

HRA Business Plan 2012/13
6-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT ON KEY ACTION PLAN
(March 2013)

| Action | Corporate Housing Objectives | Responsibility for Achievement | Target Date | 12-Month Progress Report <i>(as at 1st March 2013)</i> |
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| Housing General | | | | |
| 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 / 4 / 5 | Director of Finance / Director of Housing | Mar 2013 | Achieved – It was not necessary for officers to formally review the Financial Plan after just one quarter. The Scrutiny Panel considered a report at its October 2012 meeting on the Council's HRA Business Planning Consultant' review of the Plan after Quarter 2, and the latest version (Quarters 3/4 will be presented to the Scrutiny Panel for inclusion within the HRA Business Plan at its March meeting. Officers also reviewed the Financial Plan after Quarter 3. |
| 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 / 4 / 5 | Director of Housing | Feb 2013 | Achieved – A detailed report was presented to the Housing Scrutiny Panel at its January 2013 meeting, and the Scrutiny Panel has reported on to the Cabinet |
| 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 Housing (Private Sector & Resources) | Mar July 2013 | In Progress – All tenancy files have been scanned (freeing-up significant office space) and, following the approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder, all housing applicant files are due to be scanned externally shortly. |
| 4) Undertake a Tenant Satisfaction Survey using the STAR survey form by HouseMark, whereby the results can benchmarked with other landlords | HO 2 / 3 / 4 | Principal Housing Officer (Strategy & Information) | Sept 2012 | Achieved – The survey results were considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel in August 2012. Overall tenant satisfaction increased by 3% to 88%. |

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| | | | | A further report was considered by the Scrutiny Panel in January 2013, comparing tenant satisfaction of EFDC tenants with other councils' and housing associations'. |
| Housing Management | | | | |
| 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 Housing (Operations) | Dec 2012 April 2013 | Nearly Achieved – The Scrutiny Panel considered a draft Tenancy Policy at its meeting in December 2012, based on a set a principles from the Housing Portfolio Holder for a pilot scheme, including the use of flexible (fixed term) tenancies for all new 3 bedroom lettings A consultation exercise is currently being undertaken and the Scrutiny Panel's report and recommendations on the proposed Tenancy Policy will be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting in April 2013, along with the outcome of the consultation exercise. |
| 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 | Achieved – The Tenancy Strategy was adopted by the Cabinet at its meeting on 22 nd 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) | Dec 2012 April 2013 | Nearly Achieved – The Scrutiny Panel considered a draft Housing Allocations Scheme at its meeting in December 2012, based on a set a principles from the Housing Portfolio Holder, including the introduction of a local eligibility criteria. A consultation exercise is currently being undertaken and the Scrutiny Panel's report and recommendations on the proposed Housing Allocations |

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| | | | | Scheme will be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting in April 2013, along with the outcome of the consultation exercise. |
| 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 | Achieved – The Cabinet considered a report and recommendation from the Housing Portfolio Holder at its meeting on 22 nd October 2012 and agreed that the Home Ownership Grant Scheme should be discontinued. |
| 9) Introduce a facility for housing applicants to apply for housing on-line. | HO 1 / 2 | Housing Options Manager | Dec 2012 June 2013 | In Progress – Following an evaluation of various options, the Housing Portfolio Holder has agreed that the on-line housing application service provided by Locata, the Council's Choice Based Lettings Agency, should be used - as part of a wider Hosting Service. |
| 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 | Achieved – The Cabinet approved the appointment. The former Housing Officer (Fraud) has been appointed Senior Housing Officer (Fraud) and an appointment has been made to his former post. |
| 11) Purchase the freehold of land and properties at Marden Close, Chigwell Row, from Trust for London and either redevelop the site or convert the 20 existing bedsits into 10 one bedroom flats | HO 1 / 2 / 3 | Director of Housing | March 2013 N/A | In Progress – Trust for London owns adjacent land to Marden Close, and wishes to safeguard its future development potential and access via Marden Close. For this reason, the Trust is not prepared to sell the freehold to the Council. In February 2013, the Cabinet therefore agreed that the Council should convert the bedsits itself and offer a 10-year lease of neighbouring Faversham Hall to Chigwell Parish Council to let as a community hall. |

