

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS

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

Date: Monday, 29th October, 2012

Time: 10.00 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 Strategy (Pages 1 - 27)
4. Community Energy Saving Programme (Pages 28 - 33)
5. Review of Communal Cleaning Service to Flats (Pages 34 - 42)
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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information likely to reveal the identity of an individual).
7. Introductory Tenancy Review Panel (Pages 43 - 46)

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date	29th October 2012
3.	Title	Housing Strategy
4.	Directorate	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

Rotherham's Housing Strategy needs to be rewritten in order to take account of public spending cuts and national policy changes. A new draft Housing Strategy was produced in May, and shared with Directorate Leadership Team and Cabinet Member prior to the comprehensive programme of consultation which took place between June and August. The draft has been updated to take account of feedback from Members, staff, partner agencies, the voluntary and community sector and Rotherham residents, and is now undergoing the required process for final sign off and endorsement.

The draft Strategy was presented to Improving Places Select Commission on 17th October, who endorsed the draft and made a number of comments which are reflected in this covering report. Cabinet Member is now asked to review feedback from Improving Places, make any final amendments to the draft, and agree that it should be presented to Cabinet on 21st November for formal approval.

6. Recommendations

- Agree that the final draft Housing Strategy should be presented to Cabinet for approval.

7. Proposals and details

7.1 Background information about the draft Housing Strategy

It was agreed by Neighbourhoods and Adult Services Directorate Leadership Team that the Housing Strategy should be a 30 year strategy linked to the 30 year HRA business plan, but with a focus on the key deliverables for the next three years. Each new instalment of the strategy will be produced every three years, each with its own 'brand', e.g. part 1, 2013-16, focuses on *continuing to improve the quality and choice of Rotherham's housing offer*. The draft Housing Strategy is deliberately concise and accessible to everybody, including tenants and residents, and we have used a simple format of 'ten commitments':

- 1) We will deliver Council housing that meets people's needs
- 2) We will increase and improve the supply of affordable rented housing in Rotherham
- 3) We will deliver against our Local Investment Plan
- 4) We will make communities safer
- 5) We will work with partners to help to ensure everyone can afford to heat their home
- 6) We will help people to access the support they need
- 7) We will help people in Rotherham's most disadvantaged communities
- 8) We will engage with communities and individuals so that we have a better understanding of how to meet their needs and aspirations
- 9) We will help to improve Rotherham's private rented sector
- 10) We will help people who wish to own their home

We will also produce a separate, new document – Rotherham's *annual housing intelligence report* – to sit next to the Strategy, that will contain all relevant statistics, analysis, survey results ('where do you want to live' survey) housing market information etc. This will be an extremely useful resource, and it will be easy to keep this up to date rather than having to wait for the next Housing Strategy instalment. Once the Housing Strategy document has been approved a separate robust action plan will be produced to contain the finer detail of each commitment and enable us to publish six monthly updates on the Council's website.

7.2 Joined up approach to consultation

We identified opportunities to consult on other key issues concurrently with the Housing Strategy, which enabled us to use resources more effectively and ensure a holistic approach to strategic housing issues. These were as follows:

- Changes to the Allocations Policy (the Localism Act 2011 allows us to apply locally determined criteria and changes to how the housing register is managed)
- Development of a new Strategic Tenancy Policy (we asked people for their views on fixed term tenancies, as introduced by the Localism Act 2011, as RMBC must publish a Strategic Tenancy Policy by January 2013)
- Amendment to the new Homelessness Strategy (we advised people of the new power to discharge the Council's homelessness duty into the private rented sector)
- Supporting People Strategy
- Warmer Homes Strategy

7.3 Consultation programme

In line with best practice, consultation was carried out over a three month period and advice and support was provided by Corporate Community Engagement Officers. Each of the following activities primarily focused on the Housing Strategy but also generated feedback that was useful to the simultaneous consultations listed above.

General publicity: Webpage, dedicated email address, online questionnaire (275 responses), press release, publicised via all RMBC communication channels, emails to Members, all NAS staff, all partners, groups, communities of interest

Elected Members: Seminar, Area Assemblies

Staff and partner agencies: Emails, participation in public events, participation in 'fine-tuning' sub-groups, Strategic Housing Partnership, Forums, Supporting People providers' forum

Public consultation: Two public events at Springwell Gardens, RotherFed meeting, Learning from Customers forum, Area Assemblies, Tenant Quality and Standards Monitoring group, private landlords forum

The above consultation generated a vast amount of feedback, some of the most common themes being:

- Working with deprived communities important – but don't forget other areas deserve support
- Work in a more joined up way between services
- Lots on views how we allocate housing
- We should enforce tenancy conditions
- Improve how we communicate with people particularly young people, deaf people, people with learning disabilities

Once all of the material had been reviewed the draft Housing Strategy was updated, and eight small sub-groups were organised to fine-tune each of the commitments. These were led by NAS officers and included staff from other directorates and external organisations to provide an element of challenge and benchmarking. Once these sessions had all concluded, the Strategy was again updated and sent out to all staff and partners that had been involved, for any final comments.

7.4 Improving Places Select Commission

Members acknowledged that they had had various opportunities to comment on and influence the draft Housing Strategy, and overall they endorsed the document and agreed that it should be reported to Cabinet Member. Other positive comments on the draft included ease of reading due to its accessible format, and the fact that it is realistic and focuses on needs rather than solely on aspirations.

A number of questions were raised and discussion ensued regarding particular elements of the Housing Strategy:

- The concurrent consultation on the possibility of long, fixed term tenancies for large Council properties was discussed, due to recent media coverage. This will be reported on separately to Improving Places Select Commission in November.
- The importance of ensuring Housing Champions and other front-line staff are available to work in the areas to tackle antisocial behaviour and other housing management issues was noted.
- It was acknowledged that it is equally important to ensure high standards of customer service provision via the Contact Centre, and an update on recruitment to vacancies within customer services was provided.
- Members noted the challenges of ensuring the problems that sometimes occur when younger and older tenants live together in blocks of flats are dealt with effectively.
- There was a general discussion regards ASB and how RMBC compares to other local authorities, and the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services provided detailed facts and figures regarding the enforcement action that has been taken against perpetrators of ASB over the past year.
- Members noted that officers must enable them to enact the commitment to take a zero tolerance approach to drug and alcohol related ASB and criminality, by providing high quality evidence.
- It was noted that in delivering one and two bedroom properties it is essential that we consider the size of rooms and ensure adequate provision of storage space.

All of the above comments, while not necessarily requiring amendment to the draft Housing Strategy, were taken on board and where appropriate will be reflected in the action plan. Updates on specific issues can be provided to the Select Commission as and when required.

As a final point, Improving Places Select Commission noted that they should be involved in monitoring progress against the Housing Strategy action plan and this should be reflected in the work programme.

8. Finance

The consultation programme has largely been delivered within existing resources and costs have been kept to a minimum. We will need to develop a Housing Strategy action plan with a clear indication of costs and funding sources.

9. Risks and uncertainties

There is always a risk that the Housing Strategy will become out of date due to the rapidly changing national legislative and policy environment. However, the housing intelligence report can be amended if necessary and we will have a webpage with an overview of the Housing Strategy that can be updated to reflect any major changes. The next instalment of the 30 year Housing Strategy, 2016-2019, will be started in late 2015.

10. Policy and performance agenda implications

The Housing Strategy aligns with national policy and strategy and will support local priorities, including the vision of the Local Investment Plan (“our vision is that all communities are empowered and able to engage in and benefit from, the transformation of Rotherham, with no one place or person left behind”), and the Community Strategy draft priorities for 2012-15:

- 1) Help local people and businesses benefit from a growing economy
- 2) Ensure the best start in life for children and families
- 3) Support those that are vulnerable within our communities

Production of the Housing Strategy is also an objective within this year’s NAS Service Plan.

11. Background papers and consultation

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – final draft Housing Strategy

Background papers

- (Existing) Rotherham Housing Strategy updated June 2010 and April 2011
- National housing strategy – Laying the Foundations (CLG November 2011)
- Localism Act 2011

Consultation

A comprehensive programme of consultation has been completed, as summarised in 7.3.

12. Contact name

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DRAFT ROTHERHAM HOUSING STRATEGY 2013 - 2043



Part 1: 2013 - 2016

*Continuing to improve the quality and
choice of Rotherham's housing offer*



Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council
Where Everyone Matters

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We have tried to keep jargon to a minimum in this document, as we want it to be accessible to everybody, but some of the terms used may need further explanation. We have therefore included a 'guide to terms used in the Housing Strategy' on pages 20-22. The detailed actions which underpin this document are contained within a separate housing strategy action plan.

