

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

Action	Corporate Housing Objectives	Responsibility for Achievement	Target Date	12-Month Progress Report (As at 1 st March 2015)
Housing General				
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	Achieved – The Quarter 1 Review was considered by officers, and the Quarter 2 Review was considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel in October 2014. The Quarter 3 (officer review) was not undertaken, due to the Council's consultant being on sick leave. The Quarter 4 review is being undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel, as part of its consideration of the new Financial Plan for 2015/16.
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	Achieved – At its meeting in March 2015, the Cabinet agreed all of the Housing Scrutiny Panel's recommended housing improvements and service enhancements
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 Apr 2015	Good Progress – Most of the identified actions, and a number more, have been completed. The restructuring of the Communities Support Team still needs to take place
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)	Sept 2014 May 2015	Delayed – 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.

Council Housebuilding Programme

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)	July 2014 Dec 2014	Achieved – The Cabinet adopted the updated Development Strategy at its meeting in February 2015, on the recommendation of the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee.
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 Apr 2015	In Progress – 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)	July 2014 Nov 2014	Achieved – Phase 1 started 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	Achieved – 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)	Sept 2014 Jan 2015	Achieved – Following consideration of the issues, the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee has agreed that, from Phase 2 onwards, developments should meet Level 4 of the Code.
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	Delayed – The planning application for Phase 2 was refused by the Area Plans Sub-Committee. At its meeting on 5 th March 2015, the Cabinet Committee considered the options available and agreed to submit a revised planning application for the same number of homes (52 homes).

<p>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.</p>	<p>HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6</p>	<p>Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)</p>	<p>Mar 2015 May 2015</p>	<p>In Progress – Development and financial appraisals were presented to the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee for a number of potential development sites towards the end of 2015. Two further meetings of the Cabinet Committee are planned for Spring 2015 to consider the remaining 22 feasibility studies from the primary list of sites.</p>
<p>Housing Management</p>				
<p>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.</p>	<p>HO 2</p>	<p>Asst Director (Housing Operations)</p>	<p>Oct 2014</p>	<p>Achieved – In March 2015, the Cabinet agreed to make a number of changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme with effect from July 2015, following detailed consideration by the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Housing Scrutiny Panel.</p>
<p>13) Prepare for the procurement of a new choice based lettings provider, for when the existing contract with Locata Housing Services ends in 2015.</p>	<p>HO 1 / 2</p>	<p>Asst Director (Housing Operations)</p>	<p>June 2015</p>	<p>In Progress – The Council is working with the other local authorities that comprise the Herts and Essex Housing Options Consortium to procure a new choice based lettings provider.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>HO 2</p>	<p>Asst Director (Housing Operations)</p>	<p>Oct 2014</p>	<p>Achieved – In March 2015, following detailed consideration by the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Housing Scrutiny Panel, the Cabinet agreed that the use of fixed term tenancies should be extended to all Council properties re-let to new tenants (not just 3 bedroom properties as currently the case) with effect from July 2015.</p>
<p>15) Undertake a high profile publicity campaign to receive information from residents about social housing fraud</p>	<p>HO 1 / 2</p>	<p>Asst Director (Housing Operations) Chief Internal Auditor</p>	<p>Dec 2014 June 2015</p>	<p>In Progress – 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 from April 2015 (see (16) below)</p>

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	Sept 2014 Dec 2014	Achieved – The Cabinet has agreed to the formation of a Corporate Fraud Team from April 2105 (excluding Benefits Fraud Officers who will be transferring to the DWP from September 2015). The two existing Housing Fraud Officer posts will form part of the new Corporate Team.
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	Achieved – 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 April 2015	In Progress – The Task Force has been formed, under the chairmanship of the Housing Portfolio Holder, and has had a number of meetings to date. Match funding has been secured from Essex Highways, to repair/improve all the adopted footpaths on the estate. The Task Force has also formulated a menu of other improvement options, that are currently being costed.
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	Sept 2014 Sept 2015	Delayed – 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	Delayed – No progress has been made on this due to other commitments of the Director of Communities. However, in the meantime, empty property re-let times have improved.

