

BOROUGH OF BARROW-IN-FURNESS

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM

Meeting: Thursday 14th June, 2012
at 2.00 pm (Committee Room 4)

Group Meetings at 1.15 pm

A G E N D A

PART ONE

1. To consider the appointment of a Chairman for meeting management.

N.B. Councillor Hamilton was appointed as Chairman of the Housing Management Forum by Council on 15th May 2012. However, Executive Committee on 28th May, 2003 (Minute No. 216) agreed: "That a Member Chairman for the purpose of the Housing Forum be appointed by Council for the purpose of recognising responsibility but retaining the Forum's freedom to appoint an alternative chairman for meeting management if it so wished".

2. To note any items which the Chairman considers to be of an urgent nature.
3. 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.

4. 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 will be available at the meeting.

5. Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 1st March, 2012.
6. Apologies for Absence/Changes in Membership.

FOR DECISION

STRATEGIC PLANNING

- (D) 7. Appointment of Representatives to Working Groups etc.

OPERATIONAL

- (D) 8. Housing Services Delivery Plan 2011/12.
- (D) 9. Welfare Reform Action Plan.
- (D) 10. Tenant Incentive Scheme.
- (D) 11. Request to Purchase ad hoc land: Griffin Estate and Tummerhill Estate.
- (D) 12. Changes to Housing Regulation.
- (D) 13. United Utilities Reward Offer.
- (D) 14. Housing Management Performance Report.

FOR INFORMATION

- 15. Planned Maintenance Programme 2012/13.

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

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM MEMBERS:

Councillors: Hamilton (Councillors' nominated Chairman appointed at Annual Council meeting)

Barlow
Irwin
Johnston
Murray
Pointer
Richardson
Williams

Tenant Representatives: Mrs P. Charnley
Mr M. Burton
Mr N. Hird
Mr W McEwan
Ms C McFadyen
Mr A McIntosh
Mr W Ward
Mrs K Warne
Mrs B Whitby (reserve)

For queries regarding this agenda, please contact:

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Published: 1st June, 2012

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM

Meeting: 1st March, 2012
at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillors Hamilton, Barlow, Derbyshire, Irwin, Murray and Pointer.

Tenant Representatives:- Mrs P. Charnley (Chairman), Mr W. McEwan, Mrs C. McFadyen, Mr A. McIntosh and Mr W. Ward.

42 – Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th January, 2012 were taken as read and confirmed.

43 – Apologies for Absence/Changes in Membership

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Burns and Williams and Mr M. Burton.

Councillor Derbyshire had attended as a substitute for Councillor Burns for this meeting only.

44 – Housing Maintenance Contract 2011/15

The Housing Manager submitted a report requesting Members to consider introducing the option of applying financial penalties to the Housing Maintenance Contract.

It was noted that on 5th November, 2011 Vinci had taken over the delivery of the Contract following a competitive tendering process.

One element of the Contract included 'performance targets' which specified the time in which repairs should be completed. The Contract also included the option to apply penalties should the target not be achieved.

The Housing Manager had reviewed the performance information available and it appeared that the targets had not been achieved. The figures in the table below were taken from the Housing Department's "Core" statistics as at 20th February, 2012 and included all responsive repair classifications:

Priority Band	Late	On Time	Total	% On Time	Target
2 Hr Emergency	20	572	592	96.7%	House mark Upper Quartile
24 Hr Emergency	63	903	966	93.5%	
Routine	451	1096	1547	71.0%	Target 96.1% (2010/11)
Urgent	244	714	958	74.5%	
Total	778	3285	4071	81.0%	

During the mobilisation of a new Contract it would be likely that performance would be affected. The Housing Manager advised that he had recently met with the

Contractor in order to review their ongoing mobilisation. It was acknowledged that performance against timescales was poor. It was also noted that this did not mean that tenants had been dissatisfied with a repair when completed, but rather they had to wait longer than was required.

The Contractor had been tasked with providing a progress report outlining a detailed action plan on how they intended to remedy the problem.

The Housing Manager advised that in view of the time that had passed since the start of the Contract, he was of the view the Contractor had had enough time to introduce their operational arrangements in order to deliver the work in the manner specified. He therefore requested Members you agree the penalty clauses specified in the Contract to be introduced from 1st April, 2012.

RECOMMENDED:- To agree to apply financial penalties to the Housing Maintenance Contract as specified in the contract.

45 – 2012 Disabled Adaptations Contract

The Housing Manager submitted a report updating Members on the tender information received for the 2012 Disabled Adaptation Contract.

It was noted that on 1st December, 2011 the Housing Management Forum had agreed to proceed with tendering of the Contract via the Cumbria Housing Partners (CHP) framework. The Contract had been valued at £300,000 per year and predominantly involved modifications to baths, showers and support handrails, with a small number of external access ramps for wheel chair users.

The CHP framework was OJEU compliant and allowed the Council to appoint a suitable Contractor for a four year period subject to satisfactory service delivery and customer satisfaction levels. The present OJEU threshold for qualifying work was £3,927,260.

It was noted that AB Mitchell Ltd was presently contracted to undertake the existing disabled adaptation work until the end of March 2012. The company presently had 100% customer satisfaction levels.

The Housing Manager advised that eleven Contractors had been invited to tender, however the Council had only received one submission from AB Mitchell Ltd and could appoint them as the preferred Contractor under the terms and conditions of the CHP framework.

As only one tender had been submitted, the Housing Manager advised that the Council had carried out a test to ensure that value for money was being obtained and concluded that as the Office of National Statistics indicated there had been a typical increase of 18% in construction prices between 2008 and 2010, and AB Mitchell Ltd had only increased their prices on the contract by 4.86%, value for money had been demonstrated.

RECOMMENDED:- To agree to the appointment of AB Mitchell Ltd as the Council's preferred Contractor to install disabled adaptations for the period 1st April, 2012 to 31st March, 2016, subject to an annual review of service delivery and customer satisfaction levels.

46 – Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR)

The Housing Manager submitted a report informing Members of the Housing Department's proposal to undertake a tenants' satisfaction survey to enable continued promotion of tenant involvement, benchmarking of performance against other social housing providers and as a basis for action planning in respect of future service review and development.

It was noted that in early 2011, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had signalled the end of the regulatory requirement to carry out the STATUS satisfaction survey on a prescribed basis. Under STATUS, it had been compulsory for housing providers to survey at least every three years.

Housemark, a leading provider of performance improvement services, quickly identified that many housing providers wanted to continue to survey tenants and residents on a voluntary basis and sought to provide a flexible survey based upon the main features of STATUS. Following a consultation involving 261 housing providers (including Barrow Borough Council), a survey named STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) had been developed.

STAR had been summarised as:-

1. A flexible survey which could be conducted in-house or by commissioning an external market research company;
2. It had a number of core questions but users could also include any of the set optional questions or alternatively include their own specifically worded questions;
3. It could be conducted across the whole stock (census) or across a sample of the stock (sampling);
4. It could be adapted to target different categories of tenants and residents, e.g. general needs, supported, older people, leaseholders; and
5. It could be undertaken using a variety of methods such as postal, face to face, telephone or on-line. Postal had been suggested as the primary method with the option to compliment this using other methods.

There were many things to be gained from undertaking the STAR survey including:-

1. It facilitated meaningful tenant involvement;
2. It enabled scrutiny of services and therefore would assist with regulatory compliance in co-regulation;
3. Results could be used to benchmark performance against other housing providers;

4. It would enable effective service review and development;
5. It would assist in promoting value for money as trends in performance could be addressed earlier; and
6. It supported good practice throughout the housing sector.

It was noted that at present, no survey was comparable to the STAR survey. However, this survey had already been adopted by many housing providers including, Local Authorities, Housing Associations and Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs).

The Housing Manager advised that Managers and involved tenants and residents had discussed and agreed that the figures obtained from the 2008 STATUS survey were now out of date and should not be relied upon for benchmarking performance or for service review and development. It had been agreed that STAR should be utilised to obtain an up to date view of how satisfied tenants were with the services they received.

Consideration had been given to the resources required to conduct the STAR survey (in-house versus tendering) and it had been agreed that the task would be better managed by an appropriate market research company.

As part of the budget for 2012/13, £8,000 had been allocated to conduct the survey during 2012.

Having regard to the Council's procurement procedure, three market research companies had been identified and it was proposed that they would be invited to tender for the work based upon a written specification of Housing Department requirements.

RECOMMENDED:- To agree to endorse the proposal to conduct the STAR survey.

