

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

Report of the Strategic Director – Services Directorate to the Policy Review Panel 3 – 29th July 2008

HOUSING PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN – MONITORING REPORT JULY 2008

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 Policy Review Panel is requested to note progress against delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan and agree to the inclusion of the remaining recommendations into the Housing Strategy 2008-2012 Action Plan.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Panel:

2.1 Note progress against the Housing Improvement Plan and agree to include the remaining recommendations not yet delivered into the Housing Strategy 2008-2012 Action Plan.

Note: In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

3. Information, Issues and Options

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The Audit Commission inspection judged the Housing Service as 'Fair with promising prospects of improvement' in May 2005.

3.1.2 The inspection report contained a series of recommendations, one key one being 'to produce an improvement plan incorporating the many recommendations contained in the inspection report.'

3.1.3 Policy Review Panel initially requested that quarterly monitoring reports be submitted detailing progress against delivery of the plan. This has been amended to six monthly updates.

3.2 Issues

3.2.1 The recommendations contained in the Housing Improvement Plan have formed the basis of the Council's Annual Delivery Plan and the Strategic Housing Service Plan for 2007/08 and 2008/09. These documents in turn have influenced the staff appraisal process and the development of statutory documents such as the housing and homelessness strategies.

3.2.2 Progress against the targets contained in the plan has been consistent since its adoption, despite pressure on the team to respond to other national and local targets not contained within the Improvement Plan itself. The team has responded well to the challenges and the majority of targets have been met.

3.2.3 The main recommendation outstanding for the housing team is a comprehensive review of the Council's private sector policies on empty properties and fuel poverty and the development of a new Private Sector Housing Strategy. Work is well

underway on these recommendations, but completion has been delayed somewhat by Communities and Local Government's (CLG) response to Breckland's request for a district wide licensing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO).

3.2.4 There remain a number of targets which are influenced by corporate rather than Strategic Housing issues/timescales and members are requested to agree to monitor progress against these as part of Housing Strategy 2008-2012 currently in development. These are:

- a) Migration of Housing Service into Customer Contact Centre
- b) Affordable Housing Policies/approach

3.2.5 An update will be provided on the above at the meeting.

3.2.6 The Housing Improvement Plan July 2008 update is contained at Appendix 1. For ease of reference matters arising of note to members have been highlighted in the final column entitled 'update'.

3.3 Options

3.3.1 To note progress made against the Housing Improvement Plan and the outstanding matters

3.3.2 To note progress made against the Housing Improvement Plan and the matters arising.

3.3.3 To agree to the inclusion of the remaining recommendations within the Housing Strategy 2008-2012 Action Plan and to continue to monitor progress accordingly.

3.4 Reasons for Recommendation

3.4.1 The inspection report identified areas for improvement across the Housing Service which are contained in the improvement plan

3.4.2 It is considered that the 'prospects of improvement' is the more critical judgement for organisations.

3.4.3 A new Housing Strategy document for the Breckland District is currently under development covering the period 2008-2012. The Housing Strategy is the Council's overarching housing document setting out the Council's aims, objectives and priorities for the delivery of housing services across the district. As the majority of recommendations have been met from the Housing Improvement Plan 2005, it is considered appropriate for any remaining matters to be included and thus monitored by Policy Review Panel 3 as part of the Housing Strategy Action Plan.

4. Risk and Financial Implications

4.1 Risk

4.1.1 Non delivery of the action plan items could indirectly affect the Council's direction of travel rating from the Audit Commission, in terms of improvements to the overall service. The Council has however mitigated this risk by its progress and achievements to date. There remains a residual risk to the Council in terms of non delivery of targets which can only be delivered with corporate assistance.

4.2 Financial

4.2.1 No direct financial implications resulting from this report.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 No direct legal implications resulting from this report.

6. Other Implications

- a) Equalities: The report has no direct Equalities implications. Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out across the range of housing services.
- b) Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998: There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
- c) Section 40, Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006: There are no direct implications from this report.
- d) Human Resources: n/a
- e) Human Rights: The report itself does not have any direct implications in respect of human rights. Delivery of individual targets/projects/service contained in the plan make a significant contribution to ensuring the Council is upholding an individual's human right whilst they are accessing housing services Articles 2, 8, 10, 12 refer.
- f) Children's Act 2004: the provision of housing and housing support services contribute directly to the core aims of the Children's Act. Access to decent affordable housing can be seen to make a substantial contribution to improving the life chances, address health inequalities and improve access to education and opportunities for children and vulnerable young people.

7. Alignment to Council Priorities

- 7.1 Safer and Stronger Communities – The improvement plan contains recommendations for improvement to the housing service (Domestic Violence, temporary accommodation, HMO licensing, BME research et) and in doing so gives the housing function a central role in regards to delivery of the Council's wider Community Safety and Community Cohesion agenda. All actions are evaluated for Section 17 implications.
- 7.2 Your Council, Your Services – delivering noticeable, sustained improvement in the delivery of the housing service to customers is the central aim of the performance and improvement plan objectives.

8. Ward/Community Affected

8.1 All wards

Background Papers

n/a

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Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only):

n/a

Appendices attached to this report:

Strategic Housing Performance and Improvement Plan 2005 – July 2008 update