

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2009**

**AUDIT COMMISSION RE-INSPECTION OF STRATEGIC HOUSING SERVICES – ACTION PLAN UPDATE ON PROGRESS**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Peter Whittaker
Responsible Head of Service	David Hammond

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 In August last year, the Performance Management Board considered the report of the Audit Commission upon the re- inspection of Strategic Housing Services that took place in February 2008 and the action plan that officers had formulated to address the Audit Commission's recommendations.
- 1.2 This report updates members on the progress that has been made in addressing the actions set in the action plan.

**RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That members note the progress made upon the action plan (Appendix 1) containing Corporate, Strategic Planning and Strategic Housing actions to address the recommendations made by the Audit Commission.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council's Strategic Housing Service was re-inspected by the Audit Commission in the week commencing the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2008. The service had previously been inspected in March 2006 when it had been rated as being a poor, zero star service with uncertain prospects for improvement.

**4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- 4.1 The outcome of the Re-Inspection that took place in February 2008 states that Bromsgrove District Council's Strategic Housing Service is now a fair, one-star service which has promising prospects for improvement.

- 4.2 The Audit Commission report confirmed that the progress made since the initial inspection represented a significant improvement from 2006 and makes the following recommendations:

**Recommendation R1 Improve the focus on customers by:**

- Monitoring, reporting and taking action to ensure that all agreed targets within the housing advice and CAB service level agreements which relate to accessibility and timeliness of the service are met;
- Developing and implementing arrangements to monitor and report measures of satisfaction for all aspects of the strategic housing service and setting targets for improvement;
- Involving customers in the review and re-development of service standards for the strategic housing service, implement arrangements for customers to be involved in monitoring them, and publicise the standards and performance against them; and
- Ensuring that analysis of complaints, which includes common and recurring factors, is regularly reported by service area and that action to resolve them is recorded and reported internally and externally.

Target for completion – November 2008

**Recommendation R2 Improve the focus on diversity by:**

- Collecting and using customer profile information and feedback to inform development of a corporate strategy and action plan to identify and remove any barriers to accessing services;
- Developing and implementing diversity monitoring for service take up and satisfaction, across all groups identified in the equality scheme, reporting this regularly and taking action to address any actual or perceived inequality in service provision;
- Revisiting and updating the Equality Impact Assessments for the strategic housing service to ensure that they are robust and that any weaknesses are integrated into the current service improvement plan; and
- Reviewing compliance with the CRE Code of Practice for Rented Housing and for Employment and ensuring that actions to achieve compliance are included in existing improvement plans.

Target for completion – April 2009

**Recommendation R3 Maximise the impact of activities in the private sector by:**

- Revisiting internal guidance regarding identification of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and developing and implementing regular programmes of work in the district to identify the type and location of HMOs and targeting inspection and enforcement activity appropriately; and

- Developing an overarching strategy to guide all activities in the private sector which clearly sets out the expected combined benefits of work in this area supported by performance targets and monitoring.

Target for completion – April 2009

**Recommendation R4 Maximise the delivery of affordable housing**

by:

- Ensuring that sufficient staff resources are in place to prioritise the development of strategic planning documents linked to delivery of affordable housing;
- Assessing the skills and capacity within the strategic housing and planning teams to ensure that they are equipped to maximise opportunities for delivery following the outcome of the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, particularly in relation to negotiation skills;
- Formalising arrangements for contact and liaison with developers and partners; and
- Formalise joint working arrangements between the strategic housing and planning teams to more proactively consider and address required flexibility within pipeline schemes.

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Target for completion – September 2009

**Recommendation R5 Improving value for money by:**

- Ensuring that spending performance against allocated capital budgets for grants is more closely monitored and maximised and that reporting arrangements allow for prompt action to mitigate any under spends;
- Developing baseline cost, performance, and satisfaction analysis to determine value for money of the strategic housing service and any services provided under agreement, subject to regular review;
- Assessing the effectiveness of internal and external funding and investment in the service, and the impact of different resource streams, to inform a strategy for maximising the impact of future funding; and
- Implementing arrangements to ensure that the impact of investment in learning, training and development is assessed and meets stated objectives.

Target for Completion – April 2009

## **5. DEVELOPMENT OF AN IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN**

- 5.1 In response to the recommendations made, a new Strategic Housing Re- Inspection Action Plan was developed last summer to address the key recommendations set out above and the actions from the previous inspection report that are not fully completed, again focussing upon where the service can be further strengthened.
- 5.2 The Re-Inspection action plan sets out the areas of work that need to be addressed both corporately and those that are more specific to Strategic Planning and the Strategic Housing Section itself. The proposed outcomes and targets set out in the Audit Commission recommendations will, as in the previous action plan, be transferred into the new Re-Inspection Action Plan for clarity.
- 5.3 The Action Plan is attached at Appendix 1 for Members review of progress.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications associated with the recommendation to approve the action plan as the actions set will be addressed within existing budget and staff resources.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no legal implications directly linked to the recommendations

## **8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 8.1 Housing is a Council priority under Objective 1 – Regeneration.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 9.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:
  - Failure to embrace the recommendations made by the Audit Commission could impact upon the Councils corporate rating under CPA or similar CAA inspections.

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The recommendation to approve the action plan will ultimately impact upon customer service and satisfaction as service improvements are implemented.

**11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 Actions within the plan will help improve awareness of customer requirements and help strengthen the application of the Council's Equalities and Diversity Policies.

**12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 Actions within the plan will help improve and strengthen the application of the Council's Value For Money Strategy and Policies.

**13. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues
None
Personnel Implications
None
Governance/Performance Management
None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998
None
Policy
None
Environmental
None

**14. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes

Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects	Yes
Executive Director - Services	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**15. WARDS AFFECTED**

‘All Wards’

**16. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Strategic Housing Re-Inspection - Action Plan updated February 2009.

**17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Audit Commission Local authority Housing Inspection Report – Strategic Housing Re-Inspection – Bromsgrove District Council.

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