



West Dunbartonshire Council



## Housing Inspection Improvement Plan



## INTRODUCTION

This improvement plan has been prepared in response to the Scottish Housing Regulator's Re- Inspection Report on West Dunbartonshire Council's housing service published on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

### **How the improvement plan was devised**

The plan is in line with guidance on post-inspection improvement plans issued by the Scottish Housing Regulator which states that the plan should:

- provide a concise and specific response ensuring that all areas highlighted in the key recommendations part of the inspection report are covered;
- respond to points of criticism contained in the report but not highlighted as individual recommendations;
- provide a strategic overview of improvement proposals rather than a detailed operational plan;
- outline the actions the Council intends to take to achieve the desired outcomes
- show who is responsible for ensuring that the actions are carried out;
- detail the associated target timescales with milestones if necessary;
- show the priority attached to each improvement action;
- show how the improvement process will be managed e.g. the monitoring arrangements that will be used to measure progress and the effect of any new or changed resources;
- be designed to allow progress to be clearly audited
- reflect the Council's commitment to continuous improvement; and
- ensure that where performance objectives are set these are framed in accordance with S.M.A.R.T. principles;

## The Council's priorities

West Dunbartonshire Council will address all weaknesses identified by the Scottish Housing Regulator within a two year period from the date on which the plan is agreed with the Regulator. For the purposes of this plan the Council has prioritised as follows:

Priority	When we will begin to take action to meet our objectives
1	During this financial year 2010/2011
2	During the financial year 2011/2012

The greatest priority has been given to the key recommendations made by the Scottish Housing Regulator within the Re-Inspection report and also to areas identified as weaknesses where the Council is not meeting a statutory requirement or where improvement impacts directly on performance.

### Managing and monitoring the Improvement plan

Progress towards meeting the objectives of this plan will be overseen by the Housing Performance Improvement Board (HPIB) which meets monthly. Progress will be monitored by the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee and half yearly progress reports will be submitted to the Committee.

### Consultation with stakeholders

The council has widely publicised the Re-Inspection report and has asked for comments through the Tenant Participation Liaison Group for input to the Housing Inspection Improvement Plan. The Council will consult with stakeholders throughout the implementation of the improvement plan and progress reports will be made available on West Dunbartonshire Council's website.

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West Dunbartonshire Council  
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Key Recommendations (All service areas)

	Scottish Housing Regulator Key Recommendation	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
A	Continue to develop its performance management framework	1	<p>We will establish a performance management framework for the entire Housing Service within the context of the Council's Performance Framework by building on the work already done to improve performance reporting to HPIB. We will cascade this approach throughout the Housing Service and link it to the PDP process for all staff. It will also be used to publicise performance information.</p> <p><i>(See action points 26 to 30)</i></p>	Scope of performance framework agreed.	May 2010	Jim McAloon	New post of Performance and Continuous Improvement Officer within the proposed new structure	Improved service performance, communication and self awareness. Also to improve visibility of the 'golden thread' from strategic plans to front-line service delivery to embed a performance culture within the organisation.
				Appoint a dedicated Performance and Continuous Improvement Officer	July 2010			
				Set up the report framework in Covalent, load action plans and performance targets	August 2010			
				Develop scorecards.	Sept 2010			
				Produce a series of performance reports monthly and quarterly	October 2010			
				Review report content and continue to develop as necessary	ongoing			
B	Prioritise its tenant participation and improve communication with tenants	1	<p>We will provide support and opportunities to encourage tenant engagement.</p> <p><i>(See action point 35)</i></p>	Ensure Implementation of the first phase of our Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan.	Aug 2010	Joanne Martin	Resource requirements to be identified as part of investigation into resource requirements	Delivery of phase 1 of the TP Strategy Action Plan.
				Develop and implement tenant communication strategy to improve communication with our tenants.	Dec 2010			Tenants say that participation and engagement in service delivery has improved as evidenced by satisfaction survey and performance indicators
				Investigate resource requirements to deliver effective Tenants Participation	Sept 2010			

