

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'.

Our strategic contractor partners have all now started work on site. There have been some issues with quality of work and customer care, which have been addressed with both contractors, who have attended Local Housing Board meetings. I am confident that lessons have been learned and 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 our performance is excellent or good. As the performance

monitoring report, elsewhere on the agenda, shows, most of our performances are on target. We will continue to prioritise rent arrears, voids and repairs performance.

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

My assessment is 'good'.

We have successfully extended choice based lettings city-wide. 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 2003-4 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. We are continuing to improve the range of kitchen and bathroom fittings and fixtures and other work provided as part of the Homes Pride campaign. Feedback from tenants is listened to. An example is the decision to offer a basic redecoration service to elderly tenants following improvement work to kitchen and bathrooms.

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

My assessment is 'fair'.

I think our performance in this area is improving. 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. Demand for council housing has increased over the past year, so that levels of vacant properties on Cowsley, Osmaston and Old Sinfen, are at a very low level. 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 'fair'.

I am concerned at our performance in this area. This is not a criticism of our efforts, we continue to be innovative and increase the range of actions available to tackle this issue. However, the level of complaints of anti-social behaviour and crime on our estates has a detrimental effect on the reputation of some estates.

Following the last Service Improvement Committee meeting, over the next 3 months we will be consulting on introductory tenancies, which could be started in November 2003.

The work of the community watch patrols remains a key service in reducing anti-social behaviour on estates, and a new patrol, funded by the Derwent New Deal in the Communities, will start this Summer.

There remains a need to get local communities committed to tackling crime and 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. We have entered into an agreement with Social Services to ensure there is no delay in occupational therapists' assessment of any work required.

- **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 has helped to make our processes more effective and systematic.

Staff have been encouraged to participate in our 'Quality Street' initiative - which asks them to spend time on activities that are not directly linked to their day job. Examples to date have included staff writing and producing a booklet publicising our sheltered housing schemes, and assisting groups on estates to run activity days.

- **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. 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. These are to be implemented this year.

- **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 available.

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

My assessment is 'good'.

The creation of the North and South Local Housing Boards has brought 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.

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

My assessment is 'poor'.

The Employment Initiatives Officer is in discussion with other agencies to 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. This work promises to deliver good news over the next 3 months.

CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

4. The Business Plan will be rewritten in 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.

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