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| | | | | The Cabinet has charged the Council's new Housebuilding Cabinet Committee to oversee the delivery of the conversion scheme. |
| 12) Appoint a suitable organisation to act as the Council's Development Agent to undertake a new Council Housebuilding Programme | HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 | Director of Housing | Dec 2012 | Achieved – Following a robust EU-compliant procurement process and the invitation of tenders from 6 shortlisted organisations, the Cabinet appointed East Thames Group as the Council's Development Agent, at its meeting in December 2012. The signing of the formal contract is imminent. |
| 13) Select the Council-owned (mainly difficult-to-let garage) sites suitable for development and formulate the Council Housebuilding Programme accordingly | HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 | Director of Housing | Sept 2012 | Achieved – 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 East Thames, as the Council's new Development Agent. Work has already commenced on evaluating the proposed first two sites. |
| 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 | HO 2 / 3 | Director of Housing | Sept 2012 | Achieved – The post has been created and the post-holder commenced employment on 22 nd October 2012. |
| 15) Introduce the Leasehold Services module of the OHMS integrated housing system, to improve the efficiency of the leasehold service | HO 1 / 2 / 5 | Housing Resources Manager | March Sept 2013 | In Progress – This is a major IT implementation that the Housing Directorate is undertaking. It is well underway and completion of the installation is expected around September 2013 |

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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 | Achieved - The Cabinet approved the appointment and, following a recruitment process an internal appointment has been made. |
| 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 | Achieved – 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 2014 | In Progress – The review is currently being undertaken, and will be considered when the Housing Scrutiny Panel next considers the use of the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund in January 2014. |
| 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 | Achieved - The Cabinet approved the proposal and the additional dog waste bins have been 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 | Achieved – The "Tell us Once" was introduced during 2012. |
| Tenant Participation | | | | |
| 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 | Achieved – Following the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation agreeing the model for its approach and Terms of Reference, and a subsequent recruitment exercise undertaken to identify a number of interested tenants, the new Tenants Scrutiny Panel has been established. It comprises 8 tenants, who have received a whole day's training from an external trainer. |

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| | | | | <p>Its first meeting was held in February 2013, when they appointed their Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen. The next meeting is in March 2013, when the Scrutiny Panel will commence work on their first Housing Service Review - on their selected topic of the way the Housing Service deals with complaints.</p> <p>A report on the new Tenants Scrutiny Panel is due to be provided to the Housing Scrutiny Panel, at its meeting in March 2013</p> |
| 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 2013 | Delayed – Due to workload and other commitments (especially the setting up of the Tenants Scrutiny Panel). However, it is possible that some recommendations may emerge from the Tenants Scrutiny Panel's first Service Review (Housing Complaints), that may inform this process. |
| Supporting People and Supported Housing | | | | |
| 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 | Achieved – 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 Sept 2013 | In Progress – Outline design options and costings have been completed for the four highest priority sites. Works are due to commence in Summer 2013 |
| 25) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Introduce a free Handyperson Service operated by; (a) the Council's Housing Repairs Service for all older tenants in sheltered housing schemes; and | HO 3 | Asst. Director of Housing (Property) | Oct 2012 | Achieved – Following the Cabinet's approval of the Scheme. A Handyperson was appointed by the Housing Repairs Service in November 2012, and the feedback from residents has been excellent. |