47 – Review of Garage Licence Agreements

The Housing Manager submitted a report suggesting that a new Garage Licence Agreement be introduced from the start of the financial year 2012/13 for all new garage licences. The Agreement had been revised to reflect the Housing Income and Management Policy agreed on 3rd March, 2011 and other minor changes to reflect operating arrangements. A copy of the revised Garage Licence Agreement had been appended to the report for approval.

He reported that the Council's processes had had been revised to improve efficiency and update procedures to form one single guidance and operating manual. The Council's approach to housing management was firm but fair and aimed to sustain tenancies by working with tenants to prevent arrears, ensuring that every opportunity was given to obtain advice and assistance, and take prompt action to minimise any arrears that developed.

The preferred method of payment for Council tenancies was direct debit, due to it being efficient and offered value for money in respect of collection charges. The new

Garage Licence Agreement stated that rent payments must be made by direct debit in line with the Housing Income Management Policy. However in the case of existing occupiers, they would be encouraged to pay by Direct Debit but could remain with existing arrangements if they wished to do so.

It was also noted that in order to prioritise debt, Council tenants would become liable to lose the right to have a garage tenancy if their Council house tenancy fell into rent arrears. If the arrears were cleared then the tenant may be eligible to reapply for a garage tenancy.

RECOMMENDED:- (i) To agree the new Garage Licence Agreement to be introduced from the start of the financial year 2012/13 for all new garage licences; and

(ii) To agree for notice to be served on all existing garage tenancies including the new revised licence agreement with immediate effect.

48 – Communities and Local Government (CLG) Homelessness Funding 2012/14

RESOLVED:- To note that this item had been withdrawn.

49 – Planned Maintenance Programme 2011/12

The Housing Manager reported information relating to the Planned Maintenance Programme for 2011/12. The information is attached at **Appendix A** to these Minutes.

RESOLVED:- To note the information.

The meeting closed at 2.50 p.m.

PLANNED INVESTMENTS 2011-12

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	Leasholders affected?
REWIRES	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£253,000	124	£167,985	1.4.2011	Feb-12	K WILSON	£273,929	£273,929	73% Complete	No
BATHROOMS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£300,000	195	£163,154	1.4.2011	Feb-12	AB MITCHELL	£253,000	£300,000	51% Complete	No
KITCHENS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£750,000	314	£594,984	1.4.2011	Feb-12	AB MITCHELL	£717,000	£750,000	80% Complete	No
HEATING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£850,000	300	£479,461	1.4.2011	Feb-12	AB MITCHELL INTEGRAL	£642,233	£642,233	65% Complete	No
RE-POINTING	CUMBRIA ROOFING	£150,000	50	£0	1.7.2011	31.10.2012	CUMBRIA ROOFING	£225,000	£225,000	Pre Start meeting scheduled 24.2.2012	Yes
PAINTING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£200,000	492	£10,415	1.4.2011	Feb-12	GH JONES	£168,270	£168,270	70% Complete	Yes

HOUSING MAINTENANCE COMMITMENTS 2011-12

	Funding Available 2011-12	Gross COMMITMENT	Weekly Available	Gross Comm. as a % funds available
Tenant Demand Repairs	£900,000.00	£511,520.00	£17,307.69	57%
Voids	£200,000.00	£204,435.00	£3,846.15	102%
Gas Servicing	£425,000.00	£155,975.00	£8,173.08	37%
Decoration Vouchers	£35,000.00	£21,111.00	£673.08	60%
Disrepair Claims	£25,000.00	£1,014.00	£480.77	4%
Environmental Impmts	£50,000.00	£29,738.00	£961.54	59%
Disabled Adaptations	£300,000.00	£185,569.00	£5,769.23	62%
Electrical Testing	£175,000.00	£12,814.00	£3,365.38	7%
Door Entry Maintenance	£20,000.00	£31,450.00	£384.62	157%
Total	£2,205,000.00	£1,153,626.00	£40,961.54	

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM		Part One (D) Agenda Item 7
Date of Meeting:	14th June, 2012	
Reporting Officer:	Chief Executive	
<p>Title: Appointment of Representatives to Working Groups etc.</p> <p>Summary and Conclusions:</p> <p>The Council on 15th May, 2012 gave delegated authority to Committees to make appointments to Outside Bodies, Working Groups etc. in accordance with the number and allocation of seats to political groups agreed at the meeting. In the case of the Housing Management Forum this involves appointments to the Tenant Compact Working Group and the Homelessness Funding Working Groups.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>You are requested to make recommendations regarding appointments to the following Working Groups:</p> <p>Tenant Compact Working Group:- three Members (2:1) and three Tenant Representatives; and</p> <p>Homelessness Funding Working Group:- two Members (2:0) and two Tenant Representatives.</p> <p>Note:- (Labour: Conservative).</p>		

Report

At the Annual Council meeting on 15th May, 2012 the allocation of seats in respect of Forums, Panels, Working Groups etc. were agreed.

You are requested therefore to nominate Members and Tenant Representatives to the Tenant Compact Working Group and the Homelessness Funding Working Group for 2012/2013 in accordance with the notional seat allocations outlined above.

Note:- Membership for 2011/12 was as follows:-

Tenant Compact Working Group

Council Representatives (3:0) Councillors Barlow, Burns and Hamilton.

Tenant Representatives – Mrs P. Charnley, Mr M. Hird and Mr A. McIntosh.

Homeless Funding Working Group

Council Representatives (2:0) Councillors Hamilton and Pointer.

Tenant Representatives – Mrs P. Charnley and Mr A. McIntosh.

Background Papers

Nil

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 8
Date of Meeting: 14th June, 2012	
Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager	
Title: Housing Services Delivery Plan 2012/13	
Summary and Conclusion:	
The purpose of this report is to agree the Housing Service's Key Tasks for 2012/13. The report also gives an update on progress of the agreed Key Tasks for 2011/12.	
Recommendation:	
Members comments are requested on the Key Tasks for 2011/12.	

Report

The purpose of this report is to agree the Housing Service's Key Tasks for 2012/13. The report also gives an update on progress of the agreed Key Tasks for 2011/12.

The Key Tasks will form the focus of the service's work during the year and to achieving the Housing Service's vision to "provide well-maintained houses and estates where people choose to live".

As Members will be aware there have been a number of significant changes to the framework in which social Housing is funded and managed and the regulation of the service, as included in the Localism Act.

In drafting the proposed Key Tasks those changes have been used to direct the drafting of the Key Tasks.

Attached at **Appendix A** is an update on the Key Tasks for 2011/12 and proposed Key Tasks for 2012/13.

(i) Legal Implications

The recommendation has no legal implications.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has no financial implications.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(v) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on providing good quality efficient and cost effective services.

(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 Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil

HOUSING SERVICE VISION: “Provide well-maintained homes and estates where people choose to live”

KEY TASKS FOR THE HOUSING SERVICE IN 2011/12: UPDATE

HOUSING OBJECTIVE	AREA OF WORK	CURRENT POSITION	PROPOSED ACTION WITH TARGET DATE FOR EACH	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION	UPDATE
Providing excellent customer-focused and accessible services	Homelessness: Advice and Assistance	The current county-wide Homelessness Strategy ended in 2010.	To work with other Cumbrian authorities through the Homeless Task Group to agree new strategy.	Janice Sharp	Dec 2011	No progress has been made on refreshing the Cumbria wide Homeless Strategy. Officers will develop a Strategy focused on the Borough.
Investing and maintaining housing and estates to the best possible standard with resources available	Housing Maintenance Contract	Existing contract to end November 2011.	Consider and prepare for the re-tendering of the Housing Maintenance Contract	Les Davies	4 Nov 2011	Completed
Prudential financial management to ensure financial resources are used effectively and with regard to value for money	Homelink Service	Service provided under contract with the Supporting People Commissioning Body (SPCB). Following reduction in client base, the service is running a deficit. Discussions are ongoing with SPCB regarding viability of the service.	Prepare report outlining options for the service.	Colin Garnett	Sept 2010	Completed
	Review of Housing Revenue Account		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to consultancy paper 'Council Housing: A Real Future Prospectus' Continue to work with ARCH on progress of review and review Barrow Plan in light of outcome of the review. 	Colin Garnett Colin Garnett	4 July 2010 March 2012	Completed
Investing in Communities	Anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remains a key priority to tenants. New Service Level Agreement for advice now in place with ASB Action Ltd. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete a consultation exercise with users of the service to review and agree local standards. Review operational procedures. 	Janice Sharp Janice Sharp	Summer 2010 Dec 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and procedures completed. Recommendations submitted to HMF 3 March 2010 Completed.
	Housing Strategy	<p>The Council has participated in the development and implementation of a Cumbria Housing Strategy. This is due to end in 2010.</p> <p>Consideration of how the strategy should be updated is required.</p>	To work with other Cumbrian councils through the Cumbria Housing Officers' Group to consider approach and re-draft the Strategy.	Colin Garnett	Autumn 2011	Completed

