

## Select Committee Agenda



### **Housing Select Committee Tuesday, 10th November, 2015**

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Housing Select Committee**, which will be held at:

**Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping  
on Tuesday, 10th November, 2015  
at 5.30 pm .**

**Glen Chipp  
Chief Executive**

**Democratic Services  
Officer**

#### **Members:**

Councillors S Murray (Chairman), A Mitchell (Vice-Chairman), K Chana, R Gadsby, L Girling, S Kane, J Lea, C Roberts, B Rolfe, G Shiell and J H Whitehouse

**SUBSTITUTE NOMINATION DEADLINE:**

**16:30**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (MINUTE ITEM 39 - 23.7.02)**

(Director of Governance) To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

**3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Pages 5 - 10)**

To agree the notes of the last select committee meeting held on 16 June 2015 (attached).

**4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

(Director of Governance) To declare interests on any items on the agenda.

In considering whether to declare a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct, Overview and Scrutiny members are asked to pay particular attention to paragraph 11 of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any matter before an OS Committee which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a member.

Paragraph 11 does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an OS meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

**5. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 11 - 18)**

(Chairman/Lead Officer) Attached is the draft proposed Terms of Reference and Work Programme for the Select Committee. The Select Committee will receive a brief presentation from the Lead Officer for the Select Committee on identifying the relevant priorities and work areas for 2015/16. These drafts will be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval.

**6. PRESENTATION ON THE CURRENT AND FUTURE APPROACH TO DEALING WITH PRIVATE EMPTY PROPERTIES**

To receive a presentation on the current and future approach to dealing with private empty properties. Sally Devine will give an overview of the current situation regarding empty properties in the district within the context of the national and regional picture; to highlight the main issues; to explore the priorities for action and the best approach to take with a view to producing a new Empty Property Strategy.

**7. RESULTS OF THE STAR TRIENNIAL TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY (Pages 19 - 26)**

(Director of Communities) To consider the attached report and appendix.

**8. RESPONSE TO DCLG CONSULTATION ON MANDATORY "PAY TO STAY" SCHEME (Pages 27 - 38)**

(Director of Communities) To consider the attached report and appendix.

**9. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGY ON HARASSMENT (3 YEAR REVIEW) (Pages 39 - 52)**

(Director of Communities) To consider the attached report and appendix.

**10. FUTURE APPROACH TO HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGIES (Pages 53 - 56)**

(Director of Communities) To consider the attached report.

**11. SIX MONTH REVIEW OF THE HRA FINANCIAL PLAN (Pages 57 - 78)**

(Director of Communities) To consider the attached report and appendix.

**12. SIX MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT ON HOUSING BUSINESS PLAN ACTION PLAN (Pages 79 - 88)**

(Director of Communities) To consider the attached report and appendix.

**13. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2015/16 - QUARTER 1 AND 2 (Q1 AND Q2) PROGRESS (Pages 89 - 124)**

(Director of Communities) To consider the attached report and appendix.

**14. FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next scheduled meeting of the Select Committee will be held on Tuesday 12 January 2016 at 5.30p.m. in Committee Room 1 and then on:

- Tuesday 8 March at 5.30p.m. in Committee Room 1.

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**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NOTES OF A MEETING OF HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 16 JUNE 2015  
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING  
AT 5.35 - 7.45 PM**

**Members Present:** S Murray (Chairman), K Chana, R Gadsby, L Girling, S Kane, C Roberts, G Shiell, J H Whitehouse and W Marshall (Tenants and Leaseholders Federation)

**Other members present:** D Stallan

**Apologies for Absence:** J Lea (Vice Chairman) and B Rolfe

**Officers Present** A Hall (Director of Communities), R Wilson (Assistant Director (Housing Operations)), L Swan (Assistant Director (Private Sector Housing & Communities Support)), R Wallace (Housing Options Manager), H Thorpe (Housing Assets Manager) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

**1. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)**

There were no substitutions made at the meeting.

**2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Pursuant to the Member's Code of Conduct, Councillor S Murray declared a non pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of his mother being a user of Careline. The Councillor indicated that he would remain in the meeting for the duration of the discussion on the item and any subsequent voting:

- Item 9 Housing Service Strategy on Older People's Housing Services

**3. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME**

The Select Committee received a report regarding its draft Terms of Reference and Work Programme from the Director of Communities.

Officers had produced common Terms of Reference for the four new Select Committees, with a small number of additional terms added to each Select Committee to cover their specific functions. The Select Committee were advised that since the new Overview and Scrutiny structure was in place it was being proposed that representations made from and to scrutiny select committees to and from Portfolio Holders and Cabinet Committees directly would no longer be possible, and the draft Terms of Reference had been drafted on this basis. The framework now proposed that all such committees had a reporting route through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). The OSC could then recommend to the Cabinet or Portfolio Holders as appropriate.

The Members felt that this new approach was not feasible as potentially it would take a greater length of time to process reports, which it was suggested, could be urgent. The Housing Portfolio Holder was concerned at the lack of a direct route from the

Portfolio Holders and the Cabinet to the Select Committees for referring matters. He was equally concerned at what he felt had been insufficient consultation with members on this new process.

The Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation also expressed concerns about the nature of having to refer all matters through the OSC and felt that this may prove too lengthy a process.

The Director of Communities advised that it would be best to direct these comments to the OSC at its next meeting, when the OSC considered the approval of the Terms of Reference.

It was also suggested that a Select Committee should be able to create small working groups of Members to examine issues in a more detailed way and to report back to the Select Committee.

With regard to the draft Work Programme, the Select Committee observed that the draft Work Programme reflected the previous Housing Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:**

(1) That the draft Terms of Reference for the Housing Select Committee prepared by officers on a generally common basis be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a recommendation that they be amended to reflect the Select Committee's role in making direct representations to and from Portfolio Holders and the Cabinet; and

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee include provision within the Terms of Reference of Select Committees to enable them to be permitted to establish small working groups on an ad hoc basis for the purpose of limited, more detailed scrutiny that would report back to the Select Committee.

**4. REVIEW OF THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

The Panel received a report from the Housing Options Manager regarding the Review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities had a duty to review and publish their Homelessness Strategy on at least a 5 yearly basis. As this area of work regularly changed, it had previously been agreed that the Council's Homelessness Strategy would be reviewed every three years. The strategy linked with the Council's Housing Strategy, Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Policy. The strategy set out achievements since 2012 and incorporated the needs and demands on the service and actions that needed undertaking over the coming three years. The Select Committee was asked to consider the Draft Homelessness Strategy, which was included in the Work Programme and report any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder prior to adoption.

A consultation exercise on the draft Homelessness Strategy would be undertaken over an 8 week period with all stakeholders following the Select Committee meeting. The strategy would take effect from 1 September 2015. Select Committee Members supported the Homelessness Strategy and asked that officers should consult with parish churches on homelessness, where appropriate, as they were often approached by homeless persons seeking support.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (1) That subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise, the updated Homelessness Strategy be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for approval; and
- (2) That a consultation exercise be undertaken for a period of 8 weeks with all stakeholders with an interest in homelessness including Town and Parish Councils and parish churches, with the outcome of the exercise and any proposed changes being reported to the Housing Portfolio Holder for consideration when adopting the revised Homelessness Strategy.

**5. HOUSING SERVICE STANDARDS PERFORMANCE REPORT 2014-15 AND REVIEW**

The Panel received a report from the Director of Communities regarding Housing Service Standards – Performance for 2014/15 and Review.

In 2007, following consultation, the Housing Portfolio Holder agreed a range of Housing Service Standards covering all of the Housing Service's main areas of activity. It was also agreed that, annually, the Housing Service's performance against the Housing Service Standards should be considered and whether any changes should be made to the standards. The Director of Communities had reviewed the Housing Service Standards, having regard to performance in 2014/15 and changes in legislation and Council policy. As a result, a small number of changes were proposed. As part of the subsequent discussion, Members requested that a target of issuing two issues of Housing News during the municipal year should be set, instead of the current target of three issues and the current performance of one per year.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (1) That, subject to the views of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, the proposed changes to the Housing Service Standards be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder and that relevant leaflets be updated to an appropriate time; and
- (2) That the Housing Service Standards and performance against the Service Standards in 2015/16 be reviewed again in June 2016.

**6. COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE'S HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGY ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

The Panel received a report regarding the Communities Directorates' Housing Service Strategy on Energy Efficiency from the Assistant Director Private Housing and Community Support.

The Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategies were originally produced more than 15 years ago, in accordance with an agreed standard framework and had since been updated. The strategies gave more detail than the Council's main Housing Strategy on the various housing services provided, a total of 16 strategies had been produced to date.

The strategies were produced to a common format that set out how individual housing services would be delivered. They assisted the directorate in achieving the Customer Service Excellence Award and Quality Accreditation and had been important to meeting the minimum requirement for Housing Related Support funding.

**RECOMMENDED:**

That the Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on Energy Efficiency be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for approval.

**7. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGY ON HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT**

The Panel received a report regarding the Housing Service Strategy on Housing and Neighbourhood Management from the Assistant Director Housing Operations.

It was noted that this Housing Service Strategy had been drafted on a slightly different basis to previous ones and, as a result, was much shorter and sharper.

**RECOMMENDED:**

(1) That the Housing Service Strategy on Housing and Neighbourhood Management be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for approval; and

(2) That the new format for Housing Service Strategies be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for all future strategies produced.

**8. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGY ON OLDER PEOPLE'S HOUSING SERVICES**

The Panel received a report regarding the Housing Service Strategy on Older People's Housing Services from the Assistant Director Housing Operations.

**RECOMMENDED:**

That the Housing Service Strategy on Older People's Housing Services be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

**9. HOUSING STRATEGY: 6 MONTH PROGRESS REPORT ON KEY ACTION PLAN 2015/16**

The Panel received a progress report regarding the Housing Strategy 6 Month Progress on the Key Action Plan 2015/16 from the Director of Communities.

At its meeting in September 2009, the Council's Cabinet adopted the Housing Strategy 2009-12 which assessed the District's current and future housing needs and set out the Council's approach to meeting those needs. It was noted that production of the new strategy had been deferred, pending the production of the Local Plan Preferred Options. The strategy also included an annual Key Action Plan which set out the proposed actions that would be taken by the Council to contribute towards the achievement of the housing objectives. The Cabinet had agreed that Key Action Plans for the strategy should be produced and updated on an annual basis.



The latest Key Action Plan was agreed in January 2015 with progress being monitored on a 6 monthly basis by this Select Committee.

**RECOMMENDED:**

That the 6 Month Progress Report on Key Action Plan 2015/16 be noted.

**10. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2014/15 - OUTTURN (Q4) PERFORMANCE**

The Select Committee received a report regarding Key Performance Indicators 2014/15 – Outturn (Q4) Performance from the Director of Communities.

A range of 36 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the whole Council for 2014/15 were adopted by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in March 2014. The KPIs were important to the improvement of the Council's services and the achievement of its Key Objectives, they directed improvement effort towards services and the national priorities and local challenges arising from the social, economic and environmental context of the district.

From 2014/15 each former scrutiny panel became responsible for the review of quarterly performance against KPIs falling within its area of responsibility. This report therefore included in detail only those indicators which fell within the areas of responsibility of the Housing Select Committee.

Ten of the Key Performance Indicators fell within the Housing Select Committee's areas of responsibility with the overall position in regard to the achievement of target performance at the end of the year, as follows:

- 10 (100%) indicators achieved the cumulative end of year target.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Key Performance Indicators 2014/15 – Outturn (Q4) Performance be noted.

**11. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chairman advised that he would update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Select Committee's progress.

**12. FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting of the Select Committee would be held on Tuesday 8 September 2015 at 5.30p.m. in Committee Room 1.

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## SELECT COMMITTEES

### TERMS OF REFERENCE 2015/16

**Title:** Housing Select Committee

**Status:** Select Committee

1. To undertake the overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of the housing related services and functions of the Communities Directorate;
2. To develop a programme of work each year, informed by relevant service aims and member priorities, to ensure that the housing related services and functions of the Communities Directorate are appropriate and responsive to the needs of residents, service users and others;
3. To consider any matter referred to the Select Committee by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet or a relevant Portfolio Holder, and to report and make recommendations directly to the Committee, the Cabinet or relevant Portfolio Holder when appropriate;
4. To consider the effect of Government actions or initiatives on the housing related services and functions of the Communities Directorate and any implications for the Council's residents, service users and others, and to respond to consultation activities as appropriate;
5. To establish working groups as necessary to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
6. To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers, insofar as they relate to the housing related services and functions of the Communities Directorate, to help develop appropriate policy;
7. To undertake performance monitoring in relation to the housing related services and functions of the Communities Directorate, against adopted key performance indicators and identified areas of concern;
8. To identify any matters within the housing related services and functions of the Communities Directorate that require in-depth scrutiny, for referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
9. Where requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to examine and review call-in requests and the implementation of executive decisions;
10. To recommend the establishment of task and finish panels to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary, in order to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;

11. To monitor progress with the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan Key Action Plans on a six-monthly basis; and
12. To consider matters relating to the performance of the Council's Repairs Management Contract.

**Chairman:** Cllr S Murray

## Housing Select Committee (Chairman – Cllr Stephen Murray)

### Work Programme 2015/16

Item	Report Deadline/Priority	Progress/Comments	Programme of Meetings
<b>Standard (Periodic) Items</b>			
(1) Performance against Housing Service Standards and Review (Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)	June 2015 (Medium)	<b>Completed</b> – June 2015	<del>16 June 2015</del> <del>8 September 2015</del> Cancelled 10 November 2015 12 January 2016 8 March 2016
(2) 6-Month Progress Report on Housing Strategy Action Plan 2015/16	June 2015 (Medium)	<b>Completed</b> – June 2015	
(3) Housing Key Performance Indicators (KPI) – 2014/15 Out-Turn	June 2015 (Low)	<b>Completed</b> – June 2015	
(4) Housing Key Performance Indicators (KPI) – Quarter 1	<del>September 2015</del> November 2015 (Low)	<b>Scheduled for November meeting</b>	
(5) Six-monthly Progress Report on Housing Business Plan Action Plan	November 2015 (Medium)	<b>Scheduled for November meeting</b>	
(6) Six-Month Review of the HRA Financial Plan	November 2015 (High)	<b>Scheduled for November meeting</b>	

(7) Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan – Annual Progress Report	November 2015 (Medium)	<b>No longer required</b> – A presentation is being given at this meeting of the Select Committee on the approach to dealing with private empty properties, and the Housing Portfolio Holder will be receiving a report shortly on a proposal to extend the existing Private Sector Housing Strategy (pending the formulation of a new Housing Strategy) – and this report will provide a progress report on the Action Plan
(8) Housing Strategy Action Plan 2016/17 <i>(Recommendations to Cabinet)</i>	January 2016 (Medium)	
(9) Housing Key Performance Indicators (KPI) – Quarter 2	January 2016 (Low)	
(10) Briefing on the proposed Council rent increase for 2016/17	January 2016 (Low)	
(11) Proposed housing service improvements and service enhancements – 2016/17 <i>(Recommendations to Cabinet)</i>	January 2016 (High)	
(12) Housing Key Performance Indicators (KPI) – Quarter 3	March 2016 (Low)	
(13) Housing Key Performance Indicators (KPI) – Targets for 2016/17	March 2016 (High)	
(14) 12-monthly Progress report on Housing Business Plan Action Plan 2015/16	March 2016 (Medium)	

(15) HRA Business Plan 2016/17 <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	March 2016 (High)	
<b>Special (Planned) Items</b>		
(16) Homelessness Strategy 2015-2018	June 2015 (High)	<b>Completed – June 2015</b>
(17) Housing Service Strategy on Housing and Estate Management (3-Year Review) <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	June 2015 (Medium)	<b>Completed – June 2015</b>
(18) Housing Service Strategy on Energy Efficiency (3-Year Review) <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	June 2015 (Medium)	<b>Completed – June 2015</b>
(19) Housing Service Strategy on Older Peoples Housing (3-Year Review) <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	June 2015 (Medium)	<b>Completed – June 2015</b>
(20) Housing Service Strategy on Harassment (3-Year Review) <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	<del>September 2015</del> November 2015 (Medium)	<b>Scheduled for November meeting</b>
(21) Results of the STAR Triennial Tenant Satisfaction Survey	November 2015 (High)	<b>Scheduled for November meeting</b>

(22) Housing Service Strategy on Empty Properties (3-Year Review) ( <i>Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder</i> )	<del>September 2015</del> January 2016 (Medium)	<b>Deferred to January 2016 meeting</b> – to take account of comments from the Select Committee on the presentation to the November meeting on the current and future approach to dealing with private empty properties.	
(23) Review of the approach to the Scheme Management Service to sheltered housing and properties designated for older people ( <i>Recommendations to Cabinet / Housing Portfolio Holder</i> )	<del>November 2015</del> March 2016 (High)	<b>Deferred to March 2016 meeting</b> – Officers are currently formulating the proposals, which need detailed consideration before they can be brought forward.	
(24) Report of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel on its Service Review of Tenant Involvement	<del>November 2015</del> June 2016 (Medium)	<b>Deferred to June 2016 meeting</b> – Very little progress has been made by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, which has been exacerbated by the recent departure of the Tenant Participation Officer. However, recruitment to the post is underway and the new officer will be assisting the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation to review its approach to tenant scrutiny.	
(25) Policy on HMO Licensing	<del>September 2015</del> January 2016 (High)		
(26) Housing Service Strategy on Rent Collection and Administration (3-Year Review) ( <i>Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder</i> )	<del>September 2015</del> January 2016 (Medium)		
(27) Housing Service Strategy on Home Ownership (3-Year Review) ( <i>Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder</i> )	<del>September 2015</del> March 2016 (Medium)		



(28) Review of the future use of sheltered/grouped housing scheme sites <i>(Recommendations to Cabinet / Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	March 2016 (High)		
(29) Housing Service Strategy on Housing Advice (3-Year Review) <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	March 2016 (Medium)		
(30) Housing Service Strategy on Under-Occupation (3-Year Review) <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	March 2016 (Medium)		
<b>Items added to Work Programme during the year</b>			
(31) Future approach to Housing Service Strategies	November 2015	<b>Scheduled for November meeting</b>	
(32) Presentation on the current and future approach to dealing with private empty properties	November 2015	<b>Scheduled for November meeting</b>	
(33) Response to DCLG consultation on mandatory "Pay to Stay" Scheme	November 2015	<b>Scheduled for November meeting</b>	
<b>Planned Items for Future Years</b>			
Interim (soft) review of the success of the pilot scheme to extend the opening hours of the Limes Centre, following 6 months' operation	June 2016 (Low)		

Review of Housing Management Staffing Levels following the introduction of Universal Credit	June 2016 (Medium)		
Housing Strategy 2016 – 2020	September 2016 (High)		
Annual Diversity Report of Housing Applicants <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	September 2016 (Medium)		
Presentation on Disabled Facilities Grants	September 2016 (Medium)		
Review of the success of the pilot scheme to extend the opening hours of the Limes Centre, following 12 months' operation	January 2017 (Medium)		
Review of Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Policy after 2 years operation (with any changes effective from April 2018)	October 2017 (High)		



### **Report to Housing Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 10 November 2015**

**Portfolio: Housing – Cllr David Stallan**

**Subject: Tenant Satisfaction Survey Report 2015**

**Officer contact for further information:**

**Alan Hall – Director of Housing (01992 564004)**

**Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 564607)**

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#### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- 1) That the headline findings of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey Report 2015, set out in the Executive Summary attached as an Appendix, be noted; and
- 2) That the Housing Select Committee provides any comments on the findings to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Communities.

#### **Report:**

1. The Council's Communities Directorate has been a member of Housemark, a national housing benchmarking club, for many years. Housemark has a standard Tenant Satisfaction Survey, called STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents), for its members to use to measure tenant satisfaction.

2. The Council commissioned an independent research company called ARP Research to carry out the STAR survey on its behalf. The survey conformed to the HouseMark STAR methodology, enabling the Council to benchmark against other landlords. The results were also compared against those from the last survey conducted in 2012.

3. These comparisons are available in the full-length report. The full report is also available to Members, but has not been printed with the agenda due to its length (66 pages). It is available to download from the Council's Committee Management System.

#### **Survey Methodology:**

##### *Fieldwork*

4. The survey took place between July and August 2015. ARP sent an anonymous postal self-completion questionnaire to a random sample of a third of our tenants (2,215), including both general needs and sheltered housing tenants. This was followed by a reminder questionnaire being sent to every non respondent.

##### *Response rates and accuracy*

5. A free prize draw was used to encourage response. A questionnaire was drawn at random from those returned and the winner received £200 high street shopping vouchers.

6. In total 798 tenants took part in the survey, which represented a 36% response rate. This figure is in line with response rates achieved by many other councils and is well in excess of the STAR target.

### *Sampling*

7. Both ARP Research and HouseMark recommend that surveys of less than 10,000 in population (like the Council) should achieve a sampling error of at least +/- 4% at the 95% confidence level. This means that, for example, if 35% of tenants answered “yes” to a question, there are 95 chances out of 100 that the correct figure for all tenants (including those who did not respond) would be between 31% and 39% (i.e. 4% above or below 35%).

8. Due to the good response rate, the accuracy was even better than planned, and is to within +/- 2.8% at the 95% confidence interval. This included a response rate of 33% amongst general needs tenants (615, error margin +/- 3.7) and 52% for sheltered housing (183, error margin +/-6.7), with the overall response rate for the former exceeding the stipulated STAR target error margin.

### *Weighting*

9. In order to make sure the sample was representative of the overall profile of tenants it was necessary to weight the data by age category.

### *Presentation of the findings in the full report*

10. The full report presents the findings of the survey for both general needs and sheltered housing tenants. The report focuses on the key findings of the survey and the results are analysed by:

- Tenure
- Age of tenant
- Gender of tenant
- Area
- Property type
- Number of bedrooms
- Comparison with previous surveys, and
- Comparison with the results from other landlords

### *Overall tenant satisfaction and comparison with other landlords*

11. Since the Executive Summary is attached, the findings are not summarised further in this report. However, it is worth reporting here the comments on overall level of tenant satisfaction (which is the main comparator that is reported and used to compare with other landlords). According to the full report produced by ARP Research:

“ Overall the resident satisfaction survey results in 2015 were broadly similar in comparison to the last STAR survey, with satisfaction scores only varying by one or two percentage points on the majority of core questions compared to 2012. Furthermore, for those areas where benchmark information is available the vast majority of results were generally at or above average when compared with other landlords”.

12. The core STAR questions are benchmarked against the HouseMark STAR database, with the benchmarking group being selected by the Council from councils and housing associations nationwide who had completed a STAR survey in the last year. For the overall satisfaction score this included 64 organisations. HouseMark benchmark scores are supplemented for the remaining questions with benchmark data from ARP Research clients who have carried out surveys in the last 3 years using the STAR questionnaire. The group selection has been verified against the core HouseMark data to ensure that both benchmark

groups are closely matched on their scores across the core questions. This supplementary group includes 13 organisations.

13. Members are asked to note these findings and provide any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Communities accordingly.

**Reason for decision:**

Although there is no longer a requirement to undertake Tenant Satisfaction Surveys, it is considered important for Members and Officers to understand the views of tenants, and to gauge their levels of satisfaction on a periodic basis.

**Options considered and rejected:**

Consideration was given whether to include questions relating to equality and diversity. It was decided not to include the full set of questions as this information was collated during the 2013 Tenant Census.

**Consultation undertaken:**

A consultation exercise with relevant officers was undertaken in June to ensure the survey questions covered important issues. The resulting survey comprised of 29 approved questions, including the 7 core STAR questions.

Housing managers were asked to provide details of any vulnerable tenants. These were excluded from the sample.

The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation will be consulted on the STAR report at their next meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November. Their comments will be reported in the subsequent report to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

**Resource implications:**

Budget provision: Cost of approximately £8,000 met from the Housing Revenue Account

Personnel: Within existing officer time

Land: N/A

Community Plan/BVPP reference: N/A

Relevant statutory powers: N/A

Background papers: N/A

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: N/A

Key Decision reference (if required): N/A

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## 2. Executive summary

bench mark	2012 result	change over time *	proportion of tenants	
87%	88%	↓	87%	satisfaction overall
85%	89%	see section 4	85%	quality of home
82%	84%	↓	82%	value for money of rent
73%	N.A.	N.A.	73%	value for money of service charge
71%	61%	↑	62%	listens & acts on views
79%	83%	↓	82%	kept informed
70%	72%	↑	77%	final outcome of enquiry
82%	82%	↑	84%	repairs & maintenance overall
82%	N.A.	N.A.	87%	last completed repair
85%	88%	↓	87%	neighbourhood as a place to live

\* colour if statistically significant

### Overall satisfaction

1. The 2015 survey results for EFDC's tenants were in most cases similar to those achieved in the previous survey carried out in 2012. In addition, where benchmark data is available in the majority of cases EFDC appears in the top two quartiles of results when compared to the HouseMark benchmark database of similar landlords.
2. Overall satisfaction with the services that the Council's tenants receive from EFDC remained essentially the same as in 2012, with 87% of tenants now claiming to be satisfied, including 46% who were 'very satisfied'. This score was slightly above the median for other landlords within the HouseMark benchmark database (85%, section 3).

