

## Strategic Housing Improvement Plan

Table 1: Fully Completed Tasks

Line	Audit Commission Recommendation	Action	By When
1	<b>1) Develop CBC-specific policies &amp; plans to implement sub-regional strategies and meet local need</b>	a) Carry out Homelessness Review & Strategy	Completed by officers in August 2008 and approved by Council in September 2008.
2		b) Review allocations scheme & housing register	Reported to Strategic Housing Panel in April 2009. Recommended to Executive in July 2009.
3	<b>2) Improve relationships with partner organisations to help achieve strategic housing objectives, including new provision.</b>	a) establish Copeland Homes/Home Group liaison to: negotiate formal nomination arrangements: explore affordable housing opportunities: develop choice based lettings	Formal nominations agreement signed by June 2009. CBC and Home Housing Group (inc Copeland Homes) are members of the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings project team with a projected “go live” date of October 2010. Liaison with Home Group and other RSLs in the Borough is well established and schemes have been completed, are under construction or planned.
4		b) Participate fully in West Cumbria and Cumbria wide housing forums.	Ongoing participation achieved throughout 2008/09
5		c) Develop private landlords forum	Landlords forum held 6 March 2009. To be held 6 monthly.
6		d) Improve liaison with Supporting People Team and Primary Care Trust	Throughout 2008/09 CBC has been fully represented on all Supporting People bodies. The PCT is a member of the commissioning body – CBC is represented by the Housing Manager & Portfolio Holder
7	<b>3) Implement systems &amp; structures to ensure the Council is carrying statutory duties in the private sector under the Housing Act, 2004.</b>	a) create new staffing structure: train staff in HHSRS. Take consistent enforcement action.	New staff in post by end October 2008. Training completed over following 6 months.

8		b) Develop effective HMO licensing scheme	Licensing scheme established and 2 HMOs licensed.
9	<b>4) Update financial assistance policies to strategically target private sector renewal on housing and wider regeneration objectives</b>	Assess and update as part of private sector strategy review. Targets revealed by private sector stock condition survey of 2007.	New financial assistance policy agreed by Council in December 2008 and implemented from April 2009. Takes account of private sector stock condition survey of 2007.
10	<b>5) Take a client role in the delivery of housing advice provision in the Borough</b>	a) Review provision as part of homelessness strategy review.	Completed July/August 2008
11		b) Negotiate service level agreements with funded bodies	Completed by April 2009
12		c) Review ability of other CBC services to contribute to improved advice co-ordination	Review completed with Benefits in winter 2009 and agreement signed off in June 2009.
13		d) Improve advice leaflets, website and other information sources. Provide better information and advice on rehousing prospects	Suite of housing advice leaflets published January 2009. New housing element on website completed before April 2009.
14	<b>6) Develop systems &amp; structures to move towards a proactive homelessness prevention approach: reduce the use of temporary accommodation to achieve the gov't target of 50% by 2010 from the baseline number at 31/12/2004.</b>	a) Review approach in light of Homelessness Review & Homelessness Strategy Action Plan of 2008/2013	Copeland was the first LA in Cumbria to achieve the 50% reduction in the use of temporary accommodation (by end 2008). A homelessness prevention toolkit was introduced in 2008 and DCLG funding has contributed towards prevention initiatives. Discretionary Housing Payments have also been used to prevent or mitigate homelessness. In the 6 months ending April 2009 housing advice interventions have prevented 87 cases of homelessness and helped 85 others to find alternative housing.
15	<b>7) Review Housing Team's structure &amp; resources &amp; develop a permanent establishment capable of meeting the Council's statutory requirements,</b>	a) New staffing structure approved in spring 2008 for both Homelessness/Housing	However, recruitment and arrival in post of all new staff not achieved until end October 2008.

	<b>developing and implementing housing strategies to meet local need and deliver services to an acceptable standard.</b>	Options and Private Sector Renewal.	
16	<b>Develop a consistent corporate approach to the management of complaints, including reporting to Councillors about learning from them.</b>	a) CBC approach to complaints has been reviewed and changes introduced with effect from April 2009.	Strategic Housing Panel began to receive reports of complaints January 2009 (when their outcome is known).
17	<b>Develop &amp; display a comprehensive range of housing leaflets</b>	Suite of customer leaflets advice & information leaflets to be published.	Series of leaflets on homelessness, housing advice and housing options published in January 2009.
18	<b>Develop clear service standards in housing, which are well publicised and against which performance is monitored.</b>	Housing service standards to be developed which will explain the service provided, how to access the service, the standards pertaining and how they will be monitored and complaints dealt with.	Following consultation, including with customers, service standards were determined and agreed by Strategic Housing Panel in March 2009. Subsequently published in leaflet form and now appearing on website.
19	<b>Ensure corporate systems for dealing with key issues, such as budget setting and financial management, service planning and appraisals are adhered to in each service area and that robust monitoring and management takes place at the corporate centre to prevent non-compliance</b>	Housing Services to adhere to annual budget building process and monthly budget monitoring & management	With the introduction of the Capital Monitoring Group from July 2009, Housing will be represented at revenue budget & capital programme monitoring. Housing also participated in the budget building round held in 2008/09 for 2009/10 and will participate in the next and subsequent rounds. This cell does not refer to other services.
20	<b>Improve relationships between departments to exploit opportunities for joined up working and make best use of expertise outside the housing team to deliver housing objectives</b>	Establish corporate working group to support implementation of this plan. Include housing priorities in service plans of relevant internal services.	Strategic Housing Panel of Councillors established in Spring 2008 but has been supported almost only by housing staff. Corporate officers attendance reinstated in July 2009. Housing priorities included in Development Strategy Service Plan. But see line 4 of table 2.
21	<b>Improve value for money and performance management</b>	Implement effective procurement of all commissioned services	The Trusteel contract completed in February 2009 was subjected to

