

**HRA Business Plan 2012/13**  
**6-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT ON KEY ACTION PLAN**  
*(October 2012)*

| Action   | Corporate Housing Objectives | Responsibility for Achievement                              | Target Date  | 6-Month Progress Report<br><i>(as at 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012)</i>   |
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| <b>Housing General</b>   |                              |   |              |   |
| 1) Review the credibility and appropriateness of the new HRA Financial Plan and the associated treasury management arrangements within its first year of operation, with formal officer reviews on a quarterly basis and reviews by the Housing Scrutiny Panel on a half-yearly basis. | HO 1 / 2 / 3<br>/ 4 / 5      | Director of Finance /<br>Director of Housing                | Mar<br>2013  | <b>In Progress</b> – It was not considered necessary to formally review the Financial Plan after just one quarter. However, the Council's HRA Business Planning Consultant has reviewed the Plan after Quarter 2, and provided a report for the Housing Scrutiny Panel for consideration at its October 2012 meeting. |
| 2) Consider additional appropriate housing improvements and service enhancements, funded from additional resources available to the HRA from April 2013, once the available additional funding is known.   | HO 1 / 2 / 3<br>/ 4 / 5      | Director of Housing   | Feb<br>2013  | <b>Not yet required</b> – A report will be submitted to the Housing Scrutiny Panel at its January 2013 meeting.   |
| 3) Successfully complete the implementation of the electronic records and document management system (Information @Work) within the Housing Directorate  | HO 1 / 2 / 3                 | Asst Director of<br>Housing (Private<br>Sector & Resources) | Mar<br>2013  | <b>In Progress</b> – All tenancy files have been scanned (freeing-up significant office space) and the Housing Portfolio Holder has recently agreed that all housing applicant files can also be scanned externally.  |
| 4) Undertake a Tenant Satisfaction Survey using the STAR survey form by HouseMark, whereby the results can be benchmarked with other landlords   | HO 2 / 3 / 4                 | Principal Housing<br>Officer (Strategy &<br>Information)    | Sept<br>2012 | <b>Achieved</b> – The survey results were considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel in August 2012. Overall tenant satisfaction increased by 3% to 88%.  |
| <b>Housing Management</b>  |                              |   |              |   |
| 5) Consider whether the Council should use the new fixed term flexible tenancies allowed under the Localism Act 2011 and, if so, formulate a Tenancy Scheme setting out the proposed operation of the scheme   | HO 2                         | Asst Director of<br>Housing (Operations)                    | Dec<br>2012  | <b>In progress</b> – The Housing Portfolio Holder has agreed a set of principles for a pilot scheme to use flexible (fixed term) tenancies for all new 3 bedroom lettings,  |

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|  |          |                                       |           | which officers are using to formulate a Tenancy Policy for consideration by the Housing Scrutiny Panel   |
| 6) Work in partnership with Harlow and Uttlesford DCs to formulate a West Essex Tenancy Strategy, setting out the expected approach to be taken by all housing providers in West Essex to the provision of secure/assured/ fixed-term tenancies                  | HO 1 / 2 | Director of Housing                   | Jan 2013  | <b>Nearly Achieved</b> – At the time of writing, the Cabinet is due to consider the adoption of the West Essex Tenancy Strategy at its meeting on 22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2012, following a formal consultation exercise.   |
| 7) Undertake a major review of the Housing Allocations Scheme, considering whether or not to use the flexibilities provided by the Localism Act 2011, including the application of a local residence requirement, and update the Allocations Scheme accordingly. | HO2      | Asst Director of Housing (Operations) | Mar 2013  | <b>In progress</b> – The Housing Portfolio Holder has agreed a set a principles for a new Housing Allocations Scheme, including a local residence criteria, which officers are using to formulate a new Housing Allocations Scheme for consideration by the Housing Scrutiny Panel   |
| 8) Consider whether or not the Home Ownership Grant Scheme (which enables tenants to purchase their own home and vacate their Council property for occupation by a housing applicant) should be re-introduced in 2013/14   | HO 1     | Housing Resources Manager             | Sept 2012 | <b>Nearly Achieved</b> – At the time of writing, the Cabinet is due to consider a report and recommendation from the Housing Portfolio Holder, at its meeting on 22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2012, that the Home Ownership Grant Scheme be discontinued.  |
| 9) Introduce a facility for tenants to apply for the housing on-line.  | HO 1 / 2 | Housing Options Manager               | Dec 2012  | <b>In progress</b> – Officers have evaluated various options and have concluded that the on-line application service provided by Locata, the Council's Choice Based Lettings Agency, should be used. Officers will be seeking the Housing Portfolio's approval in the near future.   |
| 10) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Develop the Council's Social Housing Fraud Initiative, by doubling the number of Housing Fraud staff in 2012/13 and creating a Senior Housing Officer (Fraud) post to lead the small team                               | HO 1 / 2 | Director of Housing                   | July 2012 | <b>Achieved</b> – The Cabinet approved the appointment. The former Housing Officer (Fraud) has been appointed Senior Housing Officer (Fraud) and an internal appointment has been made to his former post, subject to job evaluation. The job evaluation has been delayed due to the unions withdrawing their support for the Council's Job Evaluation Scheme, but this problem has now been overcome. |

