

Leicester  
City Council

## Public Document Pack

### **MEETING OF THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE: THURSDAY, 19 AUGUST 2004**

**TIME: 5.30. PM**

**PLACE: COMMITTEE ROOM 2, 'B' BLOCK, NEW WALK CENTRE,  
KING STREET, LEICESTER**

### **Members of the Committee**

Councillor Draycott (Chair)  
Councillor Allen (Conservative Spokesperson)  
Councillor Smith (Liberal Democrat Spokesperson)

Councillors Farmer, Getliffe, Keeling and Westley.

### **Co-opted Member**

Christine Cronogue Leicester Federation of Tenants Association

Members of the Committee are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

for Town Clerk

**Officer contact:** Kate Wayman  
Committee Services, Town Clerk's Department  
Leicester City Council  
New Walk Centre, Welford Place, Leicester LE1 6ZG  
(Tel. 0116 252 6027 Fax. 0116 247 1181)

## **INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

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## **PUBLIC SESSION**

### **AGENDA**

#### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applies to them.

#### **2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 June 2004 seek confirmation as a correct record.

#### **3. PETITIONS**

The Town Clerk to report on the receipt of any petitions submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures.

#### **4. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Town Clerk to report on any questions, representations, or statements of case submitted.

#### **5. BEACON AWARD FOR HOUSING RENEWAL**

Members to receive a brief presentation on the Housing Department's recent Beacon Award for Housing Renewal.

#### **6. PETITION TO COUNCIL - HOUSING NEEDS - 216/248 Appendix A ST SAVIOUR'S ROAD**

The Corporate Director of Housing submits a report prepared in response to a petition submitted to full Council on 27 May 2004 by Councillor Draycott, in the following terms :

"We, the undersigned, call on the City Council to recognise the needs of residents at 216/248, St Saviours Road. The Council is to be congratulated on its support for a new Police unit in the area, and the work being planned in refurbishing Spinney Hill Park. In addition, we fully support the renewal work done to other houses surrounding the Park, which will only enhance the area as it develops. We, therefore ask "why have we been forgotten?" We ask for equality re our housing needs. Thank you."

The Committee is recommended to note that these properties are located in an area which has been declared as a Housing Action Area and General

Improvement Area for twelve years, and has not been 'forgotten'.

The Housing Department are now prioritising grants to previously 'undeclared' areas', unless there are exceptional circumstances for the properties mentioned in the petition.

**7. PETITION TO COUNCIL - ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR - Appendix B  
AMYSON ROAD, THURNBY LODGE**

The Corporate Director of Housing submits a report prepared in response to a petition received from tenants and residents of Thurnby Lodge, in the following terms :

"We, the undersigned residents of the Amyson Road area, Thurnby Lodge Estate, would like to bring to your attention the unreasonable and anti-social behaviour of the tenants and visitors to a property in the area of Amyson Road. This behaviour is affecting all of the area surrounding the address. The Police have been notified a number of times, and we now seek the help of Leicester City Council as the landlords of the property to correct this behaviour".

The Committee is recommended to note the action taken by the Housing Department, and that the tenant has terminated her tenancy with effect from 28 August 2004.

**8. BEST VALUE REVIEW - HOUSING MANAGEMENT Appendix C  
SERVICE - AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION  
REPORT**

The Corporate Director of Housing submits a report which presents the Audit Commission's final report on its inspection of the Housing Management Service.

The Committee is recommended to receive the report, to note the action being taken to address areas of improvement, and the areas of good and positive practice within the Service.

**9. RENT ARREARS - ANNUAL REPORT Appendix D**

The Corporate Director of Housing submits a report which provides an update on the Department's performance in achieving the collection of rent arrears for the Financial Year ending March 2004.

The Committee is recommended to note the initiatives taken by Officers to control the outstanding debt during a difficult year, and to note the declining arrears.

**10. PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR VOLUNTARY Appendix E  
SECTOR FUNDED PROJECTS**

The Corporate Director of Housing submits a report which provides annual performance information on voluntary sector projects grant-aided by the Department.

The Committee is recommended to note the information contained in the report.

**11. REVENUE OUTTURN 2003/2004** **Appendix F**

The Chief Finance Officer submits a report which shows the final summary outturn position comparing spending with the budget for all General Fund Services and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The Committee is recommended to note the information contained in the report.

**12. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2003/2004 - OUTTURN** **Appendix G**

The Corporate Director of Housing and the Chief Finance Officer submit a joint report which advises Members on the outturn for the Housing Capital Programme for 2003/2004.

The Committee is recommended to note the information contained in the report.

**13. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GROUP - ANNUAL REPORT** **Appendix H**

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture submits a report on the work of the Private Sector Housing Group.

The Committee is recommended to note the information in the report.

**14. EMPTY SHOPS - PROGRESS REPORT** **Appendix I**

The Service Director (Property) submits a report which provides an update on the current position with vacant Council estate shops, following various initiatives undertaken to reduce the number of empty properties.

The Committee is recommended to note the information contained in the report.

**15. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME - 2004/2005** **Appendix J**

The Chief Executive submits a report seeks comments on the draft Annual Work Programme for 2004/2005.

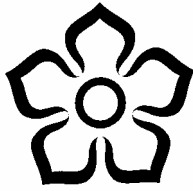
The Committee is recommended to consider the Housing Department's Work Programme, and indicate whether it wishes to add, amend, or delete any items.

**16. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**



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Leicester  
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED  
Coleman Ward

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2004

**PETITION TO COUNCIL 27 MAY 2004  
HOUSING NEEDS, 216-248 ST SAVIOURS ROAD**

**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report advises Members about the issues raised by a petition presented by Councillor Draycott to full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2004.
- 1.2 The petition stated, "We, the undersigned call on the City Council to recognise the needs of residents, 216-248 St Saviours Road. The Council is to be congratulated on its support for a new Police Unit in the area and the work being planned in refurbishing Spinney Hill Park. In addition, we fully support the renewal work done to other houses surrounding the Park, which will only enhance the area as it develops. We therefore ask why we have been forgotten? We ask for equality re our housing needs. Thank you."
- 1.3 These properties were included in the North Evington Housing Action Area (HAA) which was declared in May 1978 and then later re-declared as a General Improvement Area (GIA) in June 1984. The GIA ceased in 1990.
- 1.4 The report explains the Council's private housing renewal strategy and the current discretionary grants policies within that strategy.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are recommended to note that these properties are located in an area that enjoyed declared area status for some 12 years and so have not been "forgotten" as alleged by the petitioners.
- 2.2 We are now prioritising grants to previously undeclared areas, except in exceptional circumstances, and consequently no recommendation is made to make a special case for these properties.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (Danny McGrath)**

- 3.1 The current Capital Programme makes provision for assistance to private homeowners as shown overleaf.

**Table 1: Housing Capital Programme agreed by Cabinet 19.1.04**

	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m
<b>Renewal Grants Commitments</b>				
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants	2.000	2.000	1.500	5.500
Renovation Grants in Renewal Areas	<u>1.600</u>	<u>1.600</u>	<u>1.800</u>	<u>5.000</u>
Renewal Grants Commitments Total	3.600	3.600	3.300	10.500
<b>Renewal Grants New Starts Programme</b>				
Energy Efficiency Grants (DFGs & Renewal Areas)	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.675
Environmental Works in Renewal Areas	0.375	0.375	0.175	0.925
Home Repair Grants (incl. City Wide Home Maintenance Strategy & Care & Repair)	0.550	0.582	0.600	1.732
St Saviours Renewal Area	<u>0.792</u>	<u>0.840</u>	<u>0.000</u>	<u>1.632</u>
Renewal Grants New Starts Programme Total	1.942	2.022	1.000	4.964
Renewal Grants Overall Total	5.542	5.622	4.300	15.464
Less 3.5% overprogramming	<u>0.194</u>	<u>0.197</u>	<u>0.151</u>	<u>0.541</u>
Reduced overall total	5.348	5.425	4.149	14.923



**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**19<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2004**

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**PETITION TO COUNCIL 27 MAY 2004-05-27**  
**HOUSING NEEDS, 216-248 ST SAVIOURS ROAD**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing**

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**4. REPORT**

- 4.1 These houses are 'older' properties as they were built about 1890. They comprise one terrace of 15 houses with another two houses built semi-detached and separated from the main block by the Evington Brook. The houses are in private ownership.
- 4.2 These properties were included in the North Evington Housing Action Area (HAA) which was declared in May 1978. The area was later re-declared as a General Improvement Area (GIA) in June 1984. The GIA ceased in 1990 following a change in legislation. By that time some 90% of the houses in the area had been improved or had works in progress. No records now exist to show whether any of the subject properties were improved during that period.
- 4.3 Our powers to give assistance were changed through a Reform Order that repealed much of the old prescriptive legislation and replaced it with a new wide-ranging power to provide assistance for housing renewal. The reforms therefore affected all three stands of the private housing Renewal Strategy; declared renewal areas, citywide Home Maintenance Service and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG). Considerable flexibility is available although authorities will have to ensure that they are targeting their assistance effectively. The current private housing renewal policy was agreed by Cabinet in March 2003 and came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2003.
- 4.4 The Government's clear policy is that everyone who buys a home has an obligation to keep the property in good repair. Homeowners should knowingly take responsibility for that from the time of purchase and not expect assistance. Intervention should only be needed to assist owners who have unexpectedly encountered problems or to deal with local needs on a strategic level.
- 4.5 The decent home standard, which was previously only used in connection with public sector housing, has now been applied to private housing. By 2010 the Government wants to increase the proportion of private housing in decent

condition occupied by vulnerable people. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has defined vulnerable households as those receiving the following benefits: income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit, disabled persons tax credit, income based job seekers allowance, working tax credit, attendance allowance, disability living allowance, industrial injuries, disablement benefit, war disablement pension. 'Families with children' has recently been added to the definition of 'vulnerable'. The policy proposals adopted target vulnerable people and were designed to increase the amount of decent housing in the City.

- 4.6 Poor quality housing can have an adverse impact on the health and well being of the occupants in an area. Some homeowners, particularly the most vulnerable, do not have the necessary resources to keep their homes in good repair. Leicester's renewal strategy was agreed in 1976 in response to a major change in legislation that encouraged both home improvement and area improvement. The legislation has been altered over time and was generally very prescriptive. The new powers provide a much greater degree of flexibility in devising a strategy to deal with poor condition private sector housing, both in terms of the policy tools available, and in terms of our ability to work in partnership with others. It assists local authorities to contribute further towards the Government's overall strategies towards tackling poverty and social exclusion, health inequalities and neighbourhood decline.
- 4.7 The Council's response to the reforms was to continue along past policy lines but with modest innovation to deal better with some difficult issues. Our main commitment continues to be to our active declared renewal areas supported by the citywide Home Maintenance Service and our services to disabled people.
- 4.8 Even in our active declared renewal areas we only provide Home Improvement Grant aid where the property is below the basic minimum standard. Outside these areas we are able to provide help through the citywide Home Maintenance Service where advice and assistance is given coupled with small grants to qualifying homeowners to make their property 'wind & watertight'.
- 4.9 These properties are not in a declared renewal area and therefore the owners are not generally eligible to apply for assistance. However all applications are considered on their individual circumstance and merit and authority has been delegated to the Corporate Director for Housing to approve applications outside the general policy in exceptional cases.
- 4.10 These properties have been the subject of a previous petition. That was presented by Councillor Clair back in 1999 and was considered by the Housing Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1999. At that time the petitioners asked that the front windows and garden walls be renovated in view of their poor condition. In particular the request was made because neighbouring houses had been renovated previously and the properties are in a conservation area. At that time the Housing Committee decided not to take action outside of the general policy. A copy of the report considered by Housing Committee is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.11 Since then the St Saviours Renewal Area has been declared. However that area does not include these properties, as the area boundary was set along

East Park Road with only the properties to the East being included. This has no doubt caused further concerns to these residents. However their properties were included in a previous declared area as described in paragraph 4.2 above.

- 4.12 A bid was made to the Regional Housing Board in September 2003 entitled "A new approach in St Saviours Renewal Area ". We were notified in December 2003 that we had been successful in securing a total of £1.632m over two years (2004-06). This is shown in the Capital Programme information in Table 1 under paragraph 3.1. This funding is only available for schemes within the declared renewal area, which as stated above unfortunately does not include the subject properties.
- 4.13 These properties are in the Spinney Hill Park Conservation Area and are also covered by an Article 4 Direction under the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. This means that planning permission is required for householders to make alterations affecting the external appearance of the properties and the Council's normal approach is to resist the replacement of features such as timber windows and doors with ones made of upvc. The aim of this measure is to maintain the attractive appearance of the properties and the character of the Conservation Area. However it may have cost implications for residents and no grants are presently available towards the renovation of properties within the Conservation Area.
- 4.14 No doubt the requested improvement work would be of benefit to the area generally, particularly if a co-ordinated scheme was carried out which ensured that front elevations were brought up to a similar appearance. However such ideals must be measured against the fact that there are some 35,000 older houses in the city which were built before 1919. It is believed that there are some 14,000 homes that fall below basic standards and are technically unfit for occupation.
- 4.15 Given the effect of the Reform Order the Council could provide assistance to these owners in a variety of ways. These could range from tailored schemes for individual properties to a comprehensive co-ordinated scheme that all the owners participate in. We are required to target assistance and so some form of means testing would be required.
- 4.16 However it is not recommended that such assistance be provided as a similar case could be made by a very large number of owners of older properties around the city.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Council strategy on private housing renewal is in accordance with existing legislation and government guidance. Legal Services has been consulted and agrees with the contents of this report.

## 6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

	Yes/No	
Equal Opportunities	Yes	Para 4, throughout
Policy	Yes	Para 4, throughout
Sustainable & Environmental	Yes	Para 4, throughout
Crime & Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	Yes	Para 4, throughout

## 7. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT

- 7.1 The Department's overall Quality of Life Aim is 'A decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester', and within that Key Objective 1 is, 'To improve the condition of Leicester's housing stock and resolve unfitness in all sectors'.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 'Petition 216 – 248 St Saviour's Road – Front Windows and Garden Walls'. Report of the Director of Housing to Housing Committee, 7 September 1999
- 'Declaration of St Saviours Non-Statutory Renewal Area'. Report of the Director of Housing to Cabinet, 11 March 2002.
- 'Private Housing Renewal Strategy – Reforms'. Report of the Corporate Director for Housing to Cabinet ,10 March 2003
- 'Housing Capital Programme 2003/04 and 2004/07'. Report of the Corporate Director for Housing to Cabinet , 19 January 2004

## 9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Urban Design Group in Regeneration & Culture have been consulted and they have provided the information about the Conservation Area given in paragraph 4.13.

## 10. AUTHOR OF REPORT

Martin Bromley	Renewal & Grants Service Manager, Housing	299 5161 or x5161 bromm001@leicester.gov.uk
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Leicester  
City Council

Housing Committee

Charnwood Ward  
7<sup>th</sup> September 1999

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**Petition 216 – 248 St Saviour’s Road – Front Windows and Garden Walls**

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**Report of the Director of Housing**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report is in response to a petition with 48 signatures that was passed to the Housing Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1999. Councillor Clair had presented the petition at the Council meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1999.
- 1.2 The petitioners asked that the front windows and garden walls be renovated in view of their poor condition. In particular the request was being made because neighbouring houses had been renovated previously and the properties are in a conservation area.
- 1.3 These houses are in private ownership. The most appropriate help that could be given would be some form of discretionary grant but the request falls outside the Council’s general policy for renovation grants.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that no specific action is taken for the reasons given in the report but that the petitioners be advised of the Council’s general policy for renovation grants

**3 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The Housing Committee have allocated £1.7m in this year’s capital programme for renovation grants and £0.4m for assistance through the Home Maintenance Strategy.
- 3.2 Government subsidy at the rate of 60% is paid towards expenditure on the various housing renewal grants. This subsidy is paid through Private Sector Renewal Support Grant (PSRSG).

**4. Report**

- 4.1 Renovation grants became wholly a matter for the discretion of the Council following a change in legislation that came into force in December 1996. In March 1997 the general renovation grants policy was agreed. This has been reviewed since, particularly to deal with the declaration of new renewal areas, but the general tone of the policy remains unchanged. Generally this policy directs our grant spending towards our active declared renewal areas, where whole area improvement can be achieved.
- 4.2 These houses are not in an active renewal area and so do not qualify. At this stage there has been no detailed survey of the houses nor has there been any

- assessment of the owners' financial positions.
- 4.3 These houses are in an area that had previously benefited from significant amounts of spending. The North Evington Housing Action Area (HAA) was declared in May 1978. The area was later re-declared as a General Improvement Area (GIA) in June 1984. The GIA ceased in 1990 following a change in legislation. By that time some 90% of the houses had been improved or had works in progress.
- 4.4 Computer based records had only just been introduced by 1990 and paper files are not kept for more than seven years. It is not possible this stage to give information about money spent on the houses in question.
- 4.5 These houses would offer some 'noticeable' benefits by being improved, but then so would many other blocks of houses. There are some 35,000 older houses in the city which were built before 1919. It is believed that there are some 14,500 homes that fall below basic standards and are unfit for occupation.
- 4.6 We can give grant aid outside of our general policy but only in exceptional cases and all applications are considered on their individual circumstances and merits. A full valid application must be made before cases can be assessed. It is not appropriate to give a 'blanket' decision to all the owners of the houses involved without them making individual applications.
- 4.7 There are alternatives. One alternative could be to use powers to undertake a Group Repair scheme. This would be more attractive to the homeowners as a minimum grant of 50% (with a maximum of 100%) would be available to all subject to application. This course is not recommended because it is outside the general policy.
- 4.8 Another alternative is for the homeowners to take advantage of services available through our Home Maintenance Strategy. We can offer advice and assistance about home maintenance issues to all areas of the city, subject to the agreed programme. This year's programme is organised on a ward by ward basis and will deal with everyone who was on our waiting list by 31<sup>st</sup> December 1998. This year's capital programme provided for some small grants to qualifying owners dealt with under the Home Maintenance Strategy. One of the key areas being considered is to make a property 'wind & watertight'. Window replacement forms part of the overall spending. This programme will continue next year, subject to the detail of the agreed capital programme.
- 4.9 These houses are in the Spinney Hill Park Conservation Area. The proposed improvement work would obviously be welcomed. They are also covered by an 'Article 4 direction'. This means that any work to the front elevation of the houses must be subject to planning applications being made and must preserve the character of the conservation area.
- 4.10 In past years limited grant aid assistance was made available to help owners to carry out particular works to certain qualifying buildings. This was done through Historic Building Grants and Architectural Repair Grants the latter being supported through the former 'Urban Programme'. These were always very modest grants designed to pay towards the additional cost of repair works arising from the need to retain the character. Provision has dwindled and no grants have been awarded for some three to four years. The Environment Committee's capital programme this year does not include any money for this type of grant.

## **5. Equal Opportunities Implications**

- 5.1 By definition, renewal areas are populated by many disadvantaged people because there are set requirements about the general income levels of



residents. The declared renewal areas are also characterised by larger than average populations of older people and people from ethnic minorities.

- 5.2 The current discretionary grants policy is designed to help meet the needs of many disadvantaged people but in a structured way. Nevertheless there will be many other people in need elsewhere in the City.

## **6. Aims and Objectives**

- 6.1 The Aim of the Housing Department is 'A decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester'.

## **7. Policy Implications**

- 7.1 The recommendations made are in line with the general policy.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The general policy sets out the Council's intended delivery of grant aided improvements. However, the policy requires all applications to be considered on their individual circumstances and merits. Applications can be approved outside the policy in exceptional circumstances.

- 8.2 All validly made applications must be 'determined' (that is approved or refused) within six months of receipt.

## **9. Sustainable and Environmental Implications**

- 9.1 The renovation of these houses would make a significant visual impact in the conservation area. A number of 'quality of life' improvements for residents and other citizens would undoubtedly follow.

- 9.2 However, the recommendation made is not to provide a blanket offer of grant aid to the owners.

## **10. Crime and Disorder Implications**

- 10.1 There are no Crime and Disorder implications arising out of this report.

## **11. Consultations**

- 11.1 Officers in the Urban Design Group, Environment & Development Department have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **12. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 Background Papers**

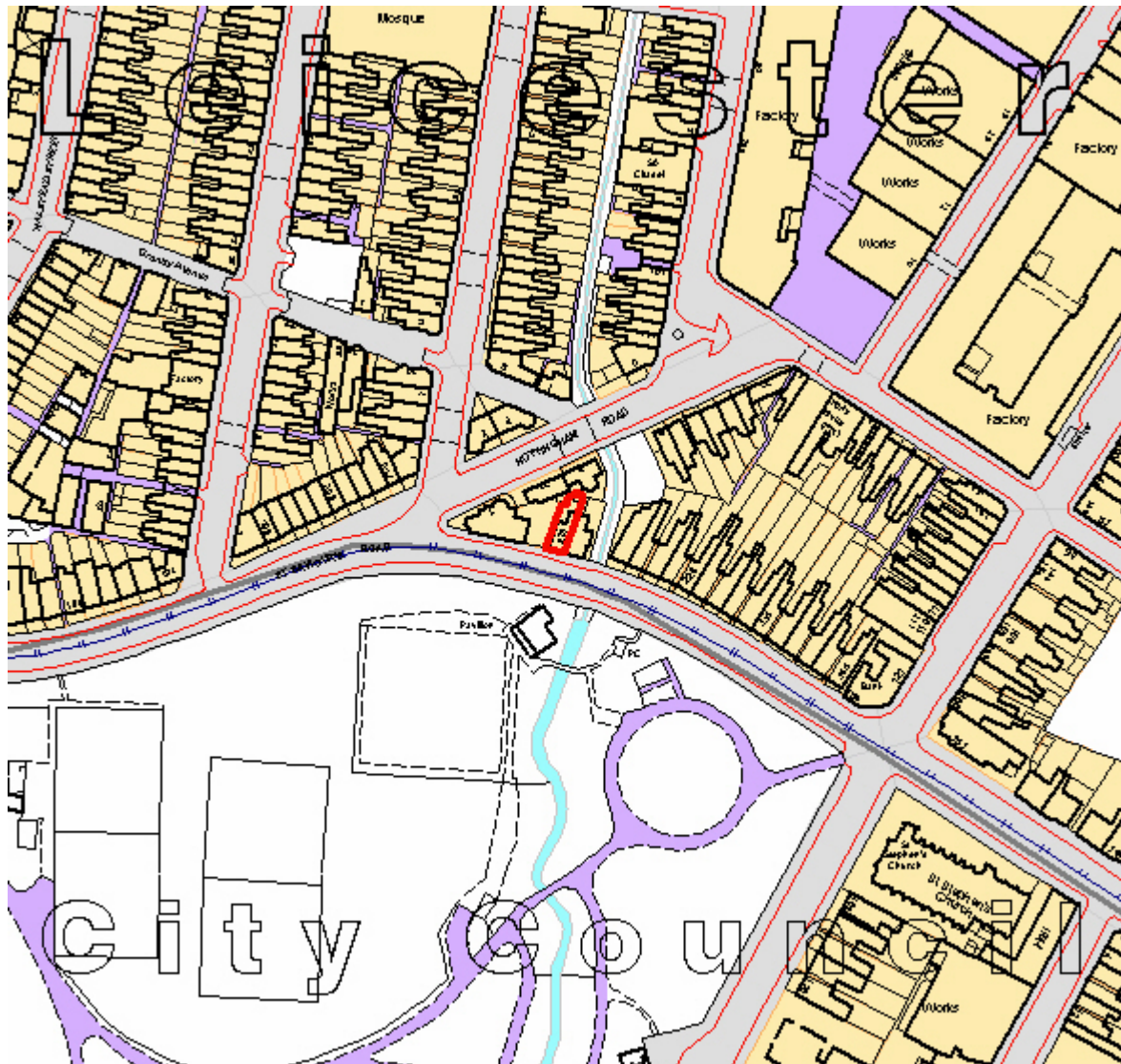
- Capital Programme 1998/99 & 1999/2000. Report of the Director of Housing to the special Housing Committee 19<sup>th</sup> January 1999.
- Additional HIP Resources 2000/2001 – 2001/2002. Report of the Director of Housing to the Housing Committee 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1999.
- Annual Review of Leicester's Renewal Strategy Policies. Report of the Director of Housing to the Housing Committee 6<sup>th</sup> January 1999.
- Review Of Renewal Strategy Policies. Report of the Director of Housing to the Housing Committee March 1997.
- Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996.
- Department of the Environment Circular 17/96.
- Renewal Strategy Annual Reviews since 1978.

