



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY COMMISSION 2 OCTOBER 2006

Report of the Corporate Director of Corporate and Adult Social Services

Derby Homes Re-inspection

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To consider the attached report and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2 Attached is the documentation considered at the Derby Homes Board on 27 July 2006. Maria Murphy will attend the Commission meeting.

For more information contact: 01322 255596 e-mail rob.davison@derby.gov.uk
Background papers: None
List of appendices: Appendix 1 – Implications
The subsequent two appendices are the documents submitted to Derby Homes' Board

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| IMPLICATIONS |
|---------------------|

Financial

1. Please see the Derby Homes documentation.

Legal

- 2.1 Please see the Derby Homes documentation.

Personnel

- 3 Please see the Derby Homes documentation.

Equalities impact

- 4 Please see the Derby Homes documentation

Corporate Priorities

- 5 Relates to deliver excellent services, performance and value for money.

DERBY HOMES BOARD

28 SEPTEMBER 2006

UPDATE ON SERVICE ACCESS REVIEW

Report of the Director of Housing and Customer Service

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This progress report updates Board Members on the implementation of the Service Access Review and work undertaken to meet the recommendations of the Council Cabinet in January 2006. This report demonstrates how Derby Homes intends to maintain a local housing service through joint working with partner organisations.

2.

1.1.1 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Derby Homes Board notes the progress of the ongoing implementation of the Service Access Review, and recommends the following to the City Council, subject to further consultation and agreement:

- Osmaston Local Office to continue as a surgery base for Derby Homes and the Neighbourhood Management Team
- Cowsley Local Office to be part leased to the Fire Service and Derby Homes to continue to provide a surgery service from there
- Chaddesden Park to remain open as a surgery base provided a co-location can be agreed with the new integrated children and young people's service pilot in Area Panel 1

1.1.2

2.2 That Derby Homes Board approves the following:

- Spondon Office to remain open as a surgery base until an alternative location can be secured, possibly at Spondon Library
- A co-located service for Derby Homes and the Neighbourhood Management team be developed at Stockbrook Street Local Office
- The opening hours for Alvaston Local Office be reduced to mornings only prior to a proposed colocated service being finalised at Alvaston Library
- The opening hours for our co-located services at New Sinfen be reduced to mornings only

- Further consultation be carried out with a view to extending the services of the Enquiry Centre to provide a Saturday morning service and closing the existing provision at Mackworth, Sussex Circus and Alvaston
- Local surgeries that have been recommended for closure by their Community Panels cease immediately.

2.3 That the detailed implementation of the proposals be delegated to the Chief Executive.

3.

1.1.3 MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Introduction

Derby Homes Board approved the Service Access Review on 28 April 2005. The Board agreed a schedule of Local Office closures, complimented by the opening of a number of local surgeries and the extension of home visits.

3.2 In January 2006 the Council Cabinet accepted the report, subject to further recommendations of the Community Regeneration Commission. An update report on progress was taken to Derby Homes Local Housing Boards in July 2006. A copy of that report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.3 The Service Access review had two main outcomes:

- Keeping 15 local housing offices open did not provide value for money and meant that staff time was not spent efficiently on public contact and resolving problems on estates, and,
- Derby Homes needed to find the right mix of opportunities for the public to access local services.

3.4 Derby Homes vision for a modern value for money service is now being developed through phased implementation. So far we have,

- implemented a much more proactive estate management service based on 43 patch based housing officers,
- established a structure based around 6 main office locations,
- co-located services in Austin and Sinfen, and in future at Alvaston,
- continued to provide a local service, on a surgery basis at local housing offices and at other well used locations,
- establish Derby Homes enquiry centre with the aim of it being the point of contact for all telephone enquiries about services provided by Derby Homes by December 2006,
- developed a modern, easy to use website.

3.5 Housing Officers

The establishment of the team of 43 patch based housing officers is central to Derby Homes new way of working. The process of building the

confidence and capability of this team is underway. A detailed training programme, developed and delivered in conjunction with De Montfort University has been put in place. We are in the process of sourcing the best possible hand held IT system so that the housing officers can have full access to all databases while out on the patch. We have also implemented a career grade structure for these staff. This will enable them to progress through the grades according to their levels of achievement and experience in areas of work such as tenant involvement and dealing with complex antisocial behaviour cases.

However for new way of working to succeed, it is critical that we enable the housing officers to spend at least 15 hours each week out on their patches. We are satisfied that the proposed mix of service access options outlined in this report will enable us to do that.

3.6 Local Housing Offices

Appendices 2a & 2b show the levels of customer contact at the full time and part time housing offices. We have developed the various alternatives to customers visiting their local office:

- increased outreach work through patch based housing officers,
- further development and marketing of the enquiry centre as 'first port of call' option for customers,
- increased use of alternative payment options for rent and Council Tax
- the development of partnership working at a local level, particularly around antisocial behaviour with the Community Safety Partnership and the improved appearance and cleanliness of estates through joint working with the NEAT teams,
- developing service access through the website.

