

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham S60
2TH**

Date: Monday, 5th March, 2012

Time: 10.30 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended March 2006).
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered later in the agenda as a matter of urgency.
3. Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring 2011/12 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Area Housing Panels (Pages 9 - 19)

Extra item:-

5. Neighbourhoods General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring 2012/13 (Pages 20 - 23)
6. Exclusion of the Press and Public
Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs, indicated below of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.
7. Contracts for Accommodation Based Services (Pages 24 - 28)
(Referred from Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care for information)
(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council))
8. Service Transfer - Pest Control and Dog Control (Pages 29 - 33)
(Exempt under Paragraph 4 of the Act – information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter)

Extra items :-

9. Aged Person and Sheltered Bungalows (Pages 34 - 39)
Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council))
10. Canklow Regeneration (Pages 40 - 45)
Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council))

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	Monday 5th March, 2012
3.	Title:	Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring Report 2011/12
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This report presents the forecast outturn position on the 2011/12 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) based upon activity as at the end of January 2012.

This report will demonstrate that a forecast increase in Repairs and Maintenance expenditure, due in the main to increased activity in empty homes turnover rates, can be contained within existing resources as a result of savings within supervision and management costs, together with a forecast increase in income.

The overall forecast is that the HRA will outturn on budget with a transfer to working balance (reserves) of £4.944m, which is an increase of £331k above the approved budget.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet Member receives and notes the latest forecast outturn position.

7. Proposals and Details

- 7.1** This budget report is based upon actual income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of January 2012 forecast to the end of the financial year to give a projected outturn position, compared to budget.
- 7.2** The report shows that there has been an overall reduction in net cost of service of £275k, when compared with the previous forecast.
- 7.3** Appendix A of this report provides the Budget Operating Statement for 2011/12 which shows the various income and expenditure budgets which make up the net cost of delivering the service. The latest forecast net cost of service is £5.719m which, together with interest received will result in an additional surplus of £331k to be transferred to working balance. This represents an increase of £275k from the previous forecast.
- 7.4** As previously reported, budget monitoring is primarily focussed on expenditure and income items which are considered to be controllable, i.e. income of £80.022m, repairs and maintenance (£14.658m) and supervision and management (£16.405m).

7.5 Budget Monitoring

- 7.5.1** Appendix A presents the projected outturn based upon spend and known commitments to the end of January 2012.
- 7.5.2** Overall it can be seen that the net cost of service is forecast to be £5.719m, a surplus of £331k as shown in the table below.

	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000
Expenditure	74,634	74,819	185
Income	-80,022	-80,538	-516
Net Cost of Service	-5,388	-5,719	-331

- 7.5.3** The table below highlights the main budget items forecasting a variance to approved budget:

	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000
Contribution to Housing Repairs	14,658	15,833	1,175
Supervision and Management	16,405	15,704	-701
Negative Subsidy Repaid to	16,162	16,354	192

Government			
Cost of Capital Charges	11,597	11,116	-481
Income	-80,022	-80,538	-516
Net Variance			-331

7.5.4 It can be seen that the forecast overspend on housing repairs £1.175m, is being offset by a reduction in the forecast cost of supervision and management of £701k, a reduction in the forecast outturn for Cost of Capital of £481k, and by an increase in income of £516k.

7.5.5 The balance of this report will focus on the main variations to budget and will also identify the main reasons for the movement from the previous monitoring report.

7.6 Expenditure

Total expenditure is forecast to outturn at £74.819m compared to a budget provision of £74.634m, an increase in spend of £185k. Appendix A provides further analysis of this position. The major changes are as follows:

7.6.1 Contributions to Housing Repairs

The forecast year-end spend on repairs is £15.832m compared to a budget provision of £14.658m an increase in spend of £1.174m. This projected overspend has reduced by £184k from the previous report. The change can be analysed as follows:

- **Voids.** The previous report identified that, due to the responsive nature of this service intense monitoring is in place and forecasts change as the actual number of void properties change throughout the year. It has previously been reported that the forecast number of voids was substantially higher than budget provision due to the introduction of the new build homes into the rental debit. As each new property has been released, the opportunity has been taken to implement the government's agenda to incentivise tenants to downsize from existing properties to smaller homes to meet current housing needs. This resulted in two, and on occasion, more void properties for every new home released.

All new properties have now been released and there has been an overall reduction in the forecast number of voids. Whilst the forecast is still greater than budget it now based upon an average of 35 voids per week (minor and major). This has resulted in a reduction of £385k to the previous forecast.

- **Contingency Sums**

In light of the reduction in the forecast overspend on void properties, a contingency budget of £200k was re-established, in line with good practice, to meet the costs of any unforeseen items of expenditure within the repairs budget. If this budget head is not called upon during the remainder of 2011/12, then it will be used to meet spend elsewhere, or transferred to Working Balance for use in 2012/13.

