the number of homes failing the decent homes standard was as follows:-

	<b>Number of properties failing the decent homes standard</b>	<b>Percentage of Stock</b>
Baseline survey 20.6.2006	509	18%
as at 1.4.2009	6	Less than 1%
as at 7.6.2010	32*	1%
as at 31.12.2010	0	0%

\* The 2010 Stock Condition Survey results had indicated a small number of newly occurring failures due to the introduction of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The 32 failures had identified at the time of the survey had now been rectified.

## 2. Suggested Investment Profiles for 2011/12

The Housing Manager submitted a suggested investment profile which is attached at **Appendix A** to these Minutes.

In terms of putting the proposals in context, they were based on a proposed investment profile of £4,943,426 in 2011/12 compared with a budgeted investment of £4,864,293 in the current year.

The profile followed the “sustainable” investment model that had been identified in the 2010 Asset Management Plan and built on existing priorities to upgrade kitchens, bathrooms, heating and electrical circuits on a worst first basis. Members noted that around £150,000 had been allocated to carryout essential re-pointing works to sheltered accommodation on Walney. The re-pointing work would ensure severely exposed properties remained wind and water tight.

## 3. Progressing the Planned Investment Works

The majority of the planned works had been delivered through the CHP. A new four year framework had been established with CHP and GM Procure and he proposed that the arrangements be continued as it had demonstrated significant cost savings and Gershon efficiencies. Currently a series of “mini competitions” were being tendered to appoint suitable contractors to commence the investment programmes from April 2011.

### RECOMMENDED:-

1. To note the progress on achieving the Decent Homes Standard shown at point 1 of the report;

2. To agree principles highlighted in point 2; and the annual Investment Profile attached at **Appendix A** to these Minutes; and
3. To agree to deliver a significant proportion of the investment proposals through Cumbria Housing Partners subject to compliance with the frameworks group accounting requirements.

#### 40 – Performance Information Report – April 2010 to December 2010

The Housing Manager submitted information relating to a selection of local and national performance indicators and Best Value Performance Indicators. The information was as follows:-

Performance Indicator	Actual 2009/10	Apr - Dec 2009	Apr -Jun 2010	Apr - Sept 2010	Apr - Dec 2010
<b>£ Rents Collection</b>					
£ Rent collected	£8,546,587		£2,022,556	£4,319,240	£6,446,265
Rent collected as % of rent due	98.46%		102.14%	99.70%	99.23%
£ Current Arrears	£165,452	£230,534	£179,365	£190,268	£221,924
£ Former Arrears	£123,432	£154,384	£111,664	£125,382	£106,504
Write Offs	£129,709	£81,729	£23,392	£44,945	£85,343
Tenants evicted for rent arrears	18		1	6	7
Current tenants arrears % of rent owed	1.91%	2.67%	NA	4.31%	3.37%
Former tenants arrears % of rent owed	1.42%		NA	2.84%	1.62%
£ Rent arrears Garages	£4,094		£4,036	£5,557	£8,414
£ Rent Arrears Shops	£28,131		£26,578	£28,390	£17,335
<b>Void management</b>					
No. of Voids	281	219	67	156	215
Average relet time for dwellings (days)	31	31	33	30	34
£ rent loss through vacant dwellings	£101,530	1.04%	£16,715	£35,639	£57,836
£ rent loss due to vacant garages	£4,873	3%	£1,268	£2,594	£3,792
£ rent loss due to vacant shops	£4,253		£393	£1,253	£7,047
% properties accepted on first offer	NA		75%	71%	
Cost per Void (Rents, Repairs, Mgt & Arrears)	NA		NA	£2,063	£2,351
<b>Maintenance</b>					
No. Repair Orders issued (Tenant Demand)	13,068		2610	5482	8257
% all reactive repairs completed on time	81%	96.4%	95.20%	95.2%	95.80%
% emergency repairs completed on time	97%	98.7%	99.40%	99.8%	99.00%
% urgent repairs completed on time	88%	89.3%	88.7%	91.3%	91.50%
% routine repairs completed on time	93%	91.3%	95.7%	94.0%	94.60%
Average end-to-end time for all reactive repairs (days)	12.6	11.4	11.1	10.5	10.1
Percentage of repairs completed right first time	NA		NA	NA	NA
Appointments kept as a percentage of appointments made	97%		NA	NA	NA
Appointments made as a percentage of repairs orders	100%		NA	NA	NA
Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate	99.5%		98.4	99.6	99.74%

Average time taken to answer inbound telephone calls (in seconds)	NA		NA	NA	NA
Percentage of homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard	0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
*Average energy efficiency rating of dwellings (based on SAP 2005)	76.20%		*	*	
<b>Equality &amp; Diversity</b>					
<b>ASB cases reported</b>	213		26	41	65
Percentage of closed ASB cases that were successfully resolved	13.1%		75%	72%	
% Vulnerable people achieving independent living	87%		100%	93%	94%
% Diversity Information : Age	99.90%		99.90%	99.92%	99.88%
Gender	100%		100%	100%	100%
Ethnicity	66.90%		66.90%	94.76%	69.23%
Disability	42.40%		42.40%	44.29%	45.45%
Sexuality	43%		43%	41.26%	42.46%
Religion or belief	43%		43%	42.61%	43.81%
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints upheld	0		0	0	
<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Actual 2009/10</b>		<b>Actual 2010/11</b>		
<b>Satisfaction</b>					
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the landlord's services overall	NA		*	*	*
Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs and maintenance	NA		*	*	*
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account	NA		*	*	*
Percentage of new tenants satisfied with the allocation and letting process	N/A		*	*	*
Percentage of residents satisfied with estate services	NA		*	*	*
<b>Value for Money - Cost per property - direct costs</b>					
Major & Cyclical works (service)	£1,406.0		*	*	*
Responsive Repairs	£400.5		*	*	*
Void Repairs	£131.8		*	*	*
Rent Arrears & Collection	£68.3		*	*	*
Community Involvement	£30.9		*	*	*
Anti Social Behaviour	£37.2		*	*	*
Neighbourhood Mgt (Estates)	£94.5		*	*	*
Housing Options	£44.6		*	*	*
Leasehold	£31.1		*	*	*
Total staff turnover	8%		3.4%	6.9%	6.9%
Ave. working days lost / sickness absence	14.0		5.57	10.23	
<b>Housing Property</b>					
	<b>Dwellings</b>	<b>Dispersed</b>			
HSE	1293	0			
FLATS	1251	10			
BUNGALOWS	156	0			
SHOPS	21	0			
GARAGES	484	0			
<b>TL DWELLINGS</b>	<b>2710</b>	<b>10</b>			

<b>SOLD PROPERTIES</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>£</b>
HSE	4	£230,500
FLAT	2	£29,200
<b>TL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>£259,700</b>

<b>HOMELESSNESS</b>	<b>Actual 2009/10</b>	<b>Apr -Jun</b>	<b>Apr - Sept</b>	<b>Apr - Dec</b>
Homeless aver. days in temporary dispersed accommodation	47	35	86	69
Homeless aver. days in temporary B&B accommodation	22	20	31	33
Homeless presentations	NA	48	63	155
Homeless preventions	NA	14	34	104
Eligible Homeless	NA	9	16	19

A Member asked that the number of people on the waiting list be included in the table. Also that a list of properties be provided in each Management Area.

RESOLVED:- (i) To note the information;

(ii) To agree to include figures relating to the housing waiting list in the table presented to the Forum; and

(iii) To agree that the Housing Manager provides a list of properties in each Management Area to all Members of the Forum.

#### **41 – Planned Maintenance Programme 2011/12**

The Housing Manager reported information relating to the progress of the Planned Maintenance Programme for 2010/11 as at 22nd December, 2010. The information is attached as **Appendix B** to these Minutes.

RESOLVED:- To note the information.

### **REFERRED ITEMS**

#### **THE FOLLOWING MATTERS ARE REFERRED TO COUNCIL FOR DECISION**

#### **42 – Housing Revenue Account 2011/2012**

The Housing Manager submitted a report to agree a Housing Revenue Account Budget for the financial year 2011/12. The report also provided an Expected Outturn Budget for the current year 2010/11 and information regarding balances.

The expected outturn and proposed HRA for 2010/11 had been attached as an appendix to the report.

The principles adopted in drafting the report followed the subsidy determination provided in the guidance on rent setting and Housing Subsidy.



## 1. Expected Outturn Budget 2010/11

The forecast outturn for the year was:

- (i) Rental Income sales during the year are in line with expectations.
- Sales assumed in original 2010/11 budget = 6 dwellings
  - Sales current expectations 2010/11 = 6 dwellings (5 completed as at December 2009)
  - Rental income was expected to be in line with budget

(ii) Salaries

Changes in personnel, working hours and unfilled vacancies had resulted in savings estimated to be £113,610 for the year.

## 2. Balances on the Expected Outturn for 2010-11

The Expected Outturn was likely to result in the following movement in balances.

### 2.1 Balance on the Major Repair Reserve as at 31st March 2010: £ 411,486

MRA funding adjustment brought forward 2010-11	:	£ (300,000)
Net additional available to spend in 2010-11	:	£ 111,486
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The above additional funds were expected to be spent along with the year's MRA allocation; therefore balance on MRA reserve at 31st March 2011 was expected to be zero.