Foreword

Rose McNeely, Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods

Dave Richmond, Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods

November 2012

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Introduction to Rotherham's 30 year Housing Strategy

We know that good or bad housing has a direct impact on health, educational achievement, economic prosperity and community safety – all of which are important to the success and wellbeing of Rotherham's communities. Housing therefore makes a key contribution to delivering Rotherham Partnership's Community Strategy, whose three priorities for 2012-15 are:

- 1) Help local people and businesses benefit from a growing economy
- 2) Ensure the best start in life for children and families
- 3) Support those that are vulnerable within our communities

The 30 year Housing Strategy reflects the crucial links between housing and other key services, particularly health. It sits alongside the Council's 30 year housing business plan.

A picture of Rotherham at the beginning of the 30 year strategy

- Diverse and vibrant blend of people, cultures and communities
- Mix of urban areas and villages (about 70% of the borough is rural)
- Rich industrial heritage and over recent years investment in new areas such as information technology and light engineering
- Population steadily increasing – 256,000 in April 2012
- Ageing population – there will be an additional 20,000 residents over the age of 65 over the next 30 years, and relative decline in younger population
- Employment rate has fallen below national and regional averages since recession
- Income levels are also below national averages
- The educational attainment of our school leavers is improving each year
- Approximately 110,000 households in borough – of which 20,993 are Council homes
- Large number of people on the Council's housing register – 27,103 in April 2012
- Vast majority of Council homes classed as 'decent' but significant decency issues in the private rented sector
- There is a low housing demand in some areas and an increasing housing affordability gap between the most and least deprived areas
- The number of new homes built is at an all-time low
- In 2011, 18.2% of Rotherham's households were living in fuel poverty, in particular people renting privately
- Low crime rates compared to national and sub-regional averages

Vision: Where we want to get to by the end of the 30 year period

- People living in high quality homes, whether in the social rented, private rented or home ownership sector
- Rotherham Council playing its part by being the best housing provider in the country, delivering high quality services and support, and peaceful and well-managed neighbourhoods
- A smaller gap between the most and least disadvantaged neighbourhoods, so that all of Rotherham's people can live in safe, healthy and vibrant communities
- No households living in homes that are poor in terms of energy efficiency

This is our 30 year vision, and we will set out how we will deliver this in three-yearly instalments. The first instalment relates to 2013-16, therefore to the end of the current Comprehensive Spending Review period. During this period of severely restricted public finance, we must focus on making our resources go as far as possible to continue to improve the quality and choice of Rotherham's housing offer. The next instalment, 2016-19 may have a different focus but the 30 year vision will remain the same.

Introduction to part 1: 2013-16 - Continuing to improve the quality and choice of Rotherham's housing offer

Wider strategic context

Nationally, the Coalition Government has embarked on a massive programme of budget cuts which has caused us to drastically reduce our planned housing and regeneration investment. Other major national changes include:

- The Localism Act 2011 has brought about a number of major changes that affect housing including changes to how Council housing is allocated and managed
- 2011 saw the publication of the Government's national Housing Strategy, *Laying the Foundations*, introducing a wide range of new initiatives particularly focused on 'reigniting the housing market and getting the nation building again'
- The Right to Buy rules have been changed to make discounts higher and therefore more Council homes are likely to be lost through this route
- Housing Revenue Account Self Financing has allowed local authorities to control their own rental income which provides opportunities to borrow and invest over 30 years
- The Welfare Reform Act 2012 will bring significant change, particularly in respect of Universal Credit (housing benefit and local housing allowance will be incorporated into a single benefits payment) and the new 'bedroom tax' which makes it more important that people are living in homes that are not larger than they require
- The Department of Health's White Paper [Caring for our future: reforming care and support](#) (July 2012) demonstrates the contribution a good home makes towards the health and wellbeing of individuals and sets out a new system that will support individuals to live independently for as long as possible
- People are finding it difficult to buy homes due to the economic recession and a reluctance by to lend to people without large deposits

At the South Yorkshire level, the Regional Spatial Strategy is to be superceded as a policy basis in favour of localism and a new approach to driving house building, based on local demand, acceptance and incentives. Also, the Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership has become a key channel for accessing external funding for housing growth.

Local strategic context

At the local level, the overarching strategic plan for Rotherham is the Community Strategy 2012-15, which describes the vision for the future of the Borough and sets our key targets and actions that all partner organisations are committed to achieving. There are also links between housing and each of the Council's corporate plan objectives, in particular *making sure no community is left behind* and *helping to create safe and healthy communities*.

The other key strategic document at the local level is the Local Plan (former Local Development Framework), and the Core Strategy (the strategic part of the Local Plan)

states that Rotherham requires 850 new homes per year up to the year 2028. RMBC has also maintained its Local Investment Plan, an important document that sets out our geographical housing and regeneration investment priorities, and although much of this remains unfunded due to the widespread public spending cuts, delivery against the Plan remains one of our ten commitments.

More recently RMBC has focused its interventions on the most disadvantaged areas, as defined by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010. These areas have, in the main, suffered from long term deprivation and have featured amongst the worst in the country based on their rankings in the Index of Multiple Deprivation for many years.

In delivering the Housing Strategy we also need to make links with other important related documents, particularly:

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Rotherham's Warmer Homes Strategy
- Rotherham's Homelessness Prevention Strategy
- Rotherham's Supporting People Strategy
- Rotherham's Child Poverty Strategy

Areas of focus within the Housing Strategy part 1 (2013-16)

In recent years we have delivered major investments and improvements to Rotherham's housing, some of our key achievements being:

- Delivery of the Housing Market Renewal Programme
- 171 new homes in the town centre and 132 new Council houses built
- Decent Homes Standard achieved for Council's housing stock
- Number of empty Council properties reduced to an all-time low of under 150
- Number of households in temporary accommodation reduced to an all time low of 22

Despite severely restricted public finances, we have chosen to increase our investment in delivering new housing, improving our existing housing and improving services. This will help us to achieve our ambition of being the best housing service provider in the country. However we have many issues to tackle, and we need to focus our resources on the things that will have the biggest impact on Rotherham's residents, in particular the need to kick start the building of more affordable homes. For the next three years, we have expressed the areas we intend to focus on as 'ten commitments' to the people of Rotherham.

We have consulted widely to make sure these commitments reflect the concerns and priorities of Rotherham's people. Six monthly progress updates will be posted on the Council's website www.rotherham.gov.uk, and the next instalment of the Housing Strategy (part 2: 2016-19) will be produced in late 2015.

Commitment 1: We will deliver Council housing that meets people's needs

We want to provide the best housing services in the country. The demand for Rotherham's Council housing continues to increase, and as housing plays a key role in people's health and wellbeing, it is essential that we ensure our housing meets the needs and aspirations of its residents, now and in the future.

How we will deliver this commitment

We will ensure the Council's housing stock meets the highest standards:

- We will increase investment to ensure that we meet our tenants' expectations of high standards and all properties comply with the decent homes standard.
- We will identify and pursue every opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock, where funding is available (see commitment 5)
- With others we will deliver environmental and public realm improvements to ensure neighbourhoods are safe and attractive

We will acquire, build and encourage new housing provision, that meets the needs of Rotherham's changing population:

- We will ensure that new Council housing meets high design and sustainability standards and is provided in areas of high need
- We will work in partnership with housing providers to deliver more housing for disabled people and rural communities and more bungalows for small households as indicated by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- We will access new resources available via the Department of Health White Paper – Caring for our future: reforming care and support
- Households are generally smaller and the new benefit rules and our attempts to free up under-occupied homes mean that we need more one and two bedroom homes. We will deliver more of these homes, including where appropriate remodelling existing stock, while continuing to meet the requirements of larger households.
- We will investigate the viability of delivering homes of modular, off-site construction in Rotherham in order to cut down time and cost and ensure high quality

As well as delivering new housing, we need to free up existing Council housing by ensuring that the right people are in the right homes. We will do this by:

- Implementing a new policy to ensure we allocate homes in a more equitable manner to meet housing need and that we assist tenants that are 'under-occupying' properties larger than they need, to move to more suitable accommodation
- Helping Council tenants who wish to move to other areas, for example for employment reasons, to exchange with other tenants via the national Homeswapper database
- Implementing a new strategic tenancy policy, as required by the Localism Act 2011, that sets out information about the length of Council tenancies

Commitment 2: We will increase and improve the supply of affordable rented housing in Rotherham

'Affordable' housing is aimed at people who are unable to afford to buy or rent on the open market, and can either be social rented housing (from the Council or a housing association) or shared ownership housing. The need for affordable housing in Rotherham has grown dramatically over the past few years and will continue to grow, for many reasons, including the following:

- The population is growing, and ageing, and household sizes are becoming smaller, meaning more people than ever before are seeking a place to live
- The average household income is relatively low, and with the forthcoming changes to welfare benefits more families will find themselves living in unaffordable housing
- It is harder to secure a mortgage and large deposits are required, therefore more people will need to rent for longer, and more 'intermediate' housing is needed (commitment 10)
- The Right to Buy could lead to a decrease in the availability of Council housing.
- Many developments are no longer proving to be financially viable because of current weak housing market conditions. Development sites are stalled and developers are not able to build enough new homes to meet the local housing demand.
- The temporary three year measure introduced by Government to enable developers to renegotiate Section 106 agreements on stalled sites, may reduce the number of affordable housing units delivered in Rotherham

The Council has strong ambitions to kick start the delivery of new affordable homes in Rotherham by working with developers and housing association partners, and also to build more Council homes – and we have already made solid progress. In 2011, RMBC built 132 new Council homes through the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) new build programme, the first in over 20 years, which signalled the beginning of a new era with the Council in a strong, leading position to get Rotherham building again. We will continue to build new Council housing, however the funding regime has changed and we must therefore look to new ways of delivering more homes.