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| <p>11) Purchase the freehold of land and properties at Marden Close, Chigwell Row, from Trust for London and either redevelop the site of convert the 20 existing bedsits into 10 one bedroom flats</p>   | <p>HO 1 / 2 / 3</p>     | <p>Director of Housing</p>       | <p>March 2013</p> | <p><b>Delayed</b> – Trust for London owns adjacent land to Marden Close, which it wishes to safeguard its future development potential. The Trust is therefore investigating all options, including officers' and the Parish Council's preferred option of an arrangement involving both Marden Close and Faversham Hall, the freehold of which is held by the District Council. However, despite the Director of Housing expressing concerns about the delays to Trust for London, the Trust continues to be slow to progress the matter.</p> |
| <p>12) Appoint a suitable organisation to act as the Council's Development Agent to undertake a new Council Housebuilding Programme</p>   | <p>HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5</p> | <p>Director of Housing</p>       | <p>Dec 2012</p>   | <p><b>In Progress</b> – The appointment process is on target. Tenders were invited from 6 shortlisted organisations, which have now been returned and are currently being evaluated. Interviews have been arranged for the end of October 2012 and a Presentation to a Selection Panel of members and officers arranged for early November 2012. The Selection Panel will be submitting its recommendation(s) to the Cabinet in December 2012, and it is envisaged that the contract will commence in January 2013.</p>                        |
| <p>13) Select the Council-owned (mainly difficult-to-let garage) sites suitable for development and formulate the Council Housebuilding Programme accordingly</p>   | <p>HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5</p> | <p>Director of Housing</p>       | <p>Sept 2012</p>  | <p><b>Achieved</b> – Cabinet has approved a Primary List and Reserve List of potential development sites for the new Council Housebuilding Programme, which will be appraised in detail by the new Development Agent when appointed.</p>   |
| <p>14) Create a part-time Housing Development Officer post, to assist the Director of Housing to undertake the "client" role for the Development Agent contract and to work in partnership with housing associations for the development of affordable housing on non-Council sites</p> | <p>HO 2 / 3</p>         | <p>Director of Housing</p>       | <p>Sept 2012</p>  | <p><b>Achieved</b> – The post has been created and job-evaluated. The appointed candidate is due to commence employment on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012.</p>   |
| <p>15) Introduce the Leasehold Services module of the OHMS integrated housing system, to improve the efficiency of the leasehold service</p>  | <p>HO 1 / 2 / 5</p>     | <p>Housing Resources Manager</p> | <p>March 2013</p> | <p><b>Not yet commenced</b></p>  |

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| 16) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Create a new post of Under-occupation Officer, to encourage underoccupying Council tenants to move to smaller accommodation and to provide practical help, support and advice to older and/or vulnerable under-occupying tenants wanting to move.  | HO 1 / 2         | Housing Manager (Older People's Services)          | Oct 2012 | <b>In progress</b> - The Cabinet approved the appointment, and the Job Description, Person Specification etc have been produced. However, the appointment has been delayed due to other commitments in the Housing Directorate and delays with the required job evaluation, due to the unions withdrawing their support for the Council's Job Evaluation Scheme. However, this problem has now been overcome and the job evaluation is due to be undertaken in November 2012, following which the recruitment process will be undertaken. |
| 17) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Expand the Garden Maintenance Service for Older and Disabled Tenants in order to assist a greater number of tenants, by doubling the annual grant provided to Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF)  | HO 2             | Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)             | Jul 2012 | <b>Achieved</b> – The Cabinet approved the additional grant, which has been provided to VAEF and more gardens are now being maintained  |
| 18) Review the level of service provided by VAEF's Garden Maintenance Service for Older and Disabled Tenants, in order to determine the additional cost of providing a higher and more regular level of service to tenants, in time for consideration of the priorities for the use of any increased funding available for additional housing improvements and service enhancements from April 2013 | HO 1 / 2         | Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)             | Jan 2013 | <b>In Progress</b> – The review is currently being undertaken.  |
| 19) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Undertake a programme to provide and empty on a regular basis 21 additional dog waste bins on Council housing estates  | HO 2             | Area Housing Managers (North) and (South)          | Oct 2012 | <b>In Progress</b> - The Cabinet approved the proposal and the additional dog waste bins are currently being installed.   |
| 20) Introduce the "Tell us Once" initiative for the Housing Service, enabling residents to automatically notify the Council of births and deaths through registration with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages  | HO 1 / 2         | Housing Options Manager                            | May 2012 | <b>Achieved</b> – The "Tell us Once" was introduced earlier in the year.  |
| <b>Tenant Participation</b>   |                  |  |          |   |
| 21) Introduce a new Tenants Scrutiny Panel, to scrutinise the performance of the Housing Service and to undertake service reviews   | HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 | Principal Housing Officer (Strategy & Information) | Dec 2012 | <b>In Progress</b> – The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation has agreed a model for its approach and Terms of Reference. Following a recruitment  |

