

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29th June 2010

Subject: Housing

Portfolio Holder: Cllr David Stallan

Recommending:

That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.

Achievement of the Decent Homes Target

In 2000, the Government announced that it was seeking “to ensure that all social housing meets standards of decency by 2010, by reducing the number of households living in social housing that does not meet these standards by a third between 2001 and 2004 with most of the improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas.” At that time, over 20% of the Council’s housing stock did not meet the Government’s Decent Home Standard.

Between 2001 and 2004, the percentage change in the number of non-decent homes was a reduction of 64%, which was well within the Government’s first target of a one-third reduction within this timeframe.

It is pleasing to report that, as at 1st April 2010, all but a handful of the Council’s housing stock met the Decent Homes Standard, meaning that the Council has met the Government’s target, nine months early - which is a real achievement by the Council; many other councils still have lots of non-decent homes.

The handful of properties (less than 10) that may not meet the standard are those where the tenants have refused to allow Council officers to visit and assess whether or not they meet the Decent Homes Standard. A firmer approach is now being taken with the tenants, including the possibility of taking legal action to gain access.

A small event is being planned, at one of the last homes to have a new kitchen installed, to commemorate the achievement.

Customer Service Excellence Award Submission for the Housing Directorate

Members will be aware that the whole of the Housing Directorate has held the Cabinet Office’s coveted Charter Mark Award for customer excellence in the public sector for the past six years. The Charter Mark has now been replaced by an even more challenging Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Award.

A submission has therefore been made to the independent assessor for the CSE Award, again for the whole of the Housing Directorate. A detailed self-assessment has been produced, and a one-day “Document Review” was held earlier in June 2010, when the assessor reviewed all the Housing Directorate’s documentary evidence to support the statements in the self assessment. A two-day assessment

visit will be undertaken on the 20th/21st July 2010, when the external assessor will undertake interviews with staff, members, partners, housing customers and tenant representatives, and will undertake various site visits.

I will advise members of the outcome of the Assessment when known.

Visit by the Tenant Services Authority and Audit Commission – 4th August 2010

The Director of Housing has been advised by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) that one of its representatives, together with a representative from the Audit Commission, will be meeting with senior housing officers on the 4th August 2010.

The reason for the meeting is currently being clarified. However, it is understood that the TSA wants to hear about progress the Council is making with its preparations for complying with the TSA's Regulatory Framework, effective from 1st April 2010.

Members of the Housing Scrutiny Panel will be aware that the Housing Directorate has produced an Action Plan on all the required tasks to comply with the Regulatory Framework.