	Scottish Housing Regulator Key Recommendation	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
C	Further improve its complaints processes	2	The Housing Service will improve its complaints processes by piloting the Council's new corporate complaints system as part of an integrated approach to the management of complaints	Develop process maps and workflow diagrams	July 2010	Stephen Daly/ Jim McAloon	Reallocation of current resources between departments	The introduction of a consistent process for dealing with customer complaints across the whole housing service to inform service improvements
				Agree new procedures for complaints handling	August 2010			
				Pilot the new complaints process	Sept 2010			
				Review pilot	Dec 2010			
				Roll out to the whole HEED Department	April 2011			
D	Implement its new allocations policy as planned	1	We have implemented our new need based allocations policy as planned.	Implement new allocation policy.	May 2010	Janice Lockhart	Within existing	Needs based allocation policy in place and fully operational
				Review outcomes to ensure the new allocation policy is effectively addressing housing need	Nov 2010			
E	Continue to improve its management of suspensions and by passing	1	We will continue to review our management and monitoring of suspensions and by passing to ensure that the process is clear and transparent.  (See action point 6)	Produce monthly reports	From April 2010	Janice Lockhart	Within existing	Management of suspensions and bypassing remains fit for purpose and meets the requirements of the Housing Regulator.
				Ensure that procedures and processes are subject to continuous monthly review	From April 2010	Janice Lockhart		
				Ensure information from monthly audit reports is used to shape on going service improvements	April 2010	Janice Lockhart		

	Scottish Housing Regulator Key Recommendation	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
F	Improve its communications on anti social behaviour cases.	1	We will incorporate regular progress letters and communication with our customers.	<p>Review Procedures &amp; Processes</p> <p>Implement new letters outlining progress notification and conclusion/outcome feedback</p> <p>Carry out monthly audit and quality assurance checks to measure customer satisfaction.</p>	<p>June 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p> <p>From June 2010</p>	Andy Cameron	Within existing	Improved communication with complainants on the outcome of ASB cases with the implementation of new letters/ procedures in place. Improved customer satisfaction of the process.
G	Continue to work to reduce rent lost through rent arrears and empty houses	1	We will set clear targets benchmarked against other landlords so that we are at or better than the current Scottish average by the end of 2012/2013.	<p><b>See Action points 16-23</b></p> <p>The Arrears Service within our Corporate Services Department are working on a 3 year plan to reduce arrears to 7% by March 2013. The plan recognises the challenges of the prevailing economic conditions and is mindful of the potential impact of the proposed partial housing stock transfer. We will set clear targets so that we achieve the current Scottish average by the end of 2012/2013</p> <p>We will continue to improve performance in the management of empty homes from the year end figure for 2009/10 of 2.7% to 2% by the end of 2010/11 and will aim to be at or better than the current Scottish average of 1.4% by the end of 2012/13</p>				Continued improved performance in reducing rent lost through rent arrears and empty houses.



How well is West Dunbartonshire Council delivering its services?





West Dunbartonshire Council  
Housing Inspection Improvement Plan  
Tenant Satisfaction

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
1	The council advised us that it will conduct a comprehensive satisfaction survey in 2010 and as part of this will examine whether or not minority groups have different satisfaction levels within the housing service. (4.5)	1	We will collect and report on tenant satisfaction levels on our housing management services bi annually.	Carry out a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey.	June 2010	Joanne Martin	Within existing	Comprehensive information on tenant satisfaction to allow service improvements to be implemented
				Examine levels of satisfaction rates among all minority groups.	October 2010	New post of Performance and Continuous Improvement within the proposed new structure		
				Publish results of survey extensively and use results to act as a baseline to gauge future performance in all aspects of the housing service.	October 2010			



West Dunbartonshire Council  
Housing Inspection Improvement Plan  
Access and Lettings

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
2	We found a small number of cases where the Council incorrectly calculated the length of time it had taken <i>to process housing application</i> (4.8)	1	We will ensure that staff are fully trained and competent in all aspects of the application process	<p>Ensure all staff, including new staff, are trained on processing housing applications.</p> <p>Implement quality assurance systems by carrying out weekly checks on processing housing applications</p>	<p>June 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p>	Janice Lockhart	Within existing	Timescales to process all applications are correctly calculated
3	The Council does not routinely identify and give advice to applicants who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. (4.9)	1	We will ensure that Housing Advice staff are fully trained in identifying clients at risk of homelessness/ potential homelessness	<p>Raised awareness of homelessness issues through staff briefing sessions.</p> <p>Ensured closer liaison between the Homeless Casework team and Housing Advice staff by merging sections within a new Homelessness and Allocations team.</p> <p>Investigate the option of establishing a small team of Advice staff attached to the Casework team to provide specialist homelessness prevention advice</p>	<p>April 2010</p> <p>April 2010</p> <p>December 2010</p>	Janice Lockhart	Within existing	Advice staff are able to effectively identify homeless applicants and provide appropriate advice and assistance
4	We found that the Council's rolling review was working well and it cancelled applications in line with its guidance. However, we found that it did not always file or save its cancellation letters. (4.12)	1	We will continue to improve the management of our housing waiting list.	<p>Continue the rolling review process to ensure accuracy of our housing waiting list.</p> <p>Trained all housing allocation staff on rolling review process.</p> <p>Implement a quality assurance system to ensure all cancellation letters are filed and saved.</p>	April 2010	Janice Lockhart	Within existing.	Improved management of our housing list and ensure all cancellation letters are correctly saved and filed.

