



**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Housing

16 October 2013

---

## Affordable Homes Draft Service Plan 2014/15

### Purpose

1. To provide the Housing Portfolio Holder with an update on the revised actions for the Affordable Homes Service Plan for 2014/15.
2. This is not a key decision but has been brought before the Housing Portfolio Holder because it sets out the proposed key actions for the Affordable Homes Service for the forthcoming year and it was first published in the March 2013 Forward Plan.

### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Housing Portfolio endorses the service plan actions identified in this report and suggests additions to or amendments to these service plan actions if required.

### Reasons for Recommendations

4. The draft service plan actions set out in Table 1 below have been developed with housing officers taking into account the key aims and objectives of the Council, central government direction and the forthcoming priorities for the Affordable Homes Service. These actions will be incorporated within the final form of the Affordable Homes service plan to be brought back to the Housing Portfolio Holder in March 2014.

### Background

5. The existing Affordable Homes Service Plan covers the period 2013/14 - 2014/15 and includes a number of service plan projects intended to run over a 2 or 3 year timeframe. This is therefore a refresh of the service plan designed mainly to introduce new service plan actions to address external challenges.
6. The Affordable Homes service plan differs to other service plans within the Council as it is closely linked to the HRA Business Plan. The introduction of the self financing regime for council housing from April 2012 means that a separate 30 year HRA Business Plan is in place from 2012/13 onwards.
7. There is also a linked Asset Management Strategy that sets out the Council's approach to managing its homes and other properties, which also covers a 30 year period. Arising from the Asset Management Strategy, the Five Year Housing Maintenance Plan sets out the planned expenditure to maintain the Council's homes and forms part of the HRA Business Plan.
8. The service plan is set in the context of the overarching Housing Strategy 2012 - 2016, which in turn is related to the sub regional housing strategy, which reflects the

sub regional strategic housing agenda of the sub regional housing market centred on Cambridge.

### Considerations

9. The service plan takes account of a number of significant changes arising from the national policy changes. These include a new housing regulatory regime from April 2012, changes to Housing Benefit and welfare benefits and changes to allocations and lettings following the Localism Act 2011.
10. In addition the service plan addresses the key actions of the Council which include the commencement of a new build strategy.

### Options

11. The Portfolio Holder is requested to consider these proposed actions and to suggest changes or additions where required. Service plan actions carried forward from last year are not listed in the table and include:
  - Development of neighbourhood teams and hub offices
  - Development of options to best meet the refurbishment needs of the Council's stock including
    - A review of Wilford Furlong and
    - the Robinson Court (Gamlingay) redevelopment
  - Continuing to extend and broaden the pool of temporary accommodation including overseeing the completion of the hostel at Robson Court (Waterbeach)
  - Establishing a pilot scheme to set up the new Housing Company

**Table 1 New Service Plan themes 2014 -2015**

	Action	Expected completion	Notes
8	Digital inclusion	March 2016	Project to explore the potential take up of internet based services and to identify the barriers to tenants accessing services using internet technology.
9	Financial inclusion	March 2016	Project to explore the potential use of Credit Unions and other measures to assist those tenants that may not have access to bank accounts. Linked to welfare reform mitigation work.
10	Review of policy changes to adapt to welfare benefit changes, including impact of Universal Credit etc.	March 2015	Some changes may be required within 2014 –review will consider where we have got to & check that everything is working as it should and identify any changes needed.

11	Strategy review of homes of non traditional construction	2016	To pull together a coherent and timed strategy to deliver those elements needed to address the non traditional properties as well as those properties identified for demolition in the HRA business plan.
12	Tenancy fraud	July 2015	Funded CLG project starting in July 2013.
13	Explore Homelessness Gold Standard	Mar 2015	External accreditation of Council's homelessness service. Dependent upon outcome of peer review taking place in 2013.
14	Delivery of new Older persons housing related support service	Jan 2015	Work needed to roll out new housing related support contract for older people. Dependent upon outcome of procurement process being carried out by County Council in 2013/14.
15	Handyman service	March 2015	Activation of service to offer small jobs to elderly and disabled households. Already part of Mears contract but needs to be implemented.
16	Review of Mears contract	March 2015	Mid term review. If the outcome is that a fresh procurement exercise is needed a decision will need to be taken in early 2015 to allow enough time to complete the work required.
17	Explore Housing Foyer	March 2015	Work with the County Council and a housing association HA partner to develop a feasibility report.
18	Review of disabled adaptations in HRA stock	March 2015	Project to review work completed, policy matters, identified need, contractors performance, HIA links, OT performance etc
19	Estate inspection project	March 2015	Project to review the need for a welfare garden scheme, any patterns in ASB and links to grounds maintenance.

### **Implications**

12. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

#### ***Financial***

13. There are financial dimensions to all of these projects but there is no significant new funding required. The proposed changes to welfare benefits have potentially

significant implications for the income stream for both the HRA (rents) and the Council (Council Tax).

***Legal***

14. A number of these projects will require specialist input from our legal services.

***Staffing***

15. There are no specific staffing requirements arising from these projects at this stage.

***Risk Management***

16. A number of risk logs will be developed for each project and incorporated into the overall Affordable Homes risk register.

***Equality and Diversity***

17. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on each policy change as it is developed.

**Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)**

18. The draft service plan actions have been produced with the help of the Tenant Participation Group and housing officers. We will consult with the youth council as part of the consultation process for the final service plan which is to be approved in March 2014.

**Effect on Strategic Aims**

19. The Affordable Homes service plan is important to help deliver all three of the Council's main strategic aims.

**Background Papers**

No background papers have been used for this report.

**Report Author:** Stephen Hills - Director of Housing  
Telephone: (01954) 713412