

**Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2005/6 – Six Monthly Progress Report on Key Action Plan
(As at 1 November 2005)**

Action	Responsibility for Achievement	Target Date	Progress Report
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Housing General

Investigate the feasibility of introducing an electronic records and document management system (ERDMS) within Housing Services	Asst Head of Housing Services (Property & Resources)	April 2006	<p>In Progress.</p> <p>A Housing Project Team has been established. However, a corporate approach to ERDMS within the Council is under consideration.</p>
Analyse the identified risks within the Housing Risk Register, and assess/record the likelihood and impact of the risks happening	Asst Head of Housing Services (Property & Resources)	Sept 2005	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The impact assessment has been completed. The Housing Risk Register will be reviewed for the next HRA Business Plan, in the light of comments received from Zurich Municipal, the Council's insurers</p>

Best Value

Complete the implement of the Service Development Plan, formulated following the Best Value Service Review of Housing Services	Head of Housing Services	April 2006	<p>In Progress.</p> <p>When last reported to the Housing Scrutiny Panel in September 2005, the majority of improvements (78%) had been achieved, and none had not been achieved. Nearly all (89%) of the highest priority achievements had been completed. The achievements not yet achieved fall into two main categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements that cannot yet be achieved - either because they are in progress and cannot be undertaken quicker or because they are dependent on other improvements being achieved. • Improvements that have been delayed, primarily because of a lack of staff resources or due to other more urgent work needing to be given priority
Seek ISO 9000:2001 quality assurance accreditation for a further three years	Housing Resources Manager	May 2005	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>Re-accreditation was achieved in May 2005 for a further three years.</p>

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Housing Management

Introduce the Leasehold Services module of the integrated housing IT system	Housing Resources Manager	April 2006	<p>Delayed.</p> <p>Following the restructure of the Council's ICT Service, this module will be implemented by ICT. However, the increased staffing complement of ICT has not yet been appointed, which has led to delays in implementation.</p>
Consider the introduction of the Estate Management module for the integrated housing IT system	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations)	June 2005	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The module has been evaluated and it has been agreed in principle to purchase. However, it will need to be implemented by the Council's ICT Service, for which the difficulties referred to above apply.</p>
Seek an alternative location for the Waltham Abbey Housing "Surgery"	Area Housing Manager (North)	April 2006	<p>No Longer Required.</p> <p>Following a comprehensive survey of all tenants in Waltham Abbey and a very low number of visitors using the Waltham Abbey Housing Surgery, the Housing Portfolio decided that the Housing Surgery should be closed, which has now been implemented.</p>
Introduce a Harassment Policy for dealing with residents experiencing harassment from Council tenants	Area Housing Managers	April 2006	<p>Delayed.</p> <p>No progress has been made on this issue, due to other commitments. However, it is intended that the Policy will be produced by April 2006.</p>
Develop the introduction of a choice based lettings scheme.	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations) / Housing Needs Manager	April 2007	<p>In Progress.</p> <p>Following detailed examination by the Housing Scrutiny Panel, it has been agreed that the Council will work with 5 other neighbouring councils to jointly commission an agency to operate a Choice Based Lettings Scheme across all the local authority areas. A bid for £96,000 has been made to the ODPM to assist with the implementation costs, on which the decision is awaited.</p>

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Introduce a new Introductory Tenancy Scheme, giving new tenants a non-secure tenancy for 12 months.	Asst Head of Housing Services (Operations)	Dec 2005	<p>In Progress.</p> <p>The Cabinet has agreed the introduction in principle. A consultation exercise has been undertaken of all tenants and with partners, who generally support the scheme. The Housing Scrutiny Panel has considered in detail the discretionary rights that introductory tenants should receive. At its meeting on 14 November 2005, the Cabinet will consider the outcome of the consultation exercise, the discretionary rights that would be given and whether to implement the scheme.</p>
Place the Housing Mutual Exchange Register on the Council's internet, with photos and search facilities	Principal Housing Officer (Information/Strategy)	Sept 2005	<p>In progress.</p> <p>The Register has been converted into an electronic format and a test site has been established for the Council's website. It is hoped that the scheme can go live on the website by January 2006.</p>
Introduce a Tenants Contents Insurance Scheme, operated by an external insurance provider	Housing Resources Manager	July 2005	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>A Tenants Contents Insurance Scheme was introduced in April 2005, operated independently of, but promoted by, the Council. For the first six months of operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 114 households have joined the scheme 2 households are in arrears with their premiums 1 household has been suspended from the scheme due to non-payment 2 claims have been made and accepted totalling £130
Review the Housing Allocations Scheme and consider ineligibility of applicants with high income or assets	Housing Needs Manager	Sept 2005	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The review of the scheme was undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Cabinet subsequently agreed the Panel's recommended changes, including provisions for demoting applicants with high levels of assets and/or incomes to lower bands.</p>

