

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
9TH MARCH 2004

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Hubbard)
Councillors Akroyd, Slater, Snartt, Taylor and Yardley

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Mrs J. Green (Association of Charnwood Tenants)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Allen, Hampson and Jenkins

127. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 13th and 27th January 2004 were confirmed and signed.

128. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Hubbard declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a tenant of a Council-owned Pre-formed Reinforced Concrete (PRC) property in respect of the item "PRC Homes – Refurbishment and Modernisation 2004/05". Councillor Hubbard would leave the meeting during any discussions on that matter. She considered that the nature of her interest did not allow her to use the dispensation set out in paragraph 10 (2) (d) of the Members' Code of Conduct.

129. DECLARATIONS – THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations of the existence of the Party Whip were made.

PART 2 (DELEGATED)

130. RECOVERY OF HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, a report of the Head of Benefits and Revenue Services to update the Committee on the current situation relating to the recovery of Housing and Council Tax Benefit overpayments was submitted.

At its meeting on 5th August 2003 the Committee had considered the current procedures for the recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit. At that meeting it had been agreed that the Head of Benefits and Revenue Services and The Bridge Housing Advice and Assistance Service (The Bridge) should monitor the situation for a further six month period and report back to the Committee at the end of the monitoring period. The Committee had requested the Head of Benefits and Revenue Services to amend the standard letter sent to claimants notifying them of an overpayment to ensure that claimants were aware of the procedure to follow to request a lesser rate of recovery, together with information on where independent financial advice could be obtained.

With the agreement of the Chair and Vice-chair, Mr P. Davey and Ms A. Ridley of The Bridge attended the meeting and took part in consideration of the matter. A report of The Bridge and Charnwood Citizens' Advice Bureau in respect of the reduction in the rate of recovery of overpayments of Housing Benefit from on-going Housing Benefit for claimants on Income Support and Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance was submitted.

The Head of Benefits and Revenue Services and the Head of Housing Services attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of the item. The Head of Benefits and Revenue Services stated that the Benefits Overpayment Team had monitored the situation during the last six months as requested. During that period there had been no cases where a reduction in the rate of payment had not been agreed. The standard overpayments letter had been amended and advice leaflets containing information in respect of independent financial assistance had been sent out to claimants. He stated that it was essential that a balance was maintained to ensure that anyone entitled to claim benefits did so whilst ensuring that when an overpayment had been made it was recovered. The rate of recovery and amount of debt would be closely scrutinised by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspectors during their visit in March 2004. The system had to be administered in a fair and consistent manner to all recipients and it should be noted that any recommendation to reduce the level of overpayment recovery would have to be for all claim types and could not be undertaken in isolation.

At the request of the Chair, Mr Davey and Ms Ridley outlined their views in respect of the matter. Mr Davey stated that The Bridge and Benefits Services continued to have a good working relationship and he agreed that the issue of overpayment recovery was sensitive and finely balanced. However, it was of concern that the current situation continued to cause considerable hardship to a small number of clients and it would be appropriate to try to improve the situation for them.

Ms Ridley stated that given the small number of cases involved it would be appropriate to consider what financial impact a reduction from £8.25 to £2.75 per week for those clients would have on the respective performance indicators.

The following issues were raised and comments made by members of the Committee:

- (i) It was encouraging to note that the Benefits Service was performing well and continued to maintain a high collection rate. However, it was essential that vulnerable clients received appropriate assistance and support. It was of concern that of the five cases outlined in the report by The Bridge, although a reduction in the rate of collection had been agreed in each case it had taken a considerable time to instigate initial proceedings.
- (ii) It was essential that if a client was unable to pay the suggested rate of reduction, Benefits Services should be notified as soon as possible to ensure that a reduction to the payment could be considered. It would appear that many clients were not contacting Benefits Services following the receipt of the overpayment letter and it would be appropriate to consider a system

where support services were notified automatically when clients were issued with overpayment letters.

