

Leicester  
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS

Cabinet

10<sup>th</sup> March 2003

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**Best Value Service Review of the Housing Management Service: Scoping Report**

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**Report of the Corporate Director of Housing**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposals for the scoping of the Best Value Service Review of the Housing Management Service and details the preparations to be undertaken prior to the formal inspection in April 2004.
- 1.2 The Housing Inspectorate will be informed by this Review when they examine this service in April 2004 which will be considered in the 2004 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

The 2002 CPA rating for all Housing Services, including this service is 3, with 4 being the best, awarded to just 9 Councils.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To agree the service areas to include in the Best Value Review as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 To agree a performance management based approach to the review as detailed in Appendix 1.

**3. HEADLINE FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

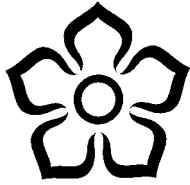
- 3.1 There are no issues relating to these proposals.

**4. REPORT AUTHOR/OFFICERS TO CONTACT:**

- 4.1 Pat Hobbs Ext 6803  
Service Director, Housing Management and Hostels  
Tracie Rees Ext 3407  
Contract Manager, Housing Management and Hostels

**DECISION STATUS**

<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reason</b>	<b>Citywide impact on communities</b>
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	<b>Executive (Cabinet)</b>



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## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1. REPORT**

#### **Background Information**

- 1.1. Members will be aware that following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) it was corporately agreed that the Housing Management Service would be subject to a formal Best Value inspection in April 2004.
- 1.2. Appendix 1. details the proposals for the scoping of the review and the preparations to be undertaken in 2003 to prepare the service for the formal inspection.

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

#### **2.1 Financial Implications**

- 2.1.1 There are no financial implications relating to this report.

#### **2.2 Legal Implications**

- 2.2.1 There are no legal implications relating to this report.

#### **2.3 Other Implications**

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

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

4.1 CPA Assessment Report for Leicester – Audit Commission 2002

#### **5. Consultation**

5.1 Corporate Policy & Performance Team  
Tenants Best Value Consultation Group

#### **6. Aims & Objectives**

6.1 “The Aim of the Housing Services is a decent home within the reach of every citizen in Leicester”

6.2 This report contributes to that aim by improving the Housing Management services provided to tenants to meet both current and future demand, and ensure that the service provided is customer focused, aimed at meeting both current and future tenants needs.

#### **7. Report Author**

7.1 Pat Hobbs Ext 6803  
Service Director, Housing Management and Hostels  
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# **BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE: SCOPING THE REVIEW**

## **Introduction**

Following the CPA it was corporately agreed that the Housing Management Service would be subject to a formal Best Value Review. This report sets out the proposals for the scoping of the review and the preparations to be undertaken in 2003 to prepare the Service for inspection in April 2004. The theme of the Review will be to improve the Housing Management Service, which will enhance the quality of life for local people.

## **Background**

### **Service Aim for the Housing Service**

The overall aim for the Housing Service is “A decent home for every citizen of Leicester.”

### **Service Aim for the Housing Management Service**

Our role is to provide decent homes to Council tenants, and to contribute towards the creation and support of neighbourhoods where people choose to live.

### ***We will achieve this by:***

- 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, we will:
  - ◆ Provide good quality Housing Management Services that acknowledge the diversity and expectations of local communities across the City
  - ◆ Contribute towards a safe and pleasant environment
  - ◆ Co-ordinate services to promote partnership working to maximise social inclusion
  - ◆ Determine rent levels in consultation with our tenants to ensure the future provision of the Housing Management Service.
  - ◆ Let individual tenancies and offer advice and options to tenants and customers
  - ◆ Maximise rental income through effective implementation of rent arrears policies
  - ◆ Continue to provide local, neighbourhood based services.
- 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.

## Key Drivers of the Review

- Improving the Quality of Service experienced by Tenants
- The local housing market: now and in the future – looking at options available for tenants or those likely to become tenants
- Government priorities for housing delivery: stock options, tenant involvement
- Improved performance
- Good practice / alternative methods for delivery of service/elements of the service

## Activities to be included in the Review

The review will encompass the following service areas:

- **Management of tenancies**
- **Management of voids**
- **Rent Collection including arrears management**
- **Environmental Management of estates**
- **Tenant consultation and participation**
- **Responding to nuisance and Harassment**
- **Community Safety**

The Council's responsibilities regarding housing management are twofold: it is a landlord providing social housing; and is a community leader committed to improving local well being.