How we will deliver this commitment

Working in partnership to increase the supply of affordable rented housing

- We will build or buy at least 150 new Council homes between 2013 and 2015
- We will spend a minimum of £3m on acquiring new properties for Council rent, including Right to Buy buy-backs, where this fulfils the requirements of our new strategic acquisitions protocol
- We will work with private developers to assist them in building new homes on delayed development sites and maximise the number of affordable homes that can be delivered through Section 106 planning gain. In addition, we will work closely with housing association partners and other developers to deliver the National Affordable Housing Programme
- We will work with our partners to take every opportunity to attract new resources into the borough, primarily via the HCA's Get Britain Building scheme and other funding schemes available at the Sheffield City Region level
- We will continue to implement the next phases of the Waverley development, and to bring forward the proposed urban extension of Bassingthorpe Farm, by liaising with

communities and private developers to bring forward quality residential developments and support economic growth and employment in Rotherham

Managing existing homes better, to increase the amount of affordable rented housing

- We will keep the level of empty Council properties low maintaining top quartile performance
- We will work with private owners and housing associations to bring at least 18 empty homes back into use as social rented housing
- We will explore options to introduce a scheme to provide loans to private sector landlords to bring properties up to a decent standard in return for fixed-period social housing tenancies

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Commitment 3: We will deliver against our Local Investment Plan

Rotherham's Local Investment Plan (LIP) sets out our future ambitions and visions for sustainable place-making in Rotherham. It was produced in collaboration with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in September 2010, and while the financing regime has changed dramatically, much of the information is still very relevant. The areas identified in the LIP are still high priority for investment, however economic growth and employment will be key drivers to successful delivery. The LIP has three overall strategic objectives, to:

- Address twin challenges of growth and renewal in a difficult economic context.
- Make a significant contribution to the National Affordable Housing Programme
- Accelerate progress in the development of sustainable communities

The LIP contains 13 key projects. We will focus on the delivery of the boroughwide development strategy defined in the LIP, although many schemes will come forward without the level of public sector funding support initially anticipated. In the current economic climate it will be a significant challenge to maintain the depth and breadth of the LIP ambitions. Out of the 13 projects earmarked for intervention in the LIP, five urban areas have been shortlisted for infrastructure funding through the Sheffield City Region Infrastructure Fund (SCRIF), alongside two housing growth areas – Waverley and Bassingthorpe Farm - identified as having the potential to trigger important new employment opportunities and economic growth in Rotherham.

The full list of projects that have been submitted via the SCRIF are therefore as follows: Rotherham Town Centre (multiple sites), Chesterhill / Dalton, Bellows Road / Parkgate, Maltby, Waverley and Bassingthorpe Farm.

We will maintain our ambition to deliver regeneration activities to all prioritised areas in a challenging economic environment. One of the key ways in which we will do this is to make the best use of Council-owned and HCA-owned land and property assets, for example by offering discounts on land for development or allowing deferred payment.

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Commitment 4: We will make communities safer

Crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and concerns about being a victim are significant issues for many Rotherham residents, despite low recorded crime and ASB rates compared to national and sub-regional averages. Crime, ASB and feeling safe in their communities remain high on residents' lists of priorities.

The impact that crime and ASB has on the lives of vulnerable victims can be particularly harmful, and identifying and supporting those vulnerable individuals is a key priority for the Council and its partnership with South Yorkshire Police.

Our residents have the right to feel safe in their own home, on the streets and to live free from crime and ASB that affects their quality of life. Tackling these issues is vital to making people feel safer and improving their quality of life. We will work in partnership with the Police to provide a range of preventative and diversionary activities and initiatives – but where crime and ASB persist we will take strong enforcement action against perpetrators.

How we will deliver this commitment

- We will take firmer, faster and better coordinated enforcement action against the perpetrators of crime and ASB, and will keep people suffering from ASB better informed of the action we are taking
- We will ensure that private landlords are made aware of the responsibility that they have for reducing antisocial behaviour caused by their tenants
- In partnership with South Yorkshire Police we will introduce a new risk management framework to enable us to better support vulnerable persons and 'out of hours' we will carry out joint 'noise nuisance patrols to better support our communities
- We will take a zero tolerance approach to drug and alcohol related criminality in our communities, particularly cannabis cultivation in Council owned properties.
- We will ensure all Council staff and the Council's partner agencies are aware of their responsibility to report concerns regarding the safety and welfare of people to the appropriate Safeguarding service
- We will engage with all our communities to enable them to set up community and voluntary groups to improve their quality of life, and we will engage better with young people to enable us to target more effectively the resources that are available to support them.

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Commitment 5: We will work with partners to ensure everyone can afford to heat their home

In 2011 18.2% of Rotherham's households were living in fuel poverty, in particular people privately renting and those living in pre-1919 terraced properties. We must learn from research programmes such as the Keeping Warm in Later Life Project (KWILLT) and the Warm Homes, Healthy People programme, to improve the health and well-being of our most vulnerable residents. We will work with partners to reduce the risk of cold related illness and excess winter deaths, and identify ways of helping people out of fuel poverty by increasing the thermal efficiency of their homes and helping to lower fuel costs.

This Housing Strategy is aligned with Rotherham's Warmer Homes Strategy, whose five aims are:

- Work in partnership to deliver Rotherham's Warmer Homes Strategy
- Residents are aware of affordable warmth issues and services available
- Improve the energy efficiency of Rotherham's housing stock
- Health and wellbeing is improved through warmer homes
- Maximise income and minimise energy costs for all Rotherham residents

How we will deliver this commitment

- We will offer advice on energy efficiency, grants and schemes across the borough, but particularly for those most at risk of ill health as a result of cold homes
- We will use Community Energy Saving Programme funding to carry out energy efficiency measures in the most disadvantaged areas in the borough, and ensure this approach is continued once the Energy Company Obligations programme commences
- We will continue to improve our Council homes by replacing inefficient gas boilers and improving loft, and cavity insulation. In our non-traditional Council homes we will complete our programme of stock thermal insulation, and improve the energy efficiency rating of other hard to treat Council properties, ensuring all Council stock meets a minimum standard.
- We will ensure that any new Council houses we build after 2016 have reduced carbon emissions

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Commitment 6: We will help people to access the support they need

Good housing and support services for vulnerable people can assist people to live healthy, independent lives and reduce the pressure on families and carers. By providing the appropriate accommodation, advice and support or home adaptations, we can reduce costs to the NHS and social care. Housing related support provides prevention and early intervention to vulnerable and excluded groups to support the maintenance of independence and / or the move from supported or temporary accommodation to independence. This Housing Strategy sits alongside Rotherham's Supporting People programme whose main aim is to enable individuals to live independently within their home, preventing homelessness and social exclusion.

It is also essential, particularly in the current economic climate, that we provide advice and support to all people who are facing financial difficulty to the extent that they are at risk of homelessness. Central Government announced significant changes to the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Scheme in April 2011. Many aspects of Welfare Reform will have a direct impact on housing providers and those in social and private accommodation. These measures have the potential to lead to increases in homelessness, evictions, child poverty and debt. The Council has taken a pro-active approach to preventing people from getting into financial hardship and being at risk of losing their home. The Council carries out statutory homeless duties but 'prevention is better than cure', and so primarily focuses on preventing homelessness. The Council has seen positive results, however due to the radically changing culture and economic climate this work has to continue and is a key part of our Housing Strategy.