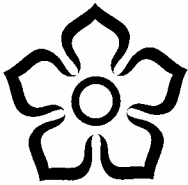
### **Officer to contact:**

Martin Bromley, Renewal & Grants Service Manager, Housing Department, x5386 or 299 5386

Appendix 2

**Location Map** (not to scale) showing 216 St Saviours Road outlined with the main terrace of properties 220 – 248 St Saviours Road to the right across Evington Brook.





Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
Thurncourt Ward

**HOUSING SCRUTINY**

**19<sup>th</sup> August 2004**

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**PETITION TO THE COUNCIL- ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR- AMYSON ROAD -THURNBY LODGE ESTATE**

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**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 A petition has been received from tenants and residents of the Amyson Rd area of Thurnby Lodge estate, requesting that City Council takes action against one particular family on the grounds of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB). This report outlines details of the case and the action taken by Officers.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 A petition comprising of 56 signatures was presented to the Housing Department in July 2004, complaining about the conduct of one family, who have caused nuisance, harassment and disorderly behaviour on the Thurnby lodge estate.
- 2.2 Members are advised to note that prior to the petition, complaints had been received about the tenant, in February/ March 04, regarding rubbish in the garden and noise nuisance. Tenant x was contacted at that time and reminded of her Tenancy Conditions.

A further complaint was made on 14<sup>th</sup> June, alleging drug dealing, multiple visitors and sexual activities at the property. The tenant was contacted to discuss this at a pre arranged appointment at her home on 24<sup>th</sup> June 04, however she was not in. A further home visit was arranged for 2nd July, but again, she was not in. She was seen in her home on 6<sup>th</sup> July, where she was informed about the petition. She denied the allegations and stated that the visitors were her relatives and that she was being targeted because she and her family/visitors were of mixed race. She was warned at that time regarding the problems and this was reiterated in a letter sent on 9<sup>th</sup> July 04.

It was not appropriate to serve a Notice to Terminate the tenancy on these incidents alone.

- 2.3 All 56 petitioners were invited to attend the Housing Office to discuss the issues. Of these, 7 people attended, 5 others telephoned to discuss the matter, 2 of whom did not want to be involved and 1 letter was received, denying having signed the petition.
- 2.4 The police have been contacted for further information.
- 2.5 Consideration was given to involving the Leicester Anti Social Behaviour Unit, however, as tenant X is an Introductory tenant, they are unable to take on the case.
- 2.6 The number of incidents reported since July has increased and a Notice to Terminate the Tenancy (NT) will now be served. The tenant has a Right of Appeal against the NT and if requested, will be heard by an Independent Panel (as required in law for Introductory Tenancies)
- 2.7 We have now received a termination Notice from tenant x to terminate her tenancy on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2004.

### **3. Recommendations**

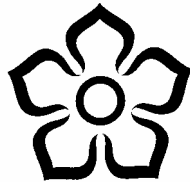
- 3.1 To note the action taken by the Housing department and that the tenant has terminated her tenancy with effect from 28<sup>th</sup> August 2004.
- 3.2 To monitor the situation

### **4. Headline Financial and legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no direct implications associated with this report. If an 'appeal' against the NT is requested, Legal Services will be advising the Panel
- 4.2 Legal Services are being consulted in the production of the NT

### **5. Report Author/Officer to contact:**

- 5.1 Ellen Watts  
Neighbourhood Housing Manager  
Rowlatts Hill & Thurnby Lodge Areas xn 1130.



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
Thurncourt Ward

**Housing Scrutiny Committee**

**Housing Scrutiny: 19<sup>th</sup> August 2004**

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**Petition to the Council- Anti Social Behaviour – Thurnby Lodge Estate**

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## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1. Report**

- 1.1 A petition was received from tenants and residents of the Amyson Road area of Thurnby Lodge estate, requesting that City Council takes action against one particular tenant on the grounds of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB). They complained about the anti social behaviour of the tenant and their visitors.
- 1.2 The petition reads ‘ We the undersigned residents and tenants of Amyson Rd, Thurnby Lodge, Leicester, would like to bring to your attention the unreasonable and antisocial behaviour of the tenants and visitors to a property in the area of Amyson Road. This behaviour is affecting all of the area surrounding the address. The Police have been notified a number of times and we now seek the help of Leicester City Council, as the landlords of the property to correct this behaviour. ‘
- 1.3 Members are recommended to note that prior to the petition, complaints had been received about the tenant, in February/ March 04, regarding rubbish in her garden and noise. Tenant x was contacted at that time and reminded of her Tenancy Conditions. A further complaint was made on 14<sup>th</sup> June, alleging drug dealing, multiple visitors and sexual activities at the property. The tenant was contacted to discuss this at a pre arranged appointment at her home on 24<sup>th</sup> June 04, however she was not in. A further home visit was arranged for 2nd July, but again, she was not in. She was seen in her home on 6<sup>th</sup> July, where she was informed about the petition. She denied the allegations and stated that the visitors were her relatives and that she was being targeted because she and her family/visitors were of mixed race. She was warned at that time regarding the problems and this was reiterated in a letter sent on 9<sup>th</sup> July 04.

- 1.4 These incidents on their own were insufficient to warrant a Notice to be served, under the regime of Introductory Tenancies.
- 1.4 Since then, things have worsened and it is now alleged that tenant X and her visitors act in an unacceptable manner. The allegations include multiple male visitors to the property, shouting abusive language, swearing, arguing and gesticulating to other residents. Also that taxis are arriving at the property and arguments are heard over payment for the service. Residents allege that these visitors often appear to be highly intoxicated and this leads to loud arguments both inside and outside the property. It is also alleged that naked men are often visible in the bedroom of tenant X. This behaviour, combined with the swearing and drinking outside the property is preventing neighbours' children from playing in the garden. Loud music is played on a regular basis, causing noise nuisance to the other residents. The allegations have also been referred to the Police.
- 1.5 All 56 petitioners were invited to attend the Housing Office to discuss the issues. Of these, 7 people attended, 5 others telephoned to discuss the matter, 2 of whom did not want to be involved and 1 letter was received, denying having signed the petition.
- 1.6 Diary sheets were issued to all those who contacted, of which, 2 have been returned so far.
- 1.7 A meeting was held with the Leicester Anti Social Behaviour Unit on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2004. However, they were unable to take the case on because tenant X is an Introductory tenant. A decision was taken to follow the Introductory Tenancy procedure and to serve a Notice to Terminate (NT) tenant X's tenancy.
- 1.8 A Notice to Terminate the Tenancy was being prepared and would have been served upon the family week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> August 2004 (The delay is due to one key witness currently being on holiday).
- 1.9 Further information from the Police had been requested. Witness statements had also been requested and would be used in any form of litigation including any appeal hearing.
- 10.1 However we have just this week received a termination Notice from tenant X, terminating her Tenancy with effect from 29<sup>th</sup> August 2004. Therefore no further action is required.

## **2. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATION**

### **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 There are no direct financial implications as yet. There may be a financial cost if litigation becomes necessary.

### **3. Legal Implications**

3.1 There are no direct legal implications as yet, however if a Notice of Possession Proceedings is issued, litigation could commence

**4 Equal Opportunities Implications**

4.1 Anti social behaviour affects all sections of our community and it is imperative that all possible solutions are sought in an attempt to eradicate this type of behaviour for all members of the community.

**6. Sustainable and Environmental Implications**

6.1 Anti social behaviour can blight neighbourhoods and undermine investment in an area.

**7. Crime and Disorder**

7.1 This report has Crime and Disorder implications in that Anti Social Behaviour is one of the seven priorities listed in the current strategy.

**8. Policy Implications**

8.1 There are no direct policy implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Y	Paragraph 3.1	
Policy	N	Paragraph 6	
Sustainable and Environmental	Y	Paragraph 4.1	
Crime and Disorder	Y	Paragraph 6.5	
Human Rights Act	N		
Elderly/People on Low Income	N		

**9. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972**

9.1 Held at Rowlatts Hill Neighbourhood Housing Office

**10. Consultations**

10.1 Police - Information has been requested

10.2 Petitioners - all petitioners have been invited to interview by the Housing Office.

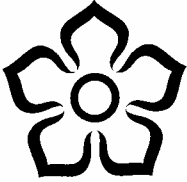
**11. Aims and Objectives**

- 11.1 The aim of the housing service is a decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester.
- 11.2 This report contributes to that aim through objective number 6; To enable citizens of Leicester to stay in their homes so long as these homes continue to meet their needs by Improving the social climate of residential neighbourhood both council estates and private sector areas) to make them safe and clean areas, which generate community spirit.
- 11.3 Deal severely with Council tenants who harass others, cause nuisance or behave in an anti social manner.

## **12 Report Author**

Ellen Watts  
Neighbourhood Housing Manager  
Rowlatts Hill & Thurnby Lodge Housing Office  
Extn 1130





Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Wards

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

Housing Scrutiny  
Cabinet

Housing Management Board

19<sup>th</sup> August 2004  
6<sup>th</sup> September 2004  
7<sup>th</sup> October 2004

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**Best Value Review – Housing Management Service:  
Audit Commission Inspection Report**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To present the Audit Commission's final report following its inspection of the Housing Management Service.
- 1.2 Recommend additional actions to be included in the Improvement Plan to address the issues raised within this report.

**2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 The Audit Commission report assessed the council as providing a 'good', two star Housing Management service that has promising prospects for improvement.
- 2.2 From the inspection, the Housing Management service was assessed as being 'good' because:
  - It has a highly customer focused ethos which makes tenants and residents concerns a priority.
  - Tenancy management services are provided from accessible and local offices and are responsive to the current and future perceived needs of tenants.
  - It makes serious efforts to ensure that services remain sensitive to the needs of all members of a diverse community.
  - A high priority is placed upon sustainability of tenancies with an emphasis on early engagement with new tenants and housing related support for the most vulnerable.
  - The council demonstrates good tenant involvement and participation in specific initiatives and within the boundaries of the existing tenant participation structure.
  - Trained tenant inspectors perform quality checks on estates and office environments.

- The quality of service in dealing with anti-social behaviour, racial harassment and nuisance is high and complaints are dealt with quickly. The partnership approach to community safety is a particularly positive feature of the service.
- Value for money is demonstrable in most aspects of the service.

2.3 The inspection report also identified key areas of the service that required improvement. The main areas highlighted were:

1. The tenants compact is only available in English.
2. Systematic customer satisfaction monitoring is very limited and there is no strategy to involve leaseholders.
3. The need to provide more opportunity for tenants to be involved in managing the service performance.
4. Former tenant arrears are collected by a separate department and in the opinion of the Audit Commission do not form part of an overall strategic approach to arrears management.
5. There is a lack of robust contract monitoring for estates services. Some communal cleaning contracts are in place but standards are not currently monitored.
6. There is a lack of clear strategic approach and direction in respect of voids management.
7. Performance against audited indicators is weak in the key areas of arrears and voids.

2.4 Many of the areas recommended for improvement have already been identified by the council's own Best Value review of the service, and form part the Housing Management Improvement Plan approved by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003. The Audit Commission inspection took place before many of these identified improvements could be implemented and for results to be shown. Indeed the Audit Commission inspection report acknowledges that the 'Best Value Improvement Plan reflects the majority of the issues identified during the review process and links to the strategic aims of the service'.

2.5 However, the inspection report has highlighted further areas that need to be incorporated into the improvement plan. The process for including actions to address these areas for improvement is highlighted in paragraph 2.23 in the supporting information. Attached at appendix A is a list of proposed new, existing or amended improvements to address the key areas of concern raised by the Audit Commission.

2.6 The Audit Commission judged the council's Housing Management service to have 'promising' prospects for delivering improvement for the following reasons:

- Housing Management staff are clearly motivated and committed to providing a good and improving service.
- There is strong political and managerial support for improvement plans. The required financial resources have been allocated to deliver the improvement plan.
- A number of the improvements in the agreed improvement plan have been completed ahead of schedule to provide some "quick wins".

- The new housing IT system has significant potential to enhance customer service and business intelligence. The implementation has been robustly project managed and appropriate training rolled out.
- Previous failings in the housing benefit service are now being addressed with very positive effects on rent arrears figures.
- The council has responded effectively to recommendations and weaknesses highlighted in previous inspection reports.

To ensure that improvement is achieved, the audit commission recommend the council:

- Ensures there is a properly embedded performance management culture that uses business information to manage performance effectively.
- Submits an action plan on how a more detailed examination of the challenge and compete elements of the best value review will be completed.
- Ensures the full utilisation of the new integrated housing IT system to realise its potential in improving service provision and value for money.
- Continue to deliver improvements in the housing benefit service.

2.7 A full copy of the audit commission final report has been placed in the members area and is also available from the audit commission website [www.auditcommission.gov.uk](http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk)

### **3. Recommendations**

3.1 Members are recommended to:

- i. Receive the Audit Commission report in relation to its inspection of the council's Housing Management service.
- ii. Note the action being taken to address areas for improvement and support the new and revised actions at appendix A to be added to the Housing Management Improvement Plan.
- iii. Note the areas of good and positive practice within the Housing Management service.

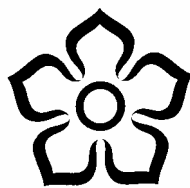
3.2 Further reports are brought to the Housing Scrutiny Committee containing strategies to improve void management performance and improving satisfaction with opportunities for tenants to participate.

**4. Headline Financial and legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report. Resources for implementing the existing improvement plan items have already been identified and approved. The new improvement plan items highlighted in **appendix A** can be funded from existing budget resources.
- 4.2 There are no direct legal issues relating to this report.

**5. Report Author/Officer to contact:**

- 5.1 Pat Hobbs Ext 6803  
Service Director, Housing Management and Hostels  
David Taylor Ext 5255  
Landlord Services Manger, Housing Management and Hostels



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Wards

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

Housing Scrutiny

Cabinet

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19<sup>th</sup> August 2004  
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**Best Value Review – Housing Management Service:  
Audit Commission Inspection Report**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing**

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Housing Management Service undertook a Best Value Review in 2003. Cabinet agreed the scope of the review on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2003. The objectives of the review were to:
- Challenge current Housing Management arrangements and seek ambitious improvements in order to tailor the best service to meet client needs.
  - Consider available alternative services for the Management of stock and assess their contribution to improved management/tenant experience.
  - Set out plans for delivering short and long-term improvements.
- 1.3 The outcome of the Housing Management Best Value Review was reported to Cabinet on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003 highlighting the review findings, and a plan containing 94 improvements was approved. The overall aims of the Improvement plan are:
- To reach a 79% customer satisfaction rating, a 10% increase, by 2006 (Measured by the ODPM status survey).
  - To reach a 63% satisfaction rating with tenant opportunities to participate, an increase of 5%, by 2006 (Measured by the ODPM status survey).
  - A reduction in rent arrears to £1.5m by April 2005.
  - At least a 10% reduction in average re-let times by April 2005.

- 1.4 The Audit Commission carried out an inspection of the Housing Management Service between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2004. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the Housing Management service to ensure that the Best Value principles - the 4 C's - are being applied when providing services. The inspection also examined the council's plans that are in place to deliver continuous improvements to the services it provides – in this case specifically housing management services. This inspection consisted of a series of interviews with the Cabinet Link Member for Housing, Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee, Tenant Representatives, the Director of Housing and other members of staff. A series of visits to Neighbourhood Housing Offices and 'reality' checks were also completed to verify that the service delivers what it says it does.
- 1.5 The Audit Commission issued its assessment and recommendations in a report released in June 2004.

## **2. The Audit Commission Report.**

2.1 The Audit Commission report assessed the council as providing a 'good', two star Housing Management service that has promising prospects for improvement.

2.2 From the inspection the Housing Management service was assessed as being 'good' because:

- It has a highly customer focused ethos which makes tenants and residents concerns a priority.
- Tenancy management services are provided from accessible and local offices and are responsive to the current and future perceived needs of tenants.
- It makes serious efforts to ensure that services remain sensitive to the needs of all members of a diverse community.
- A high priority is placed upon sustainability of tenancies with an emphasis on early engagement with new tenants and housing related support for the most vulnerable.
- The council demonstrates good tenant involvement and participation in specific initiatives and within the boundaries of the existing tenant participation structure.
- Trained tenant inspectors perform quality checks on estates and office environments.
- The quality of service in dealing with anti-social behaviour, racial harassment and nuisance is high and complaints are dealt with quickly. The partnership approach to community safety is a particularly positive feature of the service.
- Value for money is demonstrable in most aspects of the service.

2.3 The inspection report also identified key areas of the service that required improvement. The main areas highlighted were:

1. The tenants compact is only available in English.
2. Systematic customer satisfaction monitoring is very limited and there is no strategy to involve leaseholders.
3. The need to provide more opportunity for tenants to be involved in managing the service performance.

4. Former tenant arrears are collected by a separate department and in the opinion of the Audit Commission do not form part of an overall strategic approach to arrears management.
5. There is a lack of robust contract monitoring for estates services. Some communal cleaning contracts are in place but standards are not currently monitored.
6. There is a lack of clear strategic approach and direction in respect of voids management.
7. Performance against audited indicators is weak in the key areas of arrears and voids.

2.4 Many of the areas recommended for improvement have already been identified by the council's own Best Value review of the service and form part the Housing Management Improvement Plan approved by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003. The Audit Commission inspection took place before many of these identified improvements could be implemented and for results to be shown. Indeed the Audit Commission inspection report acknowledges that ' the best value improvement plan reflects the majority of the issues identified during the review process and links to the strategic aims of the service'.

2.5 The inspection report has highlighted further areas that need to be incorporated into the improvement plan. The process for including actions to address these areas for improvement is highlighted in paragraph 2.23 below. Attached at appendix A is a list of proposed new, existing or amended improvements to address the key areas of concern raised by the Audit Commission.

2.6 The Audit Commission highlighted rent collection and Void Management as particular areas of concern.

#### 2.7 **Rent Collection**

Since the inspection significant progress has been made in improving rent collection and performance. Rent arrears are now at the lowest levels since the beginning of the problems with housing benefit payments. Good progress is being made towards achieving the 2004/05 target. Meeting the 2004/05 target will put Leicester in the top 25% performing authorities in collecting rent. The details of the measures taken to improve rent collection are highlighted in appendix A and will be subject to a report to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in August 2004.

#### 2.8 **Void Management**

Work has commenced on addressing poor performance in the management and turnaround of void properties. A full list of improvements is listed in appendix A. Key improvements include the preparation of a detailed 'void management strategy' that will provide a clear direction and framework for delivering improved performance. The strategy will include:

- High level statistical analysis that identifies and substantiates reasons for poor performance
- Measurements of the extent of identified poor performance.
- Prioritisation of improvement actions to address identified weaknesses in the void management process.
- A range of improvement options targeted at particular areas of poor performance.

- A clear view of what the strategy will achieve.
- A clear framework highlighting how progress will be monitored and managed and who will be responsible. Clear targets will be set.

The review of the Housing Management structure will see the introduction of five voids officers and one senior voids officer. The purpose of these posts will be to drive forward void management improvements and improve the efficiency and quality of the voids element of the service.

Due to the importance of improving performance in this area it is proposed to bring a detailed report to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in January. The report will highlight remedial action taken and provide an update on current performance against the 2005 target.

## 2.9 **Performance Management**

A review of the Housing Management performance management framework is currently being undertaken. The objective of this review is to ensure the successful delivery of continuous improvement within the service using performance data to drive up standards and deliver an excellent service. The review is specifically focusing on:

- Developing a Performance Management Unit.
- A branch Training and Development Plan.
- Improved local service planning.
- Developing Housing Management branch values.
- Improved target setting processes.
- Improving business intelligence and data collection to be used to manage the service performance and progress towards targets.

The performance framework will improve service standards, customer satisfaction and staff motivation.

## 2.10 **Anti-social Behaviour, Harassment and Crime and Disorder**

The inspection report states that the council's partnership approach to community safety is a positive feature of the service. The inspectors reported that the Housing Management service provides a high quality service when dealing with anti-social behaviour and harassment with complaints being dealt with quickly.

2.11 The council deals with racial harassment robustly and with a pro-active approach. The housing management resource packs are felt to be 'very helpful' and the multi agency approach taken towards racial harassment is particularly praised. The audit commission notes that the council's approach has helped to ensure that in 2002/03 100 per cent of racial incidents led to further action. This is compared to 83 per cent in the East Midlands and an average of 87 per cent for all unitary authorities.

2.12 Target setting and performance management of the anti-social behaviour service were considered areas that could be improved. This will be addressed when finalising the new performance management framework.



### 2.13 **Tenant Participation**

The audit commission recognises that the council is committed to tenant participation and has well developed tenant participation structures. However the inspectors were concerned by the preliminary status survey results that suggest tenant satisfaction with the opportunity to participate has fallen to 49% from 51% three years ago. It is important to note that the same survey highlights only 14.6% actually said they were dissatisfied.

2.14 Market Research UK (MRUK) as part of the Stock Option Appraisal process has carried out a survey. This survey sought to identify tenant aspirations and priorities. The draft results suggests that 82% of tenants are not interested in participating in housing and of the 18% who wished to participate only 3% wished to join tenant and resident groups.

2.15 This highlights the need to develop the tenant participation service further to enable tenants who do not wish to join formal structures to participate. This was highlighted by the audit commission who recommend the council investigates reasons for falling satisfaction rates with the opportunity to participate and increase the range of less formal ways for tenants to get involved.

2.16 The Community Development manager is to undertake research into this area and prepare a strategy for developing tenant participation in Leicester. Tenants will be involved in this process and a report brought to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in due course.

### 2.17 **Customer Care**

The audit commission acknowledge that the customer care skills and behaviour of housing management staff has 'noticeably improved' since the recruitment of the customer care training officers and the adoption of a customer care strategy. The audit commission also recognise that the council has a 'highly customer focused ethos' and that 'availability and access to services is of good quality'.

2.18 The audit commission notes that customer satisfaction levels are improving with the latest status survey results showing satisfaction levels rising to 69% - a 10% increase. A survey of new tenants conducted by the council also shows that satisfaction levels have risen to 84% with the service. The MRUK survey conducted this year indicates (draft) that 90% of tenants feel the housing management service meets their expectations.

2.19 It is recommended by the audit commission that the council carries out more systematic customer satisfaction monitoring and that the quality of telephone contacts could be improved. To address this:

- A review of the way in which the housing management service handles telephone contacts is to be conducted, making recommendations on how to improve.
- Frequent customer satisfaction monitoring will become an integral part of the performance management unit's duties. The results will be used to drive up standards

## 2.20 Prospect for Improvement

The Audit Commission judged the council's Housing Management service to have 'promising' prospects for delivering improvement for the following reasons:

- Housing Management staff are clearly motivated and committed to providing a good and improving service.
- There is strong political and managerial support for improvement plans. The required financial resources have been allocated to deliver the improvement plan.
- A number of the improvements in the agreed improvement plan have been completed ahead of schedule to provide some "quick wins".
- The new housing IT system has significant potential to enhance customer service and business intelligence. The implementation has been robustly project managed and appropriate training rolled out.
- Previous failings in the housing benefit service are now being addressed with very positive effects on rent arrears figures.
- The council has responded effectively to recommendations and weaknesses highlighted in previous inspection reports.

