

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS**

**Venue:** Eric Manns Building, 45 Moorgate Street,  
Rotherham

**Date:** Monday, 1st March, 2010

**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. Minutes of meetings held on 30th November, 14th and 21st December, 2009 and 4th January, 2010  
(see Minute Book dated 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2010, Pages 56-75J)
4. Fees and Charges 2010/11 - Housing and Neighbourhood Services (Pages 1 - 10)
5. Under Occupation Policy (Pages 11 - 23)
6. Area Assemblies Devolved Budget Project Proposal (Pages 24 - 26)
7. 2010 Rotherham Ltd Improvement Plan Monitoring Report (Pages 27 - 51)
8. Update on the Homes and Communities Agency Single Conversation and Revised Housing Strategy (Pages 52 - 56)
9. Exclusion of the Press and Public  
Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs indicated below of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.
10. Non-Traditional Properties Investment (Pages 57 - 62)  
(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial/business affairs of any person (including the Council)).

11. 2010 Rotherham Ltd Severance Packages/Downsizing  
(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial/business affairs of any person (including the Council)).

<b>ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER</b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1st March, 2010</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Fees and Charges 2010/11 - Housing and Neighbourhood Services</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Adult Services</b>

### **5. Summary**

This report proposes 2010/11 fees and charges for Housing and Neighbourhood Services activities including animal health, food, health & safety, houses in multiple occupation, pest control, pollution control, stray dogs and weights and measures.

The level of fee and charges recommended in the report reflect both corporate guidance regarding any required increase i.e. 1% and also nationally prescribed fee levels e.g. pollution control regulation. The weights and measures fees are set following national LACORS guidance which proposes a radical review of fees this year to reflect the delivery of the verification service provided. The water fees are set in accordance with the charges set by the Health Protection Agency.

### **6. Recommendations**

- **That Cabinet Member agrees the proposed fees and charges for 2010/11, as set out in this report, with effect from 1st April 2010.**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

Legislation provides powers of discretion for local authorities to make charges for specific services. This report proposes the level for the 2010/11 fees for services where charges are currently made across Housing and Neighbourhoods Services. A further report will be submitted to the Licensing Committee on licensing activities falling within that Committee's terms of reference.

Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 provides further powers for Best Value local authorities in England (includes RMBC) to make charges for discretionary services providing income from the charges does not exceed the service cost, taking one year with another. Reports will be submitted where it is considered appropriate to invoke these powers

Proposals are as follows and a schedule of proposed 2010/11 fees and charges is set out in Appendix 1.

### **Animal Health**

The Council licences riding, animal boarding and breeding establishments, pet shops, dangerous wild animals and performing animals primarily to ensure animal welfare conditions are met. Regulation for some premises incorporates inspection undertaken by a veterinary surgeon, the costs of which are charged in addition to the licence fees. Increases of approximately 1% are recommended.

### **Bereavement Services Bereavement Services**

Cabinet Member will be aware that the Bereavement Services Partnership commenced on 1st August 2009. The fees charged by Dignity Funerals Ltd for the bereavement services it provides are reviewed in April each year. This review is currently in progress, this involves the benchmarking of the proposed fees against those charged by comparable authorities within the region, and a comparison against the national average. A further report will follow once this exercise has been completed.

### **Food, Health & Safety**

The Council registers premises for activities such as ear piercing, electrolysis, tattooing and acupuncture primarily to check and maintain appropriate health & safety standards. Increases of 1% are recommended for all chargeable services provided by this team. The fees for the water samples however are set to cover the fees charged by the Health Protection Agency. The fee for next year has not been received to date and therefore the amount charged would need to cover their proposed fees.

### **Weights & Measures and prescribed poisons**

Fees are charged for the testing and stamping (verification) of weights and measures used for trade and the sale by retail of certain strong chemicals prescribed by legislation as poisons. Most (about 90%) of local authorities set fees in accordance

with annual guidance from the Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS), the remainder tend to have high local demand for verification and offer reduced rates.

Additionally, there is agreement between authorities within the Yorkshire and Humber area to set fees in accordance with the LACORS guidance for equipment tested under the Measuring Instruments Directive. This year LACORS recommend that the fee reflects the hourly cost based on the provision of a single weights and measure inspector. LACORS have calculated this fee based on average salary levels, plus all necessary on-cost for the delivery of the service. Guidance is available that set out the methodology used to calculate the amount to be recovered. Based on this calculation, it is proposed that the fee for weights and measures work be based on an hourly rate of £51.13 for a weights and measures inspector and £30.66 for a technical officer / assistant. An additional fee may be charged to cover the cost of hiring specialist equipment (such as the heavy test unit).

### **Houses in Multiple Occupation**

Fees for the mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) were established in June 2006. There are over 200 HMOs in the Borough. However, the law does not impose mandatory licensing to all such premises, as there are a number of exceptions. Currently there are 5 Licensable HMOs which have applied for Licenses in Rotherham. Each License lasts for a period of 5 years with no further requirement for fees to be paid.

A fee is payable to the Local Authority in respect of licenses for houses in multiple occupation once every five years. Owing to the limited numbers of mandatory licensable premises in Rotherham, it has not been anticipated that this would amount to a substantial income. The Government have suggested in guidance that the minimum fee is £350. Officers have studied current guidance on the setting of fees and comparative fees in neighbouring Councils. The proposals are to increase the fees to be more in line with neighbouring Council's fees including Barnsley at £300, Doncaster at £585, and Sheffield at £520. Nevertheless such an increase will have little effect on overall income due to the limited number of premises that this fee is applicable to. The specific details of changes to these charges are attached in Appendix 1

### **Pest Control**

Pest Control fees are charged for the provision of domestic treatments of pests ranging from Public Health pests such as mice and cockroaches, through to nuisance pests such as wasps and ants. The Pest Control team also provide service to businesses in the form of contracts or one off service provision. These fees are set at rate in accordance with the hourly rate fee levels.

Unlike Private Sector companies and a number of other Local Authorities Rotherham's Pest Control service offers free treatment for rats to all residents of the borough.

Comparison of fees and charges in the ongoing value for money exercise show that the current level of charging remains competitive when compared to other local authorities and private enterprise. However, a further increase on the reviewed fees of April 2009 is liable to have a negative effect on the competitiveness of the service, with a consequent impact on income.

Pest Control fees and charges are being increased in order to take account of the findings of the value for money review of the service that show that the current level of charging remains competitive when compared to other local authorities and private enterprise. Accordingly an increase in the region of 2% across the board is proposed. The specific details of changes to these charges are attached in Appendix 1

### **Pollution control**

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 and Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999 provide for the setting of fees and charges for Local Air Pollution Control (LAPC), Local Air - Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (LA-IPPC), and Local Air Pollution Prevention and Control (LAPPC) at levels that will recover costs of local authorities of implementing the system.

Fees for EPA Part A2 and Part B processes have been set in line with statutorily prescribed DEFRA guidance and national fees. This national approach ensures a consistency of fees and charges to business across the country.

Unfortunately the effects of the current economic climate are having a negative impact on industry within Rotherham and a number of the processes that fall within the charging regime have closed or have such reduced business that they no longer reach the threshold to require permitting. There is a risk that further businesses will be effected during the coming year with the consequent risk that total income will be adversely affected despite the increase in charges.

### **Stray Dog Fees**

The responsibility for stray dogs during office hours and out of hours lies with local authorities. Section 68 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 transferred the out of hours responsibility for stray dogs from the police to local authorities.

The current fee charged for a person to recover a stray dog from the Council contracted kennels is calculated as follows

Standard Charge	£25.00 (statutorily prescribed)
Handling Charge	£17.00
Dog per day	£7.00

For example dog collected same day as seizure £49.00 then £56.00 and so on for every day up to 7 days. If the person is on benefits a £15.00 reduction is applied.

Fees are currently higher than adjoining Councils consequently any significant increase would affect Rotherham residents in a disproportionate manner compared to residents close by but within the boundaries of Sheffield, Barnsley or Doncaster.

## **8. Finance**

Proposed fees and charges for 2010/11 meet established requirements for the setting of revenue budgets and are estimated to reduce the gap that has arisen in former years between actual and budgeted income. Where service take up and income is lower than anticipated compensatory savings will be made.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

The level of fees and charges place a burden on local businesses and may, if set at unreasonably high level impede economic growth and/or become subject to challenge. In the event that income budgets are not achieved, it will be necessary for services to make compensatory savings.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

The Services provided reflect commitment to local priorities. Key strategic areas, in particular are indicated as follows:

### **a. Community Strategy**

The Services contribute to the themes and priorities of "Rotherham Safe" and "Rotherham Achieving". In addition, actions deliver against the cross cutting "Sustainable Development" theme.

### **b. Corporate Plan**

The Services contribute to the following corporate priorities "Rotherham Safe", "Rotherham Alive", and "Rotherham Achieving".