HOUSING OBJECTIVE	AREA OF WORK	CURRENT POSITION	PROPOSED ACTION WITH TARGET DATE FOR EACH	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION	UPDATE
Investing in Communities (continued)	Financial Inclusion	Housing officers have improved the targeting of our resources to help assist tenants to manage their finances and minimise rent arrears. We have developed our relationship with the CAB to provide advice surgeries in our offices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to work with other agencies to develop a credit union within the Borough that is available to all. To work with other agencies to introduce a loan service for social tenants within the Borough. 	Colin Garnet	March 2011 Autumn 2010	Completed Registration of a new Credit union is ongoing. Housing Service no longer directly involved but look to promote the new Credit Union with tenants when it is operating.
Involving & Empowering Residents	Delivery of Community Involvement Strategy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Define/develop strategic aims Review existing involvement structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Consultation Involvement/Influence Develop priorities for action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide customers with wide variety of involvement opportunities Keep customers informed of decisions, plans and changes that affect them. Maximise potential for customers to influence decision-making at all levels Build customer and community capacity to influence service delivery Achieve high customer satisfaction and value for money in involvement activities Review/develop service standards Review/develop performance management framework Monitoring/review/evaluation of strategy 	There is no current formal strategy in place although there are existing processes which give some structure to this area of work.	Set up strategy group of tenants and residents to look at each numbered point 1-6. It is anticipated that the group will have its first meeting in June 2010 with two further monthly meetings thereafter in July 2010 and August 2010 to deal with points 1-5. Point 6 is follow-up action to review whether the strategy has been delivered and will take place by January 2012.	Joanne Tyson	Sept 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The deadline for this task was extended at the request of the Strategy Group who felt that more meetings were required. The strategy draft has been completed and circulated to the Tenants' Forum, Tenant Participation Compact Working Party and staff.

HOUSING OBJECTIVE	AREA OF WORK	CURRENT POSITION	PROPOSED ACTION WITH TARGET DATE FOR EACH	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION	UPDATE
Involving & Empowering Residents <i>continued</i>	Annual Report to TSA <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review of services against national standards conducted by service managers Service managers produce brief report/action plan to Housing Manager following reviews Results shared with Tenants' Forum Report prepared 	As this is a new requirement, there has been no work done in this area although regulatory reporting is embodied into the structure from previous regulatory reporting requirements.	Each service manager will take responsibility for policy review and implementation of any action to meet the standard. The findings of all reviews and proposed actions will be presented to Tenants Forum in September 2010 for information and approval, where appropriate. This process will be co-ordinated by a lead officer who will then report to the TSA.	Joanne Tyson	October 2010	Annual Report completed and delivered to all tenants in September 2010, in advance of the TSA deadline. Completed.
	Progress Status Survey <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify organisations for selective tendering Consider tenders/quotes Make decision on tenders/quotes Commission survey Evaluate results and publish 	Two providers identified to date. The Department for Communities and Local Government have asked providers to temporarily suspend their plans for the STATUS Survey	Subject to further guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government, identify further providers and seek approval from Tenants' Forum on who should be commissioned. Aim to commission by end of July 2010 with evaluation of results by September 2010. These dates are subject to change.	Joanne Tyson	Nov 2010 (may be subject to change)	This is no longer required.
	Develop Local Standards/Others <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Seek interest for new Local Standards Steering Group. Set up Steering Group – tenants/residents/staff. Agree Local Standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home Tenant involvement and empowerment Neighbourhood and community Develop a performance management framework 	As this is a new requirement, no formal work has occurred in this area.	A Steering Group/Resident Scrutiny Panel will be formed to develop local standards. The Housing website, newsletter and TRA groups can be used to generate interest for the Steering Group. The group is expected to have up to 10 members and will be up and running by August 2010 with further monthly meetings until January 2011.	Joanne Tyson	January 2011	Local Standards have been agreed by Local Standards Group of tenants and staff. They were printed in Autumn/Winter tenants' newsletter to ensure all tenants consulted. Standards will be launched on 1 April 2011 in compliance with TSA deadline. Completed.

NEW PRIORITIES FOR HOUSING SERVICE 2012/13

HOUSING OBJECTIVE	AREA OF WORK	CURRENT POSITION	PROPOSED ACTION WITH TARGET DATE FOR EACH	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION	UPDATE
Prudential financial management to ensure financial resources are used effectively and with regard to value for money	Housing Revenue Account	Self financing now in place	Officers to review the 30 year business plan	Colin Garnett	March 2013	
	Localism Act	To consider the provisions within the Act and how they relate to the provision of Housing Services	Report to HMF with proposals in August 2012	Colin Garnett	March 2013	
Providing excellent customer-focused and accessible services	Welfare Reform	Significant changes to welfare Reform is proposed.	To progress and develop Housing Services to mitigate any risk to the income of the Housing Service	Jane Coles	ongoing	
	To review the approach to Tenant Involvement with regard to the changes introduced by the Localism Act	The Council has agreed a Community Involvement Strategy which will require updating	Await outcome of the Scrutiny Committee consideration of the matter before progressing	Joanne Tyson	March 2013	
Involving & Empowering Residents	STAR Survey	The Council has agreed to complete a STAR Survey to obtain tenants views of the service which is currently being commissioned.	On completion of STAR Survey to consider the information obtained and agree changes required to the Service to reflect tenants comments	Joanne Tyson	March 2013	

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 9
Date of Meeting: 14th June, 2012	
Reporting Officer: Jane Coles, Business Support Manager	
Title: Welfare Reform Action Plan	
Summary and Conclusion:	
<p>The purpose of this Report is to advise the Forum of changes to Welfare Benefits, including Housing Benefit, to be introduced from April 2013 which will have an impact on the management of the Housing Service. It seeks to agree a number of actions in order to respond to the changes and provide additional information or assistance to tenants and mitigate as far as is practical the possible risks to the income of the Housing Service.</p>	
Recommendation:	
<p>Members are recommended to note the information contained in the Report and in particular the potential risk to the Housing Service's Income.</p>	

Report

The purpose of this Report is to advise the Forum of changes to Welfare Benefits, including Housing Benefit, to be introduced from April 2013 which will have an impact on the management of the Housing Service. It seeks to agree a number of actions in order to respond to the changes and provide additional information or assistance to tenants and mitigate as far as is practical the possible risks to the income of the Housing Service.

Members should note that this Report is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to Welfare Reform generally, but rather Officers' initial thoughts on changes that will have an impact on the relationship between the Council and tenants. As the changes progress and Officers gather further information any action plan agreed will need amending or updating.

In considering the Council's approach it is important to balance the responsibilities of the Council as a landlord and the wellbeing of tenants. Whilst we do not have access to comprehensive income records of all our tenants we do know that by far the largest percentage of tenants receive Housing Benefit. Any changes to the Benefit system of the magnitude being progressed poses a risk to the Housing Service's income and the ability to provide service levels agreed with tenants.

1. Universal Credit

The concept of Universal Credit is in its simplest form based on the concept that all benefits will be rolled up into "one payment" to a person. It will include a housing element so that tenants will receive assistance towards paying rent in the Universal Credit and not as now in the form of Housing Benefit.

By far the greatest risk and challenge posed to landlords is that assistance for rent payment will be therefore paid direct to the tenant. This change is due in October 2013.

As at the 31st March 2012 the Housing Service collected 75% of our income from Housing Benefits. At 2012 rents this will equate to £7.1 million. Of the current 2700 tenancies, 2039 currently receive some form of Housing Benefit.

The removal of direct payment to the Council will be a challenge to the Housing Service and consideration needs to be given on how we assist tenants to budget their Universal Credit and understand the various payment options available to them to pay their rent, many of whom may not have had to do so because of the previous arrangements with Housing Benefit.

The DWP have confirmed all payments to customers in receipt of Universal Credit will be made electronically. With reference to research by the Chartered Institute of Housing they suggest around 70% of social housing tenants do not have a basic bank account. If applied to our tenant base it would suggest around 1890 households without a bank account.

As a Local Authority Social Landlord I would suggest we have a responsibility to adopt an approach to helping our tenants in terms of financial awareness and budgeting skills as contained in our recently agreed Income Policy.

The challenge we face is ensuring our tenants are equipped and understand they are required to pay their rent and do so.