- (iii) It would be appropriate to consider the possibility of introducing a lower rate of overpayment recovery initially to all claim types and to introduce a system of means testing. Following the means testing procedure, the overpayment rates could be increased where appropriate.
- (iv) It would be difficult to consider the introduction of a lower rate of recovery to all claimants as it would potentially lead to a considerable increase in administration which would not be feasible.
- (v) The possibility of introducing a Corporate Debt Policy for the Council should be considered. Through such a policy, anti-poverty issues could be addressed on a corporate level and the Cabinet should be asked to consider the possibility of introducing such a policy.
- (vi) It was essential that publicity was increased to ensure that the public were aware of the lower rate of debt recovery which could be negotiated with Benefits Services. Posters and advertisements in local newspapers should be arranged together with information which could be included in the two magazines sent out to tenants.
- (vii) The possibility of delaying the recovery of overpayment for a standard period of 14 days following a tenant being advised in writing of the overpayment should be considered for a trial period of six months. During that period publicity should be increased to ensure claimants were aware of their rights in respect of debt recovery.

In response to issues raised, comments made and questions, officers, Mr Davey and Ms Ridley stated:

- (a) Information in respect of three of the five cases referred to in the report by The Bridge had been forwarded to the Head of Benefits and Revenue Services. The three cases had been investigated and it had been found in each case that the delays referred to in the report had resulted from the tenant failing to contact Benefits Services following receipt of the overpayment letter. Once a request for a reduction to the rate of overpayment had been received the three cases had been considered promptly and a reduction had been agreed within five working days in two of the cases and within 12 working days in the remaining case. During February 2004 the Benefits Overpayment Team had considered nine cases where a request had been made to reduce payment. An agreement had been reached in each case and payments reduced within 10 working days.
- (b) It was acknowledged that the Benefits Service were not responsible for the delay in respect of the five cases outlined. Of the five cases stated in the report, and for many cases dealt with by The Bridge a delay in requesting a

reduction in payments was caused by the claimants failing to contact Benefits Services. A considerable number of the people concerned were vulnerable, possessing poor reading and writing skills. Many suffered from ill health, including mental health problems and were unable to respond to letters when they received them. The possibility of introducing a system which involved a “trigger” to alert support services including The Bridge when overpayment letters were issued should be investigated.

- (c) To enable support services to be informed that an overpayments letter had been issued, the claimant would need to agree to that procedure before information was sent.
- (d) It would be appropriate for the Council to consider and agree a reasonable and affordable recovery rate to ensure claimants were able to repay overpayments. A considerable number of tenants experienced problems associated with multiple debt and the Council contributed to those problems. A debt recovery policy for the Council as a whole should be considered and the possibility of establishing a Corporate Debt Policy should be investigated. Regular meetings between the Head of Benefits and Revenue Services and the Head of Housing Services were underway to agree a procedure to administer Housing Benefit overpayments, together with the implementation of the Council’s Anti-Poverty Policy.
- (e) It was essential that all claimants were treated fairly. A system of means testing could be operated, however, if a lower recovery rate was agreed for all claim types it would have a considerable impact on the Best Value Performance Indicators and it would be difficult to justify such a reduction to the Best Value inspectors. A lower rate of recovery for all claims would not be acceptable.
- (f) Although overpayments letters had been amended advising claimants that they should contact Benefits Services immediately if they required a reduction in payments there had been relatively little response compared to the number of letters issued. It would be of interest to identify if an increase in publicity through advertisements would result in additional interest from claimants.
- (g) It would be difficult to justify a delay in the recovery of overpayments. It would be appropriate for the Head of Benefits and Revenue Services and the Head of Housing Services to consider a procedure to improve the consultation process further, in conjunction with the Council’s Anti-Poverty Policy and to continue to monitor the situation for a further six months with a view to establishing a pilot scheme for the recovery of overpayments.