Tenant Participation

<p>21) Consider and respond as appropriate to the recommendations of the first Service Review (on handling housing complaints) produced by the Tenants Scrutiny Panel</p>	<p>HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4</p>	<p>Asst Director (Private Housing & Communities Support)</p>	<p>Sept 2014 Jan 2015</p>	<p>Achieved – The report and recommendations from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel's Service Review on the handling of housing complaints was reported to both the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation and the Housing Scrutiny Panel, and the majority of recommendations are being implemented - notably the creation of a new post of Customer Relationship Officer to co-ordinate and respond to housing complaints.</p>
<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</p>	<p>HO 2 / 3 / 4</p>	<p>Tenant Participation Officer</p>	<p>Mar 2015 Jan 2015</p>	<p>In Progress – Training has been provided to the tenant participants and the first mystery shopping exercise by tenants will take place in Spring 2015.</p>

Housing Related Support

<p>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</p>	<p>HO 1 / 2</p>	<p>Asst Director (Housing Operations)</p>	<p>Mar 2015</p>	<p>Achieved – Following Essex County Council's decision to reduce funding for the Councils Careline Service by £52,000 p/a (40%) from April 2015 and a review of options by the Housing Portfolio Holder, the Cabinet has agreed a range of alternative funding measures to meet the loss in income - primarily through increased charges to service users, including (for the first time) those in receipt of housing benefit. This has safeguarded the viability of the Careline Service for the time being. However, there are concerns that significant funding reductions will be made again from April 2016. Separately, Essex CC's Commissioning Manager has recently indicated that Essex</p>
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				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 April 2015	In Progress – The two pilot schemes (at Chapel Road, Epping and Parsonage Court, Loughton) are on site and due to be completed by April 2015.
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	Achieved – The work was completed in October 2014, and has been well received by residents.
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	In Progress – 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	Planned – 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	In Progress – 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 Management Co-ordination 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)	June 2014 Mar 2015	In Progress – 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. Since the

				service of the improvement notice, there has been an acceptable improvement in supply. However, a further stepped improvement is anticipated once the IT interface is implemented in April 2015.
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	In Progress – An advertisement was placed in the EU Journal with 16 expressions of interest received. PQQs have been evaluated and a short list of 5 contractors compiled. Tenders are due out in March 2015
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)	May 2014 Dec 2014	In Progress – This proved problematical initially, due to integration issues between Northgate OHMS and Mears' IT system (MCM). A specialist IT Consultant has been appointed and as a result the implementation is now due in April 2015, once refresher training has taken place 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	In Progress – With over 2,861 key building components already replaced in Quarter 3, this programme is well under way.
33) Continue with the Repairs Focus Group	HO 3 / 4	Asst Director (Housing Property & Devt)	Mar 2015	Ongoing – 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	Achieved – This programme was completed by the 24 September 2014 deadline, which attracted a grant of over £160,000 in Green Deal Cash-Back
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	In Progress – 165 leaseholders have so far taken up the offer of a discount for a replacement fire-protected front entrance door.

<p>36) Implement the second set of “key deliverables” as agreed by the Repairs Advisory Group and the Housing Portfolio Holder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce an on-line repairs diagnosis and reporting service with access to book appointments on-line • To develop and introduce a mobile phone App for smartphones for tenants to report repairs and book appointments. • To introduce materials product warranty notification software to warn of any warranty in existence • To undertake an HQN Repairs Self-Assessment. 	HO 1 / 3	Housing Repairs Manager (Mears)	Dec 2014 June 2015	Partly Achieved – The on-line diagnostic system and product warranty capture system are due to be rolled out in June 2015. However, the mobile phone app was successfully launched in March 2015. 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 repairs documentation. The outcome of the review is anticipated in April 2015.
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	Ongoing – 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	Year 1 Achieved – Kitchens have been completed at Buckhurst Court, Buckhurst Hill; Parsonage Court and Hedgers Close, Loughton; Jessopp Court, Waltham Abbey; Frank Bretton House, Ongar; and Leonard Davis House, North Weald. A further 5 kitchens are in the pipeline for 2015/16.
39) Undertake a feasibility study for Chalet Replacements at Norway House	HO 2 / 3 / 6	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2015	In Progress - The anticipated remaining life of the existing chalets is around 5-years, mainly due to the quality of the floors. A feasibility study has been undertaken, which is being considered alongside other management factors. Officers that manage the site are currently being consulted before a report goes forward to the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee.

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