Proposed Actions with regard to the introduction of Universal Credit:

Action 1

The role of the Housing Options and Income & Debt Recovery Officers will be to take the lead in providing customer focused support during the sign up process and in assisting tenants having difficulty paying their rent.

We will seek to maintain and introduce new procedures to ensure tenants have access to the best information and products available to them.

Action 2

We will work in partnership with organisations as appropriate to ensure they receive financial guidance on the following issues:

- Basic Bank Accounts (options for direct debit payments)
- Budgeting
- Affordable Credit (e.g. promotion of Credit Unions)
- Affordability Assessments (currently provided in conjunction with the CAB)

The objective of our approach will be help tenants maintain rent payments in the most suitable manner to avoid them falling into arrears.

2. Under-Occupation

From April 2013 tenants of working age in social housing will see their benefits reduced if they under-occupy their home. The benefit will be reduced by a national percentage rate depending on how many bedrooms are considered surplus to requirements. A 14% reduction will be made for those who under occupy their home by a single bedroom and a 25% reduction for two bedrooms or more.

The assessment of requirements will be against the same criteria currently used for Local Housing Allowance: a bedroom will be allocated for a single adult or couple; every two children under the age of 10 or each child over 10 if they are different genders.

Whilst we have adopted a “knowing our Customers” procedure to capture details of tenants living in our property, the data is not complete. From the information we currently have available approximately 526 (20%) of tenants may possibly be affected.

Although there are no planned exemptions to the new size criteria, on 14 December 2011 the Government announced that it would add an additional £30m per year to the discretionary housing payment budget from 2013/14. This is aimed at supporting two specific groups of social tenants through the changes.

The first group are disabled people who live in significantly adapted accommodation and who may need additional support to remain in their existing homes. The second group are foster carers, including those who need to keep an extra room when they are in between fostering.

Proposed Action for Under-occupation:

Action 3 - Improving our information base.

Housing Benefit has agreed access to data of household members' names, age, sex and relationship to tenant and address. Once the HB claim reference number is cross referenced to the Tenancy reference it should be possible to populate and update the records in In-House so that we have more meaningful customer profiles for the future. It is hoped that we can update our tenancy files in June 2012 and pinpoint customers at risk.

We will identify our vulnerable customers on Housing Benefit by June 2012 from our customer profiling information and submit a list of our vulnerable customers to HB once the exemptions have been agreed.

Action 4 Best use of stock

The Housing Options Team is already starting to play a vital part by applying a ‘best use of stock’ strategy to their lettings. This is managed through the Choice Based Lettings scheme where the adverts clearly state where preference will be given and limiting the number of customers receiving Housing Benefit who under occupy our properties.

Cumbria Choice CBL Policy is currently under review and due regard will be given to changes in line with the Welfare Reform and Localism Acts. A further report will be submitted to HMF following completion of the review of CBL.

We will identify those customers that may under occupy their household and the actual numbers of customers under occupying and plan to visit within six months (Jan 2013).

- How many of those identified would be interested in moving
- Where and what type of accommodation they would interested in moving to

Customers living in a property that is under-occupied by two or more rooms will be given priority as they are subject to higher Housing Benefit deductions.

Once we have identified those customers who are in the 'at risk' bracket and who want to move to smaller accommodation we can begin to assist with practical advice and support, taking customers to view potential properties etc.

We will promote the mutual exchange programme to increase membership of Homeswapper and promote an incentive scheme to create awareness of the changes and encourage customers who wish to move to come forward.

3. Changes to Non Dependant Deductions

Tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit are already experiencing an increase in the level of non-dependant deductions.

As at April 2012 we had 68 tenants who have non-dependant deductions.

Action 5

Our Income and Debt recovery Team have a number of initiatives aimed at creating awareness of the issue, e.g. a "birthday card" scheme aimed at families with children approaching 18.

4. Welfare Benefits Cap

Within the Universal Credit proposals is the introduction of a "cap" in terms of the level of Benefit.

The DWP have advised me there are four tenants who will be affected. The DWP have written to the Tenants concerned.

5. Communication Plans

As can be seen from the above the changes will be significant to many tenants. From informal discussion with tenants and their representatives at various meetings over the last few months, it would appear that whilst there is some knowledge of the changes it would be appropriate for the Housing Service to ensure it compliments any information produced by the DWP to ensure tenants are aware of the implications from a tenants perspective.

We therefore propose to progress the following:

Action 6

- Understanding tenants' awareness so we can develop our action plan.
We will look to carry out a series of consultation events to gain understanding of the changes and in particular tenants' views on under occupation and their intentions and their level of understanding on Universal Credit.
- As information becomes available communicate with tenants who appear to be at particular risk due to the changes and ensure they plan accordingly.
- Through the regular Housing Matters magazine update tenants on the changes to raise awareness.

- Review of standard correspondence to ensure the changes are communicated to tenants e.g. Sign up Packs, Rent Statements and letters from the Income and Debt Recovery Team.

Summary

In agreeing the above action plan the Housing Service will begin to prepare for the Welfare Reforms and endeavour to ensure tenants are as informed as can be for them also to prepare. Attached at **Appendix B** is a summary of the Action Points proposed at this time which I suggest will be reviewed as we gather information and from our experiences in delivering it over the next few months.

(i) Legal Implications

The recommendation has no legal implications.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has no additional financial implications.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(v) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on providing good quality efficient and cost effective services.

(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 Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil

Housing Service Welfare Reform Action Plan

Universal Credit	<p>Action 1: The role of the Housing Options and Income & Debt Recovery Officers will be to take the lead in providing customer focused support during the sign up process and in assisting tenants having difficulty paying their rent. We will seek to maintain and introduce new procedures to ensure tenants have access to the best information and products available to them.</p> <p>Action 2: We will work in partnership with organisations as appropriate to ensure they receive financial guidance on the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Bank Accounts (options for direct debit payments) • Budgeting • Affordable Credit (eg promotion of Credit Unions) • Affordability Assessments (currently provided in conjunction with the CAB) <p>The objective of our approach will be to help tenants maintain rent payments in the most suitable manner to avoid them falling into arrears.</p>
Under-Occupation	<p>Action 3: We will identify our vulnerable customers on Housing Benefit by June 2012 from our customer profiling information and submit a list of our vulnerable customers to HB once the exemptions have been agreed.</p> <p>Action 4: (best use of stock) We will identify those customers that may under occupy their household and the actual numbers of customers under occupying and plan to visit within six months (Jan 2013). We will action the mutual exchange programme to increase membership of Homeswapper and consider an incentive scheme to create awareness of the changes and encourage customers to come forward who wish to move.</p>
Changes to Non Dependant Deductions	<p>Action 5: (Benefits Liaison) Income and Debt recovery (Benefits Liaison) has a number of initiatives aimed at creating awareness amongst households potentially at risk, ie. a birthday card scheme aimed at children approaching 18 and the age of dependence which is when non dependent deductions kick in.</p>
Communication Plans	<p>Action 6 We will look to carry out a series of consultation events to gain understanding of the changes and in particular tenants' views on under occupation and their intentions and their level of understanding on Universal Credit. As information becomes available communicate with tenants who appear to be at particular risk due to the changes and ensure they plan accordingly. Through the regular Housing Matters magazine update tenants on the changes to raise awareness. Review of standard correspondence to ensure the changes are communicated to tenants, eg Sign up Packs, Rent Statements and letters from the Income and Debt Recovery Team.</p>

Part One

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 10
Date of Meeting: 14th June, 2012	
Reporting Officer: Jane Coles, Business Support Manager	
Title: Tenant Incentive Scheme	
Summary and Conclusion:	
<p>The purpose of this report is to consider introducing a Tenant Incentive Scheme (TIS). The objective of developing a TIS is to promote, encourage and reward tenants in their role in contributing to positive tenancy management and the contribution they make to their communities.</p>	
Recommendations:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the content of this report.2. Approve in principal a Tenant Incentive Scheme on the scale and in the areas outlined which is appropriate to Barrow Borough Council and its tenants and delegate responsibility to develop the necessary procedure and practices to process the matter with the Tenant Compact Working Party.3. Agree the implementation strategy.	

Background

The purpose of this report is to consider introducing a Tenant Incentive Scheme (TIS). The objective of developing a TIS is to promote, encourage and reward tenants in their role in contributing to positive tenancy management and the contribution they make to their communities.

Following a recent enquiry to the Leader of the Council, he has asked me to prepare a Report to consider introducing a TIS. It is also appropriate to give consideration to the introduction of a TIS which is in keeping with the aims of the Social Housing Reforms introduced under the Localism Act.

