

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Acting Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services (Housing and Regeneration Services)

Social Justice Committee: 14 March 2007

Subject: Best Value Review of Tenancy Services

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To advise the Committee of the outcome of the Best Value Review of Tenancy Services and outline the preferred option for future service delivery.

2. Background

- 2.1** Within West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), Tenancy Services is a collective name for a range of housing services incorporating Allocations and Void Management, Enforcement and Estate Management Services, Anti Social Investigation and Support Team (ASIST), Community Wardens and Mediation Services.
- 2.2** Tenancy Services falls within the management responsibility of the Housing Operations Section of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services Department. The funding of the various service areas is principally from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) with additional Scottish Executive funding to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- 2.3** During 1997, the Scottish Office/Scottish Executive deferred the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) whilst the best value regime was developed. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 provides the statutory framework for best value and Local Authorities are required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between cost, quality and price. Any review should be carried out in a robust manner and a fair and open approach should be taken when evaluating alternative forms of service delivery. The Council is required to conduct its business in a manner which demonstrates appropriate competitive practice.
- 2.4** The Best Value structure has replaced the former compulsory competitive tendering regime and the Best Value Review of Tenancy Services is part of a rolling programme of Best Value Service Reviews that West Dunbartonshire Council is committed to undertake.

2.5 The principal objective of the Best Value Review was to critically examine Tenancy Services and determine whether a best value service was being delivered within the current service management arrangements and to consider and evaluate alternative methods of service delivery.

2.6 A Tenancy Services Best Value Review team was established and consisted of Tenancy Services staff with Strategy Section staff providing support. The review was conducted in accordance with the process set out in the Departmental Best Value Review Toolkit by completing the following sections:-

Stage 1	Planning the Review
Stage 2	The Current Service
Stage 3	Consultation
Stage 4	Benchmarking
Stage 5	Option Appraisal
Stage 6	Final Report & Improvement Plan.

2.7 To determine whether best value was being delivered, the review team considered the four principles of:

- (a) Challenging why and how the service was being provided
- (b) Comparing performance with others
- (c) Considering competition as a means of securing an efficient and effective service
- (d) Consulting with stakeholders

2.8 To progress the principles in 2.7 above, the review team undertook a consultation and benchmarking exercise of tenancy services and performance. The service is part of the Scottish Housing Best Value Network (SHBVN) which was established in 1995. This is a consortium of all Scottish Local Authorities working together to improve performance, meet the demands of best value and deliver quality services by means of benchmarking, peer review and good practice exchange of information.

2.9 The team formulated a list of benchmarking partners that could be considered comparable authorities and identified specific authorities from the Audit Scotland Corporate Management Performance Indicators. Audit Scotland place us within Family Group C, a group judged to have similar social deprivation and population densities. This group comprises Local Authorities with broadly similar stock profiles and issues.

- a) Dundee
- b) Inverclyde
- c) Aberdeen
- d) Edinburgh
- e) North Lanarkshire
- f) Renfrewshire
- g) South Lanarkshire
- h) Glasgow (previously)

2.10 In terms of stakeholders for Tenancy Services, these include tenants and residents, Elected Members, staff, housing waiting list applicants, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), Police, Procurator Fiscal, other Council departments, voluntary organisations and statutory organisations.

2.11 The best value review should consider service provision via the following management options and evaluate the effects of implementing these against the following criteria.

- a) Status Quo
- b) Modify the existing in-house service
- c) Transfer to the private sector
- d) Work in partnership with other local authorities
- e) Public Private Partnership (PPP) and Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

2.12 Due to the unique structure and diversity of Tenancy Services the consequence of considering all Tenancy Services functions as a collective service restricted the scope and potential for investigation of alternative delivery of the individual functions. The most obvious alternative service providers for any housing service are either locally or nationally based RSLs. It should also be noted that the delivery of anti social behaviour services falls within the associated legislative remit for delivery by the Local Authority across all tenures.

