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| COMMITTEE: | SCRUTINY |
| DATE: | 6 SEPTEMBER 2004 |
| SUBJECT: | BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT PART THREE; PROPERTY SERVICES |
| REPORT OF: | HOUSING MANAGEMENT PART THREE BEST VALUE REVIEW TEAM |
| Ward(s): | All |
| Purpose: | To advise Scrutiny Committee Members of the Methodology and Outcomes of the Best Value Review of Housing Management Part Three; Property Services. |
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| | IMPROVEMENT PLAN |

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| 1.0 | <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>The review Team makes a number of recommendations, which are detailed in the Improvement Plan, attached at Appendix A. Significant recommendations arising from the review are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Continue the development of a robust procurement strategy that will enable delivery of the Decent Homes works by 2010. · Continued Tenant involvement in the development of programmes and standards for the Decent Homes works. · Explore the use of partnering with repair and maintenance contractors as a means of achieving efficiency savings and increasing levels of customer satisfaction. · Continue use of performance indicators to monitor and improve contractor performance and as a reporting tool to TAG, CMT, Cabinet and the future board of the |
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| 2.0 | <u>Introduction</u> |
| 2.1 | The Best Value Review of Housing Part Three: Property Services forms the final part of the overall Best Value review of the Housing Management service. |
| 2.2 | In 1999 a quality review of repairs and maintenance was undertaken by HFTA, a firm of independent consultants. This review resulted in the preparation of an Implementation Plan for the improvements to working Practices Within the Property Services team. |
| 3.0 | <u>Work To Date</u> |
| 3.1 | <p>A significant proportion of the major recommendations contained in the Implementation Plan have been put in place eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Repackaging of works contracts to achieve economies of scale. · Restructure of the property services team to reflect team specialisation (responsive/capital) and improved strategic planning. · The inclusion of improved customer care provisions within maintenance contracts. · Focusing resources more on planned maintenance works rather than responsive repairs to focus the resources on achieving higher levels of decency. · The better use of IT, particularly implementation of the Orchard Repairs and Maintenance system. · The preparation of a long term maintenance strategy and the carrying out of a stock condition survey in 2003. · Improved Customer Involvement through Satisfaction Surveys. · Improved customer care eg the issue of customer satisfaction slips by contractors when carrying out repairs; implementation of Contractors use of identification, introduction of a code of Conduct for Contractors, introduction of an appointment system for repairs. |

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| 3.2 | The Stock Condition Survey formed the basis of the stock options appraisal and resulted in the successful bid for ALMO status as a means of delivering the Decent Homes Standard in the Councils properties. |
| 3.3 | The Audit Commission undertook a Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Eastbourne Borough Council services in late 2003. The council achieved a overall rating of “good”. The Audit Commission commented that “strengths outweigh weaknesses and there is a low need for service improvement” with regards to the Council’s plans to achieve the Decent Homes standard. The Audit Commission also commented that “there is a high level of tenant satisfaction with repairs and maintenance” and that “tenant representatives regarded the housing repairs service very highly”. This is a clear indication of the effectiveness of the recommendations included in the Quality Review of Repairs and Maintenance that have been implemented. |
| 3.4 | The Implementation Plan was last updated in December 2002 and was included in the 2003/4 Service and Financial Plan. |
| 4.0 | <u>Methodology</u> |
| 4.1 | The Quality Review was a robust review of all aspects of the Property Services Department based on the principles of Best Value. The detailed Implementation Plan arising from the Quality Review has been used as the foundation for the Best Value Review. |
| 4.2 | <p>The review has been progressed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Property Services Manager (PSM), Senior Contracts Officer (SCO) and Senior Maintenance Officer (SMO) have reviewed and updated the Implementation Plan to reflect changes to working practices that have been introduced since the plan was last updated in December 2002. This has resulted in a First Draft Improvement Plan. · The First Draft Improvement Plan was shared with a Tenants Focus Group which was specifically set up for this purpose. The Focus Group was consulted as to how they perceived the Repairs and Maintenance Service from a user perspective. The views of the Focus Group were then incorporated into the Improvement Plan. · PSM, SCO and SMO considered areas of best practice that have been introduced subsequent to the last update of the Implementation Plan eg |

**CIOH Repairs
Conference attended**

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| 4.3 | The outcomes of the above exercises have been incorporated into the revised Improvement Plan. |
| 5.0 | <u>Comparison</u> |
| 5.1 | Comparisons were made with other service providers via the Housemark Benchmarking Club. Eastbourne's performance is in the upper quartile (the top 25%) for three of the four Performance Indicators relating to the day to day repairs service; clearly demonstrating the effectiveness of the Council's day to day repairs service. |
| 5.2 | The poor performance against the Performance Indicators relating to decency reflects the capital investment required to bring the Councils housing stock up to the Decent Homes Standard. |
| 6.0 | <u>Consultation</u> |
| 6.1 | The original Quality Review of Repairs and Maintenance was undertaken using the principles of Best Value including consultation with Stakeholders (tenants and Contractors). |
| 6.2 | <p>The subsequent work undertaken to update the Implementation Plan has taken on board the views of stakeholders via the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The results of annual Tenants Surveys · Customer Satisfaction Surveys following repair works · Telephone Surveys · Quarterly Meetings of Tenants Advisory Group · Setting up of a focus Group specific to Property Services including tenants, Councillors and Contractors · Seeking the view of staff via team meetings |

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| 6.3 | The outcome of all of the above have been considered and incorporated into the revised Improvement Plan where appropriate. |
| 7.0 | <u>Equalities Issues</u> |
| 7.1 | The recommendations of the Equalities Impact Assessment undertaken in May 2002 have been incorporated into the Improvement Plan. These centre around ensuring that the Repairs and Maintenance service is accessible to all users. |
| 8.0 | <u>Conclusions and Recommendations</u> |
| 8.1 | It is clear that a great deal of progress has been made improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Property Services Team since the Quality Review was carried out in 1999. |
| 8.2 | It is also clear that an ethos of continual improvement in service delivery exists in the Property Services Team. The quality of the repairs service provided is reflected in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment report, bench marking against adjacent Local Authorities and the results of Tenant Surveys (81% of tenants are satisfied or very satisfied with the Repairs Service; source 2003 tenants survey) |
| 8.3 | With the successful ALMO bid; further challenges lie ahead for the Property Services team around the impact of the Decent Homes Capital Programme on the Team Structure and the impact on the maintenance service. Actions are identified in the revised Improvement Plan to ensure that these challenges are met. |

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| 8.4 | <p>In order that the service can continue to improve to meet the needs of its users the following will be implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Annual Consultation with stakeholders to seek their views on the service provided · Six monthly reviews of the Improvement Plan to update with action progress · Specific team members to be given ownership of particular actions · Preparation of key objectives that are clear to all stakeholders · A review of the actions contained within the Improvement Plan to ensure they are still relevant |
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| <p>Background Papers:</p> <p>The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Quality Review of Repairs and Maintenance 1999 · Housemark Benchmarking Club (website) · Audit Commission Comprehensive Performance Assessment Report · HRA Business Plan 2003 · ALMO Bid for Funding December 2003 · Property Services monthly performance reports · Equalities Impact Assessment May 2002 <p>To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.</p> |
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APPENDIX A

BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- **Key Objectives**
- **Improvement Plan**

BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

KEY OBJECTIVES

1. Customer Care

- CC1: Consult tenants regarding repairs booklet
- CC11: Implement actions arising from Equalities Impact Assessment

2. Service Standards

- SS1: Deliver Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- SS4: Continued use of PI's to monitor and improve Contractor Performance
- SS6: Development of a Sustainability Policy

3. Performance Indicators

- PI1: Resurrect the Technical Forum to share best practice with local housing providers
- PI7: Review the extent and use of PI's with the Property Services Team to ensure they are used in a focussed way to improve service delivery

4. Information Technology

- IT1: Implement Planned Maintenance module on Orchard
- IT1: Review effectiveness of Orchard system and what it can offer

5. Contract Strategy

- CS7: Explore the implications of the ALMO works on the existing Repair and Maintenance contracts, develop an action plan
- CS12: Work with Contractors to develop QA procedure for employment of agency staff
- CS16: Explore the options for Partnering with Repair and Maintenance Contractors

6. Contract Management

- CM4: Develop monthly reporting mechanism between senior officers and Property Services Manager

7. Budget

- B2: Continue to develop a procurement strategy for the Decent Homes works
- B6: Develop an action plan for efficiency savings in line with Government requirements

8. Financial Management

- FM3: Implement training on Powersolve for relevant team members

9. Operational Procedures

- OP3: Monitor workload and focus of maintenance team
- OP8: Investigate potential for procurement savings via procurement consortia

10. Tenant Liaison

- TL1: Continued customer involvement with the Decent Homes programme

11. Staff Training

- ST4: Provide access to current technical information

12. Staff Resources

- SR1: Review staff structure in the light of the ALMO bid