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

### Background Papers

- LACORS Guidance Fee on verification costs 2010/11

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**APPENDIX 1**  
**Community Protection Unit**  
**Proposed Fees and Charges 2010/11 (excluding VAT)**

<u>Service</u>	<u>2009/10 (£)</u>	<u>2010/11 (£)</u>
<b>HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION</b>		
First Application	460	500
Subsequent Applications	360	400
<b>PEST CONTROL</b>		
<b>Domestic Treatments</b> (all prices are subject to VAT)		
Rats	Free	
Mice (up to 3 visits)	57	58
(any subsequent requested mouse visit)	13	14
Insects excluding cockroaches	57	58
All other treatments including cockroaches (per hour)	57	58
Call out fee paid for visit where treatment cancelled by customer	41	42
Out of hours fixed fee:		
Evenings and Saturday	62	63
Sunday & Bank Holiday	72	73
<b>Commercial premises</b> (all prices are per hour and subject to VAT and materials costs)		
All treatments and proofing	57	58
Out of hours:		
Evenings and Saturday	87	88
Sundays and Bank Holiday	112	113
<b>Other charges (Single fees)</b>		
Call out fee paid for visit where treatment cancelled by customer	41	42
Surveyors charge	57	58
Other Service Provision:		



<b>Service</b>	<b>2009/10 (£)</b>	<b>2010/11 (£)</b>
Self-Help Ant Spray	7	10
Client Missed Appointment	27	50
Treatment Penalty (For further treatments where repairs have been reported and repairs not done – in lieu of legal proceedings)	114	150
<b>POLLUTION CONTROL</b>		
Standard process	1,561	<b>1579</b>
Additional fee for operating without a permit	1,124	<b>£1137</b>
Reduced fee activities (Except VRs)	146	<b>£148</b>
PVR I & II Combined	243	<b>£246</b>
Vehicle Refinishers (VRs)	342	<b>£346</b>
Reduced fee activities additional fee for operating without a permit	67	<b>£68</b>
Mobile screening and crushing plant	1561	<b>£1579</b>
for the third to seventh applications	932	<b>£943</b>
for the eighth and subsequent applications	472	<b>£477</b>
Where an application for any of the above is for a combined Part B and waste application, add an extra £297 to the above amounts		
Reduced fee activities are: service stations, vehicle refinishers, Dry Cleaners and small Waste Oil Burners under 0.4MW		
Standard process LOW	731	739 (+99)*
Standard process MEDIUM	1098	1111(+149)*
Standard process HIGH	1653	1672 (+198)*
Reduced fee activities Low/Medium/High	75 149 224	76 151 227
PVR I & II Combined Medium Component	65**	108 216 326
Vehicle Refinishers Low/Medium/High	216 345 518	218 349 524
Odorising of natural gas Low/Medium/High	75 149 224	76 151 227

<b>Service</b>	<b>2009/10 (£)</b>	<b>2010/11 (£)</b>
Mobile screening and crushing plant Low/Medium/High	611 978 1467	618 989 1485
for the third to seventh authorisations Low/Medium/High	364 583 874	368 590 884
for the eighth and subsequent authorisations Low/Medium/High	187 299 448	189 302 453
* the additional amounts in brackets must be charged where a permit is for a combined Part B and waste installation Where a Part B installation is subject to reporting under the E-PRTR Regulation, add an extra £99 to the above amounts		
<b>Transfer and Surrender</b>		
Standard process transfer	160	162
Standard process partial transfer	471	476
New operator at low risk reduced fee activity		75
Surrender: all Part B activities	0	0
Reduced fee activities*: transfer	0	0
Reduced fee activities*: partial transfer	44	45
<b>Temporary Transfer for Mobiles</b>		
First Transfer	50	51
Repeat Transfer	10	10
Repeat Following enforcement or warning	50	51
Substantial change s10 and s11		
Standard process	994	1005
Standard process where the substantial change results in a new PPC activity	1,561	1579
Reduced fee activities*	97	98
* Reduced fee activities are:- Service Stations, Vehicle Refinishers, Dry Cleaners and Small Waste Oil Burners under 0.4MW		
Part A2		

<b><u>Service</u></b>	<b><u>2009/10 (£)</u></b>	<b><u>2010/11 (£)</u></b>
Application	3181	3218
Additional fee for operating without a permit	1124	1137
Annual Subsistence LOW	1368	1384
Annual Subsistence MEDIUM	1524	1541
Annual Subsistence HIGH	2208	2233
Substantial Variation	1294	1309
Transfer	222	225
Partial Transfer	660	668
Surrender	660	668
<b>STRAY DOGS</b>		
Handling Charge	17	17
Dog per day	7	7.50
<b>ANIMAL HEALTH</b>		
Animal Boarding Establishments	214	216
Riding Establishments	214	216
Performing Animals	131	132
Dog Breeding Establishments	131	132
Dangerous Wild Animals	131	132
Pet Shops	131	132
Zoos (First licence 4 years)	936	945
Zoos (Renewal licence 6 years)	1384	1398
<b>FOOD, HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>		

<b><u>Service</u></b>	<b><u>2009/10 (£)</u></b>	<b><u>2010/11 (£)</u></b>
Ear-piercing – PREMISES	109	111
Ear piercing - person carrying on the business	22	23
Tattooing – PREMISES	161	163
Tattooing - person carrying on the business	22	23
Acupuncture – PREMISES	136	137
Acupuncture – person carrying on the practice	22	23
Electrolysis – PREMISES	136	137
Electrolysis – person carrying on the practice	22	23
Water Standard	28	30
Water Additional	32	34

<b>ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER</b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1st March 2010</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Under-Occupation Policy</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Programme Area:</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Adult Services</b>

**5. Summary**

Under-occupation policies can help free up family housing and thereby reduce problems with over-crowding and homelessness by promoting a more efficient use of the Council's housing stock. This report seeks approval to introduce under occupancy and housing assistance incentives to encourage tenants that are under occupying large Council houses to downsize.

**6. Recommendations**

- **TO CONSIDER AND AGREE THE OPTIONS TO INCLUDE IN AN UNDER-OCCUPATION POLICY AS IDENTIFIED IN SECTION 7.5**
- **REVIEW THE EFFECTIVENESS AND THE NEED TO OFFER INCENTIVES IN 12 MONTHS**

## 7. Background

**7.1** The purpose of a policy on under-occupation would be to recognise and provide for those who already want to move to a smaller home, and to encourage others to consider such a move at an earlier stage than they might otherwise do.

**7.2** Currently in Council accommodation in Rotherham there are 142 households that are under-occupying 4 bedroom houses and 5025 under occupying 3 bedroom houses. Of these 2538 households have applied via the housing register for a transfer to a smaller home. Since December 2008, only 18 under occupied households living in family houses have actually transferred to a flat or bungalow. This is because overall the demand for accommodation is extremely high and most certainly outweighs supply. In total there 7981 single applicants on the housing register wanting to move to smaller accommodation such as a flat.

**7.3** National evidence has suggested that the majority of under-occupiers who would be willing, or are looking, to move from their existing home would only do so if they were offered a two-bedroom house or bungalow. This is backed up by a research project undertaken by the London Research Centre (now the Greater London Authority) and Heriot-Watt University. The research looked at the strategies which social landlords can adopt to manage under occupation in their stock and what works in assisting tenants to move to a smaller home if they want to.

**7.4 What incentives do we currently offer?** – No financial incentives are currently offered however the Allocation Policy does award Priority status to households who wish to downsize to a flat or bungalow. Since December 2008 there has been 120 households awarded Priority status to enable them to transfer to a flat or bungalow.

**7.5 Implementing an enhanced under occupancy policy to encourage downsizing – what could the policy could include?**

It is suggest that the policy would be implemented in a phased approach. This will enable us to monitor the effectiveness to see what this does and if the policy doesn't work we can reconsider, in 12 months the need to offer incentives or not.

**7.5.1 Better provision of information** - Providing good quality information to tenants about the availability of suitable housing and the process of securing it can help encourage people in under occupancy situations to secure smaller properties. The better understanding people have about the availability of properties and how the process of receiving offers, viewing and moving is likely to work, the better the chance that they will be able to make the right decisions for them and to make a successful move. Many landlords provide leaflets about downsizing. There is an example at Appendix 1. **This option is supported at this time.**

**7.5.2 Amend the Allocation Policy to allow under occupiers of 4 bedroom houses to downsize to 2 bedroom houses and permit more than 2 refusals** - In Rotherham more people might want to move from accommodation with four bedrooms into smaller two bedroom houses as often one-bedroom bungalows are largely not in high demand as they are too small. **This option is supported at this time.**

**7.5.3 Offer a cash incentive scheme of either £1000 or £1500 per household to encourage tenants to downsize.** Cash incentives, payment of expenses and help with removal arrangements are unlikely to generate interest from anyone who is not already thinking about moving, but they can play an essential role in helping to overcome practical and financial barriers. Leeds City Council offers under occupier's cash incentives of £1000 per bedroom they relinquish which has led to 80 households downsizing. However, it may seem wasteful to offer incentives to people who would have moved anyway, especially if they are going to a choice property. Nevertheless some people who would like to move are deterred by the practicalities, the upheaval, and by lack of money. The size of payments may be affected by whether the cash is intended as a gesture of goodwill, as compensation for trading down or as an incentive.

Small payments can create a lot of work and still leave tenants out of pocket: The practicalities of cash payments also need to be considered. For example: should receipts be required, should deduction in any rent arrears or Housing Benefit overpayments be made before releasing the cash. For some tenants, one of the motivations for trading down might be the desire to pay off arrears and they may still have some money left to help with moving expenses. **This option is not recommended at this time but may be reconsidered dependent upon the success of the other options.**

**7.5.4 Offer a Mutual Exchange incentive of £1000 or £1500 to a tenant who is under occupying that results in a move that alleviates overcrowding** – The mutual exchange service is in a transition of moving from the old Councils system to a new innovative mutual exchange system called HOMESWAPPER. There are 2,120 households registered on the old mutual exchange system to move and 61 tenants have moved over and registered with the new HOMESWAPPER service, of these 11 are under occupied and 4 households are overcrowded. HOMESWAPPER matches individual households to properties that meet their needs into the areas of their choices. Where a tenant secures a move to a smaller property (downsizes) and the exchange assists a family who are locally or statutory overcrowded a proposed grant payment to be made to the under occupier. The added benefit of facilitating moves through mutual exchanges is the reduction in associated voids costs. **This option is not recommended at this time but may be reconsidered dependent upon the success of the other options.**

**7.5.5 Direct payment of expenses and removal costs;** This method is not as easy to administer and there is little control of spend as each move would incur a variance in moving costs. However the direct payment of expenses can help to persuade people to accept a property that they might otherwise

have rejected as they know that they won't be out of pocket as all expenses will be met. Allowing more time to move and making arrangements on their behalf, so help with the move can ease the pressure on someone who is uncertain whether to go ahead maybe more beneficial. The total estimated cost of moving can be as little as £500 but realistically can range between £1,500 and £3,200. Staffing resources to administer the direct payments also need to be considered. The cost of moving home can include some or all of the following:

- ❖ removal costs (either using a removal company or hiring a self drive vehicle) (estimated between £100 and £400 depending on distance, the size to the property and number of boxes required )
- ❖ packing (if required) (£500)
- ❖ disconnection and reconnection charges for gas, electricity, telephone, cooker, washing machine and other appliances (including TV and satellite aerials) or replacement (e.g. where someone has a gas cooker but is moving to a property with electricity only) (£300)
- ❖ alteration or purchase and fitting of carpets and curtains (£600 for carpets and £170) curtains supplied by Furniture Solutions ,
- ❖ charges for post redirection (£50)
- ❖ redecorations (it may be useful to identify this element of the payment separately and pay it only when appropriate).(£1500 supplied by Furniture Solutions)
- ❖ Offer 2 weeks rent free to allow more time to move in (£80)