RESOLVED

1. that the current position be noted;
2. that the Cabinet be informed of the Committee's concerns in respect of the issues arising from the recovery of overpayments and it be requested to consider the possibility of establishing a Corporate Debt Policy for the Council to alleviate the current difficulties for vulnerable claimants;
3. that the Head of Benefits and Revenue Services and the Head of Housing Services be requested to consider a procedure to improve the consultation process further, in conjunction with the Council's Anti-Poverty Policy and to continue to monitor the situation for a further six months with a view to establishing a pilot scheme for the recovery of overpayments and to report their findings to the Committee at the end of that period.

131. REVENUE MONITORING 2003/04

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, a report of the Head of Financial Services outlining the actual expenditure and income of the Service Development Plans within the Committee's scrutiny remit compared with the profiled budgets at the end of period 10 (end January 2004) was submitted. The report illustrated "controllable" expenditure and, therefore, excluded internal recharges. Brief reasons for variances were included.

The Group Accountant attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of the item. He stated that significant underspending in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2003/04 had occurred because, although repairs and maintenance works had been ordered or committed to, they had yet to be invoiced.

The following issues were raised and comments made by members of the Committee:

- (i) The underspending on repairs and maintenance was a reflection of the budgetary process undertaken 12 to 18 months ago and it would be of interest to know if the situation would occur again next year.
- (ii) It was encouraging to note the underspending on administration costs.
- (iii) It was difficult to identify when during the year administration costs would be incurred as the system was demand led. Administration was incurred for on-going investigations, various security measures and consultation fees where appropriate.

In response to issues raised, comments made and questions, officers stated:

- (a) It was envisaged that following the invoicing of completed works there would be an underspending of £285,000 by April 2004 in respect of repairs and maintenance.

- (b) The auditors Pricewaterhousecoopers were currently undertaking a review to identify if works originally allocated to the Capital Programme should be returned to the HRA. If work was moved from one account to another that would have an influence on the out-turn figures.

RESOLVED that the current position be noted.

132. VOID PROPERTIES – PROPOSED REVISED PROCEDURES

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, the Head of Housing Services and the Head of Property Services attended the meeting to assist with the Committee's consideration of the proposed revised procedures for void properties. A report on the matter had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 26th February 2004, a copy of which was submitted.

The Head of Housing Services stated that the purpose of the new procedure was to significantly reduce the voids stock and average voids time by undertaking the minimum amount of work to a property whilst it was empty between tenancies. Significant works would be undertaken under the Responsive Maintenance Contract once a new tenant was in the property. Any improvement works undertaken by previous tenants would remain unless they were considered to be unfit and then they would be replaced by Council fittings and fixtures. Works to bathrooms, kitchens and flooring would be undertaken on the Planned Capital Programme. There were currently 136 void properties, 40 of which were difficult to let sheltered unit bedsits. The total voids period for the 136 properties was 16.77 years. It was envisaged that, in future, multiple offers would be made on flats and a short response period would be introduced to ensure a rapid turn-round of flats. Changes to the Allocation Policy in February 2003 were adversely affecting performance as the Open List policy allowed unlimited offers to be made which had resulted in difficult to let sheltered accommodation being refused more often. It was envisaged that by reducing the number of void properties and the average voids time there would be a reduction in rent loss and in the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation, together with an increase in the stock available for allocations.

The following issues were raised and comments made by members of the Committee:

- (i) It was of concern that tenants were often unaware of the procedure to use to inform the Council that works were required once a property was occupied.
- (ii) It would be of interest to know if checks were undertaken to ensure that the central heating system was working before a property was occupied.
- (iii) It was encouraging to note the new revised procedures. Currently 2.5% of Council housing stock was void and that was unacceptable. The situation should continue to be monitored to ensure that improvements were made. An update report should be submitted to the Committee in June 2004 so

that a comparison could be made with the figures reported for February 2004.