## 2. Executive summary

3. Areas where the scores seemed particularly positive included the repairs and maintenance service, including very good scores for the last completed repair (section 5), a significant increase in ratings for how the Council deals with anti-social behaviour (ASB) (section 9), and customer services which had seen a significant increase in satisfaction with the outcome of enquires (section 6). Conversely, satisfaction with the quality of the home was lower than in 2012, although there might have been methodological reasons for this (see below), satisfaction that the Housing Service listened to tenants' views was lower than average (section 8), and there was dissatisfaction amongst some tenants with communal cleaning (section 9).
4. A 'key driver' analysis is a statistical test to check which other results in the survey are best at predicting overall satisfaction. In descending order of strength, the top four key drivers for tenants are listed below.
  - Quality of the home (85% satisfied, section 4)
  - Ability of staff to deal with queries (83%, section 6)
  - Repairs and maintenance overall (84%, section 5)
  - Service charge value for money (73%, section 4)

### The home

5. Satisfaction with the quality of the home was the primary key driver of overall satisfaction (section 3), and was rated significantly lower than it had been in 2012 (85% v 89%), but around the level expected of other similar landlords (84% benchmark, section 4). However, this result is somewhat misleading as the 2012 survey was less representative of the overall tenant population than the current survey. Indeed, when a like for like comparison is done using unweighted data, satisfaction had barely changed (88%, was 89%).
6. Significantly lower than average levels were reported with the quality and condition of the home by those living in in properties built between 1965 and 1974, whereas those in older properties built between 1945 and 1964 were significantly more satisfied. By patch, respondents in Epping & North Weald were significantly more satisfied, whereas those in Oakwood Hill & Loughton South, Waltham Abbey Estates South and Limes Farm & Chigwell were significantly less satisfied than average.

### Customer services

7. The overall perception for the manner in which the Housing Service deals with enquiries had not changed since 2012, remaining at 85% satisfaction. However, this was a little higher than the expected median score of 82% amongst other landlords (section 6).
8. As in 2012, four out of five respondents (83%) were satisfied with the ability of staff to deal with queries. However, there had been a significant improvement in satisfaction with the final outcome (77%, up from 72%). In both cases, satisfaction was well above the benchmark median putting the Council's customer service scores in the top quartile of providers. Furthermore, there had also been a similar significant increase in satisfaction with how complaints were dealt with (71%, up from 68%).

### Repairs and maintenance

9. Overall satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service was rated slightly above the level one would expect based upon other landlords, with 84% of the sample being satisfied compared to a median benchmark target score of 82%. This score was also slightly higher than that reported in 2012 (was 82%, section 5).



## 2. Executive summary

10. This is particularly important as repairs and maintenance was the second key driver of overall satisfaction behind the quality of the home. These results are encouraging, as they will have had an impact on satisfaction with the Housing Service overall, and may well have been a factor in a number of the other questions where satisfaction had also improved.
11. When tenants were asked about their most recent repair, it was positive to find levels of satisfaction had barely changed with all but one aspect of the service rated high enough to appear in the top quartile of providers. The best predictor of satisfaction with the repairs service were the quality of the work (88% satisfied), speed of completion (89% satisfied) and the repair being done 'right first time' (80% satisfied). There was also a very strong relationship between whether workers showed proof of identity (89% satisfied) or not shown (74%) and overall satisfaction with the service.

### Value for money

12. It would seem that value for money is an issue for the Council's tenants in 2015, in particular the value for money provided by the service charge which was a key driver of satisfaction overall. Three quarters of tenants were satisfied in this regard (73%), which is broadly in line with other providers where the median score is 74% (section 4). Communal cleaning services may be a factor in this appearing as a key driver, as almost a quarter of those who rated such services said that they were dissatisfied (see section 9).
13. A somewhat larger proportion of tenants were also satisfied that their rent provides value for money (82%), which equalled the benchmark median putting the organisation in the second quartile of providers.

### Information and resident involvement

14. The extent to which respondents felt that EFDC's Housing Service listens to their views and acts upon them remains broadly unchanged since 2012 (62%, up from 61%). However, in contrast with the customer service questions, this result is well below the benchmark average (71%), putting the Council in the bottom quartile of providers (section 8).
15. In terms of what this result means, it is quite likely that it is more closely related to day to day customer transactions than it is to wider tenant involvement, indeed satisfaction was significantly lower for those who had made contact in the last year (58%) than those who had not (64%).
16. Nevertheless, only 17% were aware of the Tenant Participation Officer, a similar proportion said they would consider getting involved in a tenants' group (14%). Whilst awareness of the TPO increased with age, it was tenants aged 35 – 49 who were more likely to consider getting involved in one of the tenants' groups (24%).
17. Moving on to consider what tenants thought of the level of information provided by the Housing Service, it was again the case that the results were similar to those achieved in 2012 (82%, was 83%) and as a consequence remained well above the benchmark target of 79%, placing EFDC in the top quartile of providers.

### Online access

18. When asked, two out of three respondents said they have access to the internet (63%). The majority had access at home (43%, 68% of users), but it is notable that around three quarters of those who used the internet did so via smartphone, which encompassed around a half of all respondents (49%). Tablets were also popular, being used by 41% of all those with internet (section 7).

## 2. Executive summary

19. Other than simple lack of interest, the cost of equipment was the biggest barrier to getting online (32% of non-users), with around a quarter also mentioning a connection costs, a lack of confidence and lack of knowledge.

### Neighbourhood services

20. The majority of respondents were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a safe place to live (87%), including more than half who were 'very satisfied' (54%). On the opposite end of the scale only 9% expressed any dissatisfaction. This result obviously varied by patch with those living in the following significantly more satisfied than average:

- Epping & North Weald
- Abridge, Nazeing, Theydon & Rural
- Ongar & Epping Rural
- Buckhurst Hill & Loughton South

In contrast, respondents in the following areas were significantly less so (see section 9):

- Limes Farm & Chigwell
- Oakwood Hill & Loughton South
- Waltham Abbey Estates South

21. The experience of anti-social behaviour (ASB) is something that has an obvious impact on how people perceive their neighbourhood, so the results will have been helped by the fact that a significantly greater proportion of tenants were now satisfied with the way in which EFDC deals with ASB (67% v 62% in 2012), whilst one in five (19%) were ambivalent, and 15% were dissatisfied. This meant that the Council matched the score one would normally expect, whereas before it was below average.
22. Respondents were slightly more satisfied with the cleaning of external communal areas than internal (65% and 63% respectively) which is the opposite of what is typically the case. The two areas of communal cleaning also differed when compared to the respective benchmark medians with external cleaning comparing favourably (65% v 63% average), but tenants rated the cleaning of internal communal areas somewhat below average (63% v 68% average).

### Sheltered housing

23. As previously noted, respondents living in sheltered accommodation were usually the most satisfied group. It was therefore unsurprising that when asked to rate the services specific to them, in each case the majority of respondents claimed to be satisfied. When compared to the benchmark average the majority of results were generally very close to the median. Indeed, to emphasise exactly how satisfied this group of customers were, for each aspect of the care and support service rated, the proportion who were 'very satisfied' did not fall below 55% and went as high as 78% (section 10).

## **Report to Housing Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 10 November 2015**

**Portfolio: Housing – Councillor D Stallan**

**Subject: Council Response to DCLG Consultation on Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing**



**Officer contact for further information: Roger Wilson extension 4419**

**Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins extension 4607**

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**That the Housing Select Committee give consideration to the Council's response to the DCLG Consultation Paper "Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing" attached as an Appendix to the report.**

### **Report:**

#### **The Panel's response to the Government's Original Consultation Paper "Pay to Stay"**

1. In June 2013, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued a Consultation Paper entitled "High Income Social Tenants Pay to Stay".

2. At that time, the Government set out their intention that local authorities should be given the flexibility to charge those with high incomes (£60,000 per year) a higher level of rent to stay in their own homes. The DCLG's proposal at that time was based on higher rents being set at 80% of market rents (similar to the affordable rent levels). The Council's response to each of the questions asked within the previous Consultation Paper was agreed by the Panel and was, in summary, as follows:

- The principle that very high earners living in social housing should pay higher rents was agreed but providing that income thresholds are set to ensure residents have a reasonable expendable income and bureaucracy is kept to a minimum;
- The Panel's initial view was that the Council would be likely to make use of it provided the income received was more than the cost of the scheme;
- It is considered that the scheme could promote low income "ghettos" and the effect on mixed communities in social housing should be taken into account;
- Income thresholds should be based upon property size and should be increased annually as rents increase;
- There should be different thresholds for different areas of the country;
- Having an absolute threshold would give tenants a reduced incentive to increase earnings and a person's expendable income could reduce dramatically following a small increase in earnings;
- There should be provision to take into account other high earners within the household;
- Income disclosure arrangements must be put in place in advance; and
- The income threshold should be no less than £60,000.

#### **Government Guidance "Rents for Social Housing"**

3. At its meeting on 22 July 2014, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered the matter again.

The DCLG issued its Guidance on Rents for Social Housing, which came into effect from April 2015. Contained within the Guidance at Chapter 4 is the current Guidance on Rents for Social Tenants with High Incomes. For social tenants with high incomes, the Government does not expect local authorities to adhere to its Social Rent Policy for properties let to households with an income of £60,000 per year; authorities will be able instead to choose to charge them up to full market rent. The DCLG's policy is based on tenants being charged full market rents, and not 80% of market rents proposed at the consultation stage.

4. As there are currently no powers to compel tenants to tell their landlords how much they earn, the Panel agreed that a further report will be submitted when such powers are in place.

### **DCLG Consultation Paper - Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing**

5. In October 2015, the Government issued a further Consultation Paper Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing. The closing date for responses is 20 November 2015. A copy is attached as an Appendix to the report. Although Members are able to comment on any aspect of the Paper, attention is particularly drawn to the two questions on which views are invited. The questions are set out below along with comments from officers:

6. Question 1 (Page 7) "how income thresholds should operate beyond the minimum threshold set at Budget, for example through the use of a simple taper/multiple thresholds that increase the amount of rent as income increases and whether the starting threshold should be set in relation to eligibility for Housing Benefit?"

#### ***Officer comments on Question 1***

7. It is considered that the introduction of a simple taper would be a sensible approach on the basis that as a tenant's taxable income increases the level of rent increases. However, this would make the administrative arrangements even more difficult.

In terms of the starting threshold being set in relation to eligibility for Housing Benefit, the Assistant Director (Benefits) has made the following comments:

- It would be difficult to set a general threshold due to many variables bearing in mind that each housing benefit claim is decided upon based on individual circumstances including rent, household composition and income
- Varying rent levels throughout the year generally will cause increased administrative difficulties with the calculation of benefits

8. Question 2 (Page 8) Based on the current system and powers that Local Authorities have, what is your estimate of the administrative costs and what are the factors that drive these costs?

#### ***Officer comments on Question 2***

9. It is considered that, in order to administer the Scheme (and particularly if there are to be a simple taper), an additional 2 (FTE) members of staff would be required. This resource would be needed to deal with matters such as; tenants changing incomes and rent levels, backdating increased payments and refunds, altering a tenant's rent in accordance with their Tenancy Conditions and undertaking regular reviews.

10. It would also be necessary to undertake data matching exercises with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) who themselves data match with HMRC. As such a Scheme is open to fraud, it is considered that an additional 1 (FTE) Fraud Officer would be needed.

11. When taking into account the additional IT requirements etc. the overall administrative costs could be around £75,000 per annum.

### **General comments of officers**

12. Officers would make the following additional comments on the Consultation Paper:

- It should be noted that the Paper refers to “taxable income” which is not only income gained from employment
- When a tenant’s taxable income changes, under Tenancy Law and the Council’s Standard Tenancy Agreement the rent may only be altered on written Notice of no less than 4 weeks’ Notice being given to the Tenant by the Council specifying the rent proposed
- As money raised by Local Authorities will need to be returned to the Exchequer (less any reasonable administrative costs) there is no incentive to Local Authorities to administer the Scheme
- There is no mention of any fraud sanction and whether it would be a criminal offence, or if possession action should be taken
- The current discretionary Scheme only applies to those of working age the Consultation Paper is silent on this point

13. The Housing Select Committee is asked to consider the Council’s response. The deadline for responses is 20 November 2015.

#### **Consultation undertaken:**

The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation will be updated at their meeting on 2 December 2015.

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Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing

Consultation



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August 2015

ISBN: 978-1-4098-4677-2



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# The Consultation Process and How to Respond

## Basic Information

<b>To:</b>	This is a public consultation and it is open to anyone with an interest in these proposals to respond.
<b>Body responsible for the consultation:</b>	The Department for Communities and Local Government is responsible for the policy and the consultation exercise.
<b>Duration:</b>	This consultation will run for 6 weeks. It will begin on 9 <sup>th</sup> October and end on 20 <sup>th</sup> November.
<b>Enquiries:</b>	Email: <a href="mailto:paytostay@communities.gsi.gov.uk">paytostay@communities.gsi.gov.uk</a>
<b>How to respond:</b>	Please respond to this consultation via email to <a href="mailto:paytostay@communities.gsi.gov.uk">paytostay@communities.gsi.gov.uk</a>  Postal responses can be sent to:  William Richardson Department of Communities & Local Government 3 G/10, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London, SW1E 5DU
<b>After the consultation:</b>	A summary of responses to the consultation will be published and the views expressed will be considered by the Government.

# Overview

<b>Topic of this Consultation:</b>	Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing
<b>Scope of this Consultation:</b>	<p>This consultation is designed to help inform the detailed design of the policy in certain areas. The Government will take views on board as it moves to implement the policy from April 2017 onwards.</p> <p>However, Government will also need to be guided by the overall level of savings that have been set out at Budget and will need to ensure that the design of the policy is able to deliver those savings. In responding to the consultation it will outline how views have been considered and why decisions have been made.</p>
<b>Geographical Scope:</b>	England only
<b>Impact Assessment:</b>	A full impact assessment will be published at a later date. It will be important for that work to be informed by the questions in this consultation on the administrative costs of the policy.

# Introduction

1. The Government's view is that tenants in social housing should not always benefit automatically from subsidised rents. There needs to be a better deal in the social housing sector, with housing at subsidised rents going to those people who genuinely need it.
2. On that basis, the Government has decided that social housing tenants with household incomes of £40,000 and above in London, and £30,000 and above in the rest of England, will be required to pay an increased level of rent for their accommodation if their rent is currently being subsidised below market rent levels.
3. This will build on the current 'pay to stay' policy which is available to local authority and housing associations to operate voluntarily.
4. Money raised by local authorities through increased rents will need to be returned to the exchequer to contribute to deficit reduction. Housing Associations will be able to use the additional income to reinvest in new housing.
5. Our starting assumption is that the policy will operate in broadly the same way as the current Pay to Stay policy, i.e:
  - household means the tenant or joint tenants named on the tenancy agreement, and any tenant's spouse, civil partner or partner where they reside in the rental accommodation. Where several people live in the property the highest two incomes should be taken into account for household income.
  - income means taxable income in the tax year ending in the financial year prior to the financial (i.e. rent) year in question.
  - where a HIST tenancy comes to an end, and the property is vacated, we would expect properties to typically be re-let in line with their previous lower rent – be it at social rent or Affordable Rent – to a household in housing need.
6. Government will also consider what additional powers could be useful, for example, to require the provision of information by tenants
7. The Government will use primary legislation to bring forward powers to implement the policy and ensure it is in place from April 2017 onwards. We expect that the detail of the policy will be set out in regulations.

# Scope of the consultation

8. This consultation is designed to help inform the detailed design of the policy in relation to work incentives and administration. The Government will take views on board as it moves to implement the policy from April 2017 onwards. However, it will also need to be guided by the overall level of savings that have been set out at Budget and will need to ensure that the design of the policy is able to deliver those savings.
9. The areas where views are sought are:
  - how the scheme can support incentives to work
  - evidence of administrative costs

# Supporting work incentives

10. The Government wants to ensure that the policy supports work incentives, and is seeking views on how the policy can be designed to achieve this whilst ensuring that tenants pay a fair rent.
11. A gradual increase in rent for social tenants as their incomes rise may be a fairer system. One way this could be achieved is through a system that would ensure that households earning in excess of minimum income thresholds would pay increasing amounts of rent as income increases, for example in the form of a simple taper.
12. There will be different options for how this could be implemented, and there will be trade-offs between ensuring rent closely reflects income and simplicity and certainty for both the tenants and the landlord. We do not expect, for example, that rents will be adjusted frequently. However there will be choices over how social landlords respond to changed tenant circumstances, for example, where a household is subject to a sudden and ongoing loss of income.

**Q1:** Views are invited on:

- how income thresholds should operate beyond the minimum threshold set at Budget, for example through the use of a simple taper / multiple thresholds that increase the amount of rent as income increases.
- whether the starting threshold should be set in relation to eligibility for Housing Benefit.

# Evidence of administrative costs

13. Social landlords will be required to administer the policy.
  14. The proposal is that local authorities will be allowed to recover any reasonable administrative costs before they are required to return additional income from increased rents to the exchequer. We expect that the types and level of costs that can be retained will be prescribed. As housing associations will be retaining the income they receive from higher rent payments to invest in new housing, they will be expected to absorb the administrative costs.
  15. We expect that local authorities already have systems and processes in place that could be modified to operate the pay to stay policy. The additional administrative resource that is likely to be required is staff time in operating the scheme.
  16. Housing associations may incur additional costs in setting up systems. However, as the policy is going to allow those associations to keep the additional rent money to reinvest in social housing, they should be able to cover those costs.
  17. The Government will be publishing an impact assessment in due course that will outline the scale of the administrative costs for housing associations and is using this consultation to ask for evidence and views on the operation of the policy.
- Q2:** Based on the current systems and powers that Local Authorities have, what is your estimate of the administrative costs and what are the factors that drive these costs?

## **Report to Housing Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 10 November 2015**

**Portfolio: Housing – Cllr David Stallan**

**Subject: Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on Harassment**

**Officer contact for further information: Lyndsay Swan (01992 564146)**

**Alan Hall – Director of Communities (01992 564004)**

**Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 564607)**



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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

That the Housing Scrutiny Select Committee considers and endorses the Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on Harassment, attached as an appendix, and provides any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder for incorporation.

### **Report:**

1. The Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategies were originally produced more than 15 years ago in accordance with an agreed standard framework, and have since been updated. The Strategies give more detail than the Council's main Housing Strategy on the various housing services provided. In total, 17 Housing Service Strategies have been produced to date, covering:

Equality and Diversity	Rent Arrears
Housing and Neighbourhood Management	Rent Collection and Administration
Tenant Participation	Under-occupation
Private Rented Sector	Housing Information
Empty Council Properties	Older Peoples' Housing Services
Anti-Social Behaviour	Energy Efficiency
House Sales and Leasehold Services	Harassment
Prevention of Social Housing Fraud	

2. The Strategies are produced to a common format that sets out how individual housing services will be delivered. They assisted the Housing Directorate in achieving the Customer Service Excellence award and ISO 9001:2008 Quality Accreditation, and have been important to meeting the minimum requirement for Housing Related Support (formerly Supporting People) funding under the conditions of the contract.

3. The Housing Select Committee is asked to consider and endorse the updated Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on Harassment attached as an appendix to the report, and provide any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder for incorporation.

**Reason for decision:**

The former Housing Scrutiny Panel reviewed all Housing Directorate Service Strategies on a three-yearly basis. They assisted the Housing Directorate in achieving the Customer Service Excellence award and ISO 9001:2008 Quality Accreditation, and have been important to meeting the minimum requirement for Housing Related Support funding under the conditions of the contract.

**Options considered and rejected:**

Not to review the Housing Service Strategy on Harassment.

**Consultation undertaken:**

The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation were consulted on the Strategy at their meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015 and their comments have been incorporated into the Strategy.

**Resource implications:**

Budget provision: N/A

Personnel: N/A

Land: N/A

Community Plan/BVPP reference: N/A

Relevant statutory powers: As set out in the Strategy

Background papers: N/A

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: As set out in the Strategy

Key Decision reference: (if required) N/A None



**Epping Forest District Council**  
**HOUSING SERVICES STRATEGY on**  
**HARASSMENT**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 This Housing Service Strategy sets out the Communities Directorate's approach to dealing with acts or allegations of harassment involving those accessing the Council's housing services. This includes the harassment of tenants of privately-rented residential property by their landlords, and, to a limited extent, of landlords by their tenants. It explains how this issue is dealt with by the Housing Service and includes links with other policies and services, both internally and externally. One of these is the housing service's 'Strategy and Statement on Anti-Social Behaviour Policies and Procedures' (Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy). Although harassment in the community may often be classed as anti-social behaviour, this Strategy deals more specifically with the issue of harassment and bullying.

1.2 The Housing Service's Strategy and Statement on Anti-Social Behaviour Policies and Procedures relates to the Council's approach to anti-social behaviour on its housing estates. It defines harassment and anti-social behaviour as "any act or omission which interferes with the peace and comfort of, or which may cause nuisance, annoyance, injury or offence to:

- tenants, members of their household, their visitors or neighbours;
- the Council's employees and contractors; or,
- any other member of the general public."

1.3 Anti-discrimination legislation defines harassment as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular by creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

1.4 This Housing Service Strategy on Harassment is consistent with the Council's role as a good employer when dealing with harassment in the workplace. Further details about how the Council handles allegations of workplace harassment may be obtained from the Council's Human Resources Team.

1.5 Harassment can take many forms and can be triggered by many things. People may suffer from bullying or harassment because of their appearance, actions and habits or identity. Examples include harassment linked to a person's colour, religion, nationality, gender, sexuality, age, disability, cultural traditions and lifestyle. Harassment is defined by the impact on the recipient not the intention of the perpetrator. Harassment involves the abuse of some form of collective or individual power.

1.6 Harassment more often occurs as a result of a series of incidents which results in a damaging effect on the recipient. However, in some cases, a serious single incident may be sufficient to create a hostile and intimidating environment.

1.7 In privately-rented properties, harassment is commonly reported as a result of landlords interfering with the quiet enjoyment of those living in a property as their

tenants. An example of this would be if a landlord persistently withdrew services that are reasonably required for the occupation of the premises, such as the removal of hot water. It might also involve the landlord making constant visits to the property or entering the accommodation without permission. In these circumstances the harassment may be perpetrated in an attempt to get the tenant to vacate the premises.

1.8 Occupiers of residential park home sites have historically been particularly vulnerable to harassment by site operators that own the land on which the homes are sited. This may take various forms such as withholding services or facilities or preventing improvements to the home.

1.9 Owners of residential park homes can be subject to harassment by park home site operators who may, for example, actively prevent the sale of their home to a third party or take other bullying action for financial gain (for example, requiring that a homeowner can only purchase goods or services provided by the owner). The Mobile Homes Act 2013 amends previous legislation to address specific issues of harassment by site operators on owners and occupiers of park homes.

1.10 The Council is currently reviewing the condition of the accommodation of workers on commercial food growing nurseries in the District. Although many of these workers are living in mobile homes, they are not covered under the Mobile Homes Act. Like nursery workers that live in types of on-site accommodation, they are tenants and are protected from harassment in the same way as other tenants.

1.11 Dealing effectively with all forms of harassment, in and around residential buildings owned and/or managed by the Council and those subject to private renting, is an important role for the Council. The Council's Standard Tenancy Agreement for its own tenants was updated in February 2014. Under Section 8 it sets out conditions relating to nuisance and anti-social behaviour. More specifically, under Section 8 (a) it covers "harassment on the grounds of age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Breaches of these 'Conditions of Tenancy' could result in prosecution, an injunction and/or repossession of the premises.

1.12 With regard to issues in the private sector, the Council must have regard to the Regulator Code made under section 23 of the Legislative and Regulatory Act 2006 when considering enforcement action it may take including cases of harassment and illegal eviction in privately-rented living accommodation. Ultimately this could lead to the prosecution of a landlord, either in a Magistrates Court or in the Crown Court, with penalties upon conviction including a fine and/or imprisonment.

1.13 The Housing Service is well placed to promote equality, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations (statutory duties for public authorities) in its role as a housing authority, working in partnership with other registered social housing providers to develop and manage affordable housing in the District, and carrying out its statutory duties to maintain standards in private sector housing.

1.14 Furthermore, the Council has a role in supporting vulnerable tenants within the community and homeless people to whom a duty is owed, who may be more at risk of harassment by other people.

1.15 As with related issues, such as responding to racist, homophobic and anti-social behaviour, the Council works in partnership with relevant agencies through the Community Safety Partnership.

1.16 The Strategy has been developed in accordance with the provisions of the legislation identified in Section 5 and, where relevant, associated codes of practice.

1.17 The Housing Service Strategy on Harassment has been developed in consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinating Group and the three Citizens Advice Bureaux.

1.18 The Housing Service Strategy on Harassment was considered in detail by the Council's Housing Scrutiny Panel and agreed by the Housing Portfolio Holder on xxxxx.