7.6.2 Supervision and Management

Based on expenditure and known commitments to date, total expenditure is forecast to outturn at £15.704m, a saving on budget of £701k.

The previous budget monitoring report forecast an under spend of £821k; therefore a reduction for this period. The main variances are as follows:-

- Forecast savings of £46k on salaries due to vacancies being held pending the current restructure.
- ICT savings of £70k due to the decommissioning of current Housing Repairs System.
- Support cost savings of £101k.
- Re-phasing of the implementation of the Housing Information Management System from 2011/12 to 2012/13 has resulted in savings of £223k in the current financial year.
- There is both a forecast under spend of £138k on the purchase of furniture within the Furnished Homes Service plus increased income of £286k as a result of more customers taking up this service.
- Additional staffing costs of £116k arising from the establishment of an Empty Homes and Adaptations Team to reduce both the number of voids and the turnover period.

7.6.3 Negative Housing Subsidy repaid to Government

The forecast year-end outturn of £16.355m compared to the budget of £16.162m, shows a cost of £193k. This is due to lower than anticipated interest and debt management charges calculated in the HRA Subsidy second advance claim. This results in the Council having to repay additional subsidy to Government given it is in Negative Subsidy.

7.6.4 Cost of Capital

The Cost of Capital is projected to outturn at £11.116m against a budget of £11.597m, a reduction of £481k. This is due to a revised Consolidated Rate of Interest calculation which is used to calculate the cost of capital and reflects the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

7.6.5 In conclusion, when the forecast increased spend on repairs is offset against forecast savings on supervision and management and a reduction in the capital charges there is a net total increase in expenditure of £185k over budget. However, this net overspend can be contained within overall resources due to a forecast over recovery on income of £516k.

7.7 Income

7.7.1 The total forecast income collectable is £80.538m, an increase of £516k over and above the approved budget of £80.022m. This represents a minor reduction in forecast income of £79k from the previous forecast position. Appendix A provides further analysis of this position.

7.7.2 The main variations can be explained as follows:

- Dwelling rental income is projected to increase by £237k, rather than £327k previously forecast.
- Rent income foregone due to void dwellings still remains an issue with additional income of £80k forecast to be foregone.
- Charges for services and facilities are projecting to out-turn at £3.305m an over recovery against budget (£3.028m) of £277k. This is mostly due to additional income from the furnished homes scheme as a result of higher than anticipated customer take up.

7.8 Summary

In summary it can be seen in foregoing paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 that the variance to budget of £331k when comparing the forecast net cost of service against the budget of £5.388m is due to changes within repairs and maintenance, supervision and management, negative subsidy paid to government, cost of capital, together with income due.

Whilst it can be noted that there has been a marked forecast increase in spend within repairs and maintenance, the projected overspend can be off-set against forecast savings on supervision and management and cost of capital, together with forecast increased income thus containing the increased spend within budgeted resources.

8. Finance

Impact on Working Balance - The previous report identified that any deficit or surplus arising from the net cost of service would be transferred to the Working Balance which is reflected through the Appropriations section of the Operating Statement at Appendix A. Any forecast increase / decrease will be added to the budgeted sum shown under transfer to reserves.

Based upon the current forecast out-turn position on the net cost of service, the forecast transfer to balances will be £4.944m, which is £331k higher than budget.

This is an increase of £275k when compared to the previous forecast which is mainly attributable to a reduction in the cost of capital charge.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

- **Inflation – Non Contractual**

The 2011/12 budget was formulated around an inflation assumption of nil; if inflation rises costs may exceed budget provision. It should be noted that the inflationary increase on the repair and maintenance contract is locked in for the financial year at 5.5% and this has been provided for within the budget set.

Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring

- **Vacancy Factor**

Salaries budgets assume various levels of vacancies. If vacancies do not arise this could lead to salary costs in excess of budget.

Mitigation: In depth monitoring and forecasting of salary budgets.

- **Repairs and Maintenance**

Voids - Whilst the current empty home forecast is considered to be a prudent projection based upon 1,811 minor voids, it should be noted that the final number of voids received and completed in year could change. Any change in numbers or values is likely to impact on expenditure.

Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring and triangulation with contractors.

- **Cyclical Repairs Dispute**

Now mitigated.

- **Negative Subsidy repaid to Government**
Changes in property numbers and interest rates will have a bearing on final subsidy due to Government. Any changes are likely to impact upon the contribution to Working Balance at the end of the year.
- **Rental Income**
Net rental income has been calculated on the basis of 2% void loss. Any increase / decrease on the actual levels of voids are likely to impact on the level of income achieved.
Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

10.1 The HRA supports the new Corporate Plan Priorities and is central to the long term strategy:

- Making sure no community is left behind.
- Helping to create safe and healthy communities.
- Improving the environment.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Budget and Council Tax Setting Report (2011/12) to Cabinet Member March 2011
- Cabinet Member Report 28th November 2011: Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring Report 2011/12
- Director of Financial Services and Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services have been consulted on the preparation of this report.

