

Report for Resolution

Report to Executive
14 April 2010

Report of Head of Neighbourhood and Strategic Housing Services

Subject Blueprint and vision for the housing service

Item
5

Purpose

For members to note the proposed blueprint and vision for the housing as an outcome of the housing improvement plan.

Recommendations

To agree the blueprint and vision for the housing service.

Financial Consequences

None.

Risk Assessment

The blueprint is covered by the Housing Improvement plan risk assessment which is monitored by the housing improvement board

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority “Safe and healthy neighbourhoods – working in partnership with residents to create neighbourhoods where people feel secure, where the streets are clean and well maintained, where there is good quality housing and local amenities and where there are active local communities” and the service plan priority

Executive Member: Councillor Arthur - Housing and Adult Services

Ward: University

Contact Officers

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Background Documents

Housing Improvement Plan

Plus4 report from the TalkBack panel- Blueprint and vision.

Report

Blueprint and Vision

1. The draft blueprint and vision forms part of the communication, consultation and vision work stream of the housing improvement plan.
2. The draft blueprint was developed by officers from neighbourhood housing and the communication and culture service, looking at best practice from other housing providers and incorporating the objectives of the housing improvement plan. As work has progressed with other work streams of the housing improvement plan, these were subject to a consultation process by Plus4 Market Research Market Ltd and the feedback received from the various focus groups (TalkBack Panel) were also incorporated into the draft framework.
3. The vision for the housing service is to :-
 - provide affordable and decent homes that people want to live in;
 - make sure that neighbourhoods are safe and clean for the people of Norwich.;
 - deliver an excellent housing service which offers value for money and gives residents the very best customer experience.
4. The draft framework was then subject to a specific focus group, drawn from tenant and leaseholder representatives' of the TalkBack Panel and their comments have been incorporated into the final version of the blueprint and vision.
5. The document has also been circulated to members of the housing improvement board for their comments.
6. As part of our commitment to tenant consultation, the document has been presented to the publications group of the Citywide Board on 24 March 2010 tenants tick logo.
7. To ensure that we are able to achieve the vision, this will be measured as part of the recently introduced performance management framework.
8. The blueprint and vision will form part of the continuous service improvement plan and will be monitored at regular intervals in partnership with the TalkBack Panel and other stakeholders.

**(DRAFT) Blueprint and vision for
the housing service
2009-2011**

November 2009

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A blueprint for change

Introduction by Councillor Brenda Arthur

In the last year the housing service has been through many changes. In summer 2008 we carried out a review of the whole service, designed to highlight any areas that we needed to improve. This review found that while some areas were performing well, the housing landlord service was not. The review was followed by a formal inspection by the Audit Commission in January 2009. The result of this was that the housing landlord service was awarded no stars with uncertain prospects for improvement.

We have taken a long hard look at how we can improve all aspects of the housing service to make things better for you, our customers. To make sure we put tenants and leaseholders at the heart of how the housing service works we have been asking you what you think, listening to what you have had to say and changing the way we do things.

To help us get your honest views in the most impartial way we have enlisted the help of an independent market research company Plus Four. The work they have done has helped us to focus on the things that matter the most to you.

We have also invited a number of independent housing experts, together with tenant representatives, to sit on our housing improvement board. This has an independent chair and the group act as critical friends and advisers.

As a direct result of what you have told us, we have put together a plan of what the housing service needs to do to improve. This plan will map out our journey of continuous improvement with the aim of becoming a one star 'fair' service by April 2010 and a two star 'good' service by March 2011.

The blueprint and vision will be the first part of our continuous improvement for the housing service and we would therefore value your thoughts and views on this.

Brenda Arthur
Executive member for housing and adult services

November 2009

The vision – why we are here

The city council's overall vision is to make Norwich:

- a strong and prosperous city
- have safe and healthy neighbourhoods
- full of opportunities for all.

Within this, the housing service provides:

- affordable and decent homes that people want to live in
- neighbourhoods that are safe and clean
- services that offer value for money and give residents the very best customer experience..

What have you told us so far and how this will make us a better landlord

Over the last twelve months we have been actively seeking the views of tenants and leaseholders about the services they receive from us and how they think these can be improved. We also recognise the valuable role we play in providing much needed homes for thousands of people and are committed to providing a high quality, reliable and accurate service for tenants and leaseholders.

