
DECENT HOMES DELIVERY – ACTION PLAN

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report suggests formal adoption of the Decent Homes Delivery Action Plan as a mechanism to assess the current number of non-decent or potential non-decent Council dwellings in the District.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In July 2000, following its Spending Review, the Government announced a significant increase in resources for housing, and especially social housing.
- 2.2 As part of its desire to link increased spending with better outcomes, the Government established a target to ensure that all social housing meets set standards of decency by 2010 by reducing the number of households living in social housing that does not meet these standards by one-third by 2004. Most improvement is to be targeted to the most deprived areas.
- 2.3 Guidance was provided to local authorities to help them quantify the level of non-decent stock in their areas and to measure the progress towards eliminating it.

3 ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 It is necessary for each local authority to work towards assessing its stock in as short a time as possible so as to include a submission in its Investment Programme Bid and Business Plan.
- 3.2 In April the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) asked for submission of an Action Plan to ensure Non-Decent Homes identification. The plan was devised and submitted 24 April. At the time of drafting this report there had been no feedback from GO-East.
- 3.3 It is now necessary to demonstrate to GO-East that the Council is fully committed to delivering Decent Homes in the Rochford District by adopting the appended Action Plan.

4 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES** to adopt the Decent Homes Delivery Action Plan appended to this report.

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Background Papers:

None

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APPENDIX

ACTION PLAN

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council acknowledges the production of a robust plan is essential for the effective delivery of decent homes in the District.
- 1.2 The Council's housing stock is generally well maintained and customer surveys consistently point to high levels of satisfaction both in terms of management and repairs and maintenance.
- 1.3 Over the years our ambitious improvement plans have meant that all tenants have been offered gas central heating installations (where gas supply is available) and uPVC double glazing. Most tenants accepted these improvements. Where unimproved houses become vacant or the tenant changes their minds and requests installation, then the Head of Service has delegated authority to include that property in an improvement programme.
- 1.4 We recognise that a key element in the process of delivering decent homes is the assessment of the current number of non-decent homes although we believe this TO BE NIL. Nevertheless, the exercise needs to be undertaken in order to prevent homes becoming non-decent in the future and for business planning purposes.
- 1.5 We have therefore devised a Delivery Plan which covers inspection of the fabric of the dwellings and improvements to service standards. This latter aspect of the plan emerged from the Best Value Review of Housing Management (attached).
- 1.6 Where possible, thermal comfort criteria will be examined to ensure that this meets latest Government guidelines.

2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The Head of Revenue and Housing Management has overall responsibility for the delivery of the Decent Homes Initiative. In December 2001, a Working Group was formed to ensure the timely production of the Business Plan. This Group comprised:-
 - Head of Revenue and Housing Management
 - Housing Manager
 - Property Maintenance and Highways Manager
 - Housing Strategy Officer
 - Principal Building Surveyor

- 2.2 The Group acknowledged that existing information about the stock was sketchy and disparate.
- 2.3 At 1 April 2002 the stock comprised 1,871 dwellings. However, 501 of these were bedsit, single bedroom or two bedroom dwellings within 14 sheltered housing schemes. For the purposes of this exercise each scheme was to count as one property for survey purposes. The task was therefore scoped as 1,385 units of inspection.
- 2.4 Using the component lifetimes defined in the disrepair criterion a database has been constructed to record each dwelling unit as defined in 2.3 above.
- 2.5 As a start, each of the properties had the baseline date set, as a default, to the date of construction. This information was readily available from the Council's computer system.
- 2.6 The second stage in gathering baseline information is to interrogate a 'sister' computer system holding data regarding repairs and improvements. Data is currently being transferred to the new database at around 200 units every 2 week.
- 2.7 The third stage is to arrange physical inspection of each unit to record expected remaining life of the component. This exercise is labour consumptive and cannot be achieved other than by physical inspection by appointment.
- 2.8 Based on the foregoing methodology and the very limited resources to undertake the work the following Delivery Plan has been agreed.

3 DECENT HOMES DELIVERY PLAN

KEY DATE	ACTION
31 December 2001	Set up Officer Working Group to deliver Decent Homes Initiative.
8 February 2002	Agree methodology and scope resources for exercise
1 March 2002	Investigate database creation, cost of exercise and available information

KEY DATE	ACTION	
22 March 2020	Establish broad outline of database. Corporate Management Board to agree resources to be made available. Recruit/retain staff for same.	
5 April 2002	Start work in database creation and merge record files by default date entry.	
	Database Update	Survey Work
19 April 2002	200 entries	–
3 May 2002	400 entries	200 inspections
17 May 2002	600 entries	–
31 May 2002	800 entries	400 inspections
14 June 2002	1,000 entries	–
28 June 2002	1,200 entries	600 inspections
12 July 2002	1,385 entries	–
26 July 2002	Exercise completed	800 inspections
9 August 2002	–	–
23 August 2002	–	1,000 inspections
6 September 2002	–	–
20 September 2002	–	1,200 inspections
4 October 2002	–	–

KEY DATE	ACTION	
18 October 2002	–	1,385 inspections
1 November 2002	–	Exercise completed

- 3.1 This programme will culminate in a report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2002.