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Housing Revenue Account - Budget Operating Statement

Jan-12

Narrative	Full Year Budget 2011/12	Forecast Outturn 2011/12	Variance to Budget	% Variance to Budget
Expenditure				
Contributions to Housing Repairs Account	14,658,092	15,832,875	1,174,783	8.01%
Supervision and Management	16,405,289	15,703,958	-701,331	-4.28%
ALMO Management Fee	1,892,055	1,892,055	0	
Rents, Rates, Taxes etc.	73,519	73,681	162	0.22%
Negative Subsidy repaid to Government	16,162,214	16,354,737	192,523	1.19%
Provision for Bad Debts	500,000	500,000	0	
Cost of capital Charge	11,596,589	11,115,570	-481,019	-4.15%
Depreciation of Fixed Assets	13,120,398	13,120,398	0	
Deferred Charges	0	0	0	
Impairment of Fixed Assets	0	0	0	
Debt Management Costs	225,913	225,913	0	
Expenditure	74,634,069	74,819,187	185,118	
Income				
Dwelling Rents	-62,904,116	-63,141,575	-237,459	0.38%
Non-dwelling Rents	-793,930	-773,498	20,432	-2.57%
Charges for Services and facilities	-3,027,928	-3,304,775	-276,847	9.14%
Other fees and charges	-176,000	-197,913	-21,913	12.45%
HRA Subsidy receivable (Major Repairs Allowance)	-13,120,398	-13,120,398	0	
Income	-80,022,372	-80,538,159	-515,787	0
Net Cost of Services	-5,388,303	-5,718,973	-330,670	
Interest received	-25,000	-25,000	0	0
Net Operating Expenditure	-5,413,303	-5,743,973	-330,670	0
Appropriations:				
Transfer from Capital Finance Account- Deferred	0	0	0	
Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay	800,000	800,000	0	
Transfer from Capital Finance Account- Impairment	0	0	0	
Transfer from Major Repairs Reserve	0	0	0	
Transfer to Reserves	4,613,333	4,943,973	330,640	7.17%
Surplus/Deficit for the year	0	0	0	0

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

1	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2	Date:	5th March 2012
3	Title:	Area Housing Panels
4	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5 Summary

Area Housing Panels are a key element of tenant involvement. Following the return of the ALMO to the council and in the context of developments in local democracy and changes in national housing policy, a review of the role of AHPs was considered timely with the aims of:

- ✓ redefining and strengthening their role in service improvement;
- ✓ giving tenants greater confidence that we are delivering what is important to them; and
- ✓ ensuring tenants have the opportunity to influence the local housing 'offer'.

The review was undertaken in autumn last year and incorporated extensive consultation over several weeks with AHPs, Area Assemblies, tenants and other groups.

The Area Assembly Chairs' meeting of 6th October requested that a paper setting out the outcomes and recommendations arising from the consultation exercise be presented to the Select Commission for Improving Places for discussion prior to it going to the Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods.

The comments made at the Select Commission have been taken into consideration in this paper when presenting the proposals for Cabinet Member's approval.

6 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the actions (a) to (n) as proposed on pages 2 and 3 of this report.

7 Proposals and Details

7.1 Background

Area Housing Panels are part of housing management's tenant involvement structure which also includes: a customer local offers monitoring group; several service improvement groups; a database of "key players" i.e. customers willing to be contacted on specified issues; and a communications and editorial group. Since the development of the Local Offers Monitoring Group (LOMG) many service improvement groups have been discontinued as that group examines performance closely and calls in managers to account where service delivery falls below expected standards. The LOMG is itself likely to be subject to change to reflect the unique insights that residents are able to bring in respect of service monitoring and improvement.

RotherFed is the federation of tenants and residents' associations (TaRAs), largely funded by the council. The vision of RotherFed is the creation of an active and empowered tenants' and residents' movement in Rotherham and its mission is "*to unite and represent tenants and residents in decisions about their homes and communities*". To this end Rotherfed supports over 30 Tenants and Residents Associations.

Within NAS', Neighbourhood Partnerships Teams support Area Assemblies and the AA Coordinating Groups, as well as a wide range of other resident engagement activities. Since services were reintegrated these teams also manage three resident engagement champions whose jobs are to interact with local people to encourage participation in the community which, where residents are also tenants, may lead to involvement in the structures described above.

At this moment in time the relationship between these various structures is underdeveloped, but it does present a significant opportunity to develop a network, which can play a fundamental role in driving up the quality of housing services. There is also considerable opportunity to revitalise the role of the AHP's as part of this network.