### 2.2 Balance on the Housing Revenue Account as at 31st March 2010 : £ 823,061

### 2.3 Breakdown of Balance on Account

Balance on the Housing Revenue Account as at 31st March 2010	:	£ 823,061
Forecast Deficit 2010-11*	:	£ (52,310)

Estimated Balance at year end	:	<u>£ 770,751</u>
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\*The subsidy repayment was forecast to rise to £687,190 or £194,940 more than budget.

The Balance was in line with the recommended minimum balances as suggested by the Borough Treasurer.

## 3. Draft Proposed HRA 2011/12

In developing a proposed budget for 2011/12 the following factors had been taken into account:

3.1 The formula for calculating the Housing Revenue Account subsidy had remained unchanged from the 2010-11 determination but there were changes to certain key factors which adversely affected the major repair, management and maintenance allowances the Council receive.

- The weighting given to the ratio of flats and high rise flats had increased compared to low level flats and houses
- Relets and terminations had fallen by 25%
- Right to Buy sales reduce the Council's stock level

The reduction in allowances was, in part, mitigated by an examination and correction of the terraced house stock classification from small to large which improved the allowances by £99,540.

Estimated movement in allowances by : £ (27,914)

3.2 Rent increases would be applied in accordance with the rent restructuring plans currently averaging 6.05%.

- Overall staff expenditure would be reduced by £200,000.  
General inflation of 0% on salaries and increases to NI and changes to the way that superannuation was treated accounted for £120,000.
- The balance of £85, 910 was the net result of taking the following actions:-
  - Deleting the posts of the Senior Services Officer for Income and Debt Recovery and the balance of hours from the Tenancy Services Manager becoming a part time role, re-designating the role of Senior Customer Services Assistant to Customer Services Assistant all of which had previously been agreed by Committee.
  - It also included the saving which was accrued by the ongoing vacancy of the Homelink Supervisor which he recommended be deleted.
- 0% on utilities or in line with contractual increases.
- Rental income was based on sales of 8 dwellings in 2011/12.

3.3 As referred to above, rent levels were dictated by the rent restructuring rules.

Rent restructuring was a mechanism which would harmonise rents across the country. Every property had a Target Rent determined by the property's value, size and location and every year rents were uplifted by the formula of half a % above inflation to move rents towards the Target Rent. Increases were capped so that they remained affordable. For 2011/12 the increase had been based on an RPI of 4.6% + 0.5% and the date for convergence for the Target Rent had been extended from three to five years.

Current Rent (48 wks)	Current Rent (52 wks)	Uplifted by 5.1% (52 wks)	Uplifted by Convergence 1/5 <sup>th</sup> (52 wks)	Affordability Caps Limit (52 wks)	Target Rent (52 wks)	New Rent (48 wks)
£91.59	£84.54	£88.85	£90.24	£90.24	£95.78	£97.76

The government national average guideline rent increase for 2011/12 was 6.8% with the following effect:-

	52 Weeks	48 Weeks
2011/12	<b>64.14</b>	<b>69.48</b>
2010/11	60.48	65.52
Increase	<b>6.05%</b>	<b>6.05%</b>

The Housing Manager had also included, as an appendix to his report further details of the resultant rents for different property types.

- 3.4 The housing repairs and maintenance budget had been adjusted in line with the subsidy guidelines allowing £1,121 per dwelling.

#### 4 Other Charges

##### 4.1 Garage Charges

As it was normal practice to recommend that garage rents be increased in line with residential properties the proposed budget included a £6.05% increase on garage charges which generated £16,232.

The effect on individual garage charges would be as follows:

	2010/11	+4%	+6.05%	+8%
Garage rate 1	£5.45	£5.64	£5.78	£5.89
Garage rate 2	£7.79	£7.38	£7.99	£8.13
Increase		£11,950	£16,232	£19,506

It was noted that VAT was payable in addition to the above charges for garage holders who were not also Council tenants. VAT increased 10th January 2011 from 17.5% to 20%.

There was a 100 strong waiting list garages with few vacancies.

The Housing Manager suggested that the garage charges be increased in line with the increase for residential properties.

## 4.2 Homelink

The Housing Manager reported that the income for Homelink tenants was influenced by the Contract Arrangements that were in place with Supporting People. He did not propose any changes to Homelink charging at this time.

It was his intention to complete a Review of the Service in parallel with a County Wide review of such services by Supporting People. A timetable had now been published for the review to be completed by September 2011.

It was projected that the income for the service for 2011/12 would be c£55k. That included savings that were accruing from the non-filling of the Homelink Supervisors role (Post no OHS 200).

He commented that the responsibilities of that Post had changed significantly from when it was created and the Council operated a Call Handling Facility. In consideration of the deficit on the Service area and ongoing pressure on the HRA generally he recommended that the post be deleted.

## 4.3 Other Charges

Previously the principle had been agreed to vary certain charges as required to reflect the full cost of the service. These charges were altered when contracts were reviewed. Areas covered by this were staircase cleaning, supported tenancies, furnished tenancies, and dispersed accommodation.

He recommended that the principle be continued.

## 5. **Housing Revenue Account Review**

The Housing Manager reminded the Forum that he had previously advised on the changes that were planned to the current HRA financing arrangement by the coalition who would introduce a Self Financing model for April 2012. Further information would be provided as it was released. In the meantime there was provision within the budget for £20,000 to obtain assistance and advice on the correct approach to take.

## 6. **Business Improvement Initiatives**

Work had started on restructuring cost centres so that the components and costs of delivering each of the Housing services areas could be pinpointed, compared and improved. Other initiatives included:-

- Looking more closely at the revenue and expenditure on Shops, Garages, Leaseholding and Homeless accommodation.
- Process improvements which streamline and reduce costs on Lettings, Void Management and Rent Collection.
- Reviewing current Information Systems and Technology to support the improvements and reduce IT costs.

- Work had begun on 'De-pooling', a term used to mean the separation of rent and service charge creation elements from the Rent and was a step which was advised preparatory to Self Financing. The findings would be brought to Committee in due course.

RECOMMENDED:- To approve the Housing Manager's recommendations and request the Executive Committee:-

1. To note the information at (1) of the report;
2. To note the information on balances at (2) of the report;
3. To agree the 2011/12 budget as shown at Appendix A of the report;
4. To agree an average increase of 6.05% in line with Rent Restructuring guidelines and note the effect on individual rents as shown at Appendix B of the report;
5. To agree an increase of Garage charges of 6.05% point 4.1 (above);
6. To agree the deletion of the Homelink Supervisor Post (Post No. OHS 200) point 4.2; and
7. To agree the action contained in point 4.3 (above).

The meeting closed at 2.33 p.m.

**2011/12 Investment Profile****£4,943,426****Routine Maintenance**

£900,000 Tenant Demand Repairs  
 £200,000 Void Repairs  
 £30,000 EPC Surveys  
 £32,000 Decoration Vouchers  
 £8,000 Security Shutters  
 £15,000 Tipping charges (Voids)

**£1,185,000****£4,943,426****Other Planned Maintenance**

£75,000 Gas Building Works  
 £208,110 Gas Breakdown Repairs  
 £141,900 Gas Safety Tests and Servicing  
 £200,000 Painting and Fabric repairs  
 £20,000 Community Centre Repairs  
 £20,000 Door Entry Maintenance  
 £10,000 Disrepair Claims  
 £25,000 Environmental Enhancements  
 £165,000 Electrical Testing & Smoke Alarms  
 £10,000 Asbestos Surveys and Removal  
 £25,000 Fencing and Environmental Imp  
 £40,000 Consultancy Fees  
 £20,000 Shop Repairs/Upgrades  
 £157,578 Re-Pointing works  
 £20,000 Re-Insulation works  
 £110,740 Other Contractors Planned Works (Misc)  
 £295,000 Kitchens via CHP  
 £300,000 Disabled Adaptations

**£1,843,328****MRA**

£265,098 Rewires (CHP)  
 £850,000 Heating and Insulation (CHP)  
 £300,000 Bathrooms (CHP)  
 £500,000 Kitchens (CHP)

**£1,915,098**

CHP = Cumbria Housing Partners



APPENDIX B

PLANNED INVESTMENTS 2010/11 @ 22.12.2010

SCHEME	CONTRACTOR OR SUPPLIER	AVAILABLE BUDGET	NO OF PROPERTIES	INVOICES PAID TO DATE	START DATE	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE	CONTRACTOR	TARGET COST	OUT TURN ESTIMATE	COMMENTS
REWIRES	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£283,543	Phase 1 - 70 Properties Phase II - 77 Properties	£178,476	01/04/2010 and 01/10/2010	Feb-11	AB MITCHELL (via K Wilson)	£130,000 £155,000	£283,000	90% COMPLETE 50% COMPLETE
BATHROOMS I	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£200,000	82 PROPERTIES PENNINE/RAGLAN COURT	£117,000	Apr-10	Feb-11	AB MITCHELL	£184,218	£200,000	60% COMPLETE
BATHROOMS II	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£100,000	42 PROPERTIES	£51,500	Nov-10	Feb-11	AB MITCHELL	£102,000	£100,000	50% COMPLETE
KITCHENS I	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£500,000	190 PROPERTIES	£414,338	Apr-10	Feb-11	AB MITCHELL	£462,019	£500,000	90% COMPLETE
KITCHENS II	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£225,000	70 PROPERTIES ORMSGILL/WALNEY	£50,000	Dec-10	Mar-11	AB MITCHELL	£177,000	£225,000	3% COMPLETE
HEATING I	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£475,000	155 Properties via CHP 20 One Off systems via Integral	£390,250	Apr-10	Feb-11	AB MITCHELL INTEGRAL	£425,000 £100,000	£475,000	70% COMPLETE 15% COMPLETE
HEATING II	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£375,000	90	£160,676	TBC	TBC	AB MITCHELL INTEGRAL	£365,000	£375,000	30% COMPLETE
DOOR ENTRY REPLACEMENTS	SS GROUP	£200,000	ALL FLATS WITH COMMUNAL ENTRANCES	£136,254	Mar-10	Feb-11	SS GROUP	£172,000	£200,000	60% COMPLETE
PAINTING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£200,000	400	£153,552	Apr-10	Feb-11	GH JONES	£155,000	£160,000	99% COMPLETE