## **2. Background to the Service**

2.1 The Council owns and manages a stock of around 6,400 properties in addition to which there are approximately 7,800 privately-rented properties throughout the District (Private Sector House Condition Survey 2011). There are Council homes in towns and villages throughout the District, while Chigwell, Loughton, Waltham Abbey, Epping and Ongar have some larger estates. The Council also works closely with several housing associations to develop affordable housing for rent. There are over 1,700 housing association properties in the District. Some people on the Housing Register (waiting list) are offered a housing association property for which the Council has nomination rights instead of a council-owned home.

2.2 The Council also has sheltered housing for older people and these are covered by 'Scheme Managers' who visit residents on every duty day. The Council also provides a homeless person's hostel, Norway House, in North Weald with around 40 rooms plus shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. A further 10 "chalets" with shared facilities are located in the grounds. The Hostel is overseen by a Manager and two Deputy Managers.

2.3 Careline is a twenty-four hour emergency alarm service provided to people living in sheltered housing as well as other vulnerable residents in the private sector.

## **3. Relationships with Other Documents**

3.1 The following documents complement or have an effect on the Strategy:

- Housing Service's 'Strategy and Statement on Anti-Social Behaviour Policies and Procedures' (Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy);
- Community Safety Team Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Procedures;
- Housing Service Strategy on Equality and Diversity;
- Housing Service Strategy on Housing and Neighbourhood Management;
- Housing Charter;
- Housing News;
- Housing Allocations Scheme;
- Housing Appeals and Review Panel Application Pack;
- Private Sector Housing Strategy;
- Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy and,
- Standard Tenancy Agreement.

3.2 The following Corporate strategies, policies and procedures also have links with this Strategy:

- Corporate Equality Framework, Policy and Scheme;

- Corporate Safeguarding Procedures;
- ‘Dignity at Work’ and ‘Grievance’ procedures for Council employees;
- Staff equality/diversity training;
- CCTV Codes of Practice;
- Equality monitoring statistics and census data; and,
- Corporate Compliments and Complaints procedure.

3.3 The following strategies, policies, procedures and schemes delivered in partnership with other agencies, are also relevant to this strategy:

- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs);
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC);
- Hate Crime reporting procedures (relating to racist, homophobic and transgender incidents, harassment and victimisation);
- Housing Services Guidelines for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults from Abuse;
- Floating Support Scheme for single adults with care and support needs;
- Safe and Sound Scheme for women experiencing domestic violence;
- EFDC Sanctuary Scheme for high risk victims of domestic abuse
- High and medium risk security surveys by EFDC, Police and Voluntary Sector for victims of domestic abuse;
- Mediation services; and,
- Careline twenty-four hour emergency alarm systems.

#### **4. Aims and Objectives**

4.1 The Communities Directorate condemns all forms of harassment and bullying and recognises that harassment is defined by the impact on the victim of harassment, not by the intentions of the alleged perpetrator.

4.2 The housing service in the Communities Directorate is committed to:

- Preventing harassment through positive action and the use of sanctions where necessary;
- Encouraging victims and witnesses of harassment to report it and seek help without fear;
- Taking seriously allegations of harassment;
- Supporting victims of harassment;
- Taking action to prevent further acts of harassment;
- Treating all parties with dignity and respect and taking action based on an objective and unbiased assessment of the situation, taking all the circumstances into account; and,
- Training staff to recognise and deal effectively with allegations of harassment in a fair and professional manner.

4.3 The target audience for this Strategy is:

- Epping Forest District Members;
- Staff in the Communities Directorate;
- Tenants and leaseholders in Council-owned residential properties and other people living in the same communities;
- Tenants and landlords in the private sector;
- Managing Agents; and,
- The Council’s partner agencies.

- 4.4 The objectives of this Strategy are to:
- Raise awareness about the nature and impact of harassment within the community;
  - Raise awareness about the options and support for dealing with it;
  - Raise awareness about how the Council and its partners will respond;
  - Raise awareness about the implications for perpetrators of harassment;
  - Ensure that, wherever possible, incidents of harassment are always recorded and reported to the correct body;
  - Develop effective support mechanisms in partnership with other agencies;
  - Ensure allegations of harassment are properly and promptly investigated by people who understand the issues;
  - Take effective action against alleged perpetrators, in partnership with other agencies, using all legal remedies;
  - Ensure that Council staff and other people working with the Council are trained to identify incidents of harassment and know how to respond effectively;
  - Monitor the numbers and types of incidents and the actions taken by the Council in response; and,
  - Ensure that the Council meets legislative requirements.

## **5. Statutory Requirements**

5.1 The following legislation has particular implications for services delivered by public authorities, including housing services, in relation to harassment and promoting good relations between people in the community:

### **5.1.1 Human Rights Act 1998**

It is unlawful for a public authority to act in a way that is incompatible with rights in the European Convention on Human Rights. The Act includes the following rights to:

- Private and family life, home and correspondence (Article 8);
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion and to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance (Article 9);
- Men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and to found a family (Article 12); and,
- The enjoyment of rights and freedoms set forth without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status (Article 14).

### **5.1.2 Protection from Harassment Act 1997**

- This legislation concerns any conduct classed as harassment, wherever it takes place.
- The Act provides for a civil or criminal remedy in cases of harassment of another person or putting them in fear of violence.
- Deliberate intent does not have to be proved – the test is whether a reasonable person would have known that such conduct would cause someone to feel alarmed or distressed.
- If harassment is found, actions taken could include an award for damages, an injunction, a restraining order, a fine or imprisonment.

### 5.1.3 Equality Act 2010

The Council has a number of responsibilities and requirements under the Equality Act 2010. Broadly these 'General Equality Duties' are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

The 'protected characteristics' are age, disability, faith or belief, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and sexual orientation.

The Council also complies with its duty under the Act to produce and publish equality information to demonstrate that it is complying with its equalities duties. This information has been published since January 2012 and is updated regularly.

### 5.1.4 Housing Act 1996

This Act includes:

- Discretionary powers for any Local Authority to introduce an Introductory Tenancy Scheme for all new secure tenants;
- An additional ground for possession for any tenant committing acts of domestic abuse; and,
- Proceedings in Anti-Social Behaviour cases expedited by the removal of the 4 week Notice period.

### 5.1.5 Crime & Disorder Act 1998

Section 17 (1) of this act requires each authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

### 5.1.6 Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014

- Absolute power of possession for anti-social behaviour;
- Discretionary power of possession where tenant or person living with the tenant has been convicted of an offence committed at the scene of a riot;
- Criminal Behaviour Orders;
- Civil Injunctions to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance;
- Community Protection Orders;
- The "Community Trigger";
- Amendments to the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991; and,
- Further controls on the licensing of fire-arms.

This legislation also allows for the response to anti-social behaviour cases to be reviewed if requested by individuals and that request meets an agreed threshold. This has been referred to previously as a 'community trigger'. Epping Forest District Council has published anti-social behaviour case review procedures which are consistent with Essex county wide procedures and agreed by The Police and Crime Commissioner.

### 5.1.7 Housing Act 2004

This Act covers:

- Powers to Extend the period of an Introductory Tenancy by a further 6 months;
- Right of a secure tenant to mutual exchange denied if they are the subject of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order; and,
- Right of a secure tenants Right to Buy denied if they are the subject of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order.

#### 5.1.8 Protection from Eviction Act 1977

The Act specifies that landlords must apply to Court before regaining possession; and that any Notices served must give the tenant 28 days' notice.

#### 5.1.9 Mobile Homes Act 1983 as amended by the Mobile Homes Act 2013

Section 2c (8) of the Act makes it an offence for a site operator to prevent a mobile home owner selling his home to a third party or to take any steps that are likely to have that effect.

#### 5.1.10 Mobile Homes (Site Rules) (England) Regulations 2014

These Regulations were introduced under the Mobile Homes Act 2013 to protect mobile home owners from discrimination and unreasonable requirements by site operators.

#### 5.1.11 Caravan Sites Act 1968 (as amended by the Mobile Homes Act 2013)

Section 3 of the Act covers:

- the illegal eviction of occupiers from their caravan (mobile home/park home);
- withdrawing or withholding services or facilities, or interfering with the peace or comfort of an occupier such that the occupier is likely to leave their home or be stopped from doing something they are entitled to do; and,
- The provision of false or materially misleading information that is likely to cause an occupier to leave their home or be stopped from doing something they are entitled to do, or which is likely to cause a potential purchaser of a caravan, not to do so.

## **6. Consultation, Information and Involvement**

6.1 People likely to be affected by the Strategy and those who will be involved in advising or acting on harassment reports have been consulted on this Harassment Strategy prior to its implementation. This includes the following:

- Epping Forest Tenants' and Leaseholders' Federation;
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Violent Crime Tasking Group;
- The District's three Citizens' Advice Bureaux;
- Relevant managers within the Communities Directorate; and,
- The Council's Housing Select Committee.

6.2 When agreed by the Council, information about the Housing Services Strategy on Harassment will be made available to the general public through the Council's

web-site and to Council tenants, leaseholders and the consultees listed above through "Housing News", a regular newsletter to Council tenants. The purpose of the communication will be two-fold. Firstly, to inform residents where to get help and advice and secondly, to help prevent harassment by increasing awareness and understanding of what constitutes harassment, what the impact is and what the outcome for perpetrators could be.

## **7. General Principles**

7.1 The Housing Service within the Communities Directorate provides protection for victims in the following ways:

- Protection of the homes of Council tenants or the immediate surrounding area e.g. by improving window and door locks, etc. In cases of immediate risk this could involve the provision of a sanctuary/safe room or Secured by Design approved security equipment
- Speedy removal of offensive graffiti;
- Temporary location of mobile, overt CCTV; and,
- Temporary or permanent re-housing.

7.2 In respect of the Council's secure tenants, a transfer to alternative accommodation does not necessarily solve a problem of harassment. The Council may grant a priority transfer to a tenant who is experiencing harassment, but only if there is clear evidence from agencies like the Police to confirm that the tenant would be at risk if they remained in their current accommodation.

7.3 Investigation:

- Where the allegation concerns a tenant of the Council, a full investigation will be undertaken by Housing Management in liaison with the appropriate agency, with the victim's agreement, following any reported incidents of harassment. If the victim does not wish the matter to be investigated, the incident will still be recorded and monitored. The victim will be contacted within three months to check if the harassment has continued. If not, the incident will be marked as closed. If the harassment is continuing, the victim will be encouraged to agree to an investigation.
- Positive steps will be taken to identify the alleged perpetrator(s) and, unless there are particular risks to the victim, the perpetrator will be informed of the allegations made and that the matter is under investigation.
- Where the allegation relates to the harassment of a tenant in the private sector, including park homes, by their landlord, once the housing status of the client has been assessed, the landlord will be contacted and given a chance to respond to the allegation. The landlord will be notified in writing of their obligations with regard to harassment and unlawful eviction and asked to provide assurances that they will cease the behaviour that led to the allegation. Should they fail to do so within ten days, enforcement action will be considered and where there is cause for concern, the tenant will be advised to log their complaint with the police.
- Council officers will give advice regarding allegations of harassment and illegal eviction to both private sector tenants and landlords, however, officers cannot advise both the landlord and tenant in an individual case.



In these circumstances the other party will be referred to Citizens Advice Bureaux or to further sources of information.

- Where the allegation relates to harassment of mobile home owner due to sales blocking an investigation will be carried out to establish all details of the case. Where appropriate proceedings will be taken against the site operator under the provisions of the Mobile Homes Act 2013, having regard to the Council's Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy
- In all cases the Council will take account of the victim's wishes and the risk to their safety and welfare when considering what actions to take. The victim will be provided with regular updates on any action taken. In serious cases, the police may be informed and/or the Council may decide to investigate the matter without the victim's agreement. In all cases, the victim will be told what is happening.
- The investigator's role is not to take sides, but to impartially establish the facts of the situation.
- The Council will liaise with other relevant bodies during an investigation. If the investigation has to be suspended e.g. because the police or another party is taking action, the victim will be informed.
- When the investigation has been completed, all parties will be informed of the outcome.
- The rights of all parties will be fully taken into account when deciding on the best course of action following the investigation. This will include the extent to which the perpetrator was or should have been aware that their actions caused the victim to feel harassed, taking into account all the circumstances of the case.

7.4 Dispute resolution methods may be used where the Council considers that informal means of resolving the issue are likely to be successful. Options could include:

- Advice;
- Mediation between the parties involved;
- Requesting Council tenants to enter into Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs); and,
- Developing action plans with Council tenants.

7.5 Sanctions against perpetrators – if an allegation of harassment has been investigated and found to have taken place, the Council (or other body acting in partnership with the Council such as Essex Police) may take any of the following actions against the perpetrator in accordance with the Strategy and Statement on Anti-Social Behaviour Policies and Procedures.

7.6 Monitoring – all reported incidents of harassment will be recorded together with how the case is progressing including details such as: any further incidents, investigation, involvement of other bodies, resolution and any actions taken in relation to the victims and/or perpetrators. Each case will be reviewed (by checking with the victim) within three months of any final action to check whether the case can be marked as closed or whether any further action is required. The victim will be

asked to complete a questionnaire seeking their views on how the matter was dealt with, which will assist in service improvements.

7.7 Complaints – any complaints against actions taken or not taken by the Council will be progressed in accordance with the Council's Compliments and Complaints Procedure.

7.8 Appeals – if a resident is unhappy with a decision taken by the Council under this Strategy, they may appeal. In the first instance, the decision will be reviewed by the appropriate Assistant Director in the Communities Directorate. If the resident is unhappy with the outcome of that appeal, they may proceed to the Ombudsman Service.

7.9 Staff protection – Communities Directorate employees are subject to the Council's employment policies and procedures, which include:

- Safety Policy and Strategy and accident reporting procedures;
- Equality in Employment Policy; and,
- Policy on Lone Working.

7.10 Staff training includes:

- Diversity and Disability Awareness;
- Dignity at Work;
- Managing Difficult People;
- Managing Aggressive Behaviour;
- Investigation skills (for those required to carry these out); and,
- Safeguarding.

## 8. Action Plan

8.1 The following actions will be undertaken in the future by the housing service within the Communities Directorate:

Action	Lead Officer/s	Timescale	Resource Implications
Provide appropriate staff with training on the contents of the Strategy	All Managers	Ongoing	Within existing resources
Produce a leaflet to distribute to the public and partner agencies setting out the main objectives of the Strategy	Communities Support Manager	December 2015	Within existing resources

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Officer/s</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
Include an article in the tenants magazine "Housing News" outlining the main issues covered by the Strategy	Communities Support Manager	December 2015	Within existing resources
Ensure that proper reporting arrangements are in place and any serious cases are reported to the Community Safety Partnership through the appropriate Group	Area Housing Managers	Ongoing	Within existing resources
Review and update Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.	Private Housing Manager (Technical)	Sept 2015	Within existing resources

## **9. Key Targets and Performance Monitoring**

9.2 The results of the monitoring data will be regularly reported and assessed by the Housing Directorate and reported to the Anti-Social Behaviour Network Group (at least half yearly).

## **10. Reviewing the Strategy**

10.1 The Strategy for Harassment will be reviewed in consultation with the Housing Select Committee, the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation and the Citizens Advice Bureaux before March 2018.

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## **Report to Housing Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 10 November 2015**

**Portfolio: Housing – Cllr D. Stallan**

**Subject: Housing Service Strategies**

**Officer contact for further information:**

**Alan Hall – Director of Communities (01992 56 4004)**

**Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)**



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### **Recommendation:**

**That the Select Committee discusses with officers of the Communities Management Team (CMT) at the meeting the benefits of producing and regularly updating the suite of Housing Service Strategies, compared to the officer time and cost involved, and determines the most cost-effective approach for the future.**

### **Report:**

1. Over many years, the Housing Service has formulated a suite of Housing Service Strategies, that individually set-out the detailed approach taken by the Council and its officers to various housing activities. All the Service Strategies are produced in a common format, and are then reviewed and updated by officers every three years and reported to the Housing Select Committee for consideration. Around the same time, those Service Strategies relating to landlord services are also reported for the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation for their view as well.

2. Following consideration of updated Service Strategies by the Select Committee and Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, the final version is then formally reported to the Housing Portfolio Holder for adoption. The latest draft Housing Service Strategy (on Harassment) is due to be considered by the Select Committee immediately before consideration of this report, so members can see the general format and type of content.

3. The Housing Service Strategies were originally introduced at the time of the former Housing Inspectorate being set up, and in anticipation of a formal Housing Inspection being undertaken. However, the Housing Inspectorate was closed down a number of years ago, yet the production, review and updating of the Service Strategies has continued.

4. The process from first setting-out to update Service Strategies to the Housing Portfolio Holder adopting them usually takes around 2-3 months and each Service Strategy takes around 10 hours of officer time to review, update, report to and attend the Select Committee and Tenants and Leaseholders Federation and finally report to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

5. There are now 16 separate Housing Service Strategies. The current list, together with the dates of their 3-year review, is as follows:

Empty Properties	- April 2015
Rent Administration and Collection	- January 2016

Home Ownership and Leasehold Services	- January 2016
Housing Advice	- April 2016
Under-occupation	- April 2016
Equality & Diversity	- June 2016
Housing Information	- March 2017
Tenant Participation	- March 2017
Social Housing Fraud	- May 2017
Private Rented Housing	- August 2017
Rent Arrears	- November 2017
Anti-social Behaviour	- April 2018
Energy Efficiency	- July 2018
Older People's Housing	- September 2018
Housing Management	- September 2018
Harassment	- November 2018

6. The Communities Management Team (CMT) has recently considered the cost-benefit of spending the significant amount of time to update these Housing Service Strategies. In so doing, the CMT has identified that, although the general principles set out in the Service Strategies are followed, the Service Strategies are hardly ever referred to by officers between the three-yearly reviews. Moreover, most of the actions included within the Action Plans had usually already been identified and planned prior to the relevant Service Strategy being updated, and are included and monitored through the Communities Directorate's Continuous Improvement Regime in any event.

7. The CMT is also aware that this approach to strategic service planning is not adopted by any of the other Directorates, Select Committees or Portfolio Holders; indeed, it is not adopted within the Community Services and Safety function of the Communities Directorate. Therefore, there is an inconsistent approach both across the Council and the Communities Directorate.

8. However, the CMT is also aware that the Housing Select Committee, with its membership changing on an annual basis, appears to find it useful to understand and review the Council's approach to the various housing functions. Sometimes the Select Committee has very little comment on proposed updated Service Strategies, whereas other times it provides lots of comments.

9. Therefore, in view of the recent move from the former Scrutiny Panel approach to the new Select Committee approach, the CMT felt that now would be a good time to have an open and honest discussion with the Select Committee on the future approach to the Housing Service Strategies. Of particular note is that, if the Service Strategies were not continued to be updated, it would free-up officer time and the time of the Select Committee to consider/review other issues that are actually of concern to officers, members and/or tenants.

10. Some options identified by the CMT for the future approach are as follows:

- Maintain the status quo;
- Cease the production and review of Service Strategies (apart from those listed at Paragraph 11 below) - and use the freed-up officer and Select Committee time to consider/review housing issues of concern to officers, members and/or tenants in more detail;
- Extend the validity of Service Strategies from 3 to 5 years – with a transitional period to eventually spread the updating of strategies to around 3 per annum, instead of the average 5 per annum;

- Continue with the review and updating of Service Strategies every 3-5 years by officers, but without the Select Committee and Tenants and Leaseholders considering them and them being formally signed-off by the Housing Portfolio Holder, either:
  - In their current format; or
  - In a shorter, more concise format – primarily covering the General Principles only
- Maintain the status quo - and recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that consideration be given to all Directorates and Select Committees taking the same approach to strategic service planning

11. It should be noted that the CMT believes that there would be real benefit to continue to review, update and maintain some of the Service Strategies in some form, due to their particular strategic importance or a legal requirement - even if they are not updated as regularly as they are at present. These include:

- Private Empty Properties
- Equality & Diversity
- Social Housing Fraud
- Anti-social Behaviour

12. It should also be noted that the views of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation have not been sought on this issue, or their involvement in this process. However, based on comments made by Federation members over many years, the CMT believes that the majority of Federation members would rather not pore over reams of paper documents and would prefer to spend more time discussing issues of concern and interest to them - that have a real impact on the lives of tenants. Since the Chairman of the Federation is a co-opted member of the Housing Select Committee, he will be able to give his perspective on the involvement of the Federation in the process of reviewing and updating Housing Services at the meeting.

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## **Report to Housing Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 10 November 2015**

**Portfolio: Housing – Cllr D. Stallan**

**Subject: HRA Financial Plan – Half-Yearly Update  
(Future options resulting from required rent reductions)**

**Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall – Director of Communities (01992 56 4004)**

**Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)**



**rent reductions**

**Key**

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### **Recommendations:**

- (1) That the commissioning of a report by CIH Consultancy on the options available to the Council to ensure that its HRA does not fall into deficit - following the inclusion of a requirement within the Welfare Reform and Work Bill that all social landlords must reduce their rents by 1% per annum for four years (instead of increasing their rents by CPI + 1% in accordance with previous Government guidance) - instead of the usual Six-Month Review of the HRA Financial Plan be noted;**
- (2) That report from CIH Consultancy on the options available for the Council's HRA Financial Plan (attached as an Appendix), and the decisions of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee following its consideration of the report, be noted; and**
- (3) That the Select Committee adds to its Work Programme for 2016/17 consideration of the planned further review of the options for the HRA Financial Plan, prior to further consideration by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in 2016.**

### **Background**

1. At its meeting in March 2015, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered the draft HRA Business Plan for 2015/16 and recommended its adoption to the Housing Portfolio Holder, which was subsequently approved. An important part of the HRA Business Plan is the HRA Financial Plan, which sets out the anticipated HRA income and expenditure over the next 30 years.

2. The Cabinet has previously asked the Housing Select Committee to review updates to the HRA Financial Plan twice each year, at its scheduled meetings in October and March. In addition, senior Housing and Finance officers also formally review the Financial Plan in July and January each year too.

3. CIH Consultancy are currently the Council's HRA Business Planning Consultants. Officers received and considered CIH Consultancy's Quarter 1 Review Report in July 2015. Usually, CIH Consultancy would undertake its Six-Month (Quarter 2) Review of the current HRA Financial Plan in October 2015, taking account of the Council's current financial position

and national and local policies, and provide an Update Report for consideration by the Select Committee.

4. However, as part of the Chancellor's Summer Budget in July 2015, it was announced that all social landlords (councils and housing associations) must reduce their rents by 1% per annum for four years, instead of increasing their rents by CPI + 1% in accordance with previous Government guidance. This requirement has now been included within the Welfare Reform and Work Bill.

5. CIH Consultancy have assessed that the estimated loss in rental income to the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) will be around £14million over the next four years and around £228million over the next 30 years (compared to the Council's current HRA Financial Plan expectations).

6. In view of this significant reduction in rental income, instead of providing a Quarter 2 Update Report, CIH Consultancy was commissioned to provide a report on the options available to the Council to ensure that its HRA does not fall into deficit, which was considered by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

7. Therefore, it is suggested that in the absence of the usual Quarter 2 Update Report, the Select Committee considers the report from CIH Consultancy on the options available to ensure that the HRA does not fall into deficit and notes the decisions of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee from its 17<sup>th</sup> September meeting - including the Cabinet Committee's decision that, in order to inform a further review of the options in 2016, a further Options Report be provided by CIH Consultancy at that time, and that the Housing Select Committee and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation be consulted for their views on the options, prior to consideration by the Cabinet Committee.

#### **CIH Consultancy's Options Report on the Council's HRA Financial Plan**

8. CIH Consultancy's report is attached as an Appendix. As can be seen, the report identifies a number of options available to the Council to recast its HRA Financial Plan for the future, including:

- Ceasing all or some of the funding currently available within the Financial Plan for future housing improvements and service enhancements for HRA services;
- Reducing investment in improvements to the Council's housing stock (and reducing the Council's Modern Home Standard accordingly);
- Reducing/ceasing the Council's own Housebuilding Programme;
- Further borrowing for the HRA, repaid by the end of the Financial Plan period;
- Combinations of the above.

9. The report also identifies some future financial challenges for local authority HRAs, which cannot currently be quantified. The most significant potential financial effect on the Council's HRA is the Government's proposal to encourage local authorities (but not housing associations) to sell "high value" void properties, primarily in order to fund the Government's proposal to introduce a voluntary scheme for housing associations to give the majority of their tenants the Right to Buy. It should be noted that the CIH Consultancy report was produced in advance of the recent Housing and Planning Bill being published.

10. However, very little information is currently available on what constitutes a "high value" property, or the proposed arrangements; therefore it is not yet possible to assess the financial impact on the Council's HRA.

11. CIH Consultancy's Options Report identifies that, although decisions will need to be made within the near future, no immediate corrective action is required at present.

### **Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund**

12. However, in view of the need to reduce expenditure currently planned for the HRA in the long term, and since this is likely to involve a reduction in the resources available to the HRA's Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund over the next 30 years, the Housing Portfolio Holder recommended to the Cabinet Committee that most of the £702,000 uncommitted funding within the HRA's Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund for 2016/17 not be allocated/spent at present. There were four suggested exceptions to this proposed moratorium, as follows.

