

Title of Report	Housing Services Improvements Programme – 2008 - 2011
Date:	Last Updated April 2009

Contents	Page
<u>Setting the Scene</u>	2
Service Areas:	
<u>Customer Access and Customer Care</u>	7
<u>Diversity</u>	14
<u>Value for Money</u>	24
<u>Allocations and Lettings</u>	32
<u>Homelessness and Housing Needs</u>	40
<u>Supported Housing</u>	47
<u>Stock Investment and Asset Management</u>	53
<u>Housing Income Management</u>	63
<u>Tenancy and Estate Management</u>	69
<u>Enforcing Tenancy Conditions and Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour</u>	77
<u>Resident Involvement</u>	85
<u>Strategic Approach to Housing</u>	92
<u>Private Sector Housing</u>	101

Setting the Scene

Improving Housing Services

Housing Services within Cambridge City Council includes both management around 8,500 properties, including just over 1,000 leasehold, and strategic housing services that must meet the complex needs of a growing city. The availability and affordability of housing is a major issue for local residents. In the 2006 Quality of Life Survey 50% of residents were dissatisfied with the affordability of housing in the city, and 26% with availability. Other issues that score as prominent local concerns in the Council's regular Citizen's survey include tackling homelessness, rough sleeping, and anti-social behaviour. For tenants litter and rubbish on estates is also a concern. Partnership working underpins our approach to both the delivery and management of affordable housing.

In 2005, following a Stock Option Appraisal that resulted in a decision by the City Council to retain its housing stock after 79% of tenants voted to remain with the Council, housing services embarked on a comprehensive improvement programme across the whole of housing services. This improvement plan is a stock take of how we have done so far, and sets out new targets to meet the challenges ahead. This plan looks at progress against cross cutting issues and in service specific areas.

In the first year following retention focus was given to improving performance indicators and to reviewing major policies and procedures that supported retention. This plan includes an appendix of housing related performance indicators showing trends. The most recent Audit Commission comparator data shows that 75% of all housing related Best Value Performance Indicators improved between the base year 2004/5 and 2006/7.

Checking progress is an important part of the improvement process, and using the feedback. In 2006 we commissioned tenants' focus groups to gain feedback on areas of poor performance, a mock inspection from Adams Integra, and the regular Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Adams Integra assessed the service as one star with promising prospects for improvement and commented that we if we carried through a smart action plan we 'should be able to achieve a 2 star rating within 12 months'. This led to an improvement plan, with progress initially reviewed through the Housing Management Team. The results from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2006 showed increased tenant satisfaction since 2003 by 7 percentage points, with most satisfaction indicators improving.

The Council's Annual Statement for 2007 included a target for housing services to achieve a 2 star rating, externally validated. In Autumn 2007 an improving housing services panel was set up to drive the pace of change, and a project manager was appointed to support the improving housing services programme, which systematically reviewed progress against previous targets and changing good practice. Staff briefings, workshops, and improved communications with staff and service users have been an integral part of the improvement work. The review has led

to this refreshed action plan which reflects on achievements so far and sets actions over the next year, focusing on the first two years in line with the corporate improvement plan.

The finalised plan is to be presented to tenants, leaseholders and elected members at a special briefing in July and at the tenants' conference in October, to gain approval for the direction of travel. Staff briefings will support its active use. In subsequent years the improving housing services action plan will be refreshed every Autumn to align it to service and budget plans, agreed in the following January.

The Council's track record

Cambridge City Council was assessed as an Excellent authority, following a Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2003.

The Annual Audit and Inspection Letter of March 2008 assessed the Council as performing at an excellent level (level 4) in the 'use of resources' judgement, and the direction of travel remained improving. The Council has a well established corporate budget and service planning cycle, supported by a performance management framework delivered through service planning and individual performance objectives and appraisals. The Council supports a mixed economy approach to the delivery of services, and seeks to achieve value for money through a mix of direct and externally procured services, working in partnership with others where this delivers better outcomes. In housing services we estimate that the decent homes contract by 2010 will have delivered £1.45m cashable and non-cashable efficiencies, which have been redirected back into the decent homes programme, at the same time achieving quality and satisfaction targets

The Council is currently at level 3 of the equality standard. Housing has had a number of initiatives that have contributed to this assessment, which are detailed in this plan. For example the BME survey, and improved services for rough sleepers and the single homeless.

The Council is engaged in a major reshape of services through its Customer Access Strategy (CAS), which seeks to deliver improved customer experience with the aim of resolving 80% of enquiries at first point of contact. A new Customer Service Centre (CSC) opened in April 2008, with a visitors centre, an integrated telephone contact centre and improved web design and access. Investment in Customer Relationship Management technology and other supporting enhancements have been introduced. Services are moving into these new arrangements on a phased basis. Choice Based Lettings (CBL) and supporting allocations and lettings services were one of the first services, in April 2008, to move across, with other services programmed to follow. This supports housing objectives to improve telephone answering standards and increase the use of web-based services. The former was identified as an issue in the tenant focus groups, particularly when there was the need for a call back, and was reinforced by the finding in the 2006 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, that an increasing number of tenants were shifting to telephone contact – from 54% in 2003 to 65% in 2006. The introduction of Choice Based Letting has seen a shift to an average of 85% of applicants bidding on line.

Medium Term Objectives

The Council updated its Medium Term Objectives (MTOs) in 2006. These provide the focus for a council-wide performance management framework, where the MTOs are followed through service plans and individual performance objectives. For housing services we have recently translated the MTOs into housing terms to reinforce their relevance to our work as follows:

The Council's Medium Term Objectives

- To promote Cambridge as a sustainable city, in particular by reducing carbon emissions and the amount going to landfill in the city and the sub-region.
- To ensure that residents and other service users have an entirely positive experience of dealing with the Council.
- To maintain a healthy, safe and enjoyable City for all, with thriving and viable neighbourhoods.
- To lead the growth of Cambridge to achieve attractive, sustainable new neighbourhoods, including affordable housing, close to a good range of facilities, and supported by transport networks so that people can opt not to use the car.

The vision for Housing Services picks up these themes and prioritises:

- **Improving housing standards:** Maintaining and refurbishing council housing, and supporting the development of new affordable housing, in the public and private sector, that achieves high environmental standards of energy efficiency, minimal carbon emission, and maximum waste recycling.
- **Delivering high quality services:** Enabling tenants and residents to have influence over the way we manage services and set priorities. Understanding the diverse needs of our customers. Being open and accountable to service users. Providing services through partnerships or other providers where this is the best option.
- **Safe and secure neighbourhoods:** Creating and maintaining estates in which our tenants and other residents feel safe and secure. Working in neighbourhoods with partners to effectively address issues that reduce the quality of life.
- **Affordable housing plus:** Promoting the successful delivery of new affordable housing that meets the needs of the city, and that creates good places to live for all residents regardless of tenure.

Underlying this vision are themes that underpin all our work

- Embracing diversity and equality in our customers and staff.
- Maintaining an ethos that consistently focuses on the customer needs.
- Achieving value for money through economy, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.
- Valuing and respecting our staff through our commitment to providing opportunities for development of their skills, knowledge and competencies.

Strategic Direction

Housing remains a major priority for the City, as reflected in both the Council's own strategic documents and wider partnership strategies. The recently completed sub-regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a key document in assessing need and provision. It reinforces the importance of affordable housing in the City and sub-region and the gap between supply and demand. It is being used to inform the update of the sub-regional and Cambridge City housing strategies, and the City's Local Development Framework.

Cambridge is a national growth area and the provision of affordable housing and decent community and leisure facilities to build the social fabric of new developments is an objective for the Cambridge City Sustainable Communities Strategy, and for the Countywide 'Cambridgeshire Together' plan, and the Local Area Agreement – to be finalised in July – will include targets on affordable housing.

The City and County also recognise the importance of maintaining existing neighbourhoods and integrating the City fringe developments with existing communities. The Council's MTOs support this approach, the Sustainable Communities Strategy includes as a priority theme 'Ensuring Strong and Inclusive Communities, and 'Cambridgeshire Together' has 'Strong Communities' as a priority. Both include targets on making neighbourhoods safer through reductions in crime, an important priority for our tenants as evidenced in the 2006 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, where concerns about vandalism and anti-social behaviour were high.

Recognising that housing policy in the City must respond to differing needs, a number of specific strategies reflect local circumstance. Homelessness has been consistently identified as a priority for expenditure in our Citizens' Survey, and we have invested in services that support people into permanent accommodation. Our Single Homeless and Rough Sleepers Strategy, a partnership document, has enabled an approach that has reduced rough sleeping in the city. The Countywide Supporting People Strategy which requires the City to reduce provision of sheltered housing in order that other parts of the County can gain funding, has led to the development of an Older People's Housing Strategy that will look at a more diverse range of provision. Our Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy aims to improve our engagement with, and response to, the needs of our BME tenants and wider communities.

We will use the SHMA, and information from other sources, to keep our approach refreshed. For example provision for Gypsies and Travellers will come to the fore this year following the publication of the East of England Regional Assembly special interest report which recommends provision of 15 pitches in Cambridge.

Customer Access and Customer Care

Service	Cross Cutting Area
Lead officer	Robert Hollingsworth – updated April 09

Introduction

Our strong customer focus is linked to the Medium Term Objectives, in particular 'Ensuring that residents and other service users have an entirely positive experience of dealing with the Council' and, we aim to achieve this by putting service to the public first. To this end, we have a strong focus on customer consultation and survey, the results of which feed into the service delivery. Adams Integra who carried out our mock inspection in 2006 said that they were struck by 'the strong sense of customer focus which emanates from the top management to staff with direct contact with service users....'

In their inspection report of December 2008 the Audit Commission said this is 'an area of strength. Customers have easy access to services, good quality information is available, customer care standards are in place, monitored and generally met, and staff are customer focused.'

The Council has a major corporate drive to improve customer experience through the Customer Access Strategy (CAS). The successful opening of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) in April 2008 marks the first major phase of changes to the Council's customer services. The Centre is open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and is home to a team of customer advisors trained to help with a wide range of enquiries. There is also a self-service area with access to improved online services, and the website is undergoing a major revamp.

Services are being reconfigured and introduced to be accessed through the CSC on a phased basis, with Choice Based Lettings, Housing and Council Tax Benefits, Housing Options and Advice, Homelessness and Payments, amongst the first services to be delivered under these new arrangements. By the end of 2008, Environmental Services and Community Development among others will have moved into the CSC. By December 2009 customers will be able to visit one place for different services including Housing

Repairs and Technical Services, whilst specialist teams will continue to work behind the scenes to deliver the service the customer wants. The future role of housing area offices will be reviewed following completion of the current CAS.

What has been achieved?

1. There is a broad range of published information in the form of leaflets, posters, newsletters and on the website available to help customers. The mock inspection found staff customer focused and knowledgeable. The Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2008 found that 81% of respondents rated staff as helpful 66% were satisfied with the final outcome an increase of 3% since 2006. We continue to look more closely at processes to resolve enquiries which is being done through the CAS, and at other areas such as communication and consultation with tenants.
2. The complaints system is readily accessible. Customers can make a complaint by e-mail, in writing, by phone or by calling in to one of the Council offices. If customers are not satisfied with how their complaint has been dealt they can ask to have their complaint reviewed by the Council's Independent Complaints Investigator, and ultimately by the Ombudsman. Over the last 4 years we only have had one case of maladministration. The Council publishes an Annual Complaints report and complaints trends are monitored and used to make improvements to service delivery. For example, we have invested in recycling facilities in flats and improved reporting of repairs for tenants in sheltered housing as a result of issues highlighted through complaints. All complaints are tracked and reviewed at the Departmental Management Team on a quarterly basis. If we have not carried out a service in line with our agreed standards or ethos we are open and honest with our service user, and where appropriate offer compensation.
3. 'Open Door', our tenant newsletter, has been redesigned to make it a much more effective communication tool. The Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2008 indicated that 75% of tenants were satisfied with how they were being kept informed. Through this tool we have encouraged wider participation, encouraging a much broader range of tenants to attend the annual tenants' festival.
4. Tenant and resident involvement is encouraged at all levels, supported by the Tenants Federation. Cambridge has introduced a groundbreaking approach whereby the Housing Management Board, our scrutiny committee that oversees Housing Revenue Account/Housing Management activities, has 5 tenants and a leaseholder with full voting rights, elected every four years using the independent Electoral Reform Society to carry out the election. Tenants and leaseholders are members of

decision making panels procuring all major contracts from decent homes to sheltered schemes. We also benefit from tenant inspectors for decent homes works, voids, estate cleaning and grounds maintenance, overseen by the Resident and Officer Asset Management Group (ROAM)

5. We now have a wide range of consultation mechanisms used to ensure we know what the customer wants, and we report back on the results through 'Open Door', (which we also use for surveys). We have used the information we gain from surveys to shape services and make changes. The Citizens' Survey and the Tenants' Survey both highlighted anti-social behaviour as a problem, which we have invested in as a Council creating a specialist 'Safer Communities' unit. In the past couple of years we have consulted tenants and leaseholders on a number of areas prior to making decisions – Choice Based Lettings, repair response times, and TV aerials are examples. We have also consulted service users in more depth on areas of concern such as rent arrears and BME residents' experience of the housing service.
6. Our tenants' handbook is used to summarise service standards and was updated in 2005. However we know from focus groups that some tenants find this inaccessible and that we cannot rely on this being read. We also publish standards in leaflet form and on the web. Straplines indicating that information can be obtained in other formats ie Braille, large print, audio and also in other languages are included. The website also contains forms, information and online services for making payments, applying for housing and reporting repairs. Standards are reviewed and updated as part of prioritised areas for review in the service plan.
7. Landlord services are accessed mainly, and increasingly, by telephone. We continue to provide face-to-face services through the new Customer Contact Centre and the two area offices. All of the offices are DDA compliant and include facilities such as minicomms and hearing loops. All the staff are customer care trained at induction, and the staff Competency Framework includes customer care and team and individual training needs are addressed within service areas.
8. We have continued to prioritise getting off to a good start with new tenants. New tenants are provided with clear information about landlord services at the start of their tenancy by a team of dedicated staff who carry out accompanied viewings, identify and arrange support for vulnerable people and provide one to one support through the moving-in process. The New Tenant Advisors help with benefit claims and explain the tenants' rights and responsibilities at the time of signing the tenancy agreement and a follow-up visit is made after 6 weeks. Issues, such as set payment arrangements are clearly set out in a leaflet entitled '5 Ways to Pay'. The feedback on this service from new tenants is positive.

9. In terms of Strategic Housing Services our strategy review process always ensures engagement with stakeholders and residents. For example, in the preparation of our Single Homeless and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2006/09 we consulted with service users, members, key stakeholders and partner organisations on the new priorities to be contained within the up-dated Strategy. Similarly in the development of our Reconnections Policy in relation to homeless people we sought the views of stakeholders and service users on the shape of the proposed Policy. We subsequently consulted on the 6 month review of the operation of the policy. In seeking their views service users were offered the support of council and partner agency staff. Another example is the opinions sought in the development of the choice-based lettings scheme, Home-Link, introduced in February 2008, which, in itself, is a process that aims to empower residents and provide increased choice in their housing. Home-link now invites regular feedback from users of the system, over 80% of whom access the site via the web-site.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
To ensure that all staff are adequately trained in customer care to enable them to deliver a good quality customer focused service.	2009/10	HoS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on existing service based procedures for recording staff training and develop a whole service approach. 2. Carry out initial audit. 3. Agree departmental strategy. 4. Plan mystery shopping of the service to inform training for 2009/10 (New action from AC report) 	March 2010	Done Reviewed at DMT Away-Day Personal development plans for staff include training needs for 09/10. Team plans also include essential training. However, cuts in the training budget will have an impact.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
To ensure that results of consultation/surveys are more widely used by all departments to inform service delivery.	2008/09	MJ/BK/ TW	5. Upgrade intranet to improve accessibility. 6. Establish a corporate consultation finder webpage.	July 2008 2010	Upgrade in progress. Staff briefings to raise awareness completed June 2008. The Housing Intranet page is up and running, but some difficulties are being experienced keeping it current. The corporate webpage has run into difficulties with links being broken and is unlikely to be operational for some time.
	2009	RH	7. Explore the reasons for dissatisfaction expressed in ongoing satisfaction surveys and use the information to improve services (New action from AC report)	Sept 09	
To improve customers' access to information	2008	KB/BH	8. Do an audit of reception areas to check availability of information and ease of access, ie language services, hearing loops etc. Action plan to follow.	May 2008	Audit complete. Findings translated into action plan, July 2008.
		AC	9. Co-ordinate the range of leaflets available.	August 2008	Review of leaflets complete. New unified design agreed.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
	2009	Ashley Perry/Lynda Kilkelly	10. Explore further how the website can be improved to deliver more comprehensive translation and other alternative formats for customers (New action from AC report)		The Web Team have already looked at a number of translation systems for websites and have found them to be inaccurate and unreliable. Housing IT support is looking at best practice elsewhere.
To ensure that Service Level Agreements (SLA) with the Customer Care Centre guarantee a high level of customer service during transition periods.	2008/9	All HoS	11. Use learning from first tranche services to maximise opportunities to improve customer care and VFM.	CAS programme (tranches until end 2009)	. Away day for DMT to brainstorm issues and solutions for future. Tenants representatives and HMB members to visit Customer Contact Centre and discussion paper to go to HMB in relation to future of South Area Office.
Raise profile of Customer Care work with Housing Management Board (HMB	2008		12. Annual reports on all cross-cutting issues in addition to the bi-annual service plan reports.	July 2008 June/July cycle thereafter	July meeting on Improvement Plan for 2008. Thereafter report when end of year figures available.
Improve information available to staff to enable them to deliver an effective and efficient	2008/9	JH	13. Introduction of CRM and EDRMS through Customer Access Strategy. 14. Programme to resolve	TBA	Acting Business manager (JH) working with the teams to identify future needs.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
service to the customer.			interface with housing IT systems agreed through corporate ICT Steering Group.		
To further improve the compensation system	2009	AL	15. Investigate/implement non monetary compensation for missed appointments.	March 2008	Scheme to be agreed.