HOUSING MAINTENANCE COMMITMENTS 2010/11 @ 22.12.2010

	Funding Available 2010/11	Gross COMMITMENT	Weekly Available	Gross Comm. as a % funds available
Tenant Demand Repairs	£900,000.00	£496,922.00	£17,307.69	55%
Voids	£175,000.00	£131,501.00	£3,365.38	75%
Gas Servicing	£425,000.00	£159,322.00	£8,173.08	37%
Decoration Vouchers	£35,000.00	£18,892.00	£673.08	54%
Fire Damaged properties	NIL	£29,205.00	NIL	Claim via Insurance company
Disrepair Claims	£25,000.00	£278.00	£480.77	1%
Environmental Impmts	£50,000.00	£24,867.00	£961.54	50%
Disabled Adaptations	£250,000.00	£227,942.00	£4,807.69	91%
Electrical Testing	£175,000.00	£37,179.00	£3,365.38	21%
Door Entry Maintenance	£120,000.00	£26,165.00	£2,307.69	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,230,000.00</b>	<b>£1,152,273.00</b>	<b>£11,923.08</b>	

£100k accrual brought forward from previous year



<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 6</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 3rd March, 2011</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager</b>	
<b>Title: Tenant Services Authority (TSA) – The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2010</b>	
<b>Summary and Conclusion:</b>	
The purpose of this Report is to inform you of the Housing Service's compliance with the requirements of the TSA regulatory framework and to seek endorsement of the agreed local standards.	
<b>Recommendations:</b>	
Members are recommended to:	
1. note the measures taken to comply with TSA regulatory requirements; and	
2. endorse the agreed local standards.	

### **Background and Introduction**

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) became the regulator for all social housing with effect from April 2010.

The TSA have provided full guidance on the new regulatory framework in a document entitled "The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2010", and associated annexes.

The new framework is set around the principle of co-regulation, encouraging providers to undertake robust self-regulation which incorporates effective tenant involvement.

Despite it having been announced in October 2010 that the TSA is to be abolished and its functions will transfer to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) by April 2012, current guidance is that the principles of regulation introduced by the TSA must be complied with until social housing providers are instructed otherwise.

### **Regulatory Requirements**

The regulatory framework places a number of requirements upon social housing providers like Barrow Borough Council:

- We must undertake an annual self assessment of our performance against five national standards. We are required to evidence how we meet the standards and where we don't, we must have a clear plan of how we will. We are required to consult our tenants and seek their agreement of our assessment which must be published as an annual report, the first of which was due on 1 October 2010 and each October thereafter.

- We must develop and implement “local offers” which are essentially local standards, which reflect what is important to our tenants at a local level. Local offers must be agreed with tenants and be in place by April 2011.

### **Progress to date and plans going forward**

Barrow Borough Council Housing Service is on schedule to meet all of the TSA regulatory requirements:

- A self-assessment of all services was undertaken and following consultation conducted through our Tenants Forum, Tenant Compact Working Party Group and Involvement Sessions, the results of this assessment were published in an Annual Report to tenants, delivered in advance of the 1 October 2010 deadline.
- Following initial tenant consultation through our Involvement Sessions, we formed a Local Standards Focus Group consisting of tenants and staff who worked together to produce a draft list of local standards. These standards were printed in our tenants’ Christmas Newsletter, displayed at our office and promoted through our Tenants’ and Residents’ Associations to ensure that every tenant was consulted and had an opportunity to comment. We have not received any negative feedback on the draft standards and propose to adopt these, to launch on 1 April 2011 in compliance with the TSA requirements. The local standards are attached at **Appendix A**.

### **Recommendations**

Members are recommended to:

1. note our compliance with the TSA regulatory requirements; and
2. endorse the agreed local standards.

(i) Legal Implications

Barrow Borough Council must comply with the TSA regulatory requirements which have been developed from the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and therefore have legislative effect.

(ii) Financial Implications

Not Applicable.

(iii) Health and Safety Implications

Not Applicable.

(iv) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

Not Applicable.

(v) Risk Assessment

Not Applicable.

(vi) Equality and Diversity

The TSA regulatory requirements place an emphasis on Equality and Diversity as a cross cutting theme across all standards.

(vii) Health and Well-being Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the health and well-being of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil

<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 7</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 3rd March, 2011</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager</b>	
<p><b>Title: Cumbria Housing Partners (CHP) Investments 2011-15</b></p> <p><b>Summary and Conclusion:</b></p> <p>The purpose of this report is to consider and agree the appointment of suitably qualified contractors to undertake delivery of the Housing Department's Planned Investments via CHP over the next four years.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. agree to the appointment of those contractors identified in this report using the Procure Plus 'direct selection' and 'mini competition' procurement process for the period 2011 to 2015.</li> <li>2. agree that members of the TPCWP monitor service delivery standards and key performance indicators for CHP work streams on an annual basis.</li> </ol>	

## Report

The purpose of this report is to consider and agree the appointment of suitably qualified contractors to undertake delivery of the Housing Department's Planned Investments via CHP over the next four years.

## Background

In the summer of 2010, Procure Plus established a new four year framework to deliver cost effective improvement works in the social housing sector. Cumbria Housing Partners has direct access to the new framework via its links with Procure Plus. These links allow CHP members to select contractors from a central register of qualified installers in the Cumbria and North west region.

The procurement process provides CHP members with one of two options:

- **Option 1** - Direct call off to appoint the highest ranked contractor in the relevant work stream category
- **Option 2** - Mini-competition to evaluate contractors registered for the relevant work stream category

### Option 1 - Direct Call Off

Selecting the highest ranked contractor within a particular work stream does not always guarantee the most economically advantageous tender, unless additional references are sought from existing customers on the framework. G H Jones and Sons is presently the highest ranked painting contractor and have been successfully delivering painting works in Barrow for the past two years.

Members are requested to agree to the re-appointment of G H Jones and Sons using the 'direct call off' process to carry out painting works between 2011 and 2015.

### Option 2 - Mini competition

Mini-competitions have been advertised and tendered via CHP using the Procure Plus web portal for the following work streams:

- Rewires
- Kitchens
- Bathrooms
- Heating

### Tender Assessment

In assessing each mini competition, tender submissions were evaluated using the following criterion:

- Customer Satisfaction
- Equality and Diversity
- Service Delivery
- Health and Safety
- Local Skills and Benefits
- Price

The tender process requires each contractor to submit an electronic tender via the Procure Plus web portal. Each tender submission is given a unique identification reference (ID).

The results of the 'mini competition' tender evaluation process are shown below:

### Bathroom Installations

<b>Contractor ID</b>	<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>
ID 1506	97.20	1 <sup>st</sup>
ID 1538	81.00	2 <sup>nd</sup>
ID 1511	76.80	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Members are asked to agree to the appointment of bathroom contractor ID 1506: **A B Mitchell Ltd**, for the period 2011 to 2015, subject to continuing service delivery and performance levels.

### Heating Installations

Contractor ID	Overall Score	Rank
ID 1516	98.20	1 <sup>st</sup>
ID 1509	83.00	2 <sup>nd</sup>
ID 1514	76.80	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Members are asked to agree to the appointment of heating contractor ID 1516: **A B Mitchell Ltd**, for the period 2011 to 2015, subject to continuing service delivery and performance levels.

### Kitchen Installations

Contractor ID	Overall Score	Rank
ID 1529	98.20	1 <sup>st</sup>
ID 1518	87.20	2 <sup>nd</sup>
ID 1508	80.80	3 <sup>rd</sup>
ID 1537	79.00	4 <sup>th</sup>

Members are asked to agree to the appointment of kitchen contractor ID 1529: **A B Mitchell Ltd**, for the period 2011 to 2015, subject to continuing service delivery and performance levels.

### Rewire Installations

Contractor ID	Overall Score	Rank
ID 1522	91.40	1 <sup>st</sup>
ID 1533	89.00	2 <sup>nd</sup>
ID 1527	85.60	3 <sup>rd</sup>
ID 1521	84.30	4 <sup>th</sup>
ID 1549	81.50	5 <sup>th</sup>
ID 1528	73.50	6 <sup>th</sup>
ID 1526	70.60	7 <sup>th</sup>
ID 1515	40.50	8 <sup>th</sup>

Members are asked to agree to the appointment of rewire contractor ID 1522: **Keith Wilson Electrical Ltd**, for the period 2011 to 2015, subject to continuing service delivery and performance levels.

### **Recommendations**

1. agree to the appointment of those contractors identified in this report using the Procure Plus 'direct selection' and 'mini competition' procurement process for the period 2011 to 2015.
2. agree that members of the TPCWP monitor service delivery standards and key performance indicators for CHP work streams on an annual basis.