(a) The Cabinet Committee noted that the HRA has funded a very successful **Garden Maintenance Scheme for Older and Vulnerable Tenants** (the "Mow and Grow" Scheme) operated by Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) since 2003. The service includes clearing and maintaining overgrown gardens - including lighter tasks, such as lawn cutting, hedge trimming and light weeding - with priority given to dealing with gardens that are unsafe and/or unusable and therefore hinder the tenant to enjoy the facility. Tenants are only included on the scheme if there is no-one physically able to carry out the work under the age of 70 years living at the property, or if they are disabled. All those applying are assessed by VAEF and are only included on the scheme if they genuinely cannot cope with their gardens and have no other means of maintaining them.

The Cabinet previously agreed that £20,000 per annum should be made available from the Fund for two further years, ending in March 2016, to supplement the HRA's existing ongoing funding of £20,000 per annum for the Scheme. In view of the success of the Scheme, and the benefits it brings for older and disabled tenants (as well as the difficulties that would be caused to the continuity of the service), the Housing Portfolio Holder recommended that the Fund continues to provide the additional £20,000 per annum towards the cost of the Scheme for a further two years (2016/17 and 2017/18).

(b) Since its inception in 2013, the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund has included an "**In-Year Fund**" of £50,000 per annum, for small improvements projects that may be identified during the course of the year by members and officers, instead of the improvements having to be delayed until the following year. Individual one-off projects costing in excess of £10,000 have to be formally authorised by Housing Portfolio Holder. This has proved very beneficial to tenants, so it was therefore recommended by the Housing Portfolio Holder that £50,000 per annum continues to be made available through the In-Year Fund, with the current approval arrangements applying.

(c) The Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund has funded the **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to appoint two Debt Advisors** for a period of 18 months, ending in March 2015. The Housing Portfolio Holder therefore recommended that funding of £42,000 from the Fund be made available in 2016/17 to enable the CAB to continue to appoint the two Debt Advisors for one further year.

(d) Over the last few years, the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund has accumulated £384,000 within its **Major Capital Projects Reserve**. The Cabinet previously decided to introduce the Reserve to enable resources to be accumulated and available when required for major capital housing projects, subject to the schemes having the approval of the Cabinet or Housing Portfolio Holder as appropriate. This was because no provision is made for major capital housing schemes within the HRA Financial Plan.

The need for major capital schemes has occurred from time-to-time, and has included the major improvement scheme at Springfields, Waltham Abbey, small scale stock transfers of sheltered housing schemes to housing associations to enable conversion and improvement works to be undertaken and the conversion scheme at Marden Close and Faversham Hall, Chigwell Row (currently on-site).

The Housing Portfolio Holder therefore recommended that the £384,000 already accumulated and held within the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancement Fund's Major Capital Projects Reserve be retained (but not increased) and made available for future HRA capital projects that are identified.

### **Decisions of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee**

13. Having considered CIH Consultancy's Options Report, the Cabinet Committee made the following decisions:

(1) That no immediate corrective action be taken at present, and no decisions be made to re-cast the HRA Financial Plan, until further information becomes available on the effect of the Government's separate proposal to require local authorities to sell "high value" void properties;

(2) That the £702,000 uncommitted funding within the HRA's Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund for 2016/17 not be spent at present, with the exception of:

(a) £20,000 per annum being made available for a further 2 years (2016/17 and 2017/18) to fund Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) to continue to provide the successful Mow and Grow Scheme for older and disabled Council tenants;

(b) £50,000 per annum continuing to be made available for the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements In-Year Fund, to fund small improvements and enhancements identified during 2016/17, with the current approval arrangements applying; and

(c) In principle, £42,000 to be used in 2016/17 to fund the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to extend the employment of its two existing Debt Advisers for a further year, subject to:

(i) The CAB Manager attending the Grant Aid Task and Finish Panel, in order to explain the use and outcomes of all the Council's grant funding to the CAB; and

(ii) The Cabinet Committee receive a further report, after the Task and Finish Panel Overview to consider whether or not the request for this additional grant funding should be approved.

(3) That the £384,000 already accumulated and held within the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancement Fund's Major Capital Projects Reserve be retained and made available for future HRA capital projects;

(4) That the Cabinet Committee reviews the HRA Financial Plan again in 2016, and makes decisions for the future at that time, once the financial implications for the Council of the Government's requirement for local authorities to sell "high value" void properties are known; and

(5) That, in order to inform the review in 2016, a further Options Report be provided by the Council's HRA Business Planning Consultants at that time, and that the Housing Select Committee and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation be consulted for their views on the options, prior to consideration by the Cabinet Committee.

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## **Epping Forest District Council**

### **HRA Business Plan Financial Projections**

#### **September 2015 Review and Options Paper**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 CIH consultancy have been commissioned to regularly update the Council's HRA Business Plan and report on the latest projections arising and how the position has changed from the last review of the model.
- 1.2 Following the Summer Budget on 8 July 2015 it was announced to the social housing sector that all rents within social housing would have to be reduced by 1%, rather than the previous guidance of annual increases of CPI plus 1%. The rent reduction is to be applied over a four year period. So for example a tenant currently paying £100.00 per week will see it reduced to £99.00 next April and then £98.01 the following year and so on until April 2020 when rents are proposed to increase by CPI plus 1% again.
- 1.3 This will have a significant impact to the resources available to not only Epping Forest but for the whole sector. For Local Authorities we have assessed the impact as £2.6billion in terms of lost revenue against forecasts (based on the Government's own forecasts for CPI).
- 1.4 Provisional workings provided for Epping Forest suggest that the impact will be £13.893million over the four year period, which is compounded to £225.8million over a thirty year period. This is a significant impact and one that will happen as explained below. This review identifies the initial impact of the policy to the Business Plan and a range of options to rebalance the long-term viability of the Plan.

#### **2. The New Rent Policy**

- 2.1 In the 2015 Summer Budget it was announced that social rents will reduce by 1% per year over a four year period. This was in order to save £4.28billion over a five year period for the associated Housing Benefit costs, which would have seen increases without this action.
- 2.2 To implement these changes the new Welfare Reform and Work Bill was published on 9 July 2015 which in effect set about enforcing these changes rather than going through the usual process of consultation.

- 2.3 It was originally interpreted that this would only apply to housing association rents but subsequent confirmation from DCLG has stated that this will apply to local authorities as well.
- 2.4 The Bill is to cover all types of rent within the social sector with the exclusion of shared ownership. This means that all new build properties let at affordable levels will also have the reduction applied over the next four years.
- 2.5 Further reading of the Bill suggests that the current policy of re-letting voids at formula rent will prove fruitless as the point of which rent for reduction is set at levels prior to 8 July. This also negates the opportunity to have a second rent increase within a year in order to potentially offset the impact of this policy.
- 2.6 There will be the opportunities for housing providers to claim a waiver from the policy, but we are told that this will be in very extreme circumstances and unfortunately we cannot assume (indeed, it is probably unlikely) that Epping Forest will fall into the category.
- 2.7 The Local Authority sector has voiced the possibility of challenging the Government in terms of the re-opening the self-financing settlement, given the change in the rent policy. This is an option though one we consider potentially risky in terms of challenge given that other factors could be included which may negate the possibility of some debt repayment.

### **3. The Revised Base Position**

- 3.1 We have built upon the last iteration of the Business Plan model from March 2015 (as included within the Council's latest annual HRA Business Plan) but updated this for the final out-turn position for 2014.15 (which provides for slippage on the capital programme carried forward to 2015.16) and revised opening balances. The modelling continues to start from 2014.15 as Year 1.
- 3.2 We have also updated the Plan for the latest new build projections for Phases 1 to 6 delivering 215 new affordable homes which have impacted on the short-term values for additional service enhancements as detailed below. This is offset by some additional capital receipts that will be applied during 2015.16 and 2016.17.
- 3.3 The changes to the rent policy have also been implemented on the assumption that from April 2020 rents will increase by CPI plus 1% and we have not modelled new tenancies being re-let at formula levels (as a precaution). However, as identified in section 5 there is the potential for this decision to be reversed and have identified the net benefit of this.
- 3.4 The Plan is predicated on the basis that the levels of service and the required level of investment in the existing stock is based on those within the original Business Plan.



3.5 There are though some key variables which will have a major influence on the viability of the Plan and these are summarised as:

- Investment in new affordable homes
- Debt Repayment Strategy
- Service Enhancements

Whilst the options around the application of these will be discussed as part of the review below, we have detailed below the current assumptions within the revised base position of this Plan.

3.6 The Plan currently includes for the provision of 215 new homes at a total cost of £36.7million. This is funded primarily from:

- '1-4-1' receipts from right to buy sales
- 30% of the 'allowable' debt element of right to buy sales
- Capital receipts, grants and s106 contributions
- £0.5m of HCA funding

The residual balance after utilising the above resources is funded from current reserves and future surpluses within the HRA without the need to borrow.

3.7 The loan portfolio remains unchanged and is detailed below for reference:

Loan £m	Interest Basis	Interest Rate	Maturity
31.800	Variable	0.62%	Mar 2022
30.000	Fixed	3.46%	Mar 2038
30.000	Fixed	3.47%	Mar 2039
30.000	Fixed	3.48%	Mar 2040
30.000	Fixed	3.49%	Mar 2041
33.656	Fixed	3.50%	Mar 2042

3.8 The interest on these loans will be charged directly to the HRA; since the vast majority have fixed rates the forecast interest projections will be accurate. We have estimated a gradual increase of interest rate for the variable rate loan up to 2.12% by Year 5 of the Plan.

3.9 The HRA currently has a Self-Financing Reserve with a balance currently at £9.54million with a further addition of £3.18million in 2015.16. This Reserve is projected to be increased through contributions from the HRA up to and including 2021.22 in order to build sufficient balances to repay the £31.8million loan facility in March 2022. In following years (annually increasing) contributions are forecast to build reserves in order to repay the five residual loans as and when they mature.

3.10 Within the original Business Plan, following implementation of self-financing, £770,000 per annum of service enhancements were included within the revenue projections and have continued throughout all iterations of the plan. To date approximately £200,000 of the £770,000 have been

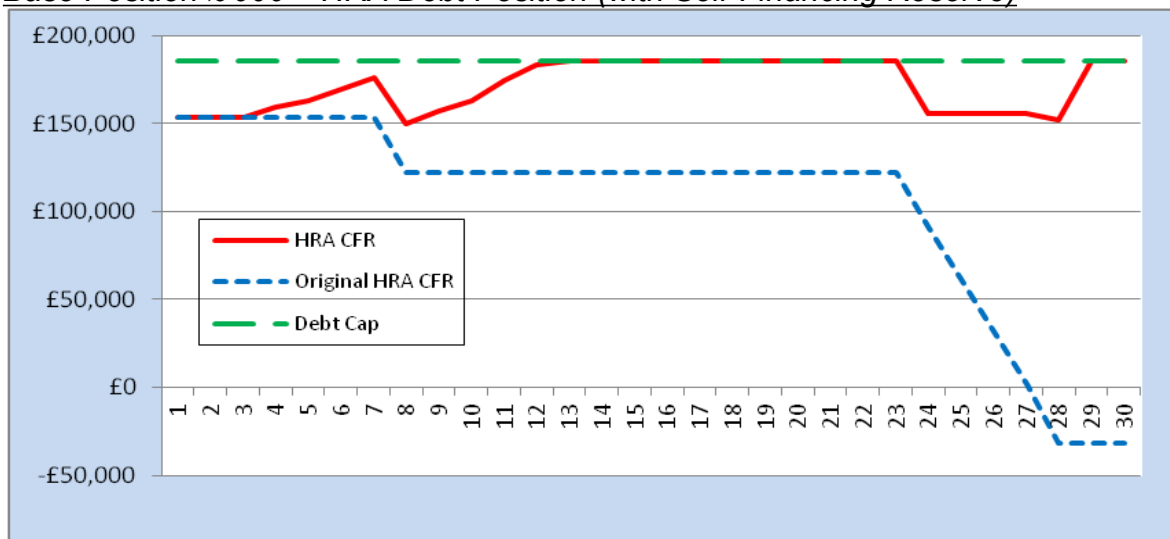
integrated into existing management and repairs budgets leaving an ongoing £570,000 per annum being provided for on an annual basis throughout the life of the Plan.

3.11 In addition to the £570,000 per annum above, provision has been made within the existing Plan for the following additional expenditure on service enhancements;

<b>Increases/ (Decreases) to Ongoing Service Enhancements</b>	<b>2015.16 Business Plan (Pre-rent adjustment) Per-annum</b>
April 2015 (4 years)	£370,000
April 2019 (3 years)	£190,000
April 2022 (2 years)	£4,390,000
April 2024 (5 years)	£2,250,000
April 2029 (5 years)	£1,700,000
April 2034 (1 year)	(£200,000)
<b>Total over 30 Years</b>	<b>£180,560,000</b>

3.12 With the inclusion of the above factors the base position of the Business Plan is presented in the graphs below:

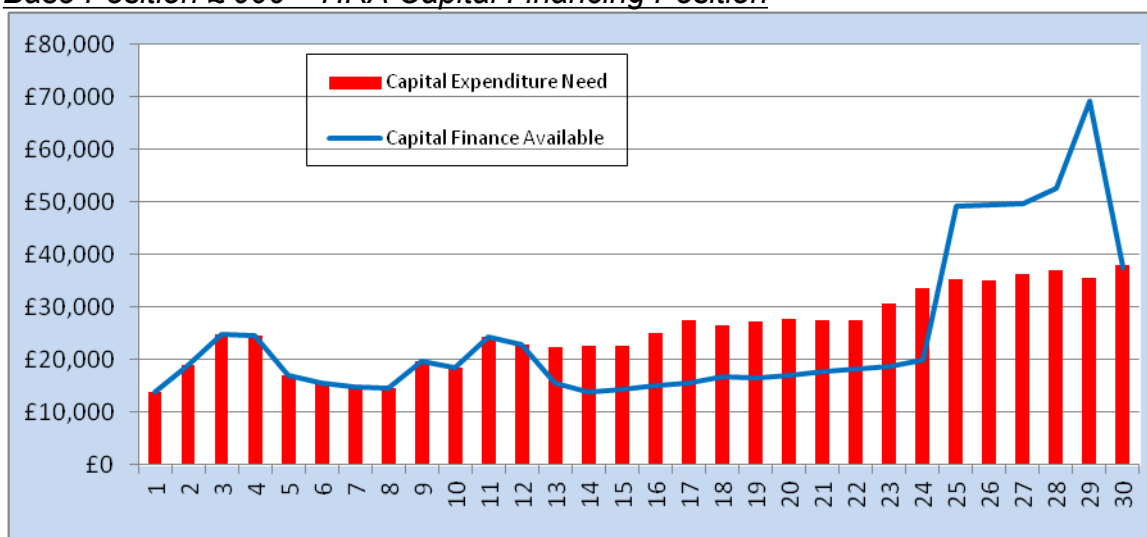
*Base Position £'000 – HRA Debt Position (with Self-Financing Reserve)*



3.13 The above demonstrates clearly the impact of the reduction in rents. From Year 3 the Plan requires additional borrowing (as per the red line) to fund the new build programme and the revised levels of additional service enhancements. In future years when the service enhancements increase (to the previously affordable levels) the debt levels increase to the Government imposed debt cap. The dotted blue line demonstrates the original projection for the HRA debt prior to the rent adjustment but still allowing for phases 1 to 6 of the new build scheme and the £570,000 annual revenue service enhancements and the additional allowances in Section 3.11. Therefore the gap between the red and dotted blue lines demonstrates the greater levels of borrowing, which are in fact capped by the Government imposed debt cap.

3.14 The above position is slightly masked by the fact that the HRA is making contributions to the Self-Financing Reserve in order to repay some of the loans, though the Reserve will hold no balances from Year 28 onwards.

*Base Position £'000 – HRA Capital Financing Position*



3.15 The red vertical lines in the graph above show the required levels of expenditure for investment in the stock, Phases 1-6 of the new build programme and additional service enhancements. The horizontal blue line shows the resources available through in-year surplus and borrowing (restricted to the debt cap). From Year 13 of the plan (due to the combination of greater levels of service enhancements and the debt cap) the levels of investment are unaffordable. It is only from Year 25 where repayments of debt (from using balances built up in the Self-Financing Reserve) mean that available resources are greater than the in-year spend requirements and the surplus resources are used to tackle the prior-years shortfalls.

3.16 Again the use of the Self-Financing Reserve slightly masks the true position in that whilst shortfalls are demonstrated in the graph above, there are balances held in the Reserve.

3.17 Within the various options available below to tackle the reduction in rents, we re-visit the contribution and operation of the Self-Financing Reserve.

#### **4. The Options Available**

4.1 In discussions with officers there are five proposed options in which to achieve a balanced and viable Business Plan, with the key objectives of the HRA repaying the scheduled loans (resulting in a negative HRA CFR of £31.881million), and the maximisation of the '1-4-1' receipts currently held. Within all of the options we have ensured that there are sufficient resources to meet existing planned capital expenditure falling in each year.

4.2 It is important to note that as at April 2015 the projected uncommitted balances of the '1-4-1' reserve stands at £4.56million (based on past

acquisitions and Phases 1 and 2 of the new build programme). These receipts will continue to increase if right to buy levels remain at higher levels than those assumed in the self-financing settlement, which we discuss later on in this review.

4.3 The options considered are:

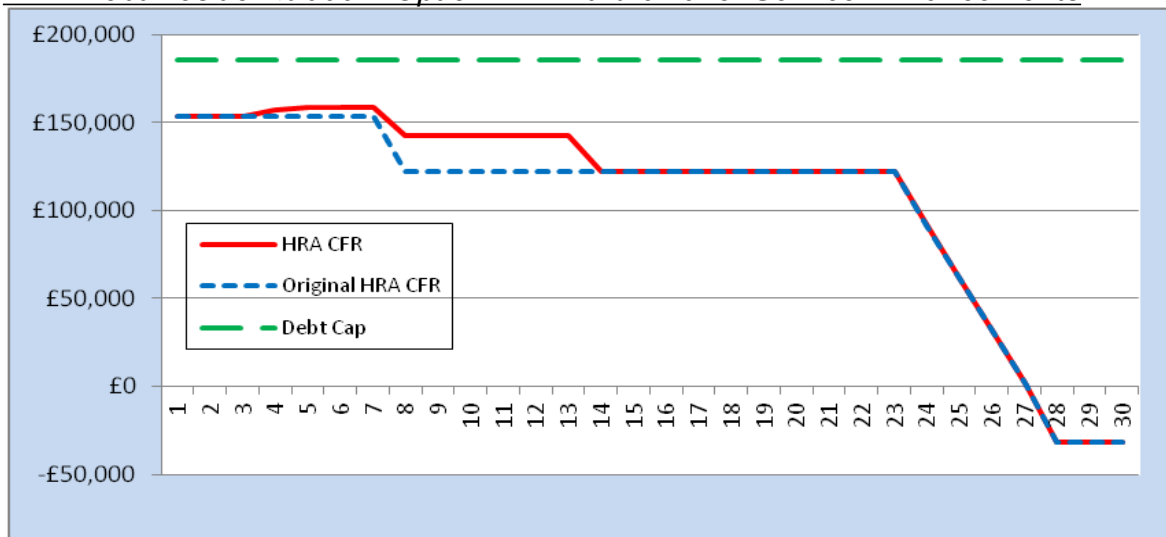
1. The complete withdrawal of service enhancements
2. To enable service enhancements and improvements at a level that does not require borrowing
3. To continue with a minimum of £1million in service enhancements and/or improvements per annum
4. To reduce the levels of new build in Phases 3 to 6
5. To ensure that no additional borrowing is undertaken but ensuring the new build programme is delivered by reducing capital investment in existing stock

4.4 Option 1 – Withdrawal of Service Enhancements

4.4.1 In this option we have removed both the £570,000 per annum service enhancements currently accounted for (but uncommitted) in revenue projections, in addition to the additional funding for service enhancements as identified in Section 3.11 from 2016.17 onwards.

4.4.2 In order to fund the new house building programme for Phases 1 to 6, for cash-flow purposes, there is a requirement to borrow in the early stages of this Plan as demonstrated in the graph below:

*HRA Debt Position £'000 – Option 1 – Withdrawal of Service Enhancements*

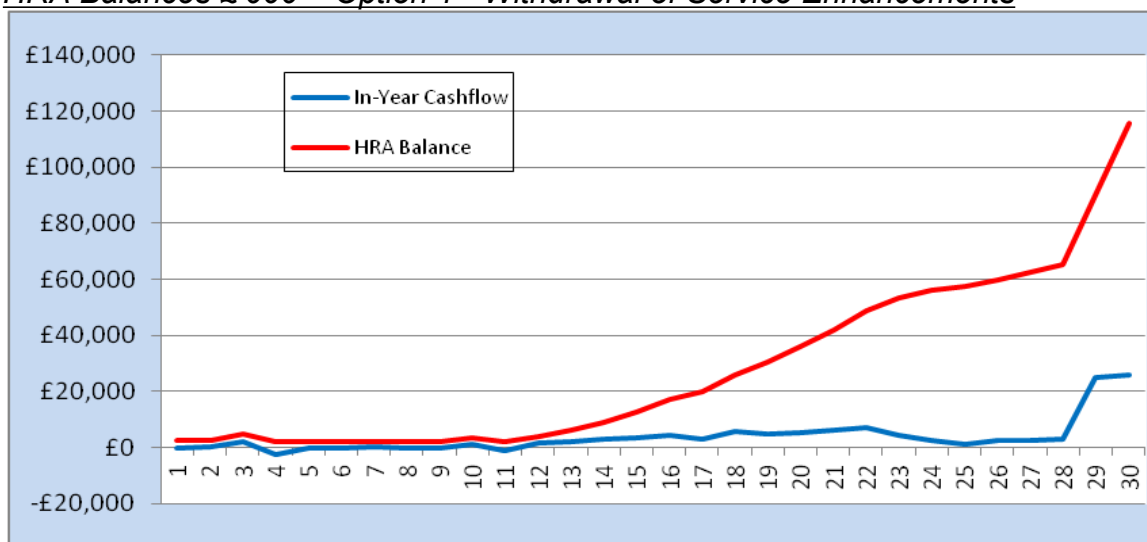


4.4.3 We have applied the required short-term loans totalling £4.657million between Years 3 to 6 and a further £16.180million for the shortfall in meeting the £31.8million loan repayment scheduled for Year 7 (2021.22). The reduction in Year 7 of loan balances recognises the net £15.62million repayment of this original loan (i.e. the balance between £31.8million and £16.180million). According to our projections the HRA can afford to repay the total £20.837million of new loans by Year 14 therefore placing the HRA on course to repay its remaining loans as planned, with resources available.

4.4.4 The early year borrowing could be avoided by using some of the balances of the Self-Financing Reserve, though this would result in greater borrowing in Year 7.

4.4.5 The graph below demonstrates the projected HRA balances, taking into account the revised contributions to the Self-Financing Reserve:

*HRA Balances £'000 – Option 1 - Withdrawal of Service Enhancements*



4.4.6 This graph shows that as a result of allocating sufficient resources to repay the existing and additional debt in the early years of the Plan, the HRA builds up sufficient balances due to the withdrawal of service enhancements, which significantly increased in value in the latter years, as according to Section 3.11 above. From Year 28 the balances increase following the conclusion of the loan repayments where over the period of two years projected balances on the HRA would increase from £65.2million to £115.8million.

4.5 Option 2 – Affordable Levels of Service Enhancements (Minimising Borrowing)

4.5.1 This option is to define the level of affordable service enhancements without the need to borrow any additional money to that set out in Option 1 above.

4.5.2 As identified in Option 1 it would be impossible not to borrow in the early years of the Plan even with the eradication of service enhancements. However we have demonstrated that whilst additional borrowing of £20.837million (net £4.657million) would be required, this could be repaid within a relatively short period of time. However due to the size of the loan repayment in Year 7 of £31.8million, significant reductions in expenditure on either new build or investment in existing stock would be required. To put this into context, the investment in existing stock would have to be reduced by over 30% between Years 3 and 7 in order to avoid any additional borrowing and have sufficient resources to repay the loan in that period. We discuss the impact of reducing the new build programme as part of Option 4 further on in this review.

4.5.3 Using Option 1 as a basis we have modelled the maximum levels of service enhancements and improvements that could be introduced within the resources available.

