

DERBY HOMES FURNITURE PACK

Report of the Director of Housing & Customer Service

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report summarises the review of two of the three schemes previously managed through the Housing Projects Team, the Furnished Tenancy scheme, and the Garden Maintenance scheme. The management of the schemes was dispersed in April 2008 and some procedural changes were introduced.

A review of the Home Decoration Scheme has been carried out by the Maintenance Operations Manager and is subject to a separate report.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Local Housing Board notes this report and the marketing campaign.

3. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Furnished Tenancies

The Furnished Tenancy Scheme was reviewed in early 2008 and it was identified at that time that the range of packs being offered to new tenants was too expensive for customers. This was having a detrimental effect on the take up of packs, particularly from customers who were not in receipt of Benefit; consequently the types and a range of smaller packs were reduced to be more cost effective.

- 3.2 Since April 2008 management of the Furniture Packs has been carried out by the Enquiry Centre Team leaders in conjunction with Local Housing Managers, overseen by the Customer Services Manager.

- 3.3 Local Offices liaise with the Allocations team to identify new tenants requiring furnished tenancies. The Enquiry Centre Team Leaders authorise orders for goods and liaise with the contractors for delivery. The Enquiry Centre responds to repair requests from existing furnished tenancies and organise the required works with the contractors; replacement items are provided if the item has been in the property for over five years and has not been damaged intentionally. Local Office staff and Enquiry centre staff liaise daily on any issues that arise.

- 3.4 Over the last 18 months there has been insufficient marketing of the scheme and this is reflected in low numbers of new furnished tenancies being issued. There are currently 843 properties with Furniture Packs; this is a reduction in packs from 900 at the end of March 2008. Improved marketing has been

identified as a requirement within the financial inclusion strategy to assist new tenants with the expensive job of equipping their home.

- 3.5 A satisfaction survey with the scheme has not been carried out in 2009 but this scheduled for January 2010, we are also introducing a new focus group with existing customers in order to gain feedback on how the scheme works for them. This will provide us with a benchmark from which to move forward with the marketing of the scheme.

3.6 Gardening Scheme

During 2008/09 a new Contractor was appointed to manage the grounds maintenance and the Gardening Scheme has been included within this contract.

- 3.7 We have been working with existing customers to manage their expectations s as this appeared to be above and beyond what was in the contract, and indeed not deliverable within the charges made for the service.
- 3.8 From feedback we have improved communication with customers by producing a calendar, which give timescales, specification of work to be carried out and useful contact details.
- 3.9 Satisfaction has increased and a number of compliments have been received.
- 3.10 The action plan for 2010/11 is:
- to have an accurate measure of all properties ready for the retendering process.
 - to look at specification improvements for the retendering process
 - to look more closely at Customer Involvement / Feedback
 - identify smarter way of working for the future.
- 3.11 Marketing of the schemes will to be addressed and a campaign to raise the profiles will be carried out in early 2010. The Customer Service Manager will liaise with the Maintenance Operations Manager (Cyclical) and Maintenance Operations Manager (Planned) and the Tenancy Sustainment Manager in order to develop the campaign.

It is intended to promote the availability of the schemes in a number of ways; some examples of how this will be done are:

- Allocations Team
- Local Office Teams
- Housing Options Centre
- Tenancy Sustainment Team
- Leaflets
- Screens in local offices
- Derby Homes News

4. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

Satisfaction for the Home Decoration is currently at 72% and the Gardening

Scheme satisfaction is 78%.

There has not been a recent survey on Furnished properties; a satisfaction survey will therefore be sent out to Furnished Tenancies in January 2010.

Customers will be consulted about effective marketing through the Customer Service Process Improvement Teams and Housing Focus Groups.

5. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equalities Impact Assessment on Furniture Packs has been carried out and the following recommendations are being worked on:

- The Customer Services Manager will incorporate the furnished tenancy service into customer satisfaction surveys and address any equality impact or need identified.
- Identify who our Furniture Pack customers are, gather information on which groups currently use this service and what % of tenancies are furnished.
- Monitor Complaints to establish any trends.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report

- Financial and business plan
- Legal and Confidentiality
- Personnel
- Environmental
- Health & Safety
- Risk

If Board members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact the author, or the Chief Executive, phil.davies@derbyhomes.org - Tel 01332 711010

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Background Information: None

Supporting Information: None