- (iv) It would be of interest to know if measures could be taken to reduce the number of difficult to let sheltered bedsits, some of which had been void for two years.
- (v) Repairs should be undertaken at two levels to reflect works to be undertaken for new tenants and existing tenants. During an inspection, kitchens and bathrooms should be considered in respect of hygiene and possible damage caused by previous tenants. If it was considered that replacements were required that work should be given high priority.
- (vi) The new procedure, once implemented, should be monitored by the Committee on a regular basis. It would be appropriate for the Committee to consider the possibility of visiting properties which were ready for occupation following the implementation of the new procedure to ensure that it was operating satisfactorily.
- (vii) It would be appropriate for the Committee to receive information in June 2004 on the savings made by following the new procedure compared to the previous procedure.

In response to issues raised, comments made and questions, officers stated:

- (a) Under the new procedure a tenant would no longer be responsible for activating the post-void repairs. A Voids Inspector would be responsible for prioritising what works needed to be undertaken and the order would automatically be placed. A tenant would be given a list of the works ordered by the Inspector. It was envisaged that the system would be in operation by April 2004.
- (b) Before a property was occupied, essential safety checks to gas and electricity supplies were undertaken, together with emergency and urgent works to ensure that the property was safe. All appliances were checked annually, although it was uncertain if the central heating system was tested during an inspection. Clarification would be sought to identify if a central heating check formed part of the regular inspection routine and those findings would be reported to the Committee.
- (c) The difficult to let sheltered bedsits had an adverse effect on the relevant performance indicators. Measures were currently being considered in respect of those bedsits to produce a pilot scheme to improve the take-up and reduce the overall numbers.
- (d) Under the new procedure it was hoped that a compromise could be reached so that both new and existing tenants were satisfied with the repairs procedure. The replacement of kitchens and bathrooms had to be undertaken according to

need and a balance had to be maintained. Existing tenants would find it unacceptable if all new tenants received replacement kitchens and bathrooms before they did.

- (e) Although it was within the remit of the Committee to monitor the new procedure, the Cabinet would also be monitoring implementation of the change. It appeared to be premature for the Committee to consider inspections at the current stage before the revised procedure had been implemented. It was suggested that the next step would be for the Committee to receive monitoring reports to enable it to see how the procedures were impacting on void periods before consideration was given to any other measures.
- (f) Under the new procedure it was envisaged that the turn-round on properties would be rapid. The multiple offers system would be in operation and the completion date would be predicted to ensure that, following the completion of emergency repairs, a property would be occupied in two to three days. Any visit by a Committee at that stage would add to the time a property remained void and that should be avoided. Any problems would be identified and addressed through the routine inspection and monitoring process.
- (g) It would be possible to include the costings for works in subsequent reports. However, although a reduction in costs was envisaged under the new procedure a dramatic reduction was not expected as works would still have to be undertaken. In future, the majority of works would be undertaken once the tenant was in occupation.
- (h) An improvement in income would be seen over time with an increase through rents and the associated reduction in the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation.

RESOLVED

1. that the current position be noted;
2. that an update report on the revised procedure, using the same comparative information as outlined in this report, together with details of the costings for works be submitted to the Committee's meeting on 29th June 2004;
3. that the Head of Property Services be requested to clarify if routine checks are undertaken on central heating systems before occupation by a tenant and to report those findings to the Committee.

133. WARDEN SERVICES RESTRUCTURE

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, the Head of Housing Services attended the meeting to assist with the Committee's consideration of the restructuring of Warden Services.

The Head of Housing Services stated that the proposed restructuring had been the subject of extensive consultation and a report would be submitted to the Cabinet on 25th March 2004. It was envisaged that the restructuring would create a more flexible and responsive working arrangement to improve support for elderly people. It was proposed to merge Mobile and Resident Warden Services, although no redundancies would be involved and Unions had been consulted on the proposals.

A member of the Committee commented that the review had already taken a considerable time and it was essential that there were no further delays. The service was of vital importance to elderly people who used it and the revised procedure should be in place as soon as possible.

In response to the issue raised above, the Head of Housing Services stated that the delays had resulted from external influences and had not been caused by the Council. Tenants had been informed of the proposals and it was hoped that no further delays would be incurred.