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
5	The Council's development of the CHR has been poor; it has made limited progress in the last two years and does not yet have a firm date for the establishment of a CHR.(4.13)	2	In partnership with our RSL partners we will develop and implement a fully operational Common Housing Register in West Dunbartonshire.	<p>Agree Common Allocation Policy and medical assessment</p> <p>Partners will reach agreement on ICT solution to progress CHR development</p> <p>Procure ICT solution.</p> <p>Install, Populate and test system</p> <p>Complete staff training programme.</p> <p>Complete consultation period with West Dunbartonshire community</p> <p>Implement a fully operational CHR in West Dunbartonshire</p>	<p>August 2010</p> <p>August 2010</p> <p>April 2011</p> <p>August 2011</p> <p>October 2011</p> <p>November 2011</p> <p>December 2011</p>	Janice Lockhart	Resource allocation agreed between all project partners.	We will increase the pace of the development of a West Dunbartonshire Common housing Register so that a CHR in place and fully operational in 2011.
6	<p>We found a number of weaknesses in the Council's practice in managing suspensions. In a number of cases we found the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>had not informed the applicant of the suspension or how it could be removed;</li> <li>is not always sensitive to an applicant's circumstances</li> <li>did not always record that it has extended the suspension or send a letter to inform the applicant; and</li> <li>did not actively manage the suspension to determine if new information was available (4.14)</li> </ul>	1	We will develop and implement a performance management framework around the management of suspensions from our housing waiting list.	<p>All housing allocations staff have been trained to ensure that the approved guidance is applied in relation to suspensions from our housing waiting list.</p> <p>Introduce more robust monthly monitoring arrangements in relations to suspensions from our housing waiting list.</p>	<p>April 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p>	Janice Lockhart	Within existing.	A PMF is in place which will improve the management of suspensions and respond to the criticisms within the Re-Inspection report.

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
7	Since our interim inspection, the Council has improved its reporting of information it collects on the ethnicity of both applicants and new tenants. However, it still does not know the ethnic origin of over half its applicants or its recently housed tenants. This makes it difficult to demonstrate that it is providing equal access to housing for all applicants. (4.20)	2	We are currently developing a comprehensive range of systems to ensure that full information on ethnicity is collated for all our services and analysed to inform the needs of BME communities:	Undertake an analysis of current information, identifying gaps in information	April 2010	Janice Lockhart	Corporate Services Equalities and Diversity Officer	Action will be progressed as part of West Dunbartonshire Council's broader equalities agenda and will lead to improved reporting of information on ethnicity across all services.
			Develop robust monitoring and reporting procedures.	April 2011				
8	The way in which it (The Council) lets its properties to homeless people is not transparent and it has no method of quality control. These weaknesses mean that the Council cannot demonstrate that its approach is fair and that it is not bypassing applicants within this category. (4.21)	1	We will improve the transparency of our lets to homeless households by introducing quality control procedures to demonstrate that the process is fair.	We have developed quality control procedures around the allocation of properties to statutory homeless households	April 2010	Janice Lockhart	Within existing	We will have a robust quality assurance framework in place which will improve the transparency of all lets to homeless households.
			We will introduce clear audit trails around the allocation of properties to statutory homeless households.	June 2010				
			We will ensure all staff working in Homelessness and Allocations receive training to properly implement the new procedures.	June 2010				

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
9	The Council recognises that the low level of successful nominations is a weakness and that its nominations process does not work as well as its section 5 referral process. It plans to improve its performance in this area by discussing nominations in its regular meetings with RSLs (4.22)	2	In partnership with our RSL partners we will improve performance in respect of our nominations procedures.	We will include nomination processes and performance as a regular agenda item at quarterly liaison meetings with our RSL partners.	May 2010	Janice Lockhart	Within existing.	An increase in the levels of successful nominations due to improved procedures around the nomination process.
			We will explore ICT system upgrades to manage the nomination process more effectively	August 2010				
			We will ensure all staff are trained on nominations procedures to raise awareness	August 2010				
			Continue to regularly monitor and review both our section 5 and nomination	April 2011				