Under the Localism Act there is increased scope for tenants to have considerably more influence in relation to repairs and maintenance through the development of a tenant cash back scheme in which tenants are rewarded for undertaking minor repairs.

Whilst this Council has not previously adopted a TIS, such schemes are now more widely used by Social Landlords as a means of improving housing management services.

Report

The Council has on an ad-hoc basis introduced a small number of initiatives to encourage positive tenancy behaviour.

Examples include a scheme to encourage tenants to provide feedback following completion of a repair and in 2011 we ran a six month trial Incentive Scheme to increase Direct Debit payments. In this instance the offer was a monthly draw of 3 x £50 retail vouchers. We started with 295 Direct Debit payers which rose to 467 and now averages 422. In the same period arrears as a percentage of rent owed reduced marginally.

With reference to other Reports on this Agenda and our operational experience, it should be noted:

- Every void incurs around £2,500 in cleaning, repair, rent loss and management costs.
- Welfare Reforms impose penalties on tenants who under occupy dwellings. We presently have 526 tenants who may be affected by this change.
- Current Tenant Arrears are £204,000 (756 accounts). 80% of our tenants receive Housing Benefit. This equates to 70% of our income. The introduction of Direct Payments (Universal Credit) will substantially increase our exposure to debt.

There are many and various Tenant Incentive Schemes run by Local Authorities and other social providers, examples of which are:

- Assistance of up to £2,000 cash payment to incentivise downsizing.
- Monthly cash prizes from £50 to £1,000, faster responsive repairs, enhanced improvement programmes for being a 'good tenant'.
- £25 to spend on flowers, wine or chocolates for nominated 'good neighbours'.
- £50 to £100 'goodbye' at the end of a tenancy if the property is left in a reasonable condition.

Principles Considered for a Tenant Incentive Scheme

To establish an excellent Tenant Incentive Scheme we have considered several fundamental ingredients, that is:

- The scheme should be clear, transparent, open, fair and accessible to all customers.
- Savings and costs should be transparent and understood by all.
- Appropriate to Barrow Borough Council Housing.
- The scheme is low cost and easy to administer.
- The rewards are what people want.

Recommended Reward Schemes

1. Good Tenant

Clear rent account for 6 weeks* **or**
Maintaining arrears payment plan for 12 weeks **or**
Access for gas inspections **or**
Direct Debit payments

Return of survey (drawn after survey)

Quarterly prize draw 1 x £100, 2 x £50 (High Street vouchers)
Enhanced maintenance programme; e.g. choice/additional units if all of the above are maintained.

Cost: £1,000 per annum

* Further consideration needed for tenants on full HB or owed HB until Direct Payments are introduced

2. Good Neighbour

Nominations by residents, validated by housing officer

Quarterly £25 to spend on flowers, wine or chocolates

Cost: £100 per annum

3. Goodbye

'Thank you' payment to tenants who meet our conditions when ending their tenancy with us

£300 (High Street vouchers)

Assumptions

10% off all voids	-21
Void Cost	£52,500
Payments	£6,300

Potential Benefit £46,200 per annum

4. Downsizing

For tenants downsizing by one bedroom or more and from 3 & 4 bedroom properties

- Higher priority for re-housing/direct offer of suitable properties (consistent with Cumbria Choice policy)
- Removals *
- Decoration and Flooring Vouchers *
- Supply of white goods such as cookers, washing machines and fridges *
- Disconnection/reconnection of white goods i.e. electric cooker and washing machine*
- To a maximum value of £1,000

Assumptions

Under occupiers	526
5% wishing to move	26

Cost: £26,000 per annum

Costs /Benefits

It is expected that the schemes 1-3 will be at least self financing and that at best the 'goodbye' incentive would make a sufficient savings to fully support scheme 4.

Implementation Strategy

In agreeing the proposals outlined in this Report, Officers in conjunction with the Tenant Compact Working Party, will:

- Develop a simple process to identify 'good tenants & neighbours'.
- Develop process to recognise tenants who qualify for a 'goodbye' payment.
- Advertise and publicise the scheme.
- Develop clear terms and conditions and rules relating to conditions of entry and the draw.
- Regular reviews of progress and reports to committee.
- 'STAR' survey of tenants to assess their awareness of the schemes and their preferences for rewards.
- Consider the development of a cash-back scheme for tenants undertaking minor repairs.

(i) Legal Implications

The recommendation will comply with competitions regulations.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has some cost implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has financial implications. If the number taking up the opportunity to downsize outstrips the saving generated from a reduction in void repairs/losses. Monitoring of the procedures will be introduced.

The cost of implementing the 'Good Tenant' and 'Good Neighbour' initiatives will be met from savings achieved generally in the HRA.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(v) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

The recommendation has a positive impact on providing good quality efficient and cost effective services by improving the number and choice of family homes.

(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 Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil

Part One

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 11
Date of Meeting: 14th June, 2012	
Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager	
Title: Request to purchase ad hoc land: Griffin Estate and Tummerhill Estate	
Summary and Conclusion: The purpose of this report is to consider two separate requests to purchase Council-owned land adjoining property owned by the applicants.	
Recommendations Members are asked to decline these requests because both areas of land in question form part of the larger green area provided for the benefit of the community on both estates.	

Report

The purpose of this report is to consider two separate requests to purchase Council-owned land adjoining property owned by the applicants.

The Housing Manager has delegated authority by virtue of Executive Committee 1st October 2003 to consider and agree where appropriate the sale of ad hoc land adjoining gardens of owner-occupiers living on Council estates. Should a potential purchaser wish to appeal my decision they have a right of appeal through this Forum.

It is our practice in the first instance to indicate to any potential purchaser whether I think it is appropriate to sell the land, prior to going through the full sale process which includes arranging a valuation and the applicant seeking planning permission.

In the case of these two applications, I would suggest to Members it is inappropriate to sell the land. In both cases the areas of land in question form part of a larger green area on the estates concerned and to sell them would be to the detriment of the original design of the estate and the benefit of the green areas provided.

I would comment specifically regarding each as follows:

43 Westminster Avenue

Attached at **Appendix C** is a plan showing the house in question and the area of land the applicant is requesting to purchase. As you can see from the plan, the area is situated within a larger green area which was specifically designed as such when the estate was constructed. The sale of the land would fundamentally change the street scene of the area and remove green open space on the estate. I would therefore not recommend the sale.

I have written and advised the applicant of my view and he has submitted an appeal requesting a review of the decision.

65 Pennine Gardens

Attached at **Appendix D** is a plan showing the house in question and the area of land the applicant is requesting to purchase. Again, as you can see from the plan, the area is situated within a larger green area which was specifically designed as such when the estate was constructed.

The sale of the land would fundamentally change the street scene of the area and remove green open space on the estate. I would therefore not recommend the sale.

I have written and advised the applicant of my view and she has submitted an appeal requesting a review of the decision. The applicant sites the reason for wishing to purchase the land is because it is being used as a dog lavatory, people access the land to dispose of rubbish over the railway fence and to add privacy to her garden. The applicant also states that fencing has been provided to flats on Pennine Gardens to provide more defensible space for the properties concerned.

I would suggest to Members that whilst noting the applicant's comment, it does not detract from the reason for my suggesting it should be declined. I would comment in the case of fencing provided to the rear of Pennine Gardens flats whilst it does give some defensible space, it does not create individual gardens for the properties, it merely provides barriers for people to be able to walk through.

(i) Legal Implications

The recommendation has no legal implications.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has no financial implications.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(v) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on providing good quality efficient and cost effective services.

