

BOROUGH OF BARROW-IN-FURNESS

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM

Meeting: Thursday, 28th November, 2013
at 2.00 pm (Committee Room No. 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. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations by Members and/or co-optees of interests in respect of items on this Agenda.

Members are reminded that, in accordance with the revised Code of Conduct, they are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests or other registrable interests which have not already been declared in the Council's Register of Interests. (It is a criminal offence not to declare a disclosable pecuniary interest either in the Register or at the meeting).

Members may however, also decide, in the interests of clarity and transparency, to declare at this point in the meeting, any such disclosable pecuniary interests which they have already declared in the Register, as well as any other registrable or other interests.

4. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meetings held on 29th August and 31st October, 2013.

5. Apologies for Absence/Changes in Membership.

FOR DECISION

OPERATIONAL

(D) 6. Rent Strategy.

(D) 7. Scrutiny of Anti-Social Behaviour Policies and Procedures.

(D) 8. Cumbria Choice: Choice-Based Lettings Scheme.

- (D) 9. Brook Street Garage Area.
- (D) 10. Relocation of Housing Service.
- (D) 11. Void Property Gas and Electricity Meters.

FOR INFORMATION

- 12. Performance Information Report
- 13. Planned Investment & Planned Maintenance 2013/14

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

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM MEMBERS:

Councillors: K Hamilton (Chairman)
D Barlow
M Irwin
A. Johnston
F G Murray
R J Pointer
J Richardson
K Williams

Tenant Representatives: Mr M Burton
Mr A McIntosh
Mr W Ward
Mrs K Warne
Mrs. G. Giddings (substitute)

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM

Meeting: Thursday 29th August, 2013
at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillors Hamilton (Chairman), Barlow, Irwin, Johnston, Murray, Pointer and Williams.

Tenant Representatives:- Mr A. McIntosh, Mr W. McEwan and Mr W. Ward.

15 – Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th June, 2013 were taken as read and confirmed.

16 – Apologies for Absence/Changes in Membership

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Richardson.

Mr W. McEwan had replaced Mrs K. Warne for this meeting only.

17 – Sense of Place

The purpose of the Housing Manager's report was to request Members to consider and agree support of potential schemes to bid for funding through Cumbria Housing Partners "Sense of Place" Fund (SofP).

The SofP fund was managed by Cumbria Housing Partners (CHP). Resources for the fund accrued from a small percentage of a landlord's fees for operating through the Cumbria Housing Partner arrangement.

The money that had now accrued and was applicable to this area was in the region of c£39K. The fund increases by in the region of £15/20K per year.

The Fund contributed to the refurbishment of the old Library building on Ormsgill which was now run successfully by a voluntary committee providing activities for young people.

All applications for SofP were considered on their individual merits by the Board of CHP. A key consideration was that any proposal had the potential to deliver a positive contribution to their locality and created a "legacy" for the area.

There were a number of other criteria to be demonstrated but included in summary, the project must be in a neighbourhood where landlord investment was already taking place, should be initiated by the community, should have a significant construction element and be able to demonstrate match funding.

Following discussion with a number of community groups the Housing Manager was aware of a number of potential schemes being developed where it may be appropriate to support a bid for SofP funding.

Details of the schemes were as follows:-

- **Four Groves Community Association**

The Association was based in offices and community rooms at Suffolk Street. The premises were owned and leased from the adjoining shop keeper. Through their centre they offered a range of activities for the local community.

The Association was currently considering taking over the adjoining shop and operating it as a “community shop”. It would be staffed by volunteers and would sell food produced on the Four Groves' community allotments, clothing and small furniture.

The aim was to provide funding to support the Association and its operations and provide the opportunity for skills training within the shop.

At present the Association had approximately eighteen months remaining on their lease of the premises they currently occupied, but the landlord had agreed to extend the existing lease for a further ten years should the shop project be successful.

The Association had made an application to the Scott Trust and had been successful in securing £15K of funding.

The potential bid to SofP would be up to the value of £15K.

- **Griffin Community Centre**

The Centre was owned by the Council but all activities were managed by a voluntary committee. For some time the Committee had been concerned about the running costs of the centre. Whilst the central heating had been checked and serviced it was old and not as efficient as more modern systems. In addition, any consideration of upgrading heating should be considered alongside improving the energy efficiency of the centre generally.

The Committee had started to raise funds to contribute towards the upgrade of the heating system. In discussion with Cumbria Housing Partners it may be appropriate to consider assisting the Management Committee to make a bid to the SofP fund to contribute to the necessary heating and energy efficiency works and to ensure the viability of the centre to continue to operate.

The potential bid to SofP would be to the value of £25K.

- **North Walney Residents' Association**

The Association was developing a proposal for a Children's Activity Park to be located next to the skate park on Mill Lane/West Shore Park.

Estimates had been obtained for the scheme which would be to the value of approximately £60K. The development of such a scheme in that particular

location would reflect the Council's Strategy for Playgrounds and it may be appropriate for it to be maintained by the Council in the longer term.

At the present time the Association was considering their options in terms of other funding opportunities to contribute to the cost of the actual scheme and any potential funding that may be available from the SofP fund.

Without the availability of any alternative funding, to progress at the present time would require SofP to fund the full cost of the scheme of in the region of £60K.

In summary, the Housing Manager suggested that all three possible schemes had merit and would, should they satisfy all the criteria required, provide a legacy that would be a valued resource to their communities.

The Four Groves project had already received financial support and appeared to meet the criteria required to be a successful application.

The Griffin Community Centre scheme was in its infancy and discussions were arranged with SofP to discuss how this could be progressed to the point of being a successful application.

The North Walney scheme was also in its infancy. The total value of the scheme would represent a number of years' contributions to SofP by the Council in terms of landlord's contribution to the SofP fund. Whilst the Association intended to pursue further the options for funding to contribute towards the scheme, further work was required on the potential funding.

In considering the above proposals, the Housing Manager suggested that it was appropriate for the Council to endeavour to support schemes across the Borough as far as was practical. To agree to support a scheme that would take up a number of years' contributions would deter the opportunity to do so and he suggested although each scheme should be considered on its own merits, for future guidance, that schemes should only be supported where funding of SofP represented approximately one year of landlord's contribution.

With regards the above three schemes, the Housing Manager therefore suggested that the Council supported an application by the Four Groves and Griffin Community Centre to be progressed as soon as practical, and agree to support in principle the North Walney scheme once alternative funding schemes could be identified to contribute towards or provide match funding, to the value of half the currently estimated cost.

RECOMMENDED:-

1. To agree to support applications from Four Groves and Griffin Community Centre;
2. To agree in principle to support the North Walney Scheme when alternative funding is available to contribute towards the actual cost of the scheme and

subject to the Council's Housing Service being able to demonstrate joint funding; and

3. To agree that the Housing Manager be directed in future when discussing possible schemes to adopt the principle of developing scheme which represent approximately one year of contributions from "Sense of Place".

18 – Accommodation for 16/17 year old applicants

The purpose of the Housing Manager's report was to consider and seek approval to make a two bedroom property available for the purpose of providing interim accommodation for 16/17 year olds. The purpose would be to assist in the development of services for this age group in conjunction with on-going work involving a number of agencies to improve the housing options for this age group.

Under the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order 2002, this Council may have responsibility for homeless 16/17 year olds. It was also the case that some young people may be the responsibility of Children's Services. It was acknowledged that a homeless 16/17 year old was likely to have multiple issues that needed consideration and each young person needed to be assessed accordingly.

Over the last twelve months there has been an on-going dialogue between various agencies, including Children's Services, INSPIRA, other district councils, etc. regarding accommodation for 16/17 year old people.

The work had been progressed at two levels, at County level, with the objective of agreeing a Young Persons' Protocol for the County, to include the principles of how various agencies would work together, and to include an action plan for each local council area to reflect resources and facilities available in their area.

On a second level, a working group in Barrow had been considering a process for agencies to work together for the benefit of the young people having regard to the accommodation resources available in the Borough.

At both County and local level, the work focused on working towards a "pathways model" to ensure the response to young people was consistent and each agency understood their respective roles.

In Barrow the group had recognised the need for a wider range of housing options to respond appropriately to young people. Impact Housing association had secured funding to progress the opportunities for developing a Foyer in Barrow and had established a working group specifically for this purpose.

However, there was no one solution to the problem of ensuring the appropriate housing offer for all young people. A Protocol based on a pathways model would provide a framework to assist in the process but a range of housing solutions would be required to reflect the range of requirements of young people. The County's Children's Services were leading on a range of possible solutions to this.

At the present time many young people were accommodated by agencies such as Project John and at Silverdale Street. Both agencies provided additional support and training opportunities and when they assessed the individual as having the skills to maintain a tenancy of their own, assisted them to find suitable accommodation that could quite often be a Council tenancy.

