

Decent Homes Standard Diagnostic Self Assessment

How well does the council know the condition of their housing stock and their compliance with the decent homes standard? What is the council trying to achieve in relation to the standard?	
<p>What is the council trying to achieve in relation to the standard?</p>	<p>Background - The City Council is committed to providing a high quality Landlord service which maintains all Housing stock to a decent standard, meets the expectations of tenants and achieves a top 25% performance when compared with other local authority landlords nationally. Achieving the DHS by 2010 is clearly stated in the Council's Key Strategic Priorities¹.</p> <p>History - The Council carried out a Stock Condition Survey in 1988 and embarked on a major repairs programme that commenced in 1990 and has been on-going since². The objectives of this Repairs plan had similar goals to that of the DHS, e.g. "to make homes wind and weather tight, warm with modern facilities". It is anticipated that the Capital enhancement works carried out since 1990 will significantly contribute towards meeting the DHS by 2010.</p> <p>Updating Stock Condition Information - The Council has commissioned a Stock Condition Survey³ to be carried by surveying consultants David Adamson & Partners in 2003. The survey will be based on a 30% stock sample and the Survey information will be "robust" and "validated" to ensure accuracy. It will establish the Council's position with respect to Decent Homes, The Housing, Health & Safety Rating System and the Disabled Discrimination Act (DDA) (where applicable). Following the survey the Council and its tenants will be in a position to determine what can be achieved in relation to the Decent Homes standard by 2010. The Council anticipates being able to state its indicative position relative to DHS by the summer of 2003. An Asbestos Survey is currently being out to further advise the Council's Asbestos Management plan.</p> <p>The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan⁴ - The Council's HRA Business Plan has been drafted in conjunction with the Tenant's Rents and Business Planning Forum and provides a clear action plan for service delivery and long term financial projections. The provision of a £6m repairs programme is a key priority in the Plan. GOSE have assessed the Plans approach to "Strategic Context" and "Effective Consultation" as "Fit for Purpose" although 8 further factors require development to achieve the "Fit for Purpose" standard⁵, including having a clear strategy for achieving the DHS and completing a comprehensive appraisal of housing options. The Plan achieved an overall score of 20 out of 30.</p> <p>Stakeholder Involvement⁶ - Views have been sought through direct involvement of Property and Contracts Forum, Rents and Business Planning Forum, TACT, and surveys of all tenants on their priorities. A further opinion survey will be completed as part of Stock Condition Survey.</p>
	<p>Community Leadership</p> <p>DDA Compliance - The Council has a proactive and well resourced Aids & Adaptations service and has close links with Social Services (joint funded OT) and is carrying out a survey of its sheltered properties (common parts) to ensure its compliance with DDA.</p> <p>Energy efficiency – A comprehensive work programme has been substantially completed in recent years (windows, heating, insulation etc) resulting in excellent National Home Energy Rating (top 25% nationally)⁷. Also, all tenancies have had the opportunity of central heating installation, complete with "insulation package" and affordable warmth design criteria.</p> <p>Sustainability - The Council has regard to sustainability in the specification of materials used for works, although Corporate LA21/Sustainability strategies are out of date and subject to review by the High Quality Environment Best Value Panel⁸</p>