To ensure that improvement is achieved the audit commission recommend the council:

- Ensures that there is a properly embedded performance management culture that uses business information to manage performance effectively.
- Submits an action plan on how a more detailed examination of the challenge and compete elements of the best value review will be completed.
- Ensures the full utilisation of the new integrated housing IT system to realise its potential in improving service provision and value for money.
- Continue to deliver improvements in the housing benefit service.

## 2.20 Other areas of Good Practice

As part of the inspection process the Audit Commission highlights examples of good practice. The final report includes the following areas of good practice that were identified within Housing Management service:

- The council demonstrates active awareness of the requirement to continuously improve activities which address equality and diversity. The efforts the council have made in meeting the needs of the newly emerged Somali community were particularly noted. This includes the recruitment of two Somali development workers who have worked to build the independence and capacity of the group.

The sensitive approach the council is taking in encouraging better community cohesion and the integration of ethnic groups into out of centre areas of the city was commended. Particularly the Northfields project where properties have been let to BME families, in consultation with the local community. The audit commission feel this has 'addressed a voids problem and enabled a new community to develop with the benefits of proximity and mutual support'.

- The level of advice and support given to the alleged victims of anti-social behavior and harassment is judged to be a particular positive aspect of the housing management service. The issuing of a comprehensive resource pack that includes a 'very helpful advice sheet' is considered to be pro-active. The fact that the council supports the Leicester "Witness Cocoon" which has a free advice and information helpline and exists both to provide support for witnesses and to help them develop coping strategies is seen as particularly positive.
- There is a high priority placed upon sustaining tenancies with an emphasis on early engagement with new tenants and housing related support for the most vulnerable. The STAR team supports 500 client households at any one time with support lasting for between three to six months. The audit commission judged that the tenancy support service is having a positive effect on the sustainability of tenancies, by providing appropriate support services targeted at the need of the individual.

2.22 A full copy of the audit commission final report has been placed in the members area and is also available from the audit commission website [www.auditcommission.gov.uk](http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk)

2.23 A detailed analysis has been made of the final audit commission report. The purpose of this exercise was to identify areas of the housing management service in need of improvement in order to contribute to improving customer satisfaction and addressing tenant needs. Many of the necessary improvements have already been identified as part of the Best Value review process. Further improvement plan actions have been developed to address any gaps highlighted by the Audit Commission inspection. The key additional improvements are attached at appendix A for members to consider and to agree to add them to the existing improvement plan.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Resources for implementing the existing improvement plan items have already been identified and approved. The new improvement plan items highlighted in **appendix A** can be funded from existing resources.

3.2 Delivering improvements in performance can lead to increased Central Government funding. Reducing void re-let times and improving rent collection leads to more income into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

### **4. Legal Implications**

4.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

### **5. Policy Implications**

5.1 Improvements resulting from the Audit Commission inspection in some instances may lead to changes in policy and procedures. Any changes will be implemented using normal council processes and will include full consultation with tenant representatives.

## 6. Equal Opportunities

- 6.1 The Audit Commission recognises the council's commitment to equal opportunities. It praises the efforts and achievements of the Housing Management service in ensuring services are accessible and that they remain sensitive to the needs of all members of Leicester's diverse communities.
- 6.2 The Audit Commission recommends that additional customer advice documents are translated into key community languages. It has been arranged for a number of key documents to be translated. Where possible computer generated letters and bulk mailings will have advice on translation services in a tenants preferred language.
- 6.3 The Audit Commission acknowledges the good progress the Council has made in making the Housing Management customer service points DDA compliant.

## 7. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	<b>Yes</b>	<b>6</b>	
Policy	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Throughout but specifically 5</b>	
Sustainable and Environmental	<b>Yes</b>	<b>2.21 &amp; 10</b>	
Crime and Disorder	<b>Yes</b>	<b>2.10, 2.11 &amp; 2.12</b>	
Human Rights Act	<b>No</b>		
Elderly/People on Low Income	<b>Yes</b>	<b>2.2 &amp; 2.21</b>	

## 8. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

- 8.1 Housing Management Best Value Scoping Report 10.3.03  
 Housing Management Best Value Improvement Plan 15.12.03  
 Audit Commission Inspection Report – Housing Management Services June 2004  
 CPA Assessment Report for Leicester – Audit Commission

## 9. Consultations

- 9.1 Throughout the Best Value process extensive consultation has taken place with our service users and key stakeholders to gain their views and opinions on the level and quality of service provided by the housing management service.
- 9.2 The LFTA were also consulted about the findings of the review and the adopted improvement plan.

9.3 Tenants receive regular updates on progress with the improvement plan and the outcome of the inspection will be presented to the next Housing Management Board for discussion.

9.4 Staff and Trades Unions have been fully involved in the Best Value review process and the subsequent review of staffing structures.

## **10. Aims and Objectives**

10.1 The corporate aim of the council is to *'Make Leicester more attractive for our diverse communities to live, work and invest in'* with a strategic objective to *'Improve our environment to make local neighbourhoods and the city centre places for people to be proud of'*

10.2 The aim of the Housing Service is *'a decent home within the reach of every citizen in Leicester'*

10.3 The aim of the Housing Management Service is to *'provide decent homes to council tenants, and to contribute towards the creation and support of neighbourhoods where people choose to live'*. The Housing Management service objectives are:

- a) Developing and supporting customer involvement by listening to our tenants and the wider community.
- b) Working towards Community Cohesion by empowering and investing in communities through community partnerships and regeneration activities.
- c) For the housing we directly manage, our objectives are:
  - To ensure equality in accessing Housing Management Services that acknowledges the diversity and expectations of local communities across the City.
  - To provide customer focused services that meet needs and expectations.
  - To create safe and pleasant environments on our estates, making them places where people want to live.
  - To ensure homes meet a decent standard and are maintained properly.
  - To promote community cohesion by tackling unacceptable behaviour and all forms of harassment.
  - To ensure tenants and residents have an opportunity to participate in the decision making processes that affect their homes and environment.
  - To increase the % of rent collected through the effective implementation of rent arrears policies, and become a top quartile performing unitary authority.
  - To increase occupancy levels within the housing stock by reducing the time taken to re-let void properties and making best use of the stock.
  - To let individual tenancies and offer advice and options to tenants and customers to increase housing choices.
- d) Investing in our staff to ensure that they provide a comprehensive, customer focused Housing Management Service.
- e) Exploring a number of alternative service options, in order to ensure value for money.

- 10.4 This report contributes to all of the above aims and objectives by continually improving the Housing Management service provided to tenants to meet both current and future need, ensuring that the service provided is customer focused.
- 10.5 Improving the environments of, and services to, local neighbourhoods will contribute towards the council's strategic aim.
- 10.6 Increasing income to the Housing Revenue Account by improving rent collection and void management performance will assist in resourcing continual improvement and will facilitate the delivery of the council's aims and objectives.

**11. Report Author / Officers to contact:**

- 11.1 Pat Hobbs Ext 6803  
Service Director, Housing Management and Hostels  
David Taylor Ext 5255  
Landlord Services Manger, Housing Management and Hostels

## Appendix A

### Housing Management Best Value Review Improvement Plan New and Existing Improvement Plan Actions to address Audit Commission Key Findings

#### 1. 'The tenants compact is only available in English'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
10.12	Distribute a summary version of the tenants compact to all tenants. Translate summary into key languages.	New	5% increase in customer satisfaction and participation.	1. Compact summary produced. 2. Summary version translated.	1. Satisfaction measured before and after – including satisfaction amongst BME tenants.	October 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£8000 To be met from existing Community Development budget.

#### 2. 'Systematic customer satisfaction monitoring is very limited and there is no strategy to involve leaseholders'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
9.11	Develop a range of customer satisfaction surveys to be used with the new IT system.	New	5% increase in customer satisfaction.	1. Systematic customer satisfaction monitoring is being undertaken. 2. The results of the monitoring are used to improve services.	1. Satisfaction measured before and after – including satisfaction amongst BME tenants.	November 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£500 To be met from existing staffing & IT budgets.

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
3.9	Develop a mechanism for involving leaseholders in consultation and participation.	Existing	5% increase in leaseholder satisfaction and participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement the mechanisms.</li> <li>2. Leaseholders are participating in consultation and service development.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Satisfaction surveys before and after new mechanisms for participation are in place.</li> </ol>	November 2004	BVPI 75	£1500 from existing community development budgets.
3.9a	Develop a leaseholders handbook.	New	5% increase in leaseholder satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Handbook issued to existing and new leaseholders</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Satisfaction surveys before and after handbook issued.</li> <li>2. Handbook issued.</li> </ol>	November 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£2000 to be met from leaseholder service charges.
10.16	Prepare a tenant and leaseholder participation strategy to give a strategic direction to the development of this service.	New	5% increase in tenant and leaseholder satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategy is completed.</li> <li>2. Development of the community development service</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Satisfaction surveys before and after the strategy is in place.</li> </ol>	December 2004	BVPI 75	£1000 from existing community development staffing budgets.



### 3. 'The need to provide more opportunity for tenants to be involved in managing the service performance'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
10.10	Review tenant involvement in policy reviews, reviewing performance and how they can actively be involved in the planning and delivery of local services	Revised	5% increase in satisfaction with opportunity participation and the service provided.	1. Tenants are involved in reviewing policies and the management of service performance.	1. Satisfaction surveys before and after the strategy is in place.	October 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£500 To be met from existing Community Development budget.
9.5	Review the local performance indicators in conjunction with TARA's	Existing	5% increase in satisfaction with opportunity participation and the service provided. 10% increase in staff satisfaction.	1. Review completed to schedule. 2. 10% reduction in staff absence due to stress.	1. Staff satisfaction surveys before and after review. 2. Customer satisfaction before and after review.	January 2004 Now completed	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	None as completed.
9.1	Enhance the quality of performance data presented in quarterly audit reports to tenants	Existing	1.Improved performance 2. 5% increase in satisfaction with the opportunity to participate.	1. More tenant involvement in managing performance 2. Clearer and more meaningful performance information provided to tenants.	1. Customer satisfaction surveys before and after review.	June 2004 Now completed	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	None as completed.

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
9.3	Enhance the use of mystery customer exercises	Existing	1. 5% increase in customer satisfaction with service. 2. Customers are assisting in monitoring standards of service.	1. Complete the enhancements. 2. Exercises are used to improve services.	1. Performance measured before and after. 2. Satisfaction measured before and after.	June 2004 Now Complete	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	None as now complete.
6.3	Enhance the role of the Tenant Inspectorate	Existing	1. 5% increase in customer satisfaction 2. 5% increase in satisfaction with participation	1. Complete the enhancements. 2. Exercises are used to improve services.	1. Performance measured before and after. 2. Satisfaction measured before and after.	June 2004 Now Complete	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	None as now complete.

#### 4. 'Former tenant arrears are collected by a separate department and, in the opinion of the Audit Commission, do not form part of an overall strategic approach to arrears management'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.11	Review the collection of former tenant arrears and assess the effectiveness of current arrangements	New	To have in place the most effective and efficient structure for collecting former tenant arrears.	1. Current methods for collecting former tenant arrears are challenged. 2. An assessment of collection methods	1. Review is completed on time. 2. % of former tenant arrears collected.	February 2005	BVPI 66a	£1000 To be met from existing staff resource budgets.

**5. 'There is a lack of robust contract monitoring for estates services. Some communal cleaning contracts are in place but standards are not currently monitored'**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Existing, Revised or New</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Measured By</b>	<b>Target Completion Date</b>	<b>Local and National PI</b>	<b>Resource Implication</b>
9.6	Creation of a Contracts Monitoring Officer	Existing	5% increase in customer satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contracts Monitoring Officer in place.</li> <li>2. Active management of housing management services contracts.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tenant satisfaction with the environment</li> <li>2. Tenant satisfaction with participation opportunities regarding improvements to the environment</li> </ol>	August 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	To be determined as part of the housing management structure review
8.5	Review housing management requirements and standards during the re-letting of the grounds maintenance, estate warden and pest control contract.	New	5% increase in customer satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder involvement in developing contract service standards.</li> <li>2. New contract let with clearly defined standards.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Performance measured before and after.</li> <li>2. Satisfaction measured before and after.</li> </ol>	October 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£750 To be met from existing staffing budgets. New cost of contract yet to be determined.

## 6. 'There is a lack of clear strategic approach and direction in respect of voids management'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
6.6	Develop a voids management strategy	Revised to include Audit Commission on advice.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% reduction in average re-let times.</li> <li>2. Improved business intelligence of the voids management service.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completed fit for purpose voids management strategy.</li> <li>2. Improved void management performance.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>2. Customer satisfaction with standard of void properties before and after.</li> <li>3. % of rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant before and after.</li> </ol>	October 2004	LCHS 10 LCHS 12 BVPI 75	£500 To be met from existing staffing budget.

## 7. 'Performance against audited indicators is weak in the key areas of arrears and voids'

### Voids:

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
6.1	Escorted viewings for all vacant properties	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>10% reduction in void times</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher acceptance rate of offers made on properties</li> <li>Increased customer satisfaction with the void management process.</li> <li>Quicker re-let times.</li> <li>Increased income to the council.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average number of offers made on properties</li> <li>Satisfaction of tenants with the void process</li> </ol>	July 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75 LCHS 10 LCHS 12	This task will be completed by existing staff.
6.2	Pre-tenancy checks	Existing	5% increase in customer satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accurate allocation of empty properties to applicants.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tenant satisfaction with the void process before and after</li> </ol>	July 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75 LCHS 10 LCHS 12	£500 from existing budgets.

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
6.3	Enhance the role of the Tenant Inspectorate	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>5% increase in satisfaction with participation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commence enhancements of tenants inspectorate role.</li> <li>5% increase in the quality of ready to let properties.</li> <li>5% increase in new tenant satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of ready to lets before and after.</li> <li>New tenant satisfaction with condition of property before and after.</li> </ol>	<p>May 2004</p> <p>Now completed</p>	<p>BVPI 74</p> <p>BVPI 75</p> <p>LCHS 10</p> <p>LCHS 12</p>	<p>None as already completed.</p>
6.4	Quality checks on ready to let properties	Existing	5% increase in customer satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce quality checks.</li> <li>10% reduction in the number of offer refusals due to the condition of the property.</li> <li>5% increase in new tenant satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of offer refusals due to condition before and after.</li> <li>New tenant satisfaction with condition of property before and after.</li> </ol>	<p>May 2004</p> <p>Quality checks will commence when Voids Officers in post.</p>	<p>BVPI 74</p> <p>LCHS 10</p> <p>LCHS 12</p>	<p>None directly.</p>
6.5	Pre-termination checks	Existing	10% reduction in average re-let time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process for pre-tenancy checks complete.</li> <li>Quicker re-let times.</li> <li>Increased income to the council.</li> <li>10% reduction in the non-recoverable expenditure on voids</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>Cost of void repairs before and after.</li> <li>Number of long term voids before and after.</li> </ol>	<p>May 2004</p> <p>Pre-termination checks will commence when Voids Officers in post.</p>	<p>BVPI 74</p> <p>LCHS 10</p> <p>LCHS 12</p>	<p>Should ensure savings on void repair costs. Cost of implementing checks forms part of the housing management structure review.</p>

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
6.7	Prepare a training programme to inform staff of new void procedures including void standard.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% reduction in average re-let time</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>3. 10% increase in staff satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase in staff knowledge of the voids process.</li> <li>2. 10% increase in customer satisfaction with staff knowledge.</li> <li>3. Quicker re-let times.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>2. Satisfaction of tenants with the void process before and after.</li> <li>3. % of rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant before and after</li> </ol>	July 2004	BVPI 74 LCHS 10 LCHS 12	None Directly
6.8	Prepare a method for setting void re-let time targets for each housing management team. Set targets for Voids Officers.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% reduction in average re-let time</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quicker re-let times.</li> <li>2. Increased income to the council.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>2. % of rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant before and after</li> </ol>	October 2004	LCHS 10 LCHS 12	None Directly
1.1	Restructure the Housing Management Service (Creation of 5 Voids Officer Posts and 1 senior voids officer)	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% reduction in average re-let time</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restructure completed.</li> <li>2. New void management posts in place.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>2. Satisfaction of tenants with the void process before and after.</li> <li>3. % of rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant before and after</li> </ol>	August 2004	BVPI 74 LCHS 10 LCHS 12	The cost of restructuring the service will broadly be neutral with the deletion of some existing posts and efficiencies made.

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
9.14	Implement a comprehensive performance management framework.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved performance against all indicators.</li> <li>5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>10% increase in staff satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved services.</li> <li>Increased income to HRA.</li> <li>Improved staff motivation.</li> <li>Customers receive excellent services</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer &amp; staff satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>Business plan indicators.</li> </ol>	December 2004	All	£2000 from existing staffing budgets

### Arrears:

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.1	Pre-tenancy counselling	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-tenancy counselling introduced.</li> <li>10% reduction in tenancies failing in their first year due to rent arrears</li> <li>Increased income to the HRA</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of tenancies failing in the first year before and after.</li> <li>% of rent collected.</li> </ol>	August 2004	BVPI 66a	Existing staffing budgets.



No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.2	Review the use of direct debits and standing orders	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	<p>1. Greater flexibility for customers paying by these methods.</p> <p>2. 10% increase in tenants paying by direct debit or standing order</p>	<p>1. Number of tenants paying by Direct Debit or Standing Order.</p> <p>2. % of rent collected.</p>	<p>April 2004</p> <p>Now Completed</p>	BVPI 66a	None as completed.
7.3	Enhanced IT system	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	<p>1. New IT system implemented.</p> <p>2. 10% increase in staff satisfaction with IT</p>	<p>1. Staff satisfaction surveys before and after.</p> <p>2. % of rent collected.</p>	<p>December 2003</p> <p>New rent accounting system in place</p>	BVPI 66a	Money was allocated as part of IT purchase package.
7.4	Rent arrears strategy	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	1. Implement the strategy.	1. % of rent collected before and after.	<p>Jan 2004</p> <p>Strategy now in place</p>	BVPI 66a	None as completed
7.5	Review of rent management policy	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	<p>1. 10% increase in staff satisfaction with their ability to manage debt.</p> <p>2. 5% increase in tenant satisfaction</p> <p>3. Increased income to the HRA</p>	<p>1. % of rent collected before and after.</p> <p>2. Staff and tenant satisfaction before and after.</p>	<p>Jan 2004</p> <p>Policy in place.</p>	BVPI 66a	None as completed

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.6	Rent arrears training for all staff	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% increase in staff satisfaction with training.</li> <li>2. 10% increase in staff knowledge</li> <li>3. 5% increase in tenant satisfaction with staff knowledge</li> <li>4. Increased income to the HRA</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. % of rent collected before and after.</li> <li>2. Staff and tenant satisfaction before and after.</li> <li>3. Staff competency levels before and after</li> </ol>	Oct 2003 and ongoing – Next scheduled training to include HB training in August 2004	BVPI 66a BVPI 74	£800
7.7	Introduction of Debt Advice Officers	Revised	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Debt advisers in post.</li> <li>2. Quality money advice available to tenants.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>2. % of rent collected.</li> </ol>	August 2004	BVPI 66a BVPI 74	NRF bid
7.8	Cease collection of water rates	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collection of water rates stops.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. % of rent collected before and after.</li> </ol>	Water Rate collection ceased in April 2004	BVPI 66a	None directly. Resource issue form part of staffing structure review.

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.9	Develop the use of the recently purchased Housing Benefit calculator. Put in place a process for evaluating impact of this tool.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. HB calculator available to all housing management staff.</li> <li>2. Training has been provided for staff on using the calculator.</li> <li>3. Customers are given good housing benefit entitlement estimates when visiting area offices.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>2. % of rent collected.</li> </ol>	HB calculator is now in use at the area offices	BVPI 66a BVPI 74	None as completed
7.10	Assist in the completion of a corporate debt policy. Evaluate impact on rent management policies.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. % of rent collected increases.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>2. % of rent collected.</li> </ol>	November 2004	BVPI 66a BVPI 74	£750 from existing staffing budgets.
9.14	Implement a comprehensive performance management framework.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved performance against all indicators.</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>3. 10% increase in staff satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved services.</li> <li>2. Increased income to HRA.</li> <li>3. Improved staff motivation.</li> <li>4. Customers receive excellent services</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer &amp; staff satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>2. Business plan indicators.</li> </ol>	December 2004	All	£2000 from existing staffing budgets

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## Appendix A

### Housing Management Best Value Review Improvement Plan New and Existing Improvement Plan Actions to address Audit Commission Key Findings

#### 1. 'The tenants compact is only available in English'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
10.12	Distribute a summary version of the tenants compact to all tenants. Translate summary into key languages.	New	5% increase in customer satisfaction and participation.	1. Compact summary produced. 2. Summary version translated.	1. Satisfaction measured before and after – including satisfaction amongst BME tenants.	October 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£8000 To be met from existing Community Development budget.

#### 2. 'Systematic customer satisfaction monitoring is very limited and there is no strategy to involve leaseholders'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
9.11	Develop a range of customer satisfaction surveys to be used with the new IT system.	New	5% increase in customer satisfaction.	1. Systematic customer satisfaction monitoring is being undertaken. 2. The results of the monitoring are used to improve services.	1. Satisfaction measured before and after – including satisfaction amongst BME tenants.	November 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£500 To be met from existing staffing & IT budgets.

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
3.9	Develop a mechanism for involving leaseholders in consultation and participation.	Existing	5% increase in leaseholder satisfaction and participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement the mechanisms.</li> <li>2. Leaseholders are participating in consultation and service development.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Satisfaction surveys before and after new mechanisms for participation are in place.</li> </ol>	November 2004	BVPI 75	£1500 from existing community development budgets.
3.9a	Develop a leaseholders handbook.	New	5% increase in leaseholder satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Handbook issued to existing and new leaseholders</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Satisfaction surveys before and after handbook issued.</li> <li>2. Handbook issued.</li> </ol>	November 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£2000 to be met from leaseholder service charges.
10.16	Prepare a tenant and leaseholder participation strategy to give a strategic direction to the development of this service.	New	5% increase in tenant and leaseholder satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategy is completed.</li> <li>2. Development of the community development service</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Satisfaction surveys before and after the strategy is in place.</li> </ol>	December 2004	BVPI 75	£1000 from existing community development staffing budgets.

### 3. 'The need to provide more opportunity for tenants to be involved in managing the service performance'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
10.10	Review tenant involvement in policy reviews, reviewing performance and how they can actively be involved in the planning and delivery of local services	Revised	5% increase in satisfaction with opportunity participation and the service provided.	1. Tenants are involved in reviewing policies and the management of service performance.	1. Satisfaction surveys before and after the strategy is in place.	October 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£500 To be met from existing Community Development budget.
9.5	Review the local performance indicators in conjunction with TARA's	Existing	5% increase in satisfaction with opportunity participation and the service provided. 10% increase in staff satisfaction.	1. Review completed to schedule. 2. 10% reduction in staff absence due to stress.	1. Staff satisfaction surveys before and after review. 2. Customer satisfaction before and after review.	January 2004 Now completed	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	None as completed.
9.1	Enhance the quality of performance data presented in quarterly audit reports to tenants	Existing	1.Improved performance 2. 5% increase in satisfaction with the opportunity to participate.	1. More tenant involvement in managing performance 2. Clearer and more meaningful information provided to tenants.	1. Customer satisfaction surveys before and after review.	June 2004 Now completed	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	None as completed.