		and products including a robust client role in contract management	effective client management throughout. Effective procurement of the Kells Environmental Improvement Scheme was achieved by February 2009 and there is a strong client role in ongoing management of that contract. This also applied to Phase 1 of the Woodhouse Evolution project in 2008/09
22	<b>Develop a clear corporate approach to translation which meets local needs</b>	Ensure that Language Line translation service is available at reception and to customer-serving staff in all departments	CBC bought fully into the Language Line service in July 09. We have an account and are able to go live on its use. It is a risk to describe this as complete until all teams have been trained in usage – by end Oct 09.
23	<b>Develop CBC specific policies &amp; plans to implement sub-regional strategies and meet local need</b>	Produce CBC-specific comprehensive action plan to implement Cumbria Housing Strategy, 2009/2011 in the Borough.	Draft to Strategic Housing Panel in August 09 and out for consultation with return date in September 09

Table 2: Partially Completed Tasks

<b>Line number</b>	<b>Audit Commission Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By When</b>
1		Develop older persons strategy	Substantial progress made but further consultation necessary with partner agencies in the public & voluntary sector. To be completed & reported to Strategic Housing Panel by end October 2009.
2		Develop private sector strategy to comply with Housing Act, 2004	To be completed by end August 2009.
3	<b>Improve relationships between departments to exploit opportunities for joined up working and make best use of expertise outside the housing team to deliver housing objectives</b>	a) Develop service level agreements (SLAs) with internal services	SLA signed off with Benefits in June 2009 but in practice was developed 6 months earlier. SLAs to be completed with

			Environmental Health and legal Services by end September 2009.
4	<b>Report regularly to the Executive and corporate team on performance against the service/improvement plan and against a full set of performance and cost indicators in housing until the service has been reinspected</b>	Progress to be reported to Executive and Corporate Team on a monthly basis, including spend against budgets and key performance indicators.	While monthly reports have been made to Strategic Housing Panel for the last twelve months, reports to Executive and Corporate Team have been sporadic, and excluded cost indicators. This to be corrected by end August 2009.
	<b>Ensure the new corporate access strategy is robust enough to manage access to housing services and to develop a strategic corporate approach to customer care by addressing key issues</b>	See below	See below
5	<b>Develop a fully interactive corporate website</b>	Housing pages on corporate website to be reviewed and updated with all new policies, strategies and information.	Housing pages almost up to date and will be completed by end July 2009. Corporate interactive website yet to be introduced.
6	<b>Develop transactional customer satisfaction surveys following key housing processes and report to Councillors on lessons learned.</b>	Customer satisfaction surveys to be developed for private sector housing renewal and homelessness/housing options functions.	Private sector housing surveys introduced & be reported to August 2009 meeting of Strategic Housing Panel. Homelessness/Housing Options surveys to be introduced August 2009.
7	<b>Further develop/implement existing equality and diversity policies</b>	a) Develop and maintain a thorough corporate understanding of the profile and needs of local people through liaison with representative community organisations and robust research.	The current work done on the draft older persons strategy and anti-fuel poverty strategy is not enough to meet the requirements of this recommendation. The gap to be addressed by end September 2009.
8	<b>Carry out and act on the findings of equality impact assessments in housing</b>	a) Develop equality impact assessments and act on findings. b) Review existing research data to profile differing housing needs across Borough. Examine needs of specific groups such as gypsies & travellers, where Cumbria wide research is available.	Initial equality impact assessments done for private sector renewal & homelessness/housing options. Actions a) & b) to be completed with action plan by end September 09

9	<b>Improve value for money and performance management</b>	Review existing partnership arrangements to improve value for money.	Partnership arrangements with RSLs and others have been reviewed to ensure they deliver service outcomes but value for money has not been specifically addressed.
10		Develop effective procurement practices for private sector renewal & improvement works, including partnerships.	CBC to join purchasing consortium in order to obtain discounts for DFG works & services. To join by end September 2009.
11	<b>Develop a consistent corporate approach to the management of complaints</b>	Housing staff to be trained on using complaints as a learning & improvement opportunity.	A training proposal has been received. To be delivered by end September 2009
12	<b>Improve value for money and performance management</b>	Tracking, benchmarking & reporting to staff & Councillors on corporate & service costs	A proposal has been accepted from consultants to undertake this work in a timeline of 20 days so will be completed before re-inspection in Sept/October.
13	<b>Develop a clear corporate approach to translation which meets local needs.</b>	Use of telephone interpretation offered in all leaflets and decision letters	To be introduced by mid-October 2009

Table 3: uncompleted tasks

Line	Audit Commission Recommendation	Action	Comments
1	<b>Further develop and implement existing equality &amp; diversity policies</b>	Understand the housing needs of migrant workers	Research has been done in the County, which we will obtain by end Aug 09.
2	<b>Carry out and act on the findings of equality impact assessments</b>	a) Liaise & consult with representative community groups	To be undertaken by end September 2009
		b) Reflect diversity issues in procurement tenders & contracts	To be undertaken after community liaison
3	<b>Improve relations with partner organisations to help achieve strategic housing objectives</b>	Develop private landlord accreditation scheme	Landlords attending the forum in March 2009 showed no willingness to join such a scheme: to be raised again at next forum in October 2009.