**This option is not recommended at this time but may be reconsidered dependent upon the success of the other options.**

**7.5.6** Suggestions from customers and elected members can also be embedded into the overall policy. These are:

- Work with internal and partner agencies such as Children and Young People Services, Adult Social Services and Age Concern to encourage full occupation and promote the advantages. **This option is supported at this time**
- Undertake chain lettings . **This option is supported at this time**
- Legal succession to a tenancy can result in under occupation. For secure tenants, when a successor is a family member other than a spouse, award Priority Plus status to the successor to offer suitable alternative smaller accommodation. . **This option is supported at this time**
- Two tenancies for one - some three bed properties are occupied by a parent with an adult son or daughter. If they are happy to split up, in may be worth offering two one bed/bedsit properties, rather than that just one two bedroom property. **This option is supported at this time**
- RSL and Council New Build accommodation catering specifically for under occupiers. This accommodation is likely to be one or two bed roomed (depending on the needs and requirements that have been identified). It may be built to a higher than usual specification and it may be located in areas that are particularly popular with under occupiers. Adopt a Local letting Policy giving preference to Council tenants who are under



occupiers, who have a proven record of being a “Good Tenant” i.e. no tenancy breaches such as rent arrears or anti social behavior. **This option is supported at this time.**

- Promote positive features of sheltered housing. Some under occupiers are unlikely to ask for sheltered housing when discussing a transfer, however they may be persuaded to consider it if the advantages are promoted. **This option is supported at this time**

## **7.7 - The Advantages of introducing an under occupancy policy are:**

### **(i) A personalised approach**

- Tenants appreciate a single point of contact, someone who knows their case. Home visits are particularly useful for getting to know the tenant, discussing their requirements, providing information in person and assessing the current property. The visit is an opportunity to persuade people to broaden or narrow their requirements – they are more likely to do this if given a realistic idea of their chances. Specialist staff can be very effective in increasing the numbers of moves by discussing with tenants their requirements, explaining what help is available and finding suitable properties. Providing information about the under occupation scheme, the allocations system and the process of moving.

### **(ii) Reduces overcrowding and homelessness**

- Under-occupation policies can help free up family housing and thereby reduce problems with over-crowding and homelessness by promoting a more efficient use of the Council’s housing stock. Under’ occupation can be measured by comparing the number of bedrooms currently rented by an existing tenant with the minimum number we would be prepared to offer if we were to let them another property.

### **(iii) Reduces the number of households on the housing register**

- Where a tenant secures a mutual exchange with the added benefit of the reduction in associated voids costs.
- More family homes are made available to family households on the housing register

### **(iv) Reduces usage of temporary accommodation**

- Meeting urgent housing need for larger homelessness families will reduce time periods spent living in temporary accommodation, whilst waiting for suitable housing.

### **(v) Savings for the customer**

- Often tenants will pay a lower rent when they move to a smaller home
- Energy saving with reduced bills for gas and electric consumption
- Smaller space to maintain and clean

## 7.8 The implications of introducing an under occupancy policy are:

### (i) Increased associated voids costs

- Encouraging more transfers will mean an increase in void repair costs and void rent loss.

**(ii) Need for staffing resources to administer the policy - If we increase advice/guidance and change the Allocation Policy staffing resources would not be required at this time.** The option to defer introducing additional staffing resources would be pending consideration of the affordability and an evaluation of the success in six months time. However if the under occupancy policy hasn't been successful then staffing resources who specialise in dealing with under occupiers would play a very important role in encouraging under occupiers to move. This would be by spelling out the options, encouraging more people to consider different areas or property types, giving confidence, overcoming all the obstacles to a move, and helping to find the right property. They can also take a pro-active role in identifying suitable voids for under occupiers and in approaching people who have not yet registered an interest in moving. Tenants may appreciate having a single point of contact, someone they can trust who understands their circumstances and aspirations. The job combines well with other responsibilities – e.g. advising older people or offering advice regarding mutual exchanges.

Some of the responsibilities of this role could also include:

- Notifying services such as gas, electricity, water, telephone, and council tax and Housing Benefit sections.
- Arranging for other services to be transferred (e.g. community alarm, meals on wheels etc).
- Ensuring that meters are read before the tenant moves out. Arranging for disconnection and reconnection of appliances (e.g. cookers, washing machines, TV aerials/dishes).
- Help to arrange the fitting carpets and curtains.
- Informing friends, family, doctor, dentist, bank, insurance companies etc of the new address.
- Arranging for redirection of mail.
- House clearance/disposal of furniture:
- Arranging for the collection of unwanted furniture or other items, or recommending a charity or commercial firms.
- Help with sorting what to take and what to have removed.
- Collection and disposal of rubbish.

Other possible responsibilities of a specialised officer could include:

- Identify and contact potential transfer applicants
- Carry out home visits to under occupiers who have already applied to move – discuss their preferences; advise on the chances of rehousing; provide information about the housing options, the under occupation

scheme and the process of moving, advise about the costs of the move, the help that is available, and how and when payments will be made.

- Keep in touch and check for changes in circumstances.
- Encourage and maintain contact with their families, where appropriate.
- Where necessary, liaise with social services and occupational therapists to establish any support needs.
- Assess the property being vacated – its suitability for meeting housing shortages, with or without extensive repairs/adaptation.
- Identify potential properties for under occupiers from present and forthcoming voids.
- Accompany tenants to view properties on offer
- Arrange practical assistance with the move
- Arrange and authorise payment of cash incentives/expenses.
- Liaise with maintenance staff about agreed improvements or decorations.
- Monitor progress and expenditure.
- Visit successions to assess whether it is appropriate to recommend a move.
- Maintain regular contact with 2010 Rotherham Neighbourhood staff, to ensure that they are well informed about the under occupation policy and in a position to offer initial advice before referring tenants to the scheme.
- Assist with marketing of the scheme and the development of new initiatives.

The appointment of an officer to undertake this role would not be required at this time if we are merely altering the policy and offering enhanced guidance.

### **8. Finance**

8.1 By focusing on meeting urgent housing need for larger families will reduce time periods in the Priority and Priority Plus Group which in turn will reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation. This will enable a cost saving to the Council as it is likely to allow a reduction in the temporary units of accommodation currently needed for homelessness families.

8.2 Encouraging more transfers will mean an increase in void costs.

8.3 There are resource implications to fund the scheme the table below details estimated level of funding for each option for 100 properties. Other Local Authorities take different approaches such as some offer incentives and some rely on the provision of advice. Leeds cash incentive scheme is funded by having a separate Code in the HRA Supervision & Management with an annual budget of £100k. The ALMO pays the tenant and recharges the HRA through the liaison officer. Dewsbury have found that the provision of advice and support offered to customers through staffing resources has had more successes than cash incentives. The provision of 1 member of staff at a cost of £28K is a more cost effective option.

	Minimum £	Maximum £
Under Occupancy Grant £1000 each	<b>100,000</b>	<b>100,000</b>
Under Occupancy Grant £1500 each	<b>150,000</b>	<b>150,000</b>
*Direct payment of expenses and removal costs, plus staffing costs.  *There is limited control of spend as each move would incur a variance in moving costs	50,000 19,621 <b>Total £69,621</b> (minimum £500 per property )	320,000 19,621 <b>Total 339.621</b> (maximum £3,200 per property )
Dedicated under occupancy housing options officer Band G	<b>28,000</b>	<b>28,000</b>
Mutual exchange grant resulting in downsizing	<b>100.000</b>	<b>100,000</b>

## 9. Risks and Uncertainties

9.1 The current demand for social rented housing is high which translates to pressures on the housing register. We have also seen an increase in households in urgent housing need who are affected financially by the economic downturn.

9.2 Increased void levels depending on the demand to downsize.

9.3 Direct payment of expenses and removal costs; has no control of spend as each move would incur a variance in moving costs.

## 10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

10.1 The Allocation Policy is delivered at a local level and via the Key Choices Property Shop and Neighbourhood Offices, which supports the Council's commitment to providing greater accessibility to services, meeting social needs by helping to ensure a better quality of life, improving fair access and choice, protecting, keeping safe vulnerable people and specifically addresses the diversity agenda, by tailoring services to the needs of hard to reach groups.

