

## UPDATE ON BUSINESS PLAN

Report of the Director of Derby Homes

### SUMMARY OF REPORT

1. This report sets out my assessment of Derby Homes performance against its Business Plan 2002-3. I have used the performance scores of 'excellent', 'good', 'fair' and 'poor'.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

2. To note the report.

### MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

3. The mission statement of Derby Homes is

'to provide the people of Derby with the best housing service in the country by continuous improvement and by working with all our partners'.

My assessment is 'excellent'.

Derby Homes achieved the highest possible score of 3 stars/excellent prospects to improve, from the Housing Inspectors in October 2002. In addition, we have been reassessed and retained our Chartermark and Investor in People awards.

Objectives of Derby Homes are

- **Delivering the decent homes standard by 2006 – Derby 'Homes Pride' campaign**

My assessment is 'good'.

We have appointed our strategic contractor partners, and much has been achieved already in spending an additional £7.5 million this year, which will make over 700 homes decent. I am confident that we are on course to achieve our target by 2006.

- **Providing best value for housing management and maintenance services**

My assessment is 'good'.

We now have 51 performance indicators against which we can be judged. Overall performance is good, although there are continued concerns about rent arrears and void turnaround times.

- **Ensuring choice of, and access to, affordable rented housing**

My assessment is 'good'.

We have successfully piloted choice based lettings in 2002-3 and aim to roll this out city-wide by the end of 2003. This system gives applicants the choice of properties advertised in newspapers and on a website.

We successfully introduced rent restructuring in 2002, and so council rents will increase in line with Government guidelines. Average rent in 2002-3 is £42.76, which is very affordable compared to private sector and housing association rents.

- **Ensuring choice of fixtures and fittings as part of the improvement programme**

My assessment is 'fair'.

We have for many years offered a range of choices. Discussions have begun on the range of kitchen and bathroom fittings and fixtures that will be provided as part of the Homes Pride campaign. I would like to extend this choice beyond that already offered and to restrict its availability to tenants with clear rent accounts and who have not broken their tenancy conditions. More work is required on this idea.

- **Increasing the popularity of council estates, reducing the rate of turnover and improving the quality of life on estates**

My assessment is 'poor'.

Over the years we have concentrated on hotspots of high turnover and reduced the rate from 15.47% in 1998 to 12.30% in 2002. There were 629 less voids in 2002 than there was in 1998. We have begun to market Derby Homes as an excellent housing management service amongst potential customers. We are working with the City Council on 'future studies' for Cowsley, Osmaston and Old Sinfen estates with a view to improving their popularity. However, the stigma and reputation of some estates remains difficult to overcome.

- **Protecting and enhancing tenants homes, reducing crime and the fear of crime and tackling anti-social tenants promptly and effectively**

My assessment is 'good'.

We have had recent success in taking legal action and obtained, in

partnership with the Police and the Anti Social Behaviour Team, our first Anti Social Behaviour Order. Good publicity followed.

We have emphasised the importance of this issue in the February edition of Derby Homes News.

The work of the four community watch patrols remains a key service in reducing anti-social behaviour on estates.

- **Providing a service that meets the needs of the diverse communities of Derby**

My assessment is 'fair'.

We have a well developed race equalities action plan, and have introduced a number of initiatives such as racial harassment support worker, the use of language line, and equalities training for staff. However, we know that parts of our City remain unpopular with Black and Minority Ethnic groups and we need to ensure that we tackle this issue.

On disabled issues, we are currently altering local housing offices to make them more accessible, and training on disability awareness is planned. Adaptations to council houses will be carried out as part of the Homes Pride campaign. This remains an area of our work where we could do more to meet the needs of elderly and disabled residents of the City.

- **Carry out effective consultation and participation with tenants and residents and support the Community Panels network to operate effectively**

My assessment is 'excellent'.

We continue to work very closely with the Derby Association of Community Partners (DACP) and with Community Panels. The new structure of 15 community panels is being started from April 2003.

- **Developing staff through team building, training and effective appraisal**

My assessment is 'good'.

Derby Homes gives staff training and development a high priority. A programme of training for front line staff is arranged each year. Team meetings and achievement and development interviews are held. The appointment of a Training Co-ordinator will help to make our processes more effective and systematic.

- **Providing affordable housing and tackling financial exclusion amongst tenants and leaseholders**

My assessment is 'good'.

Derby Homes has helped to create the new Derby Loans organisation which will help people on low income obtain loans. Our work on debt and benefit take-up also helps. Projects such as discounted home contents insurance scheme, the garden maintenance scheme, internal decoration scheme and furnished tenancies scheme, enable tenants to sustain their tenancies. However, more schemes should be developed to try to meet the needs of tenants who rely on benefits or low wages.

- **Adapted housing to meet special needs and making better use of existing adapted homes**

My assessment is 'fair'.

Adaptations to council houses are carried out after referral from Social Services. The Homes Pride programme will increase the level of adaptations. We have a partnership with Walbrook Housing Association to try and match adapted vacant homes with people needing such accommodation. These processes do meet a great and growing need.

However, there has recently been a review of adaptations practices carried out by the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Commission of the City Council which makes several recommendations to improve the service. This will be the subject of a report to the Homes Pride Committee in March.

- **Providing energy efficient and environmentally sustainable housing**

My assessment is 'fair'.

The Homes Pride campaign will provide high efficiency central heating and insulation to improve the energy efficiency in Derby Homes that currently fail the decent homes standard. There are a range of other initiatives, such as solar power and recycling of used water, that Derby Homes could try to build into its improvements, if funding was provided.

- **Fully involve tenants and leaseholders in management of the service**

My assessment is 'good'.

The creation of the North and South Local Housing Boards will bring 15 tenants and leaseholders into the governance structures of Derby Homes. Tenants continue to participate in process improvement teams and the service user group will shortly report on findings of their work.

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- **Providing training and employment opportunities for tenants and leaseholders and overcoming benefit trap issues**

My assessment is 'poor'.

The creation of the Employment Initiatives Officer will greatly expand Derby Homes activity in this area, linked to the Homes Pride campaign. It is hoped to create new jobs for local people over the next 3 years.

## **CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS**

4. The Business Plan will be rewritten in July 2003, and will be subject to consultation with tenants and the City Council.

## **FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

5. An updated version of this report will be brought to future Board meetings.

## **LEGAL AND CONFIDENTIALITY IMPLICATIONS**

6. None directly arising.

## **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7. None directly arising.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

8. None directly arising.

## **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9. None directly arising.

## **Contact Officer**

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