Diversity

Service	Cross Cutting Area
Lead officer	Alan Carter – updated April 09

Introduction

The Council has a strong commitment to equality and diversity across all services - this is reflected in its Medium Term Objectives, which states that the Council will 'Ensure that residents and other service users have an entirely positive experience of dealing with the Council'. This will be achieved by 'promoting equality of opportunity for all and celebrating diversity' and 'delivering services in a fair and equal way to all sections of the community'.

In 2006 the Council approved a revised Equalities and Diversity policy, as well as adopting a new Equalities Value Statement. Equalities and diversity planning is co-ordinated by the Joint Equalities Group (JEG) who produce a Comprehensive Equalities Programme outlining the major objectives for the year. The JEG also monitors the progress of the Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes. The Corporate Management Team has an Equalities Action Plan which tracks progress against issues raised by the staff groups. The Equalities Panel, made up of elected members, residents and staff oversee equalities and diversity work internally and in the community.

The Council has been working within the national Equalities Standard for Local Government and is currently at level 3. This standard has been replaced by the new Equality Framework for Local Government from April 2009. We will be able to migrate our level 3 achievement to the new 'achieving' level. However, this will require external validation within the next two years.

For the second year in row the Council has been ranked the top district Council in the UK in Stonewall's 2009 Workplace Equality Index which showcases the UK's 100 most gay-friendly employers. The Council's People Strategy 2007-2011 has equality and diversity as a key component and seeks to ensure that our employment policies and procedures are equitable and that our workforce reflects the wider composition of the community.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are carried out across the Council and the Housing Service, and are supported by Departmental Equality Link Officers. Stage 1 Housing EqIAs have identified a number of issues that will be addressed - for

example, that more work needs to be done to engage with victims of domestic violence from ethnic and same sex backgrounds who can often be 'hard to reach'. The service has plans in place for stage 2 assessments where appropriate.

The Housing Service, as one of the major Council services, links to and contributes to this comprehensive corporate approach to equality and diversity. Senior housing management support and lead on the development of the Housing Service Equalities Action Plan and progress is monitored through the Departmental Management Team.

What has been achieved? (Up-dated April 2009)

1. Tenancy agreements contain a declaration on equal opportunities confirming that the Council will treat everyone equally, no matter what their sex, sexuality, marital status, race religion, language, disability or ethnic group.
2. The Council consults widely with its residents and the Citizens' Survey 2007 included a booster survey of 200 BME residents. The results indicated a positive perception among BME communities regarding the Council's sense of direction and purpose, its communications with the public and its fair treatment of its service users. This is backed up by initial release of data from the 2008 Place Survey which includes information against National Indicator 1 that for Cambridge 87% of people agree their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is the highest percentage for authorities in Cambridgeshire. Further analysis and comparison with national data is to follow.
3. Although BME tenants remain less satisfied than White respondents to the 2008 STATUS survey, satisfaction with services increased from 61% in 2006 to 74% in 2008. The 2008 Status survey has also provided a range of other useful data particularly in respect of age and disability that will be used to shape our service development, for example, 13% of respondents said their property did not meet their mobility needs.
4. The Housing Service was the biggest user of interpretation and translation services in the Council between March 2006 and March 2008. The main department represented was Housing Aid, followed by City Homes South and Housing Needs. In Housing Needs the main request related to housing benefit, City Homes South requests were rent and tenancy issues, and Housing Aid was housing applications. The main languages requested were Polish, Turkish and Bengali-Sylheti.
5. The target was achieved to collect information on the ethnic make-up of 75% of tenants in 2008. The data so far indicates that our largest ethnic minority groups are White Other followed by White Irish and Asian British – Bangladeshi, and that

ethnic minorities are dispersed across all Wards. The following table illustrates data collection in respect of other aspects of Diversity.

	General Needs (Apr08)	General Needs (Jul08)	Total – General and Sheltered (sep08)	Total – General and Sheltered (Feb09)	Change
Ethnicity	60%	73%	78.7%	80.1%	+ 1.4%
Language	45%	62%	79.2%	79.4%	+ 0.2%
Age	73%	77%	79.6%	80%	+ 0.4%
Disability*	11%	12% (all)	12%		
Religion	N/A	N/A	N/A		

6. We have a BME Housing Strategy that is underpinned by a five year action plan covering 2007-2012. Issues that are being tackled include the robust collection of data, completion of EqIAs and attending local events to raise awareness of housing services among the BME community. Many of the actions within the Strategy are aimed at the Council's commitment to strengthening and demonstrating compliance with the CRE Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing.
7. In light of population projections showing that Cambridge has an ageing population, and the anticipated reduction of Supporting People Funding available for services in the City, an Older People's Housing Strategy 2009 to 2014 was approved by the Council in November 2008 in consultation with residents and stakeholders. Actions agreed to implement the Strategy are being built in to service plans from 2009.10.
8. We are reviewing our adaptations policy. We have a budget for 2008/09 of £850k for council stock and £450k for private sector. Take up of the services offered by the Home Improvements Agency by BME residents increased slightly in 2007 and remains an area of focus.
9. Home-Link the new Choice Based Lettings Scheme has an 'Access Strategy' that governs how partner organisations provide assistance to vulnerable people to ensure that there is fair and equal access to the system. Although there is no significance evidence to suggest otherwise the sub-regional First Year Review of Home-Link recommended the need "to identify more robustly, vulnerable people who may be in priority need, and how their engagement, awareness of , and support in using the system can be increased". This action has been agreed as a priority for service development by the

Home-Link Sub-Regional Board. We also aim to provide more regular and consistent reporting of the impact of Home-Link locally to substantiate performance in this area.

- 10.** The Council approved a Homelessness Strategy 2009 to 2012 in January 2009. The Strategy is built around 4 key themes which all have an impact in terms of equality of life chances for vulnerable people – Reduction of use of Temporary Accommodation; Homelessness Prevention; Access to Longer Term Housing Options; and Sustaining Settled Lifestyles and Tackling Social Exclusion.
- 11.** The Council has a Domestic Violence Strategy, incorporating a specific domestic violence housing policy, which has been developed through joint working with other agencies. This strategy incorporates objectives to work with other district councils, police and other relevant organisations to achieve safe houses for victims of DV where appropriate. There are currently 5 dedicated safe homes in the City.
- 12.** The Council engaged closely with the countywide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment and the Regional Spatial Strategy Single Issue Review that reported early in 2009. A cross-party member steering group is in place to move forward on providing a site or sites and housing staff are working closely with planning colleagues to deliver on the requirement for Cambridge for an additional 15 pitches by 2011.
- 13.** All Council offices are DDA compliant although the age and nature of some of the historic buildings present a challenge to sustaining best practice in terms of accessibility.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
Strengthen the Equality Impact Assessment process to ensure that EqIAs are completed in required areas, and that they are used to promote and improve services to all our customers	2008	DMT	16. Improve challenge and strengthen monitoring, through improved engagement of service managers, equality advocates, and Departmental Management Team (DMT).	<p>Manager training July 2008.</p> <p>Implement changes August onwards.</p> <p>Review March 2009.</p>	DMT approved improvements to process June 2008 – see report for details. Update on actions to deliver recommendations from June report– Training offered to all service managers, as it was not mandatory not all attended Need for additional EqIAs will be identified from the Forward Plan from April 09 Continued bespoke housing related training will be organised for 09/10
		DMT/ AC	17. Be clear on base line training for staff as part of diversity framework	Sept 09	Review training needs in context of a diversity framework
		HR	18. Influence the work of new Regional Housing Equality and Diversity Group in supporting the housing agencies	First report back Sept 09	

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			diversity agenda		
	2008 (for implementation 2009 onwards)	HR/CB	19. Develop more strategic EQIA timetable 2009/10 onwards to ensure full housing service coverage.	January 2009	Strategic timetable agreed at DMT in April 09
	2008/09/10	Service Managers (DMT reports – CB)	20. Ensure data and analysis is used to inform EQIAs and improvements to services and service delivery. Analysis of this data will inform our actions beyond 2008/9	Six-monthly reports to DMT as part of existing Diversity reports Annual reports to members member briefing	Year end report will go to DMT end April 09
Improve communications to staff and service users in relation to legislation and good practice		AC	21. Consider the need for a Housing Diversity Framework	March 09 Sept 09	Agreed there is a need to produce a Diversity Framework by Sept 09
	2008	HR/CB	22. Develop new Diversity pages on the intranet, to enable staff access to relevant and up to date policies, strategies, data and other information.	July 2008. Review January 2009 then six-monthly	Work under way Pages are there but more work needed
Improve communication	2009	HR/JB	23. Improve the presentation	Sept 09	A review of the range of

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
with service users to ensure all customer's diversity needs are met and users can access relevant services			of information so that it is consistent and customers can access it in different languages and formats		leaflets and information has begun and a new unified design has begun.
		HR/AC	24. Carry out team briefings on current activities in respect of Diversity.	September 2008	Completed
Improve the available information and intelligence to identify and eliminate any discrimination and allow us to tailor our services to the requirement of the diverse community.	2008/09/10	AL/SF (HMT report – HR)	25. Boost tenant diversity data available on Orchard to ensure that data is available on at least 75% of tenants, and put plan in place to continually improve data collection and reporting. We will aim to increase collection of information by 5% each year but will annually review the feasibility of achievement of these targets.	Data boosted by July 2008 Report to HMT August 2008 At least quarterly report to DMT.	. Ethnicity data on tenants already above 80%.
	2009	All HoS and Manag	26. Agree priority areas and implementation timetable for improved data collection across other	March 2009. Monitor through spot-light reviews	

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
		ers	areas of the housing service.		
			27. Extend BME data collection to include regionally agreed 'White Other, and Faith categories.	March 2009-Home-Link; Other services – dates to be agreed.	Census 2011 approach confirmed. HR working with Home-Link Manager to progress use of definitions.
	2008 onwards		28. Strengthen information within Strategic Housing Market Assessment in relation to groups with diverse needs.	March 2010	<p>Reports have been received by Cambridge Sub-Regional Housing Board during 2008.09 on Migrant Workers in Cambridgeshire; a County-wide Disability Housing Startegy; Gypsies and Travellers; the County-wide Older Persons Strategy; Self-directed Support; and Child Protection.</p> <p>Improving the SHMA in respect the needs of vulnerable groups has been prioritised for action for 2009.10.</p> <p>This will be informed by a</p>

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
					recently completed Supporting People led needs analysis and the Homelessness JSNA.
	2008 onwards	Service Managers	29. Ensure that all Housing Service actions are completed in Equalities Action Plans, and input into review of action plans.	Corporate timetable	Alan to report back to DMT
	2009	LK	30. Produce a short guide on how to gather diversity and equality information re complaints and satisfaction	December 09	
Improve information in relation to tenants with disability	2009	AC	31. Improve data on disability - develop a project plan and brief	Scope existing data by end June 09 Develop Project Plan by Sept 09	
Improve the approach to dealing with domestic violence	2009	AC	32. Embed the approach to domestic violence to ensure that it is always recognised during the	Sept 09	City Homes have begun work in this area ASB senior investigator has taken a co-ordinating role

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			course of other work		for Strategic Housing Services on the Protection of vulnerable adults and children
Improve satisfaction levels of minority groups	2009/10	AC	33. Tackle the causes of overall less satisfaction for BME and young people.	March 2010	

Value for Money

Service	Cross Cutting Area
Lead officer	Bob Hadfield – updated April 09

Introduction

Cambridge City Council aims to deliver value for money services to the residents of, and visitors to, the City of Cambridge. A culture of involving stakeholders in the decision making processes, investigating all available options for service delivery, monitoring expenditure on a regular basis and securing external income wherever possible, combine to deliver quality services that users require, at affordable prices.

Corporately, we describe value for money as the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Value for money is high when there is an optimum balance between all three - relatively low costs, high productivity and successful outcomes

There is a strong corporate approach to finance, with the authority demonstrating an excellent use of resources (overall Audit Commission score of 4 for 2006/07, placing Cambridge City Council in the top 40 of in excess of 350 Councils). Comprehensive standing orders and financial regulations are in place and adhered to, annual update of medium term strategy to inform annual budget process and strong member involvement in financial decision making process.

Savings requirements identified for the Housing Revenue Account and determined by the long term business plan, reducing balances to target level of £3m, while creating policy space for strategic re-allocation of resources in the medium term. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy sets annual efficiencies/savings and developmental bids target for General Fund Services. Savings are achieved using a strategic departmental approach, not 'top slicing' as has happened historically. Development bids are considered and prioritised for investment in new initiatives or for expansion of existing activities. Managers are required to clearly identify service delivery implications of any savings offered or bids requested, including the impact of growth and climate change impact, to enable fully informed decisions as part of the budget process.

Information on costs is accurate and is used to inform decisions – a financial reporting tool (business objects) is available for all managers to be able to query on the financial transactions relating to their service areas, monthly reports circulated to all cost

centre managers, monthly variance report produced for HRA and Housing General Fund, feeding into monthly major variance report for variances over £10,000 (capital and revenue), which is compiled in consultation with cost centre managers and forms the basis of a corporate report to CMT quarterly for monitoring purposes.

The corporate approach to investment includes ICT Steering Group and Asset Management Group, where reports for IT and asset investment are considered, including presentation of project appraisals if appropriate, prior to the decision to invest/make a recommendation to members to invest.

All housing generated capital receipts are retained for housing use, which has enabled the Council to meet the decent homes programme, invest in affordable housing, private sector renewal for vulnerable households, and environmental improvements. Section 106 agreements generate additional receipts, as commuted sums, for affordable housing. A medium term Housing Capital Investment Programme was agreed in 2005, following the decision to retain the management of council housing, and is undergoing a substantial review for 2008 following a worse than predicted housing subsidy determination for 2008/09 and beyond.

What has been achieved?

1. In 2007/08 Cambridge was one of 6 local authorities who worked with the Department of Communities and Local Government to model self financing of the HRA. This was a major value for money exercise for the authority, requiring us to consider a range of scenarios, to determine the advantages or otherwise of self financing, for management of existing housing assets and potential new build. The self-financing work, now published as a CLG report, has led to the national review of the subsidy system.
2. Our existing budget position means that we are delivering savings and efficiency targets year on year. A clear corporate framework is in place to ensure that details of potential efficiencies are captured at all stages in the financial calendar, original budgets, revised budgets and outturn. Housing contribution to the corporate Annual Efficiency Statement (Gershon) helped to deliver £494,385 in on-going efficiencies in social housing by the end of 2007/08 (of which £228,424 were cashable), £274,204 on-going efficiencies in supporting people (of which £63,426 were cashable) and £262,133 cashable efficiencies in the homelessness area. In addition to this, the Council also generated significant cross cutting savings in areas such as productive time, corporate procurement and efficient transaction processing where housing will have contributed to this corporate achievement. The eventual annual ongoing efficiency anticipated from the initial business case for the Customer Service Centre, expected to reach its full savings potential by 2015/16 when all costs of redundancy have

been realised is £832,860, of which £191,560 relates to the HRA. The final savings figures will not be available until after project completion.

3. Significant overall savings have been delivered over the last 3 years. This includes the efficiencies just described plus other savings to keep expenditure in line with budget projections. In the HRA, a total of £1,563,770 savings have been made with £753,450 of this being redirected into other priority areas. In the General Fund, £229,100 savings have been identified and £87,830 of this has been redirected to new priorities. For example, in the HRA in 2008/09, £43,880 was utilised to fund an Energy Officer post and £30,000 to implement an incentive scheme for under-occupation in Council tenancies.
4. Major budget efficiencies have been delivered to Supporting People and the PCT in respect of reductions in the running costs of sheltered and extra care housing, resulting from significant restructuring of the service, while striving to deliver an improved, streamlined service. Supporting People block subsidy income for sheltered housing in 2003/04 was approximately £600,000 and has reduced over the last 4 years to approximately £390,000. Customer feedback, recorded at meetings is confirming an improved service.
5. In the decent homes programme cashable and non-cashable efficiencies will result in £1.45m being available for investment in the programme elsewhere. These have been achieved through measures such as, detailed partnership examination and cost comparison of materials, moving to common suppliers where practicable, year on year overhead reduction, bench marking of costs and the establishment of target costs for primary works modules for all years up to and including 2010. Decent homes, the gas maintenance contract and response repairs and voids are all delivered through a partnering approach. A dashboard of indicators enables senior managers to track expenditure, satisfaction and quality, all of which remain on target. An annual plenary session attended by a wide range of stakeholders including tenants and leaseholder representatives, reviews progress and sets ambitions for the coming year.
6. Partnership working in areas such as Choice Based Letting has brought in external funding. A grant of £181k significantly reduced predicted investment costs for technology. A shared approach also meant shared costs for the project manager and associated costs such as legal fees. Other examples include CLG homelessness funding and funding for the creation of an assessment centre, and grants from energy providers for the installation of energy efficient appliances (A-rated boilers, loft and wall insulation).