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Tenancy and Neighbourhood Management

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Target	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
10	In 2008/09, 9.8% of the Council's tenancies were terminated. This is a slight increase on the previous year and slightly higher than the national average of 8.8%. The Council records and monitors tenancy sustainment and the reasons for the terminations and had now begun to collect and analyse more detailed information on why people give up their tenancies. In 2008/09, 80% of new tenants were still in their homes 12 months after the tenancy started and this figure rose to 81% for the period up to December 2009. (4.28)	2	In partnership with all social landlords operating in West Dunbartonshire we will develop a tenancy sustainment strategy to maximise successful tenancy sustainment in West Dunbartonshire	<p>We have established a short life working group to develop a tenancy Sustainment Strategy involving all social landlords in West Dunbartonshire</p> <p>We will deliver a joint tenancy sustainment strategy for all social landlords in West Dunbartonshire</p> <p>We will improve tenancy sustainment rates in West Dunbartonshire.</p>	<p>April 2010</p> <p>July 2010</p> <p>April 2011</p>	John Kerr	Additional resources may be identified within strategy, however increased sustainment rates may free up other resources	Implementation of a Tenancy Sustainment Strategy leading to increased tenancy sustainment rates within West Dunbartonshire.
11	The Council is developing a new strategy (ASB) and is currently undertaking a review of its Anti Social Behaviour Services. It will produce a new structure and service provision to fit with the new national Anti Social Behaviour framework. (4.31)	1	We will implement a new fit for purpose service delivery model in partnership with stakeholders.	<p>Undertook a review of Anti Social Behaviour Services in West Dunbartonshire</p> <p>Obtained committee approval for new service delivery structure.</p> <p>Implemented new staff structure to deliver public reassurance activities within West Dunbartonshire</p>	<p>Jan 2010</p> <p>Jan 2010</p> <p>May 2010</p>	Andy Cameron	Within existing	The delivery of a new fit for purpose service in line with new national ASB Framework aimed at tackling ASB in West Dunbartonshire
12	The Council is developing procedures to manage SSSTs when an ASBO is in place. (4.34)	1	We will develop and implement a procedure for management of SSSTs	Implement new procedure for the management of a SSST when an ASBO is in place.	May 2010	Janice Lockhart	Within existing	Effective management of SSSTs when an ASBO is in place

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Target	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
13	The Council has identified that it needs an ICT system that will support its work in this area. (4.35)	2	We will form a working group in May 2010 to take forward a review of alternative IT solutions and will progress implementation of a new IT system by June 2011.	A Working Group has been formed to consider and evaluate alternative IT solutions	May 2010	Andy Cameron	Resource need will be identified during review.	A preferred option identified to help deliver a more effective and efficient service.
				Identify new alternative software solutions.	Dec 2010			
				Implement a new IT system	June 2011			
14	The Council regularly inspects the condition of its estates although there is no consistent approach to how the estate audit is carried out. (4.37)	2	We will review our inspection process to ensure that this is streamlined and consistent.	Review Inspection Process and implement best practice to ensure consistency across all estates.	June 2010	Andy Cameron	Resource need will be identified during review.	A more consistent approach to our estate audit process resulting in a more effective and efficient service.
				Implement a new IT system which will support our inspection process.	June 2011			
15	The Council is developing local action and estate management plans in conjunction with local tenants and residents. It continues to reshape its priorities to support its area action planning. Responses to the planning process have been low and to stimulate greater resident involvement the Council is developing a Communications Strategy. This will set out how it will involve tenants and residents in its consultation and participation processes (4.38)	1	We will develop and implement an Estate Management Communications Strategy to increase and improve opportunities for resident involvement.	Complete area action planning process for all areas.	June 2010	Andy Cameron	Within existing	The completion of the area action planning process and the development of an Estate Management Communications Strategy which will improve our consultation and increase participation with our communities.
				Implement Estate Management Communications Strategy	Dec 2010			



West Dunbartonshire Council  
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Income Maximisation