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
9.3	Enhance the use of mystery customer exercises	Existing	1. 5% increase in customer satisfaction with service. 2. Customers are assisting in monitoring standards of service.	1. Complete the enhancements. 2. Exercises are used to improve services.	1. Performance measured before and after. 2. Satisfaction measured before and after.	June 2004 Now Complete	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	None as now complete.
6.3	Enhance the role of the Tenant Inspectorate	Existing	1. 5% increase in customer satisfaction 2. 5% increase in satisfaction with participation	1. Complete the enhancements. 2. Exercises are used to improve services.	1. Performance measured before and after. 2. Satisfaction measured before and after.	June 2004 Now Complete	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	None as now complete.

#### 4. 'Former tenant arrears are collected by a separate department and, in the opinion of the Audit Commission, do not form part of an overall strategic approach to arrears management'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.11	Review the collection of former tenant arrears and assess the effectiveness of current arrangements	New	To have in place the most effective and efficient structure for collecting former tenant arrears.	1. Current methods for collecting former tenant arrears are challenged. 2. An assessment of collection methods	1. Review is completed on time. 2. % of former tenant arrears collected.	February 2005	BVPI 66a	£1000 To be met from existing staff resource budgets.



**5. 'There is a lack of robust contract monitoring for estates services. Some communal cleaning contracts are in place but standards are not currently monitored'**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Existing, Revised or New</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Measured By</b>	<b>Target Completion Date</b>	<b>Local and National PI</b>	<b>Resource Implication</b>
9.6	Creation of a Contracts Monitoring Officer	Existing	5% increase in customer satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contracts Monitoring Officer in place.</li> <li>2. Active management of housing management services contracts.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tenant satisfaction with the environment</li> <li>2. Tenant satisfaction with participation opportunities regarding improvements to the environment</li> </ol>	August 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	To be determined as part of the housing management structure review
8.5	Review housing management requirements and standards during the re-letting of the grounds maintenance, estate warden and pest control contract.	New	5% increase in customer satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder involvement in developing contract service standards.</li> <li>2. New contract let with clearly defined standards.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Performance measured before and after.</li> <li>2. Satisfaction measured before and after.</li> </ol>	October 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75	£750 To be met from existing staffing budgets. New cost of contract yet to be determined.

## 6. 'There is a lack of clear strategic approach and direction in respect of voids management'

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
6.6	Develop a voids management strategy	Revised to include Audit Commission on advice.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% reduction in average re-let times.</li> <li>2. Improved business intelligence of the voids management service.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completed fit for purpose voids management strategy.</li> <li>2. Improved void management performance.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>2. Customer satisfaction with standard of void properties before and after.</li> <li>3. % of rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant before and after.</li> </ol>	October 2004	LCHS 10 LCHS 12 BVPI 75	£500 To be met from existing staffing budget.

## 7. 'Performance against audited indicators is weak in the key areas of arrears and voids'

### Voids:

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
6.1	Escorted viewings for all vacant properties	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>10% reduction in void times</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher acceptance rate of offers made on properties</li> <li>Increased customer satisfaction with the void management process.</li> <li>Quicker re-let times.</li> <li>Increased income to the council.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average number of offers made on properties</li> <li>Satisfaction of tenants with the void process</li> </ol>	July 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75 LCHS 10 LCHS 12	This task will be completed by existing staff.
6.2	Pre-tenancy checks	Existing	5% increase in customer satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accurate allocation of empty properties to applicants.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tenant satisfaction with the void process before and after</li> </ol>	July 2004	BVPI 74 BVPI 75 LCHS 10 LCHS 12	£500 from existing budgets.

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
6.3	Enhance the role of the Tenant Inspectorate	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>5% increase in satisfaction with participation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commence enhancements of tenants inspectorate role.</li> <li>5% increase in the quality of ready to let properties.</li> <li>5% increase in new tenant satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of ready to lets before and after.</li> <li>New tenant satisfaction with condition of property before and after.</li> </ol>	<p>May 2004</p> <p>Now completed</p>	<p>BVPI 74</p> <p>BVPI 75</p> <p>LCHS 10</p> <p>LCHS 12</p>	<p>None as already completed.</p>
6.4	Quality checks on ready to let properties	Existing	5% increase in customer satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce quality checks.</li> <li>10% reduction in the number of offer refusals due to the condition of the property.</li> <li>5% increase in new tenant satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of offer refusals due to condition before and after.</li> <li>New tenant satisfaction with condition of property before and after.</li> </ol>	<p>May 2004</p> <p>Quality checks will commence when Voids Officers in post.</p>	<p>BVPI 74</p> <p>LCHS 10</p> <p>LCHS 12</p>	<p>None directly.</p>
6.5	Pre-termination checks	Existing	10% reduction in average re-let time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process for pre-tenancy checks complete.</li> <li>Quicker re-let times.</li> <li>Increased income to the council.</li> <li>10% reduction in the non-recoverable expenditure on voids</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>Cost of void repairs before and after.</li> <li>Number of long term voids before and after.</li> </ol>	<p>May 2004</p> <p>Pre-termination checks will commence when Voids Officers in post.</p>	<p>BVPI 74</p> <p>LCHS 10</p> <p>LCHS 12</p>	<p>Should ensure savings on void repair costs. Cost of implementing checks forms part of the housing management structure review.</p>

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
6.7	Prepare a training programme to inform staff of new void procedures including void standard.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% reduction in average re-let time</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>3. 10% increase in staff satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase in staff knowledge of the voids process.</li> <li>2. 10% increase in customer satisfaction with staff knowledge.</li> <li>3. Quicker re-let times.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>2. Satisfaction of tenants with the void process before and after.</li> <li>3. % of rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant before and after</li> </ol>	July 2004	BVPI 74 LCHS 10 LCHS 12	None Directly
6.8	Prepare a method for setting void re-let time targets for each housing management team. Set targets for Voids Officers.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% reduction in average re-let time</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quicker re-let times.</li> <li>2. Increased income to the council.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>2. % of rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant before and after</li> </ol>	October 2004	LCHS 10 LCHS 12	None Directly
1.1	Restructure the Housing Management Service (Creation of 5 Voids Officer Posts and 1 senior voids officer)	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% reduction in average re-let time</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restructure completed.</li> <li>2. New void management posts in place.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Average re-let times before and after.</li> <li>2. Satisfaction of tenants with the void process before and after.</li> <li>3. % of rent lost through dwellings becoming vacant before and after</li> </ol>	August 2004	BVPI 74 LCHS 10 LCHS 12	The cost of restructuring the service will broadly be neutral with the deletion of some existing posts and efficiencies made.

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
9.14	Implement a comprehensive performance management framework.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved performance against all indicators.</li> <li>5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>10% increase in staff satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved services.</li> <li>Increased income to HRA.</li> <li>Improved staff motivation.</li> <li>Customers receive excellent services</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer &amp; staff satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>Business plan indicators.</li> </ol>	December 2004	All	£2000 from existing staffing budgets

### Arrears:

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.1	Pre-tenancy counselling	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-tenancy counselling introduced.</li> <li>10% reduction in tenancies failing in their first year due to rent arrears</li> <li>Increased income to the HRA</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of tenancies failing in the first year before and after.</li> <li>% of rent collected.</li> </ol>	August 2004	BVPI 66a	Existing staffing budgets.

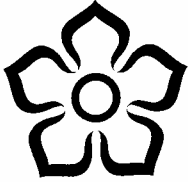
No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.2	Review the use of direct debits and standing orders	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	<p>1. Greater flexibility for customers paying by these methods.</p> <p>2. 10% increase in tenants paying by direct debit or standing order</p>	<p>1. Number of tenants paying by Direct Debit or Standing Order.</p> <p>2. % of rent collected.</p>	<p>April 2004</p> <p>Now Completed</p>	BVPI 66a	None as completed.
7.3	Enhanced IT system	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	<p>1. New IT system implemented.</p> <p>2. 10% increase in staff satisfaction with IT</p>	<p>1. Staff satisfaction surveys before and after.</p> <p>2. % of rent collected.</p>	<p>December 2003</p> <p>New rent accounting system in place</p>	BVPI 66a	Money was allocated as part of IT purchase package.
7.4	Rent arrears strategy	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	1. Implement the strategy.	1. % of rent collected before and after.	<p>Jan 2004</p> <p>Strategy now in place</p>	BVPI 66a	None as completed
7.5	Review of rent management policy	Existing	Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005	<p>1. 10% increase in staff satisfaction with their ability to manage debt.</p> <p>2. 5% increase in tenant satisfaction</p> <p>3. Increased income to the HRA</p>	<p>1. % of rent collected before and after.</p> <p>2. Staff and tenant satisfaction before and after.</p>	<p>Jan 2004</p> <p>Policy in place.</p>	BVPI 66a	None as completed

No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.6	Rent arrears training for all staff	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10% increase in staff satisfaction with training.</li> <li>2. 10% increase in staff knowledge</li> <li>3. 5% increase in tenant satisfaction with staff knowledge</li> <li>4. Increased income to the HRA</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. % of rent collected before and after.</li> <li>2. Staff and tenant satisfaction before and after.</li> <li>3. Staff competency levels before and after</li> </ol>	Oct 2003 and ongoing – Next scheduled training to include HB training in August 2004	BVPI 66a BVPI 74	£800
7.7	Introduction of Debt Advice Officers	Revised	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Debt advisers in post.</li> <li>2. Quality money advice available to tenants.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>2. % of rent collected.</li> </ol>	August 2004	BVPI 66a BVPI 74	NRF bid
7.8	Cease collection of water rates	Existing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collection of water rates stops.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. % of rent collected before and after.</li> </ol>	Water Rate collection ceased in April 2004	BVPI 66a	None directly. Resource issue form part of staffing structure review.



No.	Task	Existing, Revised or New	Outcome	Outputs	Measured By	Target Completion Date	Local and National PI	Resource Implication
7.9	Develop the use of the recently purchased Housing Benefit calculator. Put in place a process for evaluating impact of this tool.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. HB calculator available to all housing management staff.</li> <li>2. Training has been provided for staff on using the calculator.</li> <li>3. Customers are given good housing benefit entitlement estimates when visiting area offices.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>2. % of rent collected.</li> </ol>	HB calculator is now in use at the area offices	BVPI 66a BVPI 74	None as completed
7.10	Assist in the completion of a corporate debt policy. Evaluate impact on rent management policies.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce rent arrears to £1.5m by 2005</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. % of rent collected increases.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>2. % of rent collected.</li> </ol>	November 2004	BVPI 66a BVPI 74	£750 from existing staffing budgets.
9.14	Implement a comprehensive performance management framework.	New	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved performance against all indicators.</li> <li>2. 5% increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>3. 10% increase in staff satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved services.</li> <li>2. Increased income to HRA.</li> <li>3. Improved staff motivation.</li> <li>4. Customers receive excellent services</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer &amp; staff satisfaction surveys before and after.</li> <li>2. Business plan indicators.</li> </ol>	December 2004	All	£2000 from existing staffing budgets

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Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Wards

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

Housing Scrutiny  
Cabinet

Housing Management Board

19<sup>th</sup> August 2004  
6<sup>th</sup> September 2004  
7<sup>th</sup> October 2004

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**Best Value Review – Housing Management Service:  
Audit Commission Inspection Report**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To present the Audit Commission's final report following its inspection of the Housing Management Service.
- 1.2 Recommend additional actions to be included in the Improvement Plan to address the issues raised within this report.

**2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 The Audit Commission report assessed the council as providing a 'good', two star Housing Management service that has promising prospects for improvement.
- 2.2 From the inspection, the Housing Management service was assessed as being 'good' because:
  - It has a highly customer focused ethos which makes tenants and residents concerns a priority.
  - Tenancy management services are provided from accessible and local offices and are responsive to the current and future perceived needs of tenants.
  - It makes serious efforts to ensure that services remain sensitive to the needs of all members of a diverse community.
  - A high priority is placed upon sustainability of tenancies with an emphasis on early engagement with new tenants and housing related support for the most vulnerable.
  - The council demonstrates good tenant involvement and participation in specific initiatives and within the boundaries of the existing tenant participation structure.
  - Trained tenant inspectors perform quality checks on estates and office environments.

- The quality of service in dealing with anti-social behaviour, racial harassment and nuisance is high and complaints are dealt with quickly. The partnership approach to community safety is a particularly positive feature of the service.
- Value for money is demonstrable in most aspects of the service.

2.3 The inspection report also identified key areas of the service that required improvement. The main areas highlighted were:

1. The tenants compact is only available in English.
2. Systematic customer satisfaction monitoring is very limited and there is no strategy to involve leaseholders.
3. The need to provide more opportunity for tenants to be involved in managing the service performance.
4. Former tenant arrears are collected by a separate department and in the opinion of the Audit Commission do not form part of an overall strategic approach to arrears management.
5. There is a lack of robust contract monitoring for estates services. Some communal cleaning contracts are in place but standards are not currently monitored.
6. There is a lack of clear strategic approach and direction in respect of voids management.
7. Performance against audited indicators is weak in the key areas of arrears and voids.

2.4 Many of the areas recommended for improvement have already been identified by the council's own Best Value review of the service, and form part the Housing Management Improvement Plan approved by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003. The Audit Commission inspection took place before many of these identified improvements could be implemented and for results to be shown. Indeed the Audit Commission inspection report acknowledges that the 'Best Value Improvement Plan reflects the majority of the issues identified during the review process and links to the strategic aims of the service'.

2.5 However, the inspection report has highlighted further areas that need to be incorporated into the improvement plan. The process for including actions to address these areas for improvement is highlighted in paragraph 2.23 in the supporting information. Attached at appendix A is a list of proposed new, existing or amended improvements to address the key areas of concern raised by the Audit Commission.

2.6 The Audit Commission judged the council's Housing Management service to have 'promising' prospects for delivering improvement for the following reasons:

- Housing Management staff are clearly motivated and committed to providing a good and improving service.
- There is strong political and managerial support for improvement plans. The required financial resources have been allocated to deliver the improvement plan.
- A number of the improvements in the agreed improvement plan have been completed ahead of schedule to provide some "quick wins".

- The new housing IT system has significant potential to enhance customer service and business intelligence. The implementation has been robustly project managed and appropriate training rolled out.
- Previous failings in the housing benefit service are now being addressed with very positive effects on rent arrears figures.
- The council has responded effectively to recommendations and weaknesses highlighted in previous inspection reports.

To ensure that improvement is achieved, the audit commission recommend the council:

- Ensures there is a properly embedded performance management culture that uses business information to manage performance effectively.
- Submits an action plan on how a more detailed examination of the challenge and compete elements of the best value review will be completed.
- Ensures the full utilisation of the new integrated housing IT system to realise its potential in improving service provision and value for money.
- Continue to deliver improvements in the housing benefit service.

2.7 A full copy of the audit commission final report has been placed in the members area and is also available from the audit commission website [www.auditcommission.gov.uk](http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk)

### **3. Recommendations**

3.1 Members are recommended to:

- i. Receive the Audit Commission report in relation to its inspection of the council's Housing Management service.
- ii. Note the action being taken to address areas for improvement and support the new and revised actions at appendix A to be added to the Housing Management Improvement Plan.
- iii. Note the areas of good and positive practice within the Housing Management service.

3.2 Further reports are brought to the Housing Scrutiny Committee containing strategies to improve void management performance and improving satisfaction with opportunities for tenants to participate.

**4. Headline Financial and legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report. Resources for implementing the existing improvement plan items have already been identified and approved. The new improvement plan items highlighted in **appendix A** can be funded from existing budget resources.
- 4.2 There are no direct legal issues relating to this report.

**5. Report Author/Officer to contact:**

- 5.1 Pat Hobbs Ext 6803  
Service Director, Housing Management and Hostels  
David Taylor Ext 5255  
Landlord Services Manger, Housing Management and Hostels



**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Wards

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

Housing Scrutiny  
Cabinet  
Housing Management Board

19<sup>th</sup> August 2004  
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**Best Value Review – Housing Management Service:  
Audit Commission Inspection Report**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing**

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Housing Management Service undertook a Best Value Review in 2003. Cabinet agreed the scope of the review on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2003. The objectives of the review were to:
- Challenge current Housing Management arrangements and seek ambitious improvements in order to tailor the best service to meet client needs.
  - Consider available alternative services for the Management of stock and assess their contribution to improved management/tenant experience.
  - Set out plans for delivering short and long-term improvements.
- 1.3 The outcome of the Housing Management Best Value Review was reported to Cabinet on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003 highlighting the review findings, and a plan containing 94 improvements was approved. The overall aims of the Improvement plan are:
- To reach a 79% customer satisfaction rating, a 10% increase, by 2006 (Measured by the ODPM status survey).
  - To reach a 63% satisfaction rating with tenant opportunities to participate, an increase of 5%, by 2006 (Measured by the ODPM status survey).
  - A reduction in rent arrears to £1.5m by April 2005.
  - At least a 10% reduction in average re-let times by April 2005.

- 1.4 The Audit Commission carried out an inspection of the Housing Management Service between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2004. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the Housing Management service to ensure that the Best Value principles - the 4 C's - are being applied when providing services. The inspection also examined the council's plans that are in place to deliver continuous improvements to the services it provides – in this case specifically housing management services. This inspection consisted of a series of interviews with the Cabinet Link Member for Housing, Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Committee, Tenant Representatives, the Director of Housing and other members of staff. A series of visits to Neighbourhood Housing Offices and 'reality' checks were also completed to verify that the service delivers what it says it does.
- 1.5 The Audit Commission issued its assessment and recommendations in a report released in June 2004.

## **2. The Audit Commission Report.**

2.1 The Audit Commission report assessed the council as providing a 'good', two star Housing Management service that has promising prospects for improvement.

2.2 From the inspection the Housing Management service was assessed as being 'good' because:

- It has a highly customer focused ethos which makes tenants and residents concerns a priority.
- Tenancy management services are provided from accessible and local offices and are responsive to the current and future perceived needs of tenants.
- It makes serious efforts to ensure that services remain sensitive to the needs of all members of a diverse community.
- A high priority is placed upon sustainability of tenancies with an emphasis on early engagement with new tenants and housing related support for the most vulnerable.
- The council demonstrates good tenant involvement and participation in specific initiatives and within the boundaries of the existing tenant participation structure.
- Trained tenant inspectors perform quality checks on estates and office environments.
- The quality of service in dealing with anti-social behaviour, racial harassment and nuisance is high and complaints are dealt with quickly. The partnership approach to community safety is a particularly positive feature of the service.
- Value for money is demonstrable in most aspects of the service.

2.3 The inspection report also identified key areas of the service that required improvement. The main areas highlighted were:

1. The tenants compact is only available in English.
2. Systematic customer satisfaction monitoring is very limited and there is no strategy to involve leaseholders.
3. The need to provide more opportunity for tenants to be involved in managing the service performance.



4. Former tenant arrears are collected by a separate department and in the opinion of the Audit Commission do not form part of an overall strategic approach to arrears management.
5. There is a lack of robust contract monitoring for estates services. Some communal cleaning contracts are in place but standards are not currently monitored.
6. There is a lack of clear strategic approach and direction in respect of voids management.
7. Performance against audited indicators is weak in the key areas of arrears and voids.

2.4 Many of the areas recommended for improvement have already been identified by the council's own Best Value review of the service and form part the Housing Management Improvement Plan approved by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003. The Audit Commission inspection took place before many of these identified improvements could be implemented and for results to be shown. Indeed the Audit Commission inspection report acknowledges that ' the best value improvement plan reflects the majority of the issues identified during the review process and links to the strategic aims of the service'.

2.5 The inspection report has highlighted further areas that need to be incorporated into the improvement plan. The process for including actions to address these areas for improvement is highlighted in paragraph 2.23 below. Attached at appendix A is a list of proposed new, existing or amended improvements to address the key areas of concern raised by the Audit Commission.

2.6 The Audit Commission highlighted rent collection and Void Management as particular areas of concern.

#### 2.7 **Rent Collection**

Since the inspection significant progress has been made in improving rent collection and performance. Rent arrears are now at the lowest levels since the beginning of the problems with housing benefit payments. Good progress is being made towards achieving the 2004/05 target. Meeting the 2004/05 target will put Leicester in the top 25% performing authorities in collecting rent. The details of the measures taken to improve rent collection are highlighted in appendix A and will be subject to a report to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in August 2004.

#### 2.8 **Void Management**

Work has commenced on addressing poor performance in the management and turnaround of void properties. A full list of improvements is listed in appendix A. Key improvements include the preparation of a detailed 'void management strategy' that will provide a clear direction and framework for delivering improved performance. The strategy will include:

- High level statistical analysis that identifies and substantiates reasons for poor performance
- Measurements of the extent of identified poor performance.
- Prioritisation of improvement actions to address identified weaknesses in the void management process.
- A range of improvement options targeted at particular areas of poor performance.

- A clear view of what the strategy will achieve.
- A clear framework highlighting how progress will be monitored and managed and who will be responsible. Clear targets will be set.

The review of the Housing Management structure will see the introduction of five voids officers and one senior voids officer. The purpose of these posts will be to drive forward void management improvements and improve the efficiency and quality of the voids element of the service.

Due to the importance of improving performance in this area it is proposed to bring a detailed report to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in January. The report will highlight remedial action taken and provide an update on current performance against the 2005 target.

## 2.9 **Performance Management**

A review of the Housing Management performance management framework is currently being undertaken. The objective of this review is to ensure the successful delivery of continuous improvement within the service using performance data to drive up standards and deliver an excellent service. The review is specifically focusing on:

- Developing a Performance Management Unit.
- A branch Training and Development Plan.
- Improved local service planning.
- Developing Housing Management branch values.
- Improved target setting processes.
- Improving business intelligence and data collection to be used to manage the service performance and progress towards targets.

The performance framework will improve service standards, customer satisfaction and staff motivation.

## 2.10 **Anti-social Behaviour, Harassment and Crime and Disorder**

The inspection report states that the council's partnership approach to community safety is a positive feature of the service. The inspectors reported that the Housing Management service provides a high quality service when dealing with anti-social behaviour and harassment with complaints being dealt with quickly.

2.11 The council deals with racial harassment robustly and with a pro-active approach. The housing management resource packs are felt to be 'very helpful' and the multi agency approach taken towards racial harassment is particularly praised. The audit commission notes that the council's approach has helped to ensure that in 2002/03 100 per cent of racial incidents led to further action. This is compared to 83 per cent in the East Midlands and an average of 87 per cent for all unitary authorities.

2.12 Target setting and performance management of the anti-social behaviour service were considered areas that could be improved. This will be addressed when finalising the new performance management framework.

### 2.13 **Tenant Participation**

The audit commission recognises that the council is committed to tenant participation and has well developed tenant participation structures. However the inspectors were concerned by the preliminary status survey results that suggest tenant satisfaction with the opportunity to participate has fallen to 49% from 51% three years ago. It is important to note that the same survey highlights only 14.6% actually said they were dissatisfied.

2.14 Market Research UK (MRUK) as part of the Stock Option Appraisal process has carried out a survey. This survey sought to identify tenant aspirations and priorities. The draft results suggests that 82% of tenants are not interested in participating in housing and of the 18% who wished to participate only 3% wished to join tenant and resident groups.

2.15 This highlights the need to develop the tenant participation service further to enable tenants who do not wish to join formal structures to participate. This was highlighted by the audit commission who recommend the council investigates reasons for falling satisfaction rates with the opportunity to participate and increase the range of less formal ways for tenants to get involved.

2.16 The Community Development manager is to undertake research into this area and prepare a strategy for developing tenant participation in Leicester. Tenants will be involved in this process and a report brought to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in due course.

### 2.17 **Customer Care**

The audit commission acknowledge that the customer care skills and behaviour of housing management staff has 'noticeably improved' since the recruitment of the customer care training officers and the adoption of a customer care strategy. The audit commission also recognise that the council has a 'highly customer focused ethos' and that 'availability and access to services is of good quality'.