One of the options being considered was to supplement the Silverdale Street facility by providing a “shared tenancy” for residents to move on into where it was assessed as being a suitable option for the young person. It was envisaged the young person would at the appropriate time move on to their own permanent tenancy.

There were various models previously used by social landlords to facilitate shared tenancies.

At the present time an operational plan was under consideration as to how such a scheme could be operated that would ensure suitable support, supervision, management and financial arrangements could be established to operate a property on this basis.

In order to progress the matter further the Housing Manager asked Members to support this proposal and for a property to be made available for this purpose subject to the Housing Manager being satisfied the necessary arrangements were in place.

RECOMMENDED:- To agree that the Housing Manager seek to identify a suitable two bedroom property in the Council’s Housing Stock for the purpose of providing interim accommodation for 16/17 year olds subject to appropriate financial, management and support services being put in place.

19 – Adelphi Court Flats

The Housing Manager reported that Adelphi Court was a three-storey block of deck access flats with a communal entrance. All flats had one bedroom. The property was situated on Storey Square and was a single building situated within an area of predominantly private accommodation.

For some time the flats had been the focus of anti-social behaviour and had posed significant management issues. More recently a number of occupiers had vacated the property and seven of the 12 flats were now vacant. A further flat would become vacant in the next few weeks.

Over the last few years the turnover of flats had been high with the length of tenancies being relatively short. For example, excluding one tenancy of seven years, the average length of tenancy was seven months. Seven vacancies represented a turnover of 65% against a norm of 10% in all stock.

Identifying potential new tenants for the flats which were available has been progressed through the Choice Based Lettings process but it had been the case that no bids had been received.

Officers could consider making offers to applicants by using the option of “direct lets” and approach applicants on the waiting list without the normal advertising process. It was clear, however, these flats were not popular and to make direct lets may result in them not being an applicant’s preferred choice and perhaps add to the problems that had developed in this particular block.

The Housing Service’s agreed vision was “to provide well maintained homes and estates where people choose to live”. Whilst Adelphi Court had received various upgrading over the recent past unfortunately the popularity of the flats in their current format had declined.

He therefore, suggested in view of the number of vacancies it would be appropriate to consider the future use of these properties and not to take further action to let the vacancies until the Council had had the opportunity to consider the matter further.

RECOMMENDED:-

1. To agree the suspension of lettings of the vacant flats in Adelphi Court; and
2. To agree that the Housing Manager consider options for the future use of the properties and report back to the Housing Management Forum as soon as practical to ensure a longer term decision was reached before the end of the financial year.

20 – Void Properties

The purpose of the Housing Manager’s report was to bring to Members’ attention the level of voids that had arisen since the start of this financial year and to propose additional action to manage them to ensure they were available for letting as soon as it was practical to do so.

Since April an increase in the number of vacant properties arising had been seen.

From the Performance report, the number of voids during April and June this year was 94, compared with the same period last year of 76. The rate of voids on a weekly basis could fluctuate throughout the financial year.

However since June, the experience for July and August had been similar with a higher than normal level of properties becoming vacant. Based on the first three months of the financial year, should the trend continue at the same rate this could result in a total void figure of 376, against a total of 277 in 2012/13.

Whilst his report was about seeking agreement to ensure vacant properties were managed effectively, it was worth considering why the rate of vacancies had increased and whether it was a short term situation or may become the norm. For Members’ information, a table providing details of why vacancies had arisen since the start of the year was attached as an appendix to his report.

The Housing Service had assisted a number of tenants to downsize within the housing stock to reflect the changes in Housing Benefit. This accounted for 9 of the

properties becoming vacant. There were a significant number who had also moved to private rented and a number who had moved in with family. It may be the case a number of these could be as a result of the Housing Benefit changes.

At the present time, the Housing Manager suggested that the increase in the rate of vacancies may be in part be attributable to the Housing Benefit changes since April. The trend may be for a “short time” until tenants had relocated to smaller properties where it was possible to do so. Of course the properties they leave tend to be larger properties and potentially more expensive to repair. Officers would continue to monitor the trend.

On a practical level, however, the increased number of voids had an impact on resources, both financial and from a practical management approach for both the Housing Service and its principal contractor, Vinci.

Internally, over the last few months, Officers had reviewed and amended where necessary the Housing Services void management in conjunction with its principal Contractor to ensure the process was appropriate and met the Housing Services purposes.

Whilst the conclusion was that the internal management arrangements were appropriate, this did deal with the matter of the increased number of voids.

At the present time, the principal Contractor was resorting to sub-contractors to deliver the void repairs required. It had been the case that the Maintenance Team had also resorted to using a third party Contractor on an odd occasion over the last few months with particularly problematic void property. This could, in turn, be time consuming to appoint a Contractor on a job-by-job basis.

In view of the current situation, the Housing Manager suggested it appropriate for a secondary Contractor to be appointed to complete voids on an “as and when necessary basis”. Not to do so would continue to place greater than expected work levels on the principal contractor and the Housing Services efforts to improve delivery of all repair services generally.

From a financial perspective, the greater the number of voids, and the longer they were vacant, would impact on the income of the Service. In the current HRA budget a figure of c£200K was agreed for such properties. Also an additional c£190K was made available to progress upgrading of properties where appropriate whilst a property was vacant.

Since April the committed expenditure was £78,204.22. It would appear the monies allocated would be appropriate to meet the likely cost of voids and, again, Officers would continue to closely monitor expenditure. It would be the case however, proposals to upgrade property whilst vacant would have to be delayed until the longer term position became clear.

RECOMMENDED:-

1. To note the contents of the report; and

2. To agree that the Housing Manager continues to deliver void repairs through the primary contractor, but progress the appointment of a secondary contractor to complete void repairs should and when the need arises.

21 – Housing Maintenance Policy

The Housing Manager reported that the Council had recently agreed additional resources be made available for Garages, Fencing and public realm improvements. The purpose of his report was to agree the Council's Policy in these areas of investment to assist Officers target the resources appropriately and include proposals within the annual Investment Plan and agree a number of schemes to be progressed this year.

The Housing Service had a previously agreed policy and practice to direct Investment in the housing stock based on a number of principles, for example worst first in terms of component replacement.

It would be appropriate to agree a Policy for these areas of work to enable Officers to identify future investment proposals for agreement in the annual Investment Plan.

The matter was discussed and considered at a recent Tenants' Forum meeting. The outcome of the discussion was as follows:

Garages (£75k available this year)

The Housing Service managed 486 garages throughout the Borough.

It had been many years since any form of planned investment had been carried out. It was the practice to respond to requests for repairs as they arose from residents.

Generally, demand for garages remained buoyant with few vacancies and they represented an important income stream to the HRA.

The construction of garages throughout the Borough was generally uniform with some variation of roof and door types.

The Housing Manager provided Members with a list of common problems with garages and therefore suggested essential repairs and upgrading required would vary from block to block and, in some cases, garages to garages because of the nature of the issue and the manner in which repairs had been completed over an extended period.

Whilst a basic principle of any maintenance programme was to protect the fabric of a building, the 'appearance' and 'visual' impact should also be considered in any planning process. This had been highlighted in the STAR Survey.

In considering how resources should be targeted the Housing Manager proposed that two areas in particular be targeted:-

1. Griffin estate

There were 51 garages on Griffin with no vacancies and demand was buoyant for the garages.

A feature of the estate was that the garages were very 'visible' and their condition could impact on the overall appearance of the estate.

The Housing Service were in the process of replacing roof coverings on the estate which would have a significant impact. A number of garages suffered with water ingress due to the land banking, but the adjoining land was in the Council's ownership.

The Housing Manager suggested the completion of essential repairs would help complement the roof replacement in terms of improving the appearance of the estate.

2. Dalton: Lord Street Area

There were 21 garages in the area and none were vacant.

Appearance and general condition of these garages was poor and required attention.

The Housing Manager stated that these garages were not in the most poor condition throughout the Borough, but in terms of commencing a programme which would be on-going, they were particularly poor compared to many.

With regard to developing an on-going plan for garages, he proposed the following principles be agreed:-

- Work to be progressed on a block-by-block basis.
- Priority should be afforded to blocks based on a combination of their condition and where any improvements will have the greatest impact on the 'visual' appearance of surrounding area.
- Work at each area will be based on 'what is required' rather than a pre-determined work plan. For example, doors will only be replaced 'if required' not as a matter of course.
- No progress will be made on any blocks where their future 'lettability' is in doubt.