	<p>Equal Opportunities – The Council’s BME Strategy for Housing⁹ now approved and a Focus Group is being established to concentrate on steps to work with hard to reach groups.</p> <p>Environmental Improvements – A programme of work on estates will commence in 2003 with £75k resource already identified. A Community Planning exercise has been completed on two estates identifying needs¹⁰.</p>
<p>What base information is available to understand what needs to be done to meet the DHS?</p>	<p>Property Information - To date since the commencement of the major repairs plan in 1990 an annual update of elemental improvements against that identified by the Condition Survey has been reported to elected Members². Further, this information has been utilised year on year to inform the maintenance and property enhancement planning process, and subsequent year’s programmes. Base information is available to analyse levels of reactive and cyclic repairs that count towards meeting the D.H.S.</p> <p>Future Demand for Housing - Housing Needs Survey completed in 2002¹¹. Demand for family homes is very high. Some low demand for sheltered accommodation resulting in small amount of long-term voids. Currently reviewing future of sheltered stock and potential for alternative use of void flats. In isolated cases demolition has taken place of low demand sheltered accommodation followed by “appropriate” redevelopment to maximise site potential.</p> <p>The Decent Homes Standard - The stock survey will build on existing data and provide all necessary base information for achieving DHS. Information collected will be in elemental form (when installed or replaced) with corresponding life expectancy. It will be uploaded onto the Council’s IT Integrated Housing Management system. Also, an additional Asset Management module will be procured for future interrogation and updating. It is proposed that when the stock survey is completed, property that is decent, non-decent or potentially non-decent will be readily identified via its Asset Management system linked to its integrated Housing Management IT system.</p>
<p>What strategies does the council have to help them meet the DHS and are these robust?</p>	<p>Whilst DHS plans are still at an early stage, the commitment to maintaining stock in a key principle of HRA Plan. A number of strategies are in place that contribute to meeting the standard. The Housing Strategy¹² and HRA Plan link very closely to the Council’s Capital Strategy¹³ and Asset Management Plan (AMP)¹⁴ (both of which have been assessed as good by the Govt office). AMP concentrates on non-Housing assets but principles are the same. Capital Strategy very closely linked with Housing with clear sections on HRA resources and the Housing Strategy generally. In addition to these strategies and those referred to above, further relevant strategies include:</p> <p>Procurement Strategy¹⁵ – The Corporate Procurement Strategy currently contains a fairly low-level operational focus, and needs developing to address issues such as partnering and contract management. In the housing context term contracting and project partnering contract approaches are being utilised to procure works, including awarding contracts on price/quality basis and involving tenants. Further work is planned to maximise project-partnering principles as recognised in the Best Value Review. Standing Orders make some allowance for alternative means of procurement but provide limited flexibility.</p> <p>Maintenance and Enhancement Strategy² - This has been developed through full tenant consultation regarding 10 years Term maintenance Contract for Responsive and Void works that commenced in 2000, utilising “shared” IT contract management systems. A similar approach to the letting of a 5 year Term Maintenance Contract for Gas and Solid Fuel Heating Appliance Service Contract, utilising “shared” IT contract management systems.</p>
<p>How do the council develop their strategies?</p>	<p>All housing related strategies are developed in close liaison with tenant representatives. The Corporate Capital Assets Group are responsible for ensuring the co-ordination of the Housing Strategy, HRA Business Plan, Capital Strategy and AMP. Also, all strategies are approved by Council’s Corporate Management Team and Cabinet who have responsibilities for ensuring that they work towards the overall strategic aims of the Council. A tenant representative attends all Cabinet meetings and TACT comments are included in all Housing committee reports.</p>

What is the council doing to deliver its plans and meet the decent homes standard?	
What action is being taken to maximise the council's financial capacity to deliver the DHS	<p>Resources – The Council has agreed resources of £6m to fund the Housing Repairs and Maintenance¹⁰. This is met by Major Repairs Allowance (£3m) and HRA revenue (£3m). The Council's overall Capital Programme is reviewed and monitored by the Corporate Capital Assets Group in accordance with the Capital Strategy which takes full account of Housing requirements. Future programmes will be dependent on the results of the Stock Condition survey expected in August 2003. A risk assessment will be carried out following the results of the Stock Condition Survey, having regard to gap analysis and potential funding (e.g. revenue and MRA).</p> <p>The HRA Business Plan includes long-term financial projections which indicate the overall sustainability of the Landlord service. The Plan also includes a detailed sensitivity analysis to identify the key pressures on the HRA.</p> <p>Service charges have been reviewed in detail and limited de-pooling has been agreed with effect from April 2003¹⁶. The Housing Service has been subject to Best Value Review. This review included a detailed review of overheads and management costs. Also, interrogation of repair costs and most frequently used trade codes are undertaken regularly to inform areas of future capital investment.</p>
	<p>Asset Management - The Council utilises Orchard as its integrated housing management software system. It is currently carrying out a feasibility exercise to ascertain the most appropriate asset management software tool to link with this system. As part of the Stock Condition survey, David Adamson & Partners will advise on the Council's position relative to the D.H.S., and produce an asset management plan to achieve the standard by 2010 and a 30-year investment needs plan for HRA Business planning purposes.</p> <p>The Council has a nucleus of staff to manage data and procure works. An appraisal of resources required will be carried out following the results of the 2003 Stock Condition Survey. It is anticipated that works will be procured via partnering based term contracts utilising contractors and consultants as necessary. (As identified in BV review).</p> <p>Training – an in-house course on partnering was conducted by Trowers and Hamlins, who have also acted as a Partnering Advisor on a "flagship" project.</p>
	<p>Partnerships Depending on the outcome of the Stock Condition Survey and balance of programme objectives, an appropriate procurement regime will be implemented from April 2004.</p> <p>The Council has recently completed a redevelopment of a sheltered scheme in partnership with Eastleigh Housing Association, which has "added" 12 bungalows to the Council's lettings asset base.</p>
How have work programmes been prepared and have these been delivered.	<p>Through Tenant forums such as Property and Contracts Forum, Rents and Business Planning forum etc and through main TACT Group.</p> <p>A ten year + programme was set out in 1990 and has been subjected to annual review. Programmes are detailed for one year but 30-year projections have been completed. The planned maintenance programme carries out works to vacant properties having regard to relet times and restoring the property to a reasonable condition. It also carries out related works together e.g. central heating installation and insulation and achieves linkages between cyclical maintenance works and capital replacement e.g. boiler replacement. The programme links and incorporates other related works programmes e.g. disabled and elderly persons adaptations.</p>
How does the council ensure that it is making	<p>Best Value – The Best Value review of Housing was completed in 2002/03 and a comprehensive 5 year Improvement Plan¹⁷ has been agreed. Progress will be monitored through the Council's Housing Performance Improvement Committee (PIC). The review included detailed benchmarking against top performing authorities¹⁸.</p>