## 11. Background Papers and Consultation

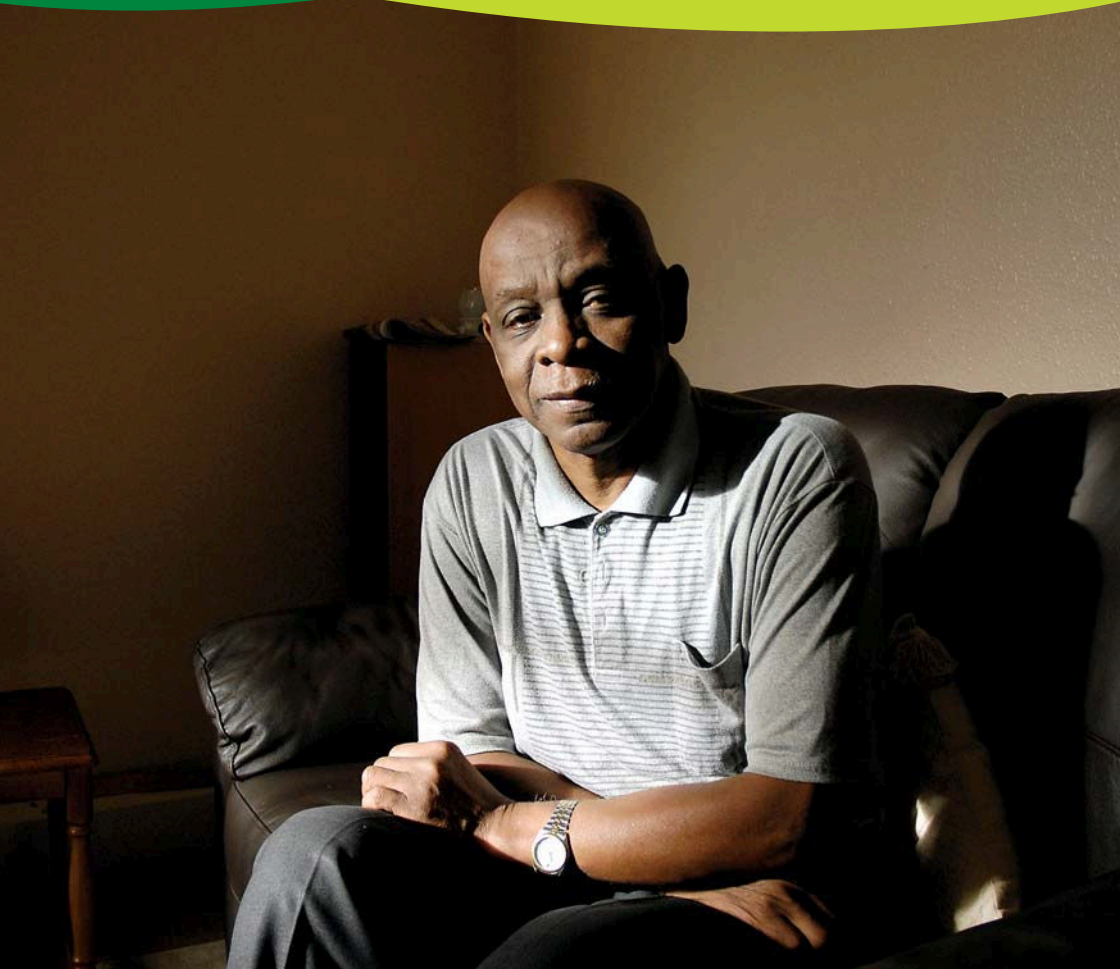
- The Allocation Policy (Revised July 2009)
- Local Lettings Policies (Revised July 2009)
- The Homelessness Act 2002.
- Housing Act 1996, Parts VI and VII
- The Code Of Guidance in Allocation [CLG 2009]
- The Homelessness Code of Guidance
- Managing under-occupation: A guide to good practice in social housing, DETR, April 2001

**Contact Name:**

*Sandra Tolley, Housing Choices Manager, Neighbourhood and Adult Services,  
Tel: 01709 (33)6561, Email [sandra.tolley@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:sandra.tolley@rotherham.gov.uk)*



# Under Occupiers scheme



Under Occupiers scheme

## Is your home too big? Are you living on your own after many years?

Whatever your change in circumstances, we can help you to find a home that better suits your needs.

A smaller home is easier to clean and manage. You could pay less rent, council tax and heating bills.

You may also be entitled to £500\* for each spare room that you give up and up to £300 to assist you with your removals.

As an under occupier you will have a higher priority on the transfer list.

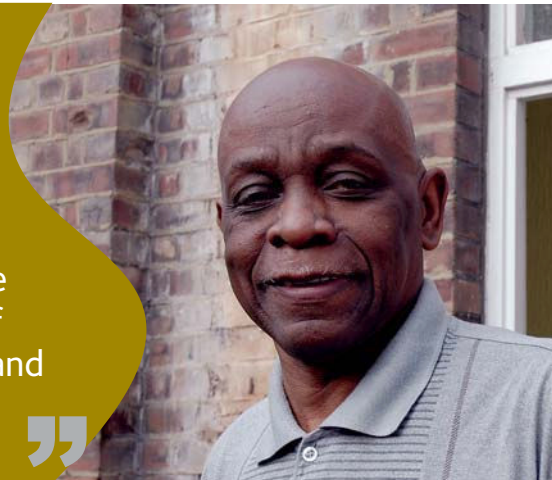
If you have a child 18 or over still living with you, we may consider offering them a home (find out more from the Rehousing Team).

“

I'm really happy in my new flat. I had to have an operation on my knee and needed to move to somewhere on the ground floor. I contacted the council and within a week of looking at this flat my wife and I had moved in.

-Joe Bramble

”



If you want to move we can provide you with practical advice and support throughout

- we will show you how to bid for a smaller property on the Home Connections site
- we can accompany you on viewings
- we can advise you on clearing your property of unwanted furniture and carpets

### Did you know

- you can bid for both council and housing association properties in Islington and you can bid for up to three properties every week
- if you are 60 or over, you can be considered for sheltered accommodation
- you may also be able to keep one of your spare rooms if your current property has four or more bedrooms

### How does it work?

All you need to do is register for a transfer. Forms are available at your local Area Housing Office, or by calling the Rehousing Team on **020 7527 4140**.





**If you would like this document in large print or Braille, audiotape or in another language, please contact 020 7527 4140.**

**Bengali**

যদি আপনি এই তথ্য গুলো আপনার নিজ ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে 020 7527 4140 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।

**Chinese (Traditional)**

如果你想要這資料的中文本, 請致電 020 7527 4140 聯繫。

**Somali**

Haddii aad jeclaan lahayd macluumaadkan oo ku qoran luqadaada fadlan la xidhiidh 020 7527 4140

**Turkish**

Buradaki bilgilerin Türkçesini istiyorsanız, lütfen 020 7527 4140 numaraya telefon edin.

**Rehousing Team**

Housing Aid Centre, 38 Devonian Road, London N1 8UY

**E** rehousing@islington.gov.uk **T** 020 7527 4140 **F** 020 7527 4136

**Minicom** 020 7527 1900 **W** www.islington.gov.uk



<b>ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER</b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1st March 2010</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Area Assemblies Devolved Budget Project Proposal</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Adult Services</b>

### **5. Summary**

The report provides an update on the proposals from the Rotherham South Area Assembly Co ordinating Group for projects identified to be funded through Housing Market Renewal Funding.

These proposals support the corporate objective of devolved decision-making in the Borough through Area Assemblies and the delivery of local projects and actions which meet Corporate Objectives and community priorities as identified in the Area Plans of the Area Assemblies.

### **6. Recommendations**

**That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods**

- i. Approves the project proposals to be funded from Housing Market Renewal.**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

Rotherham South Area Assembly Coordinating Group have submitted a project proposal to provide 2 town centre bikes for the town team plus training and safety equipment for four officers costing £1500 from their HMR underspend. The project will increase visibility throughout the Town Centre. This should be sustainable, with the bicycles being deemed a long term project. Results should be through reduced ASB in town and reduced crime.

The project addresses the priority to "take action to address crime and anti-social behaviour and reduce criminal damage incidents and nuisance youth reports"

There are concerns over the police using bikes in pedestrianised areas where bikes are normally banned.

Those concerns must be balanced against the desire to improve visibility and operational capacity. The key objective of the project is improving police presence in the town centre. Officers on bikes are one method of addressing those concerns. The Police often drive police cars through the town for operational reasons and the police must have certain exemptions to operate effectively.

## **8. Finance**

The Area Assembly Devolved Budget process consisted of;

Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) awarded over two years 2008/09 and 2009/10. Each Area Assembly was allocated £100,000 to be spent approximately £35,000 in 2008/09 and £65,000 in 2009/10.

Neighbourhoods and Adult Services (NAS) The Neighbourhoods and Adult Services Directorate agreed funding for 35k per area in 2008/09, 65k per area in 2009/10, primarily from the NAS general fund, Neighbourhood Pathfinder and Regional Housing and Housing Investment programmes to fund a 3-year devolved budget. A further 50k from Housing Market Renewal is available per area in 2010/11

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

There is a risk that the ongoing sustainability of funding Area Assemblies devolved budgets will be unstable after LABGI ends in 2010 and HMR funding ceases in 2011. This may result in a lack of confidence from the community and partners.

There are additional risks around the delivery of projects which are being managed. Systems for monitoring progress are in place as part of the governance arrangements to mitigate risks of non delivery.

## 10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The development of devolved budgets for Area Assemblies has clear linkages with the key Corporate Strategic Themes and contributes towards the aims of Strategic Objective 1 of the NAS Service Plan 2008-11

To **provide integrated local services** so that;

- People can exercise choice, retain their independence, be offered protection and have equality of access.
- Communities are active and shape local services to meet their characteristics and needs.
- Neighborhoods are safe, free from crime and places to be proud of.

The development of devolved budgets for Area Assemblies is a key driver in meeting element three of the Outcomes Framework - **Making a Positive Contribution** by engaging residents and community groups in discussing and identifying community/area/spending priorities and participating in the proposals for the development of projects.

## 11. Background Papers and Consultation

The Community Empowerment White Paper: Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power: July 08

Local Government White Paper: Strong and Prosperous Communities 2006

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

**Contact Name:** Jan Leyland, Neighbourhood Partnership Team Manager Ext 3103

1.	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods</b>
2.	<b>Date</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> March 2010</b>
3.	<b>Title</b>	<b>2010 Rotherham Ltd Improvement Plan – Monitoring Report</b>
4.	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Adult Services</b>

## 5. Summary

2010 Rotherham Ltd's improvement plan was agreed by the ALMO Board and Cabinet Member in October 2009. This is the first quarterly monitoring report and covers quarter 3 (October–December 2009). Of the 62 actions within the Improvement Plan:

- 12 actions have been completed
- 33 actions are progressing in line with timescales
- 10 actions are progressing but with some concern for timescale
- 7 actions are behind schedule

This RMBC covering report describes the reporting methodology and provides an overview of performance. 2010 Rotherham Ltd's progress report is attached as appendix 1.

## 6. Recommendations

### That Cabinet Member:

- **Accepts appendix 2 as the final version of the improvement plan.**
- **Notes the content of the quarter 3 progress report (appendix 1), and the remedial actions being taken by 2010 Rotherham Ltd to complete the 7 'off target' indicators.**
- **Notes that evidence checks will be made by RMBC officers during February and March 2010.**

## 7. Proposal and details

### 7.1 Background

The improvement plan was agreed by Cabinet Member in October 2009. Minor amendments were proposed following discussion at Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2009 to clarify and strengthen the wording of three indicators. The final version is attached as appendix 2 for Cabinet Member's endorsement.

Delivery of the improvement plan is a top priority for 2010 Rotherham Ltd, and there is an embedded understanding throughout the organisation that in order for RMBC to consider setting up a new management agreement with the ALMO after the current agreement ends, significant service improvements will be required.