4.5.4 The table below shows the levels of service enhancements in comparison with the revised set within Section 3.11:

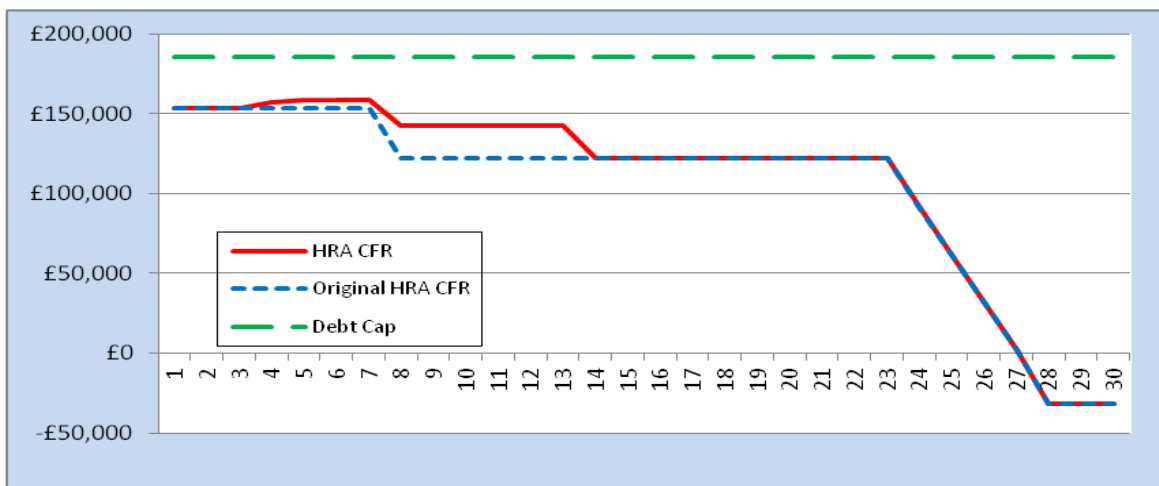
Ongoing Service Enhancements	2015.16 Business Plan (Pre-rent adjustment)*1,2	2015.16 Business Plan Option 2 (Post-rent adjustment)*1,3
April 2015 (1 year)	£370,000	£370,000
April 2016 (3 years)	£370,000	£-
April 2019 (3 years)	£560,000	£-
April 2022 (2 years)	£4,950,000	£-
April 2024 (1 year)	£7,200,000	£-
April 2025 (4 years)	£7,200,000	£1,300,000
April 2029 (5 years)	£8,900,000	£3,100,000
April 2034 (8 years)	£8,700,000	£1,450,000
April 2042 (3 years)	£8,700,000	£10,000,000
<b>Total over 30 Years</b>	<b>£180,560,000</b>	<b>£52,670,000</b>
<b>Inclusive of Inflation</b>	<b>£284,537,000</b>	<b>£89,998,000</b>

\*Notes: 1. These values are at today's prices but are inflated within the Plan  
 2. The Pre-Rent Adjusted Business Plan included in addition £570,000 per annual revenue service enhancements  
 3. The Option 3 Business Plan excludes the £570,000 revenue service enhancements

4.5.5 The impact of the rent policy can clearly be seen and the reduction of service enhancements between 2034 and 2042 is required in order to service the Self-Financing Reserve to fully repay the loans as and when they mature.

4.5.6 The graph below demonstrates again the projected borrowing position if Option 2 was selected.

HRA Debt Position £'000 – Option 2 – Affordable Levels of Service Enhancements (Minimising Borrowing)



4.5.7 As with Option 1 the additional borrowing required can be repaid back to the prior levels by Year 13 of the plan. Following this the provisions for service enhancements and or improvements can be introduced and increased through the Plan.

4.6 Option 3 – Provide a minimum of £1million per annum to the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund

4.6.1 In this option we have modelled a base £1million per annum, with inflation applied, from next year 2016.17. The principle behind this is not to necessarily spend this value but to provide a contingency through the existing Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund to cover major works excluded from the current database. Examples of this might be minor/major estate regeneration or remodelling for sheltered schemes. So if these monies are not spent then they are there to cover any unforeseen circumstances and those identified in Section 6.

4.6.2 As with Options 1 & 2 there will be the necessity to borrow to fund these contributions. For the sake of simplicity and given the additional borrowing required we have opted to cease contributions in the early years to the Self-Financing Reserve.

4.6.3 Between Years 4 & 8 a total of £28.466million needs to be borrowed, which provides for the repayment of the £31.8million loan in Year 8 and the annual contributions. However, given the contributions to the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund the balance of these loans cannot be repaid until 2029.20 (Year 16).

4.6.4 From this period onwards we have modelled that sufficient contributions are made to the Self-Financing Reserve in order to repay the residual loans by Year 28.

4.6.5 The table below identifies the contributions to the improvement and or service enhancements:

Ongoing Service Enhancements	2015.16 Business Plan (Pre-rent adjustment)*1,2	2015.16 Business Plan Option 3 (Post-rent adjustment)*1,3
April 2015 (1 year)	£370,000	£370,000
April 2016 (3 years)	£560,000	£1,000,000
April 2019 (3 years)	£4,950,000	£1,000,000
April 2022 (4 years)	£7,200,000	£1,000,000
April 2025 (4 years)	£8,900,000	£2,000,000
April 2029 (5 years)	£8,700,000	£3,000,000
April 2034 (8 years)	£8,700,000	£-
April 2042 (2 years)	£370,000	£11,500,000
<b>Total over 30 Years</b>	<b>£180,560,000</b>	<b>£55,370,000</b>
<b>Inclusive of Inflation</b>	<b>£284,537,000</b>	<b>£88,845,000</b>

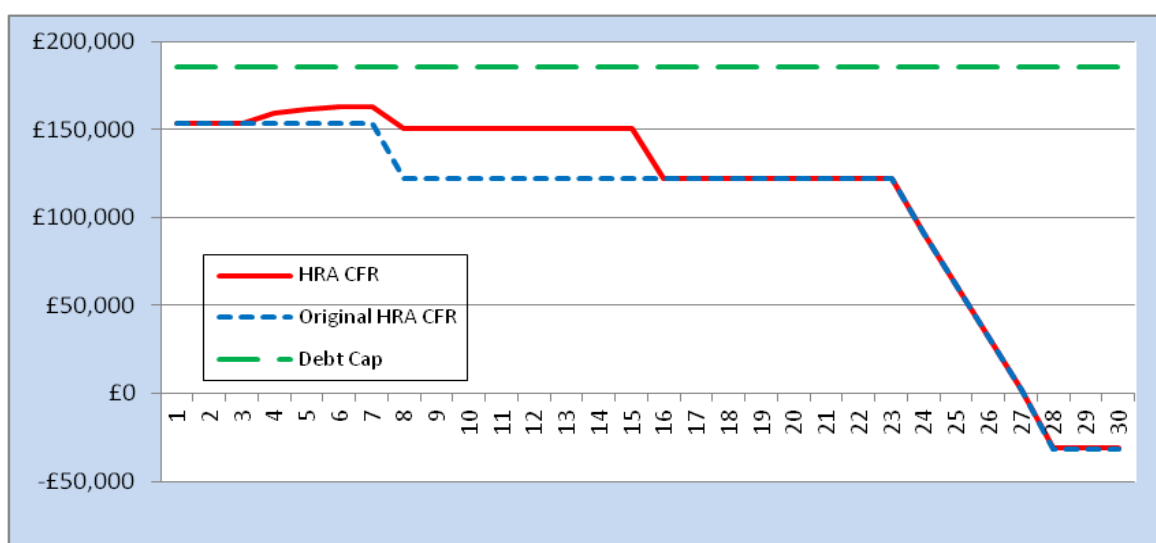
\*Notes: 1. These values are at today's prices but are inflated within the Plan

2. The Pre-Rent Adjusted Business Plan included in addition £570,000 per annum revenue service enhancements
3. The Option 3 Business Plan excludes the £570,000 revenue service enhancements

4.6.6 In overall spend terms, when taking inflation into account, Option 2 marginally delivers a greater value of contributions to the Service Enhancements and Improvements Fund. However, Option 3 provides a resource earlier into the Plan that therefore could be utilised earlier.

4.6.7 The graph below demonstrates the forecast debt position for Option 3.

HRA Debt Position £'000 – Option 3 – Minimum £1million Service Enhancements (per annum – increasing when affordable)



4.6.8 The above graph and text detail that an additional £28.466million is required in order to fund the initial £1million per annum contribution to the service enhancements and or improvements reserve. The additional borrowing can be repaid by Year 15 to bring the levels back into line with the previous Plan in order to repay debt and bring the HRA back to its position prior to Self-Financing.

4.6.9 If the Government enforced debt cap remains unchanged over the coming years there will still be capacity to borrow a further minimum of £22million should there be the need for unseen circumstances.

#### Option 4 – To reduce the level of expenditure for New House Building

4.7.1 We have split this option to demonstrate the required reduction in the new build programme, if no additional borrowing is assumed, if;

- a. There are no service enhancements until after Year 9 of the Plan; or
- b. That a £1million per annum contribution to the Service Enhancement and Housing Improvements Fund is required



#### 4.7.2 Option 4a

Using the basis of Option 1 we have modelled the required reduction in the new build programme in order to prevent any additional borrowing and that the Self-Financing Reserve has sufficient funds to repay the £31.8million loan that falls due in Year 8.

4.7.3 In order to achieve this (inclusive of the removal of any provision for service enhancements) we calculate that only Phase 1 could be afforded, delivering only 23 of the 215 homes.

4.7.4 The major implication with this would be the return to the Government of '1-4-1' right to buy receipts that will and have accumulated. We estimate that this could be in the region of £7.329million. In addition under current legislation the return of such receipts would attract interest at a rate of 4% above base rate (0.5%) and is compounded from when they were originally received. We estimate this to be £1.034million and it is assumed that this would have to be met by the HRA, of which there are marginally sufficient resources to do so.

4.7.5 In addition to the interest charge and return of receipts, the Council would also have to cancel its agreement with the HCA for the £0.5million grant and would have paid for costs incurred to date. This, of course, is against the loss of providing new affordable homes.

#### 4.7.6 Option 4b

Given that Option 4a, without any provision for service enhancements, decimates the new build programme it would prove impossible to fund the option of funding £1million per annum of contributions and therefore we see no reason to identify the borrowing that would be required to deliver this.

#### Option 5 – To reduce the level of capital expenditure in existing stock whilst delivering the new build programme to ensure no borrowing

4.8.1 A further option is to consider what action the Council would need to take in order to avoid any additional borrowing whilst still delivering the new build plan. This is in addition to the withdrawal of future uncommitted service enhancements.

4.8.2 As identified in Section 4.7.4, if the required level of new build (i.e. Phases 2 to 6) were not delivered, a potential £1.034million would have to be returned of receipts and interest to the Government along with the loss of the £0.5million HCA grant for Phase 2.

4.8.3 Therefore we consider that the Council should consider its new build programme ahead of its investment in existing stock, if no borrowing is stipulated, given the monies that would be lost.

4.8.4 In order to ensure that there is a correct provision made for the repayment of the £31.8million loan in Year 8 with no additional borrowing required, we have estimated that the following expenditure would need to be reduced from the capital investment in existing stock:

Year	Reduction Required to Capital Programme	% of Original Programme
4 - 2017.18	£3.606m	32%
5 - 2018.19	£3.813m	33%
6 - 2019.20	£3.978m	32%
7 - 2020.21	£3.991m	31%
8 - 2021.22	£4.036m	32%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£19.424m</b>	<b>32%</b>

4.8.5 In direct comparison to Option 2, the reduction needed from the capital programme is less than the £20.837million, on account of no additional interest charges needing to be factored in.

4.8.6 Our projections show that, after Year 9, the HRA is able to meet its full in-year capital expenditure requirements and set aside provisions for debt repayment and there will be surpluses within the HRA that could be used to catch up on the shortfall of expenditure identified in section 4.8.4 and or consider a re-introduction of service enhancements.

4.8.7 Another option would be to reduce the levels of new build slightly to allow for a smaller reduction in capital expenditure, though this would carry the risk of having to return some right to buy receipts to the Government along with interest, depending on the level sales in the near future.

## **5. Potential Changes to the Welfare Reform and Work Bill**

5.1 In Section 2.5 we have highlighted that currently the Bill states that rent levels as at the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015 will be used for the basis of rent reductions for the four years from April 2016. Therefore, if the Council were to continue to re-let its properties at formula rent levels rather than at the outgoing level, the benefit would be lost from April 2016 onwards.

5.2 Epping Forest have been instrumental in working with the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) in challenging the Government in allowing local authorities to continue with allowing re-let properties to be let at formula rent (obviously allowing for a 1% reduction to this).

5.3 At the time of writing, it is understood that an amendment to the Bill is being considered, though cannot be relied upon for the purposes of modelling. However, we estimate that should this be allowed to continue this would provide additional revenue in the region of £1.467million up to and including Year 8 of the Plan, given this a key milestone in terms of the first loan repayment.

## **6. Future Challenges**

6.1 There are some further developments which the Government has proposed that will have an impact on the Plan, that cannot be costed yet, and we have identified these below.

- 6.2 As part of the Conservative Party's manifesto it was announced that the Right to Buy policy would extend to Housing Association tenants. However to enable this policy to work, Housing Associations would need to be fully compensated for the sale of their properties at the much higher discounted rates than the Right to Acquire rates currently applied. This is because the Government has to demonstrate that it does not have overall control of the assets of Housing Associations or else their debt, some £60billion, would be considered as public borrowing. So in order to avoid this, full compensation has to be paid to Housing Associations so there is no demonstrable loss.
- 6.3 In order to fund these compensation payments the Conservative manifesto detailed that Local Authorities would be forced to sell their "high-value" voids, with the Government collecting the majority of the receipt to fund this policy.
- 6.4 Initial information produced prior to the election with regards to how a high value void would be identified was by region, not at a local level. This would see authorities in higher value areas (such as Epping Forest) selling more stock in a region than those with lower values.
- 6.5 It is clear that since this Government took power much more work is required around how the policy would work for both Local Authorities and Housing Associations. This is still in development and may appear closer to when the new Housing Bill is published later this Autumn.
- 6.6 We therefore expect a consultation to be published that will determine how at a local level a property could be considered high value but also how the receipt will be treated, given that part should be retained by the Local Authority, but also how much will be pooled for the Housing Association compensation and contributions for brownfield site development.
- 6.7 Given this position it is difficult for us to model any potential impact of these sales of high value voids and whether match funding is required, as with the current '1-4-1' reserve arrangements. Therefore we need to identify this as a risk to the Business Plan in terms of loss of income and the need for additional expenditure on replacement. The simple contingency plan to meet any net loss in rental income would be to either reduce provision for service enhancements and/or increase borrowing further.
- 6.8 The Government is also introducing a 'Pay to Stay' policy which means that properties that have household income over £30,000 per annum will be subject to market rent (or near market rent) rather than the current social rent. It is anticipated that a sliding scale will be introduced where, if the income is £40,000 or over, 100% of market rent should be charged. The onus will be on landlords to identify the tenants affected through changes to tenancy agreements to supply earnings information, which will obviously involve additional time and costs to the current housing service. Apart from this cost, the Government's proposals should have a neutral effect on the Council's Plan, since the potential additional income is forwarded to the Government and not for the Council to retain, unlike with Housing Associations.

## 7. Commentary

- 7.1 This paper provides officers and members with options to consider against the backdrop of the Government's new rents policy.
- 7.2 The key conclusions that need to be drawn from this is that, even with removing service enhancements, but delivering the new house building programme, there will be the need for some short to medium term borrowing. The alternative would be to reduce the projected levels of investment in the current stock and re-profile this to later years within the Plan.
- 7.3 It must be remembered that the loans arranged to finance the original self-financing transaction of £185.6million were done on the basis of:
- Rents that would increase above the rate of inflation
  - That existing rents would eventually move to their formula rent
  - Right to Buy levels would have been less than assumed in the self-financing calculation

Instead we have seen a complete overhaul of the rents system, which has stripped the HRA of up to a potential £225.8million. The additional loss of stock through Right to Buy does not fully compensate the HRA and, of course, replacement housing costs the HRA 70% of the build costs.

- 7.4 Therefore it is unavoidable that to deliver the new affordable homes programme, and even make some provision for service enhancements or improvements, that borrowing will be required to provide resources within the Plan, particularly in the early years.
- 7.5 A further consideration is that if additional borrowing is not preferred, Option 4a has identified that there is the potential for £1.034million in interest charges to be paid to the Government for non-use of receipts. Whilst the additional borrowing in Option 1 would cost in the region of £4.04million, it would deliver in excess of £32.5million of investment in new homes.
- 7.6 Whilst we have identified the risks that the Plan faces in terms of sale of high value voids, possibly partially offset by being able to re-let current properties at formula rent, there is no immediate action that Epping Forest need to take now.
- 7.7 Therefore the options and associated results can be considered by the Council at this stage, but they do not need to be enacted upon at present. This is demonstrated in each of the options where Year 4 (2017.18) is perhaps when decisions will need to be made in terms of borrowing or reducing expenditure.

## **8. Extending the New Build Programme**

- 8.1 In 2014 we provided a funding report on extending the then new build programme which included Phases 3 to 6 to ensure that the additional homes proposed could be afforded.
- 8.2 We modelled an additional set of Phases, 7 to 10, which could deliver a further 105 properties. At that stage we demonstrated that in order to deliver the properties in addition to Phases 3 to 6 that additional borrowing would be required.
- 8.3 The same holds true whatever the option chosen from those identified above. We have modelled the additional properties within Phases 7 to 10 for each option and the debt cap is not breached, and with adjustments to future service enhancements and improvements the plan can still repay its loans within the 30 year period.

Simon Smith  
September 2015

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## **Report to Housing Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 10 November 2015**

**Portfolio: Housing – Cllr D. Stallan**

**Subject: Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Key Action Plan (2015/16) - 6-Month Progress Report**



**Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall – Director of Communities (01992 56 4004)**

**Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 56 4607)**

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**That the Panel considers the Six-Month Progress Report for the Key Action Plan contained within the HRA Business Plan 2015/16 (attached as an Appendix) and provides any feedback to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Communities accordingly.**

### **Report:**

1. In March 2015, the Council's latest Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan (2015/16) was produced, incorporating the Repairs & Maintenance Business Plan. This document set out the Council's objectives, strategies and plans as landlord, in relation to the management and maintenance of its own housing stock.
2. An important section of the HRA Business Plan is the Key Action Plan, which sets out the proposed actions the Council would be taking, primarily, over the year. Having included the Key Action Plan within the Business Plan, it is good practice that the progress made with the stated actions is monitored by the Select Committee during the year.
3. The Six-Month Progress Report on the actions contained within the Key Action Plan 2015/16 is attached as an Appendix to this report for consideration.
4. The Select Committee is asked to consider the Progress Report and to feed back to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Communities any comments it considers appropriate.

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**HRA Business Plan 2015/16  
ACTION PLAN**

Action	Corporate Housing Objectives	Responsibility for Achievement	Target Date	6-Month Progress Report (as at 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2015)
<b>Housing General</b>				
1) Review the HRA Financial Plan, through formal officer reviews on a quarterly basis and reviews by the Housing Scrutiny Panel on a half-yearly basis.	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Director of Communities	Mar 2016	<b>On Target</b> - The Q1 Update was reviewed by officers and the Report on HRA Financial Plan Options (which is being reported to the Housing Select Committee in November) has replaced the need for a Q2 Update
2) <i>(Subject to Cabinet approval)</i> Consider additional appropriate housing improvements and service enhancements, funded from additional resources available to the HRA from April 2016, once the available additional funding is known.	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Director of Communities	Jan 2016	<b>No Longer Required</b> – At its meeting in September 2015, following consideration of the Report on HRA Financial Plan Options, the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee decided that, with two or three agreed exceptions, a Moratorium should be placed on the use of the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund for one year, pending a further review of options for the HRA Financial Plan during 2016.
3) Introduce a new centralised, co-ordinated and customer focussed complaints handling regime for all Step 1 and Step 2 complaints within the Communities Directorate	HO 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Private Housing & Communities Support)	June 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – The new post of Customer Relationship Officer has been created and the post-holder started in August 2015. A completely new approach has been introduced for dealing with Step 1 and Step 2 complaints, which is working very successfully.
4) Undertake the tri-annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey of a random sample of Council tenants, using Housemark's standard "Star" Tenant Satisfaction Survey questions	HO 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Information and Customer Relations Team Leader	Dec 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – The Tenant Satisfaction Survey has been completed, and the results are being presented to the November meeting of the Select Committee.

## Council Housebuilding Programme

5) Seek and obtain Investment Partner status with the HCA, to enable the Council to draw down its HCA funding and charge affordable rents for newly-built properties.	HO 1 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	May 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – May 2016
6) Complete Phase 1 of the Council's Housebuilding Programme, to provide 23 new affordable rented homes in Waltham Abbey.	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	<del>Nov 2015</del> July 2016	<b>Delayed</b> – The contractor is behind programme. No request for an extension of time has been received to date. In November, a Certificate of Non-Completion will be issued in line with the contract. The contractor is advising that completion will be in March 2016 at Roundhills and July 2016 at Harveyfields.
7) Complete the improvement scheme at Marden Close and Faversham Hall, Chigwell Row, to convert the 20 existing bedsits a former hall into 12 one bedroom flats	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	<del>Sept</del> Nov 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – The contractor has claimed, and been granted, an extension of time due to required additional work and delays caused by utility companies. Completion is due in November 2015.
8) Commence Phase 2 of the Housebuilding Programme, providing 52 new affordable rented homes at Burton Road, Loughton, including the receipt of planning permission and the procurement of the works contractor	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	Mar 2016	<b>On Target</b> – Planning permission was granted for 51 new rented homes at Burton Road, Loughton. Tenders have been issued - and are due back in November 2015. The Cabinet Committee will consider the outcome of the tender exercise at its meeting in January 2016.
9) Obtain planning permission for Phase 3 of the Council Housebuilding programme, to provide new affordable rented homes in Epping, North Weald and Ongar	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	<del>Sept</del> Dec 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – Planning Permission has been granted at thee of the nine sites making up Phase 3. Others are delayed while traffic surveys are completed to support the applications. The revised target date is December 2015.
10) Complete the development and financial appraisals for the remaining Council sites with development potential and, through the Council's Housebuilding Cabinet Committee, determine which sites planning permission for development should be sought.	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	<del>Sept 2015</del> Jan 2016	<b>In Progress</b> – The final 13 feasibility studies will be considered by the Cabinet Committee in January 2016.

11) Formulate a programme to deliver Phases 3-6 of the Council Housebuilding Programme	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	<del>Sept 2015</del> Jan 2016	<b>On Target</b> – The Cabinet Committee has already agreed the sites that will make up Phases 3-5. The sites that make up Phase 6 will be considered by the Cabinet Committee in January 2016.
<b>Housing Management</b>				
12) Implement the revisions to the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Policy, to deliver the agreed requirements.	HO 2	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	July 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – July 2015
13) Procure a new choice based lettings provider agency for when the existing contract with Locata Housing Services ends.	HO 1 / 2	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	<del>Sept</del> Nov 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – Following a detailed EU procurement exercise through competitive dialogue, Locata (the current provider) has been selected as the provider for the new contract. The contract documentation is currently in the process of being finalised
14) Undertake an Environmental Improvement Scheme for the Oakwood Hill Estate, Loughton, in partnership with Essex County Council, through a specially-formed Task Force of key individuals and partners	HO 2 / 3 / 4	Asst Director (Housing Property & Development)	Mar 2016	<b>In Progress</b> – Task Force meetings continue to be held and Essex Highways have undertaken pilot work to renew the adopted footpaths, which is currently being evaluated. Following evaluation, arrangements will be put in place to renew the remaining adopted footpaths, renew EFDC's footpaths and undertake the other identified improvements
15) Introduce an IT system to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the Council's leasehold property portfolio	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 5 / 6	Communities Support Manager	Dec 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – The project has been delayed, due to difficulties in appointing to the Housing IT Team Leader post. However, progress continues to be made.
16) Extend the opening hours of the Council Office at the Limes Centre, Chigwell into weekday afternoons and increase the range of Council services accessible from the Office	HO 2	Area Housing Manager (South)	<del>Jul 2015</del> Feb 2016	<b>Delayed</b> – Regrettably, it was not possible to recruit to the new part-time Housing Officer post following the recruitment exercise. However, a new approach to officers' working times is being introduced which, it is hoped, will increase the interest from potential candidates. In the

				meantime, progress is being made for a variety of Council services to provide “surgeries” at the Limes Centre.
17) Provide paperless direct debit facilities to Council leaseholders and clients of the Council’s Careline Service, and increase the flexibility of direct debit dates for all housing clients	HO 1 / 2 / 5	Communities Support Manager	Sept 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – September 2015
18) Extend the funding for the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau to enable the CAB to appoint their two Debt Advisors for a further year	HO 1 / 2	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	<del>June</del> Nov 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – Due to a period when the posts were vacant, the current funding will enable the service to continue until March 2016. The Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee has agreed in principle to continue to fund the posts for a further year, subject to the CAB providing a presentation to the Grant Aid Task and Finish Group and the Cabinet Committee being satisfied that reports on the use of the funding are being received and that the funding provides good value for money.
19) Increase the level of financial incentives offered to existing Council tenants to downsize their accommodation	HO 1 / 2	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	July 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – July 2015
20) Investigate the feasibility and consult tenants on a proposal to provide a caretaking service on the Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey	HO 2 / 4	Area Housing Manager (North)	<del>Sept 2015</del> Mar 2016	<b>No progress yet</b> – due to workload and other commitments
<b>Tenant Participation</b>				
21) Work with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation to commence the undertaking of periodic “mystery shopping” exercises on the Council’s housing services by trained tenants.	HO 2 / 3 / 4	Tenant Participation Officer	June 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – June 2015
22) Complete the Tenant Scrutiny Panel’s Service Review of Tenant Participation	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4	Tenant Participation Officer	<del>Sept 2015</del> June 2016	<b>Delayed</b> - Very little progress has been made by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, which has been exacerbated by the recent departure of the Tenant Participation

				Officer. However, recruitment to the post is underway and the new officer will be assisting the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation to review its approach to tenant scrutiny.
23) Undertake a recruitment campaign and rebranding exercise to increase the membership of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	<del>Jun 2015</del> Jan 2016	<b>See Item (22) above</b>
24) Work with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation to identify an appropriate area of the Housing Service for the Tenant Scrutiny Panel to undertake a Service Review	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4	Tenant Participation Officer	Jan 2016	<b>Not yet required</b> – The intention is to undertake the planned Service Review of Tenant Participation first
<b>Housing Related Support</b>				
25) Complete the first schemes under the programme of providing scooter stores at sheltered housing schemes	HO 2	Housing Assets Manager	July 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – at Chapel Road, Epping and Parsonage Court, Loughton.
26) Consider the level of Housing Related Support (HRS) Charges to be made to tenants living in sheltered housing and other housing designated for older people for the Careline and Scheme Management Services from April 2016, in the light of the availability of funding provided by Essex County Council for housing related support	HO 1 / 2	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	Dec 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – The Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee is due to consider a proposed HRS Charging Plan in November 2015. The proposals have already been pre-scrutinised by both the Resources Select Committee and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, both of whom support the proposals.
27) Undertake a feasibility study into the condition and future use of the chalets at Norway House, the Council's Homeless Persons Hostel	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 6	Asst. Director (Housing Property and Development)	<del>June 2015</del> Jan 2016	<b>In Progress</b> - A feasibility study is underway, with the outcome planned to be reported to the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee in January 2016
28) Review the approach to the designation of Council properties suitable for older people, to ensure that vacant properties are allocated to housing applicants in the most need	HO 2	Asst Director (Housing (Operations))	<del>July</del> Nov 2015	<b>In Progress</b> – A report is in the process of being considered by the Housing Portfolio Holder, setting out the proposed approach to the de-designation of a number of properties currently designated for occupation by older people.