RESOLVED that the current position be noted.

134. HOMELESS FAMILIES – PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMODATION

At its meeting on 27th January 2004, the Committee had requested that the issue of the use of the East Midlands Hotel, Loughborough as temporary accommodation for homeless people should be considered. In accordance with that request the Head of Housing Services attended the meeting to assist with the Committee's consideration of the issue. A report outlining the position regarding action being taken to meet the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) target in relation to homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 26th February 2004, a copy of which was submitted.

The Head of Housing Services stated that there were currently only two families in bed and breakfast accommodation. One family had received an offer of accommodation and the other required specialist accommodation. Two options had been considered by the Cabinet. The first option would involve the continued use of the East Midlands Hotel, following alterations, as a hostel/house in multiple occupation. However, there were concerns relating to achieving certain occupancy rates to ensure that the Council would not be required to increase the level of subsidy. The alternative option would involve the use of the Council's own difficult to let stock.

The following issues were raised and comments made by members of the Committee:

- (i) There were still a considerable number of issues to be resolved and the situation should continue to be monitored.
- (ii) It was of concern that a financial penalty could be imposed upon the Council if occupancy rates were not achieved. The Council had agreed a procedure to ensure that the number of void properties was reduced, so

increasing the available housing stock. Those measures, together with preventative measures to reduce homelessness in the future, could result in lower occupancy rates and that was desirable.

In response to the above issues, the Head of Housing Services stated that long-term solutions were being considered. It was too early to identify which was the preferred of the two options, however it was envisaged that the ODPM target would be reached by 1st April 2004. It was intended that a report outlining an Integrated Homelessness Strategy would be submitted to the Cabinet on 29th April 2004 and that report could be considered by the Committee at its next meeting in May 2004.

RESOLVED that the Committee be updated at its meeting on 18th May 2004 on issues related to the proposed Integrated Homelessness Strategy.

135. HOMELESSNESS WORKING PARTY

The item was included on the agenda to receive feedback from the meeting of the Working Party held since the last meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services stated that it had been agreed at the last meeting of the Working Party that following consideration of the Homelessness Strategy and the associated Action Plan it would be appropriate for further progress reports on the matter to be submitted to the Housing Scrutiny Committee. The Working Party had agreed to have one final meeting in May 2004 and it would be appropriate for any feedback from that meeting to be received by the Committee at its meeting on 18th May 2004.

RESOLVED that the current position be noted.

136. REPLACEMENT – MULTI-TRADE CONTRACT

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, the Head of Property Services and the Building Contracts Design Manager attended the meeting to assist with the Committee's consideration of the proposals for the re-letting of the Multi-Trade Contract. A report on the matter had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 29th January 2004, a copy of which was submitted.

The Building Contracts Design Manager stated that of the four options available for the replacement of the contract, the Cabinet had agreed to adopt option three. That would involve a partnership with Contract and Public Services for the responsive repairs element of the works, with voids work being subject to open tender, including Contract and Public Services among the bidders. It had been agreed that the current contract with Contract and Public Services would be extended until 31st March 2005 when the new arrangements were expected to become operational.

A member of the Committee commented that it would be appropriate for tenants and the Association of Charnwood Tenants to be involved in the consultation and implementation of the new arrangements, as well as the Committee.

In response to the above issue, the Building Contracts and Design Manager confirmed that those groups would be involved in the consultation.

RESOLVED that the current position be noted.

137. PRC HOMES – REFURBISHMENT AND MODERNISATION 2004/05

Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest, Councillor Hubbard left the meeting during consideration of the matter. In the absence of the Vice-chair it was proposed, seconded and agreed that Councillor Akroyd Chair the meeting for the item.

In accordance with the Committee's work programme, a report of the Head of Housing Services to update the Committee on the Council's PRC homes refurbishment and modernisation programme was submitted. The Principal Housing Officer attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of the item. He envisaged that work, which would include the installation of PVCu windows, would commence in Mountsorrel at the beginning of June 2004 and it should be completed by December 2004. Tenants had been fully consulted on the proposals.