As a social landlord, it is responsible for directly contributing to the day to day quality of life of Council tenants: from the quality of the environment of local estates to tackling anti-social behaviour. In its community leadership role, it has a responsibility for promoting the quality of life of those living and working in local communities - council tenants as well as other tenants and homeowners, and local businesses.

In broad terms the review will cover all functions associated with the Council's role as a Social Housing Landlord. These areas set out how the service is currently operated, however, the review will be customer focused and will also need to look in depth at customer care issues, equal opportunities, sustainability and anti poverty, as well as how services can be best co-ordinated within the Council and with other agencies.

The review will not cover the following areas as they have already undergone a formal Best Value Review and Inspection.

- Repairs and Maintenance
- Services to Homeless People

Sheltered Accommodation is not included as it is being reviewed by the Services to Older People Section, and they will be responsible for considering service improvements.

Although the following Service areas will not be directly included in the Review, there are important cross service issues which will be considered as part of the overall Review process.

- Housing Benefit (as it affects the timely payment of rent)
- Allocations Policy (in determining which applicants have access to council housing)
- Rent levels and the implication for social inclusion (affordability and availability of council housing to those in need)
- Day to day repairs (a feature raised in tenant consultation, affecting the day to day quality of life of tenants)
- Sheltered Accommodation (housing for vulnerable tenants who would otherwise not be able to live independently in the community)
- Tenancy Support (particularly for those tenants who would otherwise not be able to maintain their tenancies).
- Community Development (affecting the quality of the environment on estates and links into community cohesion)
- Area regeneration and the impact of SRB and New Deal initiatives
- Corporate initiatives and strategies including:
  - Revitalising Neighbourhoods
  - Community Cohesion
  - Building Communities

## **Aims and Objectives of the Review**

The aim of the review is to improve the Housing Management Services provided to tenants to meet both current and future demand, and ensure that the service provided is customer focused, aimed at meeting both current and future tenant needs. The review will consider the implications for tenants (service benefits versus cost) of having a one, two or three star housing management service.

The approach taken for the review will be performance management based. A service assessment analysis of Housing Management was undertaken in 2001, leading to the identification of areas for improvement. A performance management approach will enable us to assess these changes as well as identify service features requiring a more in-depth analysis within the context of this review.

The objectives of the review are to:

- Challenge current housing management arrangements and tailor the best service to meet client needs, seeking ambitious improvements
- Consider available alternative service for the management of the stock and assess their contribution to improved management/tenant experience.
- Set out plans for delivering short and long-term improvements.

These objectives will be achieved by following local and national guidance on Best Value service reviews, working with other providers carrying out similar strategic reviews, using evidence from other reviews, and engaging communities and other stakeholders at every key stage of the process.

## **APPLYING THE 4 C'S**

### **CHALLENGE**

In 2001, we undertook an extensive service assessment using the European Foundation Quality Model which resulted in the implementation of a comprehensive Improvement Plan. The Plan is reviewed on a regular basis which ensures continuous improvement in the Housing Management Service.

The fundamental questions are what is it like to be a Tenant/Customer of the Housing Management Service? Are we providing the services our Customers want? Are we the best provider of the Housing Management Service?

As a landlord we have a statutory duty to provide certain services. Ongoing consultation with our tenants has indicated that we are providing the services that they want.

Further assessment of the services they need and how these services are provided is required, and will be a fundamental part of the review. This will examine current arrangements for providing a council housing management service which can deliver the landlord's objectives and meet the customers needs, and determine whether the current arrangements allow identified improvements to be delivered.

Extensive reality checks have taken place to assess what is it like to be a Tenant/Customer of the Housing Management Service. These included:-

- Telephone Surveys
- Mystery Customer shopping exercises
- Estate inspections
- Random checks on ready to let properties
- Reception areas and facilities in the local housing management offices

A Tenants Inspectorate was created to undertake further reality checks and this has proved so successful that their role has been expanded to include quarterly inspections of :-

- Estates and the local environment
- A sample of the ready to let properties
- Reception areas and facilities

The reality checks undertaken by the tenants themselves have also resulted in off the job induction training for new front line staff and the introduction of Customer Care Training Officers.

Outcomes have already led to certain service changes and further improvements will be detailed in the Improvement Plan.

To inform these decisions, a comprehensive appraisal of the current system will be undertaken, looking at the quality of the current service, the costs and structure of the current service, issues with demand for the current service, low levels of tenant participation, and the impact on communities.