How we will deliver this commitment

Support to vulnerable groups

- We will deliver new housing, including specialist housing that is accessible and adaptable to accommodate people's changing needs and circumstances, and we will continue to resource the adaptation of existing homes
- We will support the most vulnerable tenants by making available or signposting people to services including a handypersons service to assist with minor fixings, fitting of telecare equipment, advice and information on safety / adaptations, support for hospital discharges, support to move home where appropriate, health and safety checks and falls prevention work
- We will make sure that hospital discharge, housing, homelessness and Supporting People services are well-coordinated, to ensure that all individuals who need housing related support have equal access to services
- We will improve the way we communicate with deaf people and other disabled groups and publicise available options for accessing services
- We will continue to support projects which refurbish hard to let and empty properties by utilising apprenticeship programmes for vulnerable people
- We will explore options for providing adequate provision to meet the housing and accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travelers, which we know to be nine pitches over the next five years

Support to people in financial difficulty and at risk of homelessness

- With partners we will develop and implement services to help sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness, including The Rent in Advance Scheme and paper bond schemes
- We will encourage homeless applicants to consider the opportunities that the private rented sector has to offer
- We will work to sustain tenancies particularly for young people aged 16-25 and work preventatively by providing information sessions on homelessness prevention for young people and those of school leaving age
- We will continue to work in partnership with local agencies to ensure that vulnerable tenants have access to affordable services, assistance and advice including advice relating to homelessness prevention and Welfare Reform

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Commitment 7: We will help people in our most disadvantaged communities

While this Housing Strategy and the Council's service provision apply across the whole Borough, some areas require more targeted intervention, if we are to achieve the vision of the wider 30 year strategy, of a 'smaller gap between the most and least disadvantaged neighbourhoods, so that all of Rotherham's people can live in safe, healthy and vibrant communities'.

Priority neighbourhoods have been identified using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 data. According to the IMD these are typically areas of poor housing and environment, low adult skills, poor educational attainment and participation, high disability rates, poor health, high levels of worklessness and crime hotspots. We know that to create sustainable communities in Rotherham we need to focus on our priority communities and take collaborative action. We have a detailed understanding of the nature and the scale of the challenges Rotherham faces in creating sustainable communities and where we need to focus our efforts in the future. This is directly linked to the sixth strand of Rotherham's Health and Wellbeing Strategy that focuses on reducing poverty in disadvantaged areas.

We recognise that not all areas require the same level of investment and intervention, and we may need to tailor services to suit local circumstances as an approach in one area may not be right for another. With limited resources we have to look to target services and resources in these priority neighbourhoods to ensure the gap between these areas and the rest of Rotherham is significantly reduced in the future.

- We know that 15% of the Borough's population live within these priority neighbourhoods
- There are high concentrations of vulnerable families / individuals (32%) in these areas
- To make a difference we need to join up our physical investment with our social investment to improve these neighbourhoods

How we will (in partnership) deliver this commitment

- We will carry out an analysis and needs assessment for each priority neighbourhood, produce an improvement plan and encourage our Partners to commit to shifting the balance of mainstream resources into these areas
- We will build on our existing operational and community engagement mechanisms to increase community confidence in the Council's commitment to improving disadvantaged areas
- We will encourage these neighbourhoods to access resources and services they need to improve their own lives, and ensure visible actions are brought about as a result
- We will increase community confidence by implementing a number of quick wins to tackle the most urgent issues, and maintaining regular communication with the residents

Commitment 8: We will engage with communities and individuals so that we have a better understanding of how to meet their needs and aspirations

RMBC has a strong track record in providing effective community engagement and empowerment opportunities to tenants and residents. Key democratic channels are Area Assemblies, and Council tenants and leaseholders can get involved via Area Housing Panels and the Quality and Standards Challenge group. The Localism Act 2011 further emphasises the importance of community empowerment and ownership, and we must continue to strengthen existing channels and find new ways of empowering residents.

How we will deliver this commitment

Communicating and engaging more effectively

We will work to understand our communities and who lives in them so that we can engage with communities and individuals in a way that suits them best. This will help us to deliver services that meet people's needs and aspirations. We will do this by:

- Being creative in the ways that we engage with people to ensure that all people, from all backgrounds and abilities have the opportunity to take part
- Engaging with children and young people, as future householders of the borough
- Working to understand how people wish to be communicated with and making sure all our communication is of good quality, easy to understand and available in a variety of formats to meet people's needs
- Providing good quality, meaningful feedback on consultations that clearly indicate what actions will be taken and when they can be expected

Empowering people

- We will support people to become an essential part of the housing decision making process within the Council, through consulting widely with our tenants and residents and acting on what we are told
- We will encourage people to become good citizens by taking personal responsibility and having pride in their area
- We will help support community groups who wish to make a difference in their area
- We will provide information to communities to enable them to explore innovative solutions to low cost home ownership such as Community Land Trusts, housing co-operatives and Mutual Home Ownership
- We will continue to support RotherFed and strengthen partnership working with the Voluntary and Community sectors.
- We will create an effective network of influence which links tenants and residents groups, Area Housing Panels and our challenge group, into an effective mechanism for monitoring, shaping and improving our services.

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Commitment 9: We will help to improve Rotherham's private rented sector

Private renting has grown considerably in recent years, with approximately 3.6 million households (16.5%) in England now living in the private rented sector (PRS). In Rotherham, approximately 8% of households rent privately, and the PRS is increasingly being seen as an alternative to both home ownership and to social housing. The Coalition Government housing agenda is focusing on increasing the private rented sector, and the role of the PRS is also set to expand to assist in accommodating homeless people, as RMBC has agreed to adopt the option introduced by the Localism Act 2011. It is therefore important that we provide support to the sector to ensure homes are well-managed and free from hazards.

We are already ensuring that minimum standards of accommodation are achieved through the provision of Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) inspections, and referring private rented tenants to the Warm Front scheme until the scheme closes in December 2012. However, despite our interventions, we know that 24.2% of vulnerable private sector households in Rotherham are living in non-decent housing, and that 22.8% of people privately renting are living in fuel poverty.

How we will deliver this commitment

- We will work with landlords to introduce schemes designed to improve the quality of the sector and use the full range of tools and enforcement powers available to us when these are needed to ensure improvement
- We will explore options to provide loans to private sector landlords to improve the standard of their properties, in return for five year social housing tenancies
- We will endeavour to work with private owners to repopulate the town centre and bring back into use empty flats above shops, and convert empty offices into homes
- We will establish an overcrowding policy for the private rented sector
- We will develop a Landlord Resources page on the Council web site
- We will endeavour to support landlords by advising them of housing-related support services, identifying resources to enable us to continue to host the Landlords' Forum, publishing regular landlord newsletters and leaflets advising tenants of their responsibilities
- We will promote and support local Rent in Advance loan and paper bond guarantee schemes
- We will evaluate the recommendations of the Montague report (August 2012) to identify opportunities to increase the amount of market rent housing in Rotherham

Once finalised, rest of page to be filled with appropriate graphics and / or consultation 'soundbites' at the design stage

Commitment 10: We will help people who wish to own their home

Nationally, home ownership has seen a steep rise over the past 60 years – from 32% in 1952 to 66% in 2010 – fuelled by favourable economic trends and sustained by government policies. The long term desire for home ownership remains strong in new households with 59% of private renters and 23% of social renters expecting to buy a property in the future. The Government is helping social housing tenants and other first time buyers to own or part-own their home through the Right to Buy and shared ownership schemes. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to afford to buy a home due to high prices and difficulties in securing mortgage finance.

We are already working with our partners to promote the various affordable home ownership products FirstBuy, NewBuy and HCA funded shared ownership. Equally we are trying to help those facing financial difficulty that already own part or all of their home. By doing more to help people who wish to own their own home we can:

- Free up social and private rented accommodation for people who need it
- Help people to access affordable home ownership and enjoy the benefits this can offer
- Provide people with information and support to help them to avoid financial hardship and losing their home

How we will deliver this commitment

- We will act as enablers and use our analysis of local demand to influence housing association partners and private developers to deliver appropriate new affordable and open market home ownership schemes, and to market them effectively
- We will help to ensure that all groups can access information about shared and home ownership, including disabled people and people with learning disabilities
- We will promote affordable home ownership products to people on the housing register
- We will sell at least ten plots of Council land to people who wish to build their own homes as this may be a more affordable option for some people than buying on the open market, and we will be a point of contact for custom and self builders

Once finalised, rest of page to be filled with appropriate graphics and / or consultation 'soundbites' at the design stage

Finance

Further details of each of the actions in this strategy are included in the Housing Strategy action plan. Some of them will be funded from within existing budgets and staff resources, whereas others require additional funding.