<p>the best use of its resources</p> <p>What has the council achieved in service delivery</p>	<p>The Council monitors progress against key best value and local performance indicators through the Housing PIC and has a clear objective to achieve top 25% performance where possible.</p> <p>Targets set as part of HRA Plan and then fed to staff through Appraisal process</p> <p>All Out-turn information¹⁹ is reported through Housing PIC and Cabinet. Such information includes Budget out-turn against prediction, Works completed against prediction, Works completed to programme and also Satisfaction of residents with the works undertaken</p>
<p>Has the council evaluated a range of options which would enable it to achieve its aims</p>	<p>Options Appraisal</p> <p>The Council has yet to undertake a full appraisal of current options for the management of landlord services. A detailed Options Appraisal exercise is planned for 2003/04 and £50k resources have been identified to support the project¹⁰. This will include the procurement of an Independent tenants advisor to work with and inform tenants of all options. The whole project will be managed jointly with tenant representatives to ensure that tenants views are taken into account.</p>

How does the council monitor its progress and how does this feed into future strategies and plans?	
<p>How does the council monitor its progress towards meeting the standard</p>	<p>Following the 2003 Stock Condition Survey, it is anticipated that by interrogation of stock data the Council will be able to identify over time which properties are decent and those becoming non-decent. Elemental enhancement programmes to achieve DHS will need to be identified and structured accordingly.</p> <p>In addition to reporting progress to the Housing PIC, an Annual report is prepared for all tenants including information on the repairs programme, how the money has been spent and what has been achieved in the year²⁰.</p>
<p>How does the council learn from itself and from others?</p>	<p>The Council is a member of the Housing Quality Network and regularly takes part in benchmarking exercises with a group of landlords in the Southern region¹⁸. It is also a member of the CIPFA Rents Benchmarking club.</p> <p>The Performance monitoring systems compare against targets, previous performance and top 25% where information exists. All maintenance and capital programme works have been subject to continuous comments from tenants since 1993. A specific tenants forum, the Property and Contracts Forum established in 1999. Meets bi-monthly and involves Tenants, Contractors and Officers.</p> <p>The Council is IIP accredited and committed to supporting professional development. CPD and update training for all staff is well resourced²¹.</p>

References

1. Corporate Strategy
2. Maintenance and Repairs Programme
3. Stock Condition Survey Report
4. HRA Business Plan 2003-33 and HRA Statistical Appendices (HIP submission)
5. GOSE Assessment of Strategy and Business Plan
6. Terms of Reference for Tenant Property and Contracts Forum and Rents Forum
7. Performance Monitoring Report
8. High Quality Environment Best Value Review Minutes
9. BME Strategy for Housing
10. HRA Budget 2003/04 Report
11. Housing Needs Survey 2002
12. Housing Strategy 2002-2007
13. Capital Strategy
14. Asset Management Plan
15. Procurement Strategy
16. Service Charges Working Group Report
17. Housing Best Value Improvement Action Plan
18. Housing Quality Network – Housing Benchmarking Report
19. Housing Service – Budget and Performance Outturn Report 2002
20. Annual Report to Tenants 2002
21. Health and Housing Training Plan