

14 September 2016

Environment and Housing Management Committee

Getting our House in Order – Update on Transformation

Report of: *Helen Gregory, Acting Head of Housing*

Wards Affected: *All wards*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Housing & Health Committee on the 7th January 2015 approved the implementation of a transformation programme for the Housing Department, called 'Getting our House in Order'. The programme was expected to be completed within 12/18 months.
- 1.2 The new revised date to deliver the key improvements in the transformation programme is the end of December 2016. This report outlines the key improvements achieved so far, and the key improvements to be delivered before the end of December 2016.
- 1.3 The transformation programme is a cultural change in the Housing Department with a new focus on performance, customer service and learning new methods of working. On completion of the transformation programme there will need to be a period of stabilisation within the Housing Department to allow new methods of working to embed for the first half of 2017 and return to a steady state.
- 1.4 The improvements delivered and improvements made in performance, coupled with the results of the Stock Condition Survey will enable the Housing Department to be in a good position to make informed decisions on how to meet the challenges of the future.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Committee agree to the progress and future direction the 'Getting our House in Order' transformation programme as outlined in the report.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 The Housing Department commenced the 'Getting our House in Order' Transformation Programme in the autumn 2014. The Transformation Programme is about improving performance across the department to deliver good quality, cost effective services to our customers, tenants and leaseholders.
- 3.2 We have made good progress so far, both in terms of improving performance with over 90% of our KPI's achieving top quartile performance; and in identifying and achieving cashable and non cashable efficiencies. As part of the Transformation programme, the Housing Department achieved £145k efficiency savings during 2015/16.
- 3.3 It became apparent early on in the programme that the changes required to transform the housing service were more extensive than originally planned. We discovered numerous working practices that were out of date, with high volumes of complaints, issues with staff not taking ownership, and a lack of investment in training. This resulted in a lack of confidence to make decisions and take responsibility in some areas.
- 3.4 A new performance culture change was required to transform services with a new management team and a positive 'can do' attitude. New methods of working have been implemented, and together with new procedures and standards have brought the service up to date with modern housing standards that comply with best practice.
- 3.5 To enable the Housing Department to be equipped to deal with the significant challenges ahead in both the internal and the external environments, it is essential that we have a workforce with the necessary skill sets to continue to deliver the quality services to our residents.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 A major change implemented in the Housing Department, is the successful out-sourcing of the Repairs Service to private contractors Wates Living Space in July 2014. This was a big transformational change to the way the Council delivers its repair service to tenants with the removal of the DLO, previously used to deliver the repairs service.
- 4.2 The change in service delivery has required a culture change to become more performance and commercially focused with sound contract management skills.

- 4.3 We have merged the Estates Team and Repairs Team together to strengthen the customer focus. Traditionally Repairs Managers have been solely focused on technical issues and occasionally less effective in performance management and Customer service skills. To resolve this imbalance the repairs and housing teams are managed by a new Housing Manager with overall responsibility for both teams.
- 4.4 This change has introduced a modern customer-focused ethos within the team. The new Housing Manager works alongside the existing Housing Options Manager. This new management team combination has the drive and commitment to introduce and deliver in partnership, new ways of working and to deliver key improvements outlined in the Transformation Programme.
- 4.5 The income management and Repairs service were prioritised to be reviewed at the beginning of the transformation programme. The new income management policy was approved by Housing Committee on the 11 March 2015. The new income management system went 'live' on the 6 April 2015.
- 4.6 With the roll out of universal credit during 2016/2017 and other benefit changes, there is a risk that rent collection will become increasingly difficult to collect as tenants will be paid housing benefit direct four weeks in arrears; rather than to the Landlord. This has been identified as a significant risk to the income stream of the HRA as approximately 60% of our tenants are currently in receipt of partial or full housing benefit.
- 4.7 To help mitigate the risk of direct payments of housing benefit to tenants, a pre tenancy service was implemented in July 2016. A pre-tenancy service works with applicants before they become tenants to help them plan and budget for their new home. It will help to identify vulnerable tenants who may require extra support. If a tenant is identified as vulnerable 'high risk', at this stage we request to the DWP that direct payments are made to the landlord.
- 4.8 We have reviewed our tenancy sign up procedures and now request payment at sign up to emphasise the importance of the requirement to pay rent from the beginning of a tenancy.
- 4.9 Further improvements to the service are the introduction of pre-termination inspections, re-charge policy and estate inspections. All these changes reinforce the need for our tenant's to take greater responsibility and develop a payment culture.

4.10 These changes are important to maintain tenancy sustainability, reduce costs to the HRA and prevent evictions which result in homelessness.

4.11 Key improvements that have been successfully completed to date are listed in table A below.

4.12 **Table A – Improvements carried out to date.**

Service Area/Type	Review commencement	Review completion date	Revised actions/targets
All - Performance KPIs workshops	September 2014	Ongoing	Performance has improved – so this has now evolved to a regular weekly voids meeting and team meetings.
Phase 1 – Income management new policy/procedure	September 2014	Phase 1 – completed April 2015	Completed
Phase 2 – Income management New Pre-Tenancy Service	March 2016	Launched July 2016 Independent trainer has been commissioned to develop staff.	Embed process and monitor progress Sept/October 2016
Phase 1 – Out source Repairs Service	July 2014	Phase 1 – completed July 2014	Completed
Phase 2 – Review Repairs Service – establish Client side and review back office functions	January 2016	End of December 2016	September 2016 Final re-structure planned to recruit new skill sets required
Re-Charge policy	Implemented March 2016		Policy Review January 2017
Estate Inspections	October 2015	Complete February 2015	Complete
ASB training	Planned August 2015	Completed July 2016	Complete

4.13 **Table B – Key improvements to be delivered by the end of December 2016. All of the improvements tabled below are work in progress.**

Service Area/Type	Review commencement	Review completion date	Revised actions/targets
Service Charges Review	Planned September 2015	Review complete September 2016	Recommendations to be completed by end of December 2016
Resident Talkback involvement Review	Commenced April 2015	Ongoing - revised completion date end of 2016	TPAS completing review with residents
Allocations Homeless Gold Standard peer review	Commenced July 2014	Completed December 2015	Completed
Housing advice & homelessness – Locata software	Planned September 2015	Ongoing	Locata software to be installed 01/10/2016
New Council Housing Development – Garage sites	Commenced September 2014	Construction Start on site 1 week of November 2016	Development programme ongoing
Stock Condition Survey	Committee approval March 2016	December 2016	Data will then need to be evaluated to plan future stock investment decisions
IT - Orchard Upgrade	Project plan stage July 2016 ongoing	System upgrade early December 2016 – staff training	Continue to monitor performance/ staff January 2017

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 The service improvements proposed in the 'Getting our House in Order' programme will improve service and value for money for residents and stakeholders.

6. Consultation

6.1 Staff have attended briefings and Tenant Talkback have been regularly consulted.

7. References to Corporate Plan

7.1 Improving service delivery will meet the Council's commitment to service improvements and increased customer satisfaction.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

Name & Title: Ramesh Prashar, Financial Services Manager
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8.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. All financial figures used have been verified by the Finance Department.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Saleem Chughtai, Legal Services Manger
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8.2 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendation contained within this report.

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright).

None

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