

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 19th July 2011

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr M. McEwen

Subject: HouseMark Benchmarking Report on Value for Money of Housing Services (2009/10)

Officer contact for further information:

Alan Hall – Director of Housing (01992 564004)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the HouseMark Summary Benchmarking Report on Value for Money of Housing Services (2009/10) be considered, and that the Housing Scrutiny Panel provides any comments on the Benchmarking Report to the Housing Portfolio Holder; and**
- (2) That the decision to only undertake benchmarking through Housemark bi-annually in future, unless Housemark can provide a quality-only (and not cost) benchmarking service, be endorsed.**

Report:

1. The Housing Directorate places great importance on benchmarking its housing performance and costs against other housing providers. Indeed, it is a requirement of the Tenant Services Authority's (TSA's) Housing Regulatory Framework.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Each year, Housemark produces a detailed Benchmarking Report for the Council, comparing the Council's performance with 47 other local authorities across the country. For this Council's Housing Directorate, the detailed benchmarking information is discussed at quarterly Continuous Improvement Meetings held between the Director of Housing, individual Housing Managers and the relevant Assisting Director of Housing.
5. 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 local authorities, in respect of the four specific service areas of the TSA's National Standards, covering:

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
- Home
- Tenancy (including allocations, rents and tenure)
- Neighbourhood and Community

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

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

7. Housemark's VFM Summary is provided as an Appendix. **It is emphasised that the data relates to 2009/10 and not 2010/11.** The quartile performance, in respect of those cost and quality indicators for which the Council had data, is summarised below:

Summary of EFDC's Quartile Placement KPIs - Cost & Quality		
Quartile	Cost KPIs	Quality KPIs
Best	3	3
2nd Best	-	5
2nd Worst	1	-
Worst	2	1

8. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the HouseMark Summary Benchmarking Report on Value for Money of Housing Services (2009/10), and provide any comments on the Benchmarking Report to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Future Housemark Benchmarking

9. Although Housemark provides an excellent and consistent benchmarking facility, and the benchmarking itself is very informative, the process is expensive and time-consuming - in terms of the Housemark subscription and officer time. Each year, officers from Housing and Finance have to extract and calculate all the relevant cost and quality data, and upload the required information to the Housemark website. The provision of cost data is the most onerous in terms of officer time. The data extraction, collection and calculation process takes officers in Housing and Finance around 10 person-days each year.

10. The annual subscription to Housemark is around £7,000 per annum, but it should be noted that the Council receives other benefits, including free training sessions on current housing policy and practice.

11. In view of the Council's current financial position and the amount of staff time involved, it has been decided to only subscribe to Housmark, and undertake the benchmarking, every two years – although discussions are due to be held with Housemark to ascertain if the Council can subscribe for just the less onerous quality benchmarking service, in which case it may be considered appropriate to undertake quality benchmarking annually.

**HouseMark Value for Money Benchmarking Summary – 2009/10
(Produced March 2011)**

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	2nd Best Quartile
			Percentage of respondents who felt staff were able to deal with their problem	Best Quartile
			Percentage of tenants satisfied with complaints handling	No Data
Home	Direct cost per property of Responsive Repairs & Void Works	Best Quartile	Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	Best Quartile
			Repairs completed 'right first time'	No Data
	Direct cost per property of Major Works & Cyclical Maintenance	2nd Worst Quartile	Percentage of tenants satisfied with overall quality of home	2nd Best Quartile
			Percentage of dwellings failing to meet the Decent Home Standard	Best Quartile
Tenancy (Including Allocations, Rents & Tenure)	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
			Current tenant rent arrears as % of rent due	2nd Best Quartile
Neighbourhood and Community	Direct costs per property of Estate Services	Worst Quartile	Percentage of tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	2nd Best Quartile
	Direct costs per case of Anti-Social behaviour	Worst Quartile	Percentage of respondents satisfied with anti-social behaviour case handling	No Data