## Housing Repairs and Maintenance

29) Implement a programme for repairs and maintenance expenditure over 5 and 30 years.	HO 1 / 3 / 5	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt / Housing Assets Manager)	Mar 2016	<b>Achieved</b> – As part of the annual business planning process, planned maintenance programmes have been put in place to deliver the replacement of key building components as part of the Council's new Modern Homes Programme.
30) Install mains-operated smoke detectors in all Council owned properties over the next 5-years	HO 3	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt) / Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2017	<b>In Progress</b> – Mains smoke detectors have been installed in around 5,000 homes, with around 1,500 remaining. The Programme should be completed by around 2017/18
31) Timetable at least one meeting each year with the Tenants Federation to discuss the annual repairs and maintenance programme.	HO 3 / 4	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2016	<b>Not yet required.</b>
32) Identify a new site to which the Housing Repairs Service can be re-located - to free up the existing Epping Depot for development.	HO 3	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt)	Mar 2016	<b>Achieved</b> – At its meeting In November 2015, the Cabinet will be considering a site in North Weald as a new Repairs and Maintenance Hub, to which the Housing Repairs Service and Housing Assets Team would relocate.
33) Closely monitor the new materials supply contract with Grafton Buildbase, and if performance deteriorates to an unacceptable level, then implement arrangements with an alternative supplier.	HO 1 / 3	Mears (Repairs Management Contractor)	<del>June 2015</del> Mar 2016	<b>In Progress</b> – The performance of Buildbase as materials suppliers continues to be closely monitored.
34) Undertake a tender to appoint at least two Framework contractors to undertake Gas Servicing and breakdown works to gas heating and hot water appliances in time to coincide with the existing contract end date in July 2015.	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	<del>July</del> Nov 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – In November 2015 the Cabinet will be considering the outcome of the recent EU procurement exercise.
35) Migrate from the Council's existing bespoke Schedule of Rates to the industry standard National Housing Federation Schedule of Rates (NHF SOR)	HO 3	Mears (Repairs Management Contractor)	Mar 2015	<b>Achieved</b> – The migration took place in April 2015, with the rates now being closely monitored to ensure they reflect the actual cost of competing jobs.

36) Renew at least 3,300 key components each year to maintain its housing stock to a more modern standard based on industry standard life cycles.	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager / Mears (Repairs Management Contractor)	Mar 2016	<b>In Progress</b> - As part of the annual business planning process, planned maintenance programmes are put in place to deliver the replacement of key building components as part of the new Modern Homes Programme.
37) Continue with the Repairs Focus Group	HO 3 / 4	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt)	Mar 2016	<b>In Progress</b> - The Repairs Focus Group has continued to meet.
38) Complete the installation of EWI to a further 40 properties using Green Deal Cash Back funding.	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2016	<b>Achieved</b> – 31 properties were completed in the rural communities. The Council has received £106,000 in Green Deal Cashback as a result.
39) Continue to offer a 75% discount for leaseholders for 30-minute front entrance fire door installations to flats	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2016	<b>In Progress</b> – In advance of the annual External Repairs and Redecoration Programme, leasehold flats are identified, and leaseholders offered the discounted rate for replacement fire doors
40) Implement the second set of “key deliverables” as agreed by the Repairs Advisory Group and the Housing Portfolio Holder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To introduce an on-line repairs diagnosis and reporting service with access to book appointments on-line</li> <li>• To introduce materials product warranty notification software to warn of any warranty in existence</li> <li>• To complete a HQN Repairs Self-Assessment.</li> </ul>	HO 3	Mears (Repairs Management Contractor)	<del>Sept 2015</del> Mar 2016	<b>Delayed</b> – This was delayed whilst the ICT integration took place between Mears MCM system and the Council's OHMS system. The key deliverables are now anticipated to be completed by March 2016.
41) Seek to include at least one local business on the list of tenderers for all future contracts.	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager / Mears (Repairs Management Contractor)	Mar 2016	<b>In Progress</b> – This has been achieved on all tenders completed this year to date.
42) Complete a programme of refurbishment to communal kitchens in Sheltered Housing Schemes	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2016	<b>On-target</b> – This is due to be completed by March 2016.
43) Complete a pilot installation of scooter stores at Chapel Road and Parsonage Court sheltered housing schemes	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	Mar 2016	<b>Achieved</b> – Scooter stores have been completed at Chapel Road and Parsonage Court.

## Key to Corporate Housing Objectives

HO 1 - Value for Money  
HO 2 - Housing Management

HO 3 - Repairs and Maintenance  
HO 4 - Tenant Participation

HO 5 - Housing Finance  
HO 6 - Housing Development





## SCRUTINY



Epping Forest District Council

**Report to: Housing Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 10 November 2015**

**Portfolio:** Housing (Councilor D. Stallan)

**Subject:** Key Performance Indicators 2015/16 – Progress at Quarter 2

**Officer contact for further information:** B. Copson (01992 564042)

**Democratic Services Officer:** A. Hendry (01992 564246)  
M. Jenkins (01992 564607)

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**That the Select Committee review progress against the Key Performance Indicators within its areas of responsibility, at the end of Quarter 2 (Q2).**

### **Executive Summary:**

The Local Government Act 1999 requires that the Council make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions and services are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

As part of the duty to secure continuous improvement, a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) relevant to the Council's services and key objectives, are adopted each year by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee. Performance against the KPIs is monitored on a quarterly basis by Management Board and overview and scrutiny to drive improvement in performance and ensure corrective action is taken where necessary.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

The KPIs provide an opportunity for the Council to focus attention on how specific areas for improvement will be addressed, and how opportunities will be exploited and better outcomes delivered. It is important that relevant performance management processes are in place to review and monitor performance against the key performance indicators to ensure their continued achievability and relevance, and to identify proposals for appropriate corrective action in areas of slippage or under performance.

### **Other Options for Action:**

No other options are appropriate in this respect. Failure to monitor and review KPI performance and to consider corrective action where necessary could have negative implications for judgements made about the Council's progress, and might mean that opportunities for improvement are lost.

### **Report:**

1. A range of thirty-six (36) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2015/16 was adopted by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in March 2015. The

KPIs are important to the improvement of the Council's services, and comprise a combination of some former statutory indicators and locally determined performance measures. The aim of the KPIs is to direct improvement effort towards services and the national priorities and local challenges arising from the social, economic and environmental context of the district.

2. Progress in respect of each of the KPIs is reviewed by the relevant Portfolio Holder, Management Board, and overview and scrutiny at the conclusion of each quarter. This report provides an overview of all KPIs and includes in detail those indicators which fall within the areas of responsibility of the Housing Select Committee
3. A headline end of Q2 performance summary in respect of each of the KPIs falling within the Housing Select Committee's areas of responsibility for 2015/16, is attached as Appendix 1 to this report together with details of the specific six-month performance for each indicator. Members of the Select Committee will be aware the September Committee meeting was cancelled and the Q1 report which was to be considered at that meeting has been overtaken by this quarter 2 report. Q1 statistics are included in Appendix 1.
4. Improvement plans are produced for all of the KPIs each year, setting out actions to be implemented in order to achieve target performance, and to reflect changes in service delivery. In view of the corporate importance attached to the KPIs, the improvement plans are agreed by Management Board and are also subject to ongoing review between the relevant service director and Portfolio Holder over the course of the year. Improvement Plans are usually included in the first quarter performance report to Select Committees and therefore the Improvement Plans for the suite of indicators which fall within the areas of responsibility of the Housing Select Committee are attached at Appendix 2 to this report.

#### **Key Performance Indicators 2015/16 – Quarter 2 Performance**

5. **All indicators** - The overall position for all 36 KPIs at the end of Q2, was as follows:
  - (a) 26 (72%) indicators achieved target at the end of Q2;
  - (b) 10 (28%) indicators did not achieve the Q2 target; although
  - (c) 1 (10 %) of these KPIs performed within their tolerated amber margin;
  - (d) 26 (72%) indicators are currently anticipated to achieve their cumulative year-end target.
6. **Housing SC indicators** - Ten (10) of the Key Performance Indicators fall within the Housing Select Committee's areas of responsibility. The overall position with regard to the achievement of target performance at the end of Q2 for these indicators, was as follows:
  - (a) 9 (80%) indicators achieved the Q2 target;
  - (b) 1 (20%) indicators did not achieve their Q2 target;
  - (c) 0 (0%) indicators performed within their tolerated amber margin;
  - (d) 9 (80%) of indicators are currently anticipated to achieve their cumulative year-end target.
7. The 'amber' performance status used in KPI reports identifies indicators that have missed the agreed target for the quarter, but where performance is within an agreed tolerance or range (+/-). The KPI tolerances were agreed by Management Board when targets for the KPIs were set in February 2015.
8. The Select Committee is requested to review performance at the end of Q2 in relation to the KPIs for 2015/16 within its areas of responsibility.

**Resource Implications:**

Resource requirements for actions to achieve specific KPI performance for 2015/16 will have been identified by the responsible service director/chief officer and reflected in the budget for the year.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

There are no legal or governance implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Relevant implications arising from actions to achieve specific KPI performance for 2015/16 will have been identified by the responsible service director.

**Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:**

There are no implications arising from the recommendations of this report in respect of the Council's commitment to the Climate Local Agreement, the corporate Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative, or any crime and disorder issues within the district. Relevant implications arising from actions to achieve specific KPI performance for 2015/16 will have been identified by the responsible service director.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

The performance information and targets set out in this report have been submitted by each appropriate service director and have been reviewed by Management Board. The individual KPI improvement plans for 2015/16 will be agreed by the Board.

**Background Papers:**

KPI submissions are held by the Performance Improvement Unit.

**Impact Assessments:*****Risk Management***

There are no risk management issues arising from the recommendations of this report. Relevant issues arising from actions to achieve specific KPI performance for 2015/16 will have been identified by the responsible service director.





















***Equality:***

There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Relevant implications arising from actions to achieve specific KPI performance for 2015/16 will have been identified by the responsible service director.

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Quarterly Indicators		Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4		Is year-end target likely to be achieved?
		Tgt	Actual	Tgt	Actual	Tgt	Actual	Tgt	Actual	

**Communities Quarterly KPIs**

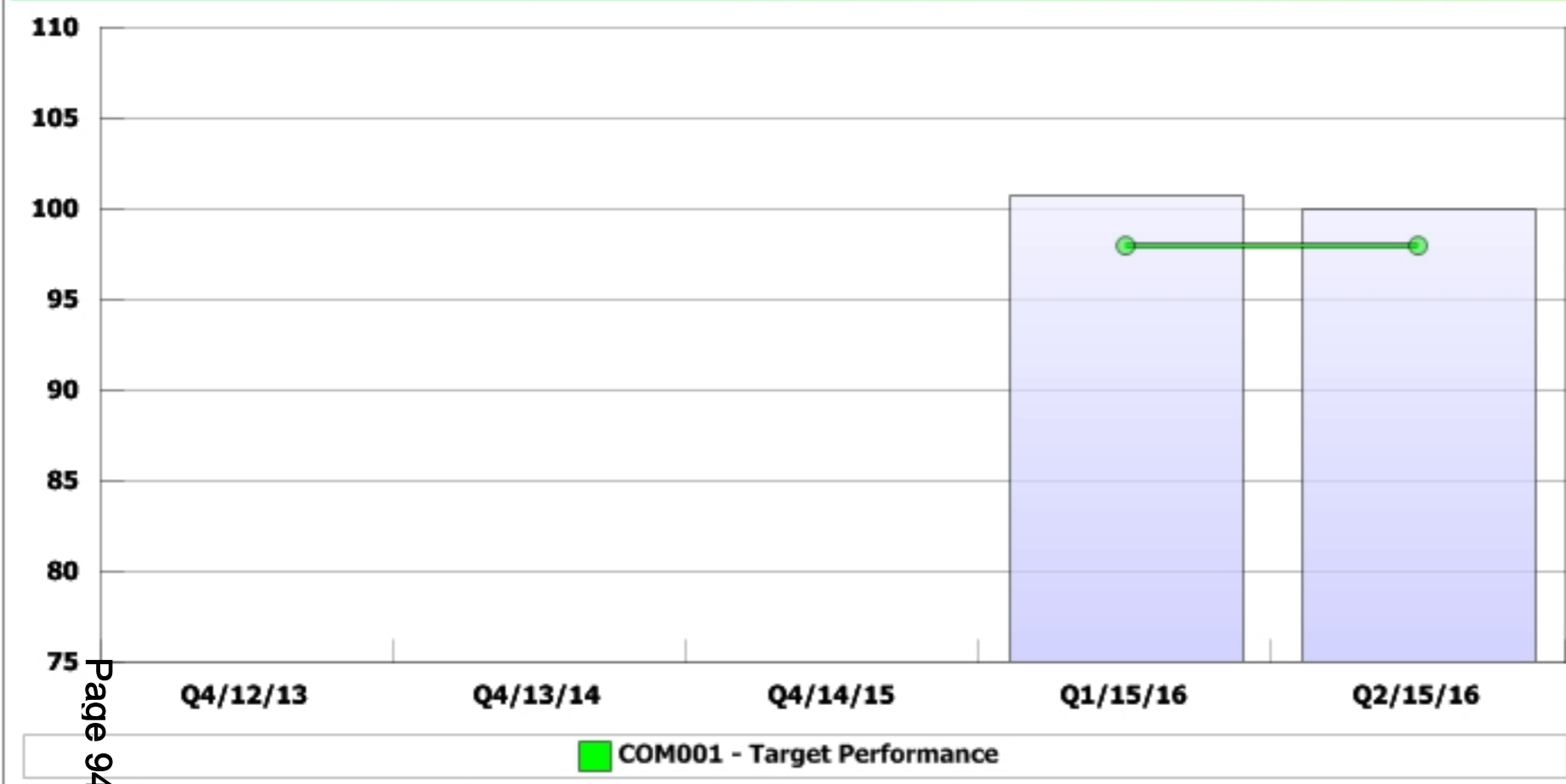
COM001	(Housing rent) (%)	98.00%	100.87%		98.00%	100.11%		98.00%	98.00%	Yes
COM002	(Void re-lets) (days)	37.0	38.0		37.0	36.0		37.0	37.0	Yes
COM003	(Tenant satisfaction) (%)	98.00%	100.00%		98.00%	100.00%		98.00%	98.00%	Yes
COM004	(Temp. accommodation) (no.)	65	73		65	83		65	65	No
COM005	(Non-decent homes) (%)	0.00%	0.00%		0.00%	0.00%		0.00%	0.00%	Yes
COM006	(Modern Homes Std) (%)	825	844		1,650	1,767		2,475	3,300	Yes
COM007	(Emergency repairs) (%)	99.00%	100.00%		99.00%	99.27%		99.00%	99.00%	Yes
COM008	(Responsive repairs) (days)	7.00	5.86		7.00	6.18		7.00	7.00	Yes
COM009	(Emergency repairs) (%)	98.00%	98.40%		98.00%	98.32%		98.00%	98.00%	Yes
COM010	(Calls to Careline) (%)	97.50%	99.91%		97.50%	99.89%		97.50%	97.50%	Yes

**COM001 Rent collected from current and former tenants as a % of rent due (excluding arrears brought forward).**

**Additional Information:** An efficient rent collection service is important so that as much of the rent due, and therefore potential income to the Council as landlord, is collected. This indicator measures the rent collected in the year-to-date regardless of when the rent charge was raised, as a percentage of the rent charges raised in the year-to-date, for all current General Needs and Housing for Older People.

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01992 564042.

**Current and previous quarters performance**



Quarter	Target	Actual	Status
Q2/15/16	98.00%	100.11%	✓
Q1/15/16	98.00%	100.87%	✓
Q4/14/15	-	-	-
Q4/13/14	-	-	-
Q4/12/13	-	-	-

**Annual Target:** 2015/16 - 98.00%  
2014/15 - N/A

**Indicator of good performance:**  
A higher percentage is good

↑ is the direction of improvement



**Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?**

Yes

**Comment on current performance (including context):**

(Q2 2015/16) - NEW Indicator.

Although a rent collection KPI has been in place for a number of years, the definition has been changed from this year to that used by other councils and housing associations, to enable benchmarking with other social landlords. The performance indicator now measures the percentage of rent collected from current and former tenants as a percentage of rent due. It does not take into account any outstanding arrears at the start of the financial year.

Old definition performance comparison with the same quarter last year as follows:  
2014/15 Q2 = 96.09% 2015/16 Q2 = 97.41%.

The target will be reviewed for 2016/17 in the light of actual performance across the first 3 quarters performance this year.

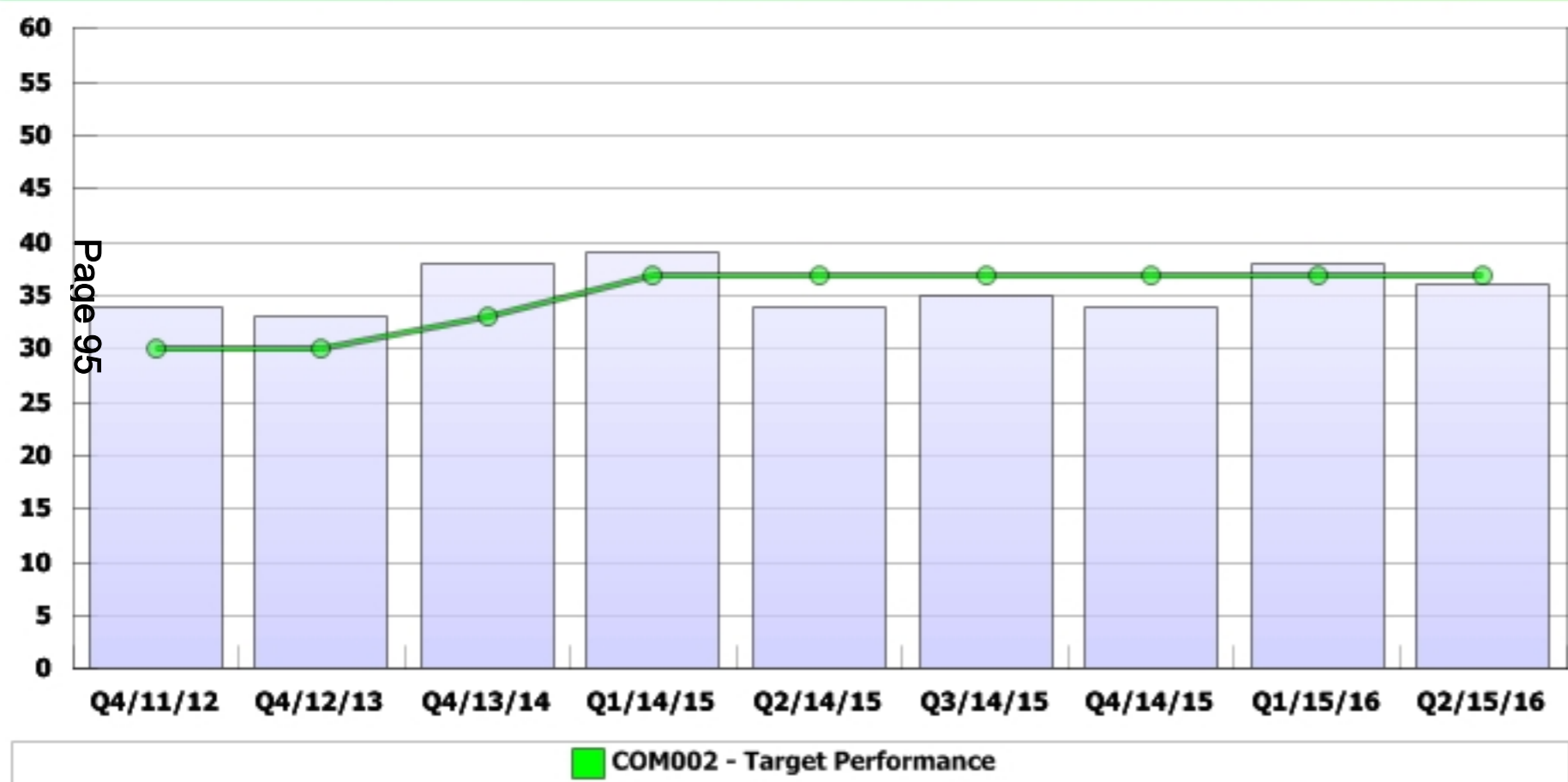
**Corrective action proposed (if required):**

**COM002 On average, how many days did it take us to re-let a Council property?**

**Additional Information:** The calculation excludes those properties which are 'difficult to let' (offered to and refused by at least two applicants) or 'major works' (works over 6 weeks AND over £1500 in cost terms). In addition it also excludes 'properties let through mutual exchanges', 'very sheltered accommodation' and 'properties the council intends to sell or demolish'.

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01992 564042.

**Current and previous quarters performance**



Quarter	Target	Actual	Status
Q2/15/16	37.0	36.0	✓
Q1/15/16	37.0	38.0	✗
Q4/14/15	37.0	34.0	✓
Q3/14/15	37.0	35.0	✓
Q2/14/15	37.0	34.0	✓

**Annual 2015/16 - 37 days**  
**Target: 2014/15 - 37 days**

**Indicator of good performance:**  
 A lower number of days is good

↓ is the direction of improvement

**Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?**

Yes



**Comment on current performance (including context):**

(Q2 2015/16) - Target has been achieved.

