

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 24 March 2015

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr D. Stallan

Subject: Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2015-16

Officer contact for further information:

Alan Hall – Director of Communities (01992 564004)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)



Recommendations:

That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2015/16, incorporating the HRA Financial Plan and the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan 2015/16 (attached as an Appendix to this report), be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for adoption.

Background

1. HRA Business Plans deal with councils' plans and performance for the delivery and quality of its housing services to tenants. Detailed guidance was issued by the former ODPM (the predecessor to the CLG), 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 for detailed financial forecasts to be produced for a 30-year period.

HRA Business Plan 2015/16

2. The Council's Audit and Governance Committee requires that all of the Council's Business Plans are completed and published by 31 March each year. Therefore, all the statistics and information within the Business Plan relating to the "last financial year", and the most up to date information, relates to 2013/14, which is the last year that full year statistics are available.

3. The development of the Business Plan and the main changes this year include:

- Updated Plain English Summary
- Updated statistics for 2013/14
- General updated information throughout the Business Plan to ensure that it remains current
- Updated comments of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation on the latest Business Plan (Section 1.6)
- New Section on the Council's new Corporate Plan 2015-2020 and the Council's Key Strategic Aims and Objectives (Section 3.1)
- Updated Summary of Key Activities and Achievements in 2014/15 (Section 3.5)
- Updated section on Key Housing Priorities and Action Plan to Meet the Objectives (Section 3.6)
- Updated section on the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund, with details of the proposed enhancements for 2015/16 (Section 4.13)

- New section on the Protected Characteristics of the Council's Housing Applicants and Applicants Accommodated (Section 7.5)
- Updated section on Housing Related Support Charges and Funding from Essex County Council, to reflect the changes and increased charges to service users for housing related support following the reduction in funding from Essex County Council (Section 8.1(f))
- Review of the Council's Rent Cap for affordable rents, under the Council's Affordable Rent Policy applied to the rents for homes built under the Council's Council Housebuilding Programme (Section 8.2(d))
- Updated Chapter on the HRA Financial Plan and cash flows (Chapter 10 and Appendices 5(a) and 5(b))
- New Key Action Plan (Chapter 12)
- Updated Repairs & Maintenance Business Plan (Appendix 1)
- Updated Appendix on Performance on Performance Indicators and Future Targets (Appendix 4)

HRA Financial Plan

4. Chapter 10 and Appendices 5(a) and 5(b) of the Business Plan set out the Council's updated HRA Financial Plan, which has been produced by the Council's HRA Business Planning Consultants, CIH Consultancy.

5. In accordance with the Cabinet's instructions, the previous Financial Plan has been formally reviewed by officers on a quarterly basis over the past year. The Cabinet also asked the Housing Scrutiny Panel to formally review the Financial Plan bi-annually. The Scrutiny Panel undertook its first bi-annual review in October 2014, and its second review will be undertaken at this meeting, through the consideration and recommendation of the proposed Financial Plan (within the draft HRA Business Plan) to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan 2015/16

6. 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 plans to ensure that the Council continues to meet the Government's decent homes standard in the short term, and maintains the Council's housing stock to a full modern standard in the longer term, as a result of the additional resources that have been made available as a result of HRA Self Financing.

7. As in previous years, the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan forms Appendix 1 to the main HRA Business Plan.

Scrutiny Panel

8. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and recommend the HRA Business Plan 2015/16, incorporating the updated Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan and Financial Plan, to the Housing Portfolio Holder for adoption.

9. The draft HRA Business Plan is also due to be discussed by the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation at their meeting on 19 March 2015. Any comments from the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation will be report orally at the meeting.