7. Benchmarking information is used to review costs, and this is an area we have set out to improve. Last year we joined Housemark to enable wider comparisons on value for money. Strategic services were reviewed as part of a sub-regional review carried out by Housing Quality Network. Although this didn't identify any immediate areas for efficiencies, it did enable a better understanding of variations, for example, for homelessness where pressures on urban and rural authorities mean very different levels of expenditure. The Council runs an in-house Home Improvement Agency, and this has been the subject of a Countywide review over the past year, which is drawing to a conclusion.
8. In determining value for money, the views of customers have had a real influence on decisions. Tenant representatives on procurement panels provide an important perspective, for example, residents of sheltered schemes have been involved in determining the level of service charge they wish to pay for grounds maintenance and digital TV services. Choice is also important; the successful contractors for the decent homes programme are both able to offer choice in kitchen fittings. This is an approach we need to carry forward into future years.

Areas for Improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Who m	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
To agree a VFM strategy that draws together our approach.	2008/09	AC/BH	34. Set out our strategic approach in a single document to be agreed at Community Services Committee.	Sept 2008 – draft Jan 2009 – approval	Framework including definition of VFM produced Feb 08, link to Performance Management Framework. Heads of Service briefed all teams. Outputs to be used to populate VFM strategy. VFM framework was agreed by committee in March.
	2009/10	BH	35. Embed a strategic approach to VFM by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting the Framework on the Intranet • Sending an electronic copy to relevant staff • Forming a project team to develop a plan to embed VFM 	Sept 09	On the intranet March 09

Improvement Objective	Year	By Who m	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
To develop improved processes to enable evidenced demonstration of VFM.	2008/09	JH/CB	36. Introduce more comprehensive benchmarking. Compile year 2 data for Housemark to allow self-comparison in addition to comparison against other housing providers.	August 2008	Year 1 data available in Housemark for comparison. Tenancy and estate management being benchmarked in more detail. Working with a group of authorities. Completed
	2009/10	JH/CB	37. Establish cost of all service activities where these have not yet been captured. 38. Use the cost of service, and benchmarking information to identify improvement actions where necessary and to show comprehensively systematic improvement in VFM over time. (New action from AC report)	Sept 09	

Improvement Objective	Year	By Who m	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
	2008/9	BH	<p>39. Undertake best value reviews and zero based budget exercises in specific service areas to be agreed each year.</p> <p><u>2008/09</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capital programme - Laundries - Leaseholder Services - Caretaking/Estate Services - Home Improvement Agency 	March 2009	<p>Laundries – HMB agreed to review and consultation exercise has taken place.</p> <p>Leaseholder Services – had best value review</p> <p>Home Improvement Agency – under review</p>
			<p><u>2009/10</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Services - Repairs - Cyclical painting - Aids and Adaptations - ASB <p><u>2010/11</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post decent homes - Independent Living Service - Housing Management post CAS - Lettings 		

Improvement Objective	Year	By Who m	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
	2008/09	JH	40. Provide better cost information reporting system to managers to help them manage services more effectively and efficiently.	March 2009	Business Objects to be rolled out to all cost centre managers during 2008/09. Business Objects was rolled out to all service managers that engaged. Training was offered but now need to re-visit with those who didn't accept training.
Update affordable housing strategic framework	2008/09	AC	41. Ensure robust framework to monitor and control expenditure on the provision of affordable housing is put in place.	September 2009	Affordable Housing investment Framework produced by working group to ensure prioritisation of sites and exercising of best investment opportunities. Report to Committee on process with 3 year programme of sites for review
Update Procurement Action Plan.		BH	42. HQN study commissioned to inform future strategy. Response repairs a key area for review. 43. Implement the Procurement Strat	September 2008	Dependent on HQN completing initial work. Procurement Strategy agreed by Committee in March.
Improve resident involvement in vfm projects and reviews.	2008/09	SF	44. Build tenant involvement into methodology eg review panel members.	July 2008	Committee Report to Housing Management Board. Being progressed through RLSR.

Allocations and Lettings

Service	Allocations and Lettings
Lead officer	David Greening - update April 09

Introduction

The focus for activity in relation to allocation and lettings over the last 2 years has been the move to Choice Based Lettings (CBL) and the restructuring of the Housing Needs Team. Linked to this has been the implementation of the Councils corporate Customer Access Strategy that has fundamentally changed the way that frontline services are now delivered by the Council.

In 2005 the Council successfully secured a grant of £180k from the DCLG, on behalf the Cambridge Sub- Region, to assist with the implementation of the Cambridge Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme.

Cambridge was the lead authority in terms of the implementation of the CBL scheme and the bulk of the grant was used to employ a sub-regional Implementation Officer in 2006 to work with the sub-regional partners on the scheme's implementation. This post was employed and managed by the City Council.

The Council introduced the CBL scheme, known as Home-Link, in February 2008 in line with its target and in advance of the CLG deadline of 2010, and at below anticipated implementation costs.

The implementation stage was a complex and sometimes difficult process as sub-regional agreement needed to be reached in relation to key elements of the scheme including:

- The common banding/assessment of need contained within the new lettings policy
- The charging matrix for partner LA and RSL members using the scheme
- Agreeing the specification for the scheme in the lead in for the tendering process
- Agreeing the contractual arrangements between the partner organisations
- Agreeing the basis of ongoing management arrangements post implementation

However all the challenges inherent with a sub-regional scheme of this nature were successfully overcome through a spirit of positive partnership working and a clear focus on the desired outcome.

Following the successful procurement exercise, which identified Locata Housing Services (LHS) as our chosen IT provider, Home-Link was launched across the sub-region in February 2008, except in Fenland when the scheme is set to go live in November 2008. Initial feedback from partner agencies and applicants has been very positive.

During this period the Council was also fundamentally restructuring the way it dealt with enquiries from its customers through the implementation of its corporate Customer Access Strategy (CAS). The CBL service (and the Housing Options & Advice Service) were identified as key first tranche services to transfer into the new corporate strategy. This presented a further challenge for the implementation of CBL locally, but also a real opportunity to add value to both the CBL and CAS programmes through joined up working and close communication during the implementation process of both new initiatives.

The restructure, along with the implementation of CBL and CAS, has produced significant efficiencies and has driven down the cost of delivering this aspect of the housing service, at the same time improving access and customer service to applicants and in particular to our most vulnerable customers.

What has been achieved?

1. The Council's new Customer Service Centre (CSC) was opened in April 2008 and provides excellent space, facilities and access for customers using the Home-Link scheme. The CSC provides dedicated advertising space for the Home-Link scheme and self-serve facilities for applicants wishing to access the website for bidding and feedback purposes. We have also worked closely with the Head of Customer Services to ensure appropriate training and support is available for Customer Service Advisors providing the frontline services in the CSC. The relationship with the CSC is established and monitored via a Service Level Agreement known as the Customer Service Business Charter.
2. After 6 cycles of Home-Link over 6000 bids have been made for 144 properties available in the City, an average bid rate of 43 per property. Initial customer feedback through the Home-Link website (www.home-link.org.uk) has been very positive with over 90% of sub-regional responses stating that they understand how the scheme works and they find the website easy

to use. In Cambridge City we are receiving over 85% of bids for properties through the website which is particularly encouraging. A briefing report was issued to members after 3 months operation of Home-Link.

3. Implementation of the CBL and CAS programmes meant a fundamental review of staffing structures and roles was required within the Housing Needs Team that had responsibility for housing allocations under the old system. The resulting restructure has led to a new CBL Team being established which effectively manages the Home-Link scheme in the City and interfaces directly with the CSC and service users. The Council has developed, and agreed with its local authority, Registered Social Landlord (RSL) and voluntary sector partners a CBL Access Strategy to ensure vulnerable households can access and benefit from the new service.
4. Effective partnership arrangements have been established with RSLs, supported housing providers and support providers to deliver CBL and support service to users appropriately. More sophisticated reporting functions linked to the allocation process means that more accurate data can be produced to show who our service users are and help identify any groups that are not bidding, using the system or being offered accommodation. The Home-Link website is available to read in different languages and key documents can be downloaded in a range of local community languages, eg Chinese, Spanish, Polish and Portuguese.
5. An Equality Impact Assessment Stage 1 has been completed in relation to the CBL scheme and the allocations policy. As a result of this a Stage 2 Assessment will be carried out in January 2009.
6. The introduction of Home-Link has prompted a review of the process to support people to move-on accommodation from hostel and supported housing. A panel has now been established, meeting monthly, to decide allocations for residents in hostels and supported housing in the City in line with Home-Link priority bands. The panel is made up of local authority and support agency partners.
7. The fortnightly Home-Link magazine, as well as advertising properties, is used to manage customer expectations and provide realistic feedback on applicants' housing options.
8. The development of the sub-regional CBL scheme has added significant value to effective sub-regional partnership working across the area through forums like the Cambridge Sub-Regional Homelessness Strategy Group and the Cambridge Sub-Regional Housing Board

which is particularly important given the high levels of housing need in the area and the significant growth agenda set to be delivered over forthcoming years.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update at June 08
To introduce a customer involvement and feedback strategy for the CBL scheme and Housing Options & Advice Service	2008/9	DG/SS	<p>45. Develop & implement the customer involvement & user strategy.</p> <p>46. Analyse feedback and use to shape future development of the service.</p>	<p>August 08</p> <p>July 09</p>	<p>June 08: Draft strategy has been produced and work on developing appropriate customer feedback questionnaire is underway. Questionnaire developed but it needs more work to ensure it is capturing the right information. Timetable has been amended to reflect extra work. May seek additional help to assess efficacy of questionnaire before it goes live.</p>
	2008/9	DG/SS	47. Develop in consultation with service users and stakeholders a set of service standards & set targets for user satisfaction and monitoring.	August 08	<p>Key draft service standards around CBL have been drafted and are currently with sub-regional partners for consultation.</p> <p>The Business Charter/SLA with CAS has been agreed which broadly outlines service standards relating to dealing with customer enquiries in the Customer Service Centre.</p>

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update at June 08
					Agreed levels of customer satisfaction will be agreed within the Customer Involvement and Feedback Strategy (see above).
Monitor Operation of CBL scheme	2008/09	Home-Link Mgr	48. Conduct full review of the CBL scheme after 6 months of operation. Include impact on speed of lettings, void turnaround, equality of allocations.	Sept 09	Sub-regional review approved by Committee in March with some recommendations. Development Plan to be produced and report back in the September round.
Ensure equality of access is achieved for the CBL scheme users	2009/10	DG/SS	49. Analyse data from the 6 monthly review of the CBL scheme to enable decisions around targeting minority groups appropriately to be made. 50. Produce quarterly monitoring reports with key PI's relating to access. 51. Stage 2 EQIA Assessment will take place following the 6	May 09 June 09	Next quarterly report is May 09. Large housing register review to be complete by September 09 – format for rolling review to be established by September 09 Draft report produced September 08. First published report produced Feb 09 First report produced in June.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update at June 08
			<p>month review, to pick up any issues of inequality for vulnerable groups.</p> <p>52. Review the CBL Access Strategy.</p>	<p>April 09</p> <p>December 09</p>	<p>Initial meeting has been held to scope the assessment. Review of Housing Register needs to happen but will not be done before EIA so may need to update the EIA post review</p> <p>Key priority in Homelessness Strategy. There is far more work in this than previously envisaged, hence the changed deadline</p>
To assess VFM in delivery of the service.	2008/9	DG/SS	<p>53. Develop a regular review process for keeping procedures up to date.</p> <p>54. Annual reviews to commence February 09.</p>	<p>August 08</p> <p>April 09</p>	<p>Procedures developed and placed on the M Drive. Completed</p> <p>Review is ongoing as the operational arrangements are still being fine tuned.</p> <p>Annual review due February 09. April 09 – This task has been delayed as the focus has been</p>

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update at June 08
					on the new system and the interface with the Customer Service Centre
	2008/9	DG/SS	55. Collect data and analyse it, on the costs of the service	February 09	Cost of the service has been driven down but we still have to tackle issue of customer feedback on VFM.
	2009/10	DG/SS	56. Carry out benchmarking with other authorities to be able to demonstrate that the service is cost effective and provides good value for money.	February 09	VFM was a key element in designing and procuring the Home-Link Scheme. Recommended sub-regional review with benchmarking within scheme with other District Councils

Homelessness and Housing Advice

Service	Homelessness and Housing Advice
Lead officer	David Greening – update 09 March

Introduction

The homelessness and housing advice services have undertaken a fundamental restructure over the last 2 years which has been driven by:

- The implementation of the Home-Link Choice Based Lettings scheme (CBL)
- The move towards a Housing Options & Advice service
- The introduction of the Council's corporate Customer Access Strategy (CAS)
- The delivery of effective homelessness prevention measures
- Improving customer access and service delivery
- Delivering efficiencies and savings targets

The implementation of the Home-Link scheme meant that significant changes were required in the way that the Housing Advice Team traditionally operated. The Housing Needs Team (dealing with the housing register and allocations) and the Housing Advice Team traditionally operated with a clear demarcation in place. Housing Advice dealt specifically with homelessness, prevention and advice and passed on enquiries around the housing register to the Housing Needs Team who would advise and update customers on housing applications. The split meant that customers were sometimes passed between the teams and this approach did not generally facilitate the development of a more options based approach.

The implementation of CBL provided the catalyst to change the working arrangements between the two teams. Under the new arrangements the Housing Advice Team (now called the Housing Options & Advice Team) still deal with homelessness, prevention, options and advice but also now support and actively work with their clients in using the CBL scheme. This is in relation to both prevention cases and cases where we have accepted a full re-housing duty and have provided temporary accommodation to the applicant. The Housing Needs Team has been renamed the Home-Link Team and focuses on the management of Home-Link, the CBL system liaising closely with the new corporate CAS Team. The changes have resulted in a more coherent and seamless

service for the applicant (no more passing between teams) and a more effective prevention service which allows the housing register to become a realistic housing option for those at risk of homelessness and with a high housing need.

The prevention and options approach has been carefully considered in the framing of the new allocations policy to ensure that appropriate priority and choice are provided to homeless, and potentially homeless, households. The arrangements will be comprehensively reviewed as part of the CBL 6 month review in August 2008.

The Housing Advice Team has been renamed the Housing Options & Advice Team and job descriptions have been reviewed and now provide a sharper focus on the options and prevention approach and the need to specifically engage with customers around the use of the CBL scheme.

The implementation of the corporate CAS programme and the opening of the Council's new CSC in April 2008 meant that the housing reception at Hobson House was closed as all new face-to-face enquiries are dealt with, in the first instance, by Customer Service Advisors in the CSC. The CSC will start taking telephone enquiries and more in depth face-to-face enquiries in October 2008.

What has been achieved?

1. We have worked effectively with the CAS programme to ensure that the new arrangements will provide the improvements to service delivery. The relationship with the CSC is established and monitored via a Service Level Agreement known as the Customer Service Business Charter.
2. We have continued to run and develop a range of successful homelessness prevention initiatives. Some of the prevention methods we have employed are:
 - Increased the number of homelessness preventions achieved through partnership working with the Cambridge Law Centre – over 300 people received support from the Law Centre during 2007/08.
 - Agreed 3 year SLA's which provide funding to a range of key partner agencies to prevent homelessness.
 - Developed a Sanctuary Scheme for victims of domestic violence in partnership with our neighbouring districts.
 - Developed a homelessness prevention fund - £7,500 for the Housing Options & Advice Team to use at their discretion in a practical way to prevent homelessness.

3. Homeless applications and acceptances for 2007/08 are broadly in line with the preceding year although homeless preventions increased significantly this year to 208 from 132 in 2006/07. We have secured a Homelessness Grant from the CLG of £400k pa for the next 3 years. We have implemented recommendations from an internal audit report relating to the Access Scheme (helping homeless people into private rented sector by paying one month's rent in advance and a rent deposit or guarantee) which has improved procedures and the scheme's operation. The Homelessness Review contract has been successfully relet to an independent firm of solicitors who undertake the statutory homelessness review procedure on behalf of the housing authority.
4. We have made positive in-roads into meeting the 50% temporary accommodation target for the City. Our starting point was 140 units meaning our target is 70. At April 2008 our figure was 108 so progress has been positive although further reductions are becoming increasingly challenging. Last year we ended the use of hostel accommodation as temporary accommodation for homeless families.
5. We maintain a strong focus on single homelessness, rough sleeping and street life issues and continue to work closely with partner agencies to tackle these issues across the City. For the first time since counting began in Cambridge we recorded a zero return for the rough sleepers count undertaken in April 2008. During 2007 we introduced a Reconnections Policy to try and stem the inward migration of non locally connected rough sleepers and single homeless into the City by reconnecting them to areas where they do have a local connection and where accommodation and appropriate support are available for them to take up. We recently commenced procurement for a new Learning & Development Service for rough sleepers, single homeless and the street life community.
6. We have been continuing to work with partners to change the 31 bed night shelter in the City, which is outdated dormitory style accommodation, into a 24 hour Assessment Centre with self contained rooms and daytime services, and a greater focus on assessment of needs, support and move-on to second stage hostel accommodation. In March this year we secured £3m from the government's Places of Change Programme to assist with the capital works required for this project.
7. As an authority with an excellent CPA rating we are not required to produce a new Homelessness Strategy. However, we are undertaking a comprehensive review of our existing Homelessness Strategy and Single Homeless & Rough Sleepers Strategy this year. The intention is to bring these two strategies together into one overarching strategy for the City with a focus on temporary accommodation, prevention, longer term housing solutions and maintaining settled lifestyles/tackling social exclusion. This will involve extensive consultation with our key voluntary sector and statutory partners as well as service users.