Fencing: £60K

The Housing Manager stated that there was no current planned replacement programme for fencing. Such work was generally carried out as follows:-

- Through a Community Payback arrangement with Cumbria Probation;
- Through the Environmental Enhancement Budget managed by the Tenants' Forum; and
- Ad hoc repairs deemed to be a Health and Safety risk.

Fencing was a topic raised on a regular basis at various forums and by tenants individually and he suggested there could be many calls on this funding throughout the Borough.

In order to start an on-going programme, the Housing Manager suggested that the following principle be adopted:-

1. Maintain and replace fencing in areas subject to previous environmental schemes. e.g. Many years ago the Council received area based grant to carry out environmental enhancements at Roosegate, Vulcan, Ormsgill and part of North Walney.

This work included providing brick walls, fencing and off-street car parking facilities. With the passage of time the timber fencing had in some cases reached the end of its life and needed replacing.

2. Maintain boundary fences with public spaces, e.g.

Footpaths: The Housing Manager suggested it was important to “ensure fencing on footpaths was secure and safe”. This had a particular impact on the appearance of estates.

Flats: Many flats had communal areas and the condition of fencing could help residents feel more secure and improve appearance of the blocks.

3. Individual Gardens

Generally, the only work completed at present was through Community Payback. To commence an on-going programme required further consideration, as due to the mixed nature of the estates it would require time-consuming consultation with owners. The Housing Manager therefore suggested that these be left until 1. and 2. above were established.

Based on the above principles, he proposed the following starting point.

1. Provide fencing to the rear of properties on Vulcan Road that back on to the cleared allotment site and future dock development.
2. Start a programme of upgrading fencing on Roosegate estate.

Public Realm (Communal Doors, Security, Access, Paths on Estates): £80K

The Housing Manager reported that the Housing Management Forum had already agreed resources to replace door entry systems at Raglan Court which was being progressed.

In considering use of these resources he would, as a one-off, focus on an on-going issue on the Ormsgill estate.

Officers in the Housing Service and Streetcare Team spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with and resolving problems of fly-tipping. He suggested in the first year of these resources, a proportion be used to try and stop these problems.

Following discussions with Officers, the Housing Manager thought this would go some way to do this by removing some of the bin stores by re-instating 'drying areas' closer to the flats they served, providing individual bins and then removing the communal bin stores.

Discussion was on-going with the relevant stakeholders but he suggested this should be the 'first call' on this money this year.

The Housing Manager suggested the term 'public realm' as it could be interpreted flexibly, but in essence was about improving the appearance and public spaces on estates, where the issue was the responsibility of the Housing Service. The importance of this was highlighted in the STAR Survey.

In many areas of the Borough the mixed nature of the tenure made environmental schemes problematic. To assist Officers to develop further proposals, he suggested the following principles be agreed:-

1. To focus on flats and, in particular, those with communal entrances and shared areas.
2. Proposed work to be developed to protect the security and appearance of communal areas on a property-by-property basis.

With regards to fencing it was moved by the Chairman and duly seconded that the opportunity for fencing be offered to owners/occupiers to benefit from the works being carried out on the basis that they can pay the actual amount for their property.

This was voted upon and,

RECOMMENDED:- To agree as follows:-

Garages

Work be completed on Griffin and Lord Street, Dalton and the principles of works in the future should be based on:

- Work to be progressed on a block-by-block basis;
- Priority should be afforded to blocks based on a combination of their condition and where any improvements will have the greatest impact on the "visual" appearance of surrounding areas;
- Work at each area will be based on "what is required" rather than a pre-determined work plan. For example, doors will only be replaced "if required" not as a matter of course; and
- No progress will be made on any blocks where their future "lettability" is in doubt.

Fencing

Work to be completed on the rear of Vulcan Road and commence on the Roosegate Estate and the principle of works in the future should be based on:

- Maintain fencing in areas subject to previous environmental scheme;
- Maintain boundary fences with public spaces, in particular along footpaths and flats with communal areas; and
- That the opportunity for fencing be offered to Owner/Occupiers to benefit from the works being carried out on the basis that they pay the actual amount for their property.

Public Realm

Work to be completed to reinstate drying areas on Ormsgill to help resolve problem with bin stores and works in the future should be based on:

- Flats with communal entrances and shared areas; and
- Work to focus on security and appearance of communal areas on a property-by-property basis.

22 – Reconsideration of Request for Vehicle Crossing on Land in front of 6-24 Middleton Avenue, Barrow-in-Furness

The Housing Manager reported that he had received a request to reconsider the application for a resident to create a vehicle crossing to allow parking of vehicles within the curtilage of his property.

This matter had been considered by the Housing Management Forum on 13th June, 2013 when the request was turned down. Through a local Elected Representative, the applicant had asked the matter be reconsidered.

The Housing Manager had attached as an appendix a plan showing the layout of properties. The plan showed that between 6 -24 Middleton Avenue there was a 'green area' between the frontage of the properties, the pavement and road. The green area was in the ownership of the Council.

The Housing Manager had advised the resident that he would not agree the request on the basis he made reference to parking commercial vehicles, loss of green area, it would change the street scene of the area and there were no existing crossings.

The resident did not accept the Housing Manager's refusal and asked for it to be reconsidered. The applicant was advised it would be brought to the attention of the Housing Management Forum.

It was not uncommon that residents applied for vehicle access to allow in-curtilage parking. In most instances, such accesses involved 'pavement' crossings and were dealt with by the Highways Authority, the County Council. Many properties in Middleton Avenue did have such crossings. There was no doubt this helped ease the congestion where it was possible. In view of the impact on the appearance of the area and loss of green area, the Housing Manager had written to residents who

either faced the green area or whose properties adjoined it to obtain their views – 19 in total.

The responses received were:-

- 3 - In favour
- 6 - Against
- 2 - Did not agree one way or the other but one wanted various assurances before commenting, which the Housing Manager was unable to provide.
- 1 - Suggested alternative arrangements

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In considering the responses, a resident had raised the question of providing additional parking facilities for general use by residents. Whilst a reasonable suggestion, the problem of congestion was common throughout Council estates and it would make it impractical to respond in a way that would be replicated elsewhere.

In summary, whilst recognising the benefit of enabling off-street parking, in this instance the benefits would have to be considered alongside the loss of green area on the avenue.

It was moved by Councillor Pointer that consideration of this request be deferred to enable the Housing Management Forum to carry out a site visit and that a special meeting be arranged following the site visit to enable a decision to be made on this matter. This was duly seconded and voted upon and,

RECOMMENDED:-

1. To agree that the request for a vehicle crossing on land in front of 6-24 Middleton Avenue be deferred to enable the Housing Management Forum to carry out a site visit; and
2. To agree that a Special Housing Management Forum be arranged following the site visit to enable a decision to be made on this matter.

23 – Housing Management Performance 2013/14

The Housing Manager submitted information relating to the Housing Management Performance 2013/14 and Best Value Performance Indicators. The information is attached at **Appendix A** to these Minutes. He provided a brief commentary to assist Members in their understanding of the key trends.

RESOLVED:- To note the Performance Information reports.

24 – Planned Investments and Planned Maintenance 2013/14 Year End Expenditure

The Housing Manager reported information relating to the Planned Investment and Planned Maintenance Programme for 2013/14 Year End Expenditure. The information is attached at **Appendix B** to these Minutes.

RESOLVED:- To note the information.

REFERRED ITEMS

THE FOLLOWING MATTERS ARE REFERRED TO COUNCIL FOR DECISION

25 – Furnished Tenancies

The Housing Manager requested Members to consider making additional resources available from HRA reserves to increase the number of “furnished tenancies” available within the Housing Stock.

The Housing Service offered potential tenants property on the basis they were unfurnished. However, for some years a small number of furnished tenancies had been provided. They were typically one or two bedroomed flats. At the present time there were 24 such properties.

The process of offering a potential tenant a furnished tenancy was made on a case by case basis. The option was often most appropriate when the applicant was being rehoused from interim accommodation or had particular additional support needs and the provision of a “basic” furniture pack helped ensure the tenancy was set up appropriately. The pack included floor coverings.

An additional charge of £21.70 per week (average - slightly different rates between one and two bedroomed property) was collected in the rent towards the cost of the furniture pack and was eligible charge for Housing Benefit purposes. On this basis, the additional cost to the Housing Service was recovered in approximately two years.

In discussion with colleagues, the provision of furnished tenancies had been a positive option in considering what help the Housing Service could offer new tenants and it had appropriate arrangements for managing such tenancies.

The majority of new tenants benefiting from the service were in receipt of benefits. As Welfare Reform was progressed and Housing Benefit arrangements would change and to operate this scheme may not be appropriate in the longer term.