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
16	The Council's published performance in collecting its tenants' rent is poor although it has shown a consistent improvement over the last three years. In 2007/08, it was the second poorest performing Scottish local authority. In 2008/09 its performance improved slightly and it has moved up to be the third poorest performing local authority in Scotland. The Council has set a target of 9% for current arrears for 2009/10. At December 2009, its performance had improved to 10%. It is aware that this remains an area of significant weakness. (4.42)	1	Our outturn arrears figure for 2009/10 was 9.6%, an improvement of 1% on the previous year. We will develop our systems, procedures and services to ensure that we continue to improve our performance in rent collection.	Monitor our sign up process on a monthly basis to ensure effectiveness of new procedures.	From April 2010	Marion Smith	Within existing	Continued improved performance in relation to rent collection.
				We will introduce an on line benefit claims system to speed up the award of benefit for new tenancies	October 2010			We intend to improve our standing among Scottish local authorities and make sufficient progress to move out of the bottom quartile.
				Review our targets quarterly for rent collection to ensure realistic challenging targets and aid continue improved performance.	From April 2010			Completion of the key tasks will result in:-
				The improved performance during 2009/10 only included the part year effect of the new sign up process and the merging of all debts on to the Corporate Arrears System. The targets set going forward will incorporate the full year effect of these initiatives.				A robust sign up process which will minimise arrears at the start of a tenancy
				We will finalise the restructure of revenues & benefits section.	July 2010			Realistic and challenging target setting
				We will implement the latest upgrade of CARs system. This will provide:- enhanced -management reporting	July 2010			An approach which will prioritise tenancy sustainment and the prevention of homelessness.
				Update arrears procedures to incorporate all new working practices	July 2010			Comprehensive procedures to improve our performance.
				Streamline court process	March 2011			

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
17	In 2007/08, the proportion of Council tenants in serious arrears was 5.4%, compared to the national figure of 4.2%. West Dunbartonshire was ranked the sixth worst performing local authority in Scotland. Its performance in 2008/09 improved to 4.5%, just above the national figure of 4.4% and improved it's ranking to 14 <sup>th</sup> position out of 26 councils. At the time of our inspection, it was reporting improved performance of 4.4%. (4.43)	1	Our outturn arrears figure for 2009/10 was 4.2%, an improvement of 0.3% on the previous year and below the Scottish average for 2008/09. We will continue to reduce the proportion of council tenants in serious arrears. Our 2010/11 target is 4%	The actions highlighted in 16 are consistent with achieving this intended outcome	March 2011	Marion Smith	Within existing	Improved performance in tackling serious arrears by meeting the 2010/11 target of 4%. A figure which is below the Scottish average.
18	The Council continues to have a high and increasing level of former tenant's arrears. The Council's policy is to confirm final balances to out going tenants however we found that it does not always do this. (4.44)		During 2009/10, our level of former tenant arrears reduced by £219,000. We will continue to reduce the levels of former tenant arrears and improve our performance in relation to the collection of former tenant arrears	<p>We will implement the interface of the Corporate Arrears System to sheriff officers to streamline referrals and increase the use of external collection services.</p> <p>We included former tenant arrears balances in the Annual Corporate statement issued to debtors</p> <p>We will ensure maximum use of write off procedures.</p> <p>We are confirming final balances to outgoing tenants.</p>	<p>July 2010</p> <p>April 2010</p> <p>March 2011</p> <p>May 2010</p>	<p>Marion Smith</p> <p>Janice Lockhart</p>	Within existing resources	Improved performance in the collection of former tenant arrears and the reduction in the level of Former Tenant Arrears

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
19	The Council is reviewing its procedures for rent arrears management during 2010 to ensure these fit with the Council's new Corporate Debt Policy. (4.45)	1	We will review our rent arrears procedures in line with corporate debt policy	Review and update of rent arrears procedures	July 2010	Marion Smith	Within existing	Comprehensive procedure manual to assist staff in the collection of rent arrears which will aid improvements in performance
				We will locate an arrears advice officer within the arrears service.	August 2010		Additional Funding secured from FSF funding	This will ensure that we seek to sustain tenancies and ensure recovery actions in accordance with the Corporate Debt Policy
20	<p>Although the Council's management of arrears is improving it still has some weaknesses that continue to affect its performance. The Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• makes limited attempts to communicate with tenants in person;</li> <li>• fails to intervene quickly and is not proactive about collecting missed payment arrangements;</li> <li>• has gaps in its information about its management of individual cases; and</li> <li>• issues standard letters that do not have a customer focus as they concentrate on enforcement and do not encourage tenants to make contact with the Council</li> </ul> <p>The council acknowledges the areas</p>	1	We will review our procedures and documentation for tackling rent arrears as part of the implementation of the Corporate Debt Policy.	Review our procedures to ensure increased effective personal contact with tenants.	July 2010	Marion Smith	Within existing	Improvements in our rent collection performance and the delivery of a more customer focused service.
				We have developed our corporate arrears system to ensure broken arrangements are identified and dealt with quickly.	April 2010			
				Improve through staff training the management of individual cases.	May 2010	Marion Smith		
				Review our standard letters to improve our customer focus.	August 2010			