## **CONSULTATION**

The driving force behind consultation is service improvement, constantly tracking the needs and expectations of our customers, stakeholders, partners and staff.

The Housing Management Service is currently responsible for fostering tenant participation in housing management and has an active ongoing programme of tenant consultation as set out in the Tenants Compact. The consultation structure is clearly set down and includes:-

- Housing Management Board (rotating chair between Chair of LFTA and the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing & Neighbourhood Renewal)
- Community Associations (currently 6)
- Local Tenants and Residents Associations
- A trained Tenants Inspectorate Team

Consultation to date has resulted in many improvements to front line service delivery for our tenants. The work of the Tenants Inspectorate is far reaching, and goes beyond normal consultation methods:-

- They assist with training front line staff
- They quality check reception areas
- They inspect estates providing detailed information on the state of the local environment
- They make recommendations for improvements, and will check that improvements have been implemented

This Review will enhance the current level of consultation and will indicate further how customers, stakeholders, partners and staff perceive the current service and their desire for future service changes; clarifying their concerns, expectations and anticipated future demands on the Housing Management Service. We shall use the findings from the consultation exercises to inform decisions on further service improvements required.

We shall also undertake specific consultation exercises as required, in the most appropriate forms. This is particularly relevant to hard to reach groups.

## **COMPARE**

Extensive work has been undertaken to compare and benchmark the service with the Major Cities Group, and a number of top quartile authorities across the country, including site visits. This has resulted in a number of reviews to our policies and practices to ensure best practice, e.g.

- A revised Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment Policy
- New Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Creation of Voids Initiatives Officers

This process will continue and we will compare ourselves with other Housing Management Service providers, looking at the following.

- Comparisons with top quartile authorities in terms of good practice and performance
- Benchmarking at a local and national level, across all appropriate authority types and also different social housing providers
- Looking at effective models of tenant participation and community development that measurably improve tenant experience of housing services
- Looking at emerging models of alternative forms of service delivery, and challenging in-house provision
- Trend analysis, including forecasts for tenant demand (demographic and the social profile of tenants), and housing provision within Leicester (provision/availability of and demand for affordable housing).

## **COMPETE**

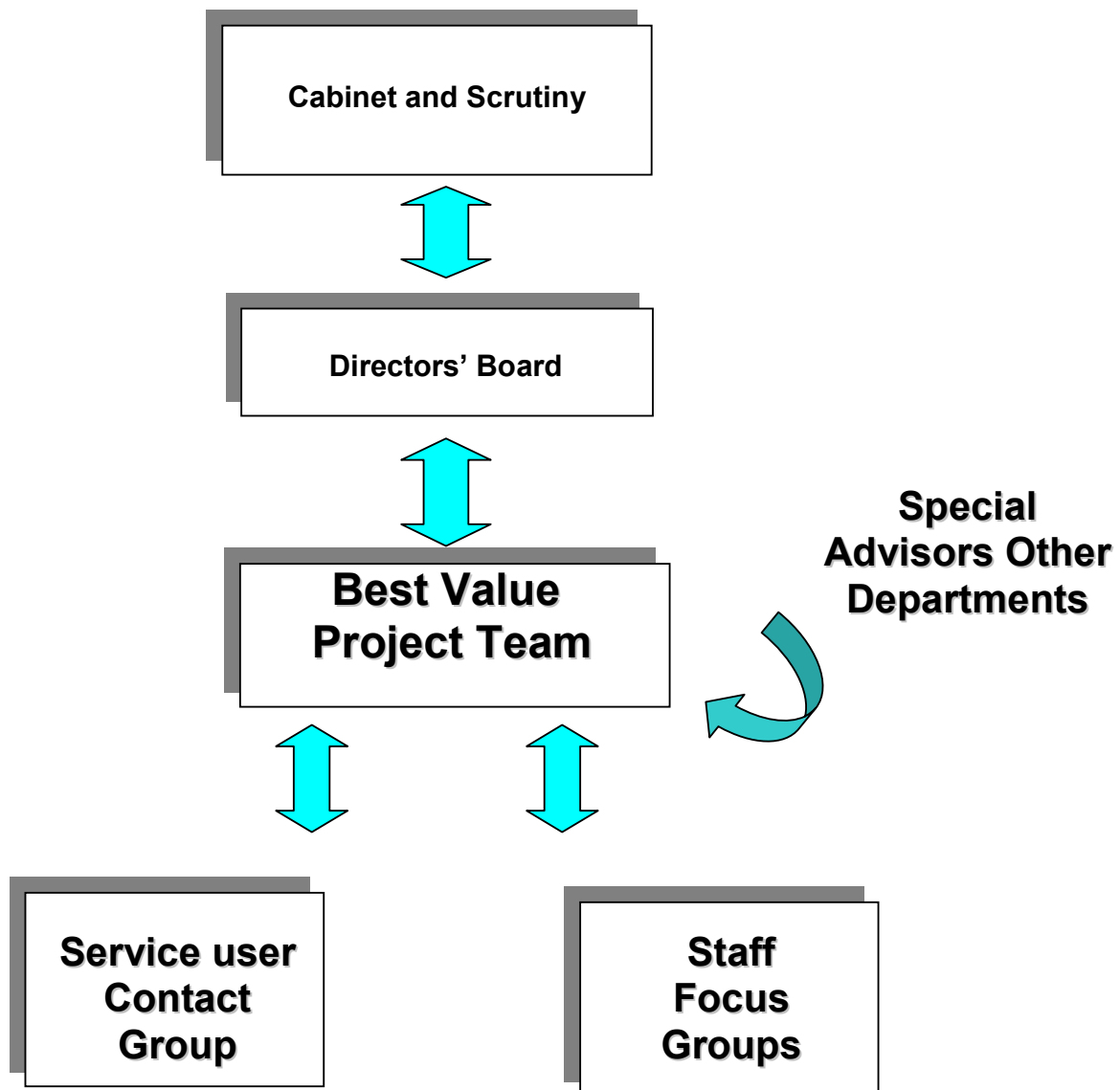
There have been no recent competitive costings undertaken, however, our intention is to collect enough comparable data on cost and quality of service, across a range of housing providers in order to identify competition as a means of securing efficient and effective services.