However, on the basis that the Housing Service would normally recover the cost of the furniture provided within two years, the Housing Manager suggested consideration be given to recommending a figure of £25K be made available from HRA reserves to establish up to 12 further furnished tenancies.

RECOMMENDED:- To agree a figure of £24k be made available from HRA reserves to increase the number of furnished tenancies available by 12.

The meeting closed at 3.04 p.m.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE 2013/14

APPENDIX A

Performance Indicator	Actual 2011/12	Actual 2012/13	Apr - Jun 2013	Target (Median)
£ Rents Collection				
£ Rent & Service Charges due	£9,228,558	9,728,187	2,499,630	£0
£ Rent collected	£9,134,875	9,604,739	2,342,289	£ -
Rent collected as % of rent due (inc ft)	98.98%	98.73%	93.71%	97%
£ Current Arrears (dwellings)	£181,230	£203,623	£295,660	£175,679
£ Former Arrears (dwellings)	£92,499	£135,745	£153,108	£128,081
Write Offs (Gross)	£75,538	£38,573	£1,695	£50,000
Tenants evicted for rent arrears	6	5	3	10
Current tenants arrears % of rent owed	2.0%	2.1%	11.8%	5%
Former tenants arrears % of rent owed	1.0%	1.4%	6.5%	3%
£ Rent arrears Garages	£1,824	£1,452	£1,923	£ 3,750
£ Rent Arrears Shops	£16,602	£22,146	£19,609	£ 25,000
Void management				
Tenancy Turnover %	10.3%	10.4%	3.5%	8.05%
Total number of re-lets during the period benchmarked	278	245	101	217
No. of Voids	227	277	94	218
Ends due to Under Occupation			9	
Average relet time for dwellings (CORE)	37	32	30	28
£ rent loss through vacant dwellings	£ 100,227	£ 111,607	£ -	£ 109,685
£ rent loss due to vacant garages	£5,098	£2,290	£1,161	£ 4,500
£ rent loss due to vacant shops	£16,546	£5,000	£1,000	£ 4,000
% properties accepted on first offer	86.4%	78.4%	81.2%	70%
Loss per Void (Rents, Repairs, Arrears)	£ 2,846	£ 2,683.54	£ 1,774	£2,000
Maintenance				
No. Repair Orders issued (Tenant Demand)	11,587	10,109	2,846	9,197
Responsive & Void repairs per property	4.3	3.7	1.1	3.4
P1 & P2 as a % of total repairs	61.7%	63.8%	59.8%	47.5%
% all responsive repairs completed on time	87.3%	77.1%	69.8%	96.3
P1 % emergency repairs completed on time	94.6%	94.6%	77.0%	96.7
P2 % urgent repairs completed on time	78.9%	77.3%	71.0%	94.6
Average end-to-end time for all reactive repairs (days)	12.25	19.78	18.56	8.2
Percentage of repairs completed 'Right First Time'	78.5%	79.79	N/A	88.8
Appointments kept as a percentage of appointments made	77%	61%	N/A	96.8
Appointments made as a percentage of repair orders (exc gas & voids)	NA	100%	N/A	94.1
Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate	99.89%	100%	100.0%	99.8%
Percentage of homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes	0%	0%	0%	0.2%
*Average energy efficiency rating of dwellings (based on RD SAP 9.83)	69.2	69.2	69.2	68.90%
Equality & Diversity				
ASB cases reported	82	72	26	143
Percentage of closed ASB cases that were successfully resolved	91%	99%	100%	88%
% Vulnerable people achieving independent living	100%	NA		77.2
% Diversity Information : Age	100%	100%	98%	100%
Gender	100%	100%	89%	98%
Ethnicity	95%	82%	87%	75%
Disability	100%	100%	89%	75%
Sexuality	56%	52%	45%	55%
Religion or belief	57%	53%	45%	55%
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints upheld	22%	40%		NA

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE 2013/14

APPENDIX A

Satisfaction	Actual 2011/12	Actual 2011/12		Target (Median)
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the landlord's services overall	88%	88%		83%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs and maintenance	87%	87%		79%
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account	78%	78%		64%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of the home	90	90		N/A
Percentage of residents satisfied with the neighbourhood as a place to live	84%	84%		82%
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their rent provides value for money	90%	90%		N/A
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their service charges provide value for money	81%	81%		N/A
Value for Money - TL Cost per property inc overhead	Actual 2011/12	Actual 2012/13	Actual 2013/14	
Overhead per property	£ 324	£ 274		
Major & Cyclical works	£ 1,256	£1,100		£1,241
Responsive Repairs	£ 480	£391		£424
Void Repairs	£ 167	£166		£176
Rent Arrears & Collection	£ 54	£59		£71
Community Involvement	£ 38	£36		£46
Anti Social Behaviour	£ 41	£41		£38
Neighbourhood Mgt (Estates/Tenancy mgt.)	£ 102	£105		£66
Housing Options	£ 36	£36		£37
Leasehold	£ 70	£134		£136
Total staff turnover	7.0%	5.9%	3.8%	8%
Ave. working days lost / sickness absence	14.0	18.9	2.1	10.5
Housing Property		2013-14		
HSE	1282			
FLATS	1248			
BUNGALOWS	157			
TL DWELLINGS	2687			
TL DISPERSED (FLATS)	7			
COMMUNITY CENTRES	5			
LEASEHOLDS	205			
GARAGES	486			
SHOPS	20			
TOTAL PROPERTIES	3410			
SOLD PROPERTIES	2012-13	SOLD	Apr-June	SOLD
HSE	252,750	6	84,600	2
FLAT	42,160	2	19,320	1
LAND	0	0	0	0
TL	294,910	8	103,920	3
HOMELESSNESS	Actual	Actual	Apr-June	
Homeless ave. days in temporary dispersed accommodation	56	57	18	
Homeless ave. days in temporary B&B accommodation	27	27	35	
Homeless Total Cases Closed	641	903	112	
Homeless Advice	339	408	63	
Homeless Prevention	87	170	57	
Homeless Applications	120	147	14	

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE 2013/14

APPENDIX A

Homeless Successful Preventions	71	148	32	
Eligible Homeless (Owed a full duty)	24	30	3	
HOUSING REGISTER	Actual	Apr-Dec	Apr-Mar	Jun-13
Applicants on housing register	1700			
Active Direct Applicants		1601	1471	1189
Active Transfer Applicants		358	346	297
Cumbria Choice Register		1959	1817	1486

PLANNED INVESTMENTS 2013-14

SCHEME	CONTRACTOR OR SUPPLIER	AVAILABLE BUDGET	NO OF PROPERTIES	EXPENDITURE TO DATE	START DATE	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE	CONTRACTOR	COMMENTS	Leasholders affected?
RE-ROOFING WORKS (GRIFFIN)	DLP Roofing	£300,000	183	£ -	Apr-12	Dec-13	DLP SERVICES	COMMENCED WORKS APRIL 2013	Yes
REWIRES	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£227,120	120	£ 90,483	1.4.2013	31.3.14	K WILSON	20% COMPLETE	No
BATHROOMS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£300,000	200	£ 27,185	1.4.2013	31.3.14	AB MITCHELL	10% COMPLETE	No
KITCHENS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£500,000	300	£ 93,027	1.4.2013	31.3.14	AB MITCHELL	10% COMPLETE	No
HEATING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£500,000	200	£ 116,133	1.4.2013	31.3.14	AB MITCHELL INTEGRAL	20% COMPLETE	No
PAINTING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£200,000	500	£ -	1.4.2017	31.3.14	GH JONES	15% COMPLETE	Yes

HOUSING MAINTENANCE COMMITMENTS 2013-14

	Funding Available 2011-12	EXPENDITURE TO DATE	Weekly Available	Gross Comm. as a % funds available
Tenant Demand Repairs	£ 750,000	£ 45,448	£ 14,423	6%
Preliminary Cost	£ 265,096	£ 71,168	£ 5,098	27%
Voids	£ 200,000	£ 38,955	£ 3,846	19%
Gas Servicing	£ 280,000	£ 18,667	£ 5,385	7%
Decoration Vouchers	£ 75,000	£ 7,676	£ 1,442	10%
Disrepair Claims	£ 15,000	£ -	£ 288	0%
Environmental Impmts	£ 25,000	£ 5,605	£ 481	22%
Disabled Adaptations	£ 300,000	£ 36,301	£ 5,769	12%
Electrical Testing	£ 75,000	£ 22,344	£ 1,442	30%
Door Entry Maintenance	£ 20,000	£ 9,912	£ 385	50%
Total	£2,080,096.00	£256,076.00	£38,559.54	

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM

Special Meeting: Thursday 31st October, 2013
at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillors Hamilton (Chairman), Barlow, Irwin, Murray and Pointer.

