

Strategic Housing Panel

Audit Commision Consultancy

Item 8

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Clements
LEAD OFFICER: Fergus McMorro
REPORT AUTHOR: Laurie Priebe

Summary and Recommendation:

This report describes the outcome of a meeting between the Interim Housing Services Manager (Peter Deacon), Housing Services Manager (Laurie Priebe) and Paul Clarke (Lead Housing Inspector, North West).

Members are asked to note this report and their comments are invited.

1. Introduction

The meeting took place on 14 August 2008. It was agreed that the Audit Commission would return in around January 2009 not in a capacity as inspectorate but as a consultancy. The purpose is to undertake an informal health check on the progress of the strategic action plan, to identify strengths and to advise on good practice examples with which to address weaknesses

2. Key issues

The commission can take a high level (or light touch) view of areas where we are confident of improvement and our performance information justifies that confidence. They can take a detailed view of areas where we are less confident and our performance information gives cause for concern.

Specific areas of concern include benchmarking our costs and service standards and obtaining value for money: invest to save. Challenging ourselves: for example, what is the quality of our knowledge of housing need in the Borough (this is a key test of strategic housing services)?

3. **Learning from other inspections of strategic housing services**

For example, Wirral (2 stars): Salford (2 stars): Sefton (1 star, uncertain prospects) but pick out authorities which are comparable areas to Copeland.

4. **Next steps**

Housing Services Manager will contact Paul Clarke in mid October 2008 to set specific dates for the consultancy service – it is expected to be approximately one week's work. It is likely they will delegate one inspector who was involved in the original inspection and one other who was not involved earlier. Look at different CBLS models and identify the reasons why some are more successful than others

5. The formal re-inspection is most likely for September 2009. Be very clear that we must work to a SMART action plan and demonstrate what we have achieved by that date. Set time-specific targets and track back to the beginning to plan progress. Measure, monitor and manage our actions. Always focus on the service outcomes that we intend to achieve.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

The financial implications of the consultancy work are unclear at the time of writing. Some days are already factored into our annual audit and inspection fee so we may already have paid for some of the consultancy.

Is this a Key Decision? No