

Report to the Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 27 April 2006



Subject: HRA Business Plan 2006

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Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry, ext.4246

Recommendations:

That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2006, incorporating the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan 2006, attached as an Appendix to this report, be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for adoption.

Background

1. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) requires all local authorities to produce annual Business Plans for their Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs). The ODPM's intention is to ensure that local authority housing is used and maintained to maximum effect. HRA Business Plans deal with councils' plans and performance for the delivery and quality of its housing services to tenants. Detailed guidance has been issued by the ODPM, which prescribes the form in which business plans must be produced, and includes the requirement for clear repair and maintenance strategies to be set out and, ideally, for detailed financial forecasts to be produced for thirty years hence.

2. In 2003, the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan (along with its Housing Strategy) was only the second in the country assessed by the Government Office as fully "fit for purpose". For a Business Plan to be designated as "fit for purpose", it has to meet stringent "fit for purpose" criteria laid down by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

HRA Business Plan 2006

3. The latest draft HRA Business Plan 2006 is attached. Apart from the usual updating of statistical and other information, the main changes from last year's Business Plan are:

- The deletion of references to housing benefits, since these are no longer accounted for within the housing revenue account
- Updated sections on key achievements in 2005/6 and key priorities for 2006/7 (Sections 3.5 and 3.6)
- Reference to the proposed small scale stock transfer of Wickfields, sheltered housing scheme, Chigwell (Section 6.9(c))
- An updated Financial Plan (Chapter 8)
- A new Key Action Plan (Chapter 10)
- An updated Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan (Appendix 1)

Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan 2006

4. An important part of the HRA Business Plan relates to the Council's objectives, strategies and plans relating to the repair and maintenance of the Council's housing stock over the next 30 years. This includes the Council's progress with meeting the Government's

decent homes standard, which sets out a criteria against which local authorities must assess whether or not each of their homes are “decent”. The Government has given local authorities a target of ensuring that all their homes are decent by 2010. As in previous years, the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan forms Appendix 1 to the main HRA Business Plan.

5. The draft HRA Business Plan is due to be discussed by the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation at their meeting on 26 April 2006. Their comments on the Business Plan will therefore be reported orally at the meeting.

6. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to recommend the HRA Business Plan 2006, incorporating the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan 2004, to the Housing Portfolio Holder for adoption.