

CABINET

19 May 2004

OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR LANDLORD SERVICES – COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND HOUSING

Contact Officer: Richard Botham Tel No: 01962 848421

RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB703 - Delivering Decent Homes – Options Appraisal for Housing Services dated 17 September 2003

CAB857 – Housing Strategy and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2004 and beyond dated 20 April 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

All local authorities who own housing stock have to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of options for the future delivery of Housing services and have those appraisals approved by the Government Office by July 2005. A key element of the process is to prepare a Communications Strategy which sets out the objectives of the Options Appraisal review and how all stakeholders will be involved in the process. A draft Strategy, which has been prepared by the Options Appraisal Steering Group and reviewed by the Community Housing Task Force, is appended to this report for final approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That Cabinet approves the draft Options Appraisal Communications Strategy included as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 2 That Cabinet approves that the Director of Health and Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Options Appraisal Steering Group, be given delegated authority to amend and update the operational and delivery elements of the Strategy in light of emerging information and debate to ensure that it remains an effective working document.

CABINET19 May 2004OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR HOUSING SERVICES – COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGYREPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND HOUSINGDETAIL:1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has required all councils who still own housing stock to complete a detailed appraisal of options for the future management of those homes and produce a comprehensive report to be approved by the Government Office by the summer of 2005.
- 1.2 The Options Appraisal project for Winchester is progressing well. Key milestones completed to date include:
- a) The completion of a detailed Stock Condition Survey, Housing Needs Survey and Tenant Aspirations Survey.
 - b) The completion of a detailed analysis of the current and future financial health of the Housing Revenue Account.
 - c) The establishment of a Steering Group with equal member and tenant representation which now meets monthly.
 - d) The appointment of independent tenant advisers (TPAS), who are currently conducting introductory meetings with tenants throughout the district on the process.
- 1.3 A detailed timetable for the project with progress to date is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

2 The Communications Strategy

- 2.1 A key requirement for any Options Appraisal is to have a Communications Strategy, detailing the project objectives and proposals for how the Council will communicate and consult on the options and how tenants, leaseholders and other stakeholders will be involved in the process.
- 2.2 Before approval, the Community Housing Task Force (CHTF - representatives of the ODPM) is required to review all communication strategies to ensure they meet with the national guidance.
- 2.3 The draft Communications Strategy at Appendix 2 to this report has been approved by the Options Appraisal Steering Group after consultation with both tenants and the independent advisers. It has also now been approved by the CHTF.
- 2.4 Key features of the Communications Strategy include:

- a) Clear project objectives
- b) Involving staff and members through briefings and training
- c) Informing tenants through newsletters and surveys
- d) Involving tenants through a roadshow of events across the district and other methods to address more “hard to reach” groups.
- e) Expectations of all involved in the project

It is very much a working document which will require ongoing amendment throughout the life of the project and it is recommended that the Steering Group be given authority to approve changes required as new information becomes available.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

3 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 3.1 The proposals accord with the principles of making best use of all available resources through effective financial and service planning.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Budget provision in the HRA for 2004/05 to cover the costs of this project amounts to £50,000. This is in addition to the £89,000 included in the 2003/04 budget. Total expenditure in 2003/04 is currently being reviewed although it is likely that some of the provision will need to be carried forward to meet the costs in the current year of delivering this Strategy. This will be reported to the Housing Performance Improvement Committee and on to Cabinet as part of the budget outturn process in July.

5 TACT COMMENT

- 5.1 TACT have been fully involved in the development of this Strategy, both through representation on the Options Appraisal Steering Group and through discussions at their “Independent Tenant Advisers Forum”.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

ODPM Guidance – Delivering Decent Homes – Options Appraisal (available on City Council Intranet and in hard copy on request)

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Options Appraisal Project Timetable

Appendix 2 - Draft Options Appraisal Communications Strategy

Housing Options Project Timetable – Update for Steering Group Meeting 27 April 2004

Date	Task	Progress/Action	Lead
12 October 2003	Appoint ITA	Completed. TPAS appointed and now working with TACT. Also attending Steering Group meetings	RB
27 October 2003	Steering Group Inaugural meeting	<u>Completed</u>	BM
	Approval of Outline Timetable	Outline timetable approved	BM
	Sharing of documents already available	Intranet and Internet sites updated. Master file of documents in Members library. Summary file to all Group members	JP
17 November 2003	Identifying the Scope of the Review	Completed. Now set out in draft Communications Strategy	BM
	Preparing a file of background information	Completed as above	JP
10 December 2003	Initial Analysis of Stock Condition results	Completed - Summary report on initial findings and results of Tenant Aspiration Survey considered by Steering Group	CB
	Consideration of Tenant Aspiration Survey	Completed - Included in above report	CB
	Appointing Council Consultant (Cabinet 17/12/03)	Completed - Butlers (existing Treasury Mgt consultants) commissioned to review existing financial situation and to assess potential impact of each option	RB RB
26 January 2004	Consideration of Draft Communication Strategy	Completed - Draft Communication Strategy considered by Steering Group and way forward determined.	JP
	Detailed Results of Stock Condition Survey	Completed – Report presented to Steering Group giving long term projections on requirements to meet and maintain Decent Homes Standard	CB

