

HRA Business Plan 2007/8
ACTION PLAN – SIX MONTH PROGRESS REPORT
(As at 1 January 2008)

Action	Corporate Housing Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Target Date	Progress Report
Housing General				
Analyse the information obtained from the census of Council tenants undertaken in Spring 2007	HO 2	Principal Housing Officer (Information/Strategy)	Sept 2007	In Progress – All the census forms have now been collected. The next stage is to input the data from the census into the Housing OHMS database, following which the data can be analysed.
Complete the implementation of the few outstanding initiatives within the Service Development Plan, formulated following the Best Value Service Review of Housing Services	HO 1	Director of Housing	March 2008	Achieved – All the initiatives that can be implemented have been.
Obtain the Cabinet Office's Charter Mark for Customer Service Excellence for a further three years	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations)	Nov 2007	Achieved – The Charter Mark was awarded to Housing for a further three years from August 2007
Undertake a Customer Perspective Programme for the whole of Housing Services, examining the all interfaces between Housing Services and customers	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Director of Housing	Feb 2008	In progress – The Programme has commenced, a Review Programme has been formulated and a Project Group established, which has met three times. The first service to have its customer interfaces reviewed by the Group is the Housing Options Section. Reviews of the interfaces in Housing Management will follow from February 2008.
Formulate, implement and monitor a Housing Excellence Plan, identifying the actions required to achieve the excellent level for each of the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry on Housing	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Director of Housing / Asst Heads of Housing Services / Housing Managers	April 2008	Slow Progress – A number of actions for the Housing Excellence Plan have been formulated, and some completed, but progress has generally been slow due to other commitments and the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOESs) changing. There is a need to bring all identified actions into one Action Plan.

Housing Management

Introduce the Leasehold Services module of the integrated housing IT system	HO 1 / 2	Housing Resources Manager	April 2008	No Progress – The Corporate ICT Service was unable to take on this major implementation in 2007. Discussions are taking place as to when implementation can be scheduled, taking account of other ICT priorities.
Introduce the Estate Management module for the housing IT system	HO 2	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations)	April 2008	In Progress – Demonstrations by the supplier (Anite) have been held and a site visit to another local authority using the system has been undertaken. A decision to introduce the system has been made in principle.
Implement the choice based lettings scheme, in conjunction with the five neighbouring councils.	HO 2	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations) / Housing Needs Manager	Oct 2007	Achieved – HomeOption, the Council's choice based lettings scheme, was successfully introduced in November 2007 along with two other councils. The remaining three councils in the Consortium will go live in 2008.
Review the success and any required changes to the choice based lettings scheme, six months after introduction	HO 2	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations)	April 2008	Not yet required – This will be undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Panel around July 2008
Undertake a review of the success of the Introductory Tenancy Scheme (giving new tenants a non-secure tenancy for 12 months) after one year's operation.	HO 2	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations)	Sept 2007	Achieved – The Housing Scrutiny Panel reviewed the Scheme in April 2007. In the first 12 months, 311 Introductory Tenancies were granted, with 16 Notices of Possession Proceedings being served, all on grounds of rent arrears.
Introduce a facility for tenants to apply for the Housing Register on-line	HO 2	Housing Options Manager	April 2008	Slow Progress – It has been established that the Council's website is technically unable to host such a complex facility. Consideration is therefore being given to other options. In the meantime, the facility for applicants to download Housing Application Forms has been provided.
Meet and sign-up to the Government's Respect Standard for Housing Management	HO 2	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations)	Dec 2007	Achieved – The Respect Standard was achieved, and signed up to, in July 2007

Introduce a computerised rent accounting system for the Council's Homeless Persons Hostel (Norway House) and for homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation	HO 1/ 2 / 5	Housing Resources Manager	Sept 2007	Partly Achieved – A project to administer rent accounts for Norway House on the Housing OHMS computer system was successfully completed in September 2007, saving time for housing benefit officers, who no longer have to assess claims manually. However, the Project Team has established that it is not possible to administer bed and breakfast charges on the OHMS system, which will have to continue to be administered through the sundry debtor system.
Undertake a review of heating charge levels at the Homeless Persons Hostel	HO 5	Housing Resources Manager	Jan 2008	Achieved – The review was completed and reported to the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee in November 2007. The Cabinet Committee agreed a phased increase in charges, with a further review in November 2008.
Tenant Participation				
Facilitate the formation of two additional recognised tenants associations within the District	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2008	Partly Achieved – A recognised Debden Tenants Panel has been established, which has representatives on the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation. Good progress has been made in facilitating tenants associations at Romelands and Ninefields, Waltham Abbey, but they have not yet agreed a Constitution and are not yet formally recognised
Develop the newly introduced Rural Tenants Forum (comprising representatives in rural locations that have no recognisable estates and where formal associations are difficult to establish) into a successful, sustainable body.	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	Oct 2007	Achieved – The Rural Tenants Forum has developed very successfully. Representatives from 12 different rural villages/parishes have been “recruited” and the Forum meets four times each year. The Forum also has representation on the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.
Undertake a more detailed and focussed survey on tenant participation, as a follow-up to the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, ensuring that surveyed tenants are properly informed of the current arrangements	HO 4	Principal Housing Officer (Information / Strategy)	April 2008	In Progress – The survey is scheduled to be undertaken in January 2008.