The following issues were raised and comments made by members of the Committee:

- (i) It would be of interest to know what criteria had been followed to identify which particular properties would be refurbished.
- (ii) It was pleasing to note that work would soon be underway in Mountsorrel and it was hoped that work would commence in other areas in the near future.
- (iii) Before work commenced in Mountsorrel it would be appropriate to send out a newsletter to all tenants to ensure that they were aware of the situation and why particular properties had been chosen.
- (iv) During the refurbishment works it was hoped that tenants would be inconvenienced to a minimum.

In response to issues raised and comments made, officers stated:

- (a) Properties in Anstey and Mountsorrel had been identified where there was no redevelopment potential. A modernisation programme had been agreed by the Cabinet and the properties in Anstey and Mountsorrel were in the first phase of that programme.
- (b) It was envisaged that the majority of works would be undertaken while tenants were in occupation.
- (c) Tenants had been informed of the situation. Currently it was not possible to identify when further work would be undertaken in specific areas.

Negotiations were again underway with Registered Social Landlords to try to produce a medium term Capital Programme for PRC properties and once further information was available, tenants would be notified.

- (d) It should be noted that an update report outlining the current position in respect of the Council's PRC homes throughout the Borough was programmed for consideration on 29th June 2004. The current report had been requested to consider progress in respect of work to be undertaken on the properties in Mountsorrel.

RESOLVED that the current position be noted.

138. CHARNWOOD TENANT COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP

The item was included on the agenda to enable the Association of Charnwood Tenants' (ACT) representative to report on any issues discussed at meeting(s) of the Partnership held since the last meeting of the Committee which she considered required the input of the Committee. Mrs Green stated that the last meeting of the ACT had been cancelled and consequently there were no issues to report.

RESOLVED that the current position be noted.

139. CABINET – CURRENT/RECENT ISSUES CONSIDERED AND RESPONSES TO REPORTS/COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE

Details of the items within the Committee's remit which the Cabinet had considered at its meetings on 29th January, 12th and 26th February 2004 were submitted to enable the Committee to identify whether any of the issues should be included in its work programme.

The Head of Property Services stated that in respect of the re-letting of the Gas Servicing and Repairs Term Contract 2004-2007 following an issue with the original contractor, a three months temporary contract had been agreed with Tomlinsons at a cost of £40,000 from April to July 2004. The new contract would be put out to tender and there would be budget implications.

RESOLVED that the issues considered by the Cabinet be noted.

140. SCRUTINY COMMISSION FEEDBACK

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported on the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held on 10th February 2004. He stated that the Commission had considered a draft report of the IDeA Peer Challenge Review Team in relation to scrutiny coordination. The Commission had agreed to consider the Corporate Plan at its next meeting and recommend to each scrutiny committee key topics to be scrutinised.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

141. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The current Forward Plan had been published on 16th February 2004. There were no matters within the Committee's overview and scrutiny remit identified in the current Forward Plan.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

142. WORK PROGRAMME

The current position with the Committee's work programme was submitted. The Committee was asked to review the programme, any amendments and additions it might wish to make and business for future meetings. That would enable planning for the next two or three meetings to be undertaken, for relevant background information to be prepared and for the attendance of officers and/or others to be arranged.

At its meeting on 13th January 2004, the Committee had considered the Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2003/04. During that meeting members had expressed concern at the continued increase in costs of support services and had requested that the Cabinet be informed of the Committee's concerns. The Chair had requested the Committee to consider including the matter in its work programme.