Tenant Representatives:- Mr A. McIntosh, Mr W. McEwan and Mr W. Ward.

26 – Apologies for Absence/Attendance of Substitute Members

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Williams and Mrs K. Warne

Mr W. McEwan had replaced Mrs K. Warne for this meeting only.

27 – Housing Maintenance Contract

The Housing Manager reported that at the Housing Management Forum meeting held on 1st March, 2012 Members had agreed to impose liquidated and ascertained damages (penalties) to all orders issued after 1st April, 2012. Penalties were to be applied to all task orders where the work was completed late.

Following the initial mobilisation period, Vinci had implemented a number of organisational re-structures in an attempt to deliver efficiency and cost savings. These operational changes had not been successful and despite using a range of additional manpower options Vinci had been faced with a backlog of overdue repairs. The table below shows a summary of the backlog:

Date	No of repairs overdue (*approximately)
October 2012	800*
January 2013	600*
June 2013	400*
September 2013	260 (actual)

The Housing Maintenance Section had been working closely with Vinci to reduce the numbers of overdue repairs and improve Key Performance Indicators. The application of penalties did not appear to have improved the situation.

The contracts partnering advisor (PSS Consulting) advised that penalties should not accrue to a level where their application may be construed as “punitive”, i.e. intended as a punishment, or used to describe costs that were so high they were difficult to pay. In the case of Vinci, the application of penalties appeared to be restricting their ability to appoint additional resources to deal with the problem.

Whilst the Council may wish to administer penalties in line with the contract, Members should be mindful of the potential legal challenge that may arise if they were deemed by a court or tribunal to be of a punitive nature.

The Housing Manager was seeking Members approval to cease applying liquidated and ascertained damages (penalties) over a 3 month period to allow Vinci the opportunity to utilise additional resources and complete the backlog of repairs.

The suggested 3 month period would allow Vinci sufficient operational scope to address the problem and alleviate concerns regarding any legal challenge about punitive damages.

RECOMMENDED:- To Agree the suspension of liquidated and ascertained damages to all task orders invoiced between 1st September, 2013 and 3rd December, 2013 in line with the contract addendum, shown as an appendix to the report, to allow Vinci sufficient time to address the current backlog of repairs.

28 – Housing Maintenance Contract 2005 - 2011: Closure of Accounts with Integral

The Housing Manager reported that the Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Contract 2005/11 had come to an end on 4th November, 2011. The Contract arrangements were based on an NEC form of Contract including Option 3 which included “Risk and Reward”.

The concept of the Risk and Reward element of the Contract was to encourage efficiency of delivery. It limited the Council’s risk, should a job exceed the agreed target price, but also facilitated a payment to the Contractor should they deliver a job below the target cost on the basis of a 50/50 share basis.

During the period of the Contract no payments were made to the Contractor in the form of reward due to the complexity of finalising the arrangements for calculating and agreeing any potential payment.

Since the day to day operation of the Contract had ended final payment to the Contractor had been under negotiation.

There were two matters which were outstanding and needed finalising:-

- **Payment for completed day to day repairs:** At any one time there was a sum of money outstanding to a Contractor for completed work that was being processed through the payment process. The Housing Service had paid all outstanding invoices in accordance with previously agreed procedures. However, there were outstanding jobs for which payment had not been made because the Contractor had been unable to provide the paperwork required by normal procedures. The value of the work from the Council’s own records was c£36k, whilst the Contractor advised the Housing Manager that the cost to them for the work was c£44k. The problem for the Contractor was that they had been unable to provide the background paperwork normally required. The Housing Manager had advised the Contractor that he did not want to settle this issue without a conclusion to all outstanding payments.
- **Payment of Risk and Reward:** As mentioned above no reward payment was made during the operation of the Contract which had an estimated value of

c£1.2m per annum. The Contractor initially requested a reward payment of £400k based on the financial information they held and provided to the Housing Manager on the Contract which he did not accept. The Housing Manager had therefore taken legal advice regarding the Council's responsibility to make a reward payment. Legal advice suggested because of the operational arrangements that developed in the management of the Contract no reward payment was due. However, the Contractor did not accept this position and stated should it not be possible to agree a settlement figure they would instigate an adjudication process to finalise the figure due to them.

Should the Contractor opt to instigate the adjudication process the Housing Manager had been advised that the likely cost to the Housing Service would be c£50k in costs. In addition it would involve the time of the Maintenance Manager to assist in the process and have an impact on normal day to day operational arrangements. There would not be an option to recover the £50k even if the Housing Service was able to demonstrate a reward payment was not due.

The Housing Manager had therefore, continued to negotiate a settlement figure with the Contractor and based on those discussions it would appear closure of the Contract could be agreed with a final one off payment of £120k, including the outstanding payment for completed work.

The Housing Manager suggested that as it was now sometime since this Contract stopped operating the sooner this matter could be concluded the better. The payment of reward was not satisfactorily resolved during the operation of that Contract, and due to the learning experience of that Contract, risk and reward had not been included within the Contract arrangements that were now in place. The proposed settlement should be considered with reference to the outstanding payment due to the Contractor of c£36k and the potential cost of c£50k plus Officers time and distraction from day to day activity.

He suggested that it would be appropriate for the Council to pay the £36k which he had identified at the point of any final settlement.

On balance the Housing Manager suggested to Members that they recommend a payment of £120k to the Contractor in final payment for this Contract.

RECOMMENDED:-To agree a one-off payment of £120,000 to cover outstanding work and settlement of the risk and reward element of the Contract.

29 – Reconsideration of Request for Vehicle Crossing on Land in front of 6-24 Middleton Avenue, Barrow-in-Furness

The Housing Manager reported that a resident had requested Members to reconsider his request to create a vehicle crossing to allow parking of vehicles within the curtilage of his property.

This matter had been considered by the Housing Management Forum on 13th June, 2013 (Minute No. 11 refers) when the request was turned down. Through a local Elected Representative, the applicant had asked the matter be reconsidered.

The matter was reconsidered by Members at the Housing Management Forum meeting on 29th August, 2013 (Minute No. 22 refers) where the application was deferred to enable Members to attend a site visit.

Members attended a site visit prior to today's meeting.

RECOMMENDED:- That the request to construct a vehicle crossing over the land be refused.

The meeting closed at 2.16 p.m.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 6
Date of Meeting: 28th November, 2013	
Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager	
Title: Rent Strategy	
Summary and Conclusions:	
<p>The purpose of this report is to agree to the principle proposed of developing the Housing Revenue Account budget and to agree the initial stages of exploration as a basis on which to consider, formulate and propose a Rents Strategy.</p>	
Recommendations:	
<p>Members are asked to agree to:</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bring forward convergence with market (target) rents to 2014/15 from 2015/16 and to further dispense with Target Rents and agree that the 2014/15 budget be developed on this basis and to note the potential effect on individual rents modelled at Appendix A.2. Agree in principle that the Garage rents budget is developed at the same rate as Dwellings point 2.3. Further exploration and consultation with tenants of the proposals outlined in point 3 to formulate and present a Rents Strategy and implementation plan by the end of the financial year.	

Background

Whilst the various Welfare Reforms and Self Financing changes are challenging they also present the Housing Service with an opportunity to improve the way rents are determined, demanded and collected and transform service delivery.

1. Dwelling Rents

Rents within the HRA 30-year business plan have been predicated at 3% on the assumption that they would be determined using RPI +0.5% plus an additional uplift to bring Local authority rents up to market (Target) rents by 2015-16.

Today we are guided to use the September CPI of 2.7% + 1% (3.7%) and informed that the opportunity to uplift to market rents will cease after 2014-15

This would mean that the Housing Service would lose the mechanism to harmonise individual rents where there are anomalies and to match their market equivalents and I would suggest that consideration is given to bring rents in line with market (target) rents in 2014-15 highlighted as option 3 in the table below and to dispense with target rents in any future rent determination or calculation.

The effect on our rents would be as follows:

OPTIONS	52 Weeks	48 Weeks	+/- from 2013
Current average rents	£71.40	£77.35	
OPTION 1: 2014 (uplift at 3.7%)	£74.04	£80.21	£2.86
OPTION 2: 2014 (uplift at 3.7% + partial convergence)	£74.69	£80.92	£3.57
OPTION 3: 2014 (uplift at 3.7% + full convergence)	£75.34	£81.62	£4.27

The difference in gross income between options 2 & 3 is £94,412 per annum (£10,544,605)

Under the recommendation at Option 3, rents on an individual property basis will differ but all remain within their individual £2 cap (assuming an increase of 3.7%).

Attached at **Appendix A** are examples of the effect of applying Option 3 for the different property types

2. Garage Rents

It is normal practice to recommend that garage rents are increased in line with residential properties provided that there is a healthy demand. The 2014/15 budget will develop on this basis.

