

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet

13 July 2006

**AUTHOR:** Executive Director

### HOUSING RESPONSIVE REPAIRS PROCUREMENT REVIEW – SIX MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

#### Purpose

1. In December 2005 Cabinet considered a review of housing responsive repairs procurement. Cabinet agreed to retain the Council's in house Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) building maintenance service, and adopted a 22 point action plan. A core group was established to oversee the plan's implementation. Cabinet asked that progress be reported back in six months.

#### Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The responsive repairs service is one of the Council's most frequently used services, provided to tenants of its 5900 homes.
Village Life	Provision of good quality affordable housing is essential to maintaining vibrant village life
Sustainability	Sound maintenance of the Council's homes should reduce energy consumption
Partnership	Elements of the responsive repairs service are provided by other public and private service providers.

#### Background

3. In November 2004 it emerged that the Council's in house building maintenance team was not recovering its costs and a significant operating deficit was accruing. In January 2005 Cabinet agreed a recovery plan for the DLO and in April 2005 agreed to review the procurement of housing responsive repairs. Cabinet considered the outcome of the review in December 2005 and agreed to retain the Council's in house DLO. The Director of Housing & Environmental Services was charged with implementing a 22 point action plan to be overseen by an implementation group, with a six month progress report back to Cabinet.

#### Considerations

4. A summary of progress with the 22 point action plan is attached as **Appendix A**. The implementation core group has met monthly since January 2006 to review progress. The most notable developments have been:
  - Development of a new suite of key performance indicators for the repairs service
  - Development of a draft DLO business plan that sets out the organisation's plans for the next five years
  - Maintenance of high customer satisfaction ratings
  - Procurement of hand held ICT technology for operatives and a single stores supplier has commenced

- Initial construction skills accreditation training for the workforce with 96% pass rate of health and safety test
  - Appointment of new Repairs Operations and Property Services Managers
5. Future monitoring of the plan will be undertaken by the Repairs Operations manager and Property Services manager, both of whom have been appointed in the past six months, using the Council's service planning and performance management systems, and will be reported as appropriate to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

### **Financial Implications**

6. At the end of 2004/05 the DLO's operating deficit was £411,000. At the end of 2005/06 the annual operating deficit had reduced to £60,000 (against an original estimate of £185,000). For 2006/07 it is planned that the DLO's operations break even and that as a consequence there is no charge to the HRA.

### **Staffing Implications**

7. The DLO staffing establishment has reduced slightly in overall terms over the course of the last 12 months, but staffing levels have been increased in those parts of the organisation known to be under pressure. An operative representative sits on the implementation core group and monthly team briefings have kept staff up to date on progress with the action plan. Specific elements within the action plan such as health and safety training have sought to increase the skills of the workforce and have been well received.

### **Consultations**

8. The action plan was designed following consultation with the Tenants Participation Group and the DLO workforce, with input from partner organisations. The implementation core group includes tenant and staff representatives.

### **Conclusions/Summary**

9. Overall, significant progress has been made in implementing the responsive repairs action plan following last year's review, and this is in part evidenced by the significant reduction in the DLO's operating deficit from 2004/05 to 2005/06. However a number of challenges remain and these will be managed through the Housing Services' established service planning and performance management systems, with further progress reports to the Housing Portfolio Holder as appropriate.

### **Recommendation**

10. Cabinet is asked to note progress in implementing the responsive repairs action plan to date.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Reports to Cabinet 14 April 2005, 8 December 2005

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