7.2 The Consultation Process

The consultation process was conducted in accordance with the Code of Practice on Consultation issued by the Better Regulation Executive in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in line with the seven consultation criteria, which are:

1. formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome;
2. consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible;
3. consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals;
4. consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach;
5. keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained;
6. consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation; and

7. officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

Throughout the consultation exercise the scope of influence was clearly set out as being within three overarching outcomes required by the council:

1. a strong governance framework which links to other local democratic activities;
2. robust accountability for the expenditure of HRA funding; and
3. wider involvement.

A table showing who was consulted is given in section 10 of this paper.

7.3 Proposals

This has been an open consultation process. Proposals in this paper were generated by those consulted who were able to develop ideas for consideration provided they contributed to at least one of the overarching outcomes above.

Almost 100 people attended the open meeting organised by RotherFed on 22 November 2011. Formal resolutions were presented at that meeting and one was adopted as formal RotherFed policy and notified to the council as such. It is reproduced in full below:

“We welcome the RMBC review of Area Housing Panels (AHPs); we believe:

“AHP Governance

“Tenant and residents are at the heart of the governance of AHPs, working together with RMBC officers making improvements within their local communities.

“The dedication and commitment of community volunteers is at the heart of the AHP decision making process and is something we should be proud of and determined to continue.

“AHP Involvement

“AHPs should become an exemplar of tenant involvement linking into the council’s decision making processes wherever possible

“AHPs become a means of engaging the widest range of tenants and residents in a variety of different ways, reaching out to communities who are not usually involved.

“AHP Accountability

“Decisions of AHPs should be open and available for all. Improvements should be made to AHP reporting mechanisms both to the Borough Council and to Rotherham tenants and residents as a whole.

“Greater consistency between AHPs would be enhanced by having a dedicated RMBC officer overseeing their operation.”

Given the range and roles of people consulted it was not surprising that distinct perspectives emerged regarding the future role of area housing panels. That said, there was sufficient common ground to generate a number of proposals (listed below) which address one or more of the three overarching outcomes.

1. a strong governance framework for area housing panels which links to other local democratic activities

- a. Area Assemblies to liaise with AHPs when appropriate and to consider co-opting a member of the AHP should a community vacancy arise on the co-ordinating group
- b. the same RMBC officer to service the AA, co-ordinating group and AHP in an area
- c. AHPs to send invitation and agenda to all ward councillors for each meeting
- d. at least one member of the AHP should attend the Area Assembly meeting and feed back to the panel on local initiatives and issues discussed
- e. each AHP continues to nominate a member to serve on the board of RotherFed

2. demonstrate robust accountability for HRA expenditure

- f. minutes of AHP meetings to be sent to the Area Assembly for information and inclusion in the record posted on the council's website
- g. minutes to include a clear record of decision to award HRA funding to a project
- h. HRA funded projects to be monitored and evaluated and findings minuted

3. involve Area Housing Panels in a wider range of activities supporting the co-regulation required of social housing providers

- i. Resident Engagement Champions to work with Area Housing Co-ordinators and AHP Chairs to identify potential members for each panel to reflect its catchment area
- j. one representative from each AHP to serve on the LOMG in addition to its current membership
- k. AHP can play a more active role in assessing the quality of housing services and making recommendations for service improvement.
- l. all AHP members to participate in service improvement task and finish groups as required
- m. tenants and residents involved with AHPs receive training appropriate to their roles
- n. consideration is given to AHPs being asked to form the local tenant panel (from April 2013)

Appendix 1 gives background to and rationale for each of the proposals above under the most pertinent overarching outcome and a cross-reference to the list above.

7.4 Next Steps

Informing and shaping service improvement is the main purpose of tenant involvement. If the proposals in this paper are approved their implementation will in effect provide a revised framework for tenant involvement, strengthening linkages between and clarifying roles of the main parties as shown in the diagram on the following page.

Implementation of the proposals will be the responsibility of the Housing and Communities Manager in conjunction with the Performance and Quality Manager regarding the local offers monitoring group:

- Neighbourhood Partnership teams will undertake the support functions of the AHPs, arranging meetings, ensuring full and proper records are maintained and effective links are made with the corresponding Area Assembly and its co-ordinating group; and
- Performance and Quality will support the local offers monitoring group (LOMG), providing information and support to guide and shape the service improvement agenda. That work will be led by the LOMG (which will include formal representation of each AHP) and involve members of the area housing panels and local tenants' and residents' associations in testing and assessing quality of service delivery, identifying areas falling short of agreed standards and working with P&Q to drive service improvement.