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|   |              |   |           | exercise, a number of interested tenants have also been identified. The next step is to arrange appropriate training for the members of the new Scrutiny Panel.   |
| 22) Train tenants of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation and recognised tenants associations to undertake periodic "mystery shopping" exercises on the Council's housing services, and for other social housing providers   | HO 2 / 3 / 4 | Tenant Participation Officer              | Dec 2012  | <b>Delayed</b> – Due to workload and other commitments.   |
| <b>Supporting People and Supported Housing</b>  |              |   |           |   |
| 23) Complete the installation of CCTV cameras at all the Council's sheltered housing schemes around the District, monitored live by the Council's 24-hour Careline Control Centre   | HO 2         | Housing Manager (Older People's Services) | Sept 2012 | <b>Achieved</b> – All the CCTV cameras have now been installed and linked to Careline   |
| 24) Introduce a programme of providing scooter stores at sheltered housing schemes  | HO 2         | Housing Assets Manager                    | Mar 2013  | <b>In Progress</b> – Surveys have been undertaken   |
| 25) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Introduce a free Handyperson Service operated by;<br><br>(a) the Council's Housing Repairs Service for all older tenants in sheltered housing schemes; and<br><br>(b) Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) for all older tenants in non-sheltered housing, funded by a grant from the Council | HO 3         | Asst. Director of Housing (Property)      | Oct 2012  | <b>In Progress</b> – Cabinet approved the Scheme. A Handyperson has been appointed by the Housing Repairs Service and VAEF are ready to undertake their role. The Scheme will be launched and publicised towards the end of 2012. |
| 26) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Undertake a programme to convert existing toilets in communal areas of housing community halls and sheltered scheme lounges for full disabled use  | HO 2 / 3     | Housing Assets Manager                    | Mar 2013  | <b>In Progress</b> – Cabinet approved the Scheme  |
| 27) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Undertake a programme to install Key Safes outside the front doors of all properties in sheltered housing schemes, free of charge, to enable easier access to properties by emergency services and tenants' visitors   | HO 2         | Housing Manager (Older People's Services) | Mar 2013  | <b>In Progress</b> – Cabinet approved the Scheme and the key safes are currently being installed through a planned programme.   |

### Housing Repairs and Maintenance

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| 28) Implement a programme for repairs and maintenance expenditure over 5 and 30 years.   | HO 3     | Assistant Director of Housing (Property) | Ongoing    | <b>Achieved</b> – Programmes of work have been identified and planned as part of the on-going stock condition survey.  |
| 29) Publish clear service standards for planned maintenance, Decent Homes, repairs, Right to Repairs and Leaseholder responsibilities, which are available in printed leaflet form and on the web site (Also relates to NI14 – Avoidable Contact Action Plan). | HO 3     | Housing Assets Manager                   | July 2011  | <b>In Progress</b> – Leaflets are available for Dealing with Condensation, Asbestos in the Home, Internal Decorations and Replacement Front Entrance Doors. Others are planned for kitchens, bathrooms and disabled adaptations. |
| 30) Install mains operated smoke detectors in all Council owned properties over the next 5-years   | HO 3     | Housing Assets Manager                   | 2012-2017  | <b>In Progress</b> – This Programme has been accelerated as part of the Service Enhancements Programme. As of September 2012, around 2,500 Council homes now have mains-operated smoke detectors installed.                      |
| 31) Timetable at least one meeting each year with the Tenants Federation to discuss the repairs and maintenance expenditure programme.   | HO 3 / 4 | Assistant Director of Housing (Property) | March 2013 | <b>Not yet Required</b> – This is undertaken in March each year prior to the next Business Plan being produced.  |
| 32) Introduce Asbestos record cards in all properties, and maintain the records for contactors and tenants use.  | HO 3     | Customer Repairs Manager                 | April 2012 | <b>Achieved</b> – Asbestos Record Cards have been produced and issued to the Gas Heating Contractor, who is installing them as part of the Service Programme.  |
| 33) Closer partnership working with ECC Social Care Occupational Therapists to better forward plan the budget required to meet the ongoing and future demand for disabled adaptations.   | HO 3     | Housing Assets Manager                   | April 2013 | <b>Not Yet Achieved</b> – ECC, who provide Social Care, are currently reviewing the options for future care provision, with pilots being undertaken in some Essex local authorities.   |
| 34) Explore options whereby emphasis is put on “fix first time” for responsive repairs.  | HO 1 / 3 | Customer Repairs Manager                 | Dec 2012   | <b>In Progress</b> – Whilst every attempt is made to try and fix first time, this is not always possible. This is an industry wide challenge, with few successful examples as yet.   |