The new strategy will be completed by December 2008 and then formally adopted by the Council at Community Services Scrutiny Committee in January 2009.

8. We have undertaken a benchmarking exercise with sub-regional partners through HQN in relation to our homelessness services, which has provided comparative data on the costs of homelessness services across the County. This initial exercise is resulting in a second round of benchmarking in order to establish trends, and in further work, for example improving customer satisfaction measures for services to better balance cost and quality.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update at June 08
Develop comprehensive procedure documents for the Housing Options & Advice Service	2008/9	DG/SH	57. Review procedures to ensure they reflect practices for the modernised, prevention focused services. Update as necessary.	Dec 08	Procedures in draft form. Next stage will be consultation with team members, to be finalised in August 08, to be widely distributed and on the M drive. Completed
	2008/9	DG/SH	58. Consider developing a housing options pack with standard/easy to use confirmation letter or checklist.	Dec 08	Housing Options and advice written policy and procedures are currently being produced.
Assess VFM in relation to the Housing Options & Advice Service	2008/9	DG/SH	55. Undertaking benchmarking and comparison with other local authorities.	March 09	Benchmarking with Housemark /HQN Feb/March 08 and sub-regional homelessness group is underway.
To improve access, customer care and user focus.	2008/9	DG/SH	56. Develop, in consultation with service users and stakeholders, a set of service standards. Ensure these are well publicised and available at reception in poster and leaflet format.	August 08	Draft service standards and consultation with residents in temporary housing has begun. April 09 – service standards have been produced but publicity is a problem due to rules around what can be displayed at the CSC

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update at June 08
To improve our response to the diversity of our customers.	2008/9	DG/SH	57. Make use of data on ethnic make-up of the City and feed this into service design.	Dec 08	Better collection of data arising from the implementation of CBL will help target services to encourage fairer take-up where necessary. Access Strategy is in place.
To improve the provision of housing advice, homelessness prevention and options services.	2008/9	DG/SH	58. Develop a procedure covering home visits for prevention to ensure consistency and that all prevention opportunities are being maximised. Include in this authorisation by a senior officer.	Sept 09	Home visits undertaken on homelessness cases but do not have a documented system signed off by a senior officer. Dependent on staffing resources. April 09 – we do not conduct home visits at present due to lack of back office cover following the introduction of the CSC. We need to review working arrangements in this respect and develop a response on this by September 09
To improve the provision of housing advice, homelessness prevention and options services.	2008/9	DG/SH	59. Extend range of initiatives that help make use of the private sector.	March 09	Bid for enhanced housing options funding from CLG, expression of interest. Unsuccessful, but will consider

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update at June 08
					taking elements forward with sub-regional partners. Have received £80k over 2 years to support options work sub-regionally.
To improve the provision of housing advice, homelessness prevention and options services.	2008/9	DG/SH	60. Measure the impact/effectiveness of the prevention measures in place.	March 09	Prevention measures have resulted in reduced numbers of homeless cases (see achievements). There is some ongoing work in this regard as cited at B2 of the Homelessness Strategy – review to be completed and implementation process started by April 2010.
To improve the provision of housing advice, homelessness prevention and options services.	2008/9	DG/SH/YOD	61. Effective linkage with the Housing Standards Team in relation to prevention options in the private rented sector.	June 08	These arrangements have recently been reviewed and the Housing Standards Team now inspect all private rented housing prior to allocation to a homeless household. Looking to bolster Private Sector landlord incentives

Supported Housing

Service	Independent Living Service
Lead officer	Sally-Jane Papworth – update April 09

Introduction

Following the stock retention decision the Council embarked on a programme to modernise the sheltered housing stock. All sheltered housing schemes were reviewed to consider whether they were still fit for purpose and met the 'Homes for Life' criteria, needed refurbishment, or required demolition and rebuild to meet modern standards. Sheltered voids were averaging about 60 at any point in time, mainly in unpopular bedsits with shared facilities. A £10 million programme for the whole of the sheltered housing stock was approved in 2005, in the context of our available Capital resources. This recommended that three schemes were refurbished, and that two in need of demolition were transferred to an RSL for redevelopment as sheltered schemes, and one was sold on the open market and the receipt used to support the programme overall. The sheltered housing modernisation programme is managed as an ongoing programme utilizing the Council's project management approach. The programme considers not only management of the physical assets, but also support for residents in schemes proposed for modernisation.

The programme is reviewed through regular programme management meetings and adjusted to take account of new considerations such as the countywide Supporting People Best Value Review of Sheltered Housing, and the annual review of the Capital programme. Future provision will be influenced by the Older People's Housing Strategy due for completion in November 2008. The current programme anticipates an overall reduction of sheltered units from 667 to 507 by 2012. The programme is on schedule with 86 units refurbished over the last 5 years including two schemes completed prior to 2005.

The sheltered housing service that supports residents in sheltered accommodation and in general needs housing was also restructured in 2005, and was renamed the Independent Living Service, to reflect the ethos of the change. Using the regular tenant consultation meetings held at all Sheltered Housing Schemes, we reviewed our staffing levels, service delivery, policies and procedures and methods of engagement with tenants. The gross budget of £1,789,550 for the Independent Living Service in 2005/6 has been reduced by £347,550 by 2008/09 in respect of restructure of the service and efficiencies in operation. An element of the saving is due to a reduction in the number of sheltered units in line with the County's Supporting People Strategy, but the majority of the cost savings have been passed onto Supporting People, the PCT and self-paying tenants to meet savings required as part of our contracts with the procurers of care and support services. Tenant feedback on the changes is positive. We continue to improve the service by engaging with our tenants at quarterly meetings, through tenants' surveys and through various tenant working parties, and have achieved accreditation in the 'Code of Practice for Sheltered Housing Services'.

What has been achieved?

1. We have successfully moved all tenants from schemes programmed for modernisation to alternative accommodation of their **first** choice. This has been achieved through careful planning and consultation with our tenants and other stakeholders. Tenants have been afforded the choice of kitchen cupboards/wall tiles/baths or showers/décor/furniture/carpets and which flat to return to if they wanted to return on completion of the work.
2. The modernisation programme has meant that we have reduced our void levels from an average of 60 to 20 at any point in time, and overall letting times have been improved 6 days. As we have completed an individual scheme project, demand has been much higher than completed units to let due to the standard and size of accommodation now available. In Rawling Court there were 356 applicants for 26 units, and the scheme released 12 family homes. All new accommodation is either one or two bedroomed flats with private bathroom, as opposed to bedsits with shared bathing facilities.
3. Service Standards were reviewed in consultation with staff groups, working party and tenant groups. They are displayed in each scheme and are produced in other languages. Copies are sent to each tenant.
4. There is a good range of access to the service for customer from a range of routes - referrals via Mental Health Team, GPs, Home-Link, self referral via Homelink or selection panel if requiring an Extra Care placement.
5. The Independent Living Service (ILS) carry out their own assessment before sign-up to ensure that tenant needs are met. Before a tenancy is offered in a Sheltered Housing Scheme, staff carry out an assessment and explain the support plan process and service provided. Charges for support are explained and the use of the 24 hour telephone response service are explained to the tenant. Advice leaflets are also given out.
6. Transport/assistance is available to ensure customers can attend meetings and social activities, to ensure tenants are consulted on specific issues, the service as a whole and to assist socialising. Strong resident involvement in decision-making ensures they feel involved in the service they are receiving and paying for.
7. Prior to tenants moving in, service standards and other relevant information are produced in their first language.
8. Translation/interpretation service/Braille/audio are available to customers.
9. Support needs of residents are recorded and acted on – to assist the tenant to live independently.
10. Independent Living Facilitators(ILFs) work with tenants who fall behind with their rent to offer help and support, and have good links with the rent collection offices.
11. A complete training programme is in place for both sheltered housing staff and for staff delivering care to older people. It is monitored by the Commission of Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI); 90% of staff have received or are in training for NVQ level 2 and 3. Refresher training takes place as necessary, particularly in relation to health and safety.

12. We hold a Certificate for Accreditation for Sheltered Housing Code of Practice, issued by the (CSHS).
13. A Handyman service is available – to support tenants who cannot do small works in their property.
14. There is a close working relationship with the Anti-Social Behaviour team and Police for back-up and support to ensure that any ASB problems are promptly and effectively dealt with, and CCTV is installed in all schemes.
15. Partnership working with the Supporting People Team and Primary Care Trust (PCT) ensure those identified as having a need receive the appropriate package to meet their need and funding is available.
16. VFM reviews have improved service outcomes.
17. Savings from restructuring and detailed in the introduction.
 - a. Restructure resulted in better use of staff time and allowed for every tenant to have a named ILF responsible for their scheme, and for the service to support a much more extensive range of social activities.
 - b. Gardening service – we consulted with tenants on what standards they want to see against the contribution they are prepared to pay for grounds maintenance, following complaints about this service, and agreed future service standards they were happy with.
 - c. New out-of-hours emergency service reduced costs whilst still delivering the same level of service. This is now provided by the PCT who can provide a better service as they already have staff on duty, whilst the previous arrangement relied on call out from home.
 - d. Following tenant feedback all schemes have been upgraded with soft furnishings, without an increase in rent, and repainted where necessary.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
Facilitate access to other services available to our tenants that will assist them to continue to live independently and with choice.	2008	SJP	62. Compiling a list of contacts of our own for our tenants that will be available in various forms: of languages/ font/and audio tape 63. Leaflet being produced to	August 2008, review quarterly	List now collated, quote for printing being obtained Staff and tenants have copies of contacts, would like to develop the format into a small brochure for a

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			<p>make available advise and signposting to older people living in general housing stock</p> <p>64. Look at demand to meet social needs and prevent isolation through extended services available from sheltered schemes to older people in the community</p>	<p>Summer 2009</p> <p>Autumn 2009</p>	<p>more professional look.</p>
To ensure value for money in service delivery.	2009	SJP	65. Ensure that staffing costs are benchmarked with comparator authorities and any necessary actions taken.	March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contacted SP team for support to get benchmarking prices across Cambridgeshire. - Contacting care providers for costs of care services. - Attending Sitra (umbrella organisation committed to raising standards in the housing care and support sector) benchmarking conference on 8 July to establish opportunities for benchmarking through Sitra. Sitra benchmarking received and contact made with other providers included in this to try

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
					to meet to discuss service delivery and best practice
To ensure our service users have an entirely positive experience while living in Council accommodation.	2010	SJP	66. Establish whether the Council wishes to tender for the Care and Support contracts in 2010 and plan to take the decision made forward. 67. Prepare committee report for June committee regarding current situation and options to be considered regarding delivery of care and support contracts	March 2009	- Meetings with the PCT and SP now in progress. - Information and discussion meetings taking place with HMB members, councillors, tenant reps. Feb 09 and April 09
To ensure our service users have an entirely positive experience while living in Council accommodation.	2009		68. Deliver current modernisation programme: - Talbot House - Brandon Court	Sept 2009 Sept 2011	Contractor on site at Talbot House completion date due Autumn 2009 Committee report to be considered at June committee regarding agreed plans for Brandon Court. Tenants at Brandon Court have started to move before Notice to quit has

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
					been given
To ensure our service users have an entirely positive experience while living in the Council's Sheltered Housing accommodation.	2009	RH	69. Review Modernisation programme of 2005 and report to cttee in June 2009 in light of Sheltered Housing BV Review.	Officers Meeting every 6-8 weeks	- Committee report on Capital Funding to be prepared and submitted in November 2008. - Need to link in with the Older People's Housing Strategy. Committee report being prepared for June 2009
To ensure our service users have an entirely positive experience while living in Council accommodation.	2010	SJP	70. Prepare for the re-accreditation for the Code of Practice 2010.	- Monthly meetings with staff. - Quarterly meetings with tenant working party	All ILS staff collating evidence for portfolios, ready for submission. First advisory visit has taken place and very positive feedback received
To improve our response to the diversity of our customers and staff.	July 2008	SJP	71. Reconsider Stage 1 of the EQIAs as a whole service rather than individual services	June 08	Completed staff training 10 July, may highlight some changes needed. EQUIA feed back now received and working on level 2

Stock Investment and Asset Management

Service	Stock Investment and Asset Management
Lead officer	Bob Hadfield – update April 09

Introduction

Customer expectations rise over time, and we know that tenants expect to see demonstrable value for money for the rents they pay; the tenancy profile is changing over time; the housing stock is ageing; and financial resources are limited. The focus therefore continues to be the improvement of the service experienced by residents. This will be achieved by:

- Providing efficient and flexible working practices tailored to meet the expressed needs and wants of residents within a diverse community
- Improving access to value for money services and staff that provide them
- Involving residents in shaping services and making choices within financial constraints
- Keeping people informed as to changes that are made as a result of their views being taken into account.

Since the last Audit Commission inspection in 2004 our programme for meeting the decent homes standard is on track for completion in 2010, with 86% of housing stock already meeting the standard in 2007. The programme is based on sound knowledge of the stock condition and effective tenant engagement. Improvements in our approach to working with contracting partners have also benefited residents as demonstrated in a 2% increase in overall tenant's satisfaction with the repairs service in the 2006 Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Repairs are easy to report or query, 'repairing the defect' has simplified and improved the repairs process from the customer's point of view with the service now being more responsive. Pre inspections are undertaken in fewer than 5% of properties, and operatives have more freedom to undertake works required to a value of £300. Void performance has improved significantly, the outturn at the end of last year being 30.5 days against a target of 35 days. All voids are now being brought up to the Decent Homes Standard and robust targets are in place for all stages of the voids process.

The authority undertook a stock option appraisal in 2005. Residents' aspirations beyond decent homes were identified in a major survey leading to the establishment of the 'Cambridge Standard'. This has allowed residents top priorities to be addressed within available resources in subsequent annual works programmes, and work undertaken elsewhere in the department. The top five priorities identified were:

- a. Improvements inside the home
- b. Improving community safety
- c. Improving outside the home
- d. Improving housing and care options after retirement
- e. Improving the housing service

What has been achieved?

1. Since the last Audit Commission inspection we have made significant changes to our working arrangements in seeking to improve service delivery for the customer. Examples include 'repairing the defect', rationalising the schedule of rates by reducing thousands of job rates to fewer than 200 items. This, in turn, has reduced the need for multiple visits by contracting and client representatives to residents' homes. This has reduced transaction costs and improve the customer experience, as evidenced by the last Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Following consultation, repair work categories have also been amended so as to improve emergency and urgent repair working and more accurately record performance. Clarification has been sought from the Audit Commission regarding the treatment of major works in voids, advice received has proved very helpful in determining our treatment of major works in voids. Cross city working has been adopted by technical staff so as to ensure consistency in approach to service delivery across all geographic areas within the City.
2. The introduction of the Decent Homes programme resulted in major increases in overall investment to the housing stock of some £10.7m in 2004/05 to £18m in 2007/08 with larger resulting annual work programmes, all of which has been accommodated within existing resources. The total value of the decent homes programmes from 2003 to 2010 is £69m, £42m capital and the remainder revenue. Procurement of all major contractual relationships has been made using Egan principles, with a range of procurement methodologies having been successfully employed. All utilise a partnered approach, including tendered projects. Very high levels of customer satisfaction have been achieved within Decent Homes projects (94.6% for City Services and 96.4% for Apollo in 2007/08) demonstrating the success and maturity of the contractual relationships involved. Residents are actively participating in the asset management process at both strategic and project delivery levels. Major cost

savings and efficiencies have been achieved ranging from supply chain cost savings, reductions in overhead costs and the establishment of target costs. In 2007-8 savings against target costs amounted to £269,000. Incentives are contained within contractual arrangements for contracting partners to make savings. These savings have allowed the same target costs to be applied for 2008-9 and this, against a backdrop of significant cost inflation within the industry generally. The Department achieved accreditation for Construction Client Charter Status, one of only four local authorities at that time. In excess of 70% of the stock has been surveyed for Decent Homes and Housing, Health and Safety Rating System based inspection has been introduced using hand held technology. Major sheltered refurbishment projects have been delivered to time and budget with high ECO ratings and high levels of customer satisfaction.