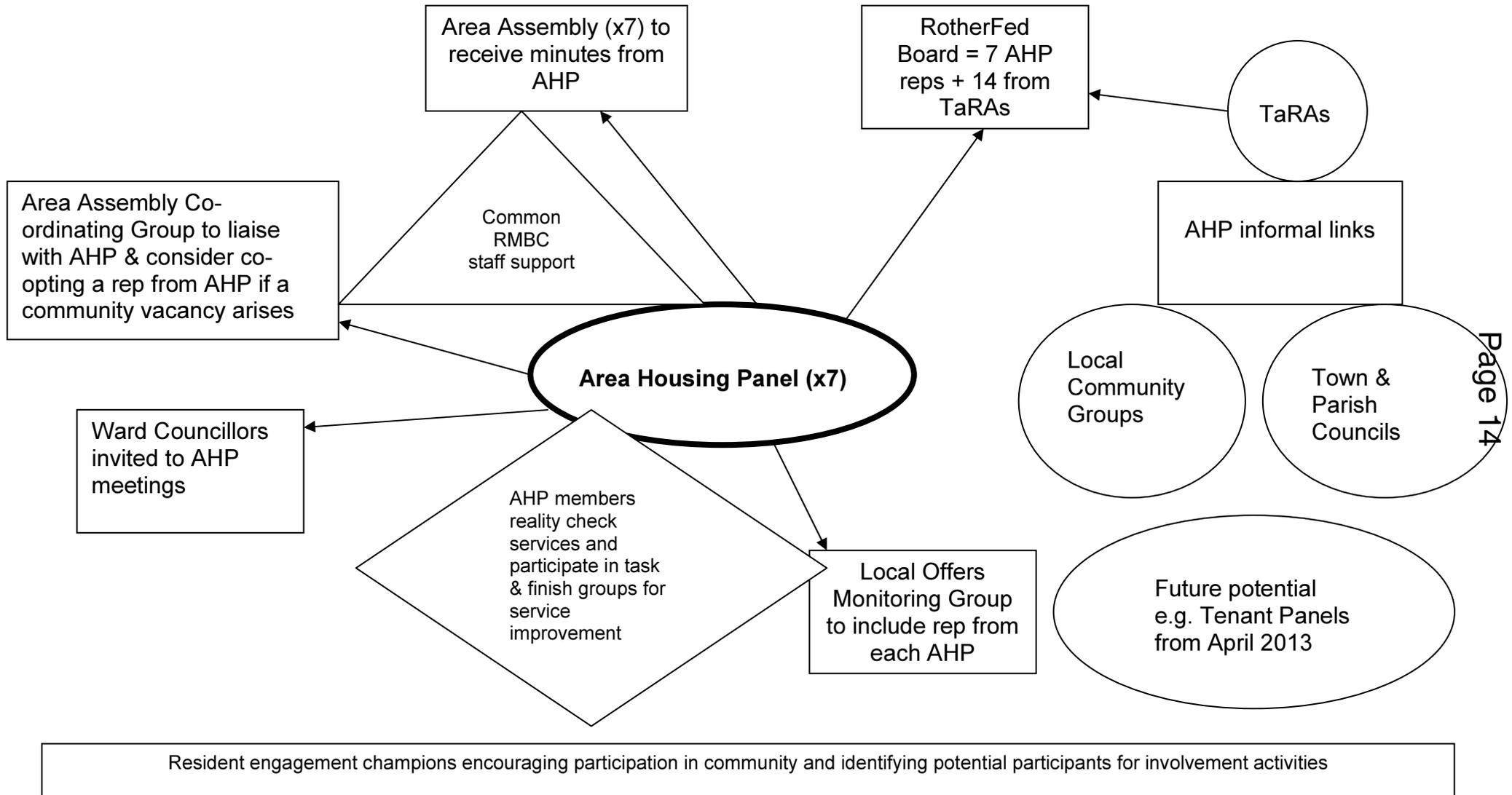
The focus of this paper has been the review of the role of area housing panels; that work was undertaken in parallel with similar work regarding the local offer monitoring group which reflects the proposals in this paper. Appendix 2 sets out the proposed revisions to the working practices of the LOMG to strengthen its role and focus on holding the council to account.

The next stage will be to look at the roles of tenants' and residents' associations and RotherFed to ensure the framework for engagement is robust, relevant and effective especially with regard to the new requirements of the Localism Act as they are enacted over the next two years.

8 **Finance**

The recommendations in this paper can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Area Housing Panels at the heart of Tenant Involvement



9 Risks and Uncertainties

Tenant involvement is critical to co-regulation, a TSA/HCA requirement of social housing providers, including local authorities. Not having a clear, substantial role for area housing panels may lead to the perception that tenant empowerment is being denuded. Given recent feedback from tenants, it is particularly important that does not happen following reintegration with the council. The proposals in this paper strengthen the role of area housing panels.

