

**HRA Business Plan 2014/15  
6-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT ON KEY ACTION PLAN**

Action	Corporate Housing Objectives	Responsibility for Achievement	Target Date	6-Month Progress Report <i>(As at 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014)</i>
<b>Housing General</b>				
1) Review the HRA Financial Plan, through 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 Communities	Mar 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – The Quarter 1 Review was considered by officers, and the Quarter 2 Review is due to be considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel in October 2014.
2) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Consider additional appropriate housing improvements and service enhancements, funded from additional resources available to the HRA from April 2015, once the available additional funding is known.	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Director of Communities	Jan 2015	<b>Not yet required</b>
3) Embed the operations of the Housing Service within the new Communities Directorate and complete all the identified tasks within the Communities Directorate Implementation Action Plan, in order to increase further the Housing Service's efficiency and effectiveness	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 6	Director of Communities	Mar 2015	<b>Good Progress</b> – Most of the identified actions, and a number more, have been completed.
4) Introduce a new centralised, co-ordinated and customer focussed complaints handling regime for all Step 1 and Step 2 complaints within the Communities Directorate	HO 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Private Housing & Communities Support)	<del>Sept 2014</del> Jan 2015	<b>Delayed</b> – The new post will form part of the Communities Support Team, which is currently subject to restructuring proposals under Phase 2 of the Management Restructure.
<b>Council Housebuilding Programme</b>				
5) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Adopt an updated Development Strategy for the Council's Housebuilding Programme, taking account of strategic and policy decisions since the adoption of the previous version and the Programme's current position	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	<del>July 2014</del> Dec 2014	<b>In Progress</b> – The Council's Development Agent is currently working on an updated Strategy, which will initially be considered by the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee by the end of 2014.

6) Subject to the Council's funding bid to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) being successful, seek and obtain Investment Partner status with the HCA, to enable the Council to draw down the funding and charge affordable rents for newly-built properties.	HO 1 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	Dec 2014	<b>In Progress</b> – The Council was successful in securing £0.5 Million grant from the HCA. East Thames is now in the process of formulating the Council's application to the HCA for Investment Partner status.
7) Start on site with Phase 1 of the Council's Housebuilding Programme, to provide 23 new affordable rented homes in Waltham Abbey.	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	<del>July 2014</del> Nov 2014	<b>In Progress</b> – Phase 1 is due to start on site in November 2014.
8) Start on site with an improvement scheme at Marden Close and Faversham Hall, Chigwell Row, to convert the 20 existing bedsits a former hall into 12 one bedroom flats	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	Aug 2014	<b>Achieved</b> – Works started on site in September 2014.
9) Consider and determine which level of the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) new Council properties should meet, to inform future development appraisals and the standards for future developments.	HO 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	<del>Sept 2014</del> Jan 2015	<b>Held in abeyance</b> – Pending the Government's decisions on the standards within new Building Regulations.
10) Progress Phase 2 of the Housebuilding Programme, providing new affordable rented homes at Burton Road, Loughton, including the receipt of planning permission and the procurement of the works contractor, in readiness for a start on site in Spring 2015	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	Mar 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – The planning application for Phase 2 will be submitted at the beginning of October 2014.
11) Undertake development and financial appraisals for the majority of the Council's remaining sites with development potential and, through the Council's Housebuilding Cabinet Committee, determine which sites planning permission for development should be sought.	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	Mar 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – Development and financial appraisals will be presented to the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee for a number of potential development sites over the next few months.
<b>Housing Management</b>				
12) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval if necessary)</i> Review the success of, and if appropriate amend as a result, the Council's new Housing Allocations Scheme, to ensure that it meets the Council's housing objectives.	HO 2	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	Oct 2014	<b>In Progress</b> – The Housing Portfolio Holder has made a Decision on the main issues to be considered as part of the review. The Housing Scrutiny Panel will then review both the Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Policy in October