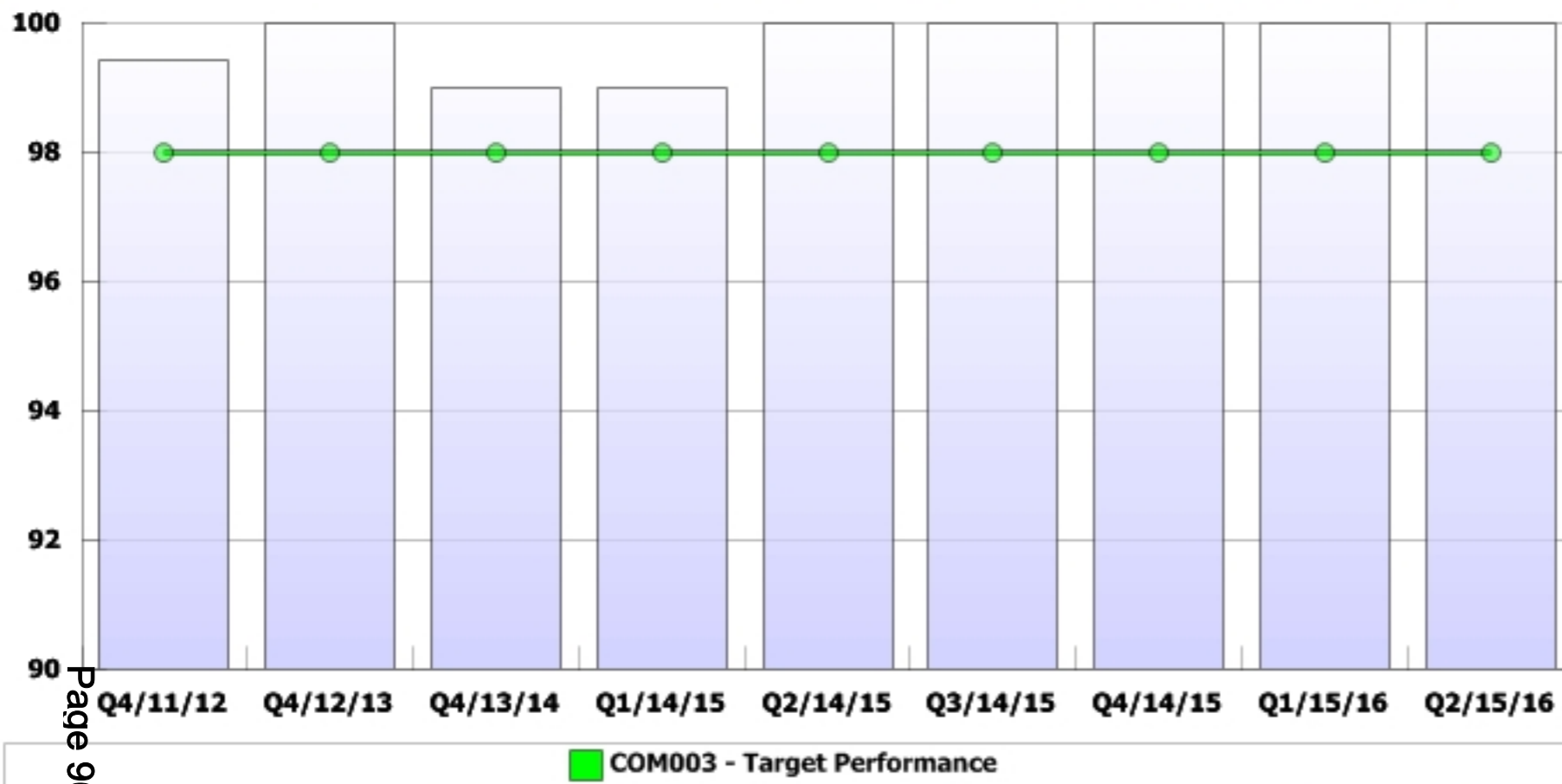
**Corrective action proposed (if required):**

# COM003 How satisfied were our tenants with the standard of the repairs service they received?

**Additional Information:** This indicator is a measure of housing management performance, as it is incumbent upon the Council as landlord to ensure the upkeep of its dwellings and that repairs are completed on time and to the satisfaction of tenants

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01992 564042.

## Current and previous quarters performance



Quarter	Target	Actual
Q2/15/16	98.00%	100.00%
Q1/15/16	98.00%	100.00%
Q4/14/15	98.00%	100.00%
Q3/14/15	98.00%	100.00%
Q2/14/15	98.00%	100.00%



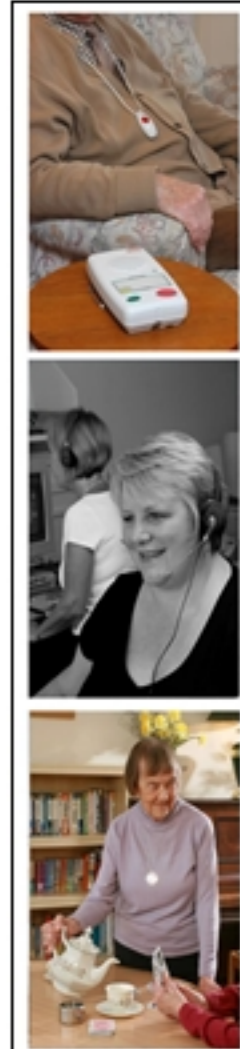
**Annual** 2015/16 - 98.00%  
**Target:** 2014/15 - 98.00%

**Indicator of good performance:**  
 A higher percentage is good

↑ is the direction of improvement

Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?

Yes



### Comment on current performance (including context):

(Q2 2015/16) - Residents continue to demonstrate high levels of satisfaction regarding work completed in their homes by the Council's Repair's Service.

### Corrective action proposed (if required):

Empty box for corrective action proposed.

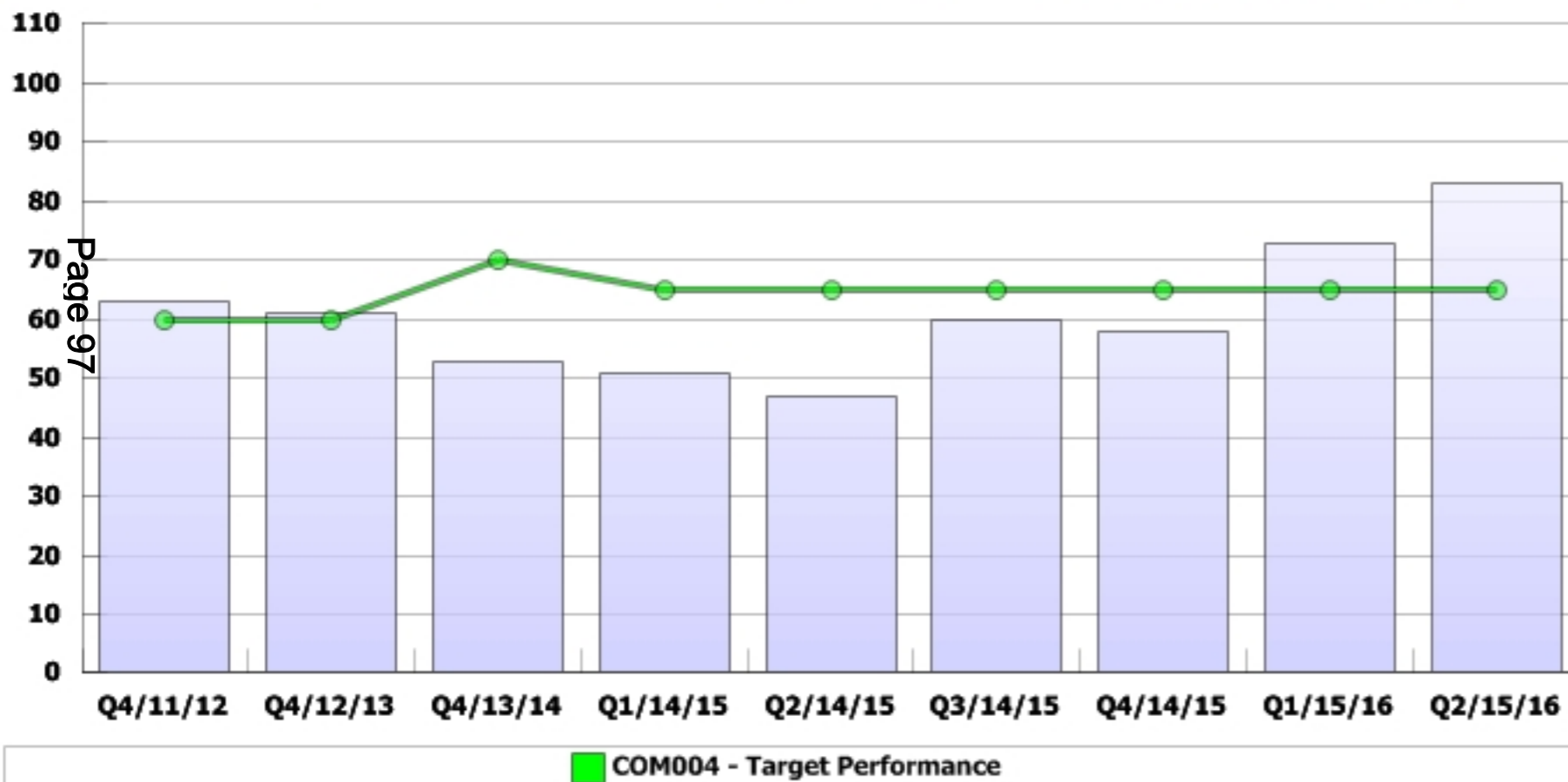


## COM004 How many households were housed in temporary accommodation?

**Additional Information:** This indicator monitors progress towards reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation provided under homelessness legislation. Annual performance is judged on the average of all four quarters performances.

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on [performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk) or by telephone on 01992 564042.

### Current and previous quarters performance



Quarter	Target	Actual
Q2/15/16	65	83
Q1/15/16	65	73
Q4/14/15	65	58
Q3/14/15	65	60
Q2/14/15	65	47

Annual Target: 2015/16 - 65  
2014/15 - 65

Indicator of good performance:  
A lower number is good

↓ is the direction of improvement



Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?

No



### Comment on current performance (including context):

(Q2 2015/16) - The reason for not meeting the target is due to the increase in homelessness, private sector landlords being reluctant to accept homeless applicants without receiving a cash incentive which they would receive from London Boroughs. EFHAS damage guarantee bonds are not generally welcomed with private landlords wanting cash payments. The Council's policy in offering only flats to homeless applicants is slowing down re-housing those to whom a duty is owed.

### Corrective action proposed (if required):

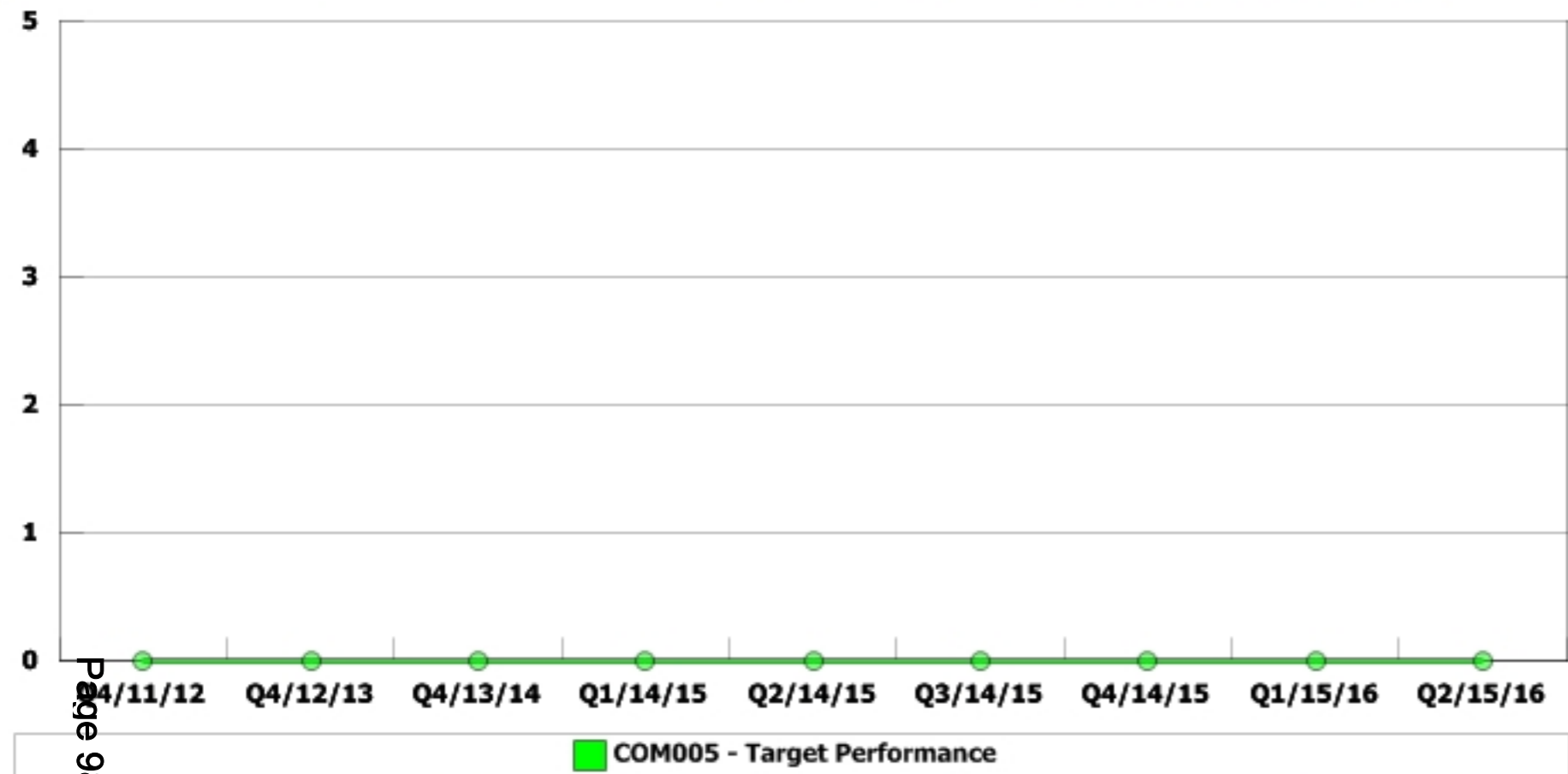
(Q2 2015/16) - Officers are: seeking Member approval for an Invest to Save proposal to provide more funding for rental loans, senior officers with responsibilities for homelessness are meeting to discuss options, and awareness of the difficulties around homelessness facing the Council is to be raised at Management Board level. It is considered that for next year the target must be increased to recognise the challenges that are being experienced by many housing authorities across the Country.

**COM005 What percentage of our council homes were not in a decent condition?**

**Additional Information:** This indicator measures the number of non-decent council homes and the proportion this represents of the total council housing stock, in order to demonstrate progress towards making all council housing decent.

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01992 564042.

**Current and previous quarters performance**



Quarter	Target	Actual
Q2/15/16	0.00%	0.00%
Q1/15/16	0.00%	0.00%
Q4/14/15	0.00%	0.00%
Q3/14/15	0.00%	0.00%
Q2/14/15	0.00%	0.00%



**Annual Target:** 2015/16 - 0.00%  
 2014/15 - 0.00%  
**Indicator of good performance:**  
 A lower percentage is good  
 ↓ is the direction of improvement

**Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?**  
 Yes

**Comment on current performance (including context):**

(Q2 2015/16) - Target achieved.

Potential building element failures have been identified from the Stock Condition Survey Address List and appropriate Capital and Revenue works programmes have commenced to prevent these properties falling into the Non-Decent category.

During 2014-15 over 800 Stock Condition Surveys were completed and during 2015-16 the same number of surveys are planned to ensure no properties fall into the Non-Decent category.

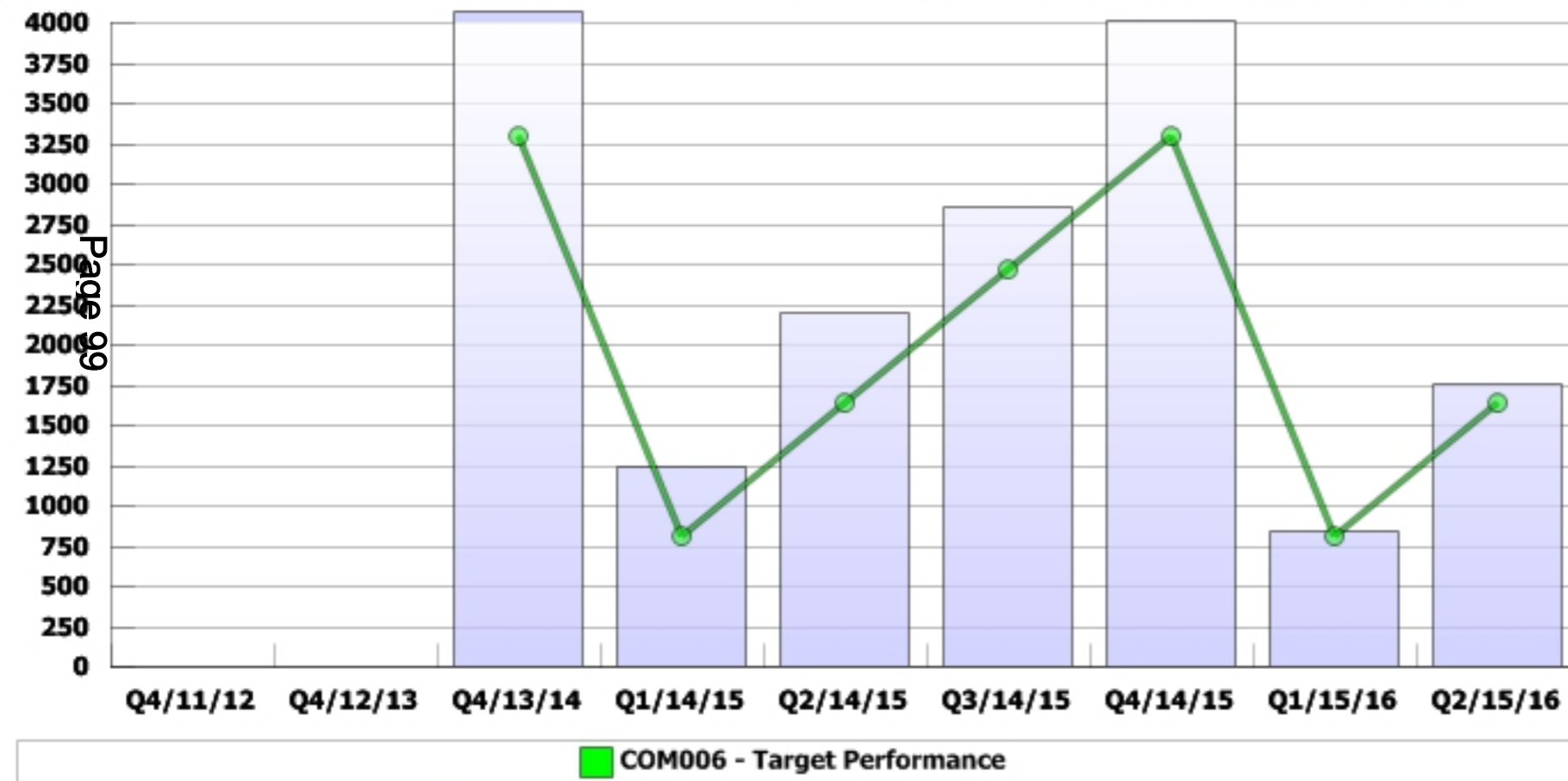
**Corrective action proposed (if required):**

**COM006 How many of the key building components required to achieve the Modern Homes Standard were renewed?**

**Additional Information: We are not currently at the Modern Homes Standard. If we were, we would still anticipate having to replace in excess of 2750 components per year to maintain that standard. Therefore, in order to address the backlog over time we will aim to replace in excess of this annual requirement each year, until we reach the Modern Homes Standard across our housing stock.**

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01992 564042.

**Current and previous quarters performance**



Quarter	Target	Actual
Q2/15/16	1,650	1,767
Q1/15/16	825	844
Q4/14/15	3,300	4,020
Q3/14/15	2,475	2,861
Q2/14/15	1,650	2,204

Annual Target: 2015/16 - 3,300  
 2014/15 - 3,300  
 Indicator of good performance: A higher percentage is good  
 ↑ is the direction of improvement

Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?  
 Yes

**Comment on current performance (including context):**

(Q2 - 2015/16) - Target achieved.  
 Potential building element failures have been identified from Stock Condition Survey Address List summarised in KPI COM005 and appropriate Capital and Revenue works programmes have commenced to prevent these properties falling into the Non-Decent category.

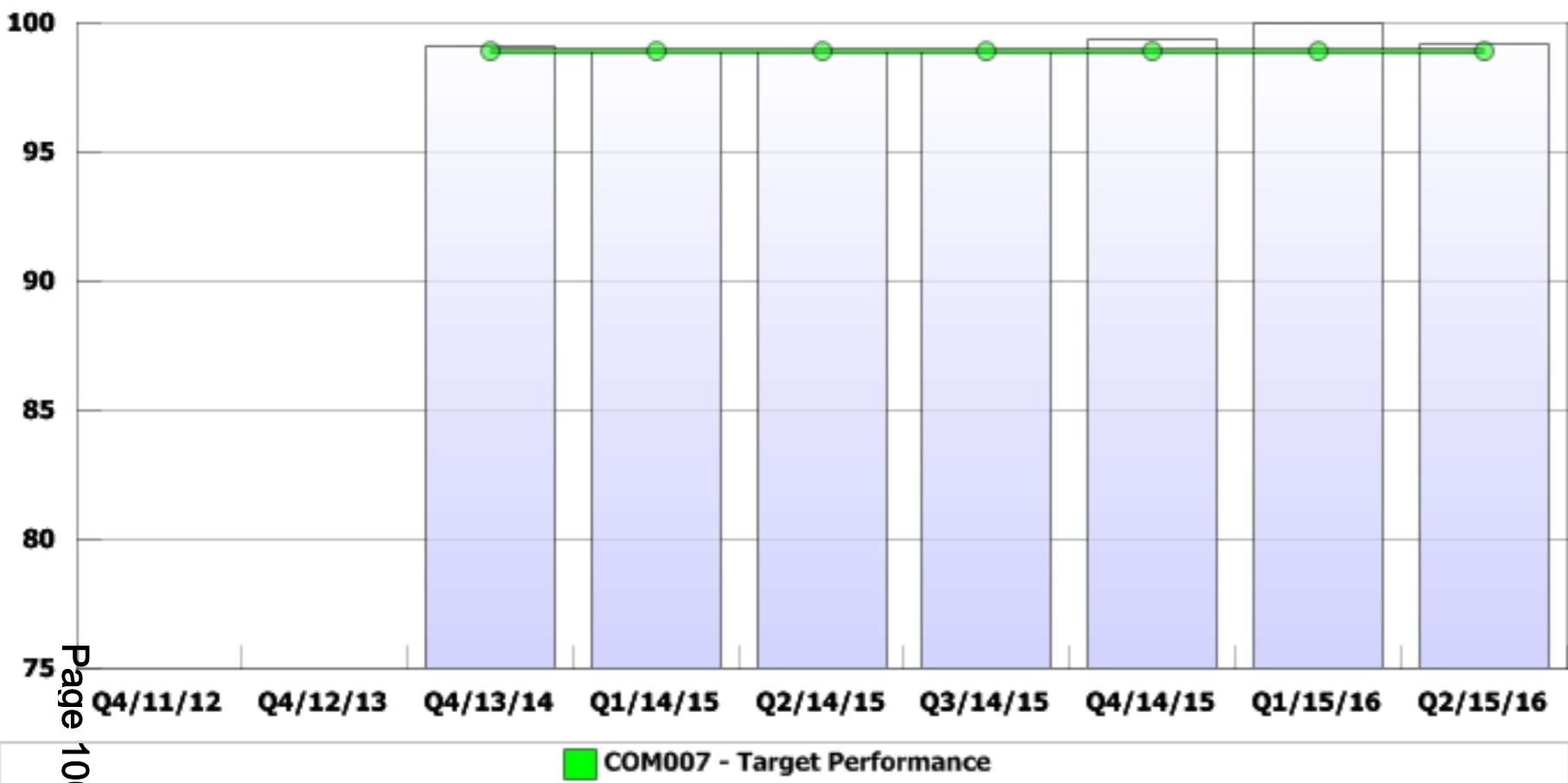
**Corrective action proposed (if required):**

**COM007 What percentage of all emergency repairs are attended to within 4 working hours?**

**Additional Information:** This indicator is a measure of housing management performance, as it is incumbent upon the Council as landlord to ensure the upkeep of its dwellings and that repairs are completed on time. The target time for the completion of emergency repairs is 4 hours.

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01992 564042.

