

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 25th March 2010

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr D. Stallan

Subject: HouseMark Benchmarking Report on Value for Money of Housing Services (2008/9)



Officer contact for further information:

Alan Hall – Director of Housing (01992 564004)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the HouseMark Benchmarking Report on Value for Money of Housing Services (2008/9) be considered, and that the Housing Scrutiny Panel provides any comments on the Benchmarking Report to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Report:

1. The Housing Directorate places great importance on benchmarking its housing performance and costs against other housing providers (both councils and registered social landlords). It benchmarks in two main ways.

Annual Value for Money Review

2. Each year, the Council compares its performance and costs for all of its main service areas with other groups of local authorities, namely others in the Council's "Nearest Neighbours" Group and other local authorities in Essex, using the Audit Commission's VFM Profile Tool. A Review Report is produced, which sets out:

- The Council's performance or cost for the indicator
- The Council's ranking, for each performance or cost indicator, compared to the other councils
- Details of the best performing authority
- A commentary from the relevant Service Director on each performance and cost indicator, including any proposed action to improve performance or reduce costs.

3. The Review is reported to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel, which considers the relative performance and costs, as well as the Service Director's Commentary, and identifies any further action required – which may include a service review.

Housemark

4. The Housing Directorate has been a member of “Housemark” for a number of years. Housemark is a national housing benchmarking organisation, which enables housing organisations to submit detailed information on their performance and costs, and then to compare these with other housing organisations nationally.

5. Housemark enables member organisations to compare themselves with user-defined data sets. For example, the Council can compare itself with all housing organisations nationally; all district councils; all local authorities; or all housing associations. Housemark can also define the locations (by regions) of those organisations to be included within the comparison, and can restrict the comparison to housing organisations of more or less than a defined number of properties.

6. In previous years, the Director of Housing has produced an annual Benchmarking Report, based on information obtained from Housemark’s web-tool, which compared how well the Council ranked against other local authorities and housing associations. The report was considered in detail by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and established that, generally, the Council performed extremely well compared with other housing organisations.

7. In 2009, all the required performance and cost data for the Council’s Housing Service relating to 2008/9 was uploaded to the Housemark website. This data was then verified by Housemark. In February 2010, Housemark produced (for the first time) its own independent and detailed Benchmarking Report for the Council for 2008/9. The report compared the Council to 37 other stock-retained councils across England.

8. In addition to the detailed benchmarking information, Housemark also provides a helpful Value for Money (VFM) Summary. The VFM Summary is organised in a way to illustrate how the Council’s housing performance – in terms of cost and quality - compares with other stock-retained local authorities, in respect of the four specific service areas of the TSA’s proposed National Standards, covering:

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
- Home
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and Community

9. The VFM Summary places the Council’s performance within one of the four quartiles, as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Best quartile | Within the best 25% of councils |
| • 2 nd Best Quartile | Within the best 50% of councils |
| • 2 nd Worst Quartile | Within the worst 50% of councils |
| • Worst Quartile | Within the worst 25% of councils |

10. Housemark’s VFM Summary is provided on the Appendix. The quartile performance, in respect of those cost and quality indicators for which the Council had data is summarised on the next page:

Summary of EFDC's Quartile Placement KPIs - Cost & Quality		
Quartile	Cost KPIs	Quality KPIs
Best	4	6
2nd Best	-	2
2nd Worst	-	-
Worst	1	1

11. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the HouseMark Benchmarking Report on Value for Money of Housing Services (2008/9), and provide any comments on the Benchmarking Report to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

**HouseMark Value for Money Benchmarking Summary – 2008/9
(Produced January 2010)**

TSA Standard	Cost KPI	EFDC's Cost KPI Quartile	Quality KPI	EFDC's Quality KPI Quartile
Tenant Involvement and Empowerment	Direct cost per property of Resident Involvement	Best Quartile	Percentage of tenants satisfied that views are being taken into account	Best Quartile
			Percentage of respondents who felt staff were able to deal with their problem	Best Quartile
Home	Direct cost per property of Responsive Repairs & Void Works	Best Quartile	Percentage of tenants satisfied with complaints handling	No Data
			Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	Best Quartile
			Repairs completed 'right first time'	No Data
Tenancy (Including Allocations, Rents & Tenure)	Direct cost per property of Major Works & Cyclical Maintenance	Best Quartile	Percentage of tenants satisfied with overall quality of home	Best Quartile
			Percentage of dwellings failing to meet the Decent Home Standard	Best Quartile
Neighbourhood and Community	Direct cost per property of Housing Management	Best Quartile	Average time in days to re-let empty properties	Worst Quartile
			Percentage of tenants satisfied with overall service provided	2nd Best Quartile
Neighbourhood and Community	Direct costs per property of Estate Services	Worst Quartile	Current tenant rent arrears as % of rent due	2nd Best Quartile
			Percentage of tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	Best Quartile
Neighbourhood and Community	Direct costs per case of Anti-Social behaviour	No Data	Percentage of respondents satisfied with anti-social behaviour case handling	No Data