3. Residents are actively involved in the work of the department at all levels. Residents are members of the Housing Management Board with voting rights and are therefore able to influence priorities and programmed works to be undertaken. Resident representatives are engaged as full members of evaluation panels for procurement of contracts. Residents also make choices regarding fixtures and fittings within their own homes. Funds are also made available for residents to undertake self managed projects in their own neighbourhoods, an example being improvement works to Lichfield Hall last year where the communal garden was replanted, redecoration of the lounge took place and new notice boards were installed to blocks of flats across the estate. Ward Councillors are proactive with members of staff in discussing neighbourhood and estate management issues.
4. The authority has robust health and safety procedures in place. Examples include gas maintenance, asbestos and legionella management, fire risk assessment, carbon monoxide detection and others. A programme is also in place to address immersion heater safety. The Authority was complimented by the courts recently on its gas procedures together with its sympathetic approach to vulnerable residents.
5. The Authority is currently undertaking a major customer access initiative across the full spectrum of its activities. Housing repairs are to enter the newly established customer access centre next year. This offers new possibilities in terms of further enhancing the repairs service, which are currently being explored, for example, web based real time tracking of repairs by customers.
6. The Council invests heavily in the provision of aids and adaptations reflecting the aging nature of our tenancy profile. Wherever possible major aids are recycled and re-employed. Minor aids and adaptations are provided on request. Average household incomes are very modest and affordable warmth is becoming a major concern for many. The authority installs gas high-efficiency replacement heating systems as standard and insulation where required, which is reflected in the improving SAP rating of the stock. During the last financial year 2,200 tonnes of CO² emissions were eliminated within the housing stock

and more than 10 million KWh of energy saved via insulation, lighting and heating improvements. Tenants' fuel bills were also reduced by an estimated £300,000 pa in total.

7. The authority has also recently determined its approach to digital television and is to install new digital aerial systems to all large blocks of flats and maisonettes 3 stories and above, together with all sheltered accommodation and associated bungalows, and for which procurement is underway via a public sector framework agreement.
8. Value for money is monitored and reported upon. Increasingly comprehensive benchmarking is being applied across the whole area of repairs activity. In recent years our response repairs costs have increased below the rate of inflation for the industrial sector as a whole. Reducing numbers of repairs to properties may be demonstrated. Enhanced information via the stock condition survey is allowing more informed and timely decisions to be made regarding repair priorities. Resident inspectors are actively involved in examining work in progress across a range of work areas and in particular capturing the experiences of our customers. Residents are also actively involved in selecting contractors and monitoring performance by working alongside officers within the Resident and Officers Asset Management Group (ROAM).
9. Future procurement will increasingly be via public sector buying agencies and/or working with other organisations to ensure benefits of scale, improved efficiency and service enhancement. The authority has put forward its Decent Homes programme to Constructing Excellence as a demonstration project to complement its existing repair service demonstrator. Joint working has recently started with South Cambridgeshire District Council for the procurement of future gas appliance servicing.

The action plan below sets out identified priorities for improving the service over the next three years.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Review date	Progress Update
Repairs service and delivery					
Post inspections of day to day housing repairs	2008/09	Bob Hadfield	72. 10% of all housing repairs are post inspected and recorded. Targets to be established with key	Sept 08 and quarterly thereafter.	Started. John Horword is currently looking at targets for post-inspections – revised review date is now Sept 09

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Review date	Progress Update
			personnel and monitored regularly and form part of performance appraisal.	Sept 09	
Missed appointments compensation	2009/10	Principal surveyor	73. Formal consideration of the introduction of compensation for missed appointments by maintenance contractor by Housing Management Team and signed off.	June 09	PMF to forward to HMM to discuss before going to DMT to clarify where funds are coming from and whether it needs to go to committee. – A decision was made at HMM not to pursue this further
Expand appoint system and times of reporting.	2009/10	BH	74. Introduction of 2 hours appointment slots for all trades and extending operation of repairs service to early evening. And possibly Saturday mornings. 75. Expand the appointment system so that appointments are offered for urgent as well as routine repairs (new from AC report) 76. Improve performance in completing urgent and routine repairs on time (new from AC report)	Sept 09 Sept 09 Jan 09	Negotiations completed with City Services at no extra cost. IT systems to be agreed to accommodate this change. New appointment slots implemented from January 2009 LPI has been expanded to monitor % of appointments made and kept.
Review Decent Homes bathroom specification.	2008/09	WB / MD	77. Improve bathroom Specification with options for	Sept 08	Negotiations underway with contractors. Financial

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Review date	Progress Update
			residents with available financial envelope.		resources were not available to do this. Consideration may be given to including bathroom specs when Cambridge Standard is reviewed.
Procure diagnostic software for housing repairs.	2009/10	BH	78. Repairs finder software in operation at commencement of repairs service within Customer Access Centre.	March 09 and quarterly thereafter	To be incorporated into BPR work for transfer to CAS. Awaiting date for transfer of repairs services to Customer Access Centre
Informing residents					
Repair standards	2009/10	Principal Surveyor/	79. Published repair standards in Open door and on web site established after consultation with residents. Leaflet to be provided to all incoming tenants.	April 09	Draft completed June. Consult with HMB and tenants, Autumn 2008 Completed
Decent Homes programme	2009/10	Rania	80. Investment programme details published in open door and available on Web site. 81. Provide longer term information for customers about the improvement works planned for their homes in the future (new from AC report)	April 09	Agreed to put certain level of detail on web such as total commitment and general timetable. This will be done as soon as web team are in a position to update the site

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Review date	Progress Update
Ensure residents informed regard asbestos	2008/09	JG / TM	82. Plasticised bespoke asbestos details made available to incoming residents in welcome pack. 83. Provide comprehensive information on asbestos for residents (new action from AC report)	Sept 08 and quarterly thereafter July 09	Preference would be for this information to be fixed to internal face of cupboard door. Need to consider cost implications for next budget review
Management information systems					
Post inspection appointment generation	2008/9	JHK	84. Orchard post repair inspection generation to be rectified.	June 08 September 08	Using a manual system for the time being. Automated systems are being investigated but may not be financially feasible.
Integration of IT modules	2009/10	BH	85. All available Arc house management packages to be integrated and communicating with each other. 86. Property attributes facility to be fully comprehensive with all that is known about the property.	June 09 and quarterly thereafter	ICT Steering Group have considered and have released corporate IT investment resources assist improvements.
Value for money					
Systematic benchmarking and	2008/09	Principal Surveyor/	87. Regular reporting of current benchmarking data to	June 08 and	Benchmarking completed. Reports still need to be

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Review date	Progress Update
reporting of voids performance and costs			monthly operational meeting and subsequently to the Core Group every six months.	monthly operation team meetings	produced regularly for benchmarking at ops meetings and reviewed systematically.
Systematic benchmarking and reporting of Decent Homes module costs	2008/09	WB	88. Formal reporting of benchmarks costs for key components within Decent Homes programme to ops team and subsequently the Core Group meeting every six months.	June 08 and quarterly thereafter	In team monitoring to be reported formally to HMT and HMB.
Performance monitoring and reporting					
Revise gas maintenance operating procedures to improve performance	2008/09	CB	89. Implementation of an operating cycle that meets performance requirements whilst allowing time within the year for successful operation of established access procedures.	Sept 08	Looking to move gas servicing to 10 month programme – meetings currently being held with CityCare. Amend MTS to reflect costs. Changes have been implemented and were successful with only 3 services to be completed at 17/03/09
Adaptations' Amend timescales to set challenging timeframes.	2008/09	HN	90. Challenging timescales for completion of aids and adaptation works.	Sept 08 Date for further review Sept 09	MTOPI has now been amended to more challenging targets and are being monitored quarterly. The targets are likely to be further adjusted in September 09

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Review date	Progress Update
Strategies policies and procedures					
Develop repairs and maintenance strategy	2008/09	TM	91. Current repairs and maintenance strategy that is consistent with MTOs and other policies and strategies.	Sept 08	Strategy to go to committee in November 2008. Strategy went to committee in March 09 and was approved.
Procurement Strategy not up to date.	2008/09	BH	92. Current procurement strategy reflecting changes in local authority procurement practice and the Egan agenda.	Sept 08	Update strategy and refer to Committee for approval in November cycle. Strategy approved at committee in March 09
Diversity					
Monitoring partnering contracts on diversity – having process in place for findings from statistics.	2009/10	WB with Apollo & City Services	93. Trend analysis of work force(s) employed and the extent to which they reflect diversity in the local community.	March 09	Have done workforce analysis with partners.
Increase satisfaction rates for BME community with repairs and maintenance service	2009/10	WB	94. Formal trend analysis to be produced quarterly.	June 09 and quarterly thereafter	Currently ad hoc reports to operation meetings. Need to consider resources for this and other cross cutting issues and link to the STATUS Survey findings
Health and Safety					
Provide energy saving advice to residents.	2008/09	SG	95. Regular informing of resident of service and support available to them, at least	June 08 and quarterly	Mailshot to all residents. Article in Open Door. Section on web site.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Review date	Progress Update
			once annually via mail shot and section on web site with contact details.	thereafter	
Improve gas inspection schedule from 12 to 10 months programme. Inspect and service additional items upon gas inspection	2009/10	CB	96. Gas maintenance contractor undertaking as part of normal maintenance activity. 97. 10 month programme to be implemented with new gas contract. Smoke alarm testing to be included on each service	March 09 (review) July 09	Will be included in new contract 2009. Now operating 11 month programme working towards 10 months. Smoke alarm testing included in new gas specification to be implemented July 09

Housing Income Management

Service	Housing Income Management
Lead officer	Andrew Latchem – updated March 2009

Introduction

The City Council has a clear strategy to reduce rent arrears and evictions whilst giving support, advice and assistance to tenants in financial difficulty.

Since the last Audit Commission Inspection in 2003 a great deal of work has been done to increase the collection rate of rent and to improve the service to tenants. The latest year-end collection rate is 98.35%, and although this is not in the upper quartile it is agreed that this is an impressive figure as Cambridge City Council aims to achieve a balance between prevention, support, sustainment and enforcement. The target to reduce evictions by 10% per year for the last three years has been achieved. The rent arrears figure at year-end was the lowest since the mid 1980s despite no extra resources being provided. A Rent Management Survey has been carried out in partnership with a local Housing Association and the results have been shared nationally at best practice meetings and seminars. The outcomes of the survey are now shaping the delivery of the Income Management service to tenants. Customers now have a wide range of payment options, including payments on line, telephone and text messaging. Direct Debit is offered as the preferred method and 24% of tenants who have a payment to make choose this method.

What has been achieved?

Access, customer care and user focus

1. Staff are customer focused and knowledgeable, and are specialist trained in income management, housing benefit and housing law.
2. Customers views were sought on collection methods and will be considered by the Housing Management Board in Autumn 2008.
3. Service standard leaflets were produced by the Rents Best Practice Group, reviewed July 2008, and are also available on the internet. “What will happen if I don’t pay my rent” – leaflet and on the internet.

4. Cambridge City Council is considered an excellent authority on rent arrears by national organisations such as Housing Quality Network as an emphasis is placed on prevention, such as the rent advisory service, sign up of tenants, rent arrears panels and referrals to external agencies, eg CAB, Cambridge Law Centre.
5. Andrew Latchem, Manager of City Homes North, is asked to speak at national events on how Cambridge City maintains excellence, particularly the balance between prevention and enforcement.
6. Flexible payment options are available and in a recent rent arrears management survey, 100% of tenants felt it was easy to pay their rent.
7. There is a wide range of ways to contact the service, including free-phone, internet contact and two area offices.
8. Open Door regularly has articles on income management, ways to avoid getting into arrears, giving advice on a seasonal basis such as Christmas being an expensive time.
9. Every 13 weeks we send out a quarterly rent statement to allow tenant to check their payments.
10. Every two years we hold a rent arrears seminar to consult HMB on the income management service and performance.
11. The service operates early morning and early evening visits where appropriate, to ensure contact with tenants who are out during the day.

Diversity

12. The New Tenant Advisors do the “sign-up” for tenants and use of a checklist to identify if they need any specific support needs.
13. New tenant advisors contribute to higher satisfaction scores for new tenants. The service includes advice on housing benefit entitlement, and payment options. This work is underpinned with an effective Service Level Agreement between housing services and housing benefits.
14. The rent system checks are effective in identifying support needs. This is done via a “pop-up” alert system on the rent account.
15. Staff are aware of a range of available assistance for customers with special needs.
16. Staff have been set a target to increase data on customer profile from 65% to 75% by August 2008.
17. Stage 1 of Equality Impact Assessment on the Income Management Policy completed. Stage 2 is planned for summer 09.
18. Interpretation/translation services, Braille and large print are made available. Straplines on leaflets inform customers of the availability of information in other languages.
19. Emphasis is put on visiting tenants in their home if they are hesitant in coming to the office to discuss sensitive issues, such as eviction or rent arrears.

20. Vulnerability is recognised, for example through referral of prisoner's families to Cambridge Law Centre family support service, with the aim of sustaining tenancies where possible.

Rent and service charges accounting and collection

21. All rent staff receive debt advice training, with Rent Advisors receiving additional specialist welfare rights training.
22. There is clear/accessible information for service users for rent and service charges.
23. New Tenant Advisers provide a comprehensive service with a clear process for new tenants.
24. Working links with the Housing Benefits section are excellent.
25. Rent collection systems for supporting people ensures a more effective system for vulnerable people.
26. '5 easy methods of payment' leaflet gives clear information around ways to pay.
27. Outcomes from a survey seeking service users' views on collection methods etc, are being incorporated into service delivery, for example tackling loan sharks and financial exclusion.

Arrears recovery and debt advice

28. The support service for prevention of rent arrears is effective. The best practice group for income management is concerned to ensure a balance between advice and support and action to reduce arrears. The level of arrears has reduced from £575,172 (2.24%) in 2004/05 to £480,074 (1.65%) in 2007/08.
29. A Rent Eviction panel has been set up and rents evictions have decreased. The target for reducing evictions by 10% per annum has been achieved in the last three years.
30. Officers make early contact with tenants in arrears. One letter is sent followed by either a visit, telephone call, text or e-mail, for a more instant response.
31. Relationships with Legal Services and the County Court are very good.
32. We have a high emphasis on performance management. Each team has a target to reduce rent arrears. Information on debt is up to date and used to produce a good range of reports.
33. Staff are aware of and are following the pre action protocol on possession proceedings that is now a requirement for court action.
34. Staff refer complex cases to external support agencies, for example Cambridge Law Centre.
35. The rent arrears management survey of tenants who are or have been in arrears highlighted the prevalence of doorstep money lenders, leading to work with the Cambridge Law Centre and Birmingham City Council to address this. A poster campaign and leaflet advice commence in July 2008.

Value for money

36. There is effective collection of rent arrears, and plans to further promote and target the take up of direct debit.

37. We have been improving our collection rates year on year - 2006/07 - 98%, 2007/08 - 98.34%.

38. Cash arrears have gone down whilst rents have gone up. Average rents have gone up from £63.53 in 2006/07 to £66.8 in 2007/08 and rent arrears have gone down from 1.97% of total rents to 1.65% for the same period.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
Continuous improvement of performance indicators.	2008/2011	AL	98. 3 year action plan to reduce arrears down further to 1.5% in the next 3 years.	Review April each year	Estimate that we have achieved 1.8% for year end 08/09. Need to develop a broad strategic plan in advance of the rent service going into the Customer Contact Centre in December 09
To improve service delivery.	2008/09	AL/SF	99. Ensure that staff are able to give examples of how the service had improved in response to customer feedback.	July 2008	Rents Best Practice Group is reviewing the results of the rents survey – Summer 2008. Survey is taking place with Housing Sounding Board through Federation. Also carrying out an electronic rent survey set up by the Resident Involvement team
			100. Use all opportunities available to help customers maximise their	Sept 09 and	The City rent advisor has already begun working with

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			incomes,	ongoing	older tenants across the City to ensure they are receiving all available benefits. Articles are being run in Open Door
To review rewards and incentives.	2008/09	SA/AH	101. Consider additional incentives to pay and penalties for failing to pay rent.	Sept 09	Will look at this at the HMB seminar – Autumn 2008. Postponed as we will look incentives for rent payment before going back to HMB
To improve VFM in the service delivery.	2008/09	AL	102. Benchmark the cost of delivering the rent collection service.	Oct 09	Awaiting the outcomes from Housemark. On Service Plan for Oct 09
	2008/09	AL	103. Analyse the unit cost of different types of collection methods develop strategies to promote the most cost effective methods where practical to do so.	August 2008	Currently promoting DD. Campaign to increase take-up of DD – Summer 2008.
		AL	104. Develop a council wide approach to dealing with customers who owe multiple debts to the Council by developing a Corporate Debt policy; (New actions from AC report)	Sept 09	Draft Debt Policy has been produced and meeting with Finance and Customer Contact Centre is being set up to progress.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
		AL/SF	105. Reduce rent loss by ensuring that the arrangements for letting properties are minimising the length of time they remain vacant	Sept 09	Local PI s are being monitored for voids and void times are reducing. Also looking at position re Sheltered properties and getting completion times more quickly from City Services to facilitate earlier viewings.
		AL	106. Ensure that the value for money implications of not actively pursuing former tenant arrears, is clearly understood and the impact assessed on the Council's financial resources (New action from AC report)	Sept 09	
To keep rent accounts clear.		JH	107. Continue to develop greater integration between Supporting People and rent accounts but not to the detriment of customers and effective collection of charges.		Need to progress with Housing Finance.

Tenancy and Estate Management

Service	Tenancy and Estate Management
Lead officer	Sandra Farmer – update 09 March

Introduction

We aim to ensure that residents, especially council tenants have an entirely positive experience when dealing with Cambridge City Council as a landlord by:

- Continuing to ensure residents have a real opportunity to influence the delivery of services and to participate in the Council's decision making.
- Affirming our commitment to tackling anti social behaviour by signing up to the Respect Standard for Housing Management.
- Achieving excellent environmental standards.
- Improving access to services through clear Tenancy Management Service Standards and effective equalities/diversity practices.
- Pursuing best practice in the provision of Housing Services by embedding Value for Money in our organisational culture.