Investigate the publication of a calendar for tenants, promoting the activities of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	Dec 2007	Deferred – In consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, it was agreed to defer the publication until Winter 2008.
Investigate the possible introduction of “Tenant Talkback Panels”, to provide qualitative feedback on housing services	HO 2 / 3 / 4	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2008	In Progress – The interest of tenants in joining Tenant Talkback Panels will be established through the survey of tenant participation referred to above.
Supporting People and Supported Housing				
Provide a comprehensive telecare service from the Council's Careline Control Service to residents of the Epping Forest and other districts, following telecare assessments by trained EFDC staff.	HO 1 / 2	Housing Manager (Older People's Services)	Dec 2007	Achieved – Staff have been trained to assess clients for a range of Telecare products. As at November 2007, 166 packages had been installed or were due for installation.
Review the viability and future of the Council's Careline Service	HO 1 / 2	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations)	April 2008	In Progress – Officers are currently considering the issues and intend to report to the Housing Scrutiny Panel at its meeting in March 2008.
Seek accreditation of the Council's Careline Service from the Telecare Services Association (TSA)	HO 2	Housing Manager (Older People's Services)	Dec 2007	In Progress – Good progress has been made to meet the TSA's requirements for accreditation. Accreditation should take place during 2008.
Housing Repairs and Maintenance				
Implement programme for repairs and maintenance expenditure over 5 and 30 years	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager / Asst Head of Housing Services (Prop & Res)	On going	In Progress – Good progress is being made through a range of planned maintenance contracts and framework agreements. Stock Condition Surveys are ongoing, which will help to form future programmes of work.
Implement upgrade to latest version of Codeman software	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	July 2007	Delayed – Delay due to Anite system upgrade that is required before the Codeman upgrade can take place. Anite version 39 upgrade took place in November 2007. Codeman upgrade now planned for April 2008.

Publish clear service standards for planned maintenance, Decent Homes, repairs, Right to Repairs and leaseholder responsibilities, which are available in printed leaflet form and on the web site.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	July 2007	In Progress – Following consideration by the Housing Scrutiny Panel, a number of Customer Service Standards have been agreed relating to repairs and maintenance. These are currently in the process of being produced in leaflet form and will then be distributed to customers.
Publish the Voids standards on the Web site and to issue a copy to all tenants in advance of them undertaking an accompanied viewing or a void offer.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Dec 2007	In Progress – Following consideration by the Housing Scrutiny Panel, a number of Customer Service Standards have been agreed relating to repairs and maintenance. These are currently in the process of being produced in leaflet form and will then be distributed to customers.
Undertake a review of the repairs responsibilities to ensure they dovetail with other service strategies ie ASBO, introductory tenancies, demoted tenancies.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Dec 2007	In Progress - This is being incorporated in the review, exploring the incorporation of the Building Maintenance Section of the Works Unit within the new Housing Directorate.
Timetable at least one meeting each year with the Tenants Federation to discuss the repairs and maintenance expenditure programme.	HO 3	Asst Head of Housing Services (Prop & Res) / Housing Repairs Manager	On going	Completed – The Tenant and Leaseholders Federation was consulted at its meeting in March 2007.
Investigate option to merge Housing Maintenance Works Unit with Housing Services	HO 3	Director of Housing / Chief Works Officer / Asst Head of Housing Services (Prop & Res)	April 2008	In Progress – Phase 1 of the Top Management Restructure agreed that a review of the Works Unit should be undertaken, prior to the retirement of the Chief Works Officer in April 2008. One of the options being explored is the incorporation of the Building Maintenance Section of the Works Unit within the new Housing Directorate.
Introduce Asbestos record cards in all properties, and maintain the records for contactors and tenants use.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	July 2007	Slow Progress – This was deferred due to the departure of the Housing Repairs Manager in June 2007. This will now be incorporated in the Works Unit Review.
Undertake periodic reviews of the outcome of difficult to let properties and seek ways of enhancing the services provided to these dwellings.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Dec 2007	In Progress – This is currently being monitored since the introduction of Choice Based Lettings in November 2007. This action may not be required, subject to the success of the scheme to tackle difficult to let properties.