### 7.2 Reporting methodology

It was determined at an early stage that all actions must be 'SMART' and that regular, quarterly progress reports must be provided. 2010 Rotherham Ltd will compile progress reports at the end of each quarter, to be reported initially to the ALMO Board and then immediately to Cabinet Member.

The report attached as appendix 1 is the first of five progress updates, and relates to quarter 3 (October-December 2009). 2010 Rotherham Ltd provided an identical appendix to the ALMO Board on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

Within the six themes of the improvement plan are 62 individual actions each with a target outcome, a key date for completion and the criteria to determine successful completion. Every action has a lead Director responsible to ensure that the action is carried out and to provide quarterly progress reports.

The status indicators are colour coded as follows:

- Red – either the key date has passed or the outcome is known not to be achievable by key date
- Amber – the key date has not yet passed but timely completion is threatened
- Green – the key date has not yet passed but timely completion is expected
- Clear (to be shown as a blue 'C' if represented by a letter) – the outcome has been achieved / the task is complete

The ALMO's Performance and Service Improvement Team carries out sampling of evidence to ensure actions are complete. RMBC officers will provide further challenge by carrying out additional evidence checks. These will be carried out during February / March 2010, and if any actions reported by 2010 Rotherham Ltd as green or complete are found to be at risk or incomplete, this will be addressed via fortnightly liaison meetings between the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods and the ALMO's senior management team, and reported in the quarter 4 progress report.

The style and format of the progress report was agreed between 2010 Rotherham Ltd and RMBC. It is intended to provide an accessible, concise and accurate picture of progress against the actions, and is organised into three sections:

1. Actions which are known to be **off target**

2. Actions where **notable achievements** have been recorded
3. A view of **forthcoming actions** scheduled to be completed within the fourth quarter of the financial year.

Further detail can be provided on any other areas of the improvement plan if required.

### 7.3 Progress to 31 December 2009 (quarter 3)

- 12 actions have been completed in or ahead of time (BLUE status)
- 33 actions are progressing in line with timescales (GREEN status)
- 10 actions are progressing with some concern for timescale (AMBER status)
- 7 actions are behind schedule (RED status)

The detailed progress report which includes any remedial actions in place for actions at RED status is attached at Appendix 1.

#### Actions with 'red' status

In general, the main reason for failure against these targets appears to have been unrealistic dates set by 2010 Rotherham Ltd. In most cases, significant work has been carried out against the actions, but the RAG status has been applied very strictly, i.e. wherever the action has not been completed in full by the original specified date, it is classed as having failed. Where dates have been moved back, this has been approved by 2010 Rotherham Ltd's Director of Business Support and Interim Chief Executive.

All actions showing as red are expected to be reported as green or complete by the end of March 2010. A brief summary of the current position follows:

- 1.1 (revisit repairs service standards with tenants, publish and monitor) – this is mostly complete and will be fully signed off before the next report.
- 1.3a (review service standards in agreement with leaseholders) – this was completed during January 2010.
- 1.3b (undertake leaseholder satisfaction survey) – the survey was carried out in December, but the results have only been recently analysed. Early indications suggest 58% satisfaction, which 2010 Rotherham Ltd will adopt as a baseline position to improve upon.
- 1.4 (publicise the 0300-100-2010 number for all customer non-repairs calls) – although this was due for completion in October, the number was not launched until November and publicity has been ongoing since then.
- 6.1d (value for money training will be rolled out to staff) – although staff have informally been made aware of the importance of VFM via supervision etc, formal training will not be completed for all staff until April 2010. All managers will be briefed via 2010 Rotherham Ltd's managers' forum on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010.
- 6.3b (develop a timetable for service reviews driven by cost and performance) – this will not be completed until June 2010 (original date December 2009).
- 6.4b (workforce strategy agreed to allocate appropriate staffing levels to operations) – 2010 Rotherham Ltd have moved the target date to April 2010. Work is well underway in respect of the in house service provider workforce, and progress with this is being reported to Cabinet Member separately.

### Actions with 'amber' status

There are doubts regarding indicator 2.1 - the requirement to improve performance on 70% of benchmarked indicators by March 2010, compared with 2008/9. This is currently showing as amber and will be monitored regularly via formal RMBC / ALMO liaison arrangements.

It is expected that we will see a significant reduction in the number of 'amber' category actions, in the next monitoring report.

### **7.4 Future reports**

The next report, which will describe progress between January and March 2010, will be reported to the ALMO Board during May 2010 and Cabinet Member on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Subsequent reports will be provided in August 2010, November 2010 and February 2011.

### **8. Financial implications**

Themes 5 and 6 of the improvement plan are intended to improve financial monitoring processes and value for money throughout the organisation.

The budget and management fee setting process for 2010/11 is now underway and will conclude once RMBC has received the final HRA subsidy determination from Central Government. 2010 Rotherham Ltd is in the process of revising its operating model to ensure delivery of the improvement plan.

The ALMO's overall financial position is intrinsically linked to the externalisation of the repairs and maintenance service, and this work has been reported separately to Cabinet Member on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010 (a further report will be provided on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010). Bi-monthly strategic finance meetings take place and the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods meets with the ALMO Interim Chief Executive and Directors on a fortnightly basis to closely monitor the ALMO's financial position.

### **9. Risks and uncertainties**

Risks associated with achieving individual actions within the improvement plan are monitored via the progress reporting process.

Risks associated with the ALMO's financial position and the externalisation of the repairs and maintenance service are monitored via a project steering group, which includes the RMBC Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods and the Director of Internal Audit and Governance.

The key uncertainty relates to the ALMO's ability to deliver the improvement plan, alongside other key pressures, for example the new regulatory framework for social housing that will be implemented from April 2010. This will be monitored via regular liaison meetings and quarterly progress reports to Cabinet Member.



## 10. Policy and performance agenda implications

2010 Rotherham Ltd's improvement plan sets out how the organisation will make a unique contribution to Rotherham's top-line priorities. 2010 Rotherham Ltd contributes to the following themes within the Local Area Agreement:

- Safer and stronger communities
- Increased service user engagement
- Citizen satisfaction rates increased
- Tackle equalities and cohesion objectives
- Improve quality of life for people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods - meet decent homes including environmental works

2010 Rotherham Ltd is responsible for NI 158 relating to delivery of the Government's Decent Homes target, which contributes to Rotherham's overall Comprehensive Area Assessment.

## 11. Background papers and consultation

### Appendices

Appendix 1: 2010 Rotherham Ltd Oct-Dec 09 progress report

Appendix 2: Final version of improvement plan

### Background papers

Report to Cabinet 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009: Council Housing Directions project – final report

Report to Cabinet 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009: Test of opinion survey report

Reports to Cabinet Member on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2009, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009

### Consultation

Consultation took place with tenants and leaseholders in spring 2009 to establish tenants' and leaseholders' priorities for improvement. 2010 Rotherham Ltd is engaging tenants in regular discussions to set local service standards as part of the new Tenant Services Authority framework.

## 12. Contact name

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Tel: 01709 334970 or 07500 102498

## Appendix 1

### 2010 Rotherham Ltd Improvement Plan: 2009/11 – Quarter 3 progress report

#### Background

The Improvement Plan contains 6 main outcomes and these are to be achieved through 62 individual actions. Each action has a lead Directorate. The plan has been updated to report progress by exception to the end of December 2009 (Quarter 3).

The status indicators are colour coded thus:

- Red:** The key date has passed or the outcome is known not to be achievable by key date
- Amber:** The key date has not yet passed but timely completion is threatened
- Green:** The key date has not yet passed but timely completion is expected
- Clear:** (to be shown as a blue 'C' if represented by a letter) The outcome has been achieved/the task is complete.

This report provides an update on those actions:

- which are known to be **behind schedule/off target** against key dates;
- those actions where there have been **notable achievements** recorded;
- and a view of **forthcoming actions** scheduled to be completed within the forth quarter of the financial year.

**Section One - Exceptions report and remedial action:**

There are 7 actions currently identified as being **behind schedule/off target** against key dates. Comments have been provided by lead Directorates to outline the remedial actions being undertaken to complete the task.

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<p><b>Theme 1: Address tenants' and leaseholders' priorities for improvement</b></p> <p>Tenants' priorities have been identified through the STATUS and test of opinion surveys and feedback from tenant's events. The STATUS survey is biannual and was undertaken in October 2008 and therefore is not due to be repeated until October 2010 so we have requested it is done earlier. Leaseholders have monthly meetings at which their priorities and proposals to address them have been discussed.</p>					
<p><b>1.1 Tenants are highly satisfied with repairs and maintenance services</b></p>	<p>a) Publicise the repairs categories, cyclical and programmed works and revisit all service standards with tenants</p>	<p>Dec 09</p>	<p>Property Services</p>	<p>a) Clear service standards, cyclical and repairs programmes in place, available on website and published in leaflets and "Round Your Place" and monitored by the Service Improvement Group.</p>	<p><b>R</b></p>
<p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>(a) Three consultation events have been held with the Customers Service Improvement Group and the service standards, cyclical and repairs programmes in place were reviewed. An article was drafted and submitted to the Communication team for publication. An amended draft of the information for tenants to be publicised on the website was produced and issued to the Communication team in January 2010. Website is scheduled to be updated late January 2010.</p> <p>The repairs element of Empty Property service standard has been reviewed with new customers who have recently experienced the service offered by 2010 and is now available online and within Neighbourhood Offices</p>					

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>1.3 Leaseholders are satisfied with 2010 Rotherham Ltd's service delivery</b>	a) Review and agree service standards with leaseholders	Nov 09	Operations	a) Service standards in place and published on website and monitored by Leaseholder Forum.	<b>R</b>
	b) Undertake baseline satisfaction survey; followed up 12 months later	Dec 09	Business Support	b) Satisfaction rate increased	<b>R</b>
	c) Work with RMBC to revise the lease agreements with all leaseholders	Oct 10	Operations	c) Revised lease developed	<b>G</b>
<p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>a) Review of service standards was discussed at Leasehold Forum in November 2009. A copy of draft proposals were sent to all leaseholders following this meeting, and the new standards are to be agreed at the next forum being held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Standards will be published on the website following this meeting. Results will be reported to the Leasehold Forum at the most appropriate time for the bi-monthly meetings.</p> <p>b) The Leaseholder Services Manager has sent out an initial survey of customer satisfaction. The response period is scheduled for mid January 2010 following which he will analyse the returned data.</p> <p>c) First draft of revised lease presented at Leasehold Forum November 2009. Comments have been sent to RMBC Legal Services for consideration before the forthcoming Forum of 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010. This is the first stage of the formal consultation process required for any variation of the lease.</p>					

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>1.4 Tenants and leaseholders know how to contact 2010 and find it easy to access services</b>	a) Publicise the 0300-100-2010 number for all customer non-repairs calls	<del>Oct 09</del> Feb 10	CEO	a) When asked, 80% of customers think contacting 2010 is easy (compared to 68% in the STATUS survey 2008)	<b>R</b>

**Comment:**

(a) The 0300 100 2010 number was launched in November 2009. The introduction of the number has been the subject of publicity in the local news media (Rother FM and Rotherham News [the Local Strategic Partnership newsletter]). It is displayed on a number of 2010 Rotherham's web pages. The new number is currently being advertised daily on Rother FM (on-going for the next two years).

