

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Clements
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Summary and Recommendation:

Attached as Appendix 1 is a list of projects that must be completed before the Audit Commission re-inspect the Housing Service, most likely to occur in October 2009.

Members are requested to note the report and their comments are invited.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 27 February 2009 the Panel considered a report describing feedback from the Audit Commission's 3 days consultancy at the end of January.
- 1.2 Members will recall that the Inspector identified 52 current strengths and 38 weaknesses. The former Strategic Housing Action Plan is renamed Improvement Plan and officers will address all remaining weaknesses.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 therefore comprises the residual improvement plan that must be completed to comply with the Audit Commission's recommendations in their original report published in 2008.

2 NEXT STEPS

- 2.1 Appendix 1 is also a list of projects with their target completion dates. For the more complex tasks involving partnerships, consultation and Council approval before implementation we shall produce project plans and report them to future meetings of the Panel.
- 2.2 Where the target completion date is later than the expected re-inspection (for example, the emerging Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Scheme), project plans will enable the inspectorate to assess the Council's "direction of travel" and therefore its prospects for improvement.

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

3.1 For 2009/2010 any financial implications can be met within existing resources. There are expected to be financial implications for Choice Based Lettings and a Cumbria-wide Housing Needs Survey in 2010/2011 but these will be the subject of consideration in the next budget building round.

4. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

4.1 This report and recommendations are in accordance with the Council's action plan following the Audit Commission's inspection report.

List of Appendices –Appendix 1: Strategic Housing Improvement Plan

Is this a Key Decision? No

Revised Strategic Housing Improvement Plan

Action	Audit Commission recommendation number (from original Strategic Housing Action Plan)	Description	Completion Date
1	Rec 1.1a	Produce Copeland-specific Housing Strategy, including for anti-fuel poverty	30.6.09
2	Rec 1.1c	Develop new private housing sector sub-strategy to sit within 1.1a	30.6.09
3	Rec 1.1.d	Complete older persons housing sub-strategy to sit within 1.1.a	30.6.09
4	Rec1.2.a	Subject to Council approval, develop Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Scheme	30.6.10 (initial Cumbria target was 31/3/10 but this is likely to slip 3 months).
5	Rec 1.6 c & d	Develop “early warning” homelessness systems with RSLs & key partners. Provide better information and advice on rehousing prospects	31.07.09
6	Rec.2.1c	Improved budget monitoring to be introduced with clear devolution of responsibility	31/5/09
7	Rec 2.3a	Establish corporate working group to support implementation of improvement plan	31.5.09
8	Rec 3.2a & b	CBC approach to translation to be reviewed alongside action to improve performance on diversity issues. Use of telephone interpretation to be offered in all leaflets and statutory decision letters	30.6.09
9	Rec 2.4a	Report regularly to Councillors on	30.6.09

		performance and against a full set of cost indicators	
10	Rec 3.6a	Report to Councillors on customer satisfaction surveys across all housing service users	30.6.09
11	Rec 4.2	Carry out and act on findings of equality impact assessments in housing services.	31.7.09
12	Rec 4.2c.d.&e	Examine needs of specific groups. Reflect these diversity issues in procurement tenders and contracts. Consult representative community groups	31.7.09
13	Homelessness Strategy Action Plan	Introduce Sanctuary-type scheme for people experiencing domestic violence	30.9.09
14	Homelessness Strategy	Where necessary to prevent homelessness, fast-track housing benefit payments for private rented sector and conclude service level agreements with Benefits	
15	Homelessness Strategy	Develop protocols for homelessness prevention with key partner agencies	31.10.09
16	Homelessness Strategy	Work with landlords & tenants to overcome problems with assured shorthold tenancies that would otherwise prevent their renewal	31.10.09
17	Homelessness Strategy	Hold training & capacity building events for all agencies involved in tackling homelessness in the district	31.10.09