

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY HOUSING REPAIRS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Wednesday, 26 July 2006

PRESENT:

Councillor Brandon Eldred (Chair)
Councillor Sally Beardsworth
Councillor Michael Hill
Councillor Christopher Malpas
Councillor Anjona Roy

Richard Fitzhenry Property Maintenance Manager
Margaret Martin Consortium
Tracy Tiff Scrutiny Officer

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Liz Tavener and Carl Grimmer, Corporate Manager.

2 ELECTION OF THE CHAIR OF THE HOUSING REPAIRS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

It was proposed by Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Malpas that Councillor Eldred be elected Chair of the Housing Repairs Task and Finish Group, upon a vote it was:

AGREED: That Councillor Eldred be elected Chair of the Housing Repairs Task and Finish Group.

3 INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair introduced everyone to the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

4 SCOPING EXERCISE

The Task and Finish Group scoped its review (copy attached at Annex I to the minutes).

In scoping the review, the Group commented:-

- The Task and Finish Group has a life span and it should pick out the key issues that it wanted to focus on to enable the Council to progress.
- There is a need to investigate communications on housing repairs with tenants and within the Council departments.
- To identify strategies to improve housing repairs. Key objectives for investigating this area would be relevant Best Value Performance Indicators and the relevant sections from the Council's Recovery Plan March 2006 – September 2006.
- Overview and Scrutiny had previously carried out comprehensive work on the door entry system, the recommendations of which had not been implemented. **Agreed: that R Fitzhenry, Property Maintenance Manager,**

would provide a progress report on the door entry systems to the next meeting.

- The Action Repairs Group met to discuss voids and many worthwhile proposals had been put forward, one of which was 'clean and safe voids'. B Turrell had been seconded from Asset Management to look at voids holistically. **Agreed: B Turrell, Voids, be asked to attend the next meeting and give an update on the progress of the review of voids.**
- The Actions Repairs Group had scheduled to visit best practice councils as part of its review. **Agreed: That the Housing Repairs Task and Finish Group accompany the Actions Repairs Groups on its visit to best practice Councils.**
- Regarding the Decent Homes Standards, tenants should be asked to provide both a 'wish list' and a 'reality' list.

It was suggested that one of the scheduled meetings be a public meeting and tenants should be invited to attend to give their views on housing repairs. Tenants would also be given the opportunity to submit written evidence if they were unable to attend the meeting. Details of the meeting would be widely publicised, in particular in the *Housing Matters* Journal. The two co-opted members would give progress updates from the Task and Finish Group meetings to NTACTION. **Agreed: That details of the public meeting of this Task and Finish Group be publicised as widely as possible, in particular in the *Housing Matters* Journal. The Co Optees would regularly report back to NTACTION on the Task and Finish Group's progress. Information would be provided in short bullet pointed format for ease of reporting back.**

5 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The following schedule of meetings was agreed:-

Wednesday 30 August commencing at 4pm

Agenda to include:-

Officers' Reports:-

- Update report on the door entry system (R Fitzhenry)
- Decent Homes Programme (R Fitzhenry)
- 5 Year's Capital Programme (R Fitzhenry)
- Progress Report on the Voids Review (B Turrell)
- Details of visits to best practice Council (B Turrell/R Fitzhenry)
- Arrange visits to void properties (B Turrell/R Fitzhenry)

Publicity for public meeting of the Task and Finish Group

Wednesday 20 September	at 4.15pm
Wednesday 18 October	at 4.15pm
Wednesday 15 November	at 4.15pm
Wednesday 13 December	at 4.15pm

The meeting concluded at 5.35pm

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING REPAIRS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

REVIEW SCOPE

1 PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

To review how well the Council is achieving on housing repairs and maintenance.

To investigate the condition of voids and the process of re-letting void properties.

To investigate communications on housing repair issues both with tenants and Council departments.

2 POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

To identify strategies to improve housing repairs. Key objectives for investigating this area: -

- Best Value Performance Indicators: -
 - B184a – The proportion of local authority homes which were non-decent at 1 April
 - BV184b – The percentage change in proportion of non-decent local authority homes between 31 March and 1 April
 - BV74a – Satisfaction of tenants of council housing with the overall service provided by their landlord
 - BV74b – Satisfaction of tenants of council housing with the overall service provided by their landlord with results further broken down by ethnic tenants
 - BV74c – Satisfaction of tenants of council housing with the overall service provided by their landlord with results further broken down by ethnic tenants
 - BV75a – Satisfaction of tenants in council housing with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services by their landlord
 - HLP19 – Night time repairs to housing completed on target
- Council's Recovery Plan March 2006 – September 2006
 - Action 19: Put in place key strategies to shape the way services are delivered
 - Action 20: Housing Action
 - Action 21 Housing Management

To inform the lettable standard for Council properties.

3 INFORMATION REQUIRED

- Complete voids process from when the property becomes empty to when it is re-let
- Voids information such as: -
 - What creates a void
 - How voids could be advertised
 - Length of time voids remain empty
- Best practice external to Northampton; e.g. Visits to other Local Authorities
- Current Housing Strategy and how the review can influence the next version
- Decent Homes Programme
- 5-Year's Capital Programme
- Communication methods with tenants and Council departments

4 FORMAT OF INFORMATION

- Baseline Data
- Details of budget allocation
- Officer reports/presentations
- Evidence from the Portfolio Holder
- Public meeting with tenants
- Written evidence from tenants
- Site visits to a selection of void properties
- Site visit to a best practice Council
- Evidence from an expert – fellow researcher (UCN)
- Evidence from the Healthier Communities Collaborative
- Involve the media

5 METHODS USED

- Minutes of the meetings
- Site visits to a selection of void properties
- Site visit to best practice Council
- Views of tenants
- Desktop research/ web based
- External organisation to be asked to carry out an independent assessment on a Council property such as elderly persons' accommodation

6 CO-OPTION TO THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

- Mrs Ann Timson NTACT
- Mr Norman Adams NTACT

7 EVIDENCE GATHERING TIMETABLE

July to November 2006

26 July	Scope the review
August – October	Site visits to voids and best practice Council
30 August	Evidence gathering
20 September	Evidence gathering
18 October and evening	Evidence gathering – Public meetings – late afternoon
15 November	Evidence gathering
13 December	Finalise Chair's report

8 RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS

Lead Officer	Carl Grimmer
Co-Ordinator	Tracy Tiff

9 RESOURCES AND BUDGET

R Fitzhenry, Property Maintenance Manager, and B Turrell, Voids Officer, to provide support and advice.

Available budget for evidence gathering.

10 FINAL REPORT

Completed by 13 December. Presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

11 MONITORING PROCESS

Review the impact of the report after six months (June/July 2007)