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Introduce the facility for tenants to make rent payments via the internet	Housing Resources Manager	Sept 2005	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>A facility for tenants to pay via the internet was introduced in Spring 2005.</p>
Tenant Participation			
Facilitate the formation of two additional recognised tenants associations within the District	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2006	<p>In Progress.</p> <p>Efforts are being made to re-introduce a Ninefields Residents Association and an Association for part of the Debden Estate, Loughton.</p>
Introduce a Rural Tenants Forum comprising representatives in rural locations that have no recognisable estates and where formal associations are difficult to establish.	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2006	<p>In Progress.</p> <p>Names of potentially interested tenants have been obtained through the “Beyond Suburbia” project and it is planned to hold a meeting of interested tenants in the near future.</p>
Hold a second Tenants Open Day, in Waltham Abbey, in conjunction with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation	Tenant Participation Officer	June 2005	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The second Tenants Open Day was held on a Saturday in Waltham Abbey in June 2005.</p> <p>Following discussion with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, it has been agreed that no further Open Days should be held, due to a relative lack of support from tenants, but that Housing Services should attend local events to publicise its work.</p>
Enter into a new Tenant Participation Agreement with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation for a further three years	Tenant Participation Officer	Nov 2005	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>A new Tenant Participation Agreement has been agreed by the Tenants and Leaseholders Association and the Housing Portfolio Holder, which will be formally signed when the current Agreement ends at the beginning of December 2005.</p>

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Supporting People and Supported Housing

Consult tenants of the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Wickfields, Chigwell on an improvement scheme to convert existing bedsits into self contained flats, and assess whether the scheme should be undertaken by the Council or a housing association, through a small scale stock transfer	Head of Housing Services	Oct 2005	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>A stock options appraisal established that it would be most cost effective to the Council to undertake an improvement scheme through a stock transfer to a housing association, which has been agreed in principle by the Cabinet, and that the housing association should be Warden Housing.</p> <p>The tenants have been informally consulted, which established that 93% of tenants (all but one) are, in principle, in favour of a stock transfer to enable an improvement scheme to be undertaken.</p> <p>The next stage is to submit an application to transfer to the ODPM and to produce the formal Offer Document to tenants.</p>
Extend the Council's Careline Control Centre, to prepare for increased expansion of service	Housing Manager (Older People's Services)	April 2006	<p>In Progress.</p> <p>Plans have been drawn up and a planning application submitted, the outcome of which is awaited.</p>
Submit at least one tender for the monitoring of alarm systems for other authorities and housing associations by the Council's own Careline Service.	Asst Head of Housing Services (Management)	April 2007	<p>No Progress.</p> <p>No invitations to tender have arisen in locations where officers feel would be appropriate for the Council to submit a tender.</p>

Housing Repairs and Maintenance and Energy Efficiency

Timetable at least one meeting each year with the Tenants Federation to discuss the repairs and maintenance expenditure programme.	Asst Head of Housing Services (Prop & Resources) Housing Assets Manager	Ongoing	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The HRA Business Plan, incorporating the Repairs & Maintenance 5 year expenditure plans, was presented and issued to the Tenants & Leaseholders Federation in April.</p>
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<p>Undertake tendering on a long-term contract for combined gas servicing and maintenance work only, with only small ad-hoc repairs included so that the contractors can concentrate on servicing and CP12 certificates.</p>	<p>Housing Assets Manager</p>	<p>April 2005</p>	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>Following a competitive tendering process, a 5-year partnering contract has been let to Gracelands and T A Horn for the north and the south of the district respectively. Subject to performance, the contract is renewable for a further 5-years.</p>
<p>Submit a report to the Housing Portfolio Holder recommending that:</p> <p>(a) Generic performance specifications be prepared, which set the quality and standards of work to be undertaken on each property, rather than undertake individual surveys and schedule all work to be included.</p> <p>(b) All properties be divided in the five year cyclical programmes into two lists, to create two five year contracts for two contractors.</p> <p>(c) Appropriate contract documentation be developed for the work, taking into account legal advice.</p> <p>(d) Contractors be required to undertake detailed surveys and prepare schedules of work, based on the performance specification</p>	<p>Housing Assets Manager</p>	<p>Sept 2004</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>The 2005/6 External Repairs & Redecorations Contract has been let on the basis of performance specifications, as a pilot for a future long-term partnering contract.</p> <p>In Progress.</p> <p>Property lists are being compiled, with a view to letting the works as a long-term partnering contract.</p> <p>In Progress.</p> <p>Consultants have been appointed to develop the contract documentation.</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>The principles of a future partnering contract, where the contractors undertake the detailed surveys, have been introduced into a pilot contract in 2005/6</p>