A regular monthly advertisement is scheduled to be placed in Rotherham News. This will commence in February 2010.

The STATUS survey is scheduled to be undertaken in Autumn 2010. However the organisation currently monitors the success criteria upon closure of dealing with Anti Social Behaviour cases. The Q3 survey response found that 71.71% of customers think contacting 2010 is easy.

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>Theme 6: Deliver value for money, making excellent use of resources</b>					
<b>6.1 2010 has a robust understanding of the costs of service delivery and how costs link to performance, and uses this information to drive improvement and efficiency</b>	d) Value for money training will be rolled out to staff.	<del>Start Nov 09</del> April 10	Business Support	d) Managers and key staff trained	<b>R</b>  Page 36
<b>Comment</b>  (d) Personal Development Reviews being undertaken to identify training requirements. Departmental Learning and Development plans to be produced by managers, discussed with L&D Manager and company plan drawn up by end February 2010. The February 2010 Manager's Forum has the theme of value for money and training will be given by the Finance Director. The training will be rolled out to all staff by April 2010.					

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>6.3 2010 reviews the competitiveness of services, evaluates options for service delivery and achieves value for money</b>	b) Develop a timetable for service reviews driven by cost and performance benchmarked with other providers	<del>Dec 09</del> June 2010	Finance	b) 2010 is able to demonstrate service improvement and value for money efficiencies.	<b>R</b>
<b>Comment</b> (b) Not completed. This links to scheduled delivery of VFM training in Q4. Not anticipated as being undertaken until Q1 of 2010/11 year. The action target date has been revised accordingly.					
<b>6.4 Workforce planning and development is effective and 2010 has a productive and skilled workforce</b>	b) Workforce strategy agreed to allocate appropriate staffing levels to operations	<del>Dec 09</del> April 2010	Business Support	b) 2010 has aligned the workforce to deliver the Business Plan	<b>R</b>
<b>Comment</b> (b) Skills audit being undertaken – IHSP the first area to be reviewed. By January 2010, 14 operatives had been identified as having no formal qualification. By April 2010 the HR Manager will conclude a resource level alignment project to identify needs for both immediate and					

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
future key business activities. The action target date has been revised accordingly.					
<b>Theme 2: Achieve the standards expected of top-performing organisations</b>					
<p>2010 Rotherham Ltd was inspected by the Audit Commission in 2006 and 2008 and therefore is not subject to further planned inspection so it is impossible to formally verify the organisation has achieved 3-star status. The actions and measures given in the table utilise external awards and benchmarking to assess the standards achieved. 2010 Rotherham Ltd is a member of the HouseMark benchmarking club which has agreed 22 core indicators, their definitions and reporting methodology, to compare performance more accurately. As this takes effect from the current financial year, 2009/10, it is difficult to compare indicators with previous years' performance where the definition and/or methodology has changed.</p>					
<b>2.2 Improving levels of performance across all areas</b>	a) Monitor performance against the suite of 22 core indicators agreed by HouseMark	Mar 10	Business Support	a) 70% of key benchmarked performance indicators show improvement on 2008/09	<b>A</b>
<p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>(a) Board members are requested to note this action (currently at AMBER status) has been reported to Board in the monthly performance reports provided by the Performance Manager to the effect that it will now be difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Of the 22 core indicators, 16 are reported monthly to the Board and there is previous years' data against 13 of them. Currently, it is predicted that 7 (54%) will improve and 4 (31%) will not, which is outside the 70% target. The remaining two (15%) are borderline but may be achieved.</p> <p>Details are shown in the table below.</p>					



HM Ref	Description	2008/09 Performance	Will improve/Will not improve on 2008/9
12	% of customers for whom the landlord has diversity information	76.80%	Will
13	% total repairs completed within target	97.71%	Will not
18	% response repairs where appointment was made and kept	98.37%	Will not
19	Tenants' satisfaction with repairs service	96.45%	Will not
21	% Repairs completed "Right First Time"	96.39%	Will
23	Gas safety certificates outstanding	0.50%	Will
26	% non-decent homes	18.60%	Will
28	Average SAP ratings	69.00%	Will
32	% satisfied with the outcome of their ASB complaint	N/A	N/A
33	% of ASB cases resolved	N/A	N/A
34	Average re-let time	39.45 days	Possibly (subject to investigation)
36	Rent collected as % of rent owed	99.85%	Borderline
38	Rent arrears of current social housing tenants at the financial year end as a percentage of rent debit	1.85%	Will
46	% new tenants satisfied with the allocation & letting process	N/A	N/A
55	% void rent loss	1.92%	Will
59	Number of working days lost due to sickness absence	10.75 days	Will not

#### Notes

Indicator HM36, rent collected as a percentage of rent owed, achieved an extremely high performance in 2008/9 of 99.85% which was aided by a high level of rent loss. The target for 2009/10 was set at 98.60%, which was below last year's out turn, as it was predicted that rent loss would be considerably reduced this year. However, rent loss has in fact been higher than expected and it is predicted that performance will be over 99.00% and there maybe a case to say that this is in fact an improvement. This however is counter balanced by the current investigation surrounding the calculation of HM34, average re-let time, which may yet see the indicator return a performance in excess of the

39.45 days reported for 2008/9.

## Section Two – Notable achievements within Quarter 3

Within the quarter there have been many notable achievements recorded and there are several actions confirmed as completed. These include:

- The customer feedback process (which includes complaints handling) has been reviewed and key staff are currently receiving training. Complaints resolution times have reduced in the majority of service areas.
- The organisation achieved the Customer Service Excellence award
- The organisation regained full status recognition for the Investor in People award
- The Board approved the Business Plan in October 2009. The budget compilation process now includes a sensitivity analysis which allows the effects of changing priorities to be modelled and an embedded growth bid process..
- Appropriate forecasting is incorporated into the budget monitoring process. Flexible budget monitoring regimes now allow quarterly, monthly or weekly cost analysis and projections to identify cost over runs and monitor recovery strategies.
- A working group has been established to assess the impact of financial decisions on service delivery.
- All budget holders have received training from Finance team staff.
- Board Members and staff have been provided with comparative benchmarking information on the cost and the quality of services provided.
- Energy Performance Certificates are now produced for all new tenancies along with advice and energy bill usage estimates at the tenancy sign up stage.
- A three year Affordable Warmth plan has been produced which will contribute towards minimising the impact on the environment and maximising the energy efficiency of our homes.

### **Section Three - Forthcoming actions in Quarter 4**

Within the next quarter there are several actions due to be completed. These include:

- The Annual Report (2008-09) will therefore be included in the winter edition of Round Your Place (on schedule to be published in early February).
- Quarterly reports will provide analyses of complaints handling satisfaction levels amongst complainants
- All senior managers will have competency based PDRs and clear development plans
- The organisation will have completed an Equal Pay Review

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## 2010 Rotherham Ltd Improvement Plan: 2009/11 November 2009

### Theme 1: Address tenants' and leaseholders' priorities for improvement

Tenants' priorities have been identified through the STATUS and test of opinion surveys and feedback from tenant's events. The STATUS survey is biannual and was undertaken in October 2008 and therefore is not due to be repeated until October 2010 so we have requested it is done earlier. Leaseholders have monthly meetings at which their priorities and proposals to address them have been discussed.

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>1.1 Tenants are highly satisfied with repairs and maintenance services</b>	a) Publicise the repairs categories, cyclical and programmed works and revisit all service standards with tenants	Dec 09	Property Services	a) Clear service standards, cyclical and repairs programmes in place, available on website and published in leaflets and "Round Your Place" and monitored by the Service Improvement Group.	A
	b) Benchmark performance and learn from the good practice of high performing ALMOs	April 10 Ongoing	Business Support	<b>b) Satisfaction levels maintained in top quartile of STATUS survey.</b>	A
<b>1.2 Tenants are satisfied that 2010 deals effectively with reports of antisocial neighbours</b>	a) Publish information for residents on ASB and tenancy management, service standards etc	Quarterly	Operations	a) Clear information produced, agreed with colleagues in RMBC, and published on the website and in "Round Your Place".	A
	b) Assess services against the RESPECT Standard and ensure continuous improvement	Quarterly	Operations	<b>b) Improved satisfaction levels for management and outcomes from 53% in 2008/09 to 78% in 2009/10</b>	A
	c) Respond to and learn from complaints related to the handling of low level of ASB cases	Ongoing	Operations	c) Reduced complaints relating to 2010's handling of reported low level ASB	A
<b>1.3 Leaseholders are satisfied with 2010 Rotherham Ltd's service delivery</b>	a) Review and agree service standards with leaseholders	Nov 09	Operations	a) Service standards in place and published on website and monitored by Leaseholder Forum.	A
	b) Undertake baseline satisfaction survey; followed up 12 months later	Dec 09	Operations	<b>b) Satisfaction rate increased</b>	R
	c) Work with RMBC to revise the lease agreements with all leaseholders	Oct 10	Operations	c) Revised lease developed	A

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>1.4 Tenants and leaseholders know how to contact 2010 and find it easy to access services</b>	a) Publicise the 0300-100-2010 number for all customer non-repairs calls	Oct 09  Oct 10 (STATUS)	CEO	<b>a) When asked, 80% of customers think contacting 2010 is easy (compared to 68% in the STATUS survey 2008)</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>1.5 Customers are satisfied with the complaints process</b>	a) Review complaints process to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Stage 1 &amp; 2 complaints are dealt within specified time scales</li> <li>✓ Stage 3 Panels can be convened when required</li> <li>✓ Responses to complainants are quality assured before issue</li> <li>✓ Satisfaction survey undertaken following closure</li> </ul>	Dec 09 (review of process)  April 2010 onwards (analysis)	Business Support	<b>a) Quarterly analyses of complaints confirms improvement in resolution within time scales and increased satisfaction rates amongst complainants</b>	<b>A</b>

## Theme 2: Achieve the standards expected of top-performing organisations

2010 Rotherham Ltd was inspected by the Audit Commission in 2006 and 2008 and therefore is not subject to further planned inspection so it is impossible to formally verify the organisation has achieved 3-star status. The actions and measures given in the table utilise external awards and benchmarking to assess the standards achieved. 2010 Rotherham Ltd is a member of the HouseMark benchmarking club which has agreed 22 core indicators, their definitions and reporting methodology, to compare performance more accurately. As this takes effect from the current financial year, 2009/10, it is difficult to compare indicators with previous years' performance where the definition and/or methodology has changed.

