

## Decision by Portfolio Holder



Epping Forest  
District Council

**Report reference: C/ /200 - 0**  
**Date of report: 1 August 2010**

**Portfolio:** Housing – Cllr D. Stallan      **Author:** Alan Hall, Director of Housing  
Committee Secretary: Rebecca Perrin

**Subject:** Housing Service Standards 2010, Housing Charter and Local Offer to Tenants

**Decision:**

- (1) That performance against the previously agreed Housing Service Standards in 2009/10 (where measured), as set out in Appendix 1, be noted;
- (2) That, following consultation with the Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, the proposed changes and additions to the Housing Service Standards (as set out in bold italics within in Appendix 1) be approved, and that the relevant leaflets be updated;
- (3) That no changes be made to the Housing Charter, set out in Appendix 2;
- (4) That in principle, and subject to further discussion and consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, the revised Housing Service Standards and the Housing Charter form the core element of the Council's Local Offer to tenants, as required by the Tenant Services Authority's new Housing Regulatory Framework;
- (5) That the Housing Service Standards, and performance against the Service Standards in 2010/11, be reviewed again in July/August 2011; and

[ Further recommendations to be inserted, setting out the proposed methodology for formulating the Local Offer - to be agreed by Tenants and Leaseholders Federation at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010].

**ADVISORY NOTICE:**

*A Portfolio Holder may not take a decision on a matter on which he/she has declared a prejudicial interest.  
A Portfolio Holder with a personal interest must declare that interest when exercising delegated powers.*

I have read and approve/do not approve (delete as appropriate) the above decision:

Comments/further action required:

Signed:

Date:

*Personal interest declared by Portfolio Holder/  
conflict of interest declared by any other  
consulted Cabinet Member:*

*Dispensation granted by Standards Committee:  
Yes/No or n/a*

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**Reason for decision:**

The Housing Service Standards and Housing Charter were first introduced in 2007. Since that time, they have been reviewed once (in 2009). Following consultation with, and review by, the Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, it is proposed that they be amended as set out. It is good practice to review the Housing Service Standards and performance against the standards annually.

Under the Tenant Services Authority's (TSA's) Housing Regulatory Framework, the Council must consult tenants on, and provide to them by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, a "Local Offer". This must set out the service that tenants can expect, and explain how the Council will meet the TSA's National Standards. It is felt that, in principle, the revised Housing Service Standards and Housing Charter could form the core element of the Local Offer, together with proposed housing improvements for the year.

**Options considered and rejected:**

- (1) Not to review or update the Housing Service Standards and/or the Housing Charter.
- (2) To make different changes/additions/deletions to the Housing Service Standards and/or the Housing Charter than those proposed.
- (3) Not to have the Housing Service Standards and/or the Housing Charter, in principle, as the core elements of the Local Offer.

**Background**

- 1. In 2007, following consultation with the Housing Scrutiny Panel, Tenants and Leaseholders Federation and the Housing Customer Perspective Group, the Housing Portfolio Holder agreed a range of Housing Service Standards, covering all of the Housing Directorate's main areas of activity. An updated Housing Charter was also agreed, which sets out the Council's approach and ethos to the delivery of its housing service to customers.
- 2. Subsequently, a leaflet setting out all of the agreed Housing Service Standards was issued to all the Council's tenants and added to the Tenants Handbook. In addition, a number of leaflets were produced setting out the Housing Service Standards for particular areas of activity.
- 3. At the same time as agreeing the Service Standards, it was also agreed that the Housing Directorate's performance against the Housing Service Standards (where possible and appropriate) should be considered annually.

**Performance Against the Housing Service Standards in 2009/10**

- 4. Appendix 1 provides details of the Housing Service Standards and – where measurable and appropriate – the Housing Directorate's performance in meeting the standards in 2009/10. As a comparison, Appendix 1 also provides details on the performance in 2006/7 and 2008/9 (the year before the Housing Service Standards were introduced). It should be noted that there was no review in 2007/8

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Portfolio Holder:**

5. It is emphasised that it is not possible to measure performance against every Service Standard. In a number of cases, there is nothing that can be measured, since the Standard is a “statement of intent”; in a number of other cases, whilst performance could potentially be measured, it is considered that the time and resources that would be required to properly record and monitor performance is not warranted.

### **Proposed Changes and New Service Standards**

6. The Director of Housing has reviewed the Housing Service Standards, having regard to performance in 2009/10 and changes in legislation and Council policy. As a result, a number of changes are proposed. These are set out in bold italics under the description of the relevant standard in the first column of Appendix 1.

7. A number of the proposed changes result from:

- (a) The Housing Directorate’s intention for the Careline Service to be accredited by the Telecare Services Association (TSA). Accreditation demonstrates that the Careline Service meets nationally agreed standards, and is necessary if the Council is to offer its Careline Service to other councils or housing associations. The TSA has its own standards that the Council would have to adopt and publish – hence the reason for the proposed changes; and
- (b) The proposed introduction of Housing Service Standards for Tenant Participation. Although these are set out in detail within the District-wide Tenant Participation Agreement the Council has with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, it is suggested that the main requirements are also included within the Housing Service Standards for completeness.

### **Housing Charter**

8. The Council’s Housing Charter is attached at Appendix 2, and has also been reviewed. However, no changes are proposed.

### **Housing Regulatory Framework – Local Offer**

9. In April 2010, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) introduced its new Housing Regulatory Framework. In addition to setting out National Standards, with which the Council must comply, the Regulatory Framework also requires Registered Providers of Housing (including the Council) to consult with tenants and publish, by April 2011, a “Local Offer”, setting out the service that tenants can expect, and explain how the Council will meet the TSA’s National Standards.

10. The nature of the Local Offer is very much left to local discretion but, crucially, must be based on what the Council’s tenants expect. The Director of Housing will be discussing with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010, how the Local Offer should be formulated and what it should contain.

**[ The final version of this report will set out the proposed methodology for formulating the Local Offer - to be agreed by Tenants and Leaseholders Federation at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010]**

11. The current thinking is that the Housing Service Standards and the Housing Charter could form the core element of the Local Offer, supplemented with additional proposals for the forthcoming year, including proposed housing improvements for the year.

## **Consultation with the Housing Scrutiny Panel and Tenants and Leaseholders Federation**

12. The Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation have been consulted on this report, the performance against the Standards, the proposed changes and additions, and the proposed methodology for formulating the Local Offer, at their meetings held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010 and 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010 respectively.

13. The comments of the Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation have been incorporated within Appendix 1 and the recommendations of this report.

## **Adoption of the New Housing Service Standards**

14. It is recommended that the proposed changes and additions to the Housing Service Standards - as set out in Appendix 1 - be approved, that the relevant leaflets be updated and that performance against the standards be reviewed again in July/August 2011.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

As set out in the detailed report above.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The appropriate setting of Service Standards and the monitoring of performance against those Standards is considered to contribute towards good governance.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

None

### **Background Papers:**

None

### **Impact Assessments:**

The regular consideration of Housing Service Standards, to some extent, helps to mitigate risks.

It is not considered necessary to undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment

### **Key Decision Reference (Y/N):**

Yes