### **Improvement Plan**

The outcome of the Review will inform a comprehensive Improvement Plan which will be incorporated into the service's Business Plan.

## Facilitating the Review

The review needs to be project managed and a small team of Officers and Tenant Representatives has been established to facilitate the process. The following chart identifies a framework, which ensures that all interested bodies are involved in the review process.



## Group Membership

### **Tenants Best Value Consultation Team**

A group drawn from the wider Tenants movement established to focus particularly on the service under review.

- To challenge services from a service user perspective
- To provide the consultative forum for service users on emerging issues and proposed improvements

#### **Membership:**

7 Members drawn from the existing Tenant movement representing the 6 Community Associations across the City and the Chair of the LFTA

### **Staff Focus Groups**

Specially appointed group drawn from a cross section of grades and posts involved in delivering the housing service

- To challenge services from a staff perspective
- To provide the consultative forum for staff on emerging issues and proposed improvements

#### **Membership**

- 25 staff from a cross section of the Housing Management Service

### **Stakeholders**

Specially appointed group drawn from all the Agencies, Council Departments, Tenants, Residents and Elected Members who have an interest in the Housing Management Service

- To challenge services from a stakeholders perspective
- To provide the consultative forum for stakeholders on emerging issues and proposed improvements

#### **Membership**

- Anyone who has an interest in the Housing Management Service

#### **Frequency:**

To be determined at key stages of the review

### **Critical Friend**

#### **Terms of Reference:**

- To act as an independent expert
- To validate the review process
- To provide useful advice throughout the course of the review.

#### **Frequency:**

To be determined at key stages of the review

## **Equalities**

Managing Diversity and delivering equality are central to the review of the Housing Management Service. In order to enhance the work already undertaken with the new and emerging communities, and to ensure that the services provided reflect our tenants and other customers' needs and expectations, we shall undertake further work in relation to:-

- Access to services (to recognise the importance of a wide range of tenants)
- Raising cultural awareness (working with staff and existing tenants groups to ensure that cultural differences are taken into account)
- Engaging with hard to reach groups (promoting social inclusion)

## **Budget and Resources**

See Appendix A.

## **Review Timetable**

Listed below are the key milestones in the Review process.