Presently, the main focus of most of the 7 area housing panels is allocating the devolved HRA budget for local projects. Formalising links with other groups and involving partnership and other staff in supporting AHPs will improve linkages with other activities in the area, ensuring the budget is spent to best effect. Increasing the role of AHPs in performance monitoring and scrutiny activities will ensure a clear role for them even if that budget should no longer be available.

The role of the Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations is distinct from that of area housing panels; continuing the formal nomination of one person from each AHP to serve on RotherFed's board will ensure they complement and support each other's activities and avoid duplication.

As the provisions of the Localism Act are applied over time, the context of some recommendations may change, for example the requirement for local tenants' panels may be dropped prior to their planned introduction from April 2013. It is unlikely any changes cannot be accommodated.

10 Background Papers and Consultation

Formal consultation began on 12th September and ended on 15th December 2011. It was conducted according to the Code of Practice on Consultation issued by the Better Regulation Executive in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Feedback will be provided to those who participated in the consultation.

The table below lists who was consulted.

Consultations held with:	Date:
Cabinet Member	13 July
AHP Chairs	16 August
RotherFed Board	12 September
Area Assembly Chairs	06 October
Rother Valley West AA Coordinating Group	24 October
Local Offers Monitoring Group (tenants/leaseholders)	01 November
Rother Valley West AHP	02 November
Wentworth Valley AA Coordinating Group	08 November
Wentworth Valley AHP	09 November
Rotherham North AHP	09 November
Rotherham South AHP	14 November
Rother Valley South AA Coordinating Group	21 November
RotherFed open meeting of tenants and residents	22 November
RMBC Partnership team staff meeting	23 November
Wentworth North AHP	24 November
Rother Valley South AHP	25 November
Housing managers	06 December
Wentworth South AHP	07 December
RMBC/Town & Parish Councils' joint working group	15 December

Following consultation discussions have been held with relevant managers to ensure the proposals in this paper are achievable.

Background papers:

Area Housing Panels: Terms of Reference (revised 2008)

Area Housing Panels: Environmental Projects (June 2009)

Area Housing Panels Review Proposal (August 2011)

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Background to and rationale for proposals

1. *A strong governance framework which links to other local democratic activities*

At the outset of the consultation it was the perception of Area Assemblies that area housing panels were operating in a vacuum, not linking to other activities and initiatives in the locality. On discussing that challenge with AHPs it became apparent that there were a number of informal networks but, as is so often the case, there was insufficient formal communication between the panels and Area Assemblies.

Whilst AHPs were keen not to become stifled with bureaucracy, it was generally accepted that some degree of formality was required to ensure appropriate links were made, particularly with the Area Assembly. Perhaps the most effective single action (a) to address that issue would be for Area Assemblies to co-opt a member of the area housing panel to sit on the co-ordinating group. That would inform the AHP and AA of other initiatives under development which may link with or duplicate proposals to the HRA budget. This would be particularly helpful when the AA co-ordinating groups are looking to form local panels to consider applications to the Communities First funding available in 11 of Rotherham's wards. If the same RMBC officer were to service the AA, co-ordinating group and AHP in an area, those links would be further strengthened (b).

Councillors on Area Assembly co-ordinating groups were not generally aware of when and where their local area housing panel met and, whilst they did not want formal membership of the panel, would welcome an invitation to meetings. (c) AHPs to send invitation and agenda to all ward councillors.

Similarly, AHPs generally agreed that at least one of their members should attend the Area Assembly meeting and feed back to the panel to raise awareness of other initiatives and issues in the locality (d).

There is a longstanding link with RotherFed in that each AHP nominates a member to serve on its board which meets monthly and it is proposed that this should continue (e).

2. *Robust accountability for the expenditure of HRA funding*

Area Assembly members were generally concerned regarding accountability for the expenditure of public funding. Whilst some wanted the Assembly to be the decision making body as to how the HRA budget for the AHP should be allocated, most felt that clear, accessible records would provide a sufficiently robust audit trail.

It is recommended that minutes of AHP meetings should be sent to the relevant Area Assembly meeting (f) which would put them in the public domain and enable any questions to be raised at AA meetings. AHP minutes should clearly record proposals considered for HRA funding, the decision taken and main reasons for approval or rejection (g).

Progress of approved projects should be reported to AHP meetings and recorded in the minutes. An evaluation should be undertaken of each project (h) following completion (immediately or after a suitable interval depending upon its nature) to determine whether it had achieved its intended objectives, identify any unexpected

effects (positive or negative) and was within budget. Again, a statement for each project should be minuted.

3. *Wider involvement in activities supporting the co-regulation required of social housing providers*

This outcome has two elements: broader membership of AHPs and their involvement in a wider range of activities.