2.18 The audit commission notes that customer satisfaction levels are improving with the latest status survey results showing satisfaction levels rising to 69% - a 10% increase. A survey of new tenants conducted by the council also shows that satisfaction levels have risen to 84% with the service. The MRUK survey conducted this year indicates (draft) that 90% of tenants feel the housing management service meets their expectations.

2.19 It is recommended by the audit commission that the council carries out more systematic customer satisfaction monitoring and that the quality of telephone contacts could be improved. To address this:

- A review of the way in which the housing management service handles telephone contacts is to be conducted, making recommendations on how to improve.
- Frequent customer satisfaction monitoring will become an integral part of the performance management unit's duties. The results will be used to drive up standards

## 2.20 Prospect for Improvement

The Audit Commission judged the council's Housing Management service to have 'promising' prospects for delivering improvement for the following reasons:

- Housing Management staff are clearly motivated and committed to providing a good and improving service.
- There is strong political and managerial support for improvement plans. The required financial resources have been allocated to deliver the improvement plan.
- A number of the improvements in the agreed improvement plan have been completed ahead of schedule to provide some "quick wins".
- The new housing IT system has significant potential to enhance customer service and business intelligence. The implementation has been robustly project managed and appropriate training rolled out.
- Previous failings in the housing benefit service are now being addressed with very positive effects on rent arrears figures.
- The council has responded effectively to recommendations and weaknesses highlighted in previous inspection reports.

To ensure that improvement is achieved the audit commission recommend the council:

- Ensures that there is a properly embedded performance management culture that uses business information to manage performance effectively.
- Submits an action plan on how a more detailed examination of the challenge and compete elements of the best value review will be completed.
- Ensures the full utilisation of the new integrated housing IT system to realise its potential in improving service provision and value for money.
- Continue to deliver improvements in the housing benefit service.

## 2.20 Other areas of Good Practice

As part of the inspection process the Audit Commission highlights examples of good practice. The final report includes the following areas of good practice that were identified within Housing Management service:

- The council demonstrates active awareness of the requirement to continuously improve activities which address equality and diversity. The efforts the council have made in meeting the needs of the newly emerged Somali community were particularly noted. This includes the recruitment of two Somali development workers who have worked to build the independence and capacity of the group.

The sensitive approach the council is taking in encouraging better community cohesion and the integration of ethnic groups into out of centre areas of the city was commended. Particularly the Northfields project where properties have been let to BME families, in consultation with the local community. The audit commission feel this has 'addressed a voids problem and enabled a new community to develop with the benefits of proximity and mutual support'.

- The level of advice and support given to the alleged victims of anti-social behavior and harassment is judged to be a particular positive aspect of the housing management service. The issuing of a comprehensive resource pack that includes a 'very helpful advice sheet' is considered to be pro-active. The fact that the council supports the Leicester "Witness Cocoon" which has a free advice and information helpline and exists both to provide support for witnesses and to help them develop coping strategies is seen as particularly positive.
- There is a high priority placed upon sustaining tenancies with an emphasis on early engagement with new tenants and housing related support for the most vulnerable. The STAR team supports 500 client households at any one time with support lasting for between three to six months. The audit commission judged that the tenancy support service is having a positive effect on the sustainability of tenancies, by providing appropriate support services targeted at the need of the individual.

2.22 A full copy of the audit commission final report has been placed in the members area and is also available from the audit commission website [www.auditcommission.gov.uk](http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk)

2.23 A detailed analysis has been made of the final audit commission report. The purpose of this exercise was to identify areas of the housing management service in need of improvement in order to contribute to improving customer satisfaction and addressing tenant needs. Many of the necessary improvements have already been identified as part of the Best Value review process. Further improvement plan actions have been developed to address any gaps highlighted by the Audit Commission inspection. The key additional improvements are attached at appendix A for members to consider and to agree to add them to the existing improvement plan.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Resources for implementing the existing improvement plan items have already been identified and approved. The new improvement plan items highlighted in **appendix A** can be funded from existing resources.

3.2 Delivering improvements in performance can lead to increased Central Government funding. Reducing void re-let times and improving rent collection leads to more income into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

### **4. Legal Implications**

4.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

### **5. Policy Implications**

5.1 Improvements resulting from the Audit Commission inspection in some instances may lead to changes in policy and procedures. Any changes will be implemented using normal council processes and will include full consultation with tenant representatives.

## 6. Equal Opportunities

- 6.1 The Audit Commission recognises the council's commitment to equal opportunities. It praises the efforts and achievements of the Housing Management service in ensuring services are accessible and that they remain sensitive to the needs of all members of Leicester's diverse communities.
- 6.2 The Audit Commission recommends that additional customer advice documents are translated into key community languages. It has been arranged for a number of key documents to be translated. Where possible computer generated letters and bulk mailings will have advice on translation services in a tenants preferred language.
- 6.3 The Audit Commission acknowledges the good progress the Council has made in making the Housing Management customer service points DDA compliant.

## 7. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Yes	6	
Policy	Yes	Throughout but specifically 5	
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	2.21 & 10	
Crime and Disorder	Yes	2.10, 2.11 & 2.12	
Human Rights Act	No		
Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	2.2 & 2.21	

## 8. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

- 8.1 Housing Management Best Value Scoping Report 10.3.03  
 Housing Management Best Value Improvement Plan 15.12.03  
 Audit Commission Inspection Report – Housing Management Services June 2004  
 CPA Assessment Report for Leicester – Audit Commission

## 9. Consultations

- 9.1 Throughout the Best Value process extensive consultation has taken place with our service users and key stakeholders to gain their views and opinions on the level and quality of service provided by the housing management service.
- 9.2 The LFTA were also consulted about the findings of the review and the adopted improvement plan.

9.3 Tenants receive regular updates on progress with the improvement plan and the outcome of the inspection will be presented to the next Housing Management Board for discussion.

9.4 Staff and Trades Unions have been fully involved in the Best Value review process and the subsequent review of staffing structures.

## **10. Aims and Objectives**

10.1 The corporate aim of the council is to *'Make Leicester more attractive for our diverse communities to live, work and invest in'* with a strategic objective to *'Improve our environment to make local neighbourhoods and the city centre places for people to be proud of'*

10.2 The aim of the Housing Service is *'a decent home within the reach of every citizen in Leicester'*

10.3 The aim of the Housing Management Service is to *'provide decent homes to council tenants, and to contribute towards the creation and support of neighbourhoods where people choose to live'*. The Housing Management service objectives are:

- a) Developing and supporting customer involvement by listening to our tenants and the wider community.
- b) Working towards Community Cohesion by empowering and investing in communities through community partnerships and regeneration activities.
- c) For the housing we directly manage, our objectives are:
  - To ensure equality in accessing Housing Management Services that acknowledges the diversity and expectations of local communities across the City.
  - To provide customer focused services that meet needs and expectations.
  - To create safe and pleasant environments on our estates, making them places where people want to live.
  - To ensure homes meet a decent standard and are maintained properly.
  - To promote community cohesion by tackling unacceptable behaviour and all forms of harassment.
  - To ensure tenants and residents have an opportunity to participate in the decision making processes that affect their homes and environment.
  - To increase the % of rent collected through the effective implementation of rent arrears policies, and become a top quartile performing unitary authority.
  - To increase occupancy levels within the housing stock by reducing the time taken to re-let void properties and making best use of the stock.
  - To let individual tenancies and offer advice and options to tenants and customers to increase housing choices.
- d) Investing in our staff to ensure that they provide a comprehensive, customer focused Housing Management Service.
- e) Exploring a number of alternative service options, in order to ensure value for money.

- 10.4 This report contributes to all of the above aims and objectives by continually improving the Housing Management service provided to tenants to meet both current and future need, ensuring that the service provided is customer focused.
- 10.5 Improving the environments of, and services to, local neighbourhoods will contribute towards the council's strategic aim.
- 10.6 Increasing income to the Housing Revenue Account by improving rent collection and void management performance will assist in resourcing continual improvement and will facilitate the delivery of the council's aims and objectives.

**11. Report Author / Officers to contact:**

- 11.1 Pat Hobbs Ext 6803  
Service Director, Housing Management and Hostels  
David Taylor Ext 5255  
Landlord Services Manger, Housing Management and Hostels



**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL****HOUSING SCRUTINY****19 AUGUST 2004**

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**RENT ARREARS REPORT- ANNUAL REPORT**

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**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING.****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the Department's performance in regard to achieving the target for the collection of rent arrears, for the financial year ending March 2004. The report also provides details of the debt as at July 2004.

**2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the successful implementation of a new integrated computer software package with IBS.
- 2.2 Members should note that since October 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 with the implementation of Introductory Tenancies, water rates were split from the Gross Rent for the first time. The collecting and management of water rates is now the responsibility of Severn Trent Water Authority. (Post April 2003).
- 2.3 Members are asked to note an inspection of the Housing Management Service, was undertaken by the Audit Commission in February 2004 and some improvements were highlighted.

**3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Members are recommended to note the initiatives taken by Officers to control the outstanding debt during a difficult year and note the declining arrears.
- 3.2 Members are recommended to note that the recovery of rent arrears had been significantly affected by the introduction of the Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) by the Housing Benefits Section in the financial 2002.
- 3.3 Members are recommended to note that some difficulties continued with the processing of Housing Benefit claims during the last financial year which affected the recovery and collection of rent arrears. The difficulties with EDMS have now been fully resolved and all backdated Housing Benefit claims fully processed.
- 3.4 Members should note that a target for March 2003 was not set due to the EDMS issues. A Target of £2.1 million was set for March 2004. Rent arrears at the end of the March 2002 had risen to £5,060,684 (collectable arrears).

- 3.5 Members are asked to note that rent arrears as at March 2003 were £2,436,953 (collectable arrears) and at March 2004 were £2,322,000. (actual arrears). If converted to collectable arrears this would approximately equate to £2,050,000. The difference in the methods of calculating rent arrears is explained in (1.2 in main report). A target for March 2005 has been set at £1.6 million. This would place the authority in the top quartile of performing authorities.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

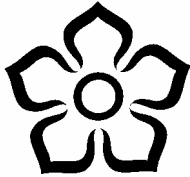
- 3.1 Any reduction in the outstanding debt is of direct benefit to Council Tenants by reducing the required annual contribution to the Bed debt provision from the Housing Revenue Account.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

### **5. AUTHOR OF REPORT**

- 5.1 Suki Supria,  
Landlord Services Manager.  
Ext 6836



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED : ALL WARDS**

**HOUSING SCRUTINY**

**19 AUGUST 2004**

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**RENT ARREARS ANNUAL REPORT 2004**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing**

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**1. BACKGROUND AND REPORT**

- 1.1 The Housing Committee in June 1999 agreed to set the Department targets based on collectable arrears rather than nominal (actual) arrears. Refinement of the computerised rent accounting system have allowed us to verify technical areas, i.e. tenants who pay by Direct Debit, Standing Order and payments from Benefits. Thus allowing us to verify collectable arrears from nominal arrears.
- 1.2 In September 2003 a new integrated Housing Management software package was purchased in conjunction with Housing Benefits and Council Tax, Technical Services, Homelessness and Housing Options and Housing Renewal. The new Open Housing Management System, which became live in February 2004, calculates actual arrears rather than collectable arrears. Future refinement of the system may allow us to verify technical arrears.
- 1.3 A target of **£2.1 collectable arrears by March 2004** had been set by the Cabinet Lead for Housing. A target for March 2003 was not set due to the difficulties in processing Housing Benefit claims.
- 1.4 The target of £2.1 million (collectable arrears) for March 2004 was met if the actual figures were convertible to collectable figures. **Actual rent arrears as at March 2004 were £2.322 million.**, if converted to collectable arrears this would **approximately equate to £2,050,000.** The growth in rent arrears during previous years, especially since January 2001, can be attributed to the problems with processing Housing Benefit claims.
- 1.5 As Members are aware, in February 2002 the Housing Benefit Section introduced an Electronic Document management System (EDMS) to scan and process Housing Benefit Claims. The introduction of the system caused major problems with the existing software, this co-incided with the Council introducing the governments' Verification Framework and as a consequence a backlog of claims began to develop.

1.6 The difficulties in processing the claims, plus the Council's supplier of EDMS going into receivership led to a significant backlog in processing claims. This has had a major impact on the ability of staff pursuing rent arrears, particularly as we did not want to pursue litigation against tenants who were showing in arrears on the Rent Accounting System (RACs) but, in fact, were waiting for Housing Benefit to be processed.

1.7 On average the level of Housing Benefits paid, per week, to RACs is approximately £700,000. However, during the period when the EDMS was 'down' the level of Housing Benefit paid into RACS was zero. The growth in rent arrears therefore, since January 2001, can be attributed in the main to the problems with Housing Benefits.

1.8. The rent arrears figure at the end of **March 2002 were £5,290,524**

Members are asked to note that the increased level of rent arrears will take a considerable period of time to control and return back to the levels of January 2001. In some cases, with the introduction of the Verification Framework, Housing Benefit may not be paid to the required amounts as perceived by the customers.

1.9. Members are asked to note that **rent arrears had reduced to £2.3 million by the end of March 2004. A reduction of nearly £3 million in two years**, because of the improved methods of work in Housing Benefits in clearing the backlog and efforts in the Housing Management in pursuing 'real' arrears.

2.0. Members are further advised that rent arrears as at week ending 1<sup>st</sup> August 2004 were **£2,13 million. The Target for March 2005 is £1.6 million and if reached will place the authority in the top-quartile of performing authorities, with a collection rate of 97.2%**

2.1 Members are asked to note that the reduction in rent arrears has been attributable to the improved HB software and the combined efforts of staff from Housing Management and Housing Benefit working together to minimise the debt and maximise income for tenants. New improved methods of work, specified targets to achieve, combined with outsourcing work in HB meant that **by March 2004 all backdated HB claims had been processed.**

2.2 Staff have continued to pursue the debt diligently and tactfully. This has included giving pre-tenancy advice and ensuring maximisation of income and take up of Housing Benefits entitlement. Staff have worked closely with Housing Benefit Section to prioritise claims prior to any litigation, at court and prior to any eviction proceedings being instigated. This has been enforced by a Service Level Agreement and a close working arrangement between Housing Benefit and Housing Management

2.2 Agreement has been reached with Housing Benefits to have three full time HB Officers working from decentralised Management Offices to deal with HB cases and enquires. The likely date the full complement of staff will be in position is September 2004. Local Housing Officers will have direct access to the HB officers and be able to deal more effectively with HB claims and enquires .

2.3 Staff have continued to use the Corporate Fair Debt Policy, whereby small manageable repayments are negotiated with tenants who are suffering financial

hardship. Given the high number of tenants dependent on benefits, the majority of the repayment plans would be in line with the Benefit Agency's level of £2.75 per week. This policy obviously influences the amount of debt that can be recovered throughout the year. A review of this policy is currently being considered.

2.4 Staff continue to work closely with the Housing Benefit Section, Social Care and Health and other agencies in order and prioritise claims and minimise any form of litigation. These can be according to:

- threat of litigation/ losing tenancy
- supported housing needs /vulnerability of tenant
- age of tenant /disability /ethnicity
- length of outstanding claim/level of arrears
- assisted cases with Social Services
- receiving floating support

2.5 The implementation of Introductory Tenancies has ensured a swift and effective approach in dealing with rent arrears. Persistent non-payment of the rent leads to mandatory possession at County Court (unlike secure tenancies were tenants can defend the case, request suspended possession orders and are entitled to unlimited appeals). (See Annual report Introductory Tenancies)

2.6 The **Best Value Inspection** of the service in February 2004, highlighted

- a) 'The Council offers an expanding range of ways in which tenants can pay rent. There are a range of agencies providing debt and welfare benefits advice which the Council part funds, but their effectiveness is not fully evaluated.'
- b) 'There has been a recent improvement in rent collection although this is not yet at the level prior to 2001. ....'
- c) 'The council had been slow to provide housing officers with a means of making provisional HB assessments. '

Any improvements required in the service will be fully implemented

2.7 During the financial year a number of new initiatives have been introduced. /or Likely to be implemented. These include.

- HB-CD /Rom provided for each local office to calculate HB entitlements.
- Improvements are planned for the forthcoming year in line with BV recommendations.
- Rent Arrears Strategy established, jointly agreed by the Cabinet Lead Member for Housing and the Chair of the Leicester Federation of Tenants
- Dedicated Housing Benefit Adviser working in Saffron, New Parks and Braunstone.
- New Rent Arrears policy and responsive arrears action (IBS)
- All NHO have undertaken welfare advise training
- All staff have been trained on the new IBS (Open Housing System)

- Enhanced reporting tools and monitoring of accounts established under IBS
- The use of Tolerated Trespasser established under responsive arrears
- Performance reports provided for Senior Management on weekly basis
- Targets for each Area office and each Neighbourhood Housing Officer
- Operation of Call Centre in the evenings in November 2004
- Direct weekly liaison between Team Leader in HB and Team leader Area offices deal with complex and urgent cases
- Culture of auditing accounts, established in the Project Team.
- Prioritised HB claims given to HB Section. Established under SLA.
- New rent arrears policy to focus on pre tenancy work, pre court and post court work
- The department has agreed to fund 2 welfare debt advisors in conjunction with E and D (temporary posts). They will primarily work with Council Tenants.
- Greater partnership working with Social Care and Health, RISE, STAR, BLISS and other agencies in dealing with vulnerable clients in order to sustain tenancies and manage the debt.
- Comprehensive training for all new NHOs on rent recovery, rent collection HB training due in August and September 2004.
- Proposal to allow customers to pay by automated telephone, by the Internet and intranet. Currently being tested and evaluated.
- Up-grading the Cash receipting system to account for PIN identification payment by Credit and Debit Card.
- Active Publicity to promote a culture of payment
- Considering Prize Draw to award good payers (currently with legal Services)
- Membership of the Rent Income Excellence Network.
- Current performance is highlighted in attached graphs.

### 3. EQUAL OPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The collection and management of the rent debt affects all sections of the community and is particularly relevant to tenants on low income.

### 4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This report has implications on the Housing Departments Rent Arrears Policy.

Other implications	Yes/ No	Paragraphs with Supporting Papers	References
Equal Opportunities	Yes	2.1	
Policy	Yes	4.1	
Sustainable and Environmental	No	NA	
Crime and Disorder	No	NA	
Human Rights	No	NA	

**4. SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct sustainable and environmental implications.

**5. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications.

**6. DETAILS OF CONSULTATION**

6.1 None.

**7. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT**

7.1.1 The aim of the Housing Service is a decent home with the reach of every citizen of Leicester. This report contributes to objective 6.1.

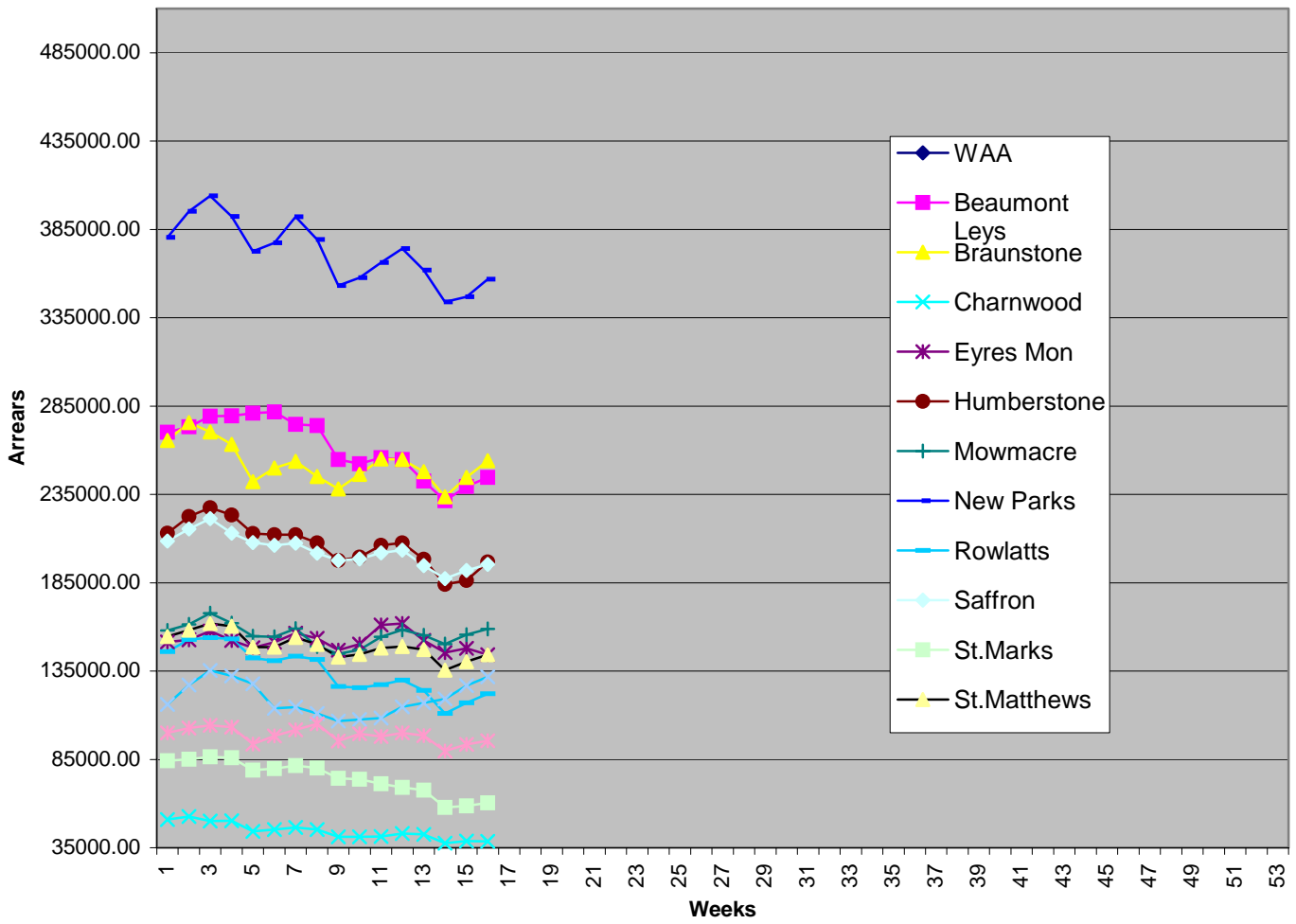
“Offer advice on rent payment, maximise the uptake of Housing Benefits and advise on other Benefits, to ensure the poorest in our city can afford to stay in their homes.