	for improvement and will consider these as part of the planned review of its Corporate Debt Policy. (4.48)			We will introduce a twilight shift so as to maximise the opportunity for officers to establish contact with debtors	August 2010	Vincent Gardiner	This will require a remodelling of the existing structure but will be done within existing resources	
	<b>What the SHR said</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>What we will do?</b>	<b>Key Tasks</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Intended Outcome</b>
21	In 2007/08, The Council lost 4.7% of its total rental income because of empty homes, which is significantly higher than the national figure of 1.6%. In 2008/09, the Council reduced this to 3.4% but is still higher than the national figure of 1.4% and it remains the poorest performing Scottish local authority, the Council has continued to improve its performance and at December 2009, it was reporting 2.8%. (4.50)	1	We will continue to improve performance in the management of empty homes from the year end figure for 2009/10 of 2.7% to 2% by the end of 2010/11 and will aim to be at the Scottish average by the end of 2012/13	<p>Develop robust management and monitoring procedures</p> <p>Continue to work in partnership with Repairs &amp; Maintenance to streamline the management of empty homes</p> <p>Ensure that strategies/ action plans are in place to take early action in areas where letting times are increasing.</p>	August 2010	Janice Lockhart	Within existing	The percentage of lost rent due to voids continues to reduce and we meet our 2010/11 target of 2% and our performance in comparison to our local authority peers continues to improve.
22	The Council has began a pilot that introduced a new approach to working with the Repairs division including a shorter target for them to carry out work on empty houses. It plans to monitor this on a monthly basis and review the target next year. (4.53)	1	Void pilot is fully operational and is being monitored on a regular basis.	<p>Ensure that areas of responsibility are clear and defined through published guidance and staff training</p> <p>Ensure systems are in place to manage and monitor the timescales for all stages of the void process</p>	July 2010	Janice Lockhart	Within existing	<p>Void timescales are reduced.</p> <p>Void properties are returned within the agreed average target timescales</p>

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
23	We found that the Council has an underdeveloped monitoring system for managing the relet process at an operational level. Although the Council introduced a policy to assist it to manage empty houses during the inspection it was too early for us to assess the impact of the policy. (4.54)	1	We will develop and implement a robust monitoring system for the management of the re let process	<p>Ensure that necessary resources are in place to deliver the Void Management Charter to manage the process more effectively.</p> <p>Develop a clear and transparent monitoring process for all stages of the lettings function which will allow us to identify areas for improvement and/or further surplus stock</p>	June 2010	Janice Lockhart	Within existing	Robust management and monitoring systems in place and fully operational



Is West Dunbartonshire Council managed for improvement?





West Dunbartonshire Council  
Housing Inspection Improvement Plan  
Leadership and Strategic Planning

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
24	Most of the external partners we spoke to acknowledged that the Council had improved its approach to partnership working in the past year but most pointed out that this needed to be embedded into the Council's partnership structures. (5.4)	1	We will continue to improve our approach to partnership working through new and existing routes.	We will carry out a review of the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnerships Housing Thematic Group to improve partnership working.	August 2010	Elaine Melrose	Additional resources will be identified through review process	Improved partnership structures in relation to housing services. This will result in improved links with RSLs, support agencies and community organizations.
25	The Council is aware there are a number of risks associated with its asset management proposals particularly around costs, timescales and the stock transfer and that these will need careful management. The Council has not yet carried out scenario planning to test its options but it has plans to do so. (5.5)	1	We will continue to utilise the Asset Management Planning model to underpin the business plan.	We have produced a new stock transfer strategy including identification of key risks and scenarios.	May 2010	Fin McElhinney	Within existing plus relevant external expertise	Partial housing stock transfer in 2012.
				We will conduct additional scenario planning following consultation with tenants and RSLs on stock transfer packages.	Aug 2010			
				We will update stock condition data and the content of the Asset Management Plan.	Nov 2010			