Numbers on AHPs vary across the borough. Some seek to ensure no estate dominates by limiting membership to two from any one district within its catchment area; others find it difficult to attract and retain active members. It is recommended that the Resident Engagement Champions work with Area Housing Co-ordinators and AHP Chairs to identify potential members for each panel to reflect its catchment area (i).

Many members of AHPs are active in other community groups, TARAs, Town or Parish Councils which provides informal networking and knowledge of local issues and initiatives. There is a formal link to the RotherFed board but not with local TaRAs. To require each AHP to establish formal links with every Town or Parish Council and TaRA in its area may be considered overly bureaucratic and time consuming; it would also deflect AHPs from their main purpose of involving tenants in improving service delivery.

Through the consultation it became apparent that many AHP members and others thought the only reason for their existence was to allocate HRA funding to local environmental projects. In the context of the Localism Act and the need for co-regulation, AHPs could provide informed tenant involvement in performance monitoring and service improvement activities

It is recommended (j) that one representative from each AHP serve on the Local Offers Monitoring Group in addition to its current membership which would ensure a geographical perspective is included in examining performance to ensure consistency of service delivery across the Borough. This proposal would also enable the LOMG members to present performance information to their AHP in a more informed way and to focus on local issues and potential service improvements.

To ensure a geographical spread of involvement, (k) other AHP members should make themselves available to undertake service testing activities and (l) participate in service improvement task and finish groups as required.

Existing members of the customer monitoring group have received training; it is recommended that (m) tenants and residents involved with AHPs receive training appropriate to their roles.

The Localism Act changes the way that complaints about social landlord will be handled; from 2013 there will be a single watchdog, the Independent Housing Ombudsman. Prior to cases being referred to the IHO, they should be referred through a local filter, i.e. a councillor, MP or tenants' panel. AHPs could be the basis for such a panel therefore it is proposed that, nearer the time, consideration is given to AHPs being asked to form the local tenant panel (n).

Local Offers Monitoring Group: Proposals

- Continue with the Local Offers Monitoring Group (LOMG) – new terms of reference, focus on scrutiny of our services against the local offers and holding us to account.
- Consider renaming to move away from simply monitoring - Tenant Scrutiny Group or Local Offers Scrutiny Group
- Review membership to consist of existing but include 1 person from each Area Housing Panel.
- Area Housing Panels are part of the local offers framework. Views from the panels are fed through to the LOMG, feeding up experience, results of any reality checks.
- Agree on 8 – 10 Local Offers which are the key issues for tenants including wider tenants based on the consultation we have done
- Local Offers are used as ‘can openers’ to a more in depth look at the service
- All Local Offers are physically measured by tenants and require minimum input from officers to get the real picture.
- Reality checks take place every month by tenants supported by officer
- Regular meetings (timescale to be agreed) continue focused on LOMG feeding back performance to the Council on their experiences over the past month and to discuss hot topics falling out of physical monitoring.
- The monitoring work that is undertaken by the LOMG is undertaken between meetings – it may be worthwhile to consider whether monthly meetings provide enough time for testing to be done and explore whether bi-monthly or quarterly meetings would provide better information on how we are really performing on the ground.
- The LOMG / Local Offers is supported by one officer from the Council to facilitate monitoring and organise meetings.
- The feedback report from LOMG is reported monthly on the internet for the wider tenant view.
- LOMG role is to firmly hold the Council to account on the local offers and to work with the Council on driving service improvement. Tenants are firmly at the heart of us striving to deliver excellent services.

New Start:

- This is about tenants holding the council to account.
- Tenants at the heart of service improvement
- Local Offers – measurable by Tenants.
- It is not about council providing stats, although we need to be as open and transparent about performance as possible.
- This is a real two way conversation on how good council housing services are.
- A chance to build the wider tenant groups into the process so that we get a better picture
- The council needs the real experience beyond the statistics
- It needs to be a can opener to focusing on the 1 in 10 or 1 in 20 who don't get a good service.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	Monday 5 March 2012
3.	Title:	Neighbourhoods General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring 2012/13
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Services

5. Summary

This report details the projected year end outturn position as at 31st January 2012 for the Neighbourhoods department within the Neighbourhoods & Adult Services Directorate compared to the approved Net Revenue Budget of £3.28m. **The latest forecast shows a projected underspend of (£313k) by the end of March 2012.**

6. Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member receives and notes the latest financial projection based on income and expenditure to the end of January 2012.

7. Proposals and Details

The table below shows the summary forecast outturn position for the Directorate against the approved Net Revenue Budgets.