**8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

8.1 Rent Arrears Report –Housing Scrutiny October 2002/3  
Best Value Report by the Audit Commission  
HB Annual Report

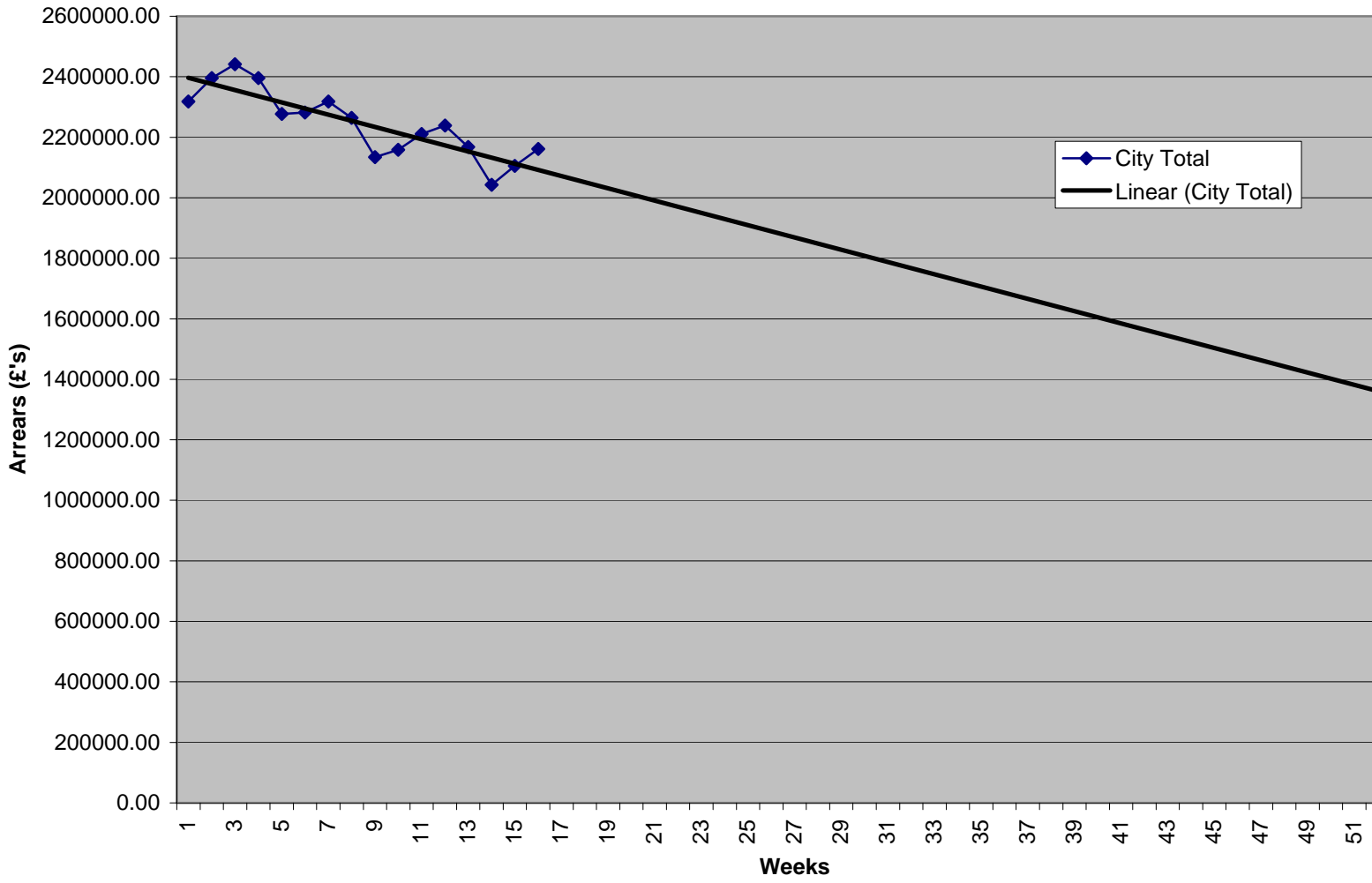
**Author of Report**  
**Suki Supria**  
**Landlord Services Manager**  
**Ext 6836**

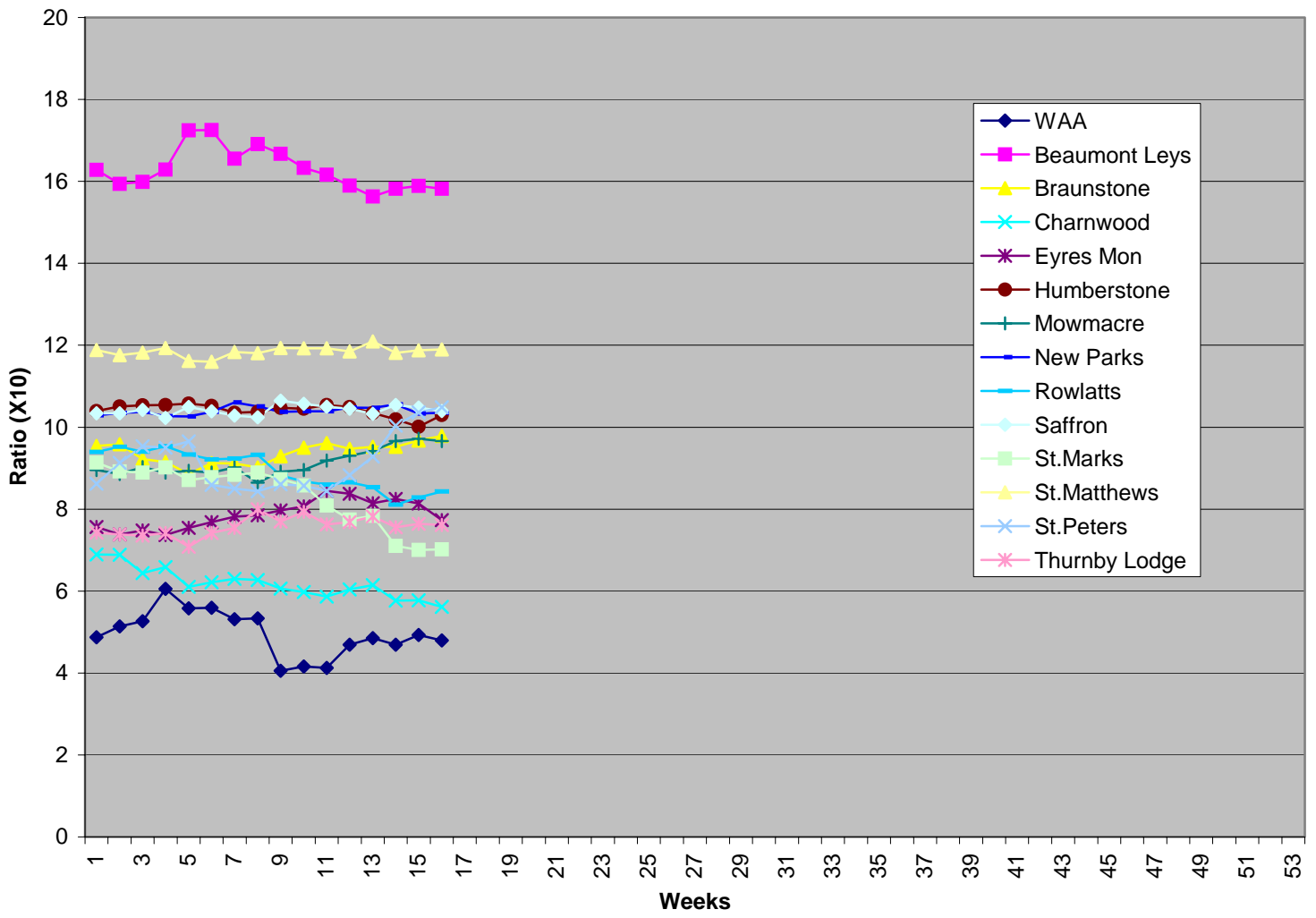
### City-Wide Arrears



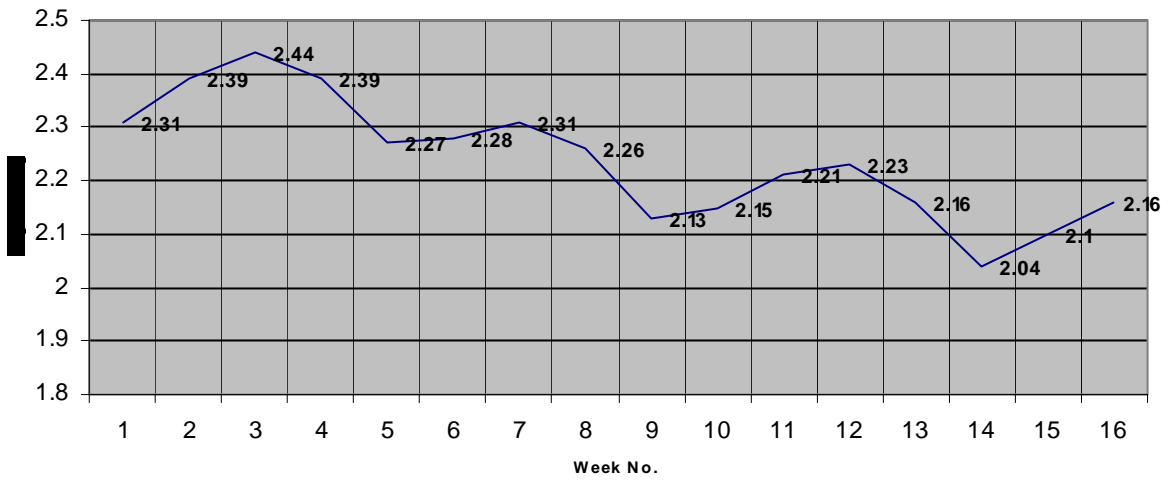


### City Trend (Linear Regression)





### Total City Arrears 2004



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**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS**

**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**19<sup>th</sup>. August 2004**

**PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDED PROJECTS**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing.**

**1. Purpose of report.**

- 1.1** This report provides the annual performance information for voluntary sector projects grant aided by the Housing Department. A range of diverse services including Day Centres, Advice Services and Tenants' Associations, are commissioned from the voluntary sector by the Department to meet its statutory duties with regard to identified need. The voluntary sector received a total grant of £420,047 Grant Aid funding from the Housing Department for 2003/2004.
- 1.2** This report covers the twelve-month period from April 2003 to March 2004 with regard to those projects receiving grant aid funding from Leicester City Council's Housing Department.

**2. Summary.**

- 2.1** The total number of users of the advice and support services is 39,725.
- 2.2** During 2003/04 Department funded 5 Tenants Associations and the Leicester Federation of Tenants Associations (LFTA) with a total amount of £154,087 inclusive of a rent element.

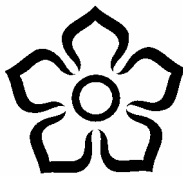
**3. Recommendations.**

- 3.1** Members are asked to note that:
- 3.1.1** Advice and support projects have achieved service level targets, jointly negotiated by organizations and officers of the Department, apart from Leicestershire Mediation Service. Discussions are currently taking place with this organization with regard to the number of new referrals being made to the project and a report is being compiled by officers, for consideration by Housing Department Directorate.
- 3.1.2** A new funding system will be put in place from 1<sup>st</sup>. October 2004 for all Tenants Associations and Tenants and Residents Associations. This will involve all associations that receive funding from Leicester City Council's Housing

Department accepting a new service level agreement including revised funding levels.

**4. Financial Implications.**

**4.1** None arising from this report.



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS**

**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**19<sup>th</sup>. August 2004**

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**PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDED  
PROJECTS APRIL 2003 - MARCH 2004**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing.**

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION.**

**1. REPORT.**

**1.1** Members are informed on the performance of the voluntary sector projects funded by the Housing Department over a twelve-month period from April 2003 to March 2004.

**2. ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICES.**

**2.1** The Housing Department funds a number of projects that provide housing advice, assistance and support to include resettlement and day centre facilities to homeless people and a home improvement agency service to home owners and private tenants living in Leicester.

**2.2** The total number of users including Care & Repair is 39,725. The figure recorded last year was 36,110. The reason for the increase of 3,615 is due mainly to an increased service user figure from the Y Advice and Support Centre, which was closed for a short period for refurbishment in the monitoring period of 2002 – 2003. It should be noted that the figures in respect of Y Advice and Support Centre and Anchor Day Centre, record number of attendances rather than the actual number of individuals using services. The following table shows a breakdown, by project, and the number of people assisted by each organisation during 2003 – 2004.

Name of project	No. of users 2002/2003	Ethnic Breakdown %				Gender Breakdown %	
		White	A/C	Asian	Other/ not known	M	F
SHARP	914	64.1	13.1	9.6	13.2	NA	NA
Y Advice & Support Centre	20,056	89.1	3.4	3.4	4.1	82.1	17.9
Anchor Day Centre	16,950	85.3	4.9	5.5	4.3	80.9	19.1
Wet Day Centre	150	84.6	7.4	8.0	-	81.4	18.6

Care & Repair	Enquires	Male	Female	Couples	White	Asian	A/ C
	1442	23.8	60.7	15.5	72.6	21.5	5.9

### 2.3 Anchor Day Centre: - contribution £9,160

A drop-in centre for homeless/rootless people, ex-offenders and those who are isolated. The project provides a number of day centre facilities, which includes doctor's surgery, food, showers, educational and recreational activities, advice and information. During the monitoring period 2003 - 2004, a total of 16,950 attendances were recorded, of which, 14.7% of attendees were from BME communities.

The open-door service offered by the centre provides a low threshold support and basic advice, drop-in service to callers from 1.00 pm – 4.00 pm, which compliments the Y Advice and Support Centre drop-in service, that operates in the mornings.

Offering general support, advice, signposting and referral on to other services, including Outreach, Housing Options, Healthcare resources and other support services, it is also an initial contact point for new street drinkers and homeless drug users who may be suitable for access to the Wet Centre caseload.



## 2.4 Wet Day Centre: - contribution £51,400

The Centre is jointly funded by the Housing Department and the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Drug and Alcohol Action Teams. The project deals with a minimum of 60 cases per annum on a key-work basis, 30 of which will present with drug related problems.

The key treatment plan objectives are:

- To facilitate engagement of service users into specialist and community based primary care treatment.
- To seek the re-integration of the single homeless, rough sleepers or vulnerably housed individuals with substance use problems within the community.
- To address housing issues impeding the rehabilitation of people using substances.

The safe environment of the Wet Centre provides drinkers with an alternative to drinking on the street and access to cheap, nutritious food and on-site information, advice on detox services, as well as access to tenancy and housing advice. The project is incorporated within the Anchor Centre and was developed originally to tackle on-street drinking, which had been identified as a significant and growing problem in Leicester. It's philosophy centres around an emphasis on harm reduction, relapse prevention strategies, establishing alternative coping mechanisms, improving health and prolonging life. This is achieved through a holistic and multi-agency approach to health, social care, housing and support needs. The project has had a steady through put and a client satisfaction survey revealed that generally clients felt a positive impact upon their health and tended to drink less alcohol generally and reduced drinking on the street.

Service performance is measured through key performance indicators.

	Key Performance Indicator	Target	Result
1	Number of cases key-worked per annum	60	76
2.	Number with drug related problems	30	47
3.	All cases to be reviewed after 6 months	100%	100%
4	Wet day centre users reporting an improvement in health	17	Awaiting survey from health
5	Reduction in alcohol consumption	60%	70.8%
6	Clients achieving controlled or non-problematic drug use	60%	68.0%
7	Clients signposted to activities or useful occupation	90%	100%

8	Clients engaged in activities	To be set	30
9	Clients maintaining a tenancy for more than three months	15	42
10	Clients signposted to housing services	75	116
11	Clients to be assisted with rent arrears including tenancies and hostels	85	100

The total number of service users registered as cases during 2003-04 was 150, 14.7% were from BME communities, which is a 3.7% increase on the previous monitoring period.

## **2.5 Y Advice and Support Centre: contribution £33,400**

Part of the Leicester YMCA, The Y Advice and Support Centre has its premises on Pocklingtons Walk, where it runs a drop-in centre for people who are homeless, hostel dwellers or those vulnerably housed. Services provided include advice and support, medical services, food and drinks, shower and laundry facilities. A number of educational and recreational classes are provided. The Centre is direct access and provides an early morning session specifically for a breakfast meal giving the opportunity to engage with rough sleepers. The service target is to provide services for a daily average of 65 attendees. The actual daily average during the monitoring period was 76.

## **2.6 Leicestershire Mediation Service: - contribution £42,300 general fund £48,300 HRA**

Provides an impartial third party intervention service, into conflict and dispute situations. The project aims to promote the provision of services directed towards mediation and conciliation, giving all residents of Leicester the opportunity to address their past concerns, whilst identifying common needs and issues.

A total of 76 new cases were referred to the project during the monitoring period compared with 72 last year. Equal opportunities monitoring of beneficiaries indicated that 31% were from BME communities and 69% were white.

Leicestershire Mediation Service receives grant aid funding through a purchase of service agreement, which includes a number of service level targets around the delivery of housing based mediation. This includes mediating a target of one hundred cases, 85% of which should be Leicester City Council Tenants. However, due to a shortage of referrals, the project has experienced difficulty in attaining this target and discussions with the project have been undertaken, which will form part of the basis for a report to Directorate to consider the future purchase of housing related mediation in Leicester.

## 2.7 Care & Repair: - contribution £32,900

Care and Repair provide a home improvement agency service to homeowners and private tenants living in Leicester. They assist older people, those with physical and or mental health problems and people on a low income to remain in their own homes in comfort and security. This is achieved by visiting people in their own homes to enable them to assess housing and welfare needs, organise appropriate work and oversee building contracts and inspect the work on completion. A list of approved contractors is maintained as well as a handy person service and a hardship fund. Apart from the publicly funded work, Care and Repair also provided work to be funded from other sources e.g. Charities and insurance claims to the value of £222,708, which represents an increase of £43,235 on the previous year. Performance indicators are now used to reflect qualitative outcome measures for services provided. The ODPM element of funding for this service was transferred over to the Supporting People grant from April 2003 and is monitored in line with the Supporting People framework.

The project is subject to a number of national performance targets, all of which were achieved during the year. The following table contains additional performance indicators, some of which have been negotiated to measure local objectives.

Performance Indicator	Target	Actual
Number of enquiries	1100	1442
Clients receiving additional benefits as a result of agency assistance.	30	49
Number of non-grant jobs	60%	81.56%
% public work / % private work	50/50	£222,708 private £50,342 public
Value of work completed	£160,000	£252,585
No. of BME clients	18%	27.39%
No. of jobs completed	390	665
Number on contractors list	35	35
Jobs provided by handyperson scheme	80	89
No of properties with increased energy efficiency	50	58
% of customers satisfied with service at good or above	80%	96

## 2.8 SHARP (Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project): - contribution £48,500

SHARP offers free, confidential, impartial information and advice on housing rights and opportunities to anyone in Leicester. It aims to offer help and practical

assistance to those, who through disadvantage or hardship, are not able to exercise housing rights or take full advantage of available opportunities. It also aims to identify, encourage and support initiatives, which will increase opportunities for homeless and badly housed people to acquire a decent home. Performance indicators are included in the projects specification to ensure qualitative outcome based measures for independent advice work.

The following table illustrates the project's performance over the twelve months monitoring period.

<b>Service monitoring target</b>	<b>Annual target</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Variance %</b>
1. Deal with an average of 250 enquiries per full time case worker per year.	250 cases per FTE case worker – 1000	914	Minus 9%
2. Provide open access sessions or advice appointments for a minimum of 200 days per year.	200	197	Minus 1.5%
3. Provide 240 open access sessions per year.	240	246	Plus 2.5%
4. See all clients who have nowhere to go that night (i.e. street homeless/sleeping in a vehicle) on the day that they first contact the service.	100%	88%	Minus 12%
5. Deal with all complex cases within the specified response times.	95%	88%	Minus 12%
6. Close or review new case files 3 months after opening.	90% of new files opened	73%	Minus 17%
7. Review ongoing cases on a month by month basis.	90% of ongoing cases	41.0%	Minus 45.5%
8. Provide outreach sessions at other locations in women only environments.	40	0	Minus 100%
9. Respond to 90% of all new enquiries within 10 working days.	90%	96.0%	Plus 6.0%
10. Provide housing information to 100 enquirers per annum.	100	106	Plus 6.0%
11. To distribute at least 1500 fact sheets per year.	1500	1260	Minus 16%
12. Respond in writing within 10 working days of any complaint received.	100%	100%	100%
13.* Provide the number of cases in receipt of a homeless decision letter in which SHARP requests a review of the decision and % of reviews in which the original decision is overturned.		31	12 overturned 7 upheld 5 satisfactory outcomes 7 undecided
14. Cases dealt with by SHARP which have resulted in a success for client/total number of clients requesting advocacy	80%	83%	Plus 3.75%

\* Indicates work undertaken by a specialist housing solicitor funded by the Legal Services Commission.

Staffing issues have resulted in SHARP being without one of the advice workers for a large part of this monitoring period. This will have impacted on the organisation's ability to achieve some of the service monitoring targets and particularly to provide outreach sessions at other locations in women only environments.

### 3.0 Tenants Associations and Tenants and Residents Associations

The Tenants Associations and Tenants and Residents Associations (TAs/TARAs) are funded through the Housing Revenue Account, with a specific aim to ensure that tenants and residents on local estates have a good quality of life, are involved in local priorities such as the promotion of community cohesion and have an input into the decision making process in issues that affect them. The Housing Department's Community Development Team support existing Tenants Associations and assist in the creation of new groups. This team, as well as other officers of the Housing Department are working closely with the LFTA to ensure greater participation across the City, especially from the BME communities, which is one of the priorities of the City Wide Tenants Compact.

Acting as a resource centre for the local community and providing advice and information, the associations also seek to encourage the use of their premises by other organisations to provide advice surgeries on a number of issues affecting their members.

Advice surgeries include MP and Councillor surgeries, maintenance and repairs, legal advice and debt advice.

The following table illustrates the number of users recorded by each of the grant aid funded TAs/TARAs.

<b>TA/TARA</b>	<b>No. of users</b>	<b>White %</b>	<b>BME %</b>	<b>Male %</b>	<b>Female %</b>
<b>Morton and Northfields</b>	7316	65	35	40	60
<b>St Peters</b>	4464	2	98	47	53
<b>St Mathews</b>	9839	68	32	40	60
<b>Eyres Monsell</b>	1561	97	3	40	60

### Leicester Federation of Tenants Associations

Management Committees	New T.A.s developing	National Contacts	Training/conferences
11	1	24	8

### Beaumont Leys

Councillors Surgeries	Money Advice
2 surgeries per week	2 surgeries per week

#### 3.1 Beaumont Leys TA – contribution £6,300 + £5,650 rent

Beaumont Leys Tenants and Residents Association differs from the other associations in that it does not have a paid worker. Information provided by the project indicates that a number of surgeries were provided during the year, which included councillor's surgeries and money advice. The association has been unable to provide equal opportunities monitoring. Because the association does not have a paid member of staff, it performs a sign posting service, directing individuals to other agencies/organisations that are able to assist with any enquiries. The association also encourages other community groups to use its premises, including LESSA (Leicester Swahili Speaking Association) and an after-school club, on three afternoons per week.

#### 3.2 Morton & Northfields TA – contribution £32,700 + £2,063 rent

Morton and Northfields Tenants and Residents Association received a total of 7,316 enquiries regarding a number of issues including housing repairs, benefits, environmental issues, health, education, employment and debt. Equal opportunities monitoring indicates that 35% of enquiries were received from BME communities, which represents a significant increase on the previous year.

A number of leaflets and newsletters have been distributed throughout the year and two satisfaction surveys were conducted in July 2003 and January 2004. A total of 150 questionnaires were sent out and 67 were returned. All those who responded, indicated that they were satisfied with the services of Morton and Northfields Tenants and Residents Association.

### **3.3 Eyres Monsell TA – contribution £26,000 + £5,000 rent**

Eyres Monsell Tenants and Residents Association recorded a total of 1561 advice sessions, compared to 798 last year. 60% of enquirers were female and 40% were male. Information/advice included issues concerning housing/council tax benefits, welfare and disability benefits, general housing advice, repairs, anti-social behaviour and environmental issues.

The Tenants and Residents Association have also contributed a number of articles to the Community newsletter.

### **3.4 St. Peters TA – contribution £35,700 + £5,400 rent**

The local tenants and residents provides a vehicle for liaison with the local authority and community groups/resources. The introduction of a women's group has ensured a cross section of representation on the management committee. Also being developed is a youth group, following the success of the women's group.

A total of 4,464 enquiries were made to the project. 98.0% were recorded as being of Asian origin and 60% were female.

### **3.5 St. Matthews TA – contribution £16,175 + £2,650 rent**

A tenants association matches the diversity of the estate. This community based service provides a wide variety of advice and support. A total of 9,839 enquiries were received during the year. Of these, 35% were from BME communities and 60% of the total were female.