**Current and previous quarters performance**



Quarter	Target	Actual	Status
Q2/15/16	99.00%	99.27%	✓
Q1/15/16	99.00%	100.00%	✓
Q4/14/15	99.00%	99.40%	✓
Q3/14/15	99.00%	99.00%	✓
Q2/14/15	99.00%	99.00%	✓

**Annual Target:** 2015/16 - 99.00%  
2014/15 - 99.00%

**Indicator of good performance:**  
A higher percentage is good

↑ is the direction of improvement

**Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?**  
 Yes

**Comment on current performance (including context):**

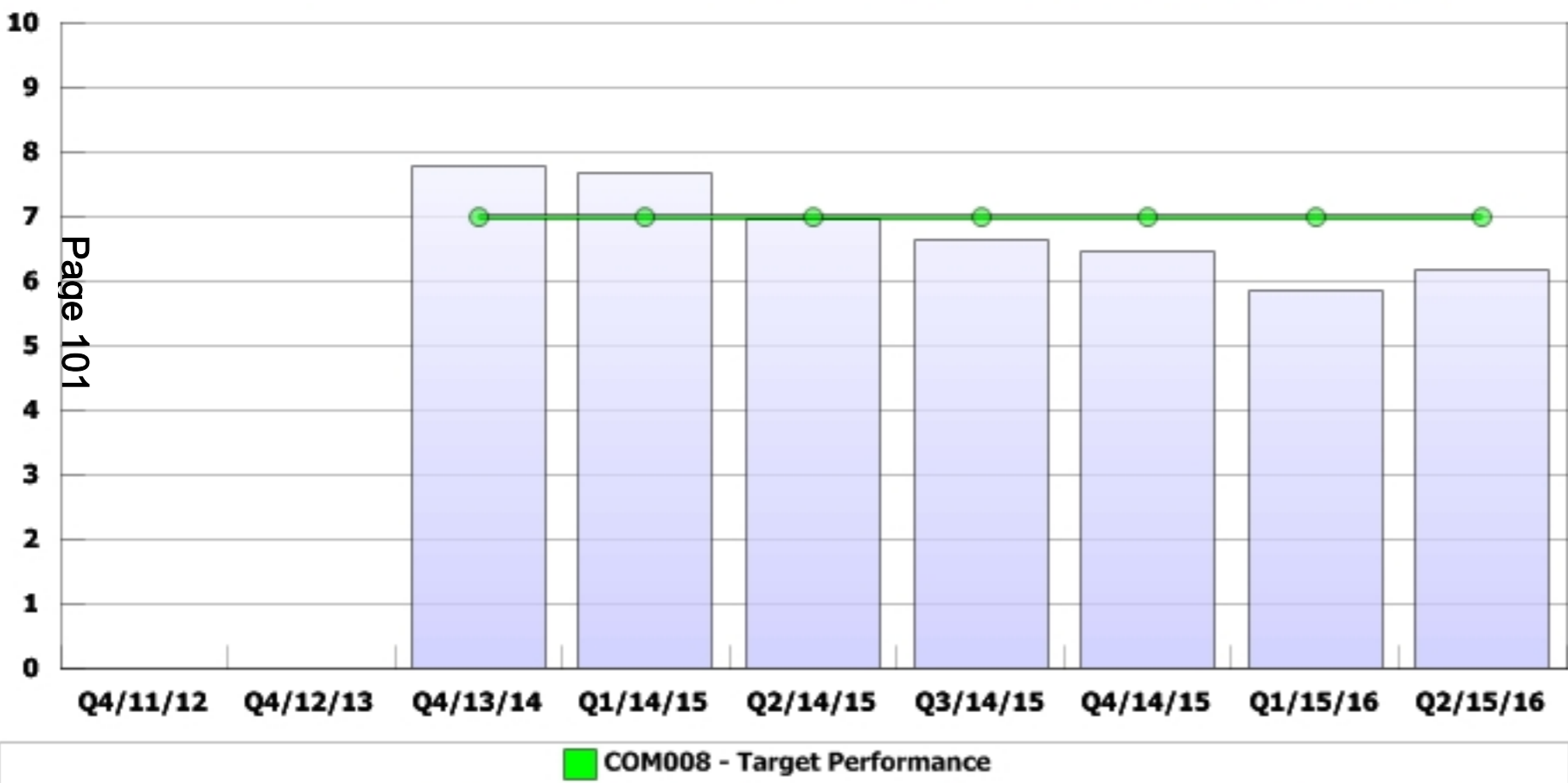
(Q2 2015/16) - Target continues to be met or exceeded.

**Corrective action proposed (if required):**

**Additional Information:** This indicator is a measure of housing management performance, as it is incumbent upon the Council as landlord to ensure the upkeep of its dwellings and that repairs are completed on time. The target time for the average overall completion of responsive repairs is 7 working days.

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01992 564042.

Current and previous quarters performance



Quarter	Target	Actual	Direction of Improvement
Q2/15/16	7.00	6.18	↓
Q1/15/16	7.00	5.86	↓
Q4/14/15	7.00	6.48	↓
Q3/14/15	7.00	6.67	↓
Q2/14/15	7.00	6.98	↓

Annual 2015/16 - 7.00 working days  
 Target: 2014/15 - 7.00 working days  
 Indicator of good performance:  
 A lower number of days is good  
 ↓ is the direction of improvement

Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?  
 Yes

Comment on current performance (including context):

(Q2 2015/16) - The target has been achieved.

Corrective action proposed (if required):

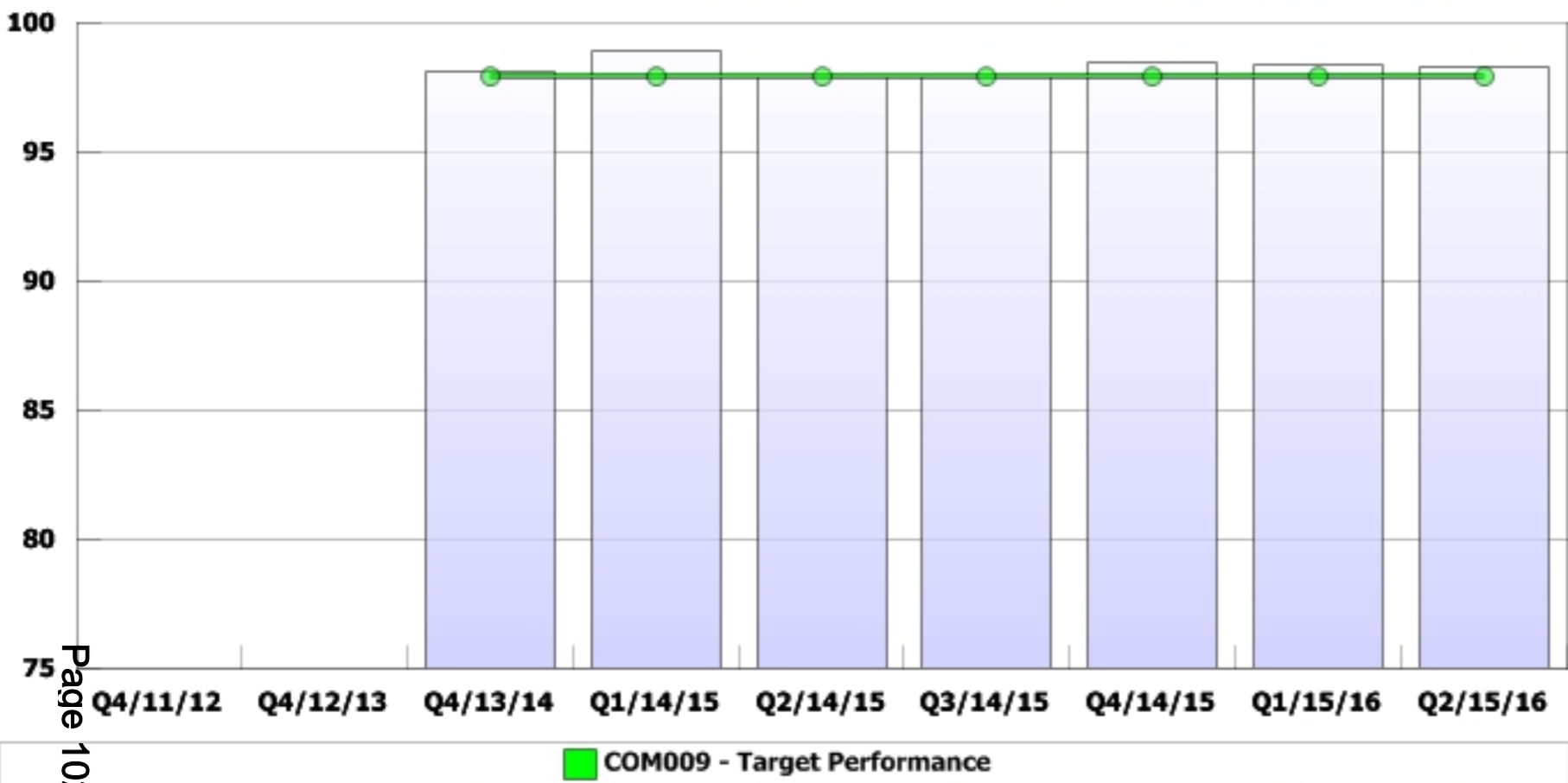
(Q2 2015/16) The Repairs Service will continue to strive to improve efficiency and reduce the overall time.

**COM009 What percentage of appointments for repairs are both made and kept?**

**Additional Information:** This indicator is a measure of housing management performance, as it is incumbent upon the Council as landlord to ensure the upkeep of its dwellings and that repairs are completed on time. The target for the percentage of appointments both made and kept is 98%.

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01992 564042.

**Current and previous quarters performance**



Quarter	Target	Actual	Status
Q2/15/16	98.00%	98.32%	✓
Q1/15/16	98.00%	98.40%	✓
Q4/14/15	98.00%	98.50%	✓
Q3/14/15	98.00%	98.00%	✓
Q2/14/15	98.00%	98.00%	✓

Annual Target: 2015/16 - 98.00%  
 Target: 2014/15 - 98.00%

Indicator of good performance:  
 A higher percentage is good

↑ is the direction of improvement

Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?

Yes

**Comment on current performance (including context):**

**Corrective action proposed (if required):**

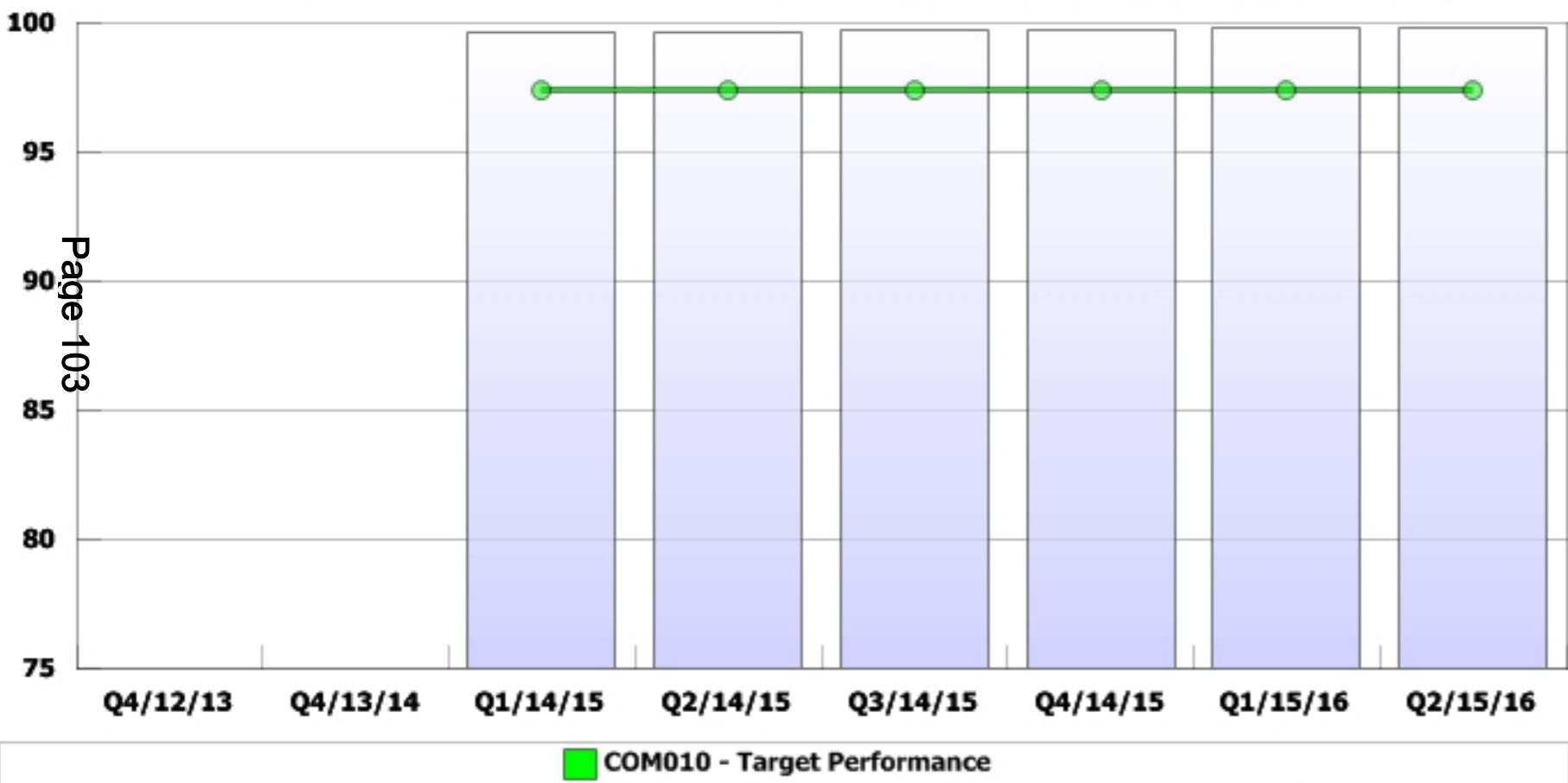
(Q2 2015/16) - Target continues to be met. It is hoped performance can be improved further by improving use of technology (PDAs).

**COM010 What percentage of calls to the council's Careline service are answered within 60 seconds?**

**Additional Information: Percentage of applicable calls received at the Careline Control Centre from users (i.e. excluding door entry, test calls and calls from Scheme Managers on/off duty) that are answered by a controller within 60 seconds of the call being received at the Control Centre.**

For enquiries regarding this indicator contact the Performance Improvement Unit by email on performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone on 01992 564042.

**Current and previous quarters performance**



Quarter	Target	Actual
Q2/15/16	97.50%	99.89%
Q1/15/16	97.50%	99.91%
Q4/14/15	97.50%	99.80%
Q3/14/15	97.50%	99.78%
Q2/14/15	97.50%	99.73%

**Annual Target: 2015/16 - 97.50%**  
**Target: 2014/15 - 97.50%**

**Indicator of good performance: A higher percentage is good**

**↑ is the direction of improvement**

Is it likely that the target will be met at the end of the year?

Yes

**Comment on current performance (including context):**

(Q2 2015/16) - The target has been exceeded.

**Corrective action proposed (if required):**

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**COM01 Rent collection from current and former tenants as a percentage of rent due (excluding rent arrears brought forward).**

Outturn			Target
New indicator for 2015/16			2015/16
			98.00%

**Responsible Officer**

**Alan Hall  
Director of Communities**

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
Enable customers to access their rent accounts online	November 2016	Recruit a Communities IT Team Leader by September 2015.  New IT Team Leader to be tasked with customer online system, following the implementation of the OHMs Leaseholder Module.
Increase the number of direct debit payment dates available to enable customers to set up a direct debit for any date in any month.	June 2015	Increased uptake of rent payments by direct debit is anticipated.
Remove restrictions on the number and frequency of direct debit payments from monthly, to include weekly, calendar monthly	June 2015	Increased uptake of rent payments by direct debit is anticipated.

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
and 4 weekly payments.		
Remove restrictions on the type of debts that can be paid by direct debit and include housing benefit sub accounts, court cost accounts and former tenant accounts.	June 2015	Increased payments of other rent related debts by direct debit is anticipated.
Re-establish the Welfare Reform Mitigation Group to consider ways to prepare customers for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit Direct.	March 2016	To consider any actions needed to support tenants in paying their rent in the light of the changes expected during 2016.
Undertake a review of staffing levels following the introduction of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit Direct in accordance with the recommendation of the former Housing Scrutiny Panel.	July 2016	To consider if any additional staffing is required following the introduction of further Welfare Reforms.
Consider extending the current arrangement to enable the Area Housing Office (North) to take payments of rent by phone.	September 2015	<p>Milestones: Area Housing Office (North) to arrange a demonstration from Finance of the system by July 2015.</p> <p>Implementation of the system by September 2015.</p>
Extend the opening hours at the Limes Centre, Chigwell in accordance with the Cabinet's decision from September 2015	September 2015	This will allow tenants, particularly those living on the Limes Farm estate, greater opportunity to pay their rent.

Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.

The review of staffing levels following the introduction of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit Direct could result in additional staffing costs depending upon the recommendations of the Housing Select Committee and the Housing Portfolio Holder.

All other improvement actions are within existing resources.

Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.

None identified.

**COM02 On average, how many days did it take us to re-let a Council property?**

Outturn			Target
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
33 days	37 days	34 days	37 days

**Responsible Officer**

Alan Hall

**Director of Communities**

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
<p>Following the Procurement of the CBL supplier, consider the benefits of moving from a fortnightly to weekly advertising cycle.</p>	<p>December 2015</p>	<p>Award of contract to the CBL supplier August 2015</p> <p>Discussions with the supplier and other HEHOC Consortium members on the benefits of a weekly advertising cycle October 2015</p> <p>Possible implementation December 2015</p>
<p>Provide greater publicity about the Supplementary Waiting list to those who do not meet the residency and housing need element of the Local Eligibility Criteria, which will assist in reducing sheltered accommodation re-let times.</p>	<p>July 2015</p>	<p>Promote the Supplementary Waiting List as part of the implementation of the Housing Allocations Scheme.</p>
<p>Expand pre-Qualification checks undertaken to Band B applicants to remove the need to undertake such checks at the point of allocation thereby preventing delays.</p>	<p>October 2015</p>	<p>Revised Housing Allocations Schemes goes live 27 July 2015</p> <p>Expand pre-verification checks of Band B applicants October 2015 when the revised Scheme has been embedded.</p>
<p>Introduce tougher penalties for refusals of offers of accommodation.</p>	<p>July 2015</p>	<p>Implementation of the revised Housing Allocations Scheme 27 July 2015.</p>

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
Following the Pilot Scheme, increase the number of accompanied multiple viewings undertaken on difficult-to-let properties	October 2015	Increase the numbers undertaken when the revised Housing Allocations Scheme has been embedded.
Consider advertising difficult-to-let properties in the private sector property adverts in the local press	October 2015	Pilot scheme when the revised Housing Allocations Scheme has been embedded.
Submit a report to the Housing Select Committee to give consideration to de-designation of all flats currently designated for older people. This will open up such flats to all home seekers on the Housing Register increasing the number of bids and reducing the number of refusals	November 2015	Housing Select Committee meeting 10 November 2015.
Undertake a review to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rationalising and improving existing sheltered/grouped housing scheme sites</li> <li>• reviewing the need/demand for sheltered/grouped accommodation</li> <li>• comparing demand and location of schemes</li> <li>• consideration of the current condition of schemes</li> </ul>	March 2016	Housing Select Committee meeting 8 March 2016
Consider appointing an external consultant to undertake a detailed “Void Study” to analyse each step of the voids process and identify any improvements	December 2015	None

Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.

Should a detailed void study be undertaken then this would incur additional consultancy costs to the HRA. Moving to a weekly advertising cycle for CBL may bring minor additional costs.  
All other improvement actions are within existing resources.

Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.

None

**COM03 How satisfied were our tenants with the standard of the repairs service they received?**

Outturn			Target
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
100.00%	99.00%	100.00%	98.00%

**Responsible Officer**

**Alan Hall  
Director of Communities**

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
Continue to run regular reports to monitor and identify any areas of customer dissatisfaction	Monthly	Housing Repairs Service Resident Liaison Officer to contact every tenant who reports dissatisfaction with the service provided and identify the root cause of the problem
Continue to capture tenant satisfaction through handheld devices after operatives complete responsive repairs	Ongoing	Monitor feedback and learn from the information that these results provide.
Mears to run a customer experience training programme to move tenant satisfaction on to the next level.	October 2015	Review impact of training.
Housing Repairs Service to undertake dial out tenant satisfaction surveys by Tenant Liaison Officer when requested by customer.	Ongoing	Review to ascertain any trends in dissatisfaction.
Review STAR satisfaction results from annual survey and put in place measures to address any trends identified. Note: that satisfaction data gathered at closest time to service delivery will always result in higher levels of satisfaction	2 months after completion of STAR survey	Review data and revise KPI action to address any service issues.

Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.

Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.

**COM04 How many households were housed in temporary accommodation?**

Outturn			Target
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
61	53	58	65

**Responsible Officer**

**Alan Hall**  
Director of Communities

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
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Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
<p>Following the Diagnostic Peer Review of the Homelessness Prevention Service in June 2015, which forms part of the Government's "Gold Standard" for homelessness services, undertake all improvement actions identified</p>	<p>March 2016</p>	<p>Feedback session on the Diagnostic Peer Review 30 June 2015</p> <p>Depending on extent of the Action Plan, not know at the time of writing, complete March 2016</p>
<p>Continue to use the rental loan scheme and the rent damage deposit guarantee scheme to assist applicants in securing private rented accommodation</p>	<p>March 2016</p>	<p>Continue to grant loans until funds run out in around December 2015</p> <p>Consider submitting a report to Cabinet for further funding January 2016</p> <p>Use additional funding if agreed March 2016</p>

**Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.**

May be additional General Fund resources if a report was submitted to the Cabinet seeking additional budget for the Rental Loan Scheme. All other improvement actions are within existing resources.

**Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.**

**COM05 What percentage of our council homes were not in a decent condition?**

Outturn			Target
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

**Responsible Officer**

**Alan Hall  
Director of Communities**

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
<p>Potential Non-Decent properties have been identified through Stock Condition Surveys where Key Building Components within the properties are nearing the end of their predicted lifecycle.</p> <p>Appropriate Capital and Revenue works programmes have commenced to prevent these Key Building Components failing and to prevent properties falling into the Non-Decent category.</p>		

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
<p>The property management database located Z Drive/Stock Condition Survey 2015-16 baseline shows an increase in PVCu double-glazing elements nearing the end of their predicted lifecycle.</p> <p>The appointment of a specialist PVCu double glazing window and door installer is required to increase the double-glazing installation programme and prevent properties falling into the Non-Decent category.</p>	<p>June 2015</p>	<p>The appointment of a specialist PVCu double-glazing window and door installer.</p>
<p>Z Drive/Stock Condition Survey 2015-16 baseline shows the communal gas heating boilers installed in Sheltered Schemes are nearing the end of their predicted lifecycle.</p> <p>The appointment of a specialist gas heating installer is required to prevent these Key Building Components failing and prevent properties falling into the Non-Decent category.</p>	<p>April 2015</p>	<p>The appointment of a specialist gas heating installer.</p>
<p>Potential Non-Decent properties have been identified though Stock Condition Surveys where they are lacking a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.</p> <p>The appointment of a specialist</p>	<p>April 2015</p>	<p>The appointment of a specialist energy efficiency insulation installer.</p>



Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
energy efficiency insulation installer is required to prevent these properties falling into the Non-Decent category.		

**Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.**

None, all budgets and resources are contained within the existing Capital Works Programme.

**Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.**

None.

**COM06 How many of the key building components required to achieve the Modern Homes Standard were renewed?**

Outturn			Target
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
NEW KPI	4,076	4,020	3,300

**Responsible Officer**

**Alan Hall  
Director of Communities**

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
The appointment of a specialist PVCu double glazing window and door installer is required to increase the PVCu double-glazing window and door installation programme.	June 2015	Increased rate of Key Building Components replacements in Q2, Q3 and Q4 following appointment.
The appointment of a specialist gas heating installer to install communal gas heating boilers to Sheltered Schemes.	April 2015	Increased rate of Key Building Components replacements in Q3 and Q4 following appointment.

**Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.**

None, all budgets and resources are contained within the existing Capital Works Programme.

**Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.**

None.

**COM07 What percentage of all emergency repairs (including out of hours emergencies) are attended to within 4 working hours?**

Outturn			Target
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
NEW KPI	99%	99%	99%

**Responsible Officer**

**Alan Hall  
Director of Communities**

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
Ensure that correct diagnosis is undertaken to confirm that the reported repairs is a valid day time emergency or valid out of hours repair.	Ongoing	Monthly checks undertaken to ensure that repairs are raised on the correct priority
During normal working hours the responsive repairs planners check that the work order is allocated to the correct operative and that they can attend within the 4 working hour priority	Ongoing	Regular review and in the event that the operative cannot within this timescale the work is re-allocated to another operative.
Out of hours, Mears 247 ensure that the work order is allocated to the out of hours operative and despatched promptly.	Ongoing	Regular report exists to monitor prompt dispatch of works order.

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones

Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.

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Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.

Adverse weather conditions could increase inbound volume of calls received.

**COM08 What is the average overall time to complete all responsive repairs, from the time the request is made to the time the job is completed?**

Outturn			Target
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
NEW KPI	7.8 days	6.5 days	7 days

**Responsible Officer**

**Alan Hall  
Director of Communities**



Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
Monitoring of work in progress jobs	Ongoing	Regular report produced to monitor work in progress
Ensure no delays occur in ordering materials for repairs orders	Ongoing	Ensure operatives order the correct materials required to complete their repair jobs in a prompt manner
Review imprest stock items carried in EFDC vehicles to ensure that more jobs are completed at first visit	Ongoing	Regular van stock reviews to be undertaken

Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.

Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.

**COM09 What percentage of appointments for repairs are both made and kept?**

**Outturn**

**Target**



2012/13

2013/14

2014/15

2015/16

NEW KPI

98%

99%

98%

**Responsible Officer**
**Alan Hall**
**Director of Communities**

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
Ensure regular monitoring of operatives to ensure that they meet the pre-agreed appointments with the customer	Ongoing	Responsive Repairs Planner to monitor and manage in real time the appointment diaries on Mears MCM system
Continue to send out SMS text reminders the day before the appointments is due to take place	Daily	System report generates notification of all SMS text message reminders
In the event that the service fails to achieve the target for appointments kept, HRS Manager to review the individual failures, number of appointment slots offered and the amount of operative labour available.	When required	Review of resources availability and productivity of operatives.

**Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.**

Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.

**COM10 What percentage of calls are answered by the Council's Careline Service within 60 seconds?**

Outturn			Target
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
NEW KPI	NEW KPI	99.8%	97.5%

**Responsible Officer**

**Alan Hall**  
Director of Communities

Improvement Action	Target Dates	Key Measures / Milestones
Performance is above target, therefore no improvement actions. The balancing 0.2% is due to a small number of calls placed on hold which the system identifies as non-urgent, for example, Scheme Managers going on/off duty		



**Please detail any budget or resource implications of the improvement actions you have listed overleaf. Please quantify any additional resources which will be required to implement the improvements and detail how the additional resources will be allocated.**

**Please describe any contextual factors, internal or external, which may impact upon the ability to deliver the improvements listed.**

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