2.13 During the course of this best value review, WDC undertook a stock option appraisal and a decision was taken by Council to apply to the Executives Community Ownership Programme for a partial stock transfer. Since completion of the review, the Council's Community Ownership Programme application has been rejected in the interim period and this is currently under discussion with Communities Scotland. Therefore, within the parameters of the Stage 5 Option Appraisal in terms of "who" may be in a position to deliver services, no investigative study or analysis has been undertaken. However full cognisance has been taken within the review as regards "how" services are delivered.

3. Main Issues

3.1 The option appraisal carried out was therefore limited by two primary factors:

- a) The Best Value Review decision to consider all Tenancy Services functions as a collective service.
- b) Council's decision to apply to the Community Ownership Programme for a partial stock transfer.

3.2 This resulted in two options being available for consideration, neither of which included any analysis of the private/RSL sector being considered as an alternative service provider. The two options were

- a) Option 1 - Improved in house service
- b) Option 2 - Reconfiguration

3.3 It is evident that notwithstanding our performance in relation to local, corporate and statutory performance indicators, the two options arising from the appraisal albeit listed as separate suitable alternatives, are in many ways intrinsically linked.

3.4 The conclusion is that Option 3.2(a) be adopted in the first instance with further detailed analysis reviews being undertaken to explore the possible implementation of Option 3.2(b). It should also be noted that the Tenancy Services Best Value Review has already undergone appraisal by the Best Value Strategy Group prior to submission to Committee.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no specific Personnel Issues to be considered under improved in-house services. In terms of any re-configuration of services any issues arising will be addressed as part of these proposals where currently specific issues are being dealt with as part of the review of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), Anti Social Investigation and Support Team (ASIST) and Wardens Services.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The current delivery of the ASB, ASIST and Warden Services is dependant presently on continued funding from the Scottish Executive. As noted in 2.2 funding was available until March 2007 and additional funding until March 2008 or as subject to targets being achieved in terms of the ASB outcome agreement. These targets have been achieved and we now have confirmation of funding until March 2008.

5.2 Other planned improvements will be achieved from existing resources.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 There are no specific risks arising from this report.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Following analysis of the options, it was the conclusion of the review team that the service remains in-house with improvements to be undertaken via a Service Improvement Plan and with further detailed analysis reviews to be undertaken to explore Option 3.2(b).

7.2 A Service Improvement Plan outlining actions which will deliver improved performance has been prepared as part of the Best Value Review and is attached to this report as Appendix 1. [An update on the Service Improvement Plan actions since completing the Best Value Review are outlined in Appendix 2.](#) The plan is underpinned by:

- (a) The commitment of employees to deliver continuous service improvements.
- (b) Results of existing and continued consultation, good practice guidance and benchmarking exercises.
- (c) Identified weaknesses in current service.
- (d) Identified strengths of the current service.
- (e) The commitment to provide cost effective but improved standards.
- (f) The commitment to provide better quality performance management systems to provide information on the service for its stakeholders.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Committee is invited to note the outcome of the Best Value review of Tenancy Services and approve the preferred option for future service delivery detailed in Section 3 of this report in terms that the service remains in-house with improvements to be undertaken via the Service Improvement Plan.**

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Appendices: Improvement Plan