### **3.6 LFTA – contribution £16,449**

Aims to promote the interests of tenants and tenants' associations, giving advice and information and acting as a negotiating body with the City Council.

It continues to play an active role in developing tenant and residents participation throughout the city and has been instrumental in developing the City Wide Tenants Compact, which was signed in July 2001.

The LFTA is currently working with the Community Development Team, to develop local compacts, which will ensure that service standards are enhanced to improve the lives of local communities.

LFTA aims to:

Provide regular bulletins, fact sheets and newsletters to all tenants associations in the city to ensure they maintain up to date information on current housing issues.

Offer an advice and information service to tenants groups on any issues relating to the running of their organisation

Provide support to any tenant in the City, interested in developing new groups.

Organising training sessions, conferences and seminars, enabling tenants to come together to exchange information and gain valuable skills.

Liaise with other Federations and groups throughout the country to ensure their members are kept up to date on national housing issues.

Act as an 'umbrella group' co-ordinating and representing the collective views of member associations at housing consultative forums, both regionally and nationally.

#### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS.**

4.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

#### **5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS.**

5.1.1 The voluntary sector provides a range of services, which cater for various ethnic groups. The section will continue to monitor to ensure that the needs of disabled people are addressed as required.

#### **6. SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS.**

6.1 The Voluntary sector provides services to ensure that ex service users sustain their tenancies by assisting users to develop support networks within the community.

6.2 The voluntary sector is required to abide by the City Council's EMAS policy, which are a contractual agreement and a requirement of the Practical Quality Standards for Small Organisations.



**7. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS.**

**7.1** The voluntary sector, through the Leicester Mediation service assist in addressing some of the issues raised in the Anti Social behaviour Strategy and detailed in the Crime and Disorder Act. The work of the Wet Day Centre also contributes to community safety and public perceptions of safety.

**8. ELDERLY/PEOPLE ON LOW INCOME.**

**8.1** The Department grant aids the services in this report to enable the provision of a range of services to vulnerable people in the City. The vast majority of users will be from a low income background, projects look towards maximising income where possible, ensuring maximum take up of benefits, particularly where the elderly and vulnerable are concerned.

**9. HUMAN RIGHTS ACT.**

**9.1** The securing of such advice services is consistent with compliance with any obligation which may arise under Article 8 of the European Convention (the right to respect for private and family life).

**10. DETAILS OF CONSULTATION.**

**10.1** Consultation has occurred with Voluntary Sector Grant Aided Projects.

**10.2** Housing Management Section.

**10.3** Legal Services

**10.4** Supporting People Team.

**11. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT.**

**11.1** This report meets the Authority's overall Quality of Life Aim for the Department 'A decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester'.

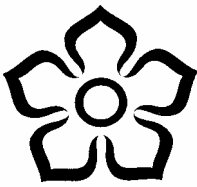
**12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985.**

**12.1** Housing Scrutiny Report, Performance Monitoring Report for Voluntary Sector Funded Projects, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

**13. AUTHOR.**

Steve Wright  
Commissioning Officer 8731

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Leicester  
City Council

**CABINET  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

**21st June 2004  
19 August 2004**

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## **REVENUE OUTTURN 2003/04**

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### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to show the final summary outturn position comparing spending with the budget for all General Fund Services and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 1.2 This is the third and final report in the annual cycle of budget monitoring and shows the outturn position for the General Fund against the revised budget of £343m, and the HRA against a gross budget of £59.9m.
- 1.3 Previous reports have been presented to the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees in October and January, which outlined budgetary issues that had emerged during the year.
- 1.4 Each Scrutiny Committee will receive this covering report, and appendices which relate to its' portfolio. The Cabinet and Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee will receive a summary report considering the overall position for the whole Council.
- 1.5 Members of the Cabinet or the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee wishing to see the appendices relating to any portfolio not appended to the report should contact the report author.

#### **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 The report shows a year-end position of a £2.5m underspend against a net revised budget of £343m. The element that relates to service departments (excluding schools) shows that they have underspent their budgets by £0.8m, which represents 0.4% of their budgets.
- 2.2 All departments have kept spending within their budgets, often in difficult circumstances.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### 3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) note the final outturn for 2003/04 for each department and the Council as a whole
- b) note the reasons for the variances between the 2003/04 budget and the final outturn
- c) note the position of the Council's general reserve
- d) approve a contribution of £0.3m to the capital fund resulting from surpluses generated by investment property and general fund traded services
- e) note the position in respect of significant earmarked reserves
- f) note the proposals for the use of underspends
- g) approve the drawn down of earmarked reserves to meet revenue costs incurred 2003/04.
- h) approve the establishment of new earmarked reserves (proposed in section 10.17 of the supporting report).
- i) approve the carry forward of the residue of the city centre improvements money which was set up in 2002/03 to pay the final costs of the projects.
- j) approve virements as detailed in section 4.2 of the supporting report

#### 3.2 Scrutiny committees are asked to consider issues affecting their portfolio and make any observations to the Cabinet as they see fit.

#### 3.3 The Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committees is asked to consider the overall position for the whole Council and make any observations and recommendations to Cabinet that it sees fit.

### **4. FINANCIAL & LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

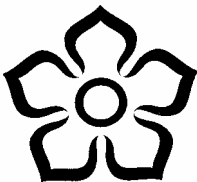
#### 4.1 The report is solely concerned with financial issues. There are no direct legal implications in this report. Tom Stephenson, the Town Clerk has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

### **5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

#### 5.1 There are no equal opportunity, policy, sustainable and environmental, crime and disorder or human rights, elderly /people on low income implications.

Report authors: Devanshi Mavani / Alison Greenhill  
Principal Accountant - Ext 7421

**MARK NOBLE**  
**CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**



Leicester  
City Council

APPENDIX A

WARDS AFFECTED :ALL WARDS

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 AUGUST 2004

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**HOUSING GENERAL FUND REVENUE OUTTURN 2003/04**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing and Chief Financial Officer**

**1. SUMMARY**

This report gives the outturn position for the Housing General Fund. The approved Housing General Fund Budget for direct expenditure for the year was £9,771,200. The outturn was £9,257,000. There was therefore an under-spend of £514,200

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 Housing Scrutiny are recommended to note the Housing General Fund outturn for 2003/04.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

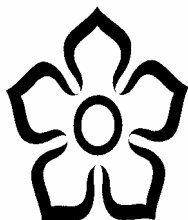
3.1 The outturn for the year reflects the actual expenditure and income for 2003/04 on services provided. This is compared with the budget for the purpose of this report.

3.2 Under the Authority's Financial Regulations the Service Director for Housing is responsible for ensuring that the cost of service provision is contained within this Committee's aggregate controllable budget.

3.3 The Department underspent by £514,2000. In accordance with the approved 2004/05 budget, £300,000 has been transferred to corporate reserves and £214,200 will be rolled forwards to 2004/05 as a Departmental underspend.

**4. REPORT/AUTHOR TO CONTACT**

Ben Eruchie, ext. 7427  
Rod Pearson, ext. 7108



Leicester  
City Council

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19TH AUGUST 2004

HOUSING GENERAL FUND REVENUE OUTTURN 2003/04

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**1. REPORT**

- 1.1 The 2003/04 outturn on the Housing General Fund shows an favourable variance of £514,200.

**2. BUDGET FOR 2003/04**

- 1.1 The Committee's approved budget for 2003/2004 on direct costs was £9,222,500. However this was amended as follows:

Approved Budget	£9,222,500
Housing Benefit Adjustment	£ 509,300
Virement	<u>£ 39,400</u>
	9,771,200

- 2.1 The virements are detailed below:-

Reduced budget for senior staff	£ - 40,800
Admin support for Council Tax	5,000
Devolved IT Training budget	24,400
Best Value Communications	-3,100
Supplementary Services Re NRF	-4,000
Additional Employers Pensions	37,800
Additional Personnel cost	20,600
Over spend Brought Forward	-500
	-----
	39,400
Housing Benefit Adjustment	509,300
	-----
	548,700
	=====

### 3. **OUTTURN**

3.1 The table below details the outturn position for the Housing Committee:

	<b>Net Direct Budget £'000</b>	<b>Actual £'000</b>	<b>Variance £'000</b>	<b>Variance as % of the Budget</b>
Private Sector Housing & Development	766	717	-49	-6.40
Housing Benefits Admin.	1,639	2,059	420	25.63
Council Tax & Local Taxation.	1,872	1,706	-166	-8.87
Miscellaneous Service Provision	406	325	-81	-19.95
Housing Options	1,560	1,489	-71	-4.55
Hostels & Community Care	300	-345	-645	-215
Tenancy Sustainment	2	86	84	
Supporting People Funding & Admin	136	130	-6	-4.41
Policy Management & Support	0	0	0	0
<b>Controllable Total</b>	<b>6,681</b>	<b>6,167</b>	<b>-514</b>	<b>-7.71</b>
Housing Benefit Payments	3,090	3,090	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,771</b>	<b>9,257</b>	<b>-514</b>	<b>-5.26</b>

3.2 The revised budget for housing benefit payments (demand led) has been adjusted to the actual net cost of £3,090,000.

#### 4. **EXPLANATION OF MAJOR VARIANCES**

4.1 The major reasons for the variances are as follows:

	<b>'000</b>
i) <u>Housing Benefit Administration</u>	<b>420</b>
<p>Considerable additional costs were incurred in 2003/04 and will be incurred un 2004/05 in clearing the backlog of cases following problems associated with DIP and the implementation of the new Open Revenues Computer system.</p>	
ii) <u>Local Taxation</u>	<b>-166</b>
<p>Problems with recruitment and staff turnover have resulted in under-spend of £54K on salaries. There has been a considerable reduction in overheads. In particular there have been savings in IT overheads and maintenance agreements following the implementation of a new computer system.</p>	
ii) <u>Miscellaneous Service Provision</u>	<b>-81</b>
<p>The total under-spend is the result of several individual under-spends, together with a change in the method of overhead apportionment.</p>	
iii) <u>Housing Options</u>	<b>-71</b>
<p>This under-spend is the result of a fall in the need to provide temporary bed and breakfast accommodation.</p>	
iv) <u>Hostel and Community Care.</u>	<b>-645</b>
<p>This underspend, is mainly the result of increased charges and very high occupancy levels in hostels.</p>	
v) <u>Tenancy Sustainment</u>	<b>84</b>
<p>This overspend is mainly the consequence of reduced income following the closure of two sheltered Housing units and increased expenditure on Health and Safety issues.</p>	



5. **RESERVES CONTROLLED BY DEPARTMENT/COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 Financial Regulations allow Service Committees to create earmarked reserves for specific purposes. Contributions may be made to such reserves by utilising budgetary provision, by means of virement or by transfer from the carry forward reserve.
- 5.2 This Committee hold reserves for Tenancy Support; Supporting People: Leicester Night-shelter and Council Tax. The table below shows the movement in these reserves during the year.

<b>Reserve</b>	<b>Balance B/F 2002/03</b>	<b>Usage in 2003/04</b>	<b>Contribution in 2003/04</b>	<b>Balance C/F 2003/04</b>
Tenancy Support	£-177,225	116,407	£-761,310	£-822,128
Supporting People Grant	0		-570,111	-570,111
Leicester Night Shelter	-527,211		-179,779	-706,990
Council Tax Project	-272,913	272,913		0
	<b>-977,349</b>	<b>389,320</b>	<b>1,511,200</b>	<b>-2,099,229</b>

6. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Many of the customers of Housing General Fund services come from disadvantaged groups.

7. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

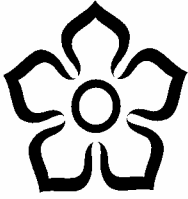
<b>Other Implications</b>		<b>Paragraph References within Supporting Information</b>
Policy	No	
Sustainable & Environmental	No	
Crime & Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Incomes	No	

8. **AUTHOR OF THE REPORT**

Ben Eruchie, Ext: 7427  
Rod Pearson Ext: 7108

**Mike Forrester**  
**CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**Mark Noble**  
**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Wards

**APPENDIX B**

**Housing Scrutiny**

**19 August 2004**

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**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND HOUSING REPAIRS TRADING SERVICES  
2003/04 OUTTURN**

---

**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing and Chief Finance Officer**

**1. Purpose of Report and Summary**

- 1.1 This report gives the outturn position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Housing Repairs Trading Services (formerly Housing DSO) for the financial year 2003/04. The actual level of HRA balances at the end of 2003/04 is £2.577m, which compares to £2.715m when the original budget was set. The Housing Repairs Trading Services surplus for the year was £25,000 which has been transferred to the Trading Services reserve.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Housing Scrutiny are recommended to note the HRA and Housing Repairs Trading Services outturns for 2003/04.

**3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Actual HRA balances at the end of 2003/04 are £2.577m. This represents a reduction in balances of £138,000 compared to the level assumed in the original 2003/04 budget. This net adverse variance is due to the outturn for the previous year (adverse variance of £798,000, largely due to a revised accounting treatment of rental income, as reported to the October 2003 Housing Scrutiny Committee) offset by a favourable variance of £660,000 on the "in year" 2003/04 HRA.
- 3.2 The actual Housing Repairs Trading Services surplus of £25,000 has been transferred to reserves.
- 3.3 Members are reminded that Cabinet have set minimum HRA balances at £1.5m to meet any unforeseen expenditure or shortfall in income. Balances at 31 March 2004 of £2.577m are, therefore, £1.1m above the minimum. The HRA is ringfenced and the reserves will be required as follows:

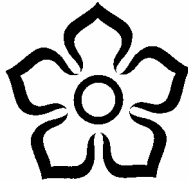
- (a) to help meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 2010;
- (b) to allow for any future restriction of rental income due to the operation of the Government's rent restructuring system; and
- (c) for the introduction of a Global Positioning System for the Housing Repairs Trading Services

**4. Legal Implications**

4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

**5. Report Author/Officer to contact:**

Dave Pate, Principal Service Director (Housing Resources), Ext. 6801  
Graham Troup, Principal Accountant (HRA), Ext. 7425



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Wards

**Housing Scrutiny Committee**

**19 August 2004**

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**Housing Revenue Account and Housing Repairs Trading Services  
2003/04 Outturn**

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## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1. Report**

- 1.1 The 2003/04 outturn on the HRA shows a favourable variance of £660,000 compared to the original budget. Annex A shows the accounts in the summarised format and indicates the variances against each of the summary headings.

### **2. Variances of Outturn against Budget**

- 2.1 The significant variances detailed in Annex A are explained as follows (note that “+” indicates additional expenditure or reduced income, and vice versa for a “-“ sign):

(i) Rent Income +£312,000

This shortfall in income is due to extremely high levels of “Right to Buy” (RTB) sales in 2002/03 and 2003/04. The 2003/04 original rents budget was prepared on the assumption of there being 500 RTB sales in both 2002/03 and 2003/04. Actual RTB sales in these years were 585 and 659 respectively, leading to a significant reduction in income below budget, albeit offset by very low void levels, and extra rental income from the 2002/03 “week 53” adjustment noted later.

(ii) Capital Financing Charges -£15,000

The small net variance of a £15,000 saving on capital financing charges comprises a number of compensating large variances:

- (a) The 75% reserved part of the high RTB capital receipts in 2002/03 and 2003/04 has substantially reduced outstanding HRA loans, giving savings in debt charges (both principal and interest) of £760,000. This saving is largely offset by the following additional costs.

- (b) The interest rate has increased from 6.34% in the original budget to 6.64% in the outturn, accounting for £530,000 of additional interest charges. However, these additional costs attract additional subsidy reimbursement (see below) and are, therefore, not a net additional cost to the HRA.
- (c) Debt Management Expenses to the HRA have increased by £90,000 due to unbudgeted professional fees incurred in connection with the “buyback” of local bonds, as part of the debt rescheduling process.
- (d) Other net changes give additional capital financing costs of £125,000, which are mainly premia associated with debt rescheduling, and are reimbursed by subsidy.

(iii) Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) -£500,000

The original budget allowed for the HRA to make a £500,000 RCCO to supplement the 2003/04 HRA Capital Programme. However, due to the availability of additional financing resources – particularly high RTB receipts – this contribution has not been necessary.

(iv) Negative Subsidy -£588,000

The reduction in negative subsidy of £588,000 chiefly comprises the reimbursement of the £530,000 additional interest charges noted above. The balance of the favourable variance is additional subsidy on the debt rescheduling premia noted earlier, offset by small write-offs following the settlement by ODPM of all subsidy claims for previous years.

(v) Balances brought forward into 2003/04 +£798,000

The working balance brought forward at 1 April 2003 was £798,000 less than the level forecast when the original 2003/04 budget was prepared. This was mainly due to a change in accounting regulations concerning the extra rent week which occurred at the end of 2002/03. In accordance with established practice, it was assumed that the full £1m rental income from the extra week would be credited to the 2002/03 accounts. However, under the revised accounting rules, only 1/7 (£143,000) of the extra income could be brought into the 2002/03 accounts, with the balance (£857,000) being effectively spread over the following four years. This reduced income, offset by net savings elsewhere, explains the £798,000 reduction in the balance brought forward into 2003/04.

### 3. HRA Balances

- 3.1 Overall, the 2003/04 “in year” HRA is showing a favourable variance of £660,000 which largely compensates for the reduction of £798,000 in the balances brought forward. The resultant actual balances at the end of 2003/04 are £2.577m. The 2004/05 HRA budget provides for a surplus of £367,000 which would leave balances of some £2.9m at March 2005.

#### 4. Housing Repairs Trading Services

- 4.1 The surplus for the year was £25,000 compared with a budgeted surplus of £200,000. This is a small variance in the context of the turnover of the trading services which is £20.5m.
- 4.2 The surplus of £25,000 was not required for the financing of the Housing Capital Programme, and has, therefore, been credited to the Trading Services reserve.

#### 5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

#### 6. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Yes	Para 7.1	
Policy	No		
Sustainable and Environmental	No		
Crime and Disorder	No		
Human Rights Act	No		
Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	Para 7.1	

#### 7. Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 Any reduction or restriction of HRA budgets directly affects the Council's ability to deliver high quality services that meet the needs and aspirations of Council tenants, many of whom are elderly and/or come from disadvantaged groups.

#### 8. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

- 8.1
- (a) Budget Books 2003/04 and 2004/05
  - (b) HRA closing down files, Ref F2M/1111
  - (c) Housing Subsidy Claim files, Ref F2M/P813
  - (d) HRA Budget files, Ref F2M/9999
  - (e) Report of the Corporate Director of Housing and Chief Finance Officer on "Revenue Budget Monitoring 2003/2004 – Period 4" to Cabinet 13 October 2003 and Housing Scrutiny Committee 9 October 2003
  - (f) Report of the Corporate Director of Housing and Chief Finance Officer on "Revenue Budget Monitoring 2003/2004 – Period 7" to Cabinet 19 January 2004 and Housing Scrutiny Committee 15 January 2004

**9. Consultations**

- 9.1 This is a joint report of the Corporate Director of Housing and Chief Finance Officer. No other departments have been consulted.

**10. Aims and Objectives**

- 10.1 The overall Quality of Life Aim for the department is that “a decent home is within the reach of every citizen of Leicester”.

**11. Report Author**

Dave Pate, Principal Service Director (Housing Resources), Ext 6801  
Graham Troup, Principal Accountant (HRA), Ext 7425



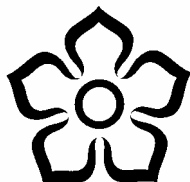
## Housing Revenue Account 2003/04

	ORIGINAL BUDGET	OUTTURN	VARIANCE*
	£000s	£000s	£000s
<u>Income</u>	56,704	56,392	+312
Rent – Dwellings	2,800	2,788	+12
Other Income			
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>59,504</b>	<b>59,180</b>	<b>+324</b>
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Landlord Services	13,330	13,503	+173
Repairs and Maintenance	19,300	19,244	-56
Bad Debt Provision	800	802	+2
Capital Financing Charges	14,954	14,939	-15
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	500	-	-500
Negative Subsidy	10,988	10,400	-588
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>59,872</b>	<b>58,888</b>	<b>-984</b>
Deficit/(Surplus) for year	368	(292)	-660
Balances brought forward 1.4.03.	(3,083)	(2,285)	+798
Balances carried forward 31.3.04.	(2,715)	(2,577)	+138

\*Note on variances

Adverse variances (ie. increased expenditure or reduced income) are denoted by a positive amount, and vice versa.

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Leicester  
City Council

Cabinet  
FREOPS/Scrutiny Committees

12 July 2004  
Various

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## 2003/04 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING – OUTTURN

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### Report of the Chief Finance Officer

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to show the outturn position of the 2003/04 capital programme.

#### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This is the final capital monitoring report for 2003/04, following the reports of the position as at the end of periods 4 (July), 7 (October) and 10 (January).
- 2.2 Each Scrutiny Committee will receive a report in the August or September cycle of meetings, consisting of this covering report and separate appendices showing the capital programme in relation to their portfolio of responsibility. Cabinet and the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee and receiving reports in respect of the full corporate position.
- 2.3 The originally approved capital programme for 2003/04 totalled £78.5 million. This was subsequently revised following capital monitoring exercises; the forecast outturn position at period 10 was £64.5 million.
- 2.4 The outturn position shows actual expenditure incurred of £65.3 million.
- 2.5 On 13 October 2003, as part of the period 4 monitoring report, Cabinet approved a target for capital expenditure target being 90% of the period 4 forecast in 2003/04 and of the original forecast in 2004/05 and later years (excluding those schemes where there is a significant 3<sup>rd</sup> party involvement). Actual performance for the programme as a whole was 97% in 2003/04.
- 2.6 Capital expenditure is partly funded from the sale of land and buildings (capital receipts). The capital receipts target for the period 2003/04 to 2004/05 of £15 million has already been achieved. Actual receipts realised totaled £16.54 million.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the following

- i) the outturn for 2003/04 of £65.3 million;
- ii) the outturn for 2003/04, excluding those schemes with a significant 3<sup>rd</sup> party involvement, of 97% of the period 4 forecast;
- iii) additional slippage of £4 million since period 10;
- iv) expenditure brought forward of £3.2 million since period 10;
- v) the progress on specific schemes;
- vi) outcomes relating to the Integrating Housing IT system;
- vii) the level of achievement of capital receipts; and
- viii) the current position on the Payback fund.

3.2 Scrutiny committees are asked to consider issues affecting their portfolio and make any observations to the Cabinet as they see fit.

3.3 The Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- i) consider the overall position for the whole Council;
- ii) advise officers if there are any particular schemes where they have concerns over progress; and
- iii) make any observations and recommendations to the Cabinet that it sees fit.

### **4. HEADLINE LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

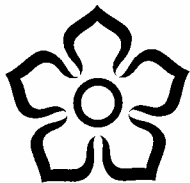
4.1 This report has been discussed with Peter Nicholls (Service Director, Legal Services) and there are no direct legal implications.

4.2 This report is concerned solely with financial issues.

### **5. Report Author:**

Nicola Harlow  
Capital Accountant  
Ext. 7432

**MARK NOBLE**  
**CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Ward

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**  
Housing Scrutiny Committee

**19 August 2004**

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**HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2003/04 OUTTURN**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing and Chief Finance Officer**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the outturn on the Housing Capital Programme for 2003/04. The expenditure for the year was £27.275m which has been fully-financed by available resources.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Cabinet and Housing Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:-
- (i) approve the 2003/04 outturn, as attached at Appendix A; and
  - (ii) approve the method of financing the 2003/04 programme, as attached at Appendix B.

**3. Financial Implications**

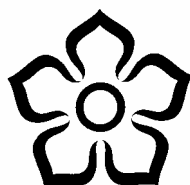
- 3.1 The 2003/04 Housing Capital Outturn shows a total spend of £27.275m which can be matched by available resources for the year.