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| (b) Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) for all older tenants in non-sheltered housing, funded by a grant from the Council | | | | VAEF has also introduced its scheme for all older tenants in non-sheltered housing. |
| 26) (Subject to Cabinet approval) 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 | In Progress – Cabinet has approved the Scheme. Works are on site at Jubilee Court (completion due late-March). The three remaining schemes are due to start this year. |
| 27) (Subject to Cabinet approval) 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 | Achieved – Following Cabinet approval to the Scheme, all the key safes have now been installed. |
| Housing Repairs and Maintenance | | | | |
| 28) Implement a programme for repairs and maintenance expenditure over 5 and 30 years. | HO 3 | Assistant Director of Housing (Property) | Ongoing | Achieved – 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 Sept 2013 | In Progress – Leaflets are available for Dealing with Condensation, Asbestos in the Home, Internal Decorations, Kitchens, Handyperson Service and Replacement Front Entrance Doors. Others are planned for 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 2012-2014 | In Progress – This Programme has been accelerated as part of the Service Enhancements Programme. As of September 2012, around 3,800 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 | In Progress – This is planned for late March 2013, prior to the 2013/14 Business Plan being finalised. |
| 32) Introduce Asbestos record cards in all properties, and maintain the records for contactors and tenants use. | HO 3 | Customer Repairs Manager | April 2012 | Achieved – Asbestos Record Cards have been produced and issued to the Gas Heating Contractor, who is installing them as part of the Service Programme. |

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| 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 | In Progress – ECC, who provide Social Care, are currently reviewing the options for future care provision, with pilots being undertaken in some Essex authorities. |
| 34) Explore options whereby emphasis is put on “fix first time” for responsive repairs. | HO 1 / 3 | Customer Repairs Manager | Dec 2012 | In Progress – 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. |
| 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 | Achieved – Framework tenders have been let for gas servicing, electrical testing and upgrades, rewiring, communal electrical installations testing and upgrades, bathroom adaptations and replacement front entrance doors. Others are planned for kitchen replacements, bathroom renewals, flat and pitched roof replacements and water tank renewals. |
| 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 | Achieved – 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 | Achieved – Whilst grant for Solar PV through the Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) was radically reduced by the Government, the Council has commenced a programme of air-source heat pumps and ad-hoc solar thermal installations, combined with a pilot scheme of external wall insulation to rural homes and electrically-heated homes without mains gas. |
| 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 | Achieved – 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 | On-going – This is undertaken as part of the contract administration and management process. |

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| 40) Seek to reduce the target response times for: (a) Routine repairs from 6-weeks to 2-weeks (b) Urgent repairs from 5-days to 3-days (c) Emergency repairs from 24 hrs to 4 hours (d) Void turnaround times from 6-weeks to 2-weeks | HO 3 | Mears / Housing Repairs Manager | April 2012 | Achieved – All targets have been achieved by the Housing Repairs Service in Quarters 2 and 3 for the first time ever, through the Repairs Management Contract with Mears. The Repairs Advisory Group has considered, and the Housing Portfolio Holder has agreed, 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 | Achieved – The Council has employed a new Handyperson to undertake the Handyman Service at the Council's sheltered housing schemes. The Council has also funded the purchase of a van and a Handyperson employed by VAEF, who is now undertaking a similar role for older residents in general needs Council housing. Following consultation with the Sheltered Housing Forum, a list of qualifying jobs for the Scheme has been agreed. This service went live in September 2012. |
| 42) Implement "key deliverables" as defined in the Repairs Refresh Programme, including the introduction of a better supply chain with suppliers to ensure value for money. | HO 1 / 3 | Mears / Housing Repairs Manager | March 2014 | Achieved – All key deliverables have now been achieved, including the appointment of Buildbase as the materials supplier. |
| 43) To develop a separate Repairs and Maintenance Service Strategy | HO 3 | Assistant Director of Housing (Property) | July 2012 | No longer required – To avoid duplication, this strategy will now be combined with the HQN Self-assessment planned as part of the new "Key Deliverables" set for the Repairs Management Contract in 2013/14. |
| 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 | On-going | Achieved – 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