#### (i) Legal Implications

The framework has been procured in accordance with OJEU and complies with the Council's Procurement Policy and Standing Orders.

(ii) Financial Implications

Payment transactions are made via the Value Works web portal, with full online auditing and reporting available.

(iii) Health and Safety Implications

The delivery of contracts is carried out in accordance with the Council's Health and Safety Policy and specific guidance where appropriate.

(iv) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

Corporate: Meet the housing needs of the Borough and make decent housing more accessible.

Housing Service: Investing and maintaining homes and estates to the best standard possible with the resources available.

(v) Risk Assessment

Management systems are in place to regularly monitor on delivery and expenditure.

(vi) Equality and Diversity

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on service users showing any of the protected characteristics under current Equalities legislation.

(vii) Health and Well-being Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the health and well-being of users of this service.

Background Papers

Not Applicable.

<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 8</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 3rd March, 2011</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager</b>	
<p><b>Title: Review of Anti Social Behaviour Policy and Procedures</b></p> <p><b>Summary and Conclusion:</b></p> <p>The purpose of this report is to consider a revised Policy on how the Service manages and responds to complaints of anti-social behaviour. It updates our existing Policy and seeks to ensure an effective response to such complaints.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>Members are asked to agree the new Policy to be introduced from the start of the next financial year.</p>	

## Background

The purpose of this report is to consider a revised Policy on how the Service manages and responds to complaints of anti-social behaviour. It updates our existing Policy and seeks to ensure an effective response to such complaints.

## Report

Attached at **Appendix B** is a copy of an updated Anti Social Behaviour Policy.

Members may be aware of recent announcements of proposals to introduce new arrangements to replace ASBOs. However, this Report is principally about how we manage complaints of anti-social behaviour, and if new legal remedies become available they can be incorporated at a later date.

The Policy has been drafted to reflect the wide range and complexity of complaints that are received by the Service. It seeks to clarify how the Service will respond to complaints and this has been discussed with tenants in agreeing local standards regarding the issue.

The Policy document has been drafted in recognition of our experience over the last twelve months, during which time we have had additional support from ASB Action Ltd, a specialist adviser in this field.

In drafting the Policy, ASB Action Ltd were requested to review the document and operating procedures and commented:

"The Policy is clear as a declamation of intent and the anti-social behaviour leaflet gave staff and residents an overview of what outcome is required and what to expect. The format is good on the 'public face' of the organisation."



Following the feedback two new operational arrangements have been introduced in our procedures:

- Introduction of new 'Case Files' with clear guidance for staff.
- Introduction of new 'Incident Diaries' for victims of anti-social behaviour complete which includes examples of how to complete the diary to ensure the correct level of detail is recorded.

In line with the requirements of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, the Policy and Procedures will be made available on our website under the Neighbourhood Management section.

## **Recommendations**

Members are asked to agree the new Policy to be introduced from the start of the next financial year.

### (i) Legal Implications

When necessary the recovery of debts are carried out in accordance with the appropriate court procedures.

### (ii) Financial Implications

No additional resources are required to implement this Policy but it seeks to consolidate and simplify procedures for raising charges on recovery of debt.

### (iii) Health and Safety Implications

Not Applicable.

### (iv) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

Corporate: Meet the housing needs of the Borough and make decent homes more accessible.  
Housing Service: Investing in communities.

### (v) Risk Assessment

Not Applicable.

### (vi) Equality and Diversity

This Policy will be applied as a 'generic' policy across all our customers and is not likely to be of any detriment to any of the potential characteristics. In our operational procedures a Risk Assessment is completed with each customer to identify any individual circumstances for which regard should be afforded.

### (vii) Health and Wellbeing Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the health and well-being of users of this service.

## Background Papers

Not Applicable.

<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 9</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 3rd March, 2011</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager</b>	
<p><b>Title: Arrears Prevention and Recovery: Policy</b></p> <p><b>Summary and Conclusion:</b></p> <p>The purpose of this Report is to consider a revised Policy on how the Service manages arrears prevention and recovery. It updates our existing policy on managing rent arrears and seeks to ensure a holistic approach to debt prevention and recovery by the Service.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>Members are asked to agree the new Policy to be introduced from the start of the next financial year 2011/12.</p>	

## Background

The purpose of this Report is to consider a revised Policy on how the Service manages arrears prevention and recovery. It updates our existing policy on managing rent arrears and seeks to ensure a holistic approach to debt prevention and recovery by the Service.

## Report

Attached at **Appendix C** is a copy of an updated Arrears Prevention and Recovery Policy for your perusal.

In drafting the proposed Policy, consideration has been given to the various income streams relevant to the Housing Service. At present the most significant income stream is managed directly by the Housing Service, through the rent accounting system. Some parts of the income functions are presently shared with Finance, who on the instruction of the Housing Service will revise invoices and pursue non payment. An example is leaseholder charges.

The Policy proposes to bring responsibility for all income streams within the Housing Service, making better use of the existing IT system that is available.

In drafting the Policy we have incorporated the previously agreed objective to operate a 'firm but fair' approach to managing.

## Recommendations:

Members are asked to agree the new Policy to be introduced from the start of the next financial year 2011/12.

(i) Legal Implications

When necessary the recovery of debts are carried out in accordance with the appropriate court procedures.

(ii) Financial Implications

No additional resources are required to implement this Policy but it seeks to consolidate and simplify procedures for raising charges on recovery of debt.

(iii) Health and Safety Implications

Not Applicable.

(iv) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

Corporate: Meet the housing needs of the Borough and make decent homes more accessible.

Housing Service: Prudent financial management to ensure financial resources are used effectively with regard to value for money.

(v) Risk Assessment

Not Applicable.

(vi) Equality and Diversity

This Policy will be applied as a 'generic' policy across all our customers and is not likely to be of any detriment to any of the potential characteristics. In our operational procedures a Risk Assessment is completed with each customer to identify any individual circumstances for which regard should be afforded.

(vii) Health and Wellbeing Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the health and well-being of users of this service.

Background Papers

Not Applicable.

<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 10</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager</b>	
<b>Title: Homeswapper UK</b>	
<b>Summary and Conclusion:</b>	
The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval to subscribe to the Homeswapper Scheme. This is a national scheme which helps tenants find and arrange mutual exchanges.	
<b>Recommendations:</b>	
Members' instructions are requested.	

## **Background**

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval to subscribe to the Homeswapper Scheme. This is a national scheme which helps tenants find and arrange mutual exchanges.

## **Report**

The Council is on target to go live with Choice Based Lettings (CBL) by 12 April 2011. As part of the process of looking at how we improve our approach to housing options in line with CBL partners, we have been considering the options for helping tenants to arrange mutual exchanges.

At present we operate a manual system which enables our tenants to advertise in a book in the Housing office.

An alternative would be to subscribe to Homeswapper.

Homeswapper is the largest national mutual exchange service for council and housing association tenants wanting to swap homes throughout the UK. Homeswapper is a simple to use housing option which:

- Offers enhanced tenant choice
- Moves those in urgent need of re-housing
- Improves occupancy
- Increases stock utilisation
- Reduces void costs
- Improves audit results
- Is accessible to all

Many of our partners within Cumbria Choice are members of Homeswapper which enables their customers free access to the scheme. Mutual Exchanges are not incorporated within Cumbria Choice. At present Barrow Borough Council operates a manual mutual exchange register which is available for our customers to view in the Housing Reception Area. The current service does not promote choice as exchanges are only incorporated from properties within the Borough which does not assist tenants with flexibility to move outside of the borough.

In terms of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) housing options should be accessible to all. Progressing the Homeswapper option would enable access to all our customers. At present 16 of our tenants are registered with Homeswapper, however our customers have to pay £7.99 to be registered with the scheme for a three month period. To ensure our customers have equal access to housing options Barrow Borough Council are keen to progress membership to Homeswapper alongside the implementation of Cumbria Choice.

In considering this option, we have made enquiries with partners of Cumbria Choice who advise that the membership of Homeswapper has improved the housing option service to their customers, reduced void costs, and assisted in the reduction of rent arrears.

The cost of annual membership to the Scheme is £2,275.00 plus vat.

No budget provision has been made for this but I am confident it could be found from existing budgets.

## **Recommendations**

Members instructions are requested.

(i) Legal Implications

Not Applicable.

(ii) Financial Implications

Not Applicable.

(iii) Health and Safety Implications

Not Applicable.

(iv) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

Corporate: Meet the housing needs of the Borough and make decent homes more accessible.

Housing Service: Providing excellent customer focused and accessible services.

(v) Risk Assessment

Not Applicable.

(vi) Equality and Diversity

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on service users showing any of the protected characteristics under current Equalities legislation.

(vii) Health and Wellbeing Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the health and well-being of users of this service.

Background Papers

Not Applicable.

<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 11</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 3rd March, 2011</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager</b>	
<p><b>Title: Electrical, Gas, Water Services Policy and Procedures: Housing Service</b></p> <p><b>Summary and Conclusion:</b></p> <p>The Council recently agreed a Corporate Policy and Procedures on Electrical, Gas and Water Installations. Whilst the Health and Safety Policy is relevant to all departments, the purpose of this Report is to agree a supplement to the Corporate document to reflect the management of the Housing Service's property assets.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>Members are asked to agree the content of the supplementary notes at <b>Appendix D</b> with regard to the safe management of Electrical, Gas, and Water services in properties managed by the Housing Service.</p>	

## Report

The Council recently agreed a Corporate Policy and Procedures on Electrical, Gas and Water Installations. Whilst the Health and Safety Policy is relevant to all departments, the purpose of this Report is to agree a supplement to the Corporate document to reflect the management of the Housing Service's property assets.