(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

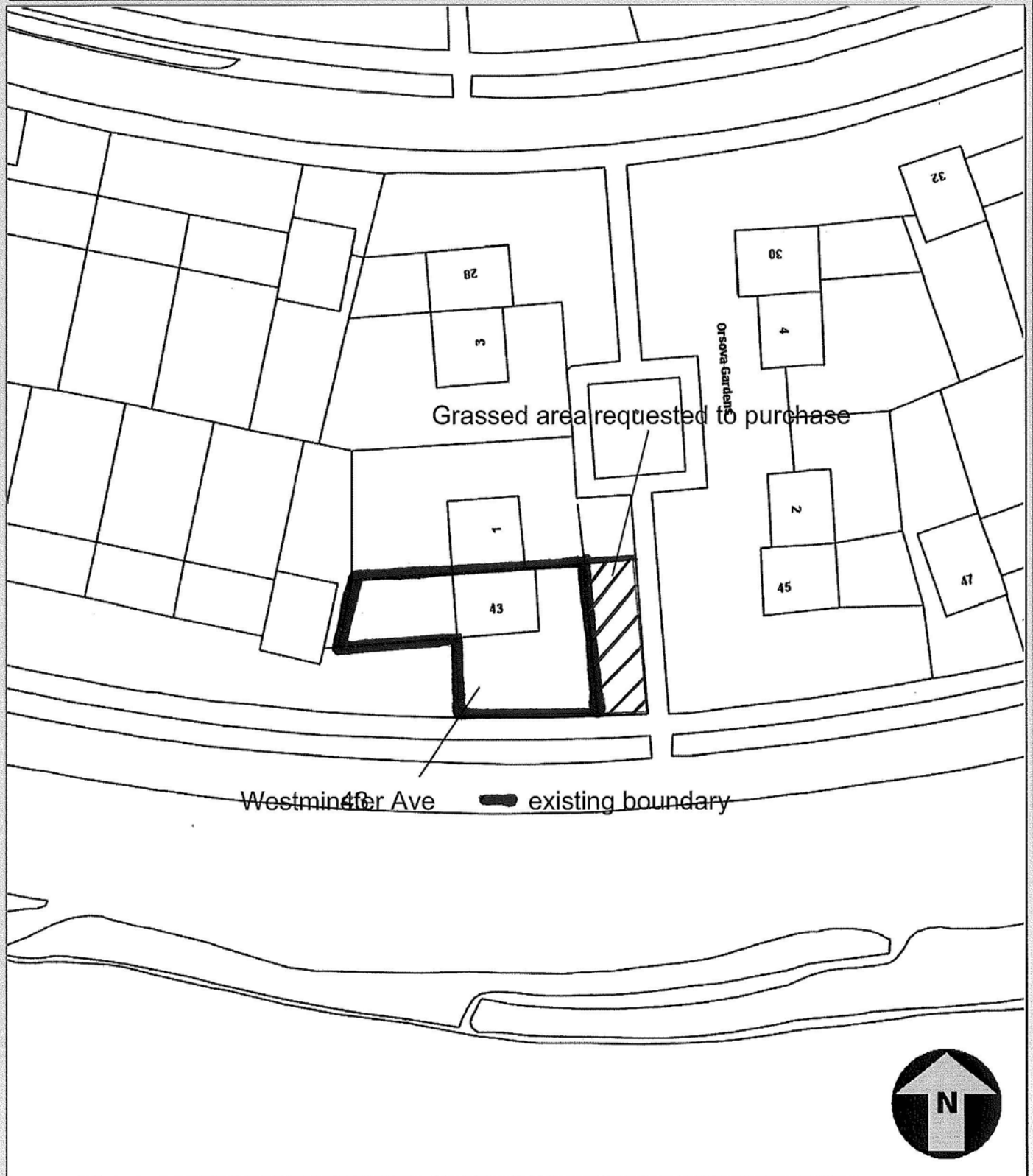
The recommendation has no adverse effect on the Health and Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil

43 Westminster Avenue

Description of map



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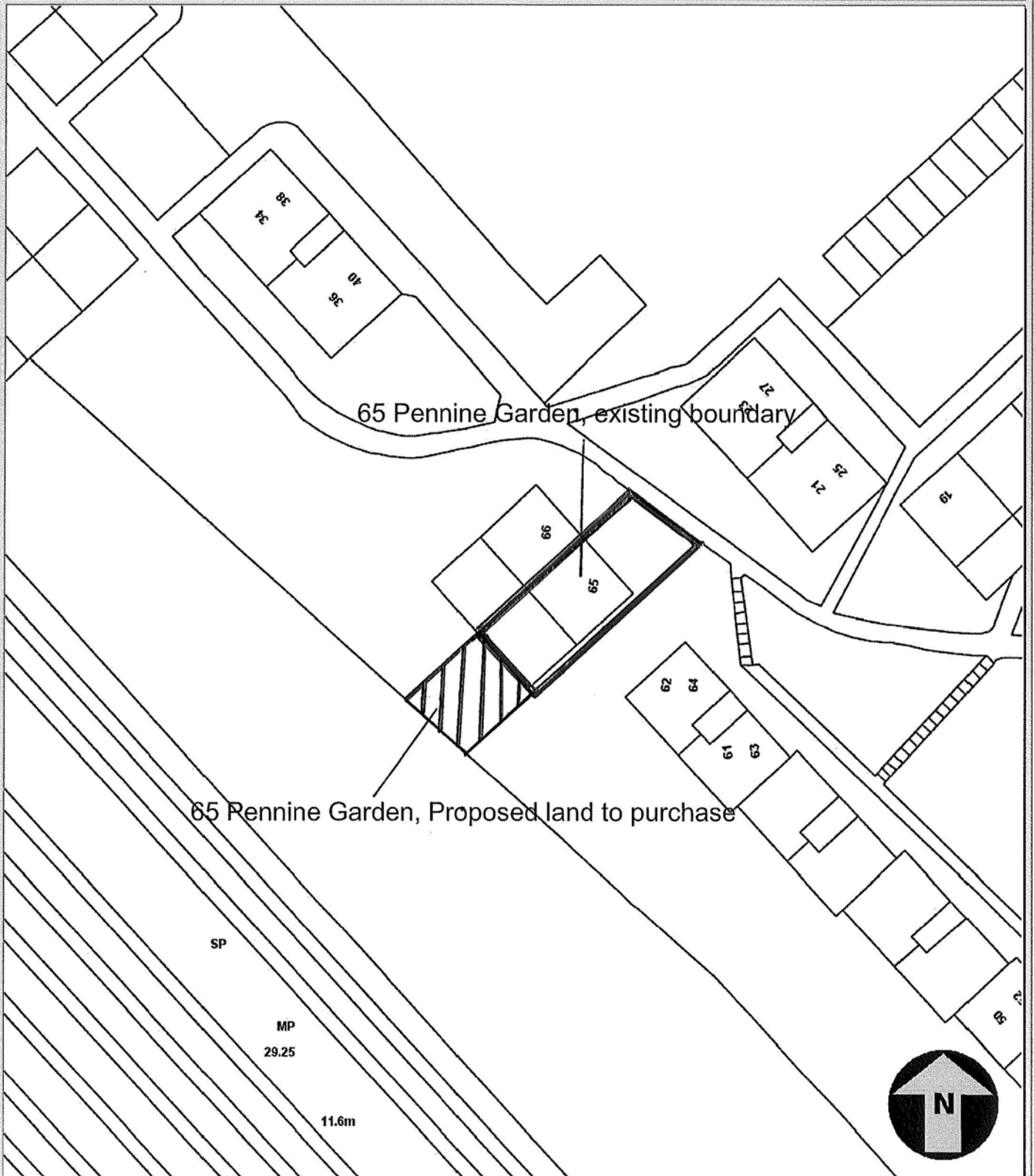
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65 Pennine Gardens

Description of map



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HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 12
Date of Meeting: 14th June, 2012	
Reporting Officer: Joanne Tyson, Community Involvement Manager	
Title: Changes to Housing Regulation	
Summary and Conclusion:	
<p>The purpose of this Report is to inform you of the changes to Housing Regulation which came into force on 1 April 2012. It also seeks to advise Members that the Council has agreed for the year 2012/13 that Scrutiny Committee will include tenant participation as an area of work.</p>	
<p>In providing this information the Report also goes on to suggest that Officers await the outcome of Scrutiny Committee before considering any changes to the existing tenant involvement processes that are in place.</p>	
Recommendation:	
Members are recommended to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the information regarding changes in regulations.2. Agree consideration as to what changes need to be made to our tenant involvement practices being progressed awaiting Scrutiny Committee's considerations of the matter.	

Report

The purpose of this Report is to inform you of the changes to Housing Regulation which came into force on 1 April 2012. It also seeks to advise Members that the Council has agreed for the year 2012/13 that Scrutiny Committee will include tenant participation as an area of work.

In providing this information the Report also goes on to suggest that Officers await the outcome of Scrutiny Committee before considering any changes to the existing tenant involvement processes that are in place.

Background and Introduction

In April 2012, the responsibility for housing regulation passed from the Tenants Services Authority (TSA) to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

The new regulatory framework has been developed from the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and remains set around the principle of co-regulation, encouraging providers to undertake robust self-regulation which incorporates effective tenant involvement.

This report contains a summary of the key changes.

For further reading, a full copy of *'The regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012'* and associated annexes can be downloaded from the following websites:- www.tenantservicesauthority.org or www.homesandcommunities.co.uk .

The Old System

The TSA system of regulation was operational between April 2010 and March 2012. Social housing landlords were required to self assess their services against a set of up to six standards and demonstrate to tenants how they were meeting them or intended to meet them.