Housing Revenue Account Reform has given Rotherham greater control over our housing budget and how we spend it. The Council has projected the money available over the next 30 years, mainly through rental income, and set out its investment priorities in the Housing Revenue Account business plan. These priorities include:

- Maintenance of housing stock
- Local authority new housing
- Improving the energy efficiency of housing stock
- Remodelling housing stock to meet changing need
- Environmental improvement works such as paving and lighting

The Council is able to borrow against the future rental income and many of the larger projects will be funded in this way. Priority is being awarded, in the business plan, to increasing investment in the Council stock for example increasing the repairs and maintenance budget by £1m per year, and increasing capital investments to external works such as roof replacement to £6m in 2012/13 and £11m in 2013/4.

A number of the recent national policy changes will have an impact on the business plan, particularly Welfare Reform which will affect tenants' ability to pay rent, and the new Right to Buy (RTB) scheme which is likely to result in more Council properties sold, and therefore reduced overall rental income. There will be opportunities however to deliver new Council housing with the increased capital receipts, albeit Council homes lost through the RTB will not be replaced on a one-to-one basis.

Projects that focus on the private sector, i.e. home owners and private rented accommodation, are generally financed through the Council's General Fund.

There are some sources of external finance we can bid for that are controlled either by the HCA or the Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership, such as

- Getting Britain Building
- Growing Places Fund
- Sheffield City Region Infrastructure Fund

We will identify and pursue every potential funding opportunity to help us to deliver our commitments, including delivery of projects identified in the Local Investment Plan.

We also receive New Homes Bonus, which is an annual grant paid to local authorities based on the number of new homes and the number of empty properties brought back into use during the year, and includes an 'affordability bonus' for new affordable housing.

Some pots of Government money are not directly accessible by the Council, but can be accessed by residents, community groups or landlords, and the Council in its strategic and enabling role will provide support, where possible, to enable people to access this, for example Green Deal funding.

Guide to terms used in the Housing Strategy (A-Z)

Affordable housing: Aimed at assisting households who are in housing need and unable to afford open market housing. It can either be social rented housing (from the Council or a housing association) or intermediate housing (low cost home ownership). More information can be found on the Council's website.

CERT and CESP funding: Carbon Emissions Reduction Target and Community Energy Saving Programme funding to improve the energy efficiency of housing. More information can be found at www.decc.gov.uk.

Community Land Trust: Non-profit, community-based organisations run by volunteers that develop housing, workspaces, community facilities or other assets that meet the needs of the community, are owned and controlled by the community and are made available at permanently affordable levels.

Comprehensive Spending Review: The HM Treasury led process that allocates public expenditure, the current CSR fixes spending budgets for each Government department up to 2014/15.

Custom Build: The government has announced a funding pot to assist Developers, housing associations and community groups to bring forward "Custom Build" housing schemes, whereby individuals or groups will commission or build their own homes either as part of a larger site or on small areas of land.

Decent Homes Standard: Housing standard designed to measure the condition of public sector stock, achieved for RMBC's housing by December 2010.

Energy Company Obligations (ECO): This funding is raised by energy companies from their customers' fuel bills and is spent on carbon reduction measures. ECO will subsidise the green deal by tackling fuel poverty and hard-to-treat properties, where the works would cost more than the savings made.

FirstBuy: A new Government-sponsored shared equity scheme to help first time buyers onto the property ladder – for more information see <http://www.firstbuyscheme.org.uk>

Fuel poverty: Defined by the Government as a household that needs to spend more than 10% of household income to heat their home

Get Britain Building: Funding programme set up by the HCA in November 2011, which aims to 'unlock' delayed development sites to restart construction activity and deliver thousands of new homes.

Green Deal: Government initiative that is designed to encourage business and home owners to employ more green technologies in their properties. Costs are repaid through energy bills over a period of time.

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA): Joins up the delivery of housing and regeneration under one roof, bringing together the functions of English Partnerships, the investment functions of the Housing Corporation, the Academy for Sustainable Communities, and key housing and regeneration programmes previously delivered by Communities and Local Government, including the Thames Gateway, Housing Market Renewal, Decent Homes. See www.homesandcommunities.co.uk

Houses in multiple occupation (HMO): Dwellings with more than one household living in them.

Housing Market Renewal Programme: A programme (now ended) to rebuild housing markets and communities in parts of the North and the Midlands where demand for housing is relatively weak and which have seen a significant decline in population, dereliction, poor services and poor social conditions as a result.

Housing Revenue Account reform: Change to the housing finance system which was formerly based on a complex subsidy system controlled by central Government. Councils are now able to keep their rental income, service their own debt and control housing finance.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) establishes the current and future health and social care needs of a population, leading to improved outcomes and reductions in health inequalities. The JSNA informs the priorities and targets set by Local Area Agreements, leading to agreed commissioning priorities that will improve outcomes and reduce health inequalities throughout the Borough.

Local Development Framework (LDF): A portfolio of documents comprising local development and planning documents, the statement of community involvement, a local development scheme and an annual monitoring report. This is now known as the Local plan.

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP): A partnership between local authorities and businesses to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local area.

Local Investment Plan (LIP): Key document produced in collaboration with the Homes and Communities Agency in September 2010, that sets out Rotherham's investment priorities for housing and regeneration

Localism: Localism Act 2011 covers four main areas - new freedoms and flexibilities for local government, new rights and powers for communities and individuals, reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective and reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally.

Local Strategic Partnership: Multi-agency body of local service providers, the private sector and the broader local community with the objective of agreeing a holistic approach to solving problems with a common vision, agreed objectives and pooled expertise.

Micro generation: The small-scale generation of heat and electricity by individuals, small businesses and communities to meet their own needs, the term is mainly used for environmentally conscious approaches that aspire to zero or low carbon footprints

Montague Report: Report published in August 2012 on the review of barriers to institutional investment in private rented housing, which sets out a series of recommendations for local authorities to consider.

Mutual Home Ownership (MHO): Form of tenure that seeks to increase the number of affordable intermediate market housing. In MHO, residents pay for the build costs but not for the land, which is owned by a Community Land Trust. The homes remain affordable in perpetuity.

NewBuy: New scheme designed to help people overcome the deposit gap for new buyers – for more information see <http://www.newbuy.org.uk>

New Homes Bonus: An incentive scheme to encourage house building by offering the local authority extra money for every newly built home and empty properties brought back into use.

Paper bond guarantee schemes: This is where a private landlord agrees to a 'paper bond' rather than a deposit.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS): Regional level planning frameworks introduced in 2004 and revoked in July 2010.

Rent in Advance loan: The Rent in Advance Scheme is where loans are offered to potentially homeless people to assist in accessing accommodation in the private rented sector. More information can be found on the Council's website.

Right to Buy (RTB): Government scheme to enable Council tenants to purchase their home at a discount.

RotherFed: Organisation bringing together Rotherham's tenants and residents www.rotherfed.org.uk

Rotherham housing intelligence report: Report that sets out key facts about housing in Rotherham such as housing needs survey results, market values, housing needs in different areas etc. Available on the Council's website from November 2012.

Rotherham Partnership: See Local Strategic Partnership

Rural Exception Policy: Planning policy which will allow more new homes to be built for local people in villages with a population of less than 3000 people.

Section 106 planning gain: Through negotiation, a planning condition can be imposed whereby a proportion of new homes must be made available for affordable housing.

Secured by Design: Housing design standard based on a crime-prevention initiative which supports the principles of 'designing out crime'

Shared ownership: Affordable home ownership option where people own part of the property and pay rent on the other part to a housing association or developer.

Sheffield City Region (Local Enterprise Partnership): Collaboration between businesses and the local authorities of the Sheffield City Region, which are Barnsley, Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales, Doncaster, North East Derbyshire, Rotherham and Sheffield. Its objective is to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth within the area. See www.sheffieldcityregion.org.uk

Sheffield City Region Infrastructure Fund: Recyclable fund which enables the City Region to make strategic infrastructure investments to create jobs and economic growth, and utilises the new funding flexibilities available to local areas.

Under-occupation: When people are living in homes that are larger than then need for the number of people in the household.

Universal Credit: See Welfare Reform

Warm Front scheme: Government grants for insulation, scheme comes to an end in December 2012.

Welfare Reform: Major changes to the way welfare benefits are provided, including Universal Credit which combines all benefits, including housing benefit / local housing allowance, into a single payment.

Linked Rotherham documents

- Housing Strategy action plan
- Annual Housing Intelligence Report
- HRA 30 year Business Plan
- Homelessness Strategy
- Revised Allocations Policy
- Strategic Tenancy Policy
- Empty Properties Policy
- Housing Assistance Policy
- Community Strategy
- Corporate Plan
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Warmer Homes Strategy
- Supporting People strategy
- Child Poverty Strategy
- Local Plan / Core Strategy (2009–2026)
- Local Investment Plan

Contact information

Strategic housing and Investment Service
Strategichousing@rotherham.gov.uk / 01709 334970

If you require this document in a different format please call the number above to discuss your requirements.

This draft was issued by RMBC's Strategic Housing and Investment Service in October 2012

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER

1. Meeting	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2. Date	Cabinet 29th October 2012
3. Title	Community Energy Saving Programme
4. Directorate	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This report informs Cabinet Member of a programme of energy saving measures being implemented for free to some of our most vulnerable private and council sector households living in our most deprived neighbourhoods. The scheme is called the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) and is funded by Energy Providers who have an obligation to reduce carbon emissions from residential property. The report sets out which neighbourhoods are benefiting from the investment, the qualifying criteria, how households are consulted and timescales for delivery.

A key benefit of the Council enabling this activity to take place, is that it directly tackles our corporate priority of reducing poverty in the most deprived neighbourhoods. Some of the key outcomes of the schemes to date are;

- 395 properties have already benefitted from CESP energy efficiency improvements and 653 further properties will be completed during 2012
- £2.7million of energy efficiency measures have been provided to date at no cost to the Council
- Approximate annual household savings on energy bills have been estimated as being £400 - £550.

The report also highlights the transition from CESP to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and how RMBC intends to utilise the ECO scheme to provide additional carbon saving opportunities that benefit Rotherham householders.

6. Recommendations

That Members;

- **Note the delivery of energy efficiency measures to both private and council homes, which has brought about a reduction in fuel poverty in Rotherham's deprived neighbourhoods and its direct impact on reducing poverty in the Borough**
- **Support the continued influencing and enabling role of the Council to maximise the household take up of energy efficiency measures**
- **Support a 'roll out approach' to extending energy efficiency installations to other neighbourhoods and in particular deprived neighbourhoods across the borough utilising the ECO, which will take over from CESP in 2013.**

7. Proposals and details

7.1 Background

The Council has previously delivered a range of energy efficiency programmes across the Borough, which were funded by energy provider obligations and implemented through Government backed carbon reduction schemes e.g. Warm Front. These schemes were complemented with HRA funding in the form of Decent Homes and non-traditional housing capital programmes.

The CESP has been created as part of the Government's Home Energy Saving Programme and its aim is to reduce carbon production through the installation of energy efficiency measures to domestic dwellings. The funding has to be targeted towards residents suffering from fuel poverty and the funding stipulates that CESP can only be spent in the top 10% most deprived neighbourhoods. Using this criteria Rotherham has 21 areas, consisting of 13,400 households, where funding can be applied. All works must be completed before 31st December 2012.

The measures being offered are;

- Solid wall insulation (External and Internal)
- Replacement gas boiler (if current boiler is G Rated)
- Loft Insulation (either complete or top-up as required)
- Draught proofing

CESP schemes are delivered by energy providers usually in collaboration with a construction partner e.g. EDF and Keepmoat, however the Council also has an important role. The delineation of roles can be summarised as follows;

The role of the energy provider and / or partner

- Procurement of the contractor
- Consultation with the community (see also 7.3)
- Applying for planning approval/building regulation consent
- Producing a schedule of works
- Delivering the programme

The role of the Council

- Identifying communities that have the correct attributes for successful scheme implementation
- Influence energy providers/constructors to appraise neighbourhoods and scheme viability
- Promote the benefits of the scheme and increase confidence within the community
- Provide links between the energy provider/partner and the community

7.2 CESP schemes in Rotherham

As stated above, the Council has an important role in identifying suitable deprived areas. The deprived areas that would most benefit from CESP are those that have high numbers of private sector households, which have not benefitted from previous energy efficiency improvements (the Council's Decent Homes programme), have solid walls and where there are high occurrences of fuel poverty.

These areas are also attractive from an energy provider's perspective as they;

- are within the top 10% deprived in the borough
- offer high levels of carbon savings
- have at least 25% of the households participating in the scheme
- are deliverable before January 2013, when CESP will be superseded by ECO.

Current schemes being carried out are in the following areas;

Ferham (completed September 2012)

The scheme was led by British Gas using their preferred main contractor, SERS, who installed the energy efficiency measures. The area consists of 602 households of which 515 were suitable for improvement. The scheme commenced late 2011 and is now finished. Of the suitable properties identified, 395 households have received energy efficiency improvements.

Eastwood Village (ongoing)

Again, the scheme is being led by British Gas using their preferred main contractor, SERS, who will install the energy efficiency measures. The area consists of 608 households of which a minimum of 300 properties are suitable and have been signed-up for improvement. The scheme commenced September 2012 and it will be completed prior to Christmas 2012.

Meadowbank / Masbrough / Town Centre / Eastwood (ongoing)

These four schemes are being led by Keepmoat and EDF Energy. Keepmoat will act as the main contractor and install the energy efficiency measures. The four areas consist of 2,879 households of which 296 properties are suitable and have been signed-up for improvement within the available timeframe. The schemes commenced in September 2012 and they will be completed prior to Christmas 2012.

Maltby (to commence October 2012)

This scheme is being led by Acrobat Carbon Services and nPower. Local Maltby based contractors will install the energy efficiency measures. The area consists of 621 households of which 66 properties are suitable and have been signed-up for improvement within the available timeframe. The scheme will commence in October 2012 and it will be completed prior to Christmas 2012.

Household Participation

Where there are low numbers of take-up, this is due to;

- the availability of suitable properties
- the construction time available to complete the works before 31st December 2012
- a number of householders have chosen not to participate in the scheme

While the Ferham and Maltby schemes have almost exclusively improved private sector homes where fuel poverty is most prevalent, the other CESP programmes will treat a combination of private and Council owned properties.

7.3 Consultation

Projects funded through CESP have to be completed by December this year; it is understood that there may be opportunities for 'carry over' into the ECO programme but energy providers, and their contractors, are ensuring timely completion by Christmas.

To this end, a brief but exhaustive consultation programme is undertaken to ensure that those householders living in the hardest to treat properties are included first;

- a) An introductory letter is delivered to all properties within the qualifying geographic area
- b) RMBC tenants, where they are predominantly miscellaneous Council properties, are consulted prior to including their properties in the scheme
- c) A series of drop in sessions have/will be held, staffed by RMBC Officers, Energy Providers and their support teams, to inform and encourage take-up of the scheme
- d) Depending on the number of attendees this may be followed up by a series of home visits to ensure no home owner is excluded from these potential improvement works
- e) The designated contractor commences a rolling programme of surveys on properties owned by residents/tenants who agree to participate in the scheme

To manage the programme on site, the energy providers/organisations employ a Resident Liaison Officer to inform residents of the intended programme, arrange access, resolve queries and ensure satisfaction upon completion.

7.4 Summary

Facts and figures

- 395 properties have already benefitted from CESP energy efficiency improvements
- £2.7million of energy efficiency measures have been provided to date at no cost to the Council
- Additional numbers of properties to receive energy efficiency improvements before 1st January 2013 is 653
- Approximate annual household savings on energy bills have been estimated at being £400 - £550.

Key benefits to Rotherham

- Reduces poverty in our most deprived neighbourhoods
- Tackling/reducing fuel poverty and health inequalities
- Offers energy efficiency measures to both private and public sector properties
- Stimulates employment and the local economy
- Improves investor confidence in our most deprived communities

7.5 Green Deal and ECO

CESP, within Rotherham, is being utilised to reduce fuel poverty and health inequalities to households living in deprived areas and its contribution is recognised in the Council's draft Warmer Homes Strategy. The CESP scheme ends in December and it is understood that ECO, integrated within the Governments Green Deal package, will take over.

The ECO will focus on providing energy efficiency measures to low income and vulnerable householders in our top 15% most deprived neighbourhoods, (CESP only worked in the top 10%) and those living in 'hard to treat' properties.

Green Deal commences in October 2012 and will enable householders to access energy efficiency improvements irrespective of where they live. Improvements are paid for via their utility bill. The scheme is planned to be cost neutral to the householder, as monthly repayments are met from the resultant energy bill savings from efficiency improvements.

7.6 Next Steps

We will continue to work with the energy providers to complete the ongoing CESP schemes and evaluate their outcomes.

In preparation for the implementation of the Green Deal and the ECO, the Council have established a Green Deal Working Group consisting of Officers from Audit & Asset Management, Commissioning Policy & Performance and Housing & Neighbourhood Services. Their role is to understand the workings of Green Deal and ECO and develop a strategy to maximise the benefits of these new schemes for Rotherham residents. The aim being to;

- Achieve maximum householder participation
- Regenerate our 11 most deprived neighbourhoods and other deprived areas.
- Tackle fuel poverty
- Address inconsistencies in the approach of different installers (a problem identified when delivering the CESP)
- Maximise job creation, training and economic regeneration outcomes
- Develop schemes which take a whole area approach as opposed to small scale developments and pepper potting.
- Promote consistently good and effective neighbourhood liaison

To achieve this, the group will be considering the merits of establishing a Green Deal / ECO partnership with one or more energy company, installer consortiums.

8. Finance

Under CESP and ECO all financial risks sit with the energy providers and the Council does not have to offer any financial contribution towards any of the schemes currently being implemented. However, there is a cost associated with officer time given up to assist with identifying suitable schemes, community consultation and design/planning advice. Consideration will need to be given to whether or not any future developments could wholly or partially underpin some of these associated costs.

Efficiency savings to date, based on the Ferham scheme, total £2.7million and this is money which Rotherham householders have not had to find to improve the thermal efficiency of their properties. Approximate annual household savings on energy bills following the installation of the measures have been estimated at being £400 - £550.

9. Risks and uncertainties

The main risk for the CESP schemes not progressing is lack of take up by the private householders because for the scheme to be viable, 25% of householders are required to participate. It is therefore imperative that effective consultation is carried out (as listed above), which highlights the benefits of the programme to the householder. Experience of the first scheme, carried out in Ferham, shows that householders are wary of a 'free' offer and it is recognised that householders may choose to sign-up after the commencement of the scheme. To accommodate this, each of the work programmes includes an amount of

flexibility to allow additional properties to be accommodated within the timeframe, ensuring completion by 31st December 2012.

In respect of future schemes, which will be undertaken through the ECO programme, the lessons learnt from this programme are as follows;

Work proactively with energy providers to maximise benefits to householders

Energy Providers will only consider working with a council if the carbon savings are attractive to them. A programme of intervention is designed by the energy provider/organisation and the Council has little or no say in what is offered. It is therefore necessary for the Council to have schemes on the shelf ahead of the introduction of ECO to engage existing and future energy providers.

Provide an offer of support for residents outside of targeted geographic areas

It is necessary to promote the energy efficiency schemes and the opportunities that they offer within geographic areas. Council co-ordination can ensure that residents in the private sector who sit outside the geographic boundaries can still receive advice and assistance via existing and future energy saving programmes.

Planning and urban design is necessary

Opportunities can be lost if the Council is not involved early on in planning the intervention. A close working partnership will ensure that the implementation phase is not delayed by highway or planning concerns.

Community engagement is of paramount importance to the success of the scheme

Promote the success of previous schemes and organise open events to allow residents to understand the proposal, inspect materials and finishes and raise questions. Ensure that enough time is offered for people to sign up to participate.

10. Background papers and consultation

DECC, 2011, Community Energy Saving Programme,
http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/funding/funding_ops/cesp/cesp.aspx

11. Contact details

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ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	29th October 2012
3.	Title:	Review of Communal Cleaning Service to Flats
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

The Council delivers a weekly cleaning service to internal communal areas of council owned apartment blocks.

Due to a number of operational and service quality issues arising, a review has been undertaken of the service. The review highlighted a number of areas of concern and set out proposals for improvement, which are detailed in the report.

The report proposes changes to the cleaning specification and the method of service delivery, subject to completion of soft market testing and consultation with leaseholders.

6. Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member agrees to:

- **Consult tenants and leaseholders on arrangements to carry out communal cleaning to flats including**
 - **Proposals to changes standards and the organisation of services**
 - **Proposals to revise charging arrangements**
- **a soft market testing exercise to establish whether better VFM can be obtained**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Background

There are 2338 apartments within 326 council owned blocks across the borough, which are accessed via communal entrances, internal hallways and stairwells. The Council is responsible for managing, maintaining and cleaning these areas. A cleaning service is provided on a weekly basis.

The communal cleaning service is currently delivered on behalf of Housing Services by Facilities Services. The service consists of 13 staff working various hours/work patterns totalling 111 hours per week, with associated costs of £139k per annum.

The current specification consists of approximately 20 minutes of cleaning per block per week (based on a three storey block of 13 flats). The basic cleaning specification is as follows:

- Brush and Mop hard floor areas
- Dust/wipe fixtures and fittings
- Remove any litter from communal areas

The cleaning service currently functions on the following basis:

- **Mobile Operation**
A mobile cleaning team deliver cleaning services to 78 units (24% of the total) where water is not available within the block or any of the adjacent blocks. Water is obtained from a container within a vehicle, which transports the operatives and cleaning equipment to site.
- **Fixed Operation (with water supply)**
Cleaners travel to and operate on site, with access to a water supply within secure cleaners cupboards in individual blocks. 90 units (28% of the total) receive cleaning services in this way.
- **Fixed Operation (without water supply)**
158 units (48% of the total) operate on a fixed basis but without a landlord water supply within the block. Water is obtained from a nearby block and carried in.

The current cleaning service is basic and generates poor customer satisfaction, both from tenants and leaseholders.

Recently, a number of operational and service quality issues have arisen, which has prompted a service review. The key findings of the review are detailed below.

7.2 Cleaning service review

The key issues identified by the review with regard to the cleaning service are as follows.

- Not all blocks of flats are provided with a cleaners cupboard containing landlord hot/cold water supply. As a result, cleaners are carrying water some distance between blocks which have a supply to those which haven't one. This has raised health and safety at work issues as well as service quality issues.
- The current cleaning specification is very basic and requires revision. It currently does not include an annual deep clean, window cleaning or cleaning of communal entrance doors and screens.
- Communal areas are in need of a general scheme of investment and improvement. In many cases, the quality of finishes to floor areas and stairwells is poor, with some floor surfaces being bare concrete. Investment in these areas would assist in delivering an enhanced and more hygienic cleaning finish.

Each of these issues are dealt with in turn below and recommendations presented to address them.

7.2.1 Access to water supply

Cleaning operatives require access to a clean (preferably hot) water supply. However, the majority of blocks are not equipped with a water supply at all. In some cases this is addressed through mobile working arrangements, but in others cleaners are 'bucketing' water (often cold or lukewarm at best) between blocks, often over some distance. This presents poor working practices and is not conducive to a quality cleaning service.

The Health and Safety Team have raised concerns with this operation and the potential for prosecution and compensation claims for non compliance with the following primary health and safety legislative requirements:

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Management of Health & Safety regulations (MHSAWR) 1999
- (COSHH) 2006 Legislation
- Approved Code of Practice and Guidance L8-"Legionnaires' disease; the control of Legionella bacteria in water."

The Health and Safety Team are satisfied with the working arrangements for the mobile element of the service and the blocks of flats with a direct water supply. However they have recommended that, should the current fixed location working arrangements remain, a water supply should be provided in all blocks in order to comply with the legislative requirements outlined above.

7.2.2 Cleaning Standard

The current cleaning service is considered to be poor by customers and requires improvement. Their issues include:

- The condition of the communal entrance doors and door screens which are not included within the current cleaning contract specification.
- Dirt and grime is ground into the floors and walls which cannot be removed with a brush or mop.

- The general physical condition of the communal areas is poor and requires significant investment. Issues include stained flooring, damaged floor coverings, cracks to walls and ceilings and poor standard of decoration.
- Window cleaning was suspended and has not been re-instated. It was suspended to create budget headroom to introduce an annual deep clean of communal areas, but this was never initiated and customer feedback to the proposal was not positive.

Window cleaning within the communal areas will be re-instated.

Discussions have been held with Facilities Services with regard to enhancing the cleaning specification and the likely additional costs of service provision as detailed below.

In order to address the health and safety and customer satisfaction issues, the following options have been considered.

Option A - Continue with current mobile/fixed cleaning service.

This would require the installation of a water supply, sink unit, drainage and hot water boiler within the 158 blocks on the fixed cleaning service, which currently have no water supply.

The existing water supply arrangements within the other blocks have been inspected and are in a reasonable condition. However, the majority of the units would require a general scheme of refurbishment, including new fittings and replacement hot water boilers.

We would remain liable for the ongoing maintenance of landlord facilities, associated utility costs and annual Legionella water testing.

The 78 apartment blocks served by the mobile team would continue to operate on that basis with no further work required.

This option would address the issues identified in 7.2.1 however the cleaning standard would remain as it is currently, with no improvements.

Option B - Provide an enhanced service on a fully mobile basis.