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>2.1 2010 can demonstrate excellence against national standards</b>	a) Develop and demonstrate strong customer focus throughout service delivery	June 09	Business Support	a) 2010 achieves Customer Service Excellence award	<b>G</b>
	b) Implement actions in plan agreed with Y&H Assessment Ltd	Dec 09	Business Support	b) 2010 regains full status recognition for Investor in People award	<b>A</b>
	c) Undertake periodic self assessment against Audit Commission/TSA standards for social housing management	Jan - Sep 10	Business Support	<b>c) At least 2 of the 4 service areas judged by the Audit Commission inspection 2008 to have a balance of strengths and weaknesses to be assessed by external peers as having strengths outweigh weaknesses; and the number of service areas judged as "strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses" to be increased from 2 to 3, again assessed by external peers</b>	<b>R</b>
	d) Complete actions to address previous Audit Commission Recommendations (2006)			d) Board agree completion	
<b>2.2 Improving levels of performance across all areas</b>	a) Monitor performance against the suite of 22 core indicators agreed by HouseMark	Mar 10	Business Support	<b>a) 70% of key benchmarked performance indicators show improvement on 2008/09</b>	<b>A</b>
	b) Put in place clear action plans to deal with poor performance and report these to Board and RMBC	Ongoing	Business Support	b) Narrative given in performance reports includes remedial action plans and progress is monitored closely	<b>A</b>

### Theme 3: Make a unique contribution to Rotherham's priorities, particularly the Safe and Proud themes

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
3.1 2010 has a strong presence in the borough	a) 2010 is represented on the LSP Board, relevant Theme Boards and key meetings	Ongoing	CEO	a) 2010 Rotherham Ltd is represented at key meetings as follows:  <b>LSP Board – 100%</b> <b>Safe Theme Board – 75%</b> <b>Proud Theme Board – 75%</b> <b>Area Assemblies – 100%</b> <b>Area Housing Panels – 100%</b> <b>Strategic Housing Partnership – 75%</b>	<b>A</b>
	b) Continue to play appropriate parts in safer estates work, domestic violence, ASB, safeguarding adults, Place-shaping etc	Ongoing	All	b) Evidence of 2010's contribution to priorities	<b>A</b>



## Theme 4: Ensure all services are well-governed and well-managed

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
4.1 Strong governance arrangements are in place	a) Implement Board Development Plan	Ongoing	Business Support	a) Development plan embedded	A
	b) Annual review of governance included within Internal Audit Plan	Sep 10	Business Support	<b>b) High standards of governance in place, demonstrated by governance audit report judgements.</b>	R
4.2 2010 has a clear focus on its purpose and vision	a) Business plan has clear objectives and alignment of resources agreed by the Board	Feb 10	CEO	a) Agreed by Board	A
	b) Delivery of Business Plan objectives	As in Business Plan	All	<b>b) Delivery of Business Plan objectives by due dates</b>	
4.3 Risk management is effective and internal control systems are sound	a) Maintain risk registers and review on quarterly basis.	Oct 09 & ongoing	Finance	<b>a) Risk registers reviewed quarterly and reported to Audit Committee</b>	G
	b) All new initiatives are risk assessed prior to implementation.	As required	Finance	<b>b) A risk assessment is completed on all new initiatives prior to implementation and included within board reports.</b>	G
	c) Yearly audit plan reviewing key business areas to assess effectiveness of key systems and compliance with internal controls.	Annually in April	Finance	<b>c) Control environment is considered adequate within yearly Audit Plan and the statement of Internal control.</b>	G
	d) Annual audit of financial accounts by external auditors.	Annually in July	Finance	<b>d) Financial controls are considered appropriate by external auditors and company accounts signed off</b>	G
4.4 Managers are competent to discharge their responsibilities	a) Agree managerial competencies required at different levels of responsibility	April 10	Business Support	<b>a) 95% senior managers have competency based PDRs and clear development plans</b>	A
	b) Commission and deliver a management leadership development programme	Start Nov 09	Business Support	b) Bespoke accredited programme developed and delivered to 80% senior managers; improved performance when assessed against competencies	A
4.5 2010 communicates effectively with its customers and other key stakeholders	a) Round Your Place sent to all customers	Ongoing	CEO	a) Four issues per year	G
	b) Communications to Ward Councillors (either independently or using existing mechanisms of partners)	Ongoing	Operations	<b>b) Bulletins are issued at least monthly to all ward councillors from October 09</b>	A
	c) Website includes all relevant information for customers	Ongoing	CEO	c) Customer Monitoring Group confirms website meets customers' needs.	A

## Theme 5: Ensure strong financial management processes are in place

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>5.1 2010 plans its finances effectively to deliver its priorities</b>	a) Budgets are set to deliver the Business Plan	Mar 10	Finance	a) Able to demonstrate appropriate spend on service priorities	<b>R</b>
	b) Sensitivity analysis is built into business planning process allowing the effects of changing priorities to be modelled.	Oct 09	Finance		<b>A</b>
	c) Growth bid process embedded into budget setting and budget monitoring processes.	Nov 09	Finance		<b>A</b>
<b>5.2 2010 manages relevant spend within resources available from the management and capital management fees</b>	a) Robust monitoring is in place to ensure that high spending areas are identified at an early stage and effectively addressed.	Monthly	Finance	2010 manages relevant spend within resources available from the Management and Capital Management Fee together with the Repairs Managed Budget	<b>G</b>
	b) Appropriate forecasting is incorporated into the budget monitoring process to identify indicative under or over spend to facilitate redirection of resources and / or development and delivery of recovery strategy.	Oct 09	Finance		<b>A</b>
	c) Flexible monitoring regimes allow quarterly, monthly or weekly cost analysis and projections to identify cost over runs and monitor recovery strategies.	Dec 09	Finance		<b>A</b>
	d) Establishment of cross cutting company working group to assess impact of financial decisions on service delivery.	Oct 09	Finance		<b>A</b>
<b>5.3 2010 values and develops financial skills at officer and Board levels</b>	a) Financial training plan developed for Board Members.	Oct 09 & ongoing	Finance	a) All new Board members receive training in understanding financial reports; refreshed annually	<b>A</b>
	b) Training developed for budget holders.	Sep 09 & ongoing	Finance		b) All budget holders receive training

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>5.4 Financial reporting is timely and reliable and clear, and is used effectively to monitor and manage performance</b>	a) Reports to each scheduled Board meeting identifying spend to date together with forecast to year end.	Aug 09 & ongoing	Finance	<b>a) Report submitted to each scheduled Board Meeting identifying spend to date, together with forecast to year end. Forecasts result in remedial action leading to projected outturn and balanced management and capital management fee budgets</b>	<b>G</b>
	b) Financial reports identify and monitor variances to budget with clear explanations and mitigation.	As above	Finance	b) Board informed of financial pressure points	<b>G</b>
	c) Recovery strategies are clear and identify any impact upon service delivery.	Nov 09	Finance	c) Board is better informed to make decisions regarding options for recovery strategies	<b>A</b>

## Theme 6: Deliver value for money, making excellent use of resources

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
<b>6.1 2010 has a robust understanding of the costs of service delivery and how costs link to performance, and uses this information to drive improvement and efficiency</b>	a) Budget to be realigned to accurately reflect service delivery areas.	Mar 10	Finance	<b>a) A wide range of clear and accurate information on overall service costs is available and is utilised to drive the value for money efficiency agenda.</b>	R
	b) Devolved budgets to be rolled out across company; budget holders will be involved in budget setting and monitoring processes and will therefore be much clearer on service costs.	Mar 10	Finance	b) Budget holders understand the cost of delivering services	R
	c) Benchmarking information will be utilised to compare cost and performance with other providers.	Nov 09	Business Support	c) Board Members and staff all use clear and regular information on costs and the quality of services to challenge how they compare to other providers.	A
	d) Value for money training will be rolled out to staff.	Start Nov 09	Business Support	d) Managers and key staff trained	A
<b>6.2 2010 involves local people, staff and partners in commissioning, procurement and service development</b>	a) Develop timetable for key procurement and contract review.	Mar 10	Finance	a) Timetable in place	R
	b) Establish appropriate review groups to include local people, staff and partners as part of service reviews and procurement exercises.	Mar 10	Business Support	b) 2010 is able to demonstrate membership of local people, staff and partners on review and procurement assessment groups and can identify how these representatives have influenced decision making.	R
<b>6.3 2010 reviews the competitiveness of services, evaluates options for service delivery and achieves value for money</b>	a) Complete market testing of IHSP	Oct 10	Property Services	<b>a) IHSP contracts determined and implemented from 01/04/2011</b>	A
	b) Develop a timetable for service reviews driven by cost and performance benchmarked with other providers	Dec 09	Finance	<b>b) 2010 is able to demonstrate service improvement and value for money efficiencies.</b>	R
	c) Undertake priority service reviews	Sep 10	All	c) Service reviews demonstrate best value within resources and contextual environment	R