West Dunbartonshire Council

Housing Inspection Improvement Plan

Performance management, planning and reporting

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
26	The Council has yet to roll out the Personal Development Plan system and link this to performance targets for staff although it plans to introduce this by March 2010. (5.8)	1	We will ensure that the roll out of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) is complete	Implement plan to deliver PDP framework throughout department	May 2010	Anne Marie Cosh	Within existing	Personal Development Plan's (PDPs) in place for all staff linked to departmental and service objectives
27	We found some staff we spoke to understood their targets however the Council does not have a co-ordinated approach to communicating performance information to front line staff. (5.8)	1	We will develop a planned approach to communicating performance information to all members of housing staff	We will review present performance communications	August 2010	New post of Performance and Continuous Improvement Officer within the proposed new structure	Within existing	Improved communication on performance issues to all housing staff.
				We will implement a plan for ensuring effective communication on all performance information to staff	December 2010			
28	To date the council has only trained senior staff on Covalent although it plans to roll this out in the medium term. (5.8)	1	We will identify key staff who assist in collating performance information and roll out the use of the covalent performance management system.	We will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify relevant staff</li> <li>Prepare training plan</li> <li>Implement training plan</li> </ul>	March 2011	Jan McKinley	Within existing	Training of key staff to assist in the collation of performance data.
29	The Council does publish its performance information on its website but our tenant assessors found the reports difficult to read. The Council is considering how best to communicate this information to tenants. (5.8)	1	In partnership with key stakeholders we will carry out a review to improve our approach public performance reporting taking into account feedback from tenant assessors and RTOs.	Undertake an analysis of our current PPR activity	December 2010	New post of Performance and Continuous Improvement Officer within the proposed new structure	Resource allocation will be identified from review	Improved public performance reporting in line with corporate priorities
				Develop and implement plan which will lead to improved PPR with housing services				

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
30	The Council does not have a strategy for communicating performance information to its tenants, but it does report some information on performance and progress in the tenants' newsletter Housing Matters. (5.8)	1	In partnership with key stakeholders including our RTOS we will carry out a review to improve our approach to public performance reporting.	<p>Undertake an analysis of our current PPR activity</p> <p>Develop and implement plan which will lead to improved PPR with housing services</p>	December 2010	New post of Performance and Continuous Improvement Officer within the proposed new structure	Resource allocation will be identified from review	Improved public performance reporting in line with corporate priorities



West Dunbartonshire Council  
Housing Inspection Improvement Plan  
Customer Focus and influence

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
31	During this re-inspection we found that the Council had taken some steps to improve its customer focus, but a number of significant weaknesses remain including its work with tenants and the management of complaints. (5.9)	1	<b>See Key recommendations– Action Points B and C</b>					
32	The Council does not monitor its performance against the majority of service standards although it does monitor and report on telephone response times. The Council acknowledges it needs to review its current service standards and told us it aims to fully monitor and publicly report on service standards within two years. (5.10)	2	We will develop in partnership with stakeholders a series of service standards across all housing service areas to improve service delivery.	<p>We will develop a series of service standards covering all aspects of the housing services which will lead to improved service delivery.</p> <p>We will implement a robust performance monitoring and reporting framework for the series of service standards.</p> <p>Investigate participation in quality assurance schemes e.g.; Customer Service Excellence</p>	April 2011	New post of Performance and Continuous Improvement Officer within the proposed new structure	within existing	Improved service delivery
33	The Council told us it plans to talk to the tenants' forum in early 2010 about how they would like to receive financial information. (5.14)	1	We have asked the West Dunbartonshire Tenants & Residents Organisation how it would like to receive financial information during the rent setting consultation.	We will incorporate preferences for information and good practice for producing financial information into our tenant communication strategy.	June 2010	Joanne Martin	within existing	Our tenant organisations will have accurate, accessible, information which they can use to assist them to contribute effectively to our rent setting consultation.
34	The Council plans to increase capacity and awareness among its housing staff by organizing training on tenant participation within two years for all staff. (5.14)	2	We will ensure all housing staff are trained on tenant participation issues to raise awareness of TP as part of their PDPs.	Complete the programme to ensure that all relevant housing staff receive tenant participation training	December 2011	Ann Marie Cosh	within existing	Housing staff will have a good understanding of tenant participation and how it fits within the job that they do, and will lead to increased tenant satisfaction.