SERVICE AREA	Net Budget	Forecast Outturn to 31st March 2012	Variance from Net Budget Deficit/ (Surplus)	% Variation to Net Budget
	£000's	£000's	£000's	%
Asylum	0	0	0	0
Housing Access	343	326	(17)	(4.95)
Housing Choices	243	151	(92)	(37.86)
Safer Neighbourhoods	2,070	1,902	(168)	(8.12)
Business Regulation	309	279	(30)	(9.71)
Neighbourhood Partnerships	276	277	1	0.36
Neighbourhood Investment	43	36	(7)	(16.28)
TOTALS	3,284	2,971	(313)	(9.53%)

Most Service areas are projecting underspends at year end or balanced budgets. The main variations are summarised below:

Housing Access (£17k)

There are small projected underspends within Adaptations Service (£9k) and Housing Management & Admin (£10k) as a result of vacant posts. These are partially reduced by a small forecast shortfall of £2k on the Medical Mobility and Community Care budget due to the unmet vacancy factor on this small budget area and a small projected income shortfall of £2k on the Housing Mortgage cost centre due to reducing income from Mortgage Interest.

Housing Choices (£92k)

This Service Area is projecting an underspend within the Homelessness budget of (£29k) as a result of a post being held vacant since the post holder's secondment to another service area within Housing Choices and savings achieved within supplies & services.

In addition the Lighting of Staircases budget is projecting an underspend of (£63k), mainly as a result of a number of large refunds on utility bills relating to previous years and lower than anticipated costs in the current year.

Safer Neighbourhoods (£168k)

There is an overall forecast underspend within Community Protection of (£156k) due in part to vacant posts of (£50k) and savings as a result of controlled spending on supplies & services (£82k) and additional income (£18k). This underspend also includes projected savings on transport costs as a direct result of efficiencies achieved due to the merger of Community Protection with the former Neighbourhood Wardens and Enviro-Crime costs centres. Additional underspends are projected within Community Safety (£12k), Domestic Violence (£6k), and Anti-Social Behaviour (£17k) mainly due to controlled spending on supplies & services and vacant post being held due to restructure.

The Pest Control Service is currently facing a forecast income pressure of £35k from fees and charges, which is being closely monitored and is the main reason behind the overall projected £23k shortfall anticipated in this area.

Business Regulation (£30k)

Within Business Regulation there are forecast underspends in Health & Safety, Food & Drugs and Bereavement Services totalling (£107k) as a result of vacant posts, tight controls on supplies and services expenditure due to the council wide moratorium and increased fee income. These are offset by projected overspends on Animal Health and Trading Standards of £51k mainly due to the services being unable to meet their vacancy management targets. Licensing budget is also forecasting a projected shortfall of £26k, mainly as a result of pressures on fee income, however this is being closely monitored and may reduce by the year end if additional income targets are achieved.

Neighbourhood Partnerships £1k

The Service is forecasting a small overspend due to pressures of meeting the vacancy management target plus additional external audit costs on the Local Ambition programme, partially offset by savings due to maternity leave.

Neighbourhood Investment (£7k)

The Registered Social Landlords cost centre is projecting a shortfall in income of £1k against budget as the number of landlords in the scheme is reducing in 2011/12. This is being offset by a surplus of (£8k) now being forecast within Neighbourhood Investment as a result of a vacant post.

A full review of the Neighbourhood Investment Team cost centre has been undertaken to ensure that sufficient funding is available to cover all costs incurred as no general fund budget is available for this service in 2011/12. The costs incurred are to be met by Growth/Housing Market Renewal Revenue Programme, New Build Council Housing and Homelessness funding (as a result of work undertaken by this team that links to the Homelessness service). It is anticipated that all costs will be met in this financial year for this service.

During the budget setting process for 2011/12 savings of £790k were identified in respect of Neighbourhood Wardens, Neighbourhood Partnerships, Food Inspection, and Trading Standards. These budget savings are on target to be achieved with the exception of Trading Standards where there are further budget pressures as highlighted above.

7.1 Agency & Consultancy

To date there is no spend on either Agency or Consultancy within Neighbourhoods General Fund Budgets.

7.2 Non-Contractual Overtime

Actual expenditure to the end of January 2012 on non-contractual overtime for Neighbourhood Services was £8,619, as follows:

Safer Neighbourhoods;	
Community Protection	£6,672 (includes Out of Hours Service)
Pest Control	£ 1,152
Safer Stronger Communities	£ 795 (fully grant funded)

8. Finance

The financial implications for each service area have been outlined in Section 7 above.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

These forecasts are based on financial performance to the end of March 2012. The forecast outturn is dependent on delivery of the planned management actions being achieved and thus effective and tight financial management practices remain essential - monthly budget clinics are held with the Service Directors to facilitate this.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The delivery of the Council's Revenue Budget within the limits determined in March 2011 is vital to achieving the Council's Policy agenda. Financial performance is a key element within the assessment of the Council's overall performance.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Cabinet February 2011 – Proposed Revenue Budget & Council Tax 2011/12
- The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – December 2011.

The content of this report has been discussed with the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods and the Director of Finance.

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