Background Papers: Best Value Review of Tenancy Services

Wards Affected: All

Best Value Review of Tenancy Services

Appendix 1

Service Improvement Plan

No.	Improvement Action	Purpose	Measure	Timescale	Planning Link	Responsibility	Resources
1.	Implement DIP & Workflow to all Tenancy Service Areas starting with Allocations & Voids, followed by Enforcement then ASIST.	To improve management information for service planning and monitoring of performance	Effective management information	Starting with allocations & voids 2006/07 into 2007/08 depending on finance.	Corporate Plan Priority 6 Service Plan	Section Head Revenues & Section Head Tenancy Services	Revenue Funding approved. Staff time Staff training
2.	Continue with the allocations policy review through the Allocations Working Group of Members and Officers.	Policy Review	Revised Policy	Started June 2006 no deadline set yet.	Corporate Plan Mainly linked to Priority 6 although impacts on other quality of life areas. Service Plan	Manager of Housing Operations	IT resource and financial implications. Staff Time Staff Training
3.	Continue with the review of ASB Services and implement outcome (reconfiguration of services as part of Option Appraisal recommendation)	Continuity & Improved Service Delivery	Improved service performance measure.	With Director for approval June 2006	Corporate Plan Mainly linked to Priority 6 although impacts on other quality of life areas.	Manager of Housing Operations	Staff Time
4.	Challenge & revise targets & improve timescales in the allocations & void house process.	Maximise income through minimizing voids	Reduction in voids & improved performance in average timescales for not low demand lets.	Progress ongoing to achieve revised targets each year.	Corporate Plan Mainly linked to Priority 3 & 6 although impacts on other quality of life areas. Service Plan	Section Head & Team Leader Allocations & Voids	Staff Time
5.	Implement return of homeless offers to the control of allocations section.	Continuity & Improved Service Delivery	Improved timescales on offers	September 2006	Corporate Plan Mainly linked to Priority 6	Section Head Tenancy Services & Section Head Homeless Services	Staff Time

No	Improvement Action	Purpose	Measure	Timescale	Service Plan Planning Link	Responsibility	Resources
6.	Develop & agree targets & timescales to deliver on effective court actions designed to tackle ASB & breaches of tenancy conditions.	Improved Service Delivery	Improved timescales on processing court actions	December 2006	Corporate Plan Mainly linked to Priority 3 & 6 although impacts on other quality of life areas. Service Plan	Service Co-ordinator Enforcement, ASIST & Wardens Services & Team Leader ASIST	Staff Time
7.	Prepare report to Social Justice Committee, seeking approval for the implementation of Estate Based Audits.	Planned programmed approach to Estate Management	Approved Estate Based Audit	August/September 2006	Corporate Plan Mainly linked to Priority 3 & 6 although impacts on other quality of life areas. Service Plan	Manager of Housing Operations	Staff Time
8.	Implement Estate Based Audits in consultation with residents taking account of feedback on customer consultation regarding environmental issues.	Partnership working with Community	Feedback from consultation	September-December 2006	Corporate Plan Mainly linked to Priority 3 & 6 although impacts on other quality of life areas. Service Plan	Service Co-ordinator Enforcement, Asist & Wardens Services & Team Leader Enforcement	Staff Time
9.	Develop challenging targets and timescales in agreement with other sections & departments to deliver on Estate Based Audits	Improved Estate management and maintenance	Improved service performance measure & improved customer satisfaction	September-December 2006	Corporate Plan Mainly linked to Priority 3 & 6 although impacts on other quality of life areas. Service Plan	Service Co-ordinator Enforcement, Asist & Wardens Services & Team Leader Enforcement	Staff Time
10.	Continue with the planned programme of process reviews taking into account good practice	To continuously review &	Improved service performance	Annual Programme	Corporate Plan Priority 6	Section Head Tenancy Services & Area Office	Staff Time Financial

	& examination of relevant qualitative benchmarking.	improve our processes	measure & improved customer satisfaction		Service Plan	Management Team	resources in attendance at Benchmarking Meetings
No.	Improvement Action	Purpose	Measure	Timescale	Planning Link	Responsibility	Resources
11.	Improve communication with internal & external partners through the planned process reviews.	To improve partnership working continuity & Improved Service Delivery	Improved timescales on processes	Annual Programme	Corporate Plan Priority 6 Service Plan	Section Head Tenancy Services & Area Office Management Team	Staff Time
12.	Continue with the planned programme of consultation as outlined in the BV Consultation Report Appendix 1.	To continuously review service needs, demand resourcing & performance.	Effective Management	Planned Programme, of quarterly or annual or bi-annual consultation	Corporate Plan Priority 6 Service Plan	Section Head Tenancy Services & Area Office Management Team	Staff Time
13.	Implement the PDP programme for all staff.	Staff Development	Production of PDP plans	March 2007	Corporate Plan in relation to valuing our employees & Service Plan	Senior Management Team & all Supervisors.	Staff Training Staff Time
14.	Review gaps in protocols & review existing protocols e.g. SSST's	To improve partnership working continuity & Improved Service Delivery	Improved service delivery performance measure.	September 2006	Corporate Plan Priority 6 Service Plan	Service Co-ordinator Enforcement, ASIST & Wardens Services & Team Leader ASIST	Staff Time
15.	Continue working towards the development of a Common Housing Register (CHR) in partnership with the RSL's.	To have a locally agreed CHR	Completed CHR Report agreed by all partners	March 2007	Community Panning Corporate Plan Priority 6 Service Plan	Section Head & Team Leader Allocations & Voids	Staff Time in the development. Considerable Financial Resources not yet established or budgeted for in any future implementation.