**4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

**5. Report Author/Officer to contact:**

- 5.1 Dave Pate, Service Director, Resources Ext. 6801  
Danny McGrath, Principal Accountant Ext. 6822.



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
All Wards

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**  
Housing Scrutiny Committee

**19 August 2004**

## **HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2003/04 OUTTURN**

**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing and Chief Finance Officer**

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **1. Report**

- 1.1 The revised 2003/04 Housing Capital Programme totalling £26.711m was approved by Cabinet in January 2004. This programme is shown in Appendix A, together with the corresponding outturn figures and variances on each of the schemes.

#### **2. Outturn**

- 2.1 The outturn shows an overall spend of £27.275m which is £564,000 (2%) above the revised programme total. Explanatory notes are included alongside the variances in Appendix A.

- 2.2 The following variances are of particular note:-

(i) Renewing Kitchens and Bathrooms

The underspend of £523,000 has arisen mainly from the delay in appointing external contractors for this work.

(ii) Aikman Avenue, Structural Works.

Delays in designing and commissioning this scheme has resulted in the bulk of this provision (£139,000) being carried forward.

(iii) Central Heating Boiler

Increased demand for new boilers has been met due to known savings on other schemes.

(iv) Door and Window Replacement.

The overspend of £1.27m on this scheme has arisen from increased levels of work using known savings on other schemes and a decision to meet the cost of a window manufacturing machine from capital resources instead of leasing it.

(v) St Matthews windows, gutters and fascias

Delays in the scheme have resulted in the majority of the provision being carried forward to 2004/05.

(vi) Beaumont Leys Core Area Redesign.

The consultation process and selection of suitable partners has resulted in the bulk of this provision being carried forward.

(vii) Home Repair Grants

Increased demand for this type of grant has resulted in an overspend of £159,000. However, this has been met from planned savings in other parts of the Renewal programme.

(viii) Housing Integrated I.T. Systems

The underspend of £200,000 has resulted from payments being delayed to 2004/05.

2.3 The following additional items were incurred on the basis that they would be met from specific internal funds or government grants.

	£ 000's
Social Housing Schemes	129
Multi-disciplinary centre	54
HB Dip scheme	65
	<u>248</u>

The overspend on the total programme on a like-for-like basis, was, therefore £316,000 (1.2%).

**3. Financing**

3.1 The resources available to finance the 2003/04 Housing Capital Outturn are detailed in Appendix B.

3.2 The main variances on the financing resources are:-

(i) Usable Capital Receipts

Usable Receipts exceeded the amount in the programme by £2.75m due to extremely high levels of Right to Buy (RTB) sales, increases in house prices and

because a number of non-RTB sales were achieved in 2003/04 that were expected to slip into 2004/05. Of the usable receipts total of £7.154m for 2003/04, £5.3m are required for the financing of 2003/04 expenditure, with £1.85m being carried forward to fund slippage in 2004/05.

#### **4. Impact on the 2004/05 Housing Capital Programme**

- 4.1 A number of the variances highlighted above, on both expenditure and financing items, will have an impact on the 2004/05 Housing Capital Programme.
- 4.2 Various funding resources as detailed in the notes on Appendix B are also being carried forward, which will permit the slippage to be financed in 2004/05.
- 4.3 All necessary amendments will be incorporated into the next revision of the 2004/05 programme.

#### **5. Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

#### **6. Other Implications**

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	Yes	7
Policy	No	
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	8
Crime and Disorder	Yes	9
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	10

#### **7. Equal Opportunities Implications**

- 7.1 The use of housing capital allocations allows the Council to tackle disadvantage and target resources to overcome inequality.

#### **8. Sustainable & Environmental Implications**

- 8.1 A number of schemes in the Housing Capital Programme have beneficial environmental implications. Such schemes include uPVC window and door replacements, replacement of central heating boilers and improvements to the district heating network.



**9. Crime and Disorder Implications**

- 9.1 Improvements to estates can help the Council and the Police tackle issues around crime and disorder. Each scheme in the programme is developed with this particular aim in mind, and the opportunity taken to reduce the potential for crime and disorder to take place on various estates across the city.

**10. Elderly /People on Low Income**

- 10.1 Many Council tenants are elderly and/or on low income. Capital investment is necessary to meet the Government's decency standard. This investment will help to provide a warm and comfortable home as well as reduced energy bills.

**11. Aims & Objectives of the Housing Department**

- 11.1 The Capital Programme contributes towards the department's primary aim that "a decent home is within the reach of every citizen of Leicester".

**12. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972**

- 12.1 (a) Report of the Corporate Director of Housing and Chief Finance Officer on "Housing Capital Programme 2003/04 and 2004/07" to Housing Scrutiny Committee 15/1/04 and Cabinet 19/1/04.
- (b) Leicester City Council 2003/04 Capital Programme Booklet.

**13. Consultations**

- 13.1 This is a joint report of the Corporate Director of Housing and Chief Finance Officer. No other departments have been consulted.

**14. Report Authors**

Dave Pate, Service Director, Resources. Ext. 6801  
Danny McGrath, Principal Accountant Ext. 6822

## Appendix A

HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2003/04  
OUTTURN

Housing Revenue Account	Approved Programme £000's	Revised Programme £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000	Notes
Renewing Kitchens & Bathrooms	2,150	2,150	1,627	(523)	
Cladding – MHC Bungalows	400	500	539	39	
Rewiring	700	579	572	(7)	
Re roofing	1,100	700	609	(91)	
Chimney Replacement	100	-	-	0	
External Works	150	-	7	7	
Aikman Avenue Structural Works	140	140	1	(139)	
Central Heating Boilers	2,200	2,400	2,610	210	
Environmental Works	30	30	14	(16)	
Sheltered Housing Improvements	300	400	464	64	
Structural Works	500	500	433	(67)	
Cladding B1SF Houses	320	320	410	90	
Replacement Door Entry Phones	100	100	116	16	
Door and Window Replacement	7,600	7,540	8,814	1,274	Includes £676k window machine
Energy Works	45	15	15	0	
St Matthews Windows, Gutters and Facias	275	275	55	(220)	
District Heating Pipework	270	270	139	(131)	Scheme delayed. Carried forward to 2004/05
District Heating Repairs	-	100	293	193	
Central Heating	100	350	338	(12)	
St Matthews District Heating	200	150	138	(12)	
Health & Safety Issues	100	100	143	43	
New Door Entry Systems	100	100	116	16	
Environmental Budgets for Comm Associations	180	180	177	(3)	
CRI Community Ass Schemes	500	500	482	(18)	
Bungalow Improvements	100	100	25	(75)	
Disabled Adaptations	1,300	1,300	1,378	78	
Service Improvements	340	490	564	74	
Beaumont Leys Core Area Redesign	200	200	1	(199)	Scheme delayed. Balance to be spent in 2004/05
Smoke Alarms and CO2 Detectors	-	90	94	4	
Water Tank Replacement	-	100	123	23	
Targeted Alarms	-	-	27	27	
Demolition of Surplus Properties	-	-	1	1	
Retaining Walls	-	-	3	3	
St Matthews Fire Jobs	-	-	9	9	
Fees	20	20	5	(15)	Residual costs not covered by insurance.
	19,520	19,699	20,342	643	

## General Fund

General Fund	Approved Programme £000's	Revised Programme £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000	Notes
Disabled Facilities Grants	1,300	1,500	1,544	44	
Renovation Grants	1,800	1,700	1,605	(95)	
Energy Efficiency Grants	225	181	200	19	
Environmental Works in Renewal Areas	175	175	105	(70)	
Environmental Works in Humberstone RA	-	50	-	(50)	Increased demand offset by savings in Renewal programme
Home Repair Grants	400	400	559	159	
Capitalisation of Salaries	450	450	444	(6)	
Empty Homes Strategy	100	100	8	(92)	
New Deal Training Scheme	30	30	30	0	
City Wide Maintenance Scheme	30	30	39	9	
Housing Management / Benefits/ Local Tax. IT	840	1,820	1,620	(200)	Slippage to 2004/05
Supporting People Computer System	60	110	77	(33)	
Improvements to Hostels	125	125	123	(2)	
Leicestercare Alarms	90	90	89	(1)	
Home Energy Scheme Contribution	-	45	36	(9)	
LASHG Scheme Bassett Street	-	125	254	129	Funded from commuted sums
Raven Road STAR Office	-	56	-	(56)	
Multi Disciplinary Centre	-	-	54	54	
Group Repair Scheme	-	-	15	15	Preliminary costs funded from reserves
HB DIP Scheme (help fund)	-	-	65	65	
Fees	25	25	66	41	

5,650	7,012	6,933	(79)
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25,170	26,711	27,275	564
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650	-	-	0
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24,520	26,711	27,275	564
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### TOTAL

Less Over-programming

### TOTAL PROGRAMME



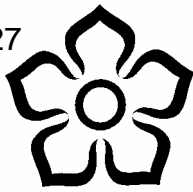
**HOUSING CAPITAL RESOURCES 2003/04**

	Revised Capital Programme £k	Outturn £k	Variance £k
Housing ACG/Single Capital Pot	6,883	6,796	(87)
Major Repairs Allowance	12,743	12,743	0
SCA for Specified Capital Grant	549	549	0
Specified Capital Grant	780	780	0
HRA Balances	500	0	(500) <i>*note 1</i>
Unsupported Credit Approval Local Taxation	447	447	0
IT Replacement Fund	273	273	0
PSRSG (prior years)	0	75	75
HB Help Fund DIP Grant	131	65	(66)
Commuted Sums	0	254	254
Usable Capital Receipts	4,405	5,293	888 <i>*note 2</i>
	26,711	27,275	564

*\*note 1* – HRA funding not required due to high level of capital receipts

*\*note 2* – Balance of usable capital receipts carried forward £1.85m

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**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**19<sup>th</sup> August 2004

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P

**Report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture****1. Purpose of Report**

To update members on the work of the private Sector Housing Group.

**2. Summary**

This Annual Report reviews progress in 2003 - 2004 and details the work programme for 2004 - 2005.

**3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that :

1. The Report is noted by members
2. That a future report be submitted on an annual basis

**4. Financial and legal Implications**

None.

**5. Report Author/Officer to contact:**

Steve Joyce  
Head of Environmental Health  
Regeneration & Culture  
Extn. 6387



ALL WARDS

HOUSING SCRUTINY

19<sup>th</sup> August 2004

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## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GROUP

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### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND CULTURE

#### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Private Sector Housing Group works to improve private sector housing and its environment in the city by:

- Enforcement action to improve private rented accommodation with emphasis on Houses in Multiple Occupation such as bedsits and flats, & shared student housing. This enforcement action improves conditions by dealing with unfitness, disrepair, amenities, and means of escape from fire.
- Regulation of conditions in privately owned Hostels using a mandatory Hostel registration scheme under the provisions of the Leicestershire Act 1985.
- Pro active inspections of privately rented property.
- Advice and partnership working with landlords for example by the development of an Accreditation Scheme for student housing jointly with DeMontfort University and Leicester Landlords Association.
- Ensuring that new residential developments meet agreed standards as part of the Planning process.
- Provision of accommodation certificates for immigration purposes

#### **Accommodation Certificates for immigration purposes**

When applying for entry clearance from the Immigration Service evidence that suitable housing is available is required and this takes the form of an Accommodation Certificate which is provided following inspection of the property by staff from the Private Sector Housing Group.



Property is inspected to ensure it is suitable for occupation particularly in relation to overcrowding and unfitness, and if satisfactory an Accommodation Certificate is issued. This is a popular service and demand for Accommodation Certificates has shown a steady rise over the years.

## **2. Statutory Standards enforced by the Private Sector Housing Group**

**Unfit properties.** There is a legal duty to deal with unfit properties by considering the “most satisfactory course of action”. The Government has consulted over proposals to change the way unfitness is determined in the new draft Housing Bill but has yet to set a date for the introduction of the new Housing Health and Safety Hazard Rating System.

**Fire safety inspections.** There is a legal duty to inspect and take enforcement action which covers the majority of houses in multiple occupation in Leicester. All statutory notices served requiring means of escape/fire precautions work are subject to prior consultation with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

**Mandatory Licensing Schemes for Houses in Multiple Occupation** have been proposed by the Government in the draft Housing Bill but there is no firm date for implementation.

A mandatory registration scheme for hostels has been operating successfully using powers contained in the Leicestershire Act 1985 for a number of years.

## **3. Workload for the Private Sector Housing Service in 2003/4**

- **641 requests** for service received from tenants and landlords. (705 last year)
- **1174 requests** for Accommodation Certificates for immigration purposes (831 last year).
- **174 consultations** on Planning Applications (145 last year)
- **134 Gypsy and Traveller** complaints

**A total requests for service 2123** (1741 last year)

**Around 1739 property inspections** were carried out in 2003/2004 of the following types:

- **198** proactive housing inspections carried out
- **456** Houses in Multiple occupation inspections made
- **641** property inspections made in response to complaints
- **900** Accommodation Certificate inspections(estimate)

- Following inspections **formal enforcement action** was taken :

**158** “Minded to take action” notices served (227 last year)

**210** Statutory notices served requiring owners to carry out works (265 last year)

**13** properties where works in default of landlords carried out (14 last year)

**97 Houses in Multiple Occupation** were improved after Notices served that is brought up to a reasonable standard of repair and means of escape from fire.

#### **4. Beacon status award for Housing Renewal**

The Private Sector Housing Group contributed to the successful Beacon Status award for Housing Renewal in 2004.

There is an inspection and enforcement program for private rented accommodation and in 2003/4 **198** proactive housing inspections were carried out. The majority of these would be in Renewal Areas as Environmental Health Officers have been assigned to specific renewal areas.

There is also involvement with the Empty Homes Strategy and the Development of an Accreditation Scheme for student rented accommodation.

#### **5. Environmental Health Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 166a)**

This indicator deals with all Environmental Health enforcement functions not just Private Sector Housing enforcement activity.

**The score for Environmental Health enforcement services has increased substantially from 17% in March 2001 to 85.8% in March 2003 to 95.4% in March 2004.**

The target for this BVPI for March 2004 was 95%.

This improvement is as a result of the following improvements:

- Consultation with users of our services using satisfaction level surveys introduced from May 2001, analysis of results introduced from July 2001.
- Additional work to establish educational and information programmes.
- Consultation with stakeholders such as landlords and tenants groups .
- An enforcement policy that has been formally adopted by the Council .
- Monitoring of educational and information programmes .

#### **6. Response time to requests for service**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of requests for service</b>	<b>Number with initial response within 2 working days</b>	<b>% initial response within 2 working days</b>

<b>2003/4</b>	<b>2123</b>	<b>1768</b>	<b>94.6% ***</b>
2002/3	1741	1696	97.4%
2001/2	1537	1485	96.8%
2000/1	1394	1383	99.2%

\*\*\* Average initial response time in 2003/4 was 1.0 days

The number of complaints responded to within the two day target is higher than the previous year but the % response rate is down. This is due to a combination of factors:

No Gypsy and Traveller enforcement officer in post for most of 2003/4,  
And a vacant Environmental Health Officer post for 3 months.

An increase in 382 complaints from previous year (Up 21%).  
This is mainly requests for Accommodation Certificates (up by 343).

## **7. Areas of work in 2004/5**

The Private Sector Housing Group responds to complaints from residents from all areas of the city and also carries out proactive work. This can be area based such as in renewal areas or based around areas of high student population or multiple occupancy housing etc. There is also a mandatory duty to inspect all 3 storey houses in multiple occupation for fire safety.

An Accreditation Scheme for student accommodation has been developed in conjunction with DeMontfort University and Leicester Landlords Association. This will involve the inspection of around 1000 properties mainly in the West End area of the city. These inspections are due to start in October 2004.

This work will be a useful groundwork for the introduction of a city wide mandatory Registration Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation. A Registration scheme has not been developed yet in Leicester as the Government has yet to produce full details of the proposed mandatory registration scheme and it is unlikely such a scheme would be up and running until 2005. Any Registration scheme is intended to be self financing as landlords will be charged a registration fee.

Inspections of accommodation used by asylum seekers and refugees will continue .

## **8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS**

We will continue recording equality monitoring data on users and receivers of our services. Ethnicity monitoring of recipients of ownership questionnaires has been underway since July 2000.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Enforcement action is taken when necessary by Environmental Health Officers and where statutory notices are served these become operative and enforceable 21 days after service unless there is an appeal to the Courts.

The Council has a legal duty to carry out many of the functions undertaken by the Private Sector Housing Group such as dealing with unfit housing, remedying statutory nuisances, and dealing with overcrowding.

## **10. SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Private Sector Housing Group seeks to improve, protect and maintain the physical environment by requiring landlords to improve the condition of their properties.

## **11. DETAILS OF CONSULTATIONS**

None.

## **12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Background Files held by the Director of Regeneration and Culture .

## **13. HOUSING DEPARTMENT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Aim of the Housing Department is 'A decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester'. In particular the work of the Private Sector Housing Group meets the key objectives to:

- Improve the condition of Leicester's housing stock and resolve unfitness in the private rented sector
- encourage and enable landlords to continue to maintain the private sector housing stock
- reduce the number of empty and under-occupied homes in Leicester
- enable all citizens of Leicester to find a home which suits their needs
- enable all citizens to have access to healthy living environment

## **14. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

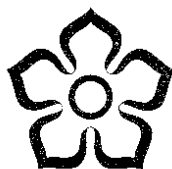
OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Yes	8	
Policy	No		
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	10	
Crime and Disorder	No		

Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	

**Officer to contact about this report -**

Steve Joyce  
Head of Environmental Health  
Regeneration and Culture  
Extn 6387 or 0116 2526387

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Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED:  
CITY WIDE**

**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**19 AUGUST 2004**

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## **EMPTY SHOPS PROGRESS REPORT**

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**Report of the Service Director (Property) – Corporate Property Officer  
Resources, Access and Diversity Department**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

This report provides an update on the current position with vacant Council estate shops following various initiatives that have been undertaken to reduce numbers of empty properties.

### **2. Summary**

The Council currently own 131 shops on Council housing estates of which 5 are currently not let . Of these, 4 are under offer to new tenants, 1 being actively marketed.

### **3. Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the report.

### **4. Financial and legal Implications**

Council estate shops are accounted for in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Therefore, any vacant shops represent foregone rental income to the HRA.

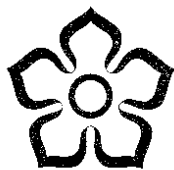
The shop currently vacant, and not under offer, has a rental value of approximately £4,000.

**(Graham Troup – Finance Implications)**

**(David Jones – Legal Implications)**

### **5. Officer to contact:**

Neil Gamble  
Valuation Services and Operational Property Manager  
Extn. 5043



Leicester  
City Council

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## **EMPTY SHOPS PROGRESS REPORT**

---

**Report of the Service Director (Property) – Corporate Property Officer  
Resources, Access and Diversity Department**

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **1. Report**

- 1.1 In 1996 the Council owned 183 Council estate shops of which 31 were vacant, a number of which having been vacant for over 2 years.
- 1.2 By January 1998 the number of shop units had dropped to 162 with 32 being vacant and in response to this the Housing Committee approved a range of options for reducing void numbers.
- 1.3 This included the continuation of a policy to sell to existing tenants where there were no separately let flats over, sale for conversion for residential use where there was no longer any demand for shops, increasing security at parades including CCTV, and the identification of shops where hot food takeaway use might be suitable. Vacant shops act as a target for vandalism and anti social behaviour and do not enhance the local environment.
- 1.4 In January 1999 the income loss from the 31 vacant properties amounted to £102,000.
- 1.5 By January 2000 the effect of the strategy was to have reduced vacancies to 17 units.
- 1.6 By August 2002 there were 135 shops with 6 being actively marketed. Income loss from the empty properties was £23,700.
- 1.7 In August 2003 it was noted that of 134 shops, two were being actively marketed with an income loss of £10,250.
- 1.8 During the last year the Council have sold 3 shops (63 Keightley Road, 2 Beatrice Road and 17 Gamel Road) with total receipts of £225,000. Of the remaining 131 shops all but 5 are let with 4 of these under offer and 1 being actively marketed.



- 1.9 The Netherhall Road parade houses the shop available to let. In recent years this parade has continued to be difficult to let but has improved with security works and the recent opening of a library in a double shop unit.
- 1.10 The statistics indicate the success of the strategy to-date with the Council having retained the parades where demand for retail use remains, have disposed of shops where there was no demand and have sought to make the remaining shops more attractive through security and environmental initiatives.
- 1.11 During this period the annual total rental income from estate shops, net of write-offs of bad debts was as follows:-

1998/99	£563,784
1999/00	£554,146
2000/01	£571,903
2001/02	£574,003
2002/03	£613,802
2003/04	£624,611

The 03/04 increase reflects the reduction in voids and rental increases gained at rent review and lease renewal negotiations.

- 1.12 However, there are continuing issues which require monitoring. Currently out of the 131 shops, 21 are occupied either as Housing offices, libraries or by SRB projects. Without these uses the vacancy rate would obviously be higher and during the last year the Netherhall Library and use of shops by STAR Team has confirmed this position.
- 1.13 There is a continuing trend in secondary retailing that the range of uses that can operate viably is reducing. In our larger parades, this is becoming increasingly evident as when voids occur the identification of non conflicting alternative uses that could be financially viable is difficult.
- 1.14 Arrangements are in place so that prior to shops being remarketed, the relevant Neighbourhood Housing Manager is asked for comment on need in the area so that the marketing can be targeted accordingly.
- 1.15 There is a trend that the small supermarket tenants are seeking to expand their ranges, and in some cases expand their size, and this remains a threat to the traditional specialist retailers on parades. The Council continues to be strict on user clauses but need to monitor the effect of the apparent wideness of supermarket general store uses as compared with more specific specialist shop user clauses which can limit traders ability to diversify and remain viable.
- 1.16 Another issue which impacts on lettings is the future of small post offices and how these services are delivered. Indications are that numbers of local post offices will continue to reduce.

- 1.17 The shop lettings continue to be managed by Property Services who have performance indicators for properties be re-let within 3 months of becoming vacant and achieving on average of 8% rental increase at rent reviews and lease renewals.
- 1.18 Another area of concern is that of repair. The Council retain the liability for external and structural repairs and with the age of the portfolio this liability is extending especially with flat roofs failing. Continued investment in maintenance and the immediate environment of the shops will be necessary to continue to keep the parades vibrant.
- 1.19 Property Services has carried out customer satisfaction surveys of estate shop tenants over the last 2 years, which have highlighted concerns over repairs and security.
- 1.20 The results of the strategy are clear to see in the reduced vacancy levels and the fact that the estate shops portfolio has been streamlined to include, for the most part, the better properties. However, the current levels of occupation are bolstered by non retail uses and in the future it is likely that the parades will find that there are not enough viable uses for the number of individual units available and therefore continuing review of the position will be necessary.

**FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

1. Financial Implications

1.1 There are no direct financial implications for this report.  
**(Graham Troup)**

2. Legal Implications

2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.  
**(David Jones)**

3. **Other Implications**

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	NO		
Policy	NO		
Sustainable and Environmental	YES	1.10	
Crime and Disorder	YES	1.10	
Human Rights Act	NO		
Elderly/People on Low Income	YES	1.16	

4. **Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972**

None.

5. **Consultations**

Housing Department.

6. **Officer to contact:**

Neil Gamble  
Valuation Services and Operational Property Manager  
Extn. 5043

**Lynn Cave**  
**Service Director (Property) – Corporate Property Officer**  
**Resources, Access and Diversity Department**

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Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED:  
CITY WIDE**

**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**19 AUGUST 2004**

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## **EMPTY SHOPS PROGRESS REPORT**

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**Report of the Service Director (Property) – Corporate Property Officer  
Resources, Access and Diversity Department**

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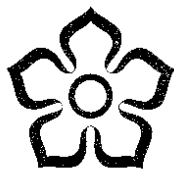
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