Attached at **Appendix D** is a supplementary note reflecting the Housing Service's approach to managing Electrical, Gas and Water services in properties managed by the Housing Service. The purpose of the supplementary note is to ensure clarity of responsibility for such services managed by the Housing Service.

The supplementary notes have been agreed with the Council's Health and Safety Adviser.

### Recommendation:

Members are asked to agree the content of the supplementary notes at **Appendix D** with regard to the safe management of Electrical, Gas, and Water services in properties managed by the Housing Service.

(i) Legal Implications

Not Applicable.

(ii) Financial Implications

There are no additional financial implications associated with agreeing this Policy.

(iii) Health and Safety Implications

The purpose of the Policy is to ensure the Housing Service complies with all relevant Health and safety requirements regarding these services.

(iv) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

Corporate: Meet the housing needs of the Borough and make decent homes more accessible.

Housing Service: Investing and maintaining houses and estates to the best standard possible within the resources available.

(v) Risk Assessment

Management systems are in place to regularly monitor the implementation of this Policy.

(vi) Equality and Diversity

Not Applicable.

(vii) Health and Wellbeing Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the health and well-being of users of this service.

Background Papers

Not Applicable.



<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 12</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 3rd March, 2011</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager</b>	
<p><b>Title: ASB Action Ltd</b></p> <p><b>Summary and Conclusion:</b></p> <p>The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the Service Level Agreement (SLA) currently in place with ASB Action Ltd to assist the Housing Service with the effective management of anti-social behaviour a key component in the Housing Service achieving its aim to provide well-maintained homes and estates where people choose to live.</p> <p>ASB Action Ltd offer a specialised service which focuses on assisting social housing providers deal with such issues.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>Members are recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note information on the Service Level Agreement with ASB Action Ltd.</li> <li>2. Agree to progress a Service Level Agreement for a further 12 months with ASB Action Ltd. Agree that the requirement to obtain written quotations be suspended due to the specialised service provided by ASB Action Ltd and note approval from the Director of Corporate Services for this requirement to be suspended.</li> </ol>	

## Report

Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council has an obligation to the residents in the local areas they manage to do all they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in these areas. The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 also requires social landlords to review their policies for tackling anti-social behaviour annually and publish their policies and procedures for inspection.

It is widely accepted that failing to tackle anti social behaviour and nuisance promptly can undermine not just physical regeneration of areas but community cohesion. Residents do not wish to live in an area of crime, graffiti, environmental damage (fly-tipping) or noise nuisance. It is therefore in both parties' interest that complaints are dealt with speedily and that a seamless service is presented to residents who have historically complained about their case being referred to a variety of agencies with no real ownership of the case.

## The Core Service

The core service provided by ASB Action Ltd is the provision of anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance services. This will assist the Housing Service to deal effectively with anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance, using tried and tested methods developed by three of the country's leading practitioners in this field.

The services provided by ASB Action Ltd include:

- Review cases referred and provide action points to the Estates Team within specified timescales to ensure prompt service to our customers.
- Where appropriate, collect evidence and construct witness statements to a standard required for Civil Court proceedings.
- Act as professional witness in court where required.
- Carry out audits/case reviews.
- Provide the Estates Team with the range of appropriate legislation which can be used to resolve specific cases and support strategic initiatives.
- Review the Housing Service's existing Anti-Social Behaviour Policies and Procedures and, where necessary, make recommendations to ensure service improvement.
- Provide Barrow Housing Service with a witness support service, including an out-of-hours telephone service to support the most vulnerable witness.
- Provide a coaching, training and mentoring service for the front line officers and managers of the Housing Service on the best practice for tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour.
- ASB Action Ltd, in supporting Barrow Housing Service, will seek to provide a service which appears seamless to the complainant/witness.

### **Service Level Agreement**

ASB Action Ltd offer a Service Level Agreement in which Barrow Borough Council Housing Service can undertake to purchase 15 days to be used over a 12-month period. The 15 days can be used however our organisation feels would best suit the needs of the Estates Team ie, training, mentoring, critical friend, case work reviews, etc. Within the 15 days staff are not deducted any time for telephone or e-mail advice. Staff can ring through with problems and they will be advised of the course of action to take. The Housing Service will be invoiced monthly with itemised work/cases giving hours used as an audit trail.

During the last 12 months the Service Level Agreement with ASB Action has assisted the Housing Service to successfully obtain 4 Injunctions for anti-social behaviour, 1 Injunction for homophobic abuse related to a hate crime, 3 Injunctions for anti-social behaviour in relation to a race hate crime.

The cost of a 15 days Service Level Agreement including training is £7,068.25.

### **Summary**

Effective management of anti-social behaviour is a key component of the Housing Service achieving its aim to provide well-maintained homes and estates where people choose to live.

ASB Action Ltd offer a specialised service which focuses on assisting social housing providers deal with such issues. I would recommend this Forum agree a further annual Service Level Agreement with ASB Action Ltd, and suspend the requirement to obtain alternative estimates.

## **Recommendations:**

Members are recommended to:

1. Note information on the Service Level Agreement with ASB Action Ltd
2. Agreement to progress a Service Level Agreement for a further 12 months with ASB Action Ltd. Agree that the requirement to obtain written quotations be suspended due to the specialised service provided by ASB Action Ltd and note approval from the Director of Corporate Services for this requirement to be suspended.

(i) Legal Implications

When necessary all formal action taken against a tenancy is done so in accordance with the relevant legal requirements.

(ii) Financial Implications

Provision has been made in the budget to fund this service level agreement.

(iii) Health and Safety Implications

Not Applicable.

(iv) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

Corporate: Meet the housing needs of the Borough and make decent homes more accessible.

Housing Service: Investing in communities.

(v) Risk Assessment

Not Applicable.

(vi) Equality and Diversity

The service level agreement has no detrimental impact.

(vii) Health and Wellbeing Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the health and well-being of users of this service.

## Background Papers

Not Applicable.

## PROPOSED LOCAL STANDARDS

### Customer Service and Choice Standards

- We will aim to answer all telephone calls within 10 rings and give our name.
- We will wear our name badges in the office and whilst conducting home visits at all times.
- We will help you fill out housing related forms, immediately if we are able to and by appointment if we are not.
- We will arrange a private interview at your request.
- We will provide information in different languages, mediums (audio/DVD) and formats (large print/Braille) at your request, when we are able to do so.

### Neighbourhood and Community Standards

- If you make a complaint about anti-social behaviour we will respond to incidents involving threats or actual violence within 24 hours and other problems within 10 working days, giving the name and contact details of the officer who will deal with your complaint.
- We will take legal action for anti-social behaviour on our estates where we deem it necessary to do so and when we believe there is a reasonable prospect of success.
- We will conduct regular estate inspections and take follow up action, where necessary.
- We will remove offensive graffiti within two working days and other graffiti within seven working days of being notified.
- We will remove hypodermic needles within two hours of being notified, during office hours.

### Home Standards

- We will acknowledge all repairs issued to the contractor by post.
- We will carry out emergency repairs within 2 hours, urgent repairs within 7 working days and routine repairs within 30 working days.
- If we cannot complete a repair in one visit for whatever reason, we will inform you what will happen next.
- We aim to carry out a post inspection on at least 10% of repair jobs to assess the quality of the job.
- When we undertake planned maintenance, we will offer a choice on the design and materials that can be used, wherever possible.

The standards above were suggested by a group of staff and tenants who met on 1 November 2010. If you are not happy with any of the proposed standards, please let us know. You can give your feedback, good or bad, by contacting us in any of the ways detailed on page two.

We will consider all feedback received before we agree a final version of the standards. We will then print the agreed standards in the next edition of our Newsletter.

**Barrow Borough Council  
Housing Department**

**ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

**POLICY DOCUMENT**



# **ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

## **Introduction**

The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 requires us to publish a statement of our policies and procedures with regard to anti-social behaviour.

## **Context**

Our statement of policies and procedures is compatible with statutory legal requirements including:

- Housing Act 1985 (as amended by Housing Act 1996)
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Police Reform Act 2002
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003

## **1. Key objectives in relation to anti social behaviour are:**

- To ensure that every tenant enjoys their right to security in their own home.
- To ensure that every tenant enjoys their right to live peacefully and without disturbance from their neighbours.
- To investigate every report of anti social behaviour and give advice or take action where necessary to remedy the problem.
- To stress a conciliatory rather than confrontational approach but to take action quickly in cases of serious harassment or victimisation.
- To ensure that every victim of nuisance behaviour receives effective support which leads to a resolution of the problem.

## **2. Definition**

Anti Social Behaviour is defined in the Housing Act 1996 as conduct which:

- Is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to any person AND
- Directly or indirectly affects the housing management functions of a relevant landlords OR
- Consists of using, or threatening to use, housing accommodation owned or managed by a relevant landlord, for an unlawful purpose.

## **3. Our Approach to Anti Social Behaviour**

Take firm action to eliminate anti social behaviour.

Deal firmly, but fairly with anti social behaviour, to deter such behaviour and to encourage others to come forward as witnesses.

Ensure that troublesome families or individuals receive support as appropriate, to assist them in modifying their behaviour.

Work closely with Police and other agencies in order to deal with serious cases of anti social behaviour and determine what action will be taken.