For example a 3.7% increase would generate £7,072 and the effect on individual garage charges would be as follows:

	No	2013/14	3.70%	2014/15
Garage rate 1	27	£6.43	£0.24	£6.67
Garage rate 2	448	£8.88	£0.33	£9.21
Increase	475	£191,129	£7,072	£198,201

There is a 160 strong waiting list garages with one vacancy and the proposed new rent appears on par with the private sector.

I would, therefore, suggest you give consideration to develop the budget on this principle.

3. Service Delivery

Historically dwelling and garage rents have been debited to tenants' accounts every Monday with 4 non collectable weeks -probably as a convenience to the Council's opening arrangements and in an era when Housing Benefit is paid on the same day and when tenants predominantly paid weekly and in cash.

Our collection and arrears processes, procedures and tenancy agreements are in line with this practice but are increasingly becoming out of kilter with today's practice.

- Today more tenants receive their income (or main benefits) 4 weekly and pay increasingly by remote, direct or automated means
- In the future Universal Credit will be paid to tenants on a fixed but personal calendar month date

We need to consider the impact of these changes and we need to offer customer focused solutions which still protects our rental income and helps us to manage arrears efficiently. We also want to encourage this channel shift and make sure that our policies and agreements are aligned and that our processes are capable of delivering the service.

Initially I would like to suggest that we explore and consult our tenants and internally on the following key aspects

- Eliminate non collectable weeks
- Introduce monthly/anyday rent groups where debits match 'income' dates
- Determining rent increases in the future

There may well be new and better ways of rent accounting and changes we look at now may reduce costs and add more certainty to business planning over the next few years

(i) Legal Implications

The final Rent strategy when proposed and agreed by Members may have legal implications and if so will be contained within the action/implementation plan.

(ii) Risk Assessment

As above.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has significant financial implications outlined in the body of the report.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no implications.

(v) Equality and Diversity

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

(vi) 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 MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 7
Date of Meeting: 28th November, 2013	
Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager	
Title: Scrutiny of Anti-Social Behaviour Policies and Procedures	
Summary and Conclusions:	
The purpose of this report is to provide you with an update on the Scrutiny Review of the Anti-Social Behaviour Policies and Procedures. The Scrutiny project commenced in September, 2013 and aims to be complete by December 2013.	
Recommendations:	
Members are asked to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the contents of the report.2. Adopt the four-stage scrutiny process for future scrutiny reviews.	

Report

The Tenants' Scrutiny Working Party was established in September, 2013 in line with the regulatory emphasis on co-regulation and the requirement for meaningful scrutiny by residents.

The main aims of the Tenants' Scrutiny Working Party are:

- To drive continuous improvement in performance and customer service excellence through the process of resident led self-regulation.
- To ensure tenants' views, aspirations and priorities are central to, and directly influence the Housing Service strategic direction and that this can be clearly evidenced.
- To conduct two or possibly three scrutiny projects each year, which result in making evidence, based recommendations to Housing Management Forum and Executive Committee.

The Tenants' Scrutiny Working Party agreed the scope and the timeframe of the project at the outset, based around the following stages:

Stage 1: Fact Finding

This included a presentation by our ASB Consultants – ASB Action Ltd on the current ASB Service by the Tenancy Services Team and an examination of the policy and procedures and performance data obtained from the ‘Star Survey’.

Stage 2: Further investigation, compare and challenge

The Tenants’ Scrutiny Working Party selected the following as their main areas of focus:

- Review of the ASB Policies and Procedures
- Access to the service and information provided to residents about the service
- Performance Issues – Timescales for ASB complaints to be dealt with

A further area to be examined as part of the wider service review was also considered:

- Review of the tenancy agreement in line with changes to ASB policies and procedures

The key activities undertaken at this stage are:

- Information noted from the presentation by ASB Action Ltd
- Document review of policies, procedures, incident diaries and case review diary – ongoing.
- Review of ASB Policy. Revised Policy Statement agreed by Tenants’ Scrutiny Working Party on 25th October, 2013.
- Tenancy Services Team meeting to review draft Policy and Procedures 25th November, 2013.
- Tenants’ Scrutiny Working Party to meet 26th November 2013 to review initial draft Procedures.
- Good practice review of other organisations’ service literature and website - on-going.
- Tenant Audit – interviews to take place of tenants who have been victims of Anti-Social Behaviour to hear their views and ‘learn from any positive negative comments’.

An evidence file is being compiled with detailed minutes of meetings, interviews with tenants and staff. The Operations Manager and Assistant

Operations Manager attend each meeting to respond to the points raised and to suggest improvements to be made. The Tenants' Scrutiny Working Party is Chaired by a tenant representative.

Stage 3: Analysis and recommendations

The Operations Manager and Assistant Operations Manager to assist Tenants' Scrutiny Working Party to share and understand the findings from the scrutiny exercise to agree recommendations for how the service might be improved for residents.

Stage 4: Implementation and review

A meeting will be arranged of the Tenants' Scrutiny Working Party and Tenancy Services Team to agree an action plan to implement the improvements identified. Monitoring progress against the agreed actions will be the responsibility of the Operations Manager.

The final report will be presented to Housing Management Forum in January 2014.

Conclusion

The Housing Service is committed to being accountable to its residents and ensuring greater transparency in the way it operates. The Housing Service believes its new residents' scrutiny arrangements enable those residents involved to gain a real understanding of the service being reviewed and a genuine means by which to help shape services to ensure they are meeting residents' needs.

(i) Legal Implications

The recommendation has no legal implications.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no significant implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has no financial implications.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no significant implications.

(v) Equality and Diversity

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

(vi) 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 MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 8
Date of Meeting: 28th November, 2013	
Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager	
Title: Cumbria Choice: Choice-Based Lettings Scheme	
Summary and Conclusions:	
The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the future financing of the Cumbria Choice Co-ordinator post.	
Recommendations:	
Members are asked to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note information within the report.2. Agree to fund the Cumbria Choice Co-Ordinator post for a further 12 months.	

Report

As you will be aware the Countywide Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme has been in operation since April 2011. Included within the original contribution costs was the funding of the Cumbria Choice Co-ordinator post. The partnership needs to consider the position on continuing to finance the post beyond its present 12 month term which would end in May 2014.

The co-ordinator role has been responsible for the following tasks for the partnership:

- Co-ordinating the system upgrade testing.
- Testing and upgrading the CBL website.
- Administration of the Facebook Page.
- Promotion of Cumbria Choice through social media.
- Continuation and development of the reporting element, producing reports for Project Board.
- Chairing Operations Group to resolve operational issues across the partnership to ensure consistency of the policy.

- Facilitating and monitoring any Review requests from applicants.

The contribution cost for the Housing Service would be £3,407.88 to fund the role for a further 12 months. The additional value and savings provided by the coordinator post include:

- Making best use of the reporting system.
- Reducing the amount spent on paper forms and staff time across the partnership by raising IT awareness and skills to boost the use of the system online.
- Reducing staff time in resolving operational issues across the partnership and facilitating any review challenges from applicants.

The partnership has agreed in principle the approach to finance the post for a further 12 months which will coincide with end of the Abris contract and allow the Partnership to consider the best approach going forward in terms of CBL system and co-ordinator role.

(i) Legal Implications

The recommendation has no legal implications.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

Should the recommendation be agreed provision will be made in the HRA 2014/15 budgets.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no implications.

(v) Equality and Diversity

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

(vi) 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 MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 9
Date of Meeting: 28th November, 2013	
Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager	
Title: Brook Street Garage Area	
Summary and Conclusions:	
The purpose of this report is to consider a possible option for the use of the above garage area which has remained unused for some years.	
Recommendations:	
Members are asked to agree that Barrow Amateur Boxing Club (BABC) be given a 12-month option to provide the Council with a business plan and proposals for use of the above area as a training facility and to agree appropriate terms for the lease of the land.	

Report

Members may be aware there is a disused garage site on property behind Brook Street.

There was also previously playground equipment on the area but this was removed some years ago. The land has restricted access and is surrounded by residential accommodation.

Within very close proximity is the location of Brook Street Gym and they have approached me to request the Council lease the land to them for the purpose of creating additional training area for the BABC.

Some Members may be aware there has been discussion regarding this matter previously but the club would like the Council to give them a firm commitment that the land would be available to them.

Following discussion, it is clear the club need to seek funding from third parties and carry out further investigations into the practicality of the land being used in the way they suggest.

In order to facilitate this process I would ask the Council to agree giving the club a 12-month option to provide the Council with a proposal for the site and confirmation that funding is in place to improve the area.

