

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STAGE 4 - IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Report By: Head of Strategic Housing Services

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To consider the Stage 4 Report and outcomes of the Best Value Review of the Private Sector Housing team.

Financial Implications

2. Efficiency savings have been identified with the transfer of the Home Improvement Agency. Any other financial implications will have to be met from within existing budgets.

Background

3. The Improvement Plan is the outcome of the Best Value Review of the provision of the Private Sector Housing Services carried out during 2005 with the recommendations of the Third Stage Report being agreed by the Adult Social Care & Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee on the 10th June 2005 and endorsed by the Strategic Monitoring Committee on 1st July, 2005. The Improvement Plan covers all the issues raised in the recommendations section of the Third Stage Report and updates current legislative and organisational changes.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the draft Improvement Plan be considered and any comments referred to the Cabinet Member (Social Care Adults and Health) for her to consider prior to finalising the Plan.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

**PROVISION OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SERVICES
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

1. Introduction

This Improvement Plan is the outcome of the Best Value Review of the provision of Private Sector Housing Services, carried out in accordance with the corporate guidance on the Best Value Review process.

The Improvement Plan covers the 3 year period from 2006-2008 within which further recommendations may be identified.

The responsibility for implementing the Improvement Plan remains with the Private Sector Housing team within the existing staff resources.

A Lead officer has been appointed to each improvement area, and will be responsible for meeting the improvement, identifying any additional resources required and to seek the necessary approval should areas require additional financial considerations.

2. Vision of the Service

The overall vision of the service is to improve housing conditions and to support independent living to meet the accommodation needs of those living in Herefordshire.

3. Aims of the Service

The key aims of the service are:

To ensure the maintenance, improvement and energy efficiency of residential property across all tenures, for the health, safety and well-being of the people of Herefordshire; and

Through partnership working to support independent living for the disabled and other vulnerable groups by providing access to facilities required for everyday living.

This is achieved through:

- The provision of a comprehensive advice service;
- The provision of financial and other assistance under the Housing Renewal Policy 2003-2006 (now due for review);
- The enforcement of standards of fitness for human habitation under the Housing Act 1985. The fitness standard is to be replaced in April 2006 by the Housing Health and Safety rating System under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004;
- The registration of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) (Housing Act 1996) The local HMO Registration Schemes will be replaced in April 2006 by HMO Licensing, also under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004;
- The development and implementation of energy efficiency initiatives and energy audits in the residential sector to address targets set in the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 and associated legislation;

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Richard Gabb, Head of Strategic Housing Services on 01432 261092

- The annual assessment of housing conditions as required by the Housing Acts 1985 and 2004;
- Ensuring the provision of an effective Home Improvement Agency in Herefordshire;
- Promoting partnership working and encouraging best practice.

4. Services Provided

The Best Value Review has shown the need to further develop the existing services provided by the Private Sector Housing team.

FUNCTIONS	USERS
Enforcement including Houses in Multiple Occupation	Landlords, tenants
Financial and other forms of assistance to improve and repair properties	Homeowners, landlords and tenants in the private sector
Major and Minor Adaptations	Disabled groups through all tenures.
Home Improvement Agency – assisting vulnerable groups to access grants, benefits and other services.	Vulnerable groups mainly in the private sector
Energy Efficiency- promotion, initiatives and responsibilities under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995	All tenures, with direct funding to the private sector

5. Improving the Service

As a result of the Best Value Review of the provision of Private Sector Housing services, key areas for improvement were identified in the Stage 3 report. They are summarised, with relevant objectives, proposed implementation dates and named lead officer on the attached Improvement Plan – Appendix 1.

In addition to the improvements originally identified under the Best Value process, there are a number of improvements that are proposed to ensure a more efficient and effective range of services.

These include:

- a team restructure;
- the development of a range of new performance indicators;
- staff training in line with new legislative requirements;
- provision of a Housing Occupational Therapist post, as highlighted within the Physical Disabilities Best Value Review;
- the [You@Home](#), Home Improvement Agency;

- IT software.

Each improvement area has been prioritised and a proposed completion date set.

However, as the implementation progresses it will be necessary to monitor and review the aims, objectives and completion dates as they impact on the overall period of the plan. The improvements are prioritised 1-3, 1 being high priority, 2 medium and 3 low priority.

6. Efficiency Savings

The Home Improvement Agency service has recently been transferred in-house due to the previous service provider having given notice of withdrawal of service from October 2005. It is envisaged that some efficiency savings may be created as a result of the transfer.

Many of the imminent changes in Private Sector Housing services arise as a result of legislative changes under the Housing Act 2004, for which Commencement Orders are currently being issued; and to address national policy and targets. Efficiency savings identified above will be used to resource these developments in service.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

The Improvement Plan will be monitored by the Head of Strategic Housing Services.