Aim to prevent and reduce anti social behaviour by such measures as:

- Lighting improvements.
- Designing out and removing hiding places.
- Effective removal of abandoned vehicles, fly tipping and graffiti.
- Working with other agencies to improve leisure facilities and access to them, particularly for young people.

## **Tenants' Obligations**

Our housing tenancies are subject to a Tenancy Agreement. The major conditions relating to anti social behaviour are as follows:

- Part 6, Section 7 – You must keep your pet under proper control and not allow it to be a nuisance or annoyance to others.
- Keep any communal access ways or staircases in a clean and tidy condition.
- Part 6, Section 2 and 3 – Act in a reasonable manner and avoid, in particular, conduct which causes a nuisance to others or cause harassment to others.
- Part 6, Section 5 – Not use the dwelling for illegal or immoral purposes.
- Part 6, Section 9 – Park vehicles only in authorised places and not obstruct other road users or paths.

## **Support for Complainants**

We will support complainants by:

- Dealing with complaint promptly and will acknowledge your complaint within three working days.
- Keeping them informed of any developments.
- Referring them to other agencies where appropriate.
- Providing interpreters on request, should this be necessary.

## **Harassment**

We will not tolerate harassment by or against our tenants and use existing legal remedies against anybody found to be harassing others.

## **Domestic Violence**

We will be sensitive to the need of those affected by relationship breakdown and any related problems of domestic violence.

We will adopt interview, investigative and documenting procedures which afford privacy and confidentiality and a victim orientated approach to those in need.

We will work with the Police and other agencies to use existing legal remedies against any tenant using domestic violence.

## **Protection of Staff**

We will not tolerate threats or violence by our tenants against members of the Housing Staff or our contractors.

We will work with the Police and other agencies to use existing legal remedies against any tenant using or threatening violence.

## **Preventing Anti Social Behaviour**

We aim to prevent anti-social behaviour. To achieve this we:

- Operate a system of introductory tenancies for new tenants.
- Contribute to the CADAS Mediation Service, as a first intervention, to avoid escalation of neighbour disputes.
- Participate in and contribute to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
- Work closely with the Police and other agencies.
- Carry out improvements to our estates to help prevent anti social behaviour and criminal activity.
- Provide support to vulnerable tenants.
- Take prompt action to deal with abandoned vehicles, fly tipping and graffiti.

## **Rehabilitation of Offenders**

We aim to prevent anti social behaviour from reoccurring. In many cases, there may be an underlying cause, for example:

- Family or relationship breakdown.
- Mental illness.
- Learning difficulty.
- Drug or alcohol dependency.
- Exclusion from school.
- Longstanding or recent dispute between families.
- Clash of lifestyles.

We will work with the tenant or family causing the nuisance, to ensure they receive advice or support that they need to deal with their difficulties. Where unsuccessful, further action will be taken as appropriate.

## **Support for Witnesses**

We are aware of the importance of providing support for witnesses. Support and protection measures available include:

- Rehousing (in extreme cases).
- Emergency legal action.
- Extra security measures.
- Working closely with Police and other agencies as necessary, to ensure witnesses are protected from intimidation.
- Keeping witnesses informed of action to be taken and ensuring that agreed timescales are kept.
- Giving assistance in collating evidence or making witness statements.
- Advice on appearing in Court.
- Support in Court from officers.
- Referral to Victim Support.
- Making witnesses aware of the outcome of cases.



## **Data Protection and Confidentiality**

Any information given to us will be treated in confidence.

Personal data or information may be disclosed to the Police, Probation Service or Health Authority, both in order to reduce crime and disorder generally and more specifically where it is 'necessary or expedient for the purposes of obtaining an Anti Social Behaviour Order'.

## **Multi Agency Partnerships**

Officers of the Housing Department attend a variety of multi agency meetings that deal with anti social behaviour issues. These include:

- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
- Liaison Meetings with Police and other relevant bodies.

## **Staff Training**

We are committed to training our staff and will ensure that all staff dealing with anti social behaviour are fully aware of this policy and our procedures. Refresher training, mediation and appropriate referral training and further training where legislation changes or in pursuit of best practice will also be provided.

## **Key Targets and Performance Indicators**

Barrow in Furness Housing uses the following key performance indicators:

- % of anti social behaviour cases investigated within designated response times.
- Number of anti social behaviour cases investigated.
- Tenant satisfaction.
- Survey required.

## **Objectives**

- To investigate every report of anti social behaviour and give advice or take action, where necessary, to remedy the problem.
- To adopt a conciliatory rather than confrontational approach.
- To take swift action in cases of serious harassment or victimisation.

## **Processing a Complaint of Anti Social Behaviour**

### **STAGE 1 – Initial Complaint**

Any complaint of anti social behaviour will be logged as 'Serious' or 'Routine'. Serious cases are those involving violence, threats, harassment or criminal activity affecting a locality – a routine case such as noise nuisance may become a serious case if it is persistent.

If 'serious', we will make personal contact immediately if possible or in any event within one working day.

In routine cases, personal contact will be made within ten working days.

## **STAGE 2 – Initial Action**

Following the initial contact, it will be agreed by the Senior Tenancy Services Officer:

- Decide that no further action is required, or
- Write to the perpetrator requesting co-operation to end nuisance, or
- Decide that it is necessary to proceed to Stage 3.

## **STAGE 3 – Collection of Evidence**

Further action will be taken as appropriate:

- Carry out further enquiries/visits as necessary.
- Visit the alleged perpetrator of nuisance.
- Suggest mediation as an option.
- Notify the complainant verbally of action taken.
- Issue diary sheets.
- Agree an action plan.

## **STAGE 4**

If the nuisance persists, the Senior Tenancy Services Officer will decide on what action to take next, taking into account:

- The nature and severity of the behaviour.
- The frequency of the incidents.
- The impact of the behaviour on the complainant.
- The intentions of the perpetrator.
- The circumstances of the perpetrator.
- Other contributory factors.
- Any counter allegations.

Where the tenant or perpetrator of anti social behaviour may suffer from a disability, an evaluation will be undertaken to consider:

- Whether the perpetrator suffers from a disability.
- Whether the disability (if any) causes the behaviour.
- Whether proceedings can be justified.

If appropriate, the complainant will be advised of any other people or agencies that may be able to assist. This could include:

- Police.
- Solicitor or Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).
- CADAS Communication Service.
- Voluntary agencies.

## **STAGE 5**

Further action taken will depend on the assessment that has been made on Stage 4, in regard to the seriousness and nature of the anti social behaviour. It will normally involve one or more of the following:

**Mediation** – a way of dealing with disputes that aims to enable the people involved to reach an agreement that satisfies everyone. Disputes can be sorted out quickly and confidentially. We have a partnership arrangement with CADAS Mediation Service (an independent organisation) to provide this service for our tenants free of charge.

**Acceptable Behaviour Contracts** – these will normally be drawn up by our officers and the Police together with the perpetrator. The idea is that a range of limits on behaviour will be agreed with the perpetrator and drawn up in a signed agreement. Contracts might cover such items as:

- Limits to volume or timing of music being played.
- Curbing offensive or threatening language or behaviour.
- Keeping away from certain people or places.

**Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)** – these may be used instead of an Acceptable Behaviour Contract or if that contract does not work. These orders normally seek to place limits on a person's behaviour such as:

- Using or threatening violence.
- Getting somebody else to use or threaten violence on their behalf.
- Behaviour in the home or local area.
- Bans on drinking or other behaviour in public places.
- Exclusion from a particular area, district or county.

**Injunctions** – an injunction can be obtained through the Court and is normally used to prevent somebody doing a particular thing. The Court may add power of arrest to an injunction and if an injunction is broken, then the guilty person may be fined or even imprisoned.

**Introductory and Demoted Tenancies** – new tenants of Barrow in Furness Housing Department are given an introductory tenancy for a trial period of 12 months. If there are no problems during the trial period, then the tenancy automatically becomes a secure tenancy on the anniversary of the date the tenancy started. The use of introductory tenancies simplifies the process for the authority to evict new tenants who cause a nuisance or break their Tenancy Agreement in some other way.

If a secure tenant or member of their family is carrying out anti social behaviour, Barrow in Furness Housing Department can apply to the Court for Demotion Order. A Demotion Order has the effect of demoting a secure tenancy to a level similar to an introductory tenancy.

**Possession Proceedings and Eviction** – Barrow in Furness Housing Department can apply to the Court for a Possession Order. An order may be 'outright' or 'suspended' and the Court's decisions will be based on the evidence given by housing officers and any other witnesses.

A suspended order means that the tenant cannot be evicted unless they break the terms of the order and so the tenant will remain if the anti social behaviour stops.

In the event of an outright order being granted or further anti social behaviour following a suspended possession order being obtained, an application can be made to the Courts for a warrant of execution to evict the tenant.

## **STAGE 6**

At the conclusion of each case of anti social behaviour, a Senior Tenancy Services Officer will contact each complainant in order to make sure that he or she agrees that the case is at an end and to find out his or her views on how the case was handled. A Neighbour Nuisance Survey form and a stamped addressed envelope will be left with the complainant for completion and return.

## **Supporting Complainants**

In most serious cases, we may consider moving complainants and witnesses to another area or even outside the Furness area.