Best Value Review of Tenancy Services
Service Improvement Plan (February 2007 update)

No.	Improvement Action	Timescale	Updated Position
1.	Implement DIP & Workflow to all Tenancy Service Areas starting with Allocations & Voids, followed by Enforcement then ASIST.	Starting with allocations & voids 2006/07 into 2007/08 depending on finance.	DIP & Workflow financial approval given at SJC 14 TH June 2006. Aug-Dec 2006 system development for Allocations & Voids with implementation set for February 2007. Slight delay due to IT issue with data transfer. Implementation now expected March 2007. Implementation to other areas to be completed in 2007/08.
2.	Continue with the allocations policy review through the Allocations Working Group (AWG) of Members and Officers.	Started June 2006 no deadline set yet.	Proposals confirmed at AWG in January 2007. Consultation questionnaire completed. Consultation scheduled for April 2007.
3.	Continue with the review of ASB Services and implement outcome (reconfiguration of services as part of Option Appraisal recommendation)	With Director for approval June 2006	Completed. Report on the Review of ASB Services was approved at the SJC on 13 th September 2006.
4.	Challenge & revise targets & improve timescales in the allocations & void house process.	Progress ongoing to achieve revised targets each year.	Targets revised annually and challenging targets set for the following year. Improved performance has been reported to SJC throughout 2006/07.
5.	Implement return of homeless offers to the control of allocations section.	September 2006	The revised practice was worked on during September 06 and November 06. Implemented to pilot in one office December 06 with full implementation planned for March 2007.

No.	Improvement Action	Timescale	Updated Position
6.	Develop & agree targets & timescales to deliver on effective court actions designed to tackle ASB & breaches of tenancy conditions.	December 2006	Completed
7.	Prepare report to Social Justice Committee, seeking approval for the implementation of Estate Based Audits.	August/September 2006	Completed. Approval at SJC 13 TH September 2007
8.	Implement Estate Based Audits in consultation with residents taking account of feedback on customer consultation regarding environmental issues.	September-December 2006	Completed. Consultation with groups ran into January 2007 and implementation took place in February.
9.	Develop challenging targets and timescales in agreement with other sections & departments to deliver on Estate Based Audits	September-December 2006	Completed. Consultation with other sections & departments has taken place. In order to report on Estate Audits in the future we now intend to set up a monitoring system through DIP & Workflow following the implementation of Allocations & Voids.
10.	Continue with the planned programme of process reviews taking into account good practice & examination of relevant qualitative benchmarking.	Annual Programme	Ongoing programme
11.	Improve communication with internal & external partners through the planned process reviews.	Annual Programme	Ongoing programme
12.	Continue with the planned programme of consultation as outlined in the BV Consultation Report Appendix 1.	Planned Programme, of quarterly or annual or bi-annual consultation	Ongoing programme with very positive results from exit surveys.
13.	Implement the PDP programme for all staff.	March 2007	Ongoing. Due to the training needs associated with this the target for the Department has now changed to June 2007.
14.	Review gaps in protocols & review existing protocols e.g. SSST's	September 2006	Completed for existing protocols.
15.	Continue working towards the development of a Common Housing Register (CHR) in partnership with the RSL's.	March 2007	This has been delayed and we are seeking a carry forward of the funding from the Executive.