(i) Legal Implications

A lease would be required to ensure clear responsibility for the future management of the area.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

I will be investigating the option of supporting the proposal through the Sense of Place Fund but would not suggest any further financial contribution from the Council.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no detrimental impact the built environment or public realm.

(v) Equality and Diversity

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

(vi) 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 MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 10
Date of Meeting: 28th November, 2013	
Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Housing Manager	
Title: Relocation of Housing Service	
Summary and Conclusions:	
The purpose of this report is to seek the Forum's agreement for the relocation of the Council's Housing Service to the Town Hall.	
Recommendations:	
Members are asked to agree the relocation of the Housing Service to the Town Hall during 2014.	

Report

The Council holds a lease on Cavendish House until 2018. However, the lease contains a break clause which would allow the Council to end the lease in December, 2014.

At the present time the Council pays a substantial rent to a third party for the lease of Cavendish House.

As a result of changes in the Council over the last 12 months there is now under-used office space in the Town Hall. This has enabled the Council to look how it can make best use of its office space, to improve income and efficiency and the delivery of services.

Following these considerations it is now proposed the Housing Service look to relocate to the Town Hall and take the opportunity to end its lease at Cavendish House.

I would like to ask the Forum to agree this proposal and I will keep you informed as the proposal is developed.

(i) Legal Implications

Appropriate Notice will have to be served on the landlord between January and June 2014.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

At the end of the lease a dilapidation survey will be required by the landlord to identify what repairs are required before the property is handed back.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no implications.

(v) Equality and Diversity

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

(vi) 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 MANAGEMENT FORUM	(D) Agenda Item 11
Date of Meeting: 28th November 2013	
Reporting Officer: Les Davies, Housing Maintenance Manager	
Title: Void Property Gas and Electricity Meters	
Summary and Conclusions:	
When a property becomes vacant there are often problems associated with the existing gas and electric meters that cause re-letting delays and consequently lead to rental loss.	
Recommendations:	
Members are asked to agree that officers proceed with the appointment of British Gas to manage gas and electricity meter related problems affecting void properties.	

Report

When a property becomes vacant there are often problems associated with the existing gas and electric meters that cause re-letting delays and consequently lead to rental loss.

Common problems include clearing former tenant meter debts, meter tampering, processing of former bills and dealing with debt management companies. This inevitably takes officers a significant amount of time and effort to co-ordinate and requires lengthy telephone calls to a number of agencies and utility suppliers.

Officers have held unsuccessful discussions with several utility companies in an attempt to simplify the existing void meter process. Having spoken to other landlords in the North West region it is clear that the problem is common throughout the housing sector.

In September 2013 a representative from British Gas approached officers with a proposal to offer the Council a free of charge "Void Management Energy Service". The scheme provides a "one stop shop" aimed at increasing revenue, reducing administration costs, managing debt and bills and helping tenants with their energy needs.

The scheme requires the Council to confirm by e mail the former tenant details, the date the property became vacant along with any existing meter

readings. British Gas will then assign the void to a Personal Account Manager who will (where necessary) arrange for the existing meters to be transferred (15 working days), debts to be cleared/chased and a new meter to be installed ready for the new tenant to move in to. The scheme also provides a free £5.00 (five pounds) out of tenancy credit allowance for each meter whilst the property remains empty.

Whilst British Gas clearly derives the benefit from being the nominated utility supplier at the time of tenancy sign up tenants have no contractual obligation to remain with British Gas and may choose an alternative supplier should they wish.

The scheme offered by British Gas is presently in operation at a number of North West based landlords including One Vision Housing, Bolton at Home and City West Housing Trust.

(i) Legal Implications

The proposal requires the Council to sign up to an “umbrella” agreement with British Gas.

The agreement can be terminated with 28 days’ notice by either party.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation will reduce administration time required to manage void properties.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no implications.

(v) Equality and Diversity

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

(vi) Health and Well-being Implications

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

Background Papers

Nil

APPENDIX A

Sample Rents 2014-15											
Basic Rents Charged											
Archetype		No. Beds	Area/Sub Area	Rent 2013/14	Unconverged 48 week 2014/15 Rent	Target 48 week 2014/15 Rent	Target 52 week 2014/15 Rent	Unconverged 48 week difference	Target 48 Week Difference	Unconverged % Change	Target % Change
House	End Terrace	2	ORM/OR1	£77.92	£81.04	£81.28	£75.03	£3.12	£3.36	4.0%	4.31%
Ground Floor Flat	Low Rise	1	ORM/OR1	£64.65	£67.22	£67.41	£62.22	£2.57	£2.76	4.0%	4.27%
Ground Floor Flat	Medium Rise	3	CEN/CEN	£82.11	£85.30	£85.46	£78.88	£3.19	£3.35	3.9%	4.08%
Bungalow	Semi Detached	1	ORM/GRI	£72.84	£75.54	£75.55	£67.74	£2.70	£2.71	3.7%	3.72%
House	Mid Terrace	3	WAL/NWA	£89.24	£93.56	£94.57	£87.29	£4.32	£5.33	4.8%	5.97%
Bungalow	End Terrace	1	WAL/NWA	£72.84	£75.54	£75.55	£67.74	£2.70	£2.71	3.7%	3.72%
Ground Floor Flat	Medium Rise	2	ROO/NBN	£76.00	£79.47	£83.13	£73.97	£3.47	£7.13	4.6%	9.38%
Upper Floor Flat	Medium Rise	2	ROO/NBN	£75.61	£79.27	£80.13	£73.97	£3.66	£4.52	4.8%	5.98%
House	Mid Terrace	2	CEN/HIN	£78.96	£82.39	£82.91	£76.53	£3.43	£3.95	4.3%	5.00%
House	End Terrace	3	ROO/ROO	£85.09	£89.01	£89.78	£82.88	£3.92	£4.69	4.6%	5.51%
Ground Floor Flat	Medium Rise	1	CEN/CEN	£67.78	£70.87	£71.46	£65.96	£3.09	£3.68	4.6%	5.43%
Upper Floor Flat	Low Rise	1	WAL/NWA	£67.89	£71.22	£72.03	£66.49	£3.33	£4.14	4.9%	6.10%
House	Semi Detached	2	ROO/GGS	£80.26	£83.73	£84.23	£77.75	£3.47	£3.97	4.3%	4.95%
House	Mid Terrace	4	ROO/GGS	£94.52	£99.26	£100.50	£92.77	£4.74	£5.98	5.0%	6.33%
Upper Floor Flat	Low Rise	3	ROO/NBN	£81.79	£85.97	£87.12	£80.42	£4.18	£5.33	5.1%	6.52%
House	End Terrace	5	ROO/GGS	£101.77	£106.46	£107.39	£99.13	£4.69	£5.62	4.6%	5.52%
Bungalow	Mid Terrace	3	ORM/OR2	£91.18	£95.03	£95.51	£88.17	£3.85	£4.33	4.2%	4.75%
Bungalow	End Terrace	3	ORM/OR2	£91.57	£95.24	£95.51	£88.17	£3.67	£3.94	4.0%	4.30%
Upper Floor Flat	Low Rise	2	ORM/OR2	£73.77	£77.25	£78.01	£72.01	£3.48	£4.24	4.7%	5.75%
Ground Floor Flat	Low Rise	2	ORM/GRI	£76.95	£80.52	£81.23	£74.99	£3.57	£4.28	4.6%	5.56%
House	Semi Detached	3	WAL/WAL	£90.80	£94.84	£95.51	£88.17	£4.04	£4.71	4.4%	5.19%
Upper Floor Flat	Medium Rise	1	CEN/LHI	£66.05	£68.98	£69.46	£64.12	£2.93	£3.41	4.4%	5.16%
House	End Terrace	4	ROO/ROO	£92.89	£97.24	£98.15	£90.60	£4.35	£5.26	4.7%	5.66%
House	Semi Detached	5	ROO/ROO	£109.94	£115.85	£117.70	£108.65	£5.91	£7.76	5.4%	7.06%
Bungalow	Semi Detached	3	ROO/NBN	£91.57	£95.24	£95.51	£88.17	£3.67	£3.94	4.0%	4.30%
House	Semi Detached	4	DAL/DAL	£98.55	£102.87	£103.55	£95.58	£4.32	£5.00	4.4%	5.07%
Bungalow	Semi Detached	2	DAL/DAL	£81.43	£84.50	£84.67	£78.16	£3.07	£3.24	3.8%	3.98%
Bungalow	Mid Terrace	1	DAL/DAL	£71.70	£74.95	£75.05	£69.74	£3.25	£3.35	4.5%	4.67%