The mobile cleaning service would be rolled out Borough wide to cover all 326 apartment blocks. Cleaning operatives would have access to vehicles with a hot and cold water supply and storage facilities for cleaning equipment.

Existing landlord water supplies would be decommissioned and services isolated to minimise/remove risks and management and maintenance costs.

Facilities Services have indicated that the delivery of the service on this basis would require 4 dedicated full time staff to deliver cleaning services, equating to 148 hours staff time per week.

This would provide an additional 37 hours of cleaning per week (compared to current arrangements of 111 hours) to provide more flexibility to re-visit blocks as required and to accommodate enhancements to the cleaning specification including the introduction of the following additional services:

- Weekly clean to communal doors and screens
- An intense deep clean to address issues which cannot be resolved with a brush and mop including machine cleaning of floors and high level dusting. This would be undertaken annually where power is available or twice per annum with battery powered equipment if power is not available.

The enhanced specification would address some of the concerns raised by tenants and leaseholders. However, it may not be fully appreciated by customers until the communal areas have received investment works to improve their overall appearance.

This option would involve a change to service delivery and consequent changes to staffing arrangements, requiring necessary consultation with staff, HR and unions. Facilities Services are aware of this and have had initial discussions with HR colleagues. It is suggested that staff affected by the proposal would be offered a new position within the mobile team, an alternative position within the cleaning service or a compensatory payment, where only a few hours are worked.

Subject to staff consultation, the mobile service could be implemented within a 4-6 week period following necessary approvals.

Having considered both options, it is recommended that Option B is implemented as the preferred option.

7.2.3 Soft market testing

Prior to implementing any proposed changes, it is recommended that soft market testing be undertaken with alternative service providers. This will enable alternative approaches to service delivery to be identified and explored, ensure that the proposals within the report demonstrate the most effective approach to service delivery and solid value for money.

7.2.4 Linkages to estate caretaking services.

In addition to communal cleaning services, tenants and leaseholders within apartment blocks also benefit from estate caretaker services. These services are contracted to and delivered by our contract partners Wilmott Dixon Partnerships (WDP) and Morrison Facilities Services (MFS). The scope of work delivered is generally environmental stewardship works to communal grounds around apartment blocks, including litter and rubbish removal, removal of weeds and self set trees etc but excluding cyclical grounds maintenance. The latter is provided by Streetpride on behalf of Housing Services.

This area of service delivery is also currently being reviewed with our contract partners.

Both reviews provide an opportunity for consideration of the potential for joint service delivery arrangements. This will be explored further as part of the soft market testing process.

7.2.5 Investment Requirements

The communal areas are generally in a poor condition and require significant investment to improve their overall appearance.

The standard of cleaning is affected by the condition of the blocks as the majority have not received investment i.e. decoration and floor covering replacement etc for a number of years. Therefore, it is imperative that investment works are aligned with recommendations to improve the cleaning standard so that significant improvements can be realised and appreciated by tenants and leaseholders.

The Strategic Housing and Investment Service are currently undertaking condition surveys within the communal areas to determine the investment requirement and priority phasing for future years. Surveys are scheduled for completion by April 2013.

A £100k budget is contained within the approved Housing Investment Programme for 2012/13 for replacement floor covering and decoration. The programme for 2012/13 will include works to Beeversleigh which has been prioritised for investment based upon its current condition and repairs issues. Further investment detail is awaited subject to completion of the current survey programme. Based upon the number of blocks of flats within the borough, the level of annual investment identified may need to be revisited to ensure that the delivery of investment does not become too protracted. Improving the general fabric and condition of the communal areas is an essential part of the strategy to improve standards of cleaning.

7.2.6 Service Charge Issues

The communal cleaning service is financed from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Leaseholders receiving the service are subject to a service charge. However, the leaseholder service charge is lower than their actual proportionate service cost. The introduction of an enhanced service specification (and increased service cost) would widen that gap.

Tenants receiving the service are not subject to a service charge. In addition, the service does not benefit council tenants residing in other property types who do not receive the service. As such, communal cleaning services are being subsidised by the general tenant base through the HRA.

A previous Audit Commission inspection report highlighted that the cost of communal services should be charged to tenants who benefit from the service rather than all tenants within the borough (who do not benefit from services provided) for fairness and consistency.

Currently 171 (7%) of the 2338 flats are held by leaseholders. The total income generated by the communal cleaning leaseholder service charge is £3235 per annum. However, the proportionate cost (based on 7%) of the current service cost is £10,175 per annum. Therefore the HRA is currently subsidising the leaseholder proportion of costs by approximately £6940 per annum. Also, it has become apparent that the charge has not been added to approximately 32 properties that benefit from the service.

In order to address the issues identified, we would need to adjust the leaseholder service charge appropriately which would equate to an average cost of £59.50 per annum based on the current level of service and costs.

The average leaseholder service charge is currently £20.95 per annum therefore this would equate to a 284% increase. If Option B is pursued, the proportionate service costs to be recovered from leaseholders would be £13,440 per annum.

Implementation of any proposed changes to service delivery and service charges will require formal consultation with leaseholders.

There is also an option to introduce a service charge to tenants who benefit from the service. This would address the issue of the service being subsidised by council tenants who do not directly benefit from the service.

Consideration should therefore be given to initiating a review of service charges overall for tenants and leaseholders to reflect the service provided by the communal cleaning, but perhaps also grounds maintenance and caretaking services. This would ensure that tenants and leaseholders who directly benefit from these services are charged for them rather than the costs being subsidised by the HRA and therefore tenants generally.

7.2.7 Housing Benefit issues.

Enquiries with colleagues in the Revenue & Benefits service has confirmed that charges relating to the cleaning of communal areas (halls, passageways, stairwells) and cleaning of windows to communal areas are eligible for Housing Benefit purposes.

However, further information on proposed charges will need to be shared with Revenue & Benefits for them to give a final view.

8. Finance

The contract cleaning budget for 2012/13, based upon current service delivery arrangements and cleaning specification is £139,128 including window cleaning.

Option A- Retaining current operational cleaning arrangements and installing the additional water supplies would result in the following costs by comparison:

- Revenue- £189k per annum
Fixed and mobile cleaning contract costs- £139k (same as it is currently) and annual management/maintenance costs, associated with water

supply £50k (which is not currently undertaken and is a mandatory requirement to address health and safety issues)

- Capital- £206k
Installation of additional water supplies and refurbishment of existing supplies

Option B- The total estimated costs for implementation of an enhanced mobile service delivery are as follows:

- Revenue- £192k per annum
Mobile cleaning contract costs including an annual deep clean, bi-annual window cleaning to communal areas and weekly cleaning of communal areas, doors and screens.
- Capital- £10k
Decommissioning of existing landlord facilities

The above costs include communal window cleaning on a six monthly basis with associated costs of £9k per annum

Implementation of the recommended option will cost an additional £53k per annum which is unbudgeted for 2012/13 therefore it is recommended that the deep clean is not undertaken until 2013/14 this would reduce the costs for the remainder of the financial year.

£100k has been allocated within the 2012/13 Housing Investment Programme for refurbishment of communal areas of flats. A further £100k per annum has also been committed for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

We are currently in potential breach of health and safety regulations with regard to the issue of water supplies which needs to be addressed immediately.

Legionella water testing is not being undertaken currently. This is a serious concern which needs to be addressed immediately. Alternatively, if the recommended option is implemented then we will need to arrange for water supplies to be isolated to resolve this issue.

Implementation of the recommended option may result in staff redundancies.

If a review of service charges is not undertaken then the service will continue to be subsidised by council tenants who do not benefit from the service.

The previous Audit Commission inspection of 2010 Rotherham Limited criticised the organisation for not implementing a fair and equitable charging structure.

There may be insufficient financial resources to increase the budget therefore the recommendation may depend on the outcome of a review of service charges.

Consultation would need to be undertaken with Leaseholders (and tenants within flats receiving the service) in relation to any proposed changes to service charges.

Details of any proposed service charges to tenants would need to be shared with Revenue & Benefits colleagues. The level of charge and how it has been arrived at will need to be provided, so that it can be determined whether the charge is being set at a reasonable level. If a charge has not been levied previously, to ensure that Revenue & Benefits are satisfied that there is no double provision. That is, to ensure that the charge has not been taken into account in base rents and then also introduced as a service charge.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The proposals support the following 'Plan on a page' corporate priorities and achievements:

- Helping to create safe and healthy communities
 - People feel safe and happy where they live

- Improving the environment
 - Clean streets

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Prior to any proposed changes being implemented, formal consultation will be required with leaseholders.

Consultation will be undertaken with the Quality and Standards Challenge Group.

Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods- 2nd March 2009- De-pooling service charges

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