What has been achieved?

Tenancy Management

1. Our commitment to excellent customer care starts right at the outset of the tenancy. Our New Tenants Advisers Service was established in 2002 and supports new tenants through the moving in process.
2. Customer satisfaction with the New Tenant Advisers Service, is excellent. In 2007/08, at least 85% of new tenants surveyed told us that the overall service was either good or excellent. In 2008, the role of the Standards Group (a group of tenants, officers and leaseholders) was extended to incorporate tenants inspections on voids including reviewing the customers relet standard known as the 5 point promise.
3. Well trained staff receive periodic updates on housing law and a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures on Tenancy Management is available to support staff in their day to day role along with open access to our in-house legal team.
4. Support for vulnerable tenants at risk of homelessness is achieved through the Tenants at Risk Group, a multi agency panel which was established in 2003 to improve tenancy sustainment. The Rent Arrears Panel has a similar role in supporting

tenants who are at risk of homelessness due to arrears. The Problem Solving Group, a multi agency group focussing on anti social behaviour was established in 2000 and the Tenancy Enforcement Panel, a panel of senior officers in conjunction with Legal was established in 2001, which considers cases where court action is appropriate due to breaches of the authority's tenancy conditions.

Estate Management

5. Grounds Maintenance and cleaning services are procured from City Services, the Council's inhouse contractors, and these services were reviewed by the customer led Standards Group in 2004/05. Standards in both communal cleaning and grounds maintenance are high, with customer satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live reaching 76%. In addition, City Homes employs 6 caretakers across 6 priority areas such as parts of Arbury including Kingsway, and parts of the City Centre including East Road and Hanover Court. Resident surveys completed as part of the 2007 Street Forums (see point 16 for definition), show that satisfaction with the caretaking service is high, although further improvements are planned in 2008/9.
6. To further improve satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live and with opportunities for participation, a comprehensive inspection regime is in place to monitor ground maintenance standards. Compliance with the standards as set by tenants, is consistently achieving in the region of 80%. Resident views are obtained through the Street Forums and as a result of customer feedback we have invested to improve recycling facilities and shrubbery, and have initiated a £137k Neighbourhood Improvement Project.
7. City Homes is a member of the Housemark Estate Services Benchmarking Group and has set up a Local Landlords Benchmarking Consortium to measure value for money and compare the quality of their services.

Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)

8. The Housing Officers work closely with the council's Anti Social Behaviour Team. In 2002, the council invested in the Cambridge Mediation Service to help empower residents to agree solutions to problems with their neighbours. A survey completed in 2004, reviewing the then, new service, indicated that customers felt that the service was good. Housing Officers regularly attend Neighbourhood Action Group Meetings and have excellent working relationships with the Police, Environmental Health and support agencies such as English Churches Housing, as evidenced by the recent multi Agency "Neighbourhood Matters Event" and as outlined in the Enforcing Tenancy Conditions and Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) section.
9. The council actively uses a wide range of tools in tackling anti social behaviour such as demotions and injunctions as well as possession action. The council has also recently acquired its 4th closure on a council property and examples of action taken to

tackle anti social behaviour has been shared with customers through the Open Door Magazine and the Cambridge Evening News, the local daily paper..

10. Cambridge City Council has joined the Housemark ASB Benchmarking Club and has commissioned Housemark to advise on a comprehensive performance management system in this area.
11. Introductory tenancies commenced in 2006. Their effectiveness was reviewed in a report presented to Committee in 2007, which showed the benefits in reducing rent arrears and tackling anti social behaviour.

Resident Involvement (RI)

12. Resident Involvement is at the heart of Tenancy Management. The Community Involvement Programme includes events such as Environmental Days run in co-operation with other departments. Housing Officers encourage residents to become actively involved through local community events.
13. Residents help organise the annual Housing Tour, RI Festival and other initiatives such the Count Me in Scheme and Street Forums as well as more traditional Residents Association events.
14. Increasing opportunities for residents to get involved is offered through the Robert at Home and Southside Partnership Meetings established in 2001 as well as through the Standards Group. Since 2007 Housing Officers have agreed service priorities and reported achievements back to Southside Partnership, Robert at Home and the Tenant Forum. Newsletters are provided targeted at areas where greater engagement with residents is needed.
15. Housing Officers produced Area Profiles in 2006, which are in the process of being reviewed and will include the most up to date diversity information.
16. Residents' views are sought through working in partnership with the Tenants' Federation and Leaseholder Forum, where views are sought on the doorstep. This is referred to as Street Forums as it tends to target streets.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
To improve access, customer care and user focus.	2009/10	SF	108. Review the comprehensive service standards for the tenancy and estate	Review date: March	Peer review has been completed July 08. Monthly performance reports

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			management service.	2009	produced.
	2009/10	SF	109. Review Tenancy and Estate Management policies and procedures to reflect implementation of CBL.	Review date: June 2009	
	2008/09	SF	110. Review plans to involve residents in the specification of contracts for grounds maintenance. Develop clear standards and monitor against the standards in all areas.	Next review date January 2009	Monthly inspections are completed by staff and an action plan has been agreed to target improvements.
	2008/09	SF	111. Ensure that the handbook is readily available in the main community languages.	Target date: December 2008	Review of tenancy conditions has been approved by HMB March 09 and is being promoted to tenants, after which the revised handbook will be produced. Need to look at resource implications for this, however in the course of the consultation tenants told us they wanted the conditions in English.
To further improve the condition of estates.	2008/09	SF	112. Work towards increasing residents satisfaction with the	Target: October	HMB approved the in principal report in July 08.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			neighbourhood as a place to live by reviewing ways of improving efficiencies of the existing caretaking service.	2008	Undertook a review of care-taking services including cost effectiveness and efficiency, approved by Committee. Work will start soon on pilot sites.
To improve performance management by the introduction of new performance indicators in Tenancy and Estate Management.	2008/09 continuing through 2009/10	AR SF	<p>Estate Management:</p> <p>113. To commission a consultant to complete a bill of quantities to enable us to benchmark through the HouseMark estate services group.</p> <p>114. To ensure grounds maintenance standards continue to achieve 80% or above.</p> <p>115. Sign-up to the Respect Standard, produce Respect action plan. Implement year 1 actions from Respect Standards Action Plan</p> <p>116. To continue to gather residents' views of their estates through the street forums and to</p>	<p>Review: January 2009</p> <p>Target: October 2009</p> <p>Review: July 2009</p>	<p>.</p> <p>HMB approved committee report July 2008.</p>

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
	2008/09	AL/AR	<p>target improvements as necessary via funding from the Cambridge Standard money.</p> <p>117. Consider a reward system for tenants monitoring contracts.</p> <p>Tenancy Management: 118. To continue to achieve 80% and above customer satisfaction in the overall relet process.</p>	<p>October 09</p> <p>Review March 09</p> <p>March 09</p>	<p>This year's street forums are scheduled for completion in October 08.</p> <p>Meeting our targets and end of year report will be produced and reviewed quarterly. Discussed at voids best practice group</p>
To demonstrate VFM across the service delivery.	2008/09 continuing through 2009/10	SF	<p>Estate Management: 119. Need to assess value for money delivered by in-house environmental contracts.</p> <p>120. In light of the outcome of the above to develop and implement service level agreements.</p> <p>121. money.</p>	<p>Target date: March 09</p> <p>Target date: June 09</p>	<p>Joined the Housemark Estate Services Improvement club. Benchmarking with other local Landlords has commenced.</p> <p>Move to ASB section of the</p>

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			<p>Tenancy Management:</p> <p>122. Pilot an under occupation incentive scheme and complete a cost benefit analysis to use this information to inform other incentive schemes.</p> <p>123. Establish framework for identifying and capturing costing information eg (6.14) Repairs relating to vandalism.</p>	<p>Target date: June 2009</p> <p>Target date: October 2009</p>	<p>Improvement Plan</p> <p>Improved practice re rechargeable repairs with our in house contractor. Agreed set charges for rechargeable repairs relating to Void properties.</p> <p>Incentive packages to be put together for outgoing tenants to help reduce void costs.</p>
Improve satisfaction with the way ASB is dealt with		SF	124. Ensure that all cases of low level ASB are dealt with in a consistent way. (new from AC report	Dec 08	Managers now receive anti-social behaviour case loads on an ongoing basis, for review, to ensure they are being dealt with in a consistent way.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
Reduce void times		SF	125. Reduce time taken to let properties after repair (new from AC report)	Sept 09	New local PI has been introduced. Also looking at position re Sheltered properties and getting completion times more quickly from City Services to facilitate earlier viewings.

Enforcing Tenancy Conditions and Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Service	Enforcing Tenancy Conditions and Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
Lead officer	Alastair Roberts – update April 09

Introduction

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour in all its forms is a priority for the City Council and the Cambridge Community Safety Partnership. It has become a priority in response to listening to residents and tenants concerns and complaints through, for example, the Citizens' Survey, the Cambridge Standard Consultation and the Cambridge Tenants' Status Survey and in the context of emerging government policy. The Safer Communities Team is a self-contained team which as well as ASB includes the allied services of Racial Harassment and the Community Safety Strategy. Whilst the bulk of cases (currently 57 open cases) handled by the ASB Team and Racial Harassment Service remain focused on its social landlord properties and neighbourhoods, a requirement of which is a close working relationship with City Homes, the service is provided across tenures and with other agencies promoting safer and more peaceful spaces from shopping areas, city centre squares and open spaces and business parks. The team has adopted a 'supporting the community' approach to problem resolution. The service is provided at both a strategic and an operational level. Strategically, taking the lead for the Council and the Community Safety Partnership's response to Anti-Social Behaviour across the City. Operationally, they have established policies and procedures and a referral mechanism with City Homes housing officers to deliver a seamless response in terms of investigation and the use of both enforcement and prevention techniques. The Racial Harassment Officer has direct links with the police Hate Crime Task Force. Although strong links already exist with staff in the Environmental Services Division over casework, further work is to be done in the coming year with the Private Sector Housing Standards Team on landlord/tenant ASB issues.

What has been achieved?

1. Residents were consulted over changes to the ASB Procedures in the Autumn of 2006 and their views taken into account in the production of the current version.

2. Overall resident involvement is strong with work taking place with various ASB groups, which meet on a quarterly basis. For instance work with the East Chesterton residents, developed from the APEC (Abbey, Petersfield and East Chesterton) Project resulted in, amongst other things, the introduction of E-Cops, a mechanism for linking police and agencies with local residents via the internet. Many other residents groups have become involved in environmental improvements in their areas. City Homes have established neighbourhood ASB agreements (levels of behaviour you expect from your neighbours) in certain areas.
3. The City Council's Lead Officer for ASB spent three and a half years (part time) at the Home Office Crime & Drugs Team at Go-East taking the strategic lead on ASB in the Eastern Region. During this time he developed a highly successful undergraduate and post Graduate Diploma in the Management of ASB with the Anglia Ruskin University.
4. Staff in the ASB Team have had no fewer than four commendations for their work from Cambridgeshire Constabulary including one from the Chief Constable for their contribution in reducing crime & disorder in the city.
5. The Council has exposed the ASB service to scrutiny by an external consultant to ensure that it is fit for purpose (Adam Greenwood Associates Report) and has produced an action plan for improvements.
6. There is an out-of-hours e-mail and telephone service for ASB and a 24hour hot line for reporting racial harassment or other hate crime.
7. A Racial Harassment policy is in place and will be refreshed in 2008 and the racial harassment strategy is closely linked into the Community Safety Plan. The Racial Harassment Officer also works closely with minority communities, risk assessing potential tensions in Cambridge. For instance, after the London bombings the RH officer has worked with the Muslim community to communicate positive messages to all sections of the community. Individual hate crime cases are also being dealt with and regular surgeries are held in different parts of the City.
8. Overall crime is down in the City by 23%. In 2005 the Home Office set the Community Safety Partnership a stretching target to reduce overall crime in the City (through focussed work on Alcohol Related Violent Crime, Domestic Violence, Anti-social Behaviour & Criminal Damage and Prolific and Priority Offenders) by 21% by April 2008. This was from a baseline established in 2003/04. By April 2008 the Partnership had exceeded this target and overall crime was down by 23% with, for

example, a reduction in reported criminal damage of 23%. The Safer Communities Section has played a significant role in working with partner agencies to co-ordinate projects, which have contributed towards this achievement.

9. Funding for a number of diversionary/preventative projects has been received through the Community Safety Partnership and the Safer Stronger Communities Fund. In addition, 2005/06 24 grants, in 2006/07 28 grants and in 2007/08 21 grants were approved from the Safer City Fund. The ASB plan includes diversionary projects and close working links exist with Community Development, via the Children and Young Peoples Participation Service (ChYPPs) team. Work is targeted at young people – particularly those at risk of offending or about to enter into the criminal justice system. The database now allows the monitoring of those who are re-offending to measure if the actions taken have a long-term benefit. However, the database is still under development and work is commencing with Housemark to ensure its effectiveness as a management tool. The work of the ASB Team is also linked into the Prolific and Priority Offenders programme.
10. A wide range of prevention and enforcement tools are used, for example prevention work with young people is done through the ChYPPs Team, Guardian Awareness Programme (GAP) letters issued by the Police are sometimes a feature of this work. All available enforcement tools are used (apart from parental control orders which are issued by the court), ASBOs, ABCs, injunctions, S1 crackhouse closures, demotion orders, S30 dispersal orders. All new tenants to the City Council are placed on an Introductory Tenancy by City Homes for the first 12 months. For example, in the past financial year the ASB Team have worked with partners to achieve 8 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, 3 Injunctions, 18 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, 1 Parenting Contract, 1 Undertaking to the Court, 8 Notices of Seeking Possession and 5 Possession Orders. In May 2008, working closely with City Homes and the Police, a Section 1 (ASB Act 2003) Crack House Closure was secured. Staff in City Homes and the ASB Team are to be formally commended by the Constabulary for the role they played in partnership working by liaising with and reassuring the community in the area affected.
11. Multi-agency problem solving groups meet monthly to discuss referred ASB cases and develop action plans. The groups serve to close cases when all agencies are in agreement that the case is solved or no longer active.
12. The ASB team use overt and covert CCTV coverage and work closely with the City CCTV Operations Department for specific overt surveillance as necessary to reduce crime and disorder. In all cases of covert surveillance for crime & disorder issues RIPA (Regulation of Investigative Powers Act) applications are sought. From April 2007 - April 2008 a total of 1,191 arrests were made across the City of which 37 were for ASB. The ASB Team assists residents in applying for grants for stand-alone CCTV systems in particular hot-spot areas.

13. Offensive graffiti is removed within 24 hours and other graffiti is removed within 5 days – 100% of offensive, 97% of non-offensive is being achieved, and demonstrated by City Services statistics.
14. Cambridge Community Safety Plan incorporates ASB as a priority and strong links are established with the Community Safety Partnership. This is embedded into every-day core working and has been mainstreamed and expanded into stronger partnership working via area committees and neighbourhood policing. High quality statistical information is produced by the police and the County's crime research team to help us better direct resources. The ASB Team is not just fulfilling a landlord function, but works City-wide to improve quality of life for residents, visitors and those working in the City. Quarterly reports on ASB across the City are made to the Community Safety Partnership as tackling ASB is a Partnership priority.
15. The Neighbourhood Policing initiative has been rolled out across the City and is working well. Actions are taken forward via a Neighbourhood Action Group which deals with ASB issues considered as priorities by residents and elected members through Area Committees. Outcomes are reported back to Area Committees where feedback is given and the priorities re-examined.
16. The Corporate Community Safety Group ensures that ASB measures are being considered alongside all services in the City Council.
17. Strong partnership working and ToR are in place such as with Neighbourhood Policing, Tenants at Risk, ASB, City Services, Apollo, City Care, BPHA, Federation, Cambridge Law Centre; and work closely with support agencies.
18. ASB database information and monitoring links with the performance management. – Phase 4 of the ASB database is now complete. Meetings are held with City Homes to ensure the system is kept up to date to produce high quality data, including performance, ie response times to complaints. It flags up the annual review of ASBOs and 6 monthly review of ABCs in advance, and highlight those coming back into the system. An Annual Report will go to Members at their September Community Safety Briefing. Monitoring is linked PIs recommended by Housemark and the Audit Commission.
19. Complainants are kept updated and informed of the progress of complaints by various means including telephone, letter and e-mail, face-to-face meetings and cards.