				2014, and make recommendations to the Cabinet accordingly.
13) Prepare for the procurement of a new choice based lettings agency, for when the existing contract with Locata Housing Services ends in 2015.	HO 1 / 2	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	June 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – The Council is working with the other local authorities that comprise the Herts and Essex Housing Options Consortium to undertake a joint procurement of a new CBL Agency.
14) Review the success of, and if appropriate amend as a result, the Council's new Tenancy Policy - and in particular the use of 10-year fixed term flexible tenancies for all new lettings of Council properties with 3 or more bedrooms.	HO 2	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	Oct 2014	<b>In Progress</b> – As (12) above
15) Undertake a high profile publicity campaign to receive information from residents about social housing fraud	HO 1 / 2	<del>Asst Director (Housing (Operations))</del> Chief Internal Auditor	Dec 2014	<b>In Progress</b> – Preparations are underway. The campaign will now be led by the Council's Chief Internal Officer, who will shortly be responsible for the new Corporate Fraud Team (see (16) below)
16) Incorporate the Social Housing Fraud Team within a new Corporate Fraud Team, in order to increase/improve the sharing of intelligence, staffing resources and expertise	HO 1 / 2	Chief Internal Auditor	<del>Sept 2014</del> Dec 2014	<b>In Progress</b> – The Chief Internal Auditor has nearly formulated his proposals, which he intends to report to the Cabinet meeting in November 2014
17) Formulate and adopt a Social Housing Fraud Strategy, to clearly set out the Council's approach to dealing with social housing fraud, and how and when the different remedies available will be used	HO 1 / 2 / 5	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	May 2014	<b>Achieved</b> – The Housing Portfolio Holder has adopted the new Social Housing Fraud Strategy, following detailed consideration by the Housing Portfolio Holder.
18) Commence an Environmental Improvement Scheme for the Oakwood Hill Estate, Loughton, through a specially-formed Task Force of key individuals and partners established to review and consider the available options	HO 2 / 3 / 4	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	Jan 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – The Task Force has been formed, under the chairmanship of the Housing Portfolio Holder, and has had two meetings to date.
19) Introduce an IT system to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the Council's leasehold property portfolio	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Communities Support Manager	<del>Sept 2014</del> Mar 2015	<b>Delayed</b> – Due to internal staffing issues, this has not been progressed as quickly as had been hoped. The two current Housing IT vacancies are included within restructure of the Communities Support Team. Once this new structure has been implemented, good progress is then expected.

20) Undertake a fundamental review of processes and policies for the re-letting of empty Council properties, through the commission of a study by an experienced and independent specialist, in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness and to improve re-letting times	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4	Director of Communities	Mar 2015	<b>Delayed</b> – No progress has been made on this due to other commitments of the Director of Communities.
<b>Tenant Participation</b>				
21) Consider and respond as appropriate to the recommendations of the first Service Review (on handling housing complaints) produced by the Tenants Scrutiny Panel	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4	Asst Director (Private Housing & Communities Support)	<del>Sept 2014</del> Jan 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – The recommendations are being implemented. The main recommendation relates to the appointment of the new Customer Relationship Officer (see (4) above)
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	<del>Mar 2015</del> Jan 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – This project is now at an advanced stage of implementation, and it is envisaged that the first mystery shopping exercise by tenants will take place in early 2015, after training.
<b>Housing Related Support</b>				
23) Review the future of the Council's Careline Service, in the light of the County Council's decision to procure a county-wide telecare contract from one provider	HO 1 / 2	Asst Director (Housing Operations)	Mar 2015	<b>Held in abeyance</b> – Awaiting Essex County Council's proposals. Essex CC's Commissioning Manager has recently indicated that Essex CC is minded to enter into discussions with existing telecare providers (including EFDC) about a negotiated arrangement for the use of existing telecare provision across Essex.
24) Complete the first schemes under the programme of providing scooter stores at sheltered housing schemes	HO 2	Housing Assets Manager	Oct 2014	<b>In Progress</b> – The two pilot schemes (at Chapel Road, Epping and Parsonage Court, Loughton) are currently awaiting planning applications to be determined.
25) Install a free Wi-Fi service at the Council's Homeless Persons Hostel at Norway House, North Weald, in order to enable residents and their children to access the internet	HO 2	Housing Options Manager	Oct 2014	<b>Nearly Achieved</b> – The work will be completed by the end of October 2014