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| 35) Seek, through the Essex Hub, a framework agreement with specialist contractors for, Gas Servicing and Maintenance (South), electrical testing and rewiring, Digital TV maintenance, bathroom adaptations, Energy Efficiency as well as ad-hoc repairs where necessary   | HO 1 / 3     | Housing Assets Manager                   | March 2013 | <b>In Progress</b> – Framework tenders have been sought for gas servicing, electrical testing and upgrades, bathrooms adaptations and replacement front entrance doors.  |
| 36) Continue with the Repairs Focus Group once set up, and create an action plan for inclusion in the Repairs Refresh Programme   | HO 3 / 4     | Assistant Director of Housing (Property) | March 2013 | <b>Achieved</b> – Meetings take place on a quarterly basis, with very good membership and participation.   |
| 37) Continue feasibility studies into alternative fuel sources for properties in rural communities where mains gas is not available.  | HO 1 / 3     | Housing Assets Manager                   | March 2013 | <b>No Further Progress</b> – Since grant funding for Solar PV was radically reduced by the Government, no further action has taken place with this initiative.   |
| 38) Commence the installation of external wall insulation for solid wall constructed properties, and to seek grant funding to support future programmes   | HO 1 / 3 / 5 | Housing Assets Manager                   | April 2012 | <b>Achieved</b> – Three properties have been successfully completed, with very good tenant feedback. A grant application for external funding is currently in the process of being submitted.  |
| 39) Review all projects with a contract value in excess of £1m on completion to identify any lessons learnt.  | HO 3         | Housing Assets Manager                   | On-going   | <b>On-going</b> – This is undertaken as part of the contract administration and management process.  |
| 40) Seek to reduce the target response times for:<br>(a) Routine repairs from 6-weeks to 2-weeks<br>(b) Urgent repairs from 5-days to 3-days<br>(c) Emergency repairs from 24 hrs to 4 hours<br>(d) Void turnaround times from 6-weeks to 2-weeks   | HO 3         | Mears / Housing Repairs Manager          | April 2012 | <b>Achieved</b> – All targets have been achieved by the Housing Repairs Service in Quarter 2 for the first time ever, through the Repairs Management Contract with Mears. The Repairs Advisory Group have considered and recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder new contract targets from 1 October 2012.   |
| 41) Undertake small jobs on behalf of older people free of charge, which are currently specified as the tenants' responsibility. This will be via directly employed tradesmen for residents at Sheltered Accommodation and through a direct grant to the Voluntary Action Epping Forest for those qualifying tenants' in other general needs housing. | HO 3         | Mears / Housing Repairs Manager          | March 2013 | <b>In progress</b> – The recruitment process has been undertaken and a new employee appointed, subject to contract. A new van is in the process of being purchased. A list of qualifying jobs for the Scheme has been agreed and the Sheltered Forum consulted. A Service Level Agreement is being drafted with VAEF. The service is due to go live in Oct/Nov 2012. |

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| 42) Implement "key deliverables" as defined in the Repairs Refresh Programme, including the introduction of a better supply chain arrangements with suppliers to ensure value for money. | HO 1 / 3 | Mears / Housing Repairs Manager                          | March 2014 | <b>In Progress</b> – With the exception of the materials supplies implementation, all other Key Deliverables have been delivered. Tenders have been returned for the materials supply contract, which is anticipated to be approved in November 2012. |
| 43) To develop a separate Repairs and Maintenance Service Strategy   | HO 3     | Assistant Director of Housing (Property)                 | July 2012  | <b>In Progress</b> – This is being drafted to take account of the new Housing Repairs Charter which the Council has signed-up to and the new full modern maintenance standard the Council has introduced to supersede the Decent Homes Standard.      |
| 44) To seek to include at least one local business on the list of tenderers for all future contracts.  | HO 3     | Housing Assets Manager & Mears / Housing Repairs Manager | On-going   | <b>Achieved</b> – This is an ongoing requirement of Contract Standing Orders.   |

### Key to Corporate Housing Objectives

HO 1 - Value for Money

HO 2 - Housing Management

HO 3 - Repairs and Maintenance

HO 4 - Tenant Participation

HO 5 - Housing Finance