

Report of Director, Environments & Neighbourhoods

Report to Inner West Area Committee Meeting

Date: 18 December 2013

Subject: Housing Leeds – Housing Service Review Update

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Armley, Bramley & Stanningley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? None identified	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number Appendix Number	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

The current model for delivering Housing Services across the City is being reviewed following the decision by the Council's Executive Board in June 2013 to integrate the housing service into the Council's Environment and Housing directorate.

The main principals that have been agreed as part of this process are to;

- build on the improved housing service that has been developed over the last 10years
- ensure that the most effective arrangements are in place to deliver a high quality, efficient service that delivers VFM to tenants.
- Provided clarity around decision making, governance and accountability arrangements.
- To ensure a consistent service is delivered across the city which is based on current best practice.

The new housing service, which will be known as Housing Leeds, and will be delivered through three function areas of responsibility;

- Strategic Housing
- Housing Management
- Property and Contracts

The housing management service will operate in three geographical areas which will be coterminous with the Area Committee boundaries to allow for better service integration across all Council services.

Recommendations

Members of the Inner West Area Committee are asked to note the contents of the report, and to provide advice, comments or other feedback on the review process, and offer direction in terms of future service delivery.

1 Purpose of this report

1. The purpose of the attached report is to provide Members of the Inner West Area Committee with an update on progress with regard to the service integration of the housing service into the Council's Environment and Housing directorate.

2 Background information

- 2.1 In 2003, the Council created six ALMO's in order to submit a bid to the government for additional income to enable investment into the housing stock to achieve the Governments decent homes target.
- 2.2 Following successful 'Best Value' inspections by the Audit Commission In 2004 all six ALMO's were able to drawn down additional investment which has resulted in around £850m being spent on the city's housing stock over the last 10 years.
- 2.3 In 2006 a review was undertaken, which due to reducing stock numbers and the long term financial viability of six companies, concluded that a reduction to three would deliver the best outcomes for tenants.
- 2.4 In 2010 a further review was undertaken which concluded that the three ALMO model was best placed to complete delivery of the decency programme and through the creation of the ABCL would also deliver further economies of scale and financial efficiencies.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Since the last internal review was undertaken, the Audit Commission has been abolished and the national performance management framework for housing management is no longer in place.
- 3.2 Decency funding has also now come to end and has been replaced with the new self-financing Housing Revenue Account (HRA) model.
- 3.2 Given the above changes an further extensive review was undertaken and a decision made by the Council's Executive Board in June 2013 to integrate the housing service across Leeds into the Environment and Housing directorate.
- 3.3 In order to move ahead with the service integration 1,200 staff were TUPE transferred into the Environment and Housing directorate on 1.10.13.
- 3.4 The senior management structures have been developed and consultation is currently being undertaken with effected staff and the Trade Unions.
- 3.5 It is proposed that the new structure will contain three Chief Officer posts which are detailed below;

Chief Officer – Strategic Housing

- Responsible for strategic housing issues across the City, including private sector housing
- Housing options and housing need assessments across the City
- Lead role on policy issues
- Interface with Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)
- Lead on environmental sustainability, fuel poverty and climate change.

Chief Officer – Housing Management

- Tenancy management across the city
- Delivery of an Allocations and Lettings function, including policy planning
- Tenancy involvement including the strategic interface with LTF
- Income management and arrears recovery (including welfare change)
- Delivery of an older peoples housing service through sheltered provision
- Tenancy sustainability through independent living support teams

Chief Officer – Property and Contracts

- Delivery of the responsive repairs service and Capital programme
- Management of the internal DLO
- Procurement and contract management
- Commercial asset management
- Construction Health and Safety

- 3.6 A number of staff workshops have been undertaken to identify the existing resources and to identify the current ways of working. This has helped to identify where resources need to be moved across the individual disciplines and also where efficiencies can be made by reducing transactional duplication.
- 3.7 These workshops have been used to look at the different ways of working across the City and to identify the model of best practice that can be used to ensure a consistent service model is adopted across the City to avoid confusion and inconsistency.
- 3.8 Whilst the workshops have looked at existing services and resources, there are a number of key work streams looking at a number of issues that require further consideration when developing an integrated model of service delivery. This includes;
- Location of face to face service (links to Customer Services)
 - Office opening times
 - Impact of Universal Credit
 - Tenancy sustainability and support
 - Housing needs assessment
 - Management of MSF's
 - Generic v Specialist
 - Investment strategy
 - Business growth
 - Links to Police Review
 - Poverty strategy
 - Social contract
 - Sharing best practice

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 In order to engage and consult with staff, and Trade Unions, a number of formal briefing sessions have taken place and more will be arranged throughout the process.
- 4.1.2 Front line staff have been engaged through a series of operation workshops and a

regular briefing is circulated to all staff.

4.1.3 A customer communication plan has been developed which will conclude with a tenant's conference in early Feb '14.

4.1.4 Individual briefing sessions will be provided to Members on request with formal consultation taking place through the Housing Advisory Board.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 It is essential that the good work undertaken by the ALMO's during the past ten years to gain customer profile data is used as a platform to improve services whilst allowing for flexibility to respond to the needs of individual localities and specific customer groups.

4.2.2 All three ALMO achieved accreditation to the Social Housing Equality Framework with a combined action plan being developed to ensure that all areas of best practice are replicated across the City.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Any proposed model for service re-design will maximise the opportunities for Housing Leeds to support the Environment and Housing directorate to meet City priorities.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 Whilst the new model for service delivery will provide efficiencies through designing out duplication of resources and operational activity, the main focus is the delivery of a high quality, efficient service that delivers VFM whilst allowing for flexibility to meet the needs of individuals and communities.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Since the decision by Executive Board in June '13 to integrate the housing service into the Environments and Housing directorate work has been ongoing and the 1,200 staff have now TUPE's into the Council.

5.2 Work is ongoing to develop structure and service models with formal consultation taking place with staff and Trade Unions.

5.3 Formal consultation with all stakeholders will be ongoing throughout the process.

5.4 It is envisaged that the new service model for the delivery of housing services in Leeds will be fully operational from 1.4.14.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members of the Inner West Area Committee are asked to note the contents of the report, and to provide advice, comments or other feedback on the review process, and offer direction in terms of future service delivery.