Explore options whereby emphasis is put on "fix first time" for responsive repairs	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	April 2008	In Progress - This is being incorporated in the Works Unit Review.
Seek through the Essex Hub a framework agreement with specialist contractors for ad-hoc repairs	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	April 2008	In Progress – 11 Framework agreements are already in place for various aspects of the planned maintenance programme of works. Further frameworks are to be incorporated as part of the Works Unit Review.
Undertake a feasibility study into alternative fuel sources for properties in rural communities where mains gas is not available.	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	Oct 2007	In Progress – Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) Grant funding mechanisms for alternative fuel sources are not due to be announced by the Government until January 2008. However, the use of solar panels in Council properties are planned to be trialled in a rural location in February 2008.
Review all projects with a contract value in excess of £1m on completion to identify any lessons learnt.	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager Housing Repairs Manager	On-going	On-going – This applies where contracts reach their conclusion, and a report is submitted to the Cabinet on the outcome of the contract. A report was considered by the Cabinet in February 2007 for the former Kitchen and Bathroom replacement contract.
Undertake tenant satisfaction surveys for all void properties let and all accompanied viewings.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Apr 2007	On-going – Surveys were introduced in November 2007 and the results are monitored by senior housing management on a quarterly basis.
Hold training sessions at empty properties to enable officers to gain a common understanding of specification requirements.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Apr 2008	Completed – This was undertaken in November 2007.
Seek to reduce the target response times for routine non-urgent repairs from 8-weeks to 6-weeks	HO 3	Chief Works Officer	Oct 2007	In Progress - This is being incorporated in the Works Unit Review
Identify the need to run training events / DIY courses for residents on issues that fall within their own responsibility.	HO 3	Chief Works Officer Housing Repairs Manager	Oct 2007	In Progress - This will follow on from the Works Unit Review
Introduce 3-day job ticket	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Dec 2007	Completed – 3-day "Right to Repair" works category were introduced in November 2007.

Introduce generic repairs and voids officers.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Dec 2007	In Progress - This is being incorporated in the Works Unit Review.
Implement mobile working for the Housing Repairs Section	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Apr 2008	In Progress - This is being incorporated in the Works Unit Review.
Hold site visits at blocks of flats with Tenant Representatives to monitor repairs to, and condition of, communal areas	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Apr 2008	In Progress - This will follow on from the Works Unit Review.
Seek to set up a benchmark group for Repairs and Maintenance with other Local Authorities and RSL's, with a view to sharing good practice and exploring collective procurement	HO 3	Asst Head of Housing Services (Prop & Res)	Oct 2007	No progress – This has been deferred, pending the Works Unit Review.
Explore the benefits of gaining Chartered Construction Client Status	HO 3	Asst Head of Housing Services (Prop & Res)	Oct 2007	Deleted – This scheme is only available to Main Contractors through the Considerate Contractors Scheme.
Review the Accompanied viewing process in light “Choice Based Lettings”	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager / Housing Options Manager	Oct 2007	In progress – A Voids Project Team was set up in November 2007, comprising Housing Repairs and Needs Officers and Building Maintenance Division staff.
(a) Recommend to the Housing Portfolio Holder that a Tenants' Repairs Scheme be introduced after the application of job evaluation to the Building Maintenance DSO, but that the scheme be suspended (or eligibility restricted to just elderly and disabled people) at any time when the scheme would detrimentally affect the Council's Repairs Service. (b) Produce and publicise a leaflet on the scheme when it is introduced. (c) Consider extending the scheme to cover leaseholders at a later date.	HO 3	Chief Works Officer	Dec 2007 Dec 2007 April 2008	No Progress – Recruitment and retention of tradesmen continues to be a problem, and it is likely that the introduction of a scheme at the present time would have a detrimental effect on the repairs service to the Council's tenants. However, the ability to provide this scheme will be re-visited after the Works Unit Review has been completed.

Make more information available about disabled adaptations to residents, setting out the responsibilities of the Council, procedures, targets, contacts in the form of a leaflet.	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	May 2008	Completed – The leaflet was produced in July 2007
Explore the feasibility of an OT being jointly employed between Housing Services, Environmental Services and Social Services to oversee all disabled adaptation and DFG requests within the District, subject to the approval of funding	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	April 2008	No progress – This has been deferred, pending the incorporation of Private Sector Housing within the new Housing Directorate, which is due to take place around April 2008.
Retain register of all Council properties receiving substantial major adaptations and where possible allocate them to applicants from the Housing Register with similar disabilities, in order to avoid the removal of the adaptations already provided	HO 3	Housing Needs Manager	Oct 2007	Completed – The register was produced and updated by the Housing Officer (Disabled Adaptations) and issued to Housing Options Manager. This action is however no longer relevant since the introduction of Choice Based Lettings, where the allocation of properties is based on expressions of interest from applicants based on their banding position.

Key to Corporate Housing Objectives

- HO 1 - Value for Money
- HO 2 - Housing Management
- HO 3 - Repairs and Maintenance
- HO 4 - Tenant Participation
- HO 5 - Housing Finance

