

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET HOUSING PANEL – 16 JANUARY 2019  
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

**HOUSING OPERATIONS TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides the Cabinet Housing Panel with an update on the progress of the Housing Operations Transformation Programme (the Programme).
- 1.2 The aim of the programme was to modernise the housing service so that customers can benefit from a more flexible, community-facing service, making better use of the council's resources.
- 1.3 New team structures across all teams have been implemented and nearing full compliment.
- 1.4 An enhanced suite of performance metrics has been developed across all teams.
- 1.5 Now the staffing aspect of the programme is virtually complete, the next steps will be to continue to progress the operational and cultural changes and improvements to allow the vision of the Programme to be delivered successfully in the long term.
- 1.6 Teams are continuing to develop full scale service reviews, with some already demonstrating successes in progressing and delivering outcomes as a direct result of actions identified following transformation. These successes will contribute to the overall success of the Programme both for the council, but more importantly for the residents.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 Modernisation of the service was required to improve the customer experience, provide more services within the community and deliver a more accessible service, including enabling customers with a simple enquiry to have a much smoother, 'first time fix' transaction. The aim has also been to improve the use of technology and generally get more from the council's resources.
- 3.2 The need to deliver efficiencies in operational processes was paramount with a more modern approach to service delivery.
- 3.3 Some Housing Operations services were unaffected by the changes. These are the Control Centre, Community Buses, Shop Mobility and the Jim McDonald Centre.

- 3.4 Set out below are some of the key changes and achievements delivered since the rollout of the Programme in June 2018.

### **Structures / Staffing**

- 3.5 New team structures across all teams is in place with all posts associated with the Programme soon to be at full complement following successful recruitment.
- 3.6 **Appendix 1** shows the current structure charts as at December 2018.

### **Performance Management**

- 3.7 An enhanced suite of performance metrics has been developed across all teams with overarching operational efficiency metrics (Business Excellence) also included. These are monitored on a monthly basis at Operational Management Team (OMT) Performance Clinics. A breakdown of the suite of metrics is shown at **Appendix 2**.
- 3.8 A modern approach to presenting the performance metrics is being worked on through Clearview (Performance and Project Management Portal) to create automation where possible.

### **Service Delivery Feedback**

- 3.9 A mystery shopping exercise has been carried out, the findings currently being collated and scheduled to be analysed early 2019. The findings will be used to develop an action / improvement plan.
- 3.10 Resident focus groups will be set up to give residents' opportunities to focus on improving specific services and contribute to the shaping of services going forward.

### **Service Reviews**

- 3.11 With new teams and initial service delivery changes now bedded in, teams are working on developing and finalising full scale service reviews, with some already demonstrating successes in progressing and delivering outcomes as a direct result of actions identified following transformation.
- 3.12 Gap analysis has been carried out across some services, with others to follow. Where possible the analysis has been compared against sector standards such as RESPECT ASB Charter, Tenant Participation (TPAS) and Housing Quality Network (HQN).
- 3.13 Gap analysis allows us to identify service development opportunities to prioritise service improvement to achieve the required standard of good practice. This will allow us to deliver our longer term objectives of achieving accreditation for delivering excellence and building on the council's recent successes with winning awards and wider sector recognition.

### **Successes So Far**

- 3.14 There have been a number of service improvements and new initiatives implemented already, some of which are stated below.

- 3.15 A number of new operational documents have been completed (or nearing completion). These include:
- Rent and Former Tenant Arrears Policies
  - Anti-Social Behaviour and Domestic Abuse Policies
  - Decoration Allowance Scheme
  - Leaseholder Booklet
  - Mutual Exchange Action Plan
  - Right to Buy Scheme
- 3.16 In addition, new customer leaflets have been designed and printed creating easily accessible information on key services.
- 3.17 A new 'Neighbourhood Improvement Bid' scheme has been implemented. This new initiative has a set budget to support ideas to improve the community and neighbourhood environment for our tenants and leaseholders. This new scheme encourages residents and our Neighbourhood Officers to work together to make changes to the local neighbourhood to improve the area.
- 3.18 The use of new technology is an opportunity to manage services more efficiently, providing demonstrable benefits for users as well as managing officers. One of the opportunities being piloted is the use of the Noise App, an application that enables complainants to make recordings of alleged noise nuisance at the point it happens.
- 3.19 A new neighbourhood inspection programme is nearing development completion with the team finalising the details of a new neighbourhood standard, inspection form and programme, and recruitment of 'Neighbourhood Champions' across our housing stock. This will demonstrate positive engagement to deliver a more proactive neighbourhood management approach, focused on improving the standards of the neighbourhoods and communities where our residents live.
- 3.20 Following the implementation of the new Income Team and a review of the associated processes with income recover, officers now do DIY possession cases which delivers increased capacity for the council's Legal Services Team. No longer do a council legal representative and an Income Officer both attend court at the same time. In addition to efficiency and capacity, this change also satisfies one of the drivers for delivering the Programme, ownership and accountability in service delivery. The feedback has been really positive from officers who feel empowered to manage their own work and to make decisions, albeit within a set policy and process.
- 3.21 A review of how calls are managed between Control Centre and Scheme Co-ordinators identified a high volume of waste/nuisance calls which were impacting the capacity of the Co-ordinators managing the sheltered housing schemes. The changes implemented have had a positive impact on the ability of the Co-ordinators to focus on priority tasks and offer more support to residents who actually require it.
- 3.22 The changes already delivered are really positive and albeit small steps on a longer journey, they are starting to make a difference to the services delivered to council tenants and leaseholders.

## **Looking Forward**

- 3.23 Comprehensive and fluid operational service review plans will continue to be developed with key projects prioritised over the next 12 months, with longer term projects deliverable over the next two years.
- 3.24 New policies, procedures and resident communication will continue to be developed to increase the suite of easily accessible information for customers.
- 3.25 Enhancements to information technology will continue to be explored, particularly where the investment will deliver improvements in accessibility for customers, as well as giving staff the best tools to do their job.
- 3.26 We will be looking to seek service excellence recognition through being successful in submissions for accreditation and awards. We plan to be in position to make at least two submissions for accreditation during 2019/20.
- 3.27 Monitoring of the finalised suite of performance metrics will happen monthly, in some cases weekly with data used to drive service improvement and enhancement.
- 3.28 We will be reviewing the customer satisfaction framework across Housing Operations and more widely across Housing and Communities which will give us an insight as to how satisfied our customers are with specific services, but also with the council as a landlord overall.

### **4 Legal Implication(s)**

- 4.1 None directly arising from this report.

### **5 Financial Implication(s)**

- 5.1 None directly arising from this report.

### **6 Risk Management Implications**

- 6.1 None directly arising from this report.

### **7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

- 7.1 None directly arising from this report.

### **8 Procurement Implication(s)**

- 8.1 None directly arising from this report.

### **9 Climate Change Implications**

- 9.1 None directly arising from this report.

### **10 Communications Plan**

- 10.1 Communication of the service changes across Housing Operations have been published through a designated leaflet mail out to all council tenants and leaseholders. **Appendix 3** shows a copy of the leaflet that was sent out.

10.2 This leaflet contains details of the new teams, service summary and team contact details. The leaflet was sent out in September 2018.

## **11 Link to Corporate Priorities**

11.1 The subject of this report is linked to 3 of the 5 Council Corporate Priorities:

- 1) Our Community
- 2) Our Housing
- 3) Our Council

## **12 Equality and Diversity**

12.1 An EqlA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

12.2 An EqlA was completed as part of the original service change proposal.

Name of author	Stuart Pearson
Title	Head of Housing Operations
Date	08 January 2019