In addition, there was a requirement to produce an annual report and develop “local offers” which were essentially standards which reflected what people felt were important at a local level.

Landlords were also subject to Inspection although due to the short period that the TSA were operating, very few were.

The New System

From 1 April 2012, the HCA took over the housing regulation role. Co-regulation remains at the heart of the framework which means having a solid partnership between tenants, landlords and those who govern the organisation to deliver positive results for tenants. Specifically, for Barrow Borough Council, it means that councillors who govern housing services are responsible for:-

1. Meeting the standards set out in the framework.
2. Delivering the organisations social housing objectives, including being transparent and accountable.
3. Supporting tenants to both shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold councillors to account.

The standards from the old system have been added to and undergone some amendment. They are now called ‘economic’ and ‘consumer’ standards. Economic standards cover rents, governance and financial viability, and value for money. Consumer standards cover tenant involvement and empowerment, home, tenancy and neighbourhood/community.

The regulator is going to focus regulatory activities on the economic standards. Local authority owned housing will not be subject to economic regulation by the HCA so Barrow Borough Council will not need to deal with this aspect of the regulatory standards.

With regard to consumer standards, the regulator no longer has an active role in monitoring providers service performance. There will be no automatic inspection regime and intervention will only occur where there is a risk of serious harm to tenants. This has been referred to as the ‘serious detriment test’. Since 1 April 2012, there are known to have been 19 enquiries to the regulator under the ‘serious detriment test’ and all have been refused. No details of these complaints have been released but what can be drawn from this is that the regulator is keen for issues to be resolved between landlord and tenant at a more local level.

The requirement for local offers and annual reports is retained.

With regard to Barrow Borough Council’s position, it appears that as long as an effective system of co-regulation is in operation and the authority is meeting the consumer standards, there will be no intervention by the regulator.

Key Changes to Consumer Standards

Some of the key changes to these standards are as follows:-

1. There is a greater focus on local resolution of complaints and disputes, including a role for tenant panels in resolving complaints.
2. There is an increased scope for tenants to have considerably more influence in relation to repairs and maintenance through the development of a tenant cash back scheme in which tenants are rewarded for undertaking minor repairs.
3. There is a greater focus on promoting mutual exchange to assist tenants in moving to properties appropriate to their housing needs.
4. Local authorities have flexible tenure options (shorter fixed terms tenancies of not less than 5 years or by exception tenancies of not less than 2 years, in addition to any probationary period) if they choose to use them and must have clear and accessible lettings policies detailing the types of tenancies granted..

Responding to the Changes

It would be appropriate with the changing regulations that the Council consider its current tenant involvement policy and procedures. However, it has recently been agreed that the Council Scrutiny Committee includes tenant involvement as a topic of work for the current financial year. I would therefore suggest we delay taking any action to amend the current tenant participation processes until after the work of the Scrutiny Committee is completed.

(i) Legal Implications

Barrow Borough Council must comply with regulatory requirements which have been developed from the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and therefore have legislative effect.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has no additional financial implications.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(v) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on providing good quality efficient and cost effective services.

(vi) Equality and Diversity

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

(viii) Health and Wellbeing Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the Health and Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Further information on websites:- www.tenantservicesauthority.org or www.homesandcommunities.co.uk .

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 13
Date of Meeting: 14th June, 2012	
Reporting Officer: Jane Coles, Business Support Manager	
Title: United Utilities Reward Offer	
Summary and Conclusion:	
<p>The purpose of this Report is to ascertain Members' views on whether you feel it is prudent for the Housing Service to take advantage of an incentive scheme which could provide additional income to the HRA for the benefit of its customers.</p>	
<p>We have been approached by United Utilities with a proposal under which we would collect their water charges in return for a fee. Additional work in consultation with tenants is required for financial approval for such a scheme.</p>	
Recommendation:	
<p>I would recommend to Members that they agree to the Housing Service Business Support Manager investigating further the benefits of this incentive scheme and presenting a further report as to whether to participate or not.</p>	

Report

The purpose of this Report is to ascertain that Members' views on whether you feel it is prudent for the Housing Service to take advantage of an incentive scheme which could provide additional income to the HRA for the benefit of its customers.

We have been approached by United Utilities with a proposal under which we would collect their water charges in return for a fee. Additional work in consultation with tenants is required for financial approval for such a scheme.

The target date is 1st April 2013. The benefits to United Utilities are transparent:

- Reduce their collection costs
- Concentration of their resources on their core business of managing water supplies

The potential benefits to Housing and its customers are:

- £10 incentive discount per customer
- £26 per property collection fee (£92k) per annum
- Opportunity to increase the number of tenants who pay by direct debit as United Utilities offer a £5.00 discount incentive and achieve a take up of 30% compared to our 10%
- Opportunity for our Housing Officers to offer customers advice on the benefits of changing to meters. One and two bedroom flats would probably reduce their water charges.

The basic process is that we would add the charges to rent account as a separate rent element and collect alongside rents and other service charges. United Utilities would invoice us once per annum. The fee has agreed provision for void properties and bad debt.

We have carried out an initial mapping exercise which provided the profile of benefits. However there are several actions required before the proposal could move forward:

- Consultation with Tenants (including Leasehold Tenants)
- Amend (if required) Tenancy Agreement
- Assessment of the impact of Universal Credit/direct payments
- Provide Members with a detailed cost/risk of the proposal for approval
- Ensure that the legal agreement is properly reviewed.

I would suggest to Members that it is important we give consideration to any opportunity to increase the level of resources within the Housing Service that can be used for the benefit of supporting services to tenants. Before engaging with such opportunities, however, I think it is important that the Housing Service assess the views of its tenants and residents and how such schemes operate.

At this time I would ask Members views on the matter and whether further work should be done on investigating this proposal and report further.

(i) Legal Implications

The recommendation has no legal implications as yet.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications as yet.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has no financial implications as yet.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications as yet.

(v) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on the quality of housing.

(vi) Equality and Diversity

The recommendation has little impact on users with disabilities and Furness Equality and Diversity Partnership will be consulted.

(vii) Health and Well-being Implications

The recommendation has no impact on the Health and Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 14
Date of Meeting: 14th June, 2012	
Reporting Officer: Jane Coles, Business Support Manager	
Title: Housing Management Performance Report	
Summary and Conclusion: The end of year performance information is attached together with a brief commentary to assist members in their understanding of the key trends.	
Recommendations: Members are asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. see through the current sanctions with the repair contractor VINCI and closely monitor their performance;2. apply additional resource and support to reduce the number of Responsive and Void, Tenancy Turnover and prevent arrears in line with the Income Management Policy;3. include additional measures to monitor volume and priority of Responsive (Tenant Demand) repairs; and4. remove the vulnerable people measure as we will no longer provide this service.	

Background

The end of year performance information is attached at **Appendix E** together with a brief commentary to assist Members in their understanding of the key trends. Normally we would only provide this information as an Information Report, however, as it is year-end we thought it appropriate to incorporate it into the report with some narrative comment about the performance.

The indicators were agreed 20th January 2011 and reflect Housing Management's overall efficiency, customer satisfaction and compliance. The targets shown are the Housemark 2010/2011 'median' or average cross sector performance scores which we use to provide a useful benchmark.

The Value for Money section cannot be completed until final accounts are available.

Both the targets for 2012/13 and the Value for Money section will be updated in the first quarter Housing Management Performance Report (30th August).

The Customer Satisfaction section will be updated following the 'STAR' survey in the autumn.

Report

There are three significant factors which may have adversely impacted on the performances this year and they are:

- The introduction of Choice Based Lettings
- The changeover in main repair contractor
- The downturn in the economy

Strengths

Overall arrears performance has improved though Current Tenant Arrears have increased by £26k it still falls within target and needs to be considered as part of the total debt of current, former and gross write offs which collectively have fallen by £24k .

Gas Safety, Decent Homes and SAP rating measures have all improved this year and are better than target

Homelessness advice cases have seen a 56% increase and a reduction in the numbers going on to make a homeless application.

Weaknesses

The Responsive and Void repair performances are down significantly on the previous year which could be attributed to a fall off in performance of the outgoing contractor and teething problems with management and IT systems with the new contractor.

Measures proposed and agreed in January are in effect and there appears to be an improvement

Other performance measures suggest that we have a much higher than average ratio of emergency / urgent repairs (61% v 47%) to all Tenant Demand repairs and a higher ratio of repairs per property compared to the norm (4.2 v 3). Both of these factors increase pressure on contractor's delivery times and on cost.

Rent loss due to dwelling, garage and shop voids has risen.

Relet time for dwellings increases from 28 to 37 days.