Key messages we have received from you

- **Working together** – you want us to keep you better informed, listen to you more and involve you in helping to shape and change the service for the better. You want us to value you as a customer and to work on building a better relationship based upon trust, respect and confidence.
- **Access to the service** – you want us to understand your needs and to make sure that the service responds to these needs through the provision of responsive, accessible and flexible services.
- **Value for money** – you want to know how we spend your money and on what. You want to be re-assured that we are spending it wisely, and where possible to have a say in how it is spent.
- **Getting it right first time** – you want us to do what we say we are going to do, when we say we are going to do it; measure our success in achieving this and test our performance against the best performing housing services in the country. You want us to improve the way you can report repairs and improve the quality of these and maintenance work.
- **Putting you first** – you want us to treat you with respect, honesty and openness and you want staff to receive the training they need to help you. You want to see an improved level of knowledge and expertise in

our workforce, including trades people, with better management and supervision of staff.

- **Making your neighbourhood a better place to live** – you want us to improve how we manage your neighbourhoods, such as dealing with issues like antisocial behaviour, cleanliness and graffiti, promptly and effectively.
- **Repairs service** – you want us to involve you in the procurement and monitoring of new contractors and improve the tenant satisfaction monitoring that is carried out. You want us to provide a flexible, convenient repairs service that includes features such as two hour appointment slots and improved value for money.

Improving our services because of what you have said

Working together

We aim to...

make sure you have up to date information by:

- producing clear, accessible, accurate and regular information about our services
- keeping all information, leaflets, booklets and the web site up to date.

make sure we take your views into account by:

- asking for these when planning any specific changes or developments to the housing service
- giving you the opportunity to influence how we improve the service.

Access to the service

We aim to...

make our service open and accessible by:

- knowing who our customers are and delivering a service tailored to your individual needs
- ensuring our services are what people need and available when they need them.

Value for money

We aim to...

make sure we spend your money wisely by:

- providing, efficient, effective and economic services – making your pound go further
- maximising our income through recovery of rent arrears and other charges
- investing in the services that matter to you, such as the decent homes and window replacement programme.

Getting it right first time

We aim to...

make sure we address poor performance by:

- training staff, having meaningful appraisals and carrying out ongoing reviews
- setting challenging improvement targets and sticking to them
- measuring ourselves against organisations delivering excellent customer service.
- learning from the comments, compliments and complaints we receive
- working with the Talkback panel and Norwich Tenants' CityWide Board to monitor the quality of services through mystery shoppers and tenant inspectors.

Improving the neighbourhood where you live

We aim to...

make sure your neighbourhood is an attractive place to live by:

- promptly dealing with an attractive and keeping you informed of progress
- removing graffiti from council property and public areas –

offensive or racist graffiti will be dealt with within 24 hours of being reported, usually on the same day a report is received. All other graffiti will be removed within 14 days

- removing fly tipping within two working days, unless there is evidence which needs to be investigated
- involving you, at a local level, in our planned maintenance programme
- Keeping your neighbourhood well maintained and monitoring standards.

Customer responsibilities

As a customer we would like you to:

- make sure you look after your home in accordance with your tenancy agreement
- pay your rent on time – and if you are having difficulty, speak to a member of staff as soon as possible
- be a good neighbour and treat your neighbours with courtesy and respect
- treat us as you would like to be treated – with courtesy and respect
- feel able to tell us where you think we could improve the housing service and help us to shape and develop it for the future.

The way forward

This blueprint and vision will be the core principle we use to guide how we deliver the range of housing services to you. We have put together a plan of what the housing service needs to do to make improvements and map out our continuous improvement journey. ~~It is our intention to become a one star service by April 2010. A peer review of the progress to date was undertaken by the Improvement and Development Agency in March 2010 who found that good progress had been made during the last twelve months. We now need to make sure that we continue to improve with the aim of becoming a two star – good housing service by March 2011. and a two star good service by March 2011.~~ To achieve this we will need your support, so every so often will contact you to seek your views and opinions in developing the service, make sure we are delivering the housing services you want and that they are of good quality and value for money.

Your feedback

As part of the ongoing development of our services, we would value your comment on this blueprint and vision document.

Please complete the section below and either return it to City Hall, email comments to info@norwich.gov.uk or call 0344 980 3333.

What do you think?