Where appropriate, we will encourage the Court to offer witness support to minimise the amount of time witnesses have to spend face to face with the perpetrator of any nuisance. In some cases our officers may be able to give statements to the Court on behalf of witnesses in the form of hearsay evidence without revealing details of witness names and addresses. Where our officers have witnessed anti social behaviour themselves, they can give personal evidence to the Court.

We will also consider options such as:

- Additional security (eg. locks, lighting, alarms).
- Provision of a dispersed alarm.
- Access to counselling or referral to Victim Support.
- Request for increased police presence or security patrols in the area.

## **Monitoring Anti Social Behaviour and the Service**

The number of complaints received from and about tenants and those investigated within target times are monitored monthly. The results from completed Neighbour Nuisance forms are also monitored.

In addition, we monitor the number of:

- Cases referred to and taking up mediation.
- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.
- Anti Social Behaviour Orders.
- Injunctions obtained.
- Demotion Orders obtained.
- Possession Orders obtained on grounds of anti social behaviour.
- Evictions carried out on grounds of anti social behaviour.

We will publish these figures annually on our website and in our tenants newsletter.

**Barrow Borough Council  
Housing Department**

**ARREARS PREVENTION & RECOVERY**

**POLICY DOCUMENT**



# HOUSING INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY

## Income Management Policy

The purpose of the policy is to maximise our income collection

## Current Situation

The current approach to managing income and debt recovery is disjointed and review of its procedures is overdue. Income collection levels and recovery procedures are inconsistent because they are currently managed by different policies, accounting systems and operational areas. Leaseholder debts have been treated as business debts whilst Housing and Garage tenants are treated as private debts. Shops have no formal recovery procedure.

## Proposal

The proposal is to change the structure and unite all Housing Income Management streams under one common policy, approach and accounting system. At the same time we will update processes to improve efficiency and update procedures to form one single guidance and operating manual. We will also make better use of our information management systems to pinpoint problem customer groups and those most at risk. Authority has already been granted by the BBC Treasury to bring Leasehold accounts into Housing. It is recommended that some aspects of policy and procedure are made more robust and are described as follows:

1. To place greater emphasis on preventing debts, by actively assisting customers maximise their income and improve their budgeting at pre-tenancy stage, to reduce the cost and resources required to deal reactively with arrears
2. Join up Former Tenant Arrears, Leasehold, Garage & Shop debts in InHouse (management system) so that we have a full picture of a customer's indebtedness
3. Review financial recovery arrangements with Jacobs and debt collection
4. Introduce repair recharging ensuring that repairs are not carried out without payment in advance. Disallow transfers, exchanges and re applications from former tenants unless payment is made
5. Improve partnership working with HB to enable quicker processing and payments and with Council Tax to help with tracing former tenants
6. Review and recharge communal service charges for tenants and leaseholders i.e. lighting
7. Pursue Former Tenant debts through Small Claims Court if the debt is over £200, or where we already have a money judgment order for the arrears, secure an attachment of earnings or a charging order on assets
8. Operate a near zero tolerance policy for shops & garages (except where the garage is integral to the property). Repossess or disallow tenancies with Housing Rent, Service Charge or Housing Benefits overpayments since this would divert funds needed to sustain their tenancy. If the Garage or shop rent account has more than 28 days for rent arrears a Notice to Quit will be served and the tenancy will terminate.
9. Pursue persistent Leaseholder debts by requesting payment of arrears and service charges from the mortgage lender if there is one, or action via the Small Claims Track if not. Where the service charge is disputed we will refer the case to Leasehold Valuation Tribunal to adjudicate.

# HOUSING INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY

## 1. Overall Approach

The approach of Barrow Borough Council to housing income management is firm but fair and aims to sustain tenancies by working with tenants to prevent arrears, ensuring that every opportunity is given to obtain advice and assistance, and that prompt action is taken to minimise any arrears that develop.

Housing Income Management covers the following types of payments:

- Rent (current tenants)
- Former tenant rent
- Leaseholder rent, repair & service charges
- Garage rent
- Shop rent
- Court costs
- Rechargeable repairs
- Housing Benefit Overpayments

Responsibility for Housing Income Management is devolved to The Housing Department (Housing) which has specialist Rent and Debt Teams dedicated to collecting income and working with customers to prevent debt developing.

It is essential that Housing collect the maximum possible income because there is a direct link between the income collected and the services provided to customers. Unpaid debts have a financial cost which will, ultimately, be passed onto customers.

The commitment to collecting income is a beginning to end process. It starts with advice and assistance before a customer becomes a tenant, continues throughout the tenancy and ends only after a tenancy is ended and all debt is paid.

### 1.2 Rent Payments

If a customer does not pay their rent a contact is made promptly to establish the reason for non-payment, offer advice and seek payment to clear the debt before it becomes unmanageable. An affordable repayment plan, based on income and essential expenditure is negotiated.

Housing works with customers who *can't* pay their rent to ensure they receive independent and impartial debt advice and are in receipt of maximum income. It provides additional support to vulnerable customers and works with external agencies (e.g. Social Services, Housing Options, Citizen's Advice Bureau) to support the tenancy and collect income.

Support for tenants, particularly new and first time tenants is critical to prevent debt from accruing. Our approach in this respect is described in shown in detail in Section B (1.1) and in the process chart entitled New Tenancy/Financial Inclusion.

The process is designed around a preventative approach that seeks to maximise tenants & leaseholders income, ensure Housing Benefit is correctly assessed, assistance is given towards the payment of Service Charges (via Department of Works and Pensions) and ensure payments are made when due. Emphasis is placed on early intervention whilst arrears are at a relatively low level in order to prevent the escalation of arrears.

When customers *won't* pay their rent or keep to an affordable repayment plan Housing takes firm action that may result in court action and as a last resort, eviction or forfeiture.

# HOUSING INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY

A wide range of payment options are offered to ensure all customers can pay their rent via a method convenient for them (i.e. by direct debit, at payment offices or post offices, online, by phone or post). The preferred method of payment is direct debit because it is efficient and offers value for money in respect of collection charges.

Rent arrears recovery is based on a staged escalation process, up to and including repossession for non-payment of rent. Leaseholders are sent annual invoices and arrears progressed through a variety of options which could result in a charge being made on their property. Garages and Shops operate a near zero tolerance policy.

Clear procedures are provided to all Housing employees to ensure there is a consistent approach to preventing debt, collecting income, implementing best practice and ensuring all customers have equal access to the service. Procedures are under continuous review to ensure that current best practice is followed.

The policy supports and compliments the BBC's corporate policies and reflects good practice amongst its peers. A user guide manual will reflect the aims in our Business Plan and for completeness includes detailed procedures for the key steps in income and arrears recovery work. We continually benchmark and seek customer views on our performance and use this information to influence policy and practices.

## 1.3 Primary Objectives

**We aim to substantially reduce the level of debt owed by both current and former tenants and Leaseholders in a way that will contribute to the sustainability of the Council neighbourhoods.**

- promptly collect the maximum amount of rental income, service and other charges due from customers to protect the provision of essential services
- focus resources on the areas with the most arrears issues
- involve tenants in our decision making through the Tenant Compact Working Party and the Tenant and Leaseholder representative groups
- provide timely and accurate information to enable tenants to manage their rent account
- prevent arrears wherever possible and provide effective support and assistance to tenants and especially those in financial difficulty to minimise arrears and bad debt
- sustain tenancies and support community cohesion by working in partnership with other agencies
- ensure a professional, consistent and timely approach to arrears management
- adopt modern working practices and policies to achieve value for money

## 1.4 Tenancy Profile

In Jan 2011 3.6% of all adults of working age claiming Job Seekers Allowance in Barrow was 3.6% against the UK average of 3.7%.

We still have some way to go to collect full disability data but it is known that high proportions of tenants have a long term illness or are disabled. The May 2010 averages of Working Age People on ESA or Incapacity Benefit was 10.7% in Barrow against a UK average of 6.7% and the Key Out Of Work Benefits average was 16.3% against a UK average of 12.4%.

Nearly 36% (1,256) of Council properties are flats which have the highest debt level of 41%. Tenants who are single people (27%) and the 40 to 49 year age group (34%) account for the



# HOUSING INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY

highest value of debts. Whilst reducing, tenancy turnover remains high, with 10% (281) of tenancies ending in 2009/10. This high turnover rate adds workload in managing rent arrears as well as voids.

## 1.5 Staff Responsibilities

- Business Support Manager (Rent Account Manager) has overall responsibility for the Rent Account and Housing Management & Information Systems for managing arrears and provides relevant reports and performance data for the Operations Manager
- Operations Manager (Customer Services & Tenancy Services) manages the performance of the team and shares responsibility with the Business Support Manager for the level of income collected
- Tenancy Services Officers -Income & Debt recovery (TSO) monitor arrears cases on their patch, supporting tenants who are having difficulty but taking firm action against those who fail to work with us to resolve their arrears and evictions. They oversee high level debts as instructed by their Manager.
- The Admin Support Team (AST) manage Former Tenant and Leasehold Arrears, as well as our relationship with the County Court and deal with possession applications and provide all administrative support and rent account information.
- Housing Benefit Officer (HBO) works with new and existing tenants ensuring that benefit entitlement is paid and provides advice on budgeting, bank accounts, insurance, savings and loans. They deal with queries relating to Housing Benefit claims and payments and ensure that the Housing Benefit Section is notified of any changes in circumstances, ensures that Housing Benefit claims are processed as quickly as possible and that details and information are entered into the tenants text screen for the benefit of relevant staff.