(i) Legal Implications

The recommendation has no legal implications.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation should improve the financial position.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no, minor or significant implications.

(v) Key Priorities or Corporate Aims

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on providing good quality efficient and cost effective services.

(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 Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Housing Management Performance Report

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

APPENDIX E

Performance Indicator	Actual 2008/9	Actual 2009/10	Actual 2010/11	Actual 2011/12	Target (Median)
£ Rents Collection					
£ Rent collected	£8,278,622	£ 8,546,587	£8,738,448	£9,134,875	£ 9,141,931
Rent collected as % of rent due	97.57%	98.46%	103.47%	97.62%	99%
£ Current Arrears (dwellings)	£219,901	£165,452	£155,726	£181,230	£175,679
£ Former Arrears (dwellings)	£150,501	£123,432	£103,418	£92,499	£128,081
Write Offs (Gross)	£146,643	£129,709	£114,706	£75,538	£42,803
Tenants evicted for rent arrears	24	18	13	6	6
Current tenants arrears % of rent owed	2.59%	1.91%	1.79%	1.96%	3.16%
Former tenants arrears % of rent owed	1.77%	1.42%	1.18%	1.02%	1.29%
£ Rent arrears Garages	£4,500	£4,094	£3,289	£1,824	£ 3,750
£ Rent Arrears Shops	£29,714	£28,131	£27,524	£16,602	£ 25,000
Void management					
Tenancy Turnover %				10.3%	8.05%
Total number of re-lets during the period benchmarked			268	278	217
No. of Voids	378	281	264	227	218
Average relet time for dwellings (days)	30	31	28	37	28
£ rent loss through vacant dwellings	£ 116,363	£ 101,530	£85,909	£ 100,227	£ 109,685
£ rent loss due to vacant garages		£4,873	£4,907	£5,098	£ 4,500
£ rent loss due to vacant shops		£4,253	£4,844	£16,546	£ 4,000
% properties accepted on first offer	NA	NA	73.9%	86.4%	70%
Loss per Void (Rents, Repairs, Mgt & Maintenance)	NA	NA	£ 2,556	£ 2,846	£2,000
Maintenance					
No. Repair Orders issued (Tenant Demand)	10644	13,068	10,890	11,587	9,197
Responsive & Void repairs per property			4.2	4.3	3.4
P1 & P2 as a % of total repairs	NA	NA	50.5%	61.7%	47.5%
% all responsive repairs completed on time	NA	81%	92.5%	87.3%	96.3
P1 % emergency repairs completed on time	89%	97%	98.9%	94.6%	96.7
P2 % urgent repairs completed on time	78%	88%	89.6%	78.9%	94.6
% routine repairs completed on time	79%	93%	90.6%	85.0%	94.1
Average end-to-end time for all reactive repairs (days)	7.2	12.6	12.6	12.25	8.2
Percentage of repairs completed 'Right First Time'	NA	NA	NA	78.5	88.8
Appointments kept as a percentage of appointments made	NA	97%	97.13	77%	96.8
Appointments made as a percentage of repair orders (exc gas & voids)	NA	100%	100%	NA	94.1
Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate	97.9%	99.5%	99.2%	99.89%	99.8%
Percentage of homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard	0.2%	0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
*Average energy efficiency rating of dwellings (based on SAP 2005)	75.4%	76.20%	68.3	69.2	68.90%
Equality & Diversity					
ASB cases reported	126	213	85	82	143
Percentage of closed ASB cases that were successfully resolved	NA	13.1%	72%	91%	88%
% Vulnerable people achieving independent	61.7%	87%	97%	100%	77.2
% Diversity Information : Age	100%	99.90%	99.88%	100%	100%
Gender	100%	100%	100%	100%	98%
Ethnicity	24.8%	66.90%	94.70%	95%	75%
Disability	24.8%	42.40%	44.59%	100%	75%
Sexuality	24.8%	43%	41.70%	56%	55%
Religion or belief	24.8%	43%	43.05%	57%	55%
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints upheld	0	NA	25%	22%	NA

Performance Indicator	Actual 2008/9	Actual 2009/10	Actual 2010/11	Actual 2011/12	Target (Median)
Satisfaction					
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the landlord's services overall	87%	87%	87%		83%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs and maintenance	88%	88%	88%		79%
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account	76%	76%	76%		64%
Percentage of new tenants satisfied with the allocation and letting process		NA	NA		NA
Percentage of residents satisfied with estate services	81%	81%	81%		82%
Value for Money -	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	
Direct Costs per property	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	
Major & Cyclical works	£ 1,231.3	£1,406	£1,294		£1,241
Responsive Repairs	£ 606.8	£400	£455		£424
Void Repairs	£ 93.1	£132	£144		£176
Rent Arrears & Collection	£ 68.1	£68	£53		£71
Community Involvement	£ 26.7	£31	£27		£46
Anti Social Behaviour	£ 25.9	£37	£29		£38
Neighbourhood Mgt (Estates/Tenancy)	£ 101.3	£95	£34		£66
Housing Options	£ 53.8	£45	£43		£37
Leasehold	£ 7.4	£31	£50		£136
Total staff turnover	5.1%	8%	10.3%	7.0%	8%
Ave. working days lost / sickness absence	11.3	14.0	22.3	14.0	10.5

Housing Property	2010-11	Dispersed
HSE	1293	0
FLATS	1251	10
BUNGALOWS	156	0
TL DWELLINGS	2700	10
LEASEHOLDS	202	
GARAGES	484	0
SHOPS	21	0

2011-12	Dispersed
1290	0
1258	10
157	0
2705	10
202	
484	
20	

SOLD PROPERTIES	2010-11	No
HSE		4
FLAT		2
LAND		
TL		6

2011-12	No
	3
	1
	1

HOMELESSNESS	Actual 2008/9	Actual 2009/10	Actual 2010/11	Actual 2011/12
Homeless ave. days in temporary dispersed accommodation	56	47	46	59
Homeless ave. days in temporary B&B accommodation	18	22	31	20
Homeless Total Cases Closed			616	752
Homeless Advice			216	339
Homeless Prevention	NA	NA	174	114
Homeless Applications			226	185
Homeless Successful Preventions	NA	NA	146	85
Eligible Homeless (Owed a full duty)	NA	NA	27	29

HOUSING REGISTER	Actual 2008/9	Actual 2009/10	Actual 2010/11	Actual 2011/12
Applicants on housing register	56		1700	
Cumbria Choice Register				1745

PLANNED INVESTMENTS 2011-12 - YEAR END EXPENDITURE

AGENDA ITEM 15

SCHEME	CONTRACTOR OR SUPPLIER	AVAILABLE BUDGET	NO OF PROPERTIES	YEAR END EXPENDITURE	START DATE	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE	CONTRACTOR	COMMENTS	Leasholders affected?
REWIRES	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£253,000	124	£268,837	1.4.2011	Feb-12	K WILSON	100% Complete	No
BATHROOMS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£300,000	195	£308,278	1.4.2011	Feb-12	AB MITCHELL	100% Complete	No
KITCHENS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£750,000	314	£721,563	1.4.2011	Feb-12	AB MITCHELL	100% Complete	No
HEATING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£850,000	300	£813,464	1.4.2011	Feb-12	AB MITCHELL INTEGRAL	100% Complete	No
RE-POINTING	CUMBRIA ROOFING	£150,000	50	£0	1.4.2012	31.10.2012	CUMBRIA ROOFING	25% Complete - Awaiting invoicing	Yes
PAINTING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£200,000	492	£187,786	1.4.2011	Feb-12	GH JONES	100% Complete	Yes

HOUSING MAINTENANCE COMMITMENTS 2011-12 - YEAR END EXPENDITURE

	Funding Available 2011-12	YEAR END EXPENDITURE	Weekly Available	Gross Comm. as a % funds available
Tenant Demand Repairs	£900,000.00	£667,106.00	£17,307.69	74%
Voids	£200,000.00	£222,918.00	£3,846.15	111%
Gas Servicing	£425,000.00	£293,069.00	£8,173.08	69%
Decoration Vouchers	£35,000.00	£24,623.00	£673.08	70%
Disrepair Claims	£25,000.00	£1,385.00	£480.77	6%
Environmental Impmts	£50,000.00	£32,885.00	£961.54	66%
Disabled Adaptations	£300,000.00	£231,329.00	£5,769.23	77%
Electrical Testing	£175,000.00	£17,226.00	£3,365.38	10%
Door Entry Maintenance	£20,000.00	£36,200.00	£384.62	181%
Total	£2,205,000.00	£1,526,741.00	£40,961.54	