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<p>(e) Contractors be benchmarked against each other in terms of quality, programme and price, using standard construction best practice key performance indicators.</p> <p>(f) Quality inspections be undertaken and at the same time, undertake a full stock condition survey report for updating the OHMS attribute database.</p>			<p>Achieved.</p> <p>Construction best practice KPI's have been established to measure the quality and performance of each contractor. These will be used as a benchmark for future years.</p> <p>Achieved.</p> <p>Undertaking a pilot contract - whereby contractors are required to undertake detailed surveys and prepare schedules of work (based on the performance specification) - has allowed officers to undertake stock condition and Decent Homes Surveys in-house.</p>
<p>Implement electronic mobile working for the Housing Repairs Section</p>	<p>Housing Repairs Manager</p>	<p>Dec 2005</p>	<p>In Progress.</p> <p>Smart Phones with software have been issued to staff. Training has been arranged for November & December 2005. The system is due to go live on 2 January 2006</p>
<p>Recommend to the Housing Portfolio Holder that:</p> <p>(a) a new category of repairs be introduced to be undertaken within three days, for repairs covered by the Right to Repair legislation that do not need to be undertaken within 24 hours.</p> <p>(b) the target time for routine works be reduced from 8 weeks to 6 weeks.</p>	<p>Housing Repairs Manager</p>	<p>Dec 2004</p>	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The report was approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder in February 2005.</p> <p>No Progress.</p> <p>Due to the recruitment difficulties experienced by the DSO, the target time for routine works has remained at 8 weeks. However, following the recent introduction of single status job evaluation, the DSO are now seeking to recruit tradesmen, which should enable the target time to be reduced.</p>

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Undertake a feasibility study to assess in detail the costs and benefits of a fully operational 12 hours repairs help line being introduced, with calls handled by the repairs section between 8.00am and 5.15 pm and by Careline between 5.15pm and 8.00pm	Asst Head of Housing Services (Prop & Resources)	Dec 2004	In progress. The report was approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder in June 2005. An IT data line has been installed and staff training arranged. Tenants will be notified in Housing News in December 2005, with a view to going live on 2 January 2006.
Investigate further ways of using the accompanied viewing process to help let difficult-to-let properties.	Asst Head of Housing Services (Prop & Resources)	Dec 2005	In progress. Multiple accompanied viewings for difficult to let properties are currently being undertaken for a trial period in November & December 2005.
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.	Housing Assets Manager	Dec 2004	In Progress. A leaflet has been drafted and is due to be printed and available for distribution in January 2006.
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	Housing Assets Manager	April 2005	In progress. A meeting has been held between Housing and Essex County Council Social Care to explore the options. Follow up meetings with Environmental Services and Finance are to be held to explore funding options. A site visit to other local authorities that have undertaken a similar function is due in January 2006.
Set up partner frameworks with the voluntary sector organisations and the EFPCT to widen the scope of benefits for residents.	Housing Assets Manager	Dec 2004	In progress. Essex County Council Social Care are setting up follow-up meetings with voluntary sector and private sector organisations in January 2005.

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Housing Benefits			
Implement a Document Management System and Workflow	Assistant Head of Finance (Benefits)	Mar 2006	Consideration is being given to implementation. However, a corporate approach to ERDMS within the Council needs to be established first.

Key to Corporate Housing Objectives

- HO 1 - Best Value
- HO 2 - Housing Management
- HO 3 - Repairs and Maintenance
- HO 4 - Energy Efficiency
- HO 5 - Tenant Participation
- HO 6 - Housing Benefits
- HO 7 - Housing Finance