## 1.6 Continuous Improvement and Learning

It is our objective to continually improve collection rates year on year, working towards Top Quartile performance by 2011/12. We will do this by:

- Having well trained and motivated staff
- Promoting a payment culture
- Working with tenants and community groups to better understand their needs to ensure our services are valued and effective
- Operating effective and challenging performance management frameworks and targets
- Having effective managers who strive for excellence, praise good performance and pro-actively tackle areas of weakness
- Working as one team in the company and in partnership with other agencies.
- Ensuring our In Year collection rates exceed 100%
- Monitoring and analysing our actions for effectiveness and value for money
- Learning from best practice and striving for innovation

# HOUSING INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY

## 1.7 Our commitment to customers

We are committed to maximising income from rent and reducing rent arrears for the benefit of all tenants. We will provide support and advice for those tenants suffering financial hardship, maximise the take up of welfare benefits, and pursue recovery action that is proportionate and fair.

We will:

- Offer a choice of methods and times to pay rent
- Write to you every March to inform you of what your rent and other charges will be for the coming year
- Provide you with a Quarterly rent statement
- Provide you with advice and assistance on completing your Housing Benefit application
- Provide you with information on what to do if you fall into arrears and who to contact
- Write to you if you fail to pay your rent, to tell you how much you owe and to request payment
- Try to contact you in person to discuss payment – either over the telephone, face to face in your own home or in the housing office
- Provide you with details of other agencies that may be able to help you prioritise your debts
- Ask you to make an offer to clear your rent arrears within an agreed timescale
- Not ask you to pay an unreasonable amount but to try to reach an acceptable arrangement for repayment with based on your income
- Deal with your enquiry in a sensitive and confidential manner
- Work with Support Workers, Social Workers or someone legally appointed by you if you are vulnerable or unable to deal with your financial affairs personally
- Contact you at every stage of the rent arrears procedure advising you of the amount of rent outstanding and of any action to be taken
- Provide a dedicated team to assist with Service Charge and leaseholder enquiries
- Inform you throughout the stage of legal proceedings

## HOUSING INCOME MANAGEMENT POLICY

PRIORITY	DEFINITION OF DEBT REASON	REASON FOR PRIORITY
<b>Priority One: Rent</b>	Unpaid rent for a current tenancy	Persistent unpaid rent will result in court action and possible eviction so paying rent arrears must be the first priority for the customer. Initial arrears will be dealt with by contacts, calculating income and essential expenditure, agreeing payment promises and will escalate to legal action if the debt is not paid.
<b>Priority One: Leasehold Service Charge</b>	Unpaid service charge for customers who have bought their flat on a long lease (excludes free-holders)	Payment of service charge must be the first priority as failure to pay could result in the loss of their home by forfeiture of lease. Initial arrears will be dealt with by contacts, calculating income & essential expenditure and agreeing payment promises.
<b>Priority Two: Housing Benefit Overpayment</b>	A Housing Benefit overpayment is an amount of housing benefit awarded to a customer for a period to which it is subsequently determined there is no entitlement to benefit under the Regulations	Income and essential expenditure will be calculated to agree a regular repayment amount that also enables the customer to repay any rent arrears and keep the terms of any court orders. BBC collects most housing benefit overpayments by either deducting a weekly amount directly from their current housing benefit claim or by issuing the customer with an invoice and arranging repayment. The amount deducted may be reviewed to assist the customer to be able to meet their priority debts.
<b>Priority Three: Court Costs</b>	Court costs accrue when BBC Housing takes legal action to obtain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A possession order</li> <li>• Forfeiture of lease (leaseholders only)</li> <li>• Warrant for eviction</li> <li>• Money judgment</li> <li>• Third party debt order</li> <li>• Attachment of earnings</li> </ul>	Unpaid court costs from possession action mean the original possession order is still valid even if the rent arrears have been cleared. The customer must clear the court costs in full to discharge the possession order. Once rent arrears are cleared, the customer should pay an agreed regular sum to clear their court costs.
<b>Priority Four: Rechargeable Repairs</b>	Charge for repairs required as a result of customer damage or neglect to the Council's property	Repairs maybe withheld until payment is made which may impact on quality of life or the condition of the property.
<b>Priority Five: Former Tenant Arrears</b>	Unpaid debt for a previous tenancy which includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unpaid rent</li> <li>• Unpaid court costs</li> <li>• Unpaid garage rent</li> </ul>	We aim to recover all former tenant arrears where it is financially viable to do so. It is important customers clear this debt as they may be excluded from accessing BBC & Cumbria Choice accommodation if they have outstanding debts. If the debtor is not traceable, or the debt is not viable to recover or has been owed for over six years we will write-off the former tenant arrears (see section three). If the debtor is subsequently traced or makes contact, the debt is written back and pursued. Before deciding to write-off, the case may be referred to a debt agency for collection.
<b>Priority Six: Garage/Shop arrears</b>	Unpaid rent for a garage /shop tenancy	Garage tenancies will not be granted to applicants with priority one, two or three arrears, since this would divert funds needed to sustain their tenancy. Whilst a customer has a garage tenancy their rent account must not accrue rent arrears. If the garage rent account has more than 28 days rent arrears a Notice to Quit will be served and terminate the tenancy. This will enable the customer to prioritise paying their rent and keeping their home.

## **Housing Assets - Supplementary Notes**

The Housing Manager will manage the provision, inspection, testing and maintenance of services within the Council Housing stock, shops and community centers in accordance with the corporate procedure relating to legal requirements, hazards and control of risks associated with Electrical and Gas services.

The control and management of Legionella in hot and cold water systems in operational premises is a corporate responsibility and the role of Statutory Duty Holder rests with the Technical Support Unit (TSU). The Council has engaged a specialist water treatment contractor to ensure competent advice and service. The Councils TSU are responsible for the management, maintenance and repair of the housing departments main offices located at Cavendish House and the Mobile Caretakers offices at Middlefield with regard to legal requirements, hazards and control of risks associated with Water, Electrical and Gas services.

### **Housing Maintenance**

The Housing Maintenance Manager shall co-ordinate maintenance contracts in order to maintain safe electrical, water and gas services to the Council housing stock, shops and community centers and will:

#### **Provision**

- Engage a competent contractor to carry out the contract.
- Ensure contractor certification and registration to the relevant regulatory body is in place and relevant to the services required, i.e. Gas Safe and NICEIC
- Validate qualifications and experience of the contractor's managers and site based personnel to establish competency levels.
- Ensure that contractor's carry out their role effectively and in accordance with the agreed service schedules.
- Undertake periodic surveys of the electrical and gas services to ensure all domestic Council housing, shops and community centers are included in the appropriate maintenance contract.
- Ensure that the service installation for domestic properties, shops and community centers are suitable for use within the building.
- Ensure that contractor's risk assessments, method statements and any other records required by legislation are available to the CDM Co-coordinator, contractors, sub-contractors, workers and relevant personnel for reference.
- Ensure that information regarding health and safety matters is provided to the CDM Co-coordinator, contractors, sub-contractors, workers and relevant personnel.
- Oversee the re tender of the contract at the end of its term in accordance with the Councils Procurement Policy and Standing Orders.
- Ensure adequate Public/Employee Liability insurance cover is in place throughout the contract term

#### **Inspection**

- Ensure that the electrical, water and gas services to Council housing, shops and community centers remain in an efficient state of repair and a safe condition.
- Ensure safe systems of work for maintenance, inspection and testing are in place and implemented.
- Monitor contractor's service and compliance standards.
- Maintain service maintenance and inspection records.
- Coordinate any necessary remedial works.
- Carry out any necessary assessments and reviews of the service installation.
- Decommission/commission systems as necessary.

## Testing

- The Gas Technician will ensure that gas services to the Council owned housing stock (Domestic only), shops and community centers are safety checked and tested at no more than twelve month intervals or at each change of occupancy, including;
  - Issuing the gas safety repair order to contractors 75 days before the “12 month anniversary date”
  - Recording all attempts made by the contractor to gain access
  - Contacting the tenant in writing or by other suitable means where access has been denied
  - Hand delivering a final warning notice prior to legal action
  - Taking appropriate enforcement action to gain access via the courts
  - Providing new occupants with a copy of the LGSR sheet
  - Sample checking of the Landlords Gas Safety Record (LGSR) sheets
  - Reviewing risks and sub standard works identified by the contractor
  - Issuing of follow on works to the contractor
  - Liaison with the contractor, Gas Safe and the HSE with regard to RIDDOR incidents and serious gas safety issues
  - Filing and record keeping of the current years LGSR sheets with a Minimum of 4 previous years on file)
- The Contract Supervisor will ensure that electrical services to the Council owned housing stock are periodically checked at ten year intervals, and shops and community centers are periodically checked at five year intervals or at each change of occupancy or mutual exchange request, including
  - Issuing the periodic electrical test order to contractors 75 days before the “5 year anniversary date”
  - Recording all attempts made by the contractor to gain access
  - Contacting the tenant in writing or by other suitable means where access has been denied
  - Checking and validation of the Periodic Electrical Test record sheet
  - Reviewing risks and sub standard works identified by the contractor
  - Issuing of all “Priority 1 & 2”, coded works to the contractor
  - Liaison with the contractor, NICEIC and the HSE with regard to RIDDOR incidents and serious electrical safety issues
  - Filing of electrical test certificates on the relevant house file
- Monitoring customer satisfaction levels
- Authorising payment for all contractor services.