## Housing Repairs and Maintenance

26) Install mains operated smoke detectors in all Council owned properties over the next 5-years	HO 2 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2017	<b>In Progress</b> – In excess of 80% of Council owned properties now have mains smoke alarms installed.
27) Timetable at least one meeting each year with the Tenants Federation to discuss the annual repairs and maintenance programme.	HO 3 / 4	Asst Director (Housing Property & Devt) / Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2015	<b>Not yet required</b> – This meeting takes place in March and is part of the consultation process that informs the Business Planning process.
28) Identify a new depot site from which to relocate the Housing Repairs Service to free up the existing Epping Depot for redevelopment.	HO 1 / 3 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Devt)	Mar 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – A schedule of space requirements has been drawn up and has been issued to Officers in Estates and Valuation to identify alternative sites. This is also a standard agenda item at the Asset Working Group, and will continue to be so until a site is identified.
29) Closely monitor the new materials supply contract with Grafton Buildbase, and if performance deteriorates to an unacceptable level, then implement arrangements with an alternative supplier.	HO 1 / 3	Housing Repairs Manager (Mears)	<del>June 2014</del> Mar 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – For the first 12-months of the contract, Buildbase failed to meet an acceptable standard of service for the supply of materials. This resulted in an improvement notice being served in accordance with the contract. This is now being monitored closely.
30) Undertake a tender to appoint at least two Framework contractors to undertake Gas Servicing and breakdown works to gas heating and hot water appliances in time to coincide with the existing contract end date in July 2015.	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	July 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – An advertisement was placed in the EU Journal with 16 expressions of interest received. PQQs have been evaluated and a short list of 6 contractors compiled. Tenders are due out in December 2014
31) Migrate from the Council's existing bespoke Schedule of Rates to the industry standard National Housing Federation Schedule of Rates (NHF SOR)	HO 3 / 5	Housing Repairs Manager (Mears)	<del>May 2014</del> Dec 2014	<b>In Progress</b> – This proved problematical initially, due to integration issues between Northgate OHMS and Mears' IT system (MCM). However, updated scripts from Northgate have been purchased and are now due to be implemented in December 2014 following training for Repairs staff.

32) Renew at least 3,300 key components each year to maintain its housing stock to a more modern standard based on industry standard life cycles.	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager / Housing Repairs Manager (Mears)	Mar 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – With over 1,200 key building components already replaced in Q1, this programme is well under way.
33) Continue with the Repairs Focus Group	HO 3 / 4	Asst Director (Housing Property & Devt)	Mar 2015	<b>Ongoing</b> – This group continues to meet on a quarterly basis
34) Complete the installation of external wall insulation to around 40 properties using Green Deal Cash Back funding.	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Sept 2014	<b>Achieved</b> – This programme was completed by the 24 September 2014 deadline, which attracted a grant of over £112,000
35) Roll out the 75% discount for leaseholders for 30-minute front entrance fire door installations to flats	HO 2 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – 165 Leaseholders has so far taken up the offer of a discount for a replacement fire protected front entrance door.
36) Implement the second set of “key deliverables” as agreed by the Repairs Advisory Group and the Housing Portfolio Holder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To introduce an on-line repairs diagnosis and reporting service with access to book appointments on-line</li> <li>To develop and introduce a mobile phone App for smartphones for tenants to report repairs and book appointments.</li> <li>To introduce materials product warranty notification software to warn of any warranty in existence</li> <li>To undertake an HQN Repairs Self-Assessment.</li> </ul>	HO 1 / 3	Housing Repairs Manager (Mears)	<del>Dec 2014</del> June 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – The on-line diagnostic system and the product warranty capture system have yet to be rolled out. However, the mobile phone app is anticipated to be ready for launch in January 2014 following testing.  HQN commenced its independent assessment of the Repairs Service in September 2014, starting with a series of interviews with operatives, staff and tenants. This is now being followed up with a review of the documentation relating to the way repairs are offered to tenants. The outcome of the review is anticipated in December 2014.
37) Seek to include at least one local business on the list of tenderers for all future contracts.	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager / Housing Repairs Manager (Mears)	Mar 2015	<b>Ongoing</b> – This is being achieved on all contracts so far this year. However, this cannot be guaranteed for EU procurement exercises, such as gas servicing, as this is subject to a strict and consistent marking regime of PQQ’s

38) Commence a programme of Refurbishment to Communal Kitchens in Sheltered Housing Schemes	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – Kitchens have been completed at Buckhurst Court, Buckhurst Hill; Parsonage Court and Hedgers Close, Loughton and Jessopp Court, Waltham Abbey. Three more kitchens are in the pipeline for 2014/15 and a further 5 kitchens in 2015/16.
39) Undertake a feasibility study for Chalet Replacements at Norway House	HO 2 / 3 / 6	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2015	<b>In Progress</b> - A feasibility study has been commissioned. The anticipated remaining life of the existing chalets is around 5-years, mainly due to the quality of the floors in the existing units. Three design options have been prepared and are currently being considered.

**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

HO 6 - Housing Development