Date	Task	Progress/Action	Lead
February 04	<p>Draft report on Analysis of Financial Position and Impact of each Option to be prepared</p> <p>Prepare Houseproud Options article</p>	<p>Completed – Draft report received and dispatched to Steering Group for consideration.</p> <p>Completed. Draft distributed to Steering Group for comment</p>	<p>Butlers/RB</p> <p>RB</p>
March 2004	<p>Steering Group to consider Butlers Report on HRA Financial Analysis</p> <p>Member Training Seminar</p> <p>Update Meeting with CHTF</p> <p>Review Results of Tenant Satisfaction Survey</p> <p>Feedback from CHTF on draft Communication Strategy</p> <p>Test financial assumptions and draft commentary on Butlers Report</p> <p>Steering Group Meeting 29/3/04</p>	<p>Completed – Steve Partridge presented report to meeting on 2 March 2004</p> <p>Completed - Butlers/Adamsons attended and presented background to Options and Stock Survey to all members (2/03/04)</p> <p>Completed - Meeting held on 12/3/04</p> <p>Completed - Considered by Housing PIC on 16/3/04 and Steering Group on 29/3/04</p> <p>Completed - Mary Marshall considers Strategy to meet requirements</p> <p>Completed – Report considered by Steering Group on 29/3/04 and revised projections were noted</p> <p>Completed – Meeting reviewed progress, approved revised projections, discussed the Communications Strategy and reviewed options for the newsletter to tenants.</p>	<p>Butlers/DAP</p> <p>RB</p> <p>CHTF</p> <p>RB/CB</p>

Date	Task	Progress/Action	Lead
April 04	<p>Draft an "Options" special edition of Houseproud</p> <p>Develop Tenant Empowerment Strategy</p> <p>Progress report to Cabinet/LSP to approve Communication Strategy</p> <p>Steering Group Meeting 27/4/04</p>	<p>Draft text to be considered by Steering Group on 27/04/04.</p> <p>Draft to be developed following ITA/Tenants Forum on 21/04/04</p> <p>Draft communication strategy currently with CHTF for comment</p> <p>To consider: Issues for tenant roadshows Draft Houseproud articles</p>	<p>RB</p> <p>GC/ TPAS</p> <p>RB</p>
May 2004	<p>Draft report on options for funding Affordable Housing programme</p> <p>Progress report to Cabinet/LSP to approve Communication Strategy</p> <p>Prepare special "Houseproud" to provide all tenants and leaseholders with information on Options process and roadshow events</p> <p>Agree all dates for roadshow events/sessions at sheltered schemes</p> <p>Steering Group Meeting 25/05/04</p>	<p>To be prepared by Butlers following officer meetings on 14 May and to be circulated to Steering Group for 25 May meeting</p> <p>Report to Cabinet on 19 May to approve Communications Strategy and project objectives</p> <p>Final draft available will need to go to print on 26/5</p> <p>ITA to liaise with Tenant Participation Manager to establish timetable</p> <p>To consider latest information available against each option To respond to ITA review of current position Also to consider draft Tenant Empowerment Strategy and Butlers paper on Affordable Housing</p>	<p>RB/Butlers</p> <p>RB</p> <p>RB/GC</p> <p>GC/TPAS</p>
June 04	<p>Distribute special Houseproud to tenants and leaseholders</p>	<p>To include questionnaire on Options (detail to be agreed by Steering Group on 27/4/04)</p>	<p>GC</p>

Date	Task	Progress/Action	Lead
July/Aug 04	Review of ITA Interim report Commence roadshows and drop in events Steering Group Meeting 20/7/04	TPAS to submit interim report following initial tenant events Dates still to be agreed with TPAS. Format as agreed by Steering Group on 27/4/04 To consider all above July tasks	RB BM RB
Sept 2004	Identifying a "Winchester Standard" the for Housing Service Identifying the preferred option(s) to meet the "Winchester Standard" and other project objectives Prepare Houseproud Newsletter to be distributed to tenants/ leaseholders updating them on current position Detailed Consultation on Preferred Solution/s with tenants/leaseholders Final ITA Report Steering Group Meeting 16/9/04	Will include analysis of all background information, feedback from seminars and ITA interim report To be determined through Steering Group debate in light of available information Newsletter to summarise options for achieving the "Winchester Standard" Suggested that specialist consultants be appointed to facilitate this as with Tenant Satisfaction Survey to ensure high return rate These events will provide opportunities for tenants and other stakeholders to debate the Council's preferred option(s) Report to summarise results from 2 nd stage of roadshow process To consider progress and any action needed to adhere to timetable	Steering Group Steering Group RB/GC RB TPAS

Date	Task	Progress/Action	Lead
October 2004	Review of Consultation Results	Review by Steering Group based on summary report from Survey consultants	RB
	Consideration of Draft Final Options Report	Final report to Steering Group on proposed way forward	RB
	Steering Group Meeting 19/10/04	To agree content of final report for ODPM	
November 2004	Steering Group Meeting 16/11/04	To consider draft final report for ODPM	RB
December 2004	Steering Group Meeting 14/12/04	Backup meeting to cater for delays in the process	
	Submission of final report to ODPM		

Key: RB - R Botham
 TPAS – Independent tenant advisors
 BM – B Merrett
 CB – C Broomfield
 GC – G Cole
 JP – J Palmer
 Butlers – Finance Consultants
 DAP – David Adamson Partnership – Stock Condition Consultants