### *JANUARY 2003*

- Consultation:
  - i) First consultative meeting with tenants
  - ii) Commence Staff Focus Groups
  - iii) Stakeholders meeting
  - iv) Devise Tenants Survey
- Commence data collection (for comparisons)
- Research emerging models of alternative housing management provision, public, private and RSL sector
- Undertake trend analysis: including tenant profile and local housing market

Facilitation of the Review Process:

- Meeting with key Council stakeholders (Members, Scrutiny Director etc.)
- Meeting with Trade Unions

### *FEBRUARY 2003*

- Scoping Report to Corporate Directors' Board
- Scoping Report to Members Best Value Working Party
- Ongoing research and consultation
- Collection and analysis of data:
  - i) Commence benchmarking activities
  - ii) Performance data analysis

*MARCH 2003*

- Draw conclusions from consultation & research on tenants' needs and aspirations for the housing management service
- Review research and data – identify emerging options that meet tenants needs and landlord obligations for provision
- Input into the HRA Business Plan to ensure co-ordination of the Best Value process
- Scope options and the implications of their implementation on staffing and available resources within the HRA boundaries; delivery options for the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX management of the stock
- Continue Service Assessment
- Scoping Report to Cabinet (& Scrutiny as required)

*APRIL 2003*

- Continue Service Assessment

*MAY 2003*

- Interim Report to Corporate Directors' Board, setting out the Service Assessment results
- Meeting with Trade Unions
- Interim Report to Members Best value Working Party
- Interim Report to Cabinet (& Scrutiny as required)

*JUNE 2003*

- Development of the Improvement Plan, incorporating information gained from the Service Assessment process
  - Improvement Plan to Corporate Directors' Board
- Improvement Plan to Members Best Value Working Party
- Improvement Plan to Cabinet (& Scrutiny as required)

*JULY 2003*

- Implementation of the Improvement Plan

*APRIL 2004*

- Formal Best value Inspection

**Recommendation**

That the proposals on scoping, facilitation and timetable of this review are endorsed.

**Budget****HRA Income & Expenditure 2001/02 Actuals**

	£000
<b><u>Income</u></b>	
Dwelling Rents	54,967
Other Rents (Garages, shops & land)	967
Service Charges (mainly District Heating)	1,353
General Fund Contribution - Tenant/Resident Support	124
General Fund Contribution - 'Hard Areas'	125
Housing Benefit Transfers	200
Interest received on balances	<u>533</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>58,269</u></b>
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>	£000
Repairs & Maintenance	19,404
General Management:	
District Managers, BV preparation & Arrears team	<b>681</b>
Neighbourhood Offices	<b>4,240</b>
General Support/SLA's/insurances	<b><u>4,291</u></b>
	9,212
Management:	
Environmental budgets	<b>183</b>
TA funding	<b>180</b>
St Mark's EMB	440
Community Development	<b><u>43</u></b>
	846
Special Management:	
Flat/concierge services	<b>963</b>
District Heating	1,192
Other (projects, shops management, repairs reporting)	657
Warden assisted services/LeicesterCare	<u>441</u>
	3,253
Capital Financing costs	17,015
Negative subsidy	7,198
Contribution to Bad Debts provision	<u>1,136</u>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b><u>58,064</u></b>
<b>Net (surplus) for 2001/02</b>	<b>(205)</b>

\*The figures highlighted in bold are areas covered by this review.  
Others will have been covered by previous Best Value reviews.

## Resources

Number of posts	Title
1	<b>Service Director</b>
3	Contract Managers
11	Neighbourhood Housing Managers
12	Team Leaders
11	Administration & Finance Officer
64.5	Neighbourhood Housing Officers
59	Housing Support Officers
4	Tower Block Officers
2.5	Rent Collectors
4	Estate Wardens
2	Somalian Workers (Temp 2 years)
<b>Arrears Team</b>	
1	IT/Rent Arrears Strategy Manger
1	Project Officer Rent Arrears (Temp 12 months)
4	To be appointed Arrears Officers (Temp 6 months)
<b>Project Team</b>	
1	Project Manager
2	Project Officers
2	Customer Care Officer (Temp 12 months)
2	Project Officer Equalities (Temp 12 months)
2	Support Project Officers
<b>Noise Nuisance Team *</b>	
1	Team Leader
4	Nuisance Response Officer
1	Administer
1	Legal Officer (Home Office Funded)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NNT all posts funded by SRB5/6 until March 2004</li> </ul>	
<b>Community Development Team</b>	
1	Community Development Manager
6	Community Development Officers
<b>Tenancy Support Team</b>	
1	Tenancy Support Manager
6	Team Leaders
30	Tenancy Support Workers
4	Admin Officers
<b>Total Number of Staff 244</b>	