

Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED : ALL WARDS

CABINET

4 APRIL 2005

**HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S RESPONSE TO
ISSUES REFERRED FROM COUNCIL**

Report of the Corporate Director of Housing

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises Cabinet of the Housing Scrutiny Committee's response to two issues referred to Scrutiny, by Council, in January 2005 during the debates on the Housing Capital Programme 2004/5 and 2005/8, and the Housing Revenue Account 2005/6.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report informs Cabinet of the Committee's views on how the issues should be progressed.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is **recommended** to consider the Committee's response, to the issues raised, and to decide how it wishes to proceed.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (Rod Pearson)

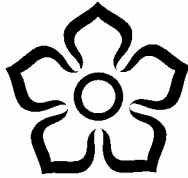
- 4.1 If Cabinet decide to approved additional resources for HomeCome the report would require Council approval.

5. AUTHOR

- 5.1 Dave Pate ext 6801

DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	No
Executive or Council Decision	Cabinet



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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 During the debates on the Housing Capital Programme 2004/5 and 2005/8, and the Housing Revenue Account 2005/6, Councillor Smith moved two amendments, which were defeated. However, in considering the issues Council agreed to refer the items to Scrutiny for further consideration. This report therefore addresses this referral and Scrutiny's response on the way forward.

2. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/5 and 2005/8

2.1 In considering the Housing Capital Programme 2004/5 and 2005/8 at Council in January 2005, Members debated an amendment to the report that would have resulted in the following:

2.1.1 HomeCome

An additional £1m per annum, over and above the £3m already included in the programme, being added in 2005/6, 2006/7 and 2007/8. This item to be funded by ring fencing anticipated extra developer contributions arising from the full implementation of the Council's policies on affordable housing.

2.1.2 Scrutiny's Response

The programme submitted to Council in January, included an amount of £3m in 2005/6, £1m in 2006/7 and £1m in 2007/8 from Commuted sums. The resources programmed for HomeCome were £3m in 2005/6, £1.5m in 2006/7 and £1.5m in 2007/8. Therefore, overall, the draft resources for HomeCome are already above the resources anticipated from Commuted sums over the three-year period.

Members, from all political party's, on the Scrutiny Committee supported the proposal that any further Commuted Sums raised above those already allowed for in the programme should be made available to HomeCome.

Cabinet were asked to support this proposal.

2.1.3 **Bathroom and Kitchen Modernisation Programme**

An additional £1m per annum being added, over and above the £10m already included in the programme in 2005/6, £9.3m in 2006/7 and £10m in 2007/8 to the Bathroom and Kitchen modernisation programme. This item to be funded by the sale of surplus corporate land and property.

2.1.4 **Scrutiny's Response**

The Committee rejected the proposal that more resources should be added to the programme but agreed that priority should be given to elderly people.

Cabinet is reminded that the current policy is that priority is given to the longest serving tenant, who has no rent arrears or Anti-social Behaviour Orders or pending Anti-social Behaviour Orders against them. A programme that directly benefited elderly tenants, at the exclusion of all other tenants, could be classed as discriminatory. The present system, excludes no one, but in reality, is liable to be more advantageous to elderly than other groups as they are likely to be our longest serving tenants.

Cabinet is asked to consider whether it wishes to change the current priority order for the Bathroom and Kitchen Programme in light of Scrutiny's views.

3. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2005/6**

3.1 In considering the Housing Revenue Account 2005/6 at Council in January 2005, Members debated an amendment to the report that would have resulted in additional resources being targeted at two areas in which the Council has received the most criticism from both best value and our tenants:

3.1.1 **Play Equipment in housing areas only**

£50,000 of investment per annum over the next three years to be funded from reductions in Housing IT provision and Miscellaneous Service Provision.

3.1.2 **Scrutiny's Response**

Members noted that the provision of play equipment is a benefit to the whole community, and not just Council tenants, unless it is in an enclosed area, e.g. maisonettes on St Matthews, where there has previously been no Right to Buy sales. Therefore, any provision for this type of facility should rightly fall on the whole community i.e. via a charge on the General Fund and not just a charge on Council tenants, via the Housing Revenue Account.

Members also noted the responsibility, expertise and budgets for Play Equipment in the City lies with the Corporate Director for Regeneration and Culture not with the Corporate Director of Housing.

The Committee therefore recommended that this item should be referred to the Corporate Director for Regeneration and Culture for action.

Cabinet is recommended to refer this item to the Corporate Director for Regeneration and Culture for consideration and comment.

3.1.3 **Improved access to Housing Department via Telephone system**

£100,000 per annum over the next three years to modernise and improve the Housing Department telephone system with the aim of increasing the opening hours and to merge with the corporate telephone system or with the new Housing Benefits and Tax Collection System. To be funded from reductions in Housing IT provision and Miscellaneous Service Provision.

3.1.4 **Scrutiny's Response**

The Committee noted that the Department has been actively working on introducing an integrated computer system and moving to an Electronic Document Management System (paperless office) over the last two years. This development includes the introduction of a Customer Relational Management database system. In most areas this work is now completed and we therefore have the opportunity to introduce the benefits that a new telephony system would bring. Work on this is planned to take place, on an incremental basis, during the next financial year, and the costs have already been approved as part of the 2004/5 and 2005/6 Housing Capital Programmes, therefore no further provision was necessary.

No further decision is required from Cabinet on this item

4. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

	Yes/No
Equal Opportunities	No
Policy	No
Sustainable & Environmental	No
Crime & Disorder	No
Human Rights Act	No

6. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT

- 6.1 This report meets the Committee's overall Quality of Life Aim for the Department 'A decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester', and within that Key Objective 1 - To improve the condition of Leicester's housing stock and resolve unfitness in all sectors.

7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

7.1 Background Papers

Joint report of the Corporate Director of Housing and the Chief Finance Officer on Capital Programme 2004/05 and 2005/08 to Housing Scrutiny Committee on 20th January 2005, Cabinet on 24th January 2005 and Council on the 27th January 2005.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 No other departments have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9. Report Author

Dave Pate - extension 6801