20. The strategic assessment drives the priorities which drill down into neighbourhood profiles, which statistically look at areas in terms of crime and ASB on a quarterly basis. An example of an outcome is the Priority Wards Project in 2006/7 – environmental clean-ups, preventative work with young people, training and development work with young people. Monthly case review meetings take place where performance management data is used to influence the work priorities.
21. ASB policies and procedures are current and in use and will be reviewed in the current year.
22. The development of in-house Legal Services has provided VFM and improved speed of response.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective (include recommendation from mock inspection)	Year	By Who m	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
To improve the performance management of the ASB service	2008/09	AR	126. Implement Phase 4 of the ASB database in line with Housemark/Audit Commission indicators.		Complete
			127. Investigate the possibility of buying a package that is compatible with Orchard	July 09	Currently several packages with an ASB database are being evaluated
	2008/09	AR	128. Training by Housemark for housing officers and ASB team on the value of data capture and how it can influence service delivery.	Training – 2.5.08; system improvement late Autumn	Training actioned 2.5.08 Housemark has provided cost for critical appraisal of database. Completed Jan 09 No progress as awaiting outcome of the Orchard upgrade. Also, no further changes to the current database anticipated for reasons of funding.
	2008/09	AR	129. Desktop research on comparisons for benchmarking and VFM.	Sept 08	Discussions have taken place with Housemark over benchmarking elements of the service with other authorities.
			130. Analyse comparative data on satisfaction and cost and consider	March 2010	Work has already started on comparisons with Portsmouth

Improvement Objective (include recommendation from mock inspection)	Year	By Who m	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			how data should be used to improve the service		and Oxford and we are beginning to establish trends. Report anticipated during summer 09.
Improve mechanisms for customer feedback	2008/09	AR	131. Feedback from service users – set up focus groups	March 09	Satisfaction levels on closed cases are monitored quarterly. Low satisfaction levels are further investigated and lessons learned are conveyed to ASB Officers and Housing Officers Focus groups will be run in 09/10 and will feed into the policy and procedure review.
	2008/09		132. Further analysis into the reasons behind the dissatisfaction of the response to reports of ASB.	Focus groups will be run through 09/10	Questions to be included within 2008 Tenant Satisfaction (STATUS) Survey to allow comparison. Issues from the STATUS and the PLACE Surveys will be discussed and investigated through the focus groups in 2009/10
Improve preventative processes	2008/09	AR/Enabli	133. Examination of the influence that can be had on designing out	March	Alastair Roberts attends Section 106 meetings with

Improvement Objective (include recommendation from mock inspection)	Year	By Who m	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
		ng Team	potential ASB hotspots at pre development stage of estates etc.	2010	Active Communities Links with the growth agenda have also been made
	2008/09	AR/TT R	134. Review Racial Harassment workplan.	June 08	Now included in Community Safety Action Plan from April 2008. The racial harassment service has been renamed community cohesion and RH service. This aligns with the police. Meetings with police to be held fortnightly to progress issues.
	2010/11	AR	135. Further development of a witness support scheme.	2010	Witness support is already in operation and is considered to be very important. A Safer City grant has been given to the Cambridge Mediation Service for community mediation which involves the inclusion of witness support as a condition of the grant. A number of drop-in sessions have taken place over recent months.

Resident Involvement

Service	Resident Involvement
Lead officer	Marella Hoffman – update March 09

Introduction

Choosing which services we provide or prioritise
Agreeing published service standards
Monitoring and publishing performance data
Reviewing for impacts, outcomes and further improvements

We aim to have all housing teams completing this cycle of engagement as far as possible within their own service-areas. Already in 2004 our annual A-Z database of Residents' Impacts showed consultations on 42 different aspects of the housing service, led by 26 different officers. Two specialist Resident Involvement (RI) staff are managed directly by the head of City Homes. However, RI awareness is mainstreamed into the jobs of all frontline housing staff. Since 2007 when we reviewed our approach, we have been emphasising the need for housing staff not only to consult, but also as far as possible to take residents' engagement through the complete cycle above.

What has been achieved?

Every tenant and leaseholder received a copy of their 'Your Home, Your Say' Tenant Compact, which enables residents to choose how to influence the housing service in the way that best suits their lifestyle. As well as offering flexible approaches, the 'Your Home, Your Say' Compact restates clear, simple service standards and transparent costings for RI. The Compact's attractive graphic format helped it achieve a 72% awareness rating in the last Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Of those who were aware of it, 73% were satisfied with it.

Every tenant and leaseholder also receives Open Door magazine quarterly. In 2006, a survey of preferred involvement methods (with about 400 replies from around the estates) showed Open Door magazine and its Freepost surveys were by far the favourite

route for involvement. Helped by a residents' editorial panel, each edition has a 'Your Home, Your Say' section that invites residents to get involved, and features improvements achieved by residents working together with staff. The Director's personal editorial at the start of each Open Door explains how residents' feedback shapes priorities and services, and most editions contain an interview with a resident representative, explaining how and why they do resident involvement. Each Open Door also contains a Freepost 'Your Home, Your Say' survey on some aspect of the housing service. To complete the feedback loop, the outcomes and impacts of each survey are featured in the next edition.

'You Said It, We Did It' features show how residents influence and improve services. The magazine's 'You Said It, We Did It' Annual Review gives an open, transparent summary of the outputs, costings, achievements and complaints handled by housing in the previous year. Open Door also invites all residents to the annual 'You Said It, We Did It Residents' Festival Day', and to a 'You Said It, We Did It Housing Tour' to view estate projects that residents and officers have achieved together.

Through Open Door, we encourage tenants and leaseholders to come forward as a candidate for the Housing Management Board. Every tenant and leaseholder receives a voting pack from Electoral Reform Services, to elect their chosen candidates. They elect tenant and leaseholder representatives every four years, and at each election new candidates refresh our panel of representatives at HMB. Each Open Door has an interview with one of the elected residents explaining how they go about representing residents while on the Board. In a random phone survey in 2007, Open Door and Housing Management Board scored 14 out of 20 both on residents' awareness of them and 16 out of 20 on satisfaction with them, among those who knew of them.

Shared Management

In 2002 Cambridge was one of the first councils nationwide to elect tenants and leaseholders onto its Housing Management Board Scrutiny Committee with equal votes alongside councillors. In addition to this level of decision-making, the housing service has, since the 1990s funded over £75k per year to an independent, staffed Cambridge Tenant Federation that is managed solely by the tenants, who employ their own staff to represent the tenant voice and to run street forums on their estates. A further £30k is given out annually in the Tenant Initiative Scheme, which funds resident-led environmental projects on the estates. A further £4k is also set aside to be given out to Residents' Associations so they can manage their own funds locally.

Within the housing service, high-level asset management is shared with resident representatives at the longstanding Residents & Officers Asset Management group (ROAM). A partner group of this is the Tenant Inspectors, a trained team of tenants who oversee the quality of the Decent Homes work, doing on-site inspections as well as having an in-depth role in the procurement process. Residents involved in the Gas Partnership have used their influence each year to help the Partnership achieve 100% gas inspections. And a range of residents' Standards

Groups work at an operational, service-delivery level to monitor and co-regulate estate-based contracts like grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts.

The Tenants' Working Group in the Independent Living Service plays an important role in the management and decision-making of sheltered schemes, which are also overseen by a grant-funded Sheltered Scheme Residents' Association citywide.

Cambridge tenants and leaseholders involved in the levels of shared management above have often given presentations and trainings to residents at other councils, and have been closely involved in helping the service repeatedly to win Chartermark accreditation.

Choice

The 'Your Home, Your Say' Tenant Compact offers a wide choice of ways that residents can get involved - from the privacy of their own home to local street-activities, from being formally elected onto the Housing Management Board, to attending fun events and cultural celebrations. Since 2007 resident feedback led us to widen our 'Your Home, Your Say' Compact 'menu' further to include residents' videos and audio-recordings, environmental action days, email surveys, doorstep consultations, an annual 'Count Me In' exhibition by minority ethnic residents, and video projects with young people.

In 2008 a survey on tenants' and leaseholders' internet use (with about 300 returns) showed that about 50% of those tenant and leaseholder respondents go online, with about 20% using the council's website. We will be using this feedback to improve and enable services. Equality Impact Assessments back in 2006 helped us identify BME residents as the least involved group and youth as the second least involved. Our new 'Count Me In' outreach project with BME residents worked well in 2007, attracting BME residents to present their oral histories and an exhibition at our 'You Said It, We Did It' Residents' Festival Day. They will be present again at the 2008 Festival, and the Tenant Federation have been funded in 2008 to do outreach to the next most excluded group, ie youth. We will continue to use the EqIA system annually in this way to target our services where they are most needed.

Clearly, Cambridge has a lot of resident involvement activities, from Board-level to large-scale procurement, from standards monitoring to estate projects. Our RI costs compare well with those of our family group. This is because so much of our RI is done virtually, using innovative media that are very cost-effective. In addition, a lot of our RI is done by non-specialist staff and resident volunteers, and we give hands-on work-experience placements in the RI service to volunteer residents. Our RI budget is scrutinised and approved annually by the elected residents on the Housing Management Board. Their scrutiny of RI PIs every 6 months, and the publishing of these documents on the council's website, help us to keep finding Gershon savings in the RI service, for instance by making creative use of inexpensive technologies such as on-line surveys.

Improvements planned

Every year, residents and staff get together to strategise about the directions that the RI service should take over the following one to three years. These RI Away Days have incrementally built up the layers of resident activities above. The broad aims for 2008/9/10 are: -

- To ensure we embed fully the complete RI cycle at the top of this page, and to increase our RI score at the next Tenant Satisfaction Survey.
- To expand our programme of residents' videos and audio-recordings
- To use our new *Open Door Online Polls*, to do dip-stick surveys that help the elected residents on the Housing Management Board and the future RLSR Panel keep in touch with the views on the estates.
- To consolidate all our *Standards Groups* into a *Resident-Led Self-Regulation* system, bringing powers comparable to those of the Board-level tenant representatives down into a more hands-on group that supervises contracts and standards at an operational level. A Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) assessment in 2008 described our RI system as already 90% of the way there towards RLSR.

We are confident that all actions planned will be completed, as every year there is a comprehensive new RI Action Plan tied to staffs' Individual Performance Reviews. In recent years all actions in the annual RI Plans were completed on target.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
Continually highlighting the range of ways for service users to be communicated to and consulted.	2009/10	MH/JB	136. Your Home, Your Say Tenant Compact highlighted better in every Open Door (recommendation from a week-long mystery-shopper exercise).	Summer 2010	Revised compact to be printed in August 08. Tenant Compact to be renewed under RLSR in summer 2010.
Getting frontline staff to	2008/0	MH/JB/	137. Provide training for reception		Staff training being organised

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
demonstrate a wide range of knowledge on the full range of opportunities for involvement.	9	SF/AL	staff to champion RI to customers.		for winter 08. Completed
	2010		138. Provide training for staff to increase awareness and understanding of RLSR	Winter 2009	Will be delivered before early 2010
Providing service users with accurate information on RI costs and benefits, plus achievement of residents' groups.	2009	MH/JB	139. The 'annual review' in winter Open Door will from 2008 also have an attached annual review from resident groups, giving their feedback on the past year's achievements, challenges, SMART impacts through RI.	December 09	Review will be published in December 08. Done. <u>New</u> : Quarterly 'Grassroots' Page in Open Door 2009 demonstrates achievements of resident's groups. Annual Review in Dec 09 will show SMART cost/benefits of RI.
Adding to the range of mechanisms in place to allow service users to participate in a way and level that suits them.	2008/09	MH/JB	140. Surveys with the new Open Door Online Poll: 'dipstick testing' on topics coming up in the Forward Plan or of interest to HMB.	Surveys to run quarterly starting Summer 08	<u>New</u> : Open Door Online Polls quarterly. Last Poll was on awareness of HMB; results published in Spring Open Door. Next is on rents; results in summer OD.
To support HMB with a robust conduit that can feed residents issues	2010/11	MH/RH	141. Achieve a Resident Led Self Regulation group, with help from CIH as a flagship model.	Jan 2010	Approved by HMB in March. Working group including tenants to embed RSLR by

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
directly to committee level.					2010
Following good practice in procurement and looking for the greatest potential benefit internally and externally.	2009/10	MH/RH/SF	142. Be creative to ensure that any Federation SLA keeps pace with the developing structures of RI.	Review quarterly by HMB. June 09	'08/'9 SLA agreed at HMB July 08. <u>New:</u> '09/'10 SLA going to June '09 HMB, with new transparency on charges paid for Federation services.
Ensuring all users have fair and equal access to resident involvement opportunities.	2008/09	MH/JB	143. Carry on with the multimedia outreach preferred by 'hard to reach' groups like teenagers & BME. RI web pages include video and audio from the grassroots.	Review quarterly	<u>New:</u> BME youth volunteer with experience in this field doing - project with RI service across April '09. He's on video on RI web-pages, showing how he's 'mystery-shopping' the RI service. He's gathering best examples from other providers' websites, for adaptation onto ours.
	2009		144. Systematic approach to EqlAs, particularly under RSLR & the intensified "duty to involve".	End 2009	RI opportunities must reach all demographics equally, to avoid risk of discrimination cases under Single Equalities Bill.
	2010		145. Plan for improving satisfaction score on next STATUS Survey for 'opportunities to get involved in	2010	Positive Practice Exchange day with other providers in June '09. We will learn from RI providers who score

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			decision-making'		particularly well at STATUS Surveys.

Strategic Approach to Housing

Service	Strategic Approach to Housing
Lead officer	Helen Reed

Introduction

Cambridge is placed at the centre of a major Growth area, and is closely engaged with the work of the local community and infrastructure delivery vehicle, Cambridgeshire Horizons, to drive forward the development of new and sustainable communities and infrastructure in the Sub-region. At the same time the Council is mindful of the need to consider the impact of growth on the existing population, make best use of existing housing, and ensure that the diverse needs of residents in existing housing continue to be met. Therefore other core services, including homelessness prevention and decent homes in the private sector, remain key priorities.

The Council has strong and effective working relationships with the other districts within the sub-region and a strong commitment to sub-regional working, with the Council's Director of Community Services chairing the Cambridge Sub-Regional Housing Board (CRHB). There are a number of sub-groups to the CRHB, including Strategic Housing, Enablers, and Homelessness Groups, and again there is strong engagement by the Council. Successful schemes arising from the sub-regional partnership include the appointment of a sub-regional housing co-ordinator post who has taken the lead on a range of projects, the launch of a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme and the production of a comprehensive sub-regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

The Local Strategic Partnership has published its Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), and a new sub-regional housing strategy is being developed to reflect the priorities of all the SCSs within the sub-region. Targets for the delivery of affordable housing have been agreed as part of the County Local Area Agreement (National Indicator 155), 2008/09 – 255, 2009/10 – 669 and 2010/11 - 618.

The Council's current Housing Strategy is supported by a range of subsidiary strategies to meet a range of diverse needs, and is being reviewed in 2008/09 to form an integral part of the sub-regional strategy.

Delivery of affordable homes to meet the growth targets is achieved working in partnership through the Local Delivery Vehicle, Cambridgeshire Horizons. On major growth sites in Cambridge and the surrounds, partnership working has delivered a commitment to 40% affordable housing (subject to viability); and a strategic approach to delivering sustainable communities, encapsulated in the 'Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth', recently adopted by the Council. Partnership working has also led to a groundbreaking approach to selecting a single strategic RSL

partner for three growth sites, two in the City and one in South Cambridgeshire, to delivery 3,300 affordable homes, with added value. The successful consortium "Cambridgeshire Partnerships", agreed in early 2008, has already enabled viability to be agreed with a 40% 75:25 tenure split for City fringe sites.

What has been achieved?

Strategic Approach

1. All of the actions within the Housing Strategy 2004/07 action plan have been completed or are ongoing, and the Strategy has recently been extended to 2008/09 and linked to agreed Service Plans, A new sub-regional housing strategy has also been developed which will form part of the basis of our own local housing strategy. A range of sub strategies has been developed to fit into the housing strategy and are being implemented, including Homelessness, Single Homeless and Rough Sleepers, Private Sector, Home Energy and BME Housing Strategies.
2. A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for the Cambridge sub-region has been produced in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, launched in June 2008. The Council has taken a strong role in influencing the work of the SHMA and it will form the key evidence base for strategic decisions in relation to housing within Cambridge and the wider sub-region for the next 5 years. The SHMA has identified a need for 1509 affordable homes a year for Cambridge over the next five years. An ongoing work-plan is in place for updating and improving the SHMA.
3. There is close working, both strategically and operationally, between Community Services and Environmental Services directorates in relation to private sector housing. Although part of Environmental Services directorate, expenditure on the private sector comes within the Executive Councillor for Housing's portfolio. The Council's Private Sector Housing Strategy is monitored through regular joint meetings, . Operational links are also strong, including joint visits between the private sector housing, the Home Improvement Agency and the Home Energy Officer to tackle Decent Homes issues.
4. A new private stock condition survey has taken place during 2008/09, the final results of which are due shortly. This will help to inform a review of the Private Sector Housing Strategy Action plan to take place this financial year.
5. A post has been created, based within the Enabling and Development team, to ensure the co-ordination of provision of appropriate community, cultural and arts facilities in new growth settlements.
6. A ring-fenced Housing Capital Programme is in place which funds all the Council's housing capital expenditure, and any capital receipts from Right to Buy Sales, housing asset disposals etc are reinvested through this programme. This was fundamentally reviewed in November 2008 and will be subject to annual review from 2009 onwards.
7. The Council was one of the six authorities involved in the government's Self-Financing pilot, and is considering the possibility of being a provider of new affordable housing.