Outcome	Key actions to achieve outcome	Key dates	Lead Director	Success criteria	Status
	d) Engage with 3-star service providers with a view to incorporating best practice within resources available.	Ongoing	Business Support	d) Best practice adopted where possible.	A
<b>6.4 Workforce planning and development is effective and 2010 has a productive and skilled workforce</b>	a) Establishment lists reconciled with RBT and maintained to reflect changes	Oct 09 & ongoing	Business Support	a) Reliable workforce information readily available	A
	b) Workforce strategy agreed to allocate appropriate staffing levels to operations	Dec 09	Business Support	b) 2010 has aligned the workforce to deliver the Business Plan	R
<b>6.5 Policies support diversity and good people management</b>	a) Undertake an equal pay review	Mar 2010	Business Support	a) confirmation 2010 is meeting the gender equality duty	A
	b) Assess organisation against the Equality Framework and take actions to ensure compliance	Dec 2010	Business Support	<b>b) 2010 satisfies requirements of "achieving" level of new Equality Framework</b>	A
<b>6.6 2010 makes effective use of natural resources and manages performance to minimise its impact on the environment</b>	a) Raise tenants' awareness of energy performance issues relating to their homes	Mar 2010	Operations	<b>a) 2010 will deliver Energy Performance Certificates to 100% of new tenancies</b>	A
	b) Complete Decent Homes programme	Dec 2010	Operations	b) The average SAP rating will improve from 69 to 70	A
<b>6.7 Tenants believe rent represents value for money</b>	a) Provide reports to tenants with clear information about expenditure and performance	Annually	CEO	a) Tenants and leaseholders informed	G
	b) Retain question regarding whether tenants believe their rent represents value for money in next STATUS survey, due October 2010	Oct 10	Business Support	<b>b) Top quartile response to VFM question in STATUS survey (next due in 2010)</b>	R

<b>ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER</b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1 March 2010</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Update on the Homes and Communities Agency Single Conversation and Revised Housing Strategy</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Adult Services.</b>

### 5. Summary

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the national housing and regeneration agency for England. Its principal business process is the “Single Conversation” with Local Authorities, who are expected to put forward the shared ambitions and objectives on behalf of their Local Strategic Partnerships.

The focus of the Single Conversation is around comprehensive place-shaping, including the full range of housing, infrastructure, regeneration and community facilities. It is important that this process is not seen primarily as a housing issue, but rather an issue of how improvements in infrastructure and housing can contribute to and compliment aspirations to improve wider quality of life issues. Council’s are required to develop a Local Investment Plan, which will form the basis of a funding agreement between the HCA and the Local Authorities.

The report also sets out the rationale and progress on rewriting the Rotherham Housing Strategy, which will enhance its status as a key component to the Single Conversation.

### 6. Recommendation

#### That Cabinet Member:

- **Notes the Key Dates associated with the Single Conversation**
- **Recognises the importance of revising the existing Housing Strategy to enhance its status as a key component of the Single Conversation**
- **Refers the report to Full Cabinet and the Local Strategic Partnership Board to ensure that wider Members and Chief Officers comprehend the strategic and corporate significance of the Single Conversation**
- **Supports the proposed officer lead and governance structures for the Single Conversation**

## 7. Proposals and Details

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the national housing and regeneration agency for England. Its principal business process is the “Single Conversation” with Local Authorities, who are expected to put forward the shared ambitions and objectives on behalf of their Local Strategic Partnerships.

The focus of the Single Conversation is around comprehensive place-shaping, including the full range of housing, infrastructure, regeneration and community facilities. Councils are required to develop a Local Investment Plan, which will form the basis of a funding agreement between the HCA and the Local Authorities.

For a successful and coherent Single Conversation the Council must ensure that partner organisations seeking funding for the three year period 2011-2014 and beyond are understood and reflected in a coherent set of priorities to which all beneficiaries are fully signed up.

The first round of Yorkshire and Humber Region’s Single Conversations are now well advanced with the Leeds City Region, Hull and Sheffield. To maintain a coherent South Yorkshire regeneration investment programme it is important Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster’s first workshops with the HCA start soon.

Officers are closely monitoring the progress of both Sheffield and Hull and the HCA fed back to the Rotherham Core Group their experiences of the process to date at a meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

It emerged during that meeting that senior officer buy-in to the process is fundamental to demonstrating that this is corporately viewed as a strategic priority for the LA and the partners it represents. It is proposed that the Strategic Director for Neighbourhood and Adult Services will lead the main workshops with representation of key thematic leads from health, transport economy, children and young people adult services, safety, housing, finance and the Chief Executives department in attendance

Also it became clear that the HCA favours a single lead officer and point of contact at each authority who is able to articulate the Council’s vision and to create a ‘pen portrait’ of the authority at the first workshop. To this end the Sustainable Communities Manager in Neighbourhood Investment Services has been tasked with the role.

### 7.1 Housing Strategy Refresh

Aligned with the importance of engaging in the Single Conversation to unlock regeneration and growth funding is that of having a robust Housing Strategy. The existing strategy was adopted as recently as 2008. This was at a time of peak housing markets when the main concerns were to close the widening affordability gap and make the most of allocations available from the funds now brought together under the HCA umbrella; the strategy therefore preceded the dramatic economic downturn into recession.

A new Housing Strategy is needed to both reflect the new economic realities and to address the emerging challenge of climate change. It will address:

- **Sustainable Communities:** investing wisely in the physical infrastructure of our communities to achieve the highest standards of quality and design whilst supporting work to address other issues such as raising educational attainment and aspirations, tackling worklessness, health inequalities, and promoting safe and inclusive communities.
- **Growth:** how Rotherham will respond to its status within a New Growth Point.
- **Renewal:** how, where appropriate, we will complete existing projects and examine the case for new ones.
- **Affordable Housing:** how we intend to develop a programme of affordable house enablement through direct council house building, work with Housing Associations and by reacting to opportunities presented by the housing market., in response to the collapse in supply of open market housing through planning gain.
- **Climate Change:** how we will strive to tackle the greenhouse gas emissions arising from existing housing whilst ensuring that new development achieves the highest possible standards and promoting the Dearne Valley as a new form of Eco-Town.

Our Emerging new strategy will align with the HCAs Investment Plan, Audit Commission 'Building Better Lives' guidance document and the South Yorkshire Housing Strategy. In doing so it will respond to Rotherham's local priorities and ambitions.

The development of our new strategy will follow corporate guidance on consultation and community engagement and members are being engaged in the process from the outset. Cross directorate meetings have been taking place to ensure a corporate approach,.

In collaboration with neighbouring authorities, a South Yorkshire Forward Strategy and Investment Plan 2010-14 is being developed by Transform South Yorkshire on behalf of the four authorities. This will serve as a sub-regional platform for supporting the local authorities in their respective Conversations. Our revised Housing Strategy is to be structured to align with this sub-regional statement, emphasising Rotherham's unique attributes within the wider city region.

## 7.2 Key Milestones

The key milestones in the Single Conversation process including the revised Housing Strategy are outlined below:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • 25 <sup>th</sup> , 26 <sup>th</sup> , 27 <sup>th</sup> January 10 | Housing Strategy consultation events      |
| • January to end May 10   | Consultation Period                       |
| • 18th March 2010   | 1st 'Pen Portrait' Workshop with the HCA. |
| • July 2010   | Housing Strategy sign-off and launch.     |
| • September 2010  | Local Investment Plan agreed              |
| • October 2010  | Local Investment Agreement signed.        |

## 8. Finance

The HCA commands funds formerly allocated by English Partnerships, The Housing Corporation, Regional Housing Boards, Communities and Local Government, and the Academy for Sustainable Communities. As a One Stop Shop for future funding, the HCA's support is critical to achieving Rotherham's ambitions across Housing and



Growth and success will complement the advance of corporate priorities across Education, Health and Economic Development.

The HCA, within its current programme administers over £17billion nationally. Rotherham is drawing down a significant proportion of this money through programmes such as Decent Homes, Affordable Housing Projects, Council House Building, Kick Start initiatives, Housing Market Renewal, private sector housing support and funds to support regeneration officers in EDS and the Neighbourhood Investment Team.

The Single Conversation will reach agreement on a funding period that starts in March 2011 and runs for a 3 years. There is currently a great deal of uncertainty around the level of funding to be made available in this period due to a series of national financial pressures, Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and potential change in government.

There may be implications for the Council's commitment to engage in prudential borrowing and to make active use of its land and property assets arising from future allocations of funds to the Borough Council. Further reports will address these issues in detail.

### **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

There is considerable uncertainty about the future of the HCA in the event of a change in national administration. Whatever the outcome of the forthcoming general election the budgets allocated to the HCA will be re-assessed from the need to align public debts with future economic and monetary policies.

Whatever the outcome of the election it is unlikely that all funding will be withdrawn, as housing renewal and growth receives cross party support as does the pressing need to close the gap between housing supply and demand.

### **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

The HCA Guidance Framework stresses the holistic place-based approach that it wishes local authorities to adopt, stressing the links between housing, infrastructure, regeneration and community activity. It follows that a corporate approach to definition of the Local Investment Plan is a pre-requisite with particular emphasis on alignment with the emerging Local Development Framework Core Strategy and areas of significant budgetary investment such as Building Schools for the Future and Transport.

The same considerations apply in relation to other public priorities as identified through the Rotherham Partnership, including health and spatial health inequalities.

This Single Conversation process can help us to make effective use of our assets and manage them to best effect. It contributes to the Sustainable Neighbourhood's agenda by addressing identified housing issues and will help deliver better choice and quality of affordable housing to the community.

The process therefore has the potential to contribute towards all our key corporate strategic themes of:-

- Rotherham Achieving
- Rotherham Learning

- Rotherham Alive
- Rotherham Safe
- Rotherham Proud
- Fairness
- Sustainable Development

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

Transform South Yorkshire - Forward Strategy November 2009  
Homes and Communities Single Conversation Guidance Framework  
<http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/singleconversation.htm>  
Rotherham Housing Strategy 2008  
Rotherham Community Strategy 2005-11(updated 2008)

Report: Gordon Smith & Tracie Seals – Neighbourhood Investment Services:  
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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted