

HRA Business Plan 2008/9
ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT
(As at February 2009)

Action	Corporate Housing Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Target Date	Current Position
Housing General				
Analyse the information obtained from the census of Council tenants	HO 2	Principal Housing Officer (Information/Strategy)	Sept 2008	In Progress – The Census has been completed and all the data has been input onto the integrated housing computer system. The data is now being analysed. Letters will be sent to under-occupying tenants shortly, explaining the incentives to move to smaller accommodation.
Seek re-accreditation of the ISO 9001:2000 quality assurance award for a further three years	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Principal Housing Officer (Information/Strategy)	June 2008	Achieved – The whole of the Housing Directorate has been awarded the ISO accreditation for a further three years (with the exception of Private Sector Housing and the Building Maintenance Section, which joined the Housing Directorate on the recent restructure)
Complete the Customer Perspective Programme for the whole of the Housing Directorate, examining the all interfaces between Housing and customers	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Director of Housing	March 2009	In Progress – 17 out of the 26 subject areas have been examined, resulting in 67 actions so far. As recommended by the Charter Mark Assessor, once the Programme has been completed, a progress report on the Action Plan will be reported to the Tenants & Leaseholders Federation
Housing Management				
Introduce the Leasehold Services module of the integrated housing IT system	HO 1 / 2	Housing Resources Manager	April 2009	Postponed - This has been postponed, pending the outcome of the recent decision by Northgate, the Council's Housing IT Supplier, to discontinue support for the OHMS integrated housing system from 2013.
Introduce a pilot scheme for the provision of home ownership grants, enabling tenants to purchase their own home and vacate their Council property for occupation by a housing applicant	HO 1	Housing Resources Manager	Dec 2008	Achieved – Three home ownership grants has been provided to date, with the remaining two in progress. The Housing Portfolio Holder intends to seek approval to continue the scheme in 2009/10.

Produce a Leaseholders Handbook and distribute it to all leaseholders	HO 2	Housing Resources Manager	May 2008	Achieved – The Handbook was produced in Summer 2008 and distributed to all leaseholders
Review the success of the implementation of the HomeOptions choice based lettings scheme, in conjunction with the five neighbouring councils.	HO 2	Asst Director of Housing (Operations) / Housing Options Manager	August 2008	Achieved – The review was undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and reported to the Cabinet. The HomeOptions Scheme has been very successful.
Introduce a computerised facility for tenants to register for a mutual exchange and to search for suitable properties for an exchange on line	HO 2	Housing Options Manager	July 2008	Achieved – The web-based “Homeswapper” Mutual Exchange System was introduced in Summer 2008, enabling tenants to register for a mutual exchange, and search for matching properties and see photos, online - free of charge
Introduce a facility for tenants to apply for the Housing Register on-line	HO 2	Housing Options Manager	Sept 2008	Not Achieved – This is proving to be difficult, but Locata (the Council’s HomeOptions provider) has been asked to investigate the introduction of such a facility
Tenant Participation				
Facilitate the formation of two additional recognised tenants associations within the District	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2008	Achieved – 3 groups have been formed in 2008/9 - Romeland Residents Association, the Debden Tenants Panel and the Ninefields Residents Panel. Although the latter two are not formally recognised and constituted tenants associations, they serve the same purpose.
Develop further the 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	June 2008	Achieved – The Rural Tenants Forum continues to develop, with more representatives from rural areas joining.
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)	Sept 2008	Not Achieved – Due to a change in Audit Commission requirements, councils must now undertake tenants satisfaction surveys every two years (instead of every three years). Accordingly, the question was asked again this year and the results from this latest satisfaction survey suggest that this issue is no longer a problem.

Investigate the publication of a calendar for tenants, promoting the activities of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	Dec 2008	Delayed – Due to other commitments, it was not possible to progress this initiative before the New Year. It is intended to investigate the issue for this Christmas.
Introduce “Tenant Talkback Panels”, providing fora to provide qualitative feedback on housing services	HO 2 / 3 / 4	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2009	In Progress - All tenants have been surveyed through Housing News on their interest in joining a Talkback Panel, and what Panels they feel should be set up. Around 100 responses were received, and the Tenant Participation Officer is currently in the process of setting up around 3-4 Panels.
Supporting People and Supported Housing				
Review the viability and future of the Council’s Careline Service	HO 1 / 2	Asst Director of Housing (Operations)	Sept 2008	Achieved – The review has been undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and reported to the Cabinet. It was decided to retain the Careline Service, but investigate the possibility of Careline dealing with other issues – e.g. receipt of routine housing repair calls out of normal office hours.
Seek accreditation of the Council’s Careline Service from the Association of Social Alarm Providers (ASAP)	HO 2	Housing Manager (Older People’s Services)	Sept 2008	In Progress – The Housing Manager (Older People’s Services) is in the process of implementing the requirements to meet the accreditation standard
Housing Repairs and Maintenance				
Implement programme for repairs and maintenance expenditure over 5 and 30 years.	HO 3	Asst Director of Housing (Property) / Housing Assets Manager	On-going	Achieved – This is undertaken on an annual basis as part of the Business Plan update.
Implement upgrade to latest version of Codeman software	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	July 2008	Postponed – Work commenced to upgrade the software. However, the IT provider (Northgate), who have recently acquired Anite, have notified the Council that they are stopping development and support of their OHMS products, including Codeman, in the foreseeable future. Therefore, this action is being deferred while alternative IT systems are reviewed.

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 Assets Manager	July 2008	Partly Achieved – Housing Service Standards have been published and are due to be issued to all tenants by April 2009. Leaseholders have been issued with a handbook, incorporating service standards. Repairs standards are to be agreed as part of the current Repairs and Works Unit review.
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	July 2008	In Progress – The voids standards have been reviewed by the officer Voids Working Party. However, they are to be grouped with the new Repairs Standards, which are to be developed as part of the Repairs and Works Unit Review and published as a combined document.
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 2008	Achieved – This has been taken into account as part of the new Housing Service Standards.
Timetable at least one meeting each year with the Tenants & Leaseholders Federation to discuss the repairs and maintenance expenditure programme.	HO 3 / 4	Asst Director of Housing (Property) / Housing Assets Manager	On-going	Achieved – A meeting was held in 2008/9 with the Federation to discuss repairs and maintenance expenditure.
Investigate option to merge Housing Maintenance Works Unit with Housing Services	HO 1 / 3	Asst Director Of Housing (Property)	May 2008	Achieved – The Council's Cabinet agreed, as part of the Top Management Restructure, to incorporate the Building Maintenance Works Unit within the new Housing Directorate with effect from May 2008. The Cabinet also agreed on an options appraisal on the way forward, which is being developed over the next 3-years, and includes the merger of the Housing Repairs Section with the Building Maintenance Section.
Introduce Asbestos record cards in all properties, and maintain the records for contactors and tenants use.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Sept 2008	Not Achieved – It has not been possible to complete this task due to resourcing issues and other commitments in the Housing Repairs Section. The Council continues to use the computer-based Asbestos Register.

Undertake periodic reviews of the outcome of difficult to let properties and seek ways of enhancing the services provided to these dwellings.	HO 2 / 3	Housing Repairs Manager	June 2008	Achieved – This has been included as part of the work of the Voids Working Party.
Explore options whereby emphasis is put on “fix first time” for responsive repairs	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Oct 2008	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Seek through the Essex Hub a framework agreement with specialist contractors for ad-hoc repairs	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Apr 2009	Partly Achieved – The Housing Directorate has entered into around 14 different framework agreements for a variety of specialist areas of planned maintenance. There are a number of additional framework agreements planned as part of the review of the Repairs and Works Unit
Undertake a feasibility study into alternative fuel sources for properties in rural communities where mains gas is not available.	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Oct 2008	Achieved – Solar panels have been installed on one property as a trial in Toot Hill. An evaluation is on-going, in conjunction with the tenant, to see what the cost benefits are.
Through the Carbon Reduction Emissions Target (CERT), which runs from 1 April 2008, fuel switching and renewable energy projects could attract full or partial funding.	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Oct 2008	Not Achieved – When the CERT funding was announced in 2008, the national funding opportunities for fuel switching and renewable energy projects did not attract full, but only partial, funding, which does not make it cost effective to introduce fuel switching and renewable energy projects at this time.
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	Achieved – This is undertaken in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.
Hold training sessions at empty properties to enable officers to gain a common understanding of specification requirements. To be undertaken annually.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	On-going	Achieved – The benefits of this training have been realised during recent changes in staffing resources during 2008/9

Seek to reduce the target response times for routine non-urgent repairs from 8-weeks to 4-weeks	HO 3	Asst Director Of Housing (Property) / Building Maintenance Manager	Oct 2008	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Identify the need to run training events / DIY courses for residents on issues that fall within their own responsibility.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager / Building Maintenance Manager	Sept 2009	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Introduce generic repairs and voids officers.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	May 2009	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Implement mobile working for the Housing Repairs Section	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Apr 2009	Postponed – This has been postponed, pending the outcome of the recent decision by Northgate, the Council's Housing IT Supplier, to discontinue support for the OHMS integrated housing system from 2013. The future options of introducing mobile working will be included as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Hold site visits at blocks of flats with Tenant Representatives to monitor repairs to, and condition of, communal areas	HO 3 / 4	Housing Repairs Manager	Apr 2009	Achieved – When work is undertaken to the communal parts of a block, then residents are now invited to sign the work as being completed to an agreed standard.
Explore the benefits of gaining Chartered Construction Client Status	HO 3	Asst Director Of Housing (Property)	Oct 2008	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Review the Accompanied viewing process in light "Choice Based Lettings"	HO 2 / 3	Housing Repairs Manager / Housing Options Manager	April 2008	Achieved – This was undertaken through the Voids Working Party.

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