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
35	<p>Tenants and RTOs acknowledged that the Council's approach has improved over the last year and that they have been consulted on the key issues for the housing service. However tenants' groups that we spoke to told us that the Council is not managing the process of engaging with tenants well/ they told us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they could not always see evidence that their response to consultations had been taken into account;</li> <li>• the Council allowed inadequate time for some consultations;</li> <li>• the Council did not issue papers sufficiently far in advance to allow tenants to review the contents and to allow them to prepare;</li> <li>• the Council did not give sufficient notice for some meetings; and</li> <li>• The Council did not allow time for the tenant representatives to consult with their associations. (5.15)</li> </ul>	1	<p>We will produce a tenant communication strategy which will address information provided to our tenants, tenants on our 'register of interested tenants' and our tenant groups.</p>	<p>We will develop a tenant communication strategy that will address the following issues highlighted by tenants;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-link consultation response to decision making.</li> <li>- allow adequate time for consultation to take place including time for tenant reps to consult with their organizations</li> <li>-and provide</li> </ul>	June 2010	Joanne Martin	Within existing	<p>The strategy will address the type of information and the different formats which we will make it available. The timescale for information to be received, good practice in consultation and how we will provide feedback. We will implement a tenant communication strategy for housing services which reflects both good practice and the needs of our tenants and tenants groups in information and consultation</p>
			<p>Develop a service charter for engagement and consultation</p>	September 2010				

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
36	<p>In our interim inspection we said that the Council still did not have a systematic approach to dealing with housing complaints. In this re-inspection this re-inspection we found that the Council has made limited progress. The Council operates a number of systems or databases to record complaints and since July 2009 has also been recording informal complaints. However procedures are not clear, staff are unsure of the difference between a complaint and an inquiry and area at times not sure what system to use. From the complaints we looked at we saw that the council accepts all forms of contact and it generally responds within the target timescales. We found some weaknesses in the complaints process. The Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not always detail appeals information in responses</li> <li>• does not use its ethnic monitoring information;</li> <li>• has incomplete records; and</li> <li>• does not correctly record some complaints that should be corporate complaints</li> </ul> <p>The Council monitors complaints and reports on this to the housing management team however the lack of integration in the systems and the weaknesses in recording limits the usefulness of the reports. The Council's current information on complaints presents it with a challenge to use complaints to develop and improve the service. (5.17)</p>	1	<b>See Key recommendations– Action Point C</b>					



West Dunbartonshire Council

Housing Inspection Improvement Plan

Equalities and diversity

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
37	It is positive that the council has carried out Equalities Impact Assessment on key policies and that it has conducted extensive consultation with specific groups on the allocations policy. However we found limited other examples of it using equalities data to develop the service. The Council plans to introduce a monitoring scorecard for the Council's key objectives in this area and the housing measures will be allocations, homelessness and adapted stock. It also plans to develop the impact assessment to include it in its Covalent performance management system. (5.19)	2	Action point 7 refers to a comprehensive range of systems in respect of information relating to ethnicity. These system will also address all aspects of equalities		April 2011	Jan McKinley	Corporate Services and Equalities and Diversity Officer	Improved recording of equalities data which will help develop services.



West Dunbartonshire Council  
Housing Inspection Improvement Plan  
Efficiency and Value for Money

	What the SHR said	Priority	What we will do?	Key Tasks	Timescale	Lead Officer	Resources	Intended Outcome
38	The Council has more robust asset management information and is now able to make strategic decisions on this with a fuller understanding of the financial implications, although the Council is aware it has yet to carry out full scenario planning on the financial risks. (5.21)	1						<b><i>See Action point 25</i></b>

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## GLOSSARY

ASBO	<b>Anti Social Behaviour Order</b>
BME	<b>Black and Minority Ethnic</b>
CARs	<b>Corporate Arrears System</b>
CHR	<b>Common Housing Register</b>
Covalent	<b>WDC's Performance Management System</b>
HEED	<b>Housing Environment and Economic Development</b>
HPIB	<b>Housing Performance Improvement Board</b>
ICT	<b>Information and Communication technologies</b>
IT	<b>Information technology</b>
PDPs	<b>Personal Development Plans</b>
PMF	<b>Performance Management Framework</b>
PS & CI	<b>Policy, Strategy and Continuous Improvement</b>
RSLs	<b>Registered Social Landlords (Housing associations)</b>
SSSTs	<b>Short Scottish Secure Tenancies</b>
SMART	<b>Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Time-Bound</b>
TP	<b>Tenant Participation</b>