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 12

Performance Indicator	Actual 2011/12	Actual 2012/13	Apr - Jun 2013	Apr -Sept 2014	Target (Median)
£ Rents Collection					
£ Rent & Service Charges due	£9,228,558	9,728,187	2,502,106	5,370,404	£10,923,715
£ Rent collected	£9,134,875	9,604,739	2,342,289	5,120,073	£ 10,596,004
Rent collected as % of rent due (inc ft)	98.98%	98.73%	93.61%	95.34%	97%
£ Current Arrears (dwellings)	£181,230	£203,623	£295,660	£430,358	£175,679
£ Former Arrears (dwellings)	£92,499	£135,745	£153,108	£204,630	£128,081
Write Offs (Gross)	£75,538	£38,573	£1,695	£17,501	£50,000
Tenants evicted for rent arrears	6	5	3	10	10
Current tenants arrears % of rent owed inc arrears b/f	2.0%	2.1%	11.8%	8.0%	5%
Former tenants arrears % of rent owed	1.0%	1.4%	6.5%	4.0%	3%
£ Rent arrears Garages	£1,824	£1,452	£1,923	£6,458	£ 3,750
£ Rent Arrears Shops	£16,602	£22,146	£19,609	£19,759	£ 25,000
Void management					
Tenancy Turnover %	10.3%	10.4%	3.5%	7.5%	8.05%
Total number of re-lets	278	245	101	201	217
No. of Voids	227	277	94	204	218
Ends due to Under Occupation			9	29	
Average relet time for dwellings (CORE)	37	32	29	30	28
£ rent loss through vacant dwellings	£ 100,227	£ 111,607	£ 32,550	£ 82,191	£ 109,685
£ rent loss due to vacant garages	£5,098	£2,290	£1,161	£1,583	£ 4,500
£ rent loss due to vacant shops	£16,546	£5,000	£1,000	£1,021	£ 4,000
% properties accepted on first offer	86.4%	78.4%	75.5%	77.1%	70%
Loss per Void (Rents, Repairs, Arrears)	£ 2,846	£ 2,684	£ 1,774	£ 1,795	£2,000
Maintenance					
No. Repair Orders issued (Tenant Demand)	11,587	10,109	2,846	5,521	9,197
Responsive & Void repairs per property	4.3	3.7	1.1	2.1	3.4
P1 & P2 as a % of total repairs	61.7%	63.8%	59.8%	59.1%	47.5%
% all responsive repairs completed on time	87.3%	77.1%	69.8%	70.8%	96.3
P1 % emergency repairs completed on time	94.6%	94.6%	77.0%	83.5%	96.7
P2 % urgent repairs completed on time	78.9%	77.3%	71.0%	71.0%	94.6
Average end-to-end time for all reactive repairs (days)	12.25	19.78	18.56	23.6	8.2
Percentage of repairs completed 'Right First Time'	78.5%	79.79	N/A	N/A	88.8
Appointments kept as a percentage of appointments made	77%	61%	N/A	N/A	96.8
Appointments made as a percentage of repair orders (exc gas & voids)	NA	100%	N/A	N/A	94.1
Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate	99.89%	100%	100.0%	99.9%	99.8%
Percentage of homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.2%
*Average energy efficiency rating of dwellings (based on RD SAP 9.83)	69.2	69.2	69.2	69.2	68.90%
Equality & Diversity					
ASB cases reported	82	72	26	35	143
Percentage of closed ASB cases that were successfully resolved	91%	99%	100%	100%	88%
% Diversity Information : Age	100%	100%	98%	100%	100%
Gender	100%	100%	89%	93%	98%
Ethnicity	95%	82%	87%	91%	75%
Disability	100%	100%	89%	93%	75%
Sexuality	56%	52%	45%	46%	55%
Religion or belief	57%	53%	45%	47%	55%
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints upheld	22%	40%			NA

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

AGENDA ITEM 12

Satisfaction	Actual 2011/12	Actual 2012/13	Apr -Jun 2013		Target (Median)
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the landlord's services overall		88%			83%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs and maintenance		87%			79%
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account		78%			64%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of the home		90			N/A
Percentage of residents satisfied with the neighbourhood as a place to live		84%			82%
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their rent provides value for money		90%			N/A
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their service charges provide value for money		81%			N/A
Value for Money - Direct Costs per property	Actual 2011/12	Actual 2012/13	Apr -Jun 2013	Apr-Sept 2013	Target (Median)
Overhead per property	£ 324	£ 274	£ 140		130
Major & Cyclical works	£ 1,256	1100			1200
Responsive Repairs	£ 480	391			375
Void Repairs	£ 167	166			150
Rent Arrears & Collection	£ 54	59			65
Community Involvement	£ 38	36			35
Anti Social Behaviour	£ 41	41			40
Neighbourhood Mgt (Estates/Tenancy)	£ 102	105			100
Housing Options	£ 36	36			40
Leasehold	£ 70	134			
Total staff turnover	7.0%	5.9%	2.0%	3.9%	
Ave. working days lost / sickness absence	14.0	18.9	2.1	4.0	
Housing Property	Apr-June 2013	Apr-Sept 2013			
HSE	1282	1280			
FLATS	1247	1247			
BUNGALOWS	157	157			
TL DWELLINGS	2686	2684			
TL DISPERSED (FLATS)	8	8			
COMMUNITY CENTRES	5	5			
LEASEHOLDS	205	205			
GARAGES	486	486			
SHOPS	20	19			
TOTAL PROPERTIES	3410	3407			
SOLD PROPERTIES	SOLD 2011/12	2012-13	SOLD 2012/13	Apr-Sept	SOLD 2013/14
HSE	3	252,750	6	152,210	4
FLAT	1	42,160	2	19,320	1
LAND	1	0	0	0	0
TL	4	294,910	8	171,530	5
HOMELESSNESS	Actual 2011/12	Actual 2012/13	Apr-June 2013	Apr-Sept 2013	
Homeless ave. days in temporary dispersed accommodation	59	57	18	30	
Homeless ave. days in temporary B&B accommodation	20	27	35	24	
Homeless Total Cases Closed	752	903	169	335	
Homeless Advice	339	408	63	119	
Homeless Prevention	114	170	57	117	
Homeless Applications	185	147	14	27	
Homeless Successful Preventions	85	148	32	65	
Eligible Homeless (Owed a full duty)	29	30	3	7	
HOUSING REGISTER	Actual 2011/12	Actual 2012/13	Apr-June 2013	Apr-Sept 2013	
Applicants on housing register					
Active Direct Applicants		1471	1189	1226	
Active Transfer Applicants		346	297	305	
Cumbria Choice Register	1745	1817	1486	1531	

PLANNED INVESTMENTS 2013-14

SCHEME	CONTRACTOR OR SUPPLIER	AVAILABLE BUDGET	NO OF PROPERTIES	EXPENDITURE TO DATE	START DATE	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE	CONTRACTOR	COMMENTS	Leasholders affected?
RE-ROOFING WORKS (GRIFFIN)	DLP Roofing	£300,000	157	£ 347,600	Apr-12	Dec-13	DLP SERVICES	COMPLETE	Yes
REWIRES	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£227,120	120	£ 168,109	1.4.2013	31.3.14	K WILSON	50% COMPLETE	No
BATHROOMS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£300,000	200	£ 64,055	1.4.2013	31.3.14	AB MITCHELL	70% COMPLETE	No
KITCHENS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£500,000	300	£ 198,979	1.4.2013	31.3.14	AB MITCHELL	70% COMPLETE	No
HEATING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£500,000	200	£ 202,372	1.4.2013	31.3.14	AB MITCHELL INTEGRAL	60% COMPLETE	No
PAINTING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£200,000	500	£ 92,954	1.4.2017	31.3.14	GH JONES	95% COMPLETE	Yes

HOUSING MAINTENANCE COMMITMENTS 2013-14

	Funding Available 2011-12	EXPENDITURE TO DATE	Weekly Available	Gross Comm. as a % funds available
Tenant Demand Repairs	£ 750,000	£ 410,584	£ 14,423	55%
Preliminary Cost	£ 265,096	£ 194,532	£ 5,098	73%
Voids	£ 200,000	£ 53,320	£ 3,846	27%
Gas Servicing	£ 280,000	£ 223,714	£ 5,385	80%
Decoration Vouchers	£ 75,000	£ 13,193	£ 1,442	18%
Disrepair Claims	£ 15,000	£ -	£ 288	0%
Environmental Impmts	£ 25,000	£ 8,712	£ 481	35%
Disabled Adaptations	£ 300,000	£ 70,846	£ 5,769	24%
Electrical Testing	£ 75,000	£ 37,754	£ 1,442	50%
Door Entry Maintenance	£ 20,000	£ 10,316	£ 385	52%
Total	£2,080,096.00	£1,022,971.00	£38,559.54	