RESOLVED

1. that the issue of support service charges be programmed for consideration;
2. that the Committee proceeds on the basis of the following work programme, which includes decisions taken earlier in the meeting:

Issue	Progress	Meeting Date
Review of Introductory Tenancies	Issue identified by the Chair for future consideration. Report on the review to be submitted to the Cabinet in March 2004. Committee to consider that report.	18th May 2004
Integrated Homelessness Strategy	Report on the Strategy to be submitted to the Cabinet in April 2004. Committee to consider that report.	18th May 2004
Homelessness	To be considered by working party set up by the Committee. Final meeting to be held 5th May 2004.	18th May 2004
Housing Support Services	To be considered by working party set up by Committee. Next meeting	18th May 2004

	to be held 24th March 2004.	
Voids Performance	<p>How voids are dealt with/process involved between tenancies considered 5th August 2003 (with exception of allocations part of process). Visits to void properties also undertaken.</p> <p>Committee has agreed a working party approach to in depth scrutiny of matter. Membership not yet agreed.</p> <p>Voids performance as a general issue to be included on an on-going basis in work programme due to outcome of Best Value Review of Housing Services.</p> <p>Future reports to be considered in three parts: difficult to let properties; major or capitalised works and re-lets. Report requested on the three issues.</p> <p>Report outlining proposed revisions to the voids procedure considered by the Cabinet 26th February 2004. Report considered by the Committee 9th March 2004.</p> <p>An update report on revised procedures to be considered by the Committee.</p>	29th June 2004
PRC Options	<p>Progress report in respect of the renovation programme on the PRC properties in Mountsorrel considered 9th March 2004.</p> <p>Report on issues related to the item considered 28th October 2003. Committee to continue to be updated.</p>	29th June 2004
Allocations Policy	Report reviewing the Council's Allocations Policy following its implementation 12 months ago considered 27th January 2004.	

	An update report reviewing the “unlimited offers” policy and related issues requested.	29th June 2004
Appointments System for Repairs and Maintenance of Council-Owned Properties	<p>Report reviewing the proposed appointments system to be introduced in Contract and Public Services considered 27th January 2004.</p> <p>An update report on the progress of the implementation of the repairs appointments system for council tenants requested. The Contact Centre Manager requested to attend that meeting.</p>	29th June 2004
Rent Arrears	<p>Issue remains of concern to the Committee. Committee has agreed a working party approach to in depth scrutiny of the matter. Membership not yet agreed.</p> <p>Report on issues related to rent arrears considered 4th December 2003. Further report to be submitted in six months time in respect of issues raised by the Committee.</p>	29th June 2004
Recovery of Housing Benefits Overpayments	Approach being taken considered 9th March 2004. Issue to be monitored by the Head of Benefits and Revenue Services and the Head of Housing Services for a further six months with a view to establishing a pilot scheme.	7th September 2004
Domestic Abuse Service	Progress last considered 24th June 2003. Presentation by representatives of Loughborough Women’s Aid and new outreach worker, once in post, on work to be undertaken and services being provided. Arrangements to be considered.	7th September 2004
Support Service Charges	Issue identified by the Chair for future consideration.	To be programmed
Housing Strategy	Following Committee’s request, Cabinet agreed to involve it in consideration of the issue at the	To be programmed

	earliest opportunity. Report considered 28th October 2003. An additional meeting of the Committee to be arranged to review the Strategy at the end of the consultation period.	
Housing Services Restructuring	Presentation received on restructure 16th September 2003. Report on staff recruitment considered 9th December 2003. Report on proposals to improve recruitment and retention requested.	To be programmed
Housing Stock Options Appraisal	Verbal report received 16th September 2003. Further report requested with the involvement of the ACT following completion of the consultation process.	To be programmed
Monitoring Implementation of the Best Value Review of the Housing Group of Services – Improvement Plan	Progress reports, in format agreed by Committee, to be considered every six months. Additional meetings to be held for the purpose. Last meeting held 4th December 2003.	To be programmed
Review of Tenant Participation in Housing Services	Issue identified by the Chair for future consideration.	To be programmed
Proposed Housing Capital/MRA Programme	Proposals for programme considered 27th January 2004. Committee to continue to be updated.	To be programmed
Performance Indicator Information	On a quarterly basis. Last considered 27th January 2004.	To be programmed

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