Making the best use of existing housing

8. The Council has a strong commitment to homelessness prevention work, including the appointment of a specialist Homelessness Prevention Officer, the introduction of Rent Access and Rent Deposit Guarantee schemes to help homeless households to access private rented housing, and a Family Mediation scheme to help young people at risk of homelessness to remain with their families. As a result, the number of homelessness applications has decreased steadily from 364 in 2003/04, to 160 in 2007/08, and the number of households accepted as homeless has decreased, from 261 to 138 over the same period.
9. As well as the Council's own temporary accommodation, an effective private sector leasing scheme is in place in partnership with a local Housing Association, providing good quality temporary accommodation for homeless families. Families are now only placed in bed and breakfast on a short-term emergency basis, with the average length of stay being reduced from 6.4 weeks during 2004/05, to 2.2 weeks during 2006/07.
10. Sub-regional work on tackling homelessness includes work underway to develop a sub-regional homelessness action plan, and the sub-region, led by the City Council, has bid to the CLG for funding under the Enhanced Housing Options Programme.
11. A comprehensive sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme was successfully launched in February this year, the development of which was led by Cambridge City Council in partnership with the other sub-regional authorities.
12. As well as use of enforcement, there is a grants and loans scheme for vulnerable owner-occupiers to bring their homes up to the Decent Homes standard and improvement grants have been made available to owners of long-term empty homes. 427 private sector homes were brought up to Decent Homes standard during 2005/06 to 2006/07. **Awaiting updated figures 07/08.** A Landlord Accreditation scheme has been set up to improve the management of private rented accommodation in the City, and a new Home Energy Officer is in place to focus on improving energy efficiency in the private sector.

Enabling the provision of more housing

13. Working with approved RSL partners an average of 250 affordable homes a year have been provided over the last 5 years.
14. With limited land available within the City, much of the new housing development and the required 'step change' in delivery has been planned in partnership with neighbouring South Cambridgeshire District Council building on good joint working already established for the new village of Cambourne where, for example, a joint allocation policy was established. Also, over 300 affordable homes have been provided jointly between the two districts at Arbury Park on the Cambridge Northern Fringe. A joint Development Control Committee has been set up between the two districts to consider planning applications for major growth sites on the edges of the city, and there are some staff posts which are jointly funded between the two authorities. Corporate processes link Affordable Housing with other dimensions such as the provision of community facilities and implementation of service growth. An Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been published, and a Sustainable Construction SPD is also in place, both of which are being used in section 106 negotiations. The Affordable Housing SPD requires 40% or more affordable housing on larger sites (or equivalent site area) and 75% social rented (until the total acquired on PPG3 sites increases above 30% when intermediate housing output will be increased).

15. The two authorities are also involved in the "ground-breaking" Cambridge Challenge – the selection by the Housing Corporation of Cambridgeshire Partnerships Limited, a strategic affordable housing and community infrastructure Registered Social Landlord delivery partner on the Southern Fringe, NIAB and Northstowe Growth sites.
16. An audit of the Council's HRA land held has been carried out, and identified sites with the potential to realise a further 600 to 700 affordable homes are being brought forward for development as part of an agreed 3-year rolling programme.
17. A Quality Charter for Growth has been successfully negotiated between key players in the public, private and voluntary sectors, aimed at achieving higher standards in the new housing developments planned for Cambridgeshire.
18. A policy is now in place to guide developers on provision of land on development sites for affordable housing

Diversity

19. The Census 2001 identified that a significant proportion of the City's population were from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) populations. Although many of these were students or had high level qualifications, there are pockets where this does not apply, and so the Council published a BME Housing Strategy. The action plan is being implemented and progress is being made in establishing a Minority Ethnic Forum to monitor implementation against the strategy and improve involvement of BME groups in housing-related issues. The Council is also involved in a Regional BME monitoring pilot to try to establish a consistent way of monitoring BME housing needs across the region, and as a result work is underway to implement the agreed changes in the sub-regional Choice Based Lettings monitoring categories.
20. As a response to the ageing population and anticipated reductions in Supporting People funding available to the City, an Older People's Housing Strategy has been developed in consultation with residents and stakeholders,
21. The Council has an active role in commissioning Supporting People services, through the Supporting People Commissioning Body, and other sub-groups. Key pieces of work completed have included the development of a new Commissioning Strategy and Costing Model, and a Best Value Review of Sheltered Housing, and the Council is currently in negotiation with Supporting People over the implementation of these initiatives and considering the potential impact on services within the City. The Council works to a county-wide core specification for disabled adaptation works and was actively engaged in the development of a county-wide Disability Housing Strategy.

Value for money

22. Innovative benchmarking of the strategic housing service has been carried out with other sub-regional authorities, Homelessness was identified as a priority area for further benchmarking, and this is under way.
23. The Council has been successful in securing external funding for a number of schemes. For example, all schemes bid for in the National Affordable Housing Programme bid round for 2008-11 were successful, resulting in a total grant allocation of £5,688,000 to delivery 125 new affordable homes. Also a £3m grant has been achieved to significantly upgrade the local night-shelter to a Homelessness Assessment Centre.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
Continue to improve information base to inform strategic planning	2008/09	HR	146. Produce first iteration of Sub-regional Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), and influence sub-regional workplan for updating and improving data.	First iteration – June 2008 Workplan developed May 2008 onwards	Ist iteration completed Work plan in place for 09/10
	2008/09	HR/BK	147. Produce sub-regional housing strategy and local element based on SHMA in consultation with residents and stakeholders, with SMART action plan, and produce any necessary further sub-strategies	Sub-regional strategy in place March 09 Sub-strategies programmed in 2009/10 onwards	Sub-regional strategy in place Local strategy to go to Executive Councillor and Community Services Scrutiny in June 09.
Meet diverse housing needs	2010/11	AC/HR	148. Identify need for further sub-strategies, and produce and implement these in consultation.	Identify gaps – October 2008 Older People's Housing Strategy – November 2008. Development of additional strategies 2009/10 onwards	BME Strategy – completed Older People's Housing Strategy – completed and action plan is being developed. All main areas have been covered but we now need to consider if any additional strategies are necessary
	2008/09	LB	149. Develop criteria for a site for Gypsy & Travellers, and provide a	Draft documents	County-wide criteria project

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			site/sites in line with criteria	to Traveller Steering Group June 2009 Decision on process for agreeing site assessment guide – June 2009 (Traveller Steering Group) Core Strategy consultation Autumn 2009. Due for formal adoption 2011.	completed. Traveller Development Planning Document and Site Assessment criteria being developed as part of LDF Core Strategy. Need to agree decision-making process for site assessment guide to try to speed up process for identifying land. Discussing communication issues with internal stakeholders.
Tackle Homelessness	2008/09	DG	150. See Homelessness section of Improvement Plan		
Maximise provision of sustainable affordable housing within sustainable communities	2008/09	AC	151. Improve policies and monitoring in relation to LAA affordable housing targets, and agree a 3-year delivery programme. Develop the 3yr rolling affordable housing programme.	Framework for investment and monitoring systems July 2008. Land policy July 2008.	Framework completed Land policy in place NI Targets re-negotiated 3yr rolling affordable housing programme has been agreed, and reviewed by the programme team.
	2008/09	SD	Develop an Affordable Housing Policy Guide – Nov 08	AH policy guide – April 09	Affordable Housing Policy

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
	2008/09	AC/SL/S D	Develop the action plan from the Affordable Housing Policy Guide		Guide –draft complete going to June 09 committee cycle.
	2009/10	SL			
		AC	152. Introduce approach to assessing extent to which new schemes meet Sustainability Code levels	March 2009	Cambridge Challenge sites require Code Level 4. Simons House being developed to Code Level 5 (zero carbon). Requirement for Code level 4 or higher is now incorporated in Affordable Housing Policy Guide COMPLETED
Maximise the use of existing housing and ensure needs of residents in existing housing continue to be met	2009/10	HR	153. Improve strategic links with Private Sector Housing Team and functions. Review the Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan following the results of the private sector stock condition survey	Agree priorities April 2008. Implement by September 2008. Final Survey results due June 09 Review action plan by March 2010	Private Sector Housing has recently been re-organised but links are still working well and will continue to monitor and improve. COMPLETED
		HR	154. Ensure local element of sub-regional strategy captures impact of	June 2009	Draft Strategy includes

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
			growth on existing communities.	(Community Services Scrutiny)	strategic objective 'Maximise the positive and minimise the potential negative impact of growth on existing communities'
			155. Monitor the potential impact of the current economic downturn on private sector empty homes, and ensure that the Council has a robust strategic approach to tackling the issue	Project Plan in place June 09. Implementation September 09 onwards	
		Y O'D	156. For further private sector housing actions, see Private Sector Housing section of this document.		
Ensure value for money is achieved in strategic housing	2008/09	JH/HR	157. Review Housing Capital Investment Programme in light of diminishing resources	November 08. Review annually.	New programme agreed November 2008 (base budget approach). Reference will be made to in outturn report June 2009 in light of revised HRA position. Review again in September/October 2009.
		JH/ CB	158. Carry out benchmarking with sub-regional authorities re Strategic Housing, and evaluate outcomes. Use proposed departmental VFM framework to ensure & demonstrate VFM	December 2008	Main priority is around Homelessness which has now been picked up by Sub-regional group

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
		AC	159. Continue to explore opportunities around self-financing outside of the HRA, and possible Council provision of new affordable housing	Dependant on government timetable	Internal viability work has started. No government timetable/confirmation yet; likely to be included in Housing Green Paper

Private Sector Housing

Service	Private Sector Housing
Lead officer	Yvonne O'Donnell – update April 09

Introduction

Since the last inspection the Council has set new strategic priorities for housing, dealing with homelessness, increasing the supply of affordable housing, and responding to the poor condition of the housing stock. The Private Sector Housing Strategy 2006-09 highlights how the Council addresses each of these priorities including the implementation of the Housing Act 2004, which introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and mandatory licensing for HMOs. There has been a significant increase in investment in the private sector with the introduction of a new Council loans and grants scheme under the new Regulatory Reform Order Policy, and availability of grants for empty homes.

Inter authority auditing has taken place between authorities of a similar nature to Cambridge in relation to private sector housing. Monthly to bi-monthly strategic meetings are held at manager and Head of Service level to strengthen relationships between the different services. A key finding from the Citizens' Survey was that there is a need to raise the profile of the private sector housing service with residents.

What has been achieved?

1. There is an on-line complaint system for Housing Standards, which is a positive forerunner to when Environmental Services move into the Customer Service Centre.
2. In March 2007 we successfully launched Landlord Accreditation Scheme with over three hundred and fifty properties within the scheme.
3. Set up a Steering group with various private partners from, letting agents, private landlords and Educational Establishments who meet every six months to promote the scheme within the City and update on legislative changes for example Energy Performance Certificates

4. Safer Homes Scheme has been operating successfully as a partnership with a number of organisations including PCT and Age Concern for over three years allowing older people to remain in their homes and signpost to other services which may be relevant, for example, the Bobby Scheme on crime safety.
5. Customers were originally consulted when setting service standards in Housing Standards. A revised service standard including Housing Advice and Home Aid will be launched in September 2008.
6. Case officers work in line with the service standards and demonstrate a customer focus at all times, for example keeping the customer up to date with their case; and having comprehensive knowledge regarding City Council loans and grants schemes, which outline customers' expectations on outcomes in order for them to make informed decisions.
7. Wide range of advisory publications available, for example landlord pack, tenant leaflet, newsletter and ability to translate into other languages and formats according to needs.
8. Although the Housing Standards Team work within a different Directorate there are close relationships as shown through inspections for the Access Scheme, Home Link and the Home Improvement Agency.
9. React to needs, for example use translators, interpreters and Language Line.
10. The Private Sector Housing Strategy 2006-2009 which is being reviewed identifies older people as requiring specific services. This has led to an Older People's Housing Strategy being written and we have commissioned a Safer Homes Scheme. Our Loans and Grants Scheme is primarily aimed at this age group.
11. Officers from Cambridge City Council represent Cambridgeshire County at the Regional Housing Strategy Group, and actively raise the profile of private sector housing with the East of England Regional Assembly
12. The Home Aid Agency has developed a marketing strategy to promote loans and grants amongst the vulnerable sector. This is updated on an annual basis to take account of changes in demographics, legislation, policies and previous achievement.
13. Last Housing Condition Survey was carried out in 2002, currently in the process of commissioning a full housing condition survey -September 2008 which will feed into the Housing Market Assessment and Private Sector Housing Strategy.
14. Collect empty homes information from Council Tax data and actively pursue bringing empty homes back into use. On average this is twelve a year.
15. Landlord Forums and newsletters are used to inform service delivery to ensure landlords are kept up to date with their responsibilities. These two vehicles were used to consult on the PSH strategy.
16. Each year we carry out over three hundred proactive inspections to identify either compliance or non-compliance with the Housing Act 2004.
17. Monitor Decent Homes Standard in the private sector to enable us to meet the PSA7 target with regular updates from the Home Aid Team.

18. Good partnering and protocols in place with external partners, for example the Fire Service. Signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Fire Service, which indicates that Cambridge City Council is the lead authority on the enforcement of fire safety allowing efficiencies for both the customer and the authorities when dealing with such issues.
19. Undertaken inter authority audit this KLOE with a number of similar local authorities which has produced an action plan to be completed over the next 2 years.
20. Home Improvement Agency's PIs include Supporting People PIs, National KPIs and locally agreed indicators. These are aimed at VFM and are outcomes focused. Benchmarking with other HIAs in the county is to take place over the coming year.
21. Appointment of Private Sector Energy Officer to work on improving national indicator 187 improving energy efficiency. Working closely with the Home Improvement Agency and using the Grants and Loans on offer from CCC.

Areas for improvement

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
To improve effective communication and consultation with service users, stakeholders and staff	2009/10	YO'D	160. Increase knowledge within ASB team on private sector housing legislation. (Mock Inspection)	July 2009	Act as consultant in the review of the ASB Policy Need to look at the revised ASB Policy to monitor inclusion of Private Sector Housing issues
	2008/09	Service Managers	161. Seek customer feedback who use PSH services and act on any recommendations	Feb 2009	Customer feedback forms are sent at the end of each case in Housing Standards and Home Aid. However, very few are returned. New indicator NI182 for Environmental Services sent out as Satisfaction Questionnaires to Businesses and Landlords.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
					Further data from Place Survey will be used to inform service delivery
	2008/09	Y O'D	162. Energy efficiency needs to be mainstreamed to ensure maximum and accurate and referrals.	March 2009	This will be an objective for the new Home Energy Officer
	2009/10	Service Managers	163. Produce an annual performance report to report against targets to users and stakeholders. To be published within Newsletter – circulated to all stakeholders.	Mar 2010	Half yearly figures are provided by the HIA in relation to the work they do. These ensure the HIA is working to the Core Spec and the contract with Supporting People. A review of the annual performance reporting in the former Management Plan will take place when ES have been fully integrated into the Customer Service Centre
	2010/11	Service Managers	164. Establish landlord forums and resolve to achieve a mechanism for consulting with private tenants. (Mock Inspection)	2010	Forum previously arranged for tenants but cancelled due to lack of take-up. Review date for looking at alternatives ways of consulting tenants. Looking at an electronic/ blog system as consultation mechanism.

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
Respond to the diversity of the City's community to ensure all have fair and equal access to private sector housing	2008-2012	Service Managers	165. Incorporate action plan from the BME strategy into work area and demonstrate this.	See action plan	
	2008/09	Service Managers	166. Consider ways of linking with community groups to improve service.	March 2009	HIA has contacted a number of BME groups to offer to visit and inform of service. To date this has been declined. Have held sessions with Neighbourhood Watch groups and O/50's groups. ES need to have discussion with Housing Services Lead on diversity to investigate links to progress this through Housing Services contacts
	2011	YO'D	167. Establish the make up of private sector tenants in the city. (Mock Inspection)	July 2011	Data collection issue is an action on the Diversity Plan and that PSH will feed into it. Although we have started to collect this information from our service users in Housing Standards Housing Condition Survey will give more data on ethnic makeup. Customer Access

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
					Centre are also looking at how to collect data. However it will be some time before we have enough information to use to influence service delivery. The target date needs to be put back to 2011
	2009/10	YO'D	168. Improve targeting in energy efficiency work by using poverty mapping and link into deprivation indices.	March 2010	Completed. Using Stock Modelling to identify action zones
Understanding the City's private sector housing stock condition and needs data	2008/09	YO'D	169. The Council will need to find ways of carrying out more detailed and frequent stock surveys so that accurate projections of need and investment can be built into future priorities. (Mock Inspection)	February 2009	A full housing condition survey will be carried out in 2008, thereafter, mechanisms need to be established to keep this information updated. M3 system to be used
To be effective in addressing poor conditions in the private sector	2009/10	Service Managers	170. Develop robust performance monitoring to measure outcomes from ancillary activities such as energy costs, community sustainability indices, health and supported housing.	Sept 2010	Look at best practise from other LA's. Consider how to measure these ancillary activities and linking it to LAA targets. Health Improvement Officer will be tasked with looking at how to monitor. Target date needs to be put back to give time for this to

Improvement Objective	Year	By Whom	Action	Timetable (target and review dates)	Progress Update
					happen.
To be effective in establishing partnerships to achieve value for money and improving performance for service users	2008/09	YO'D	171. To improve partnerships with Arran Services, West Anglia and Energy Savings Trust to direct service users to discounted loft and wall insulation and other energy efficiency works they are entitled to. (Mock Inspection)	March 2009	Working will with partners particularly around energy efficiency
	2009/10	Service Managers	172. To publish to service users the number of inspections carried out and properties brought up to standard and targets met and the costs in delivering the programme.	March 2010	Investigating re-establishing the Management Plan Statistics and making information available on the web .