- 3.7 The feedback through Community Panels is that in general residents have found the new mix of service access options to be acceptable. However residents, elected members and other stakeholders indicate a preference for Derby Homes to continue to provide a local presence at local housing offices that have been reduced to part time status, rather than close the offices completely. We would wish to do this wherever possible and have been working with a number of partners to develop joint working and a range of collocated service options.

3.8 Osmaston Local Office

Negotiations are underway with the Neighbourhood Management Team for Osmaston Local Housing Office to provide a base for both Neighbourhood Management and Derby Homes staff. The neighbourhood base at Osmaston will cover the Osmaston and Allenton areas. In addition, there will be further Neighbourhood Team staff based at the Allenton office at Bingham Street. This will enable Derby Homes staff to integrate with the Neighbourhood team and build on existing joint working processes. These arrangements will enable housing staff to continue to provide a

surgery service at Osmaston.

3.9 Cowsley Local Office

A new fire station is to be built which means that the Fire Service will need interim office accommodation for some staff. Derby Homes have held discussions with the Fire Service, and they have expressed interest in leasing the Cowsley Local Office for an initial period of 18 months. This would enable Derby Homes to continue to provide a surgery service from the office. Other options for providing a local service in the Cowsley area have been explored, including the provision of a surgery at Derwent New Deal. However, local residents prefer the location of the Cowsley Local Office.

3.10 Chaddesden Park Local Housing Office

Improving partnership working with Children and Young People's Services is an identified area for development for Derby Homes. The proposed multi agency partnership pilot in Area One of Derby (Spondon, Oakwood, Chaddesden and Derwent) provides such an opportunity. Discussions have been held with the Children and Young People's Department who are looking to secure a base in the area, proposing the use of the Chaddesden Park Local Office.

The Chaddesden Park local housing office will remain open until negotiations have been concluded. At satisfactory outcome to these negotiations will enable Derby Homes to continue to provide a surgery from the Chaddesden Park Office.

3.11 Spondon Local Office

A report to Council Cabinet on 1 August 2006 explained that the demolition of the Derbyshire blocks is likely to start during 2008/09. The Spondon Local Housing Office continues to be used as a surgery base while the remaining tenants are rehoused. It is expected that the blocks will be empty within a maximum of 6 months and work is already underway to secure them.

During the next 6 months, an alternative surgery base will be secured. Consultation with local residents and the Community Panel indicates that the Spondon library would be a popular choice. The library service have indicated their support in principle, building on the success of the co-located service at New Sinfen.

3.12 Stockbrook Street Local Office

Negotiations are ongoing with Neighbourhood Management Team for this office to provide a base for both Neighbourhood Management and Derby Homes staff. This will enable Derby Homes staff to integrate with the

Neighbourhood team and build on existing joint working processes, this model will be built upon as both neighbourhood management and Children and Young People's services are rolled out across the City.

3.13 Co-located Services

Co-located services are successfully operating at Sinfin Library and Austin Community Enterprise building. Both services benefit from joint working with another organisation, and introducing new customers to each others services. Customer usage at the Sinfin Library is low in the afternoons, we are currently consulting with local residents and the community panel with a view to amending the opening times to 9.00-1.00pm, Monday to Friday.

3.14 By Christmas 2006 alternative options for the Alvaston Local Housing Office need to be developed. The main drivers for this are:

- Reducing operating costs. The existing office requires 6 staff including a manager.
- Reducing maintenance costs. The premises will require substantial repairs in the near future. Derby Homes are responsible for the cost of repairs under the terms of the lease.
- There are serious health and safety concerns about this office which has a steep staircase and limited fire escape options.

3.15 There is an opportunity to develop a co-located service at Alvaston Library, along very similar lines to the co-located service at New Sinfin. Preliminary discussions with the library service are being held, and draft plans are being drawn up and costed. Final proposals will be presented to the South Local Board in due course.

3.16 In the meantime, it is essential that staff time is released at Alvaston to allow Housing Officers to spend more time on their patch. The office currently opens full time, and there is evidence that the office is less busy in the afternoons. It is proposed that consultation is carried out with residents, the Community Panel, Ward Councillors and other stakeholders on a proposal to open the office between 9.00am and 1.00pm Monday to Friday. The outcome of this consultation will be reported to the South Local Board.

3.17 Appendix 3 shows the weekly levels of use by customers at the surgeries during the period 22 February 2006 to 7 August 2006. Each surgery requires two Housing officers to be present for health and safety reasons and the low usage means this is not an effective use of staff time.

3.18 The Local Housing Boards North and South received update reports on the progress of the Service Access Review in July 2006. It was reported that the weekly levels of use by customers at the surgeries was very low, and the Local Boards agreed that further consultation would take place with Community Panels about the future of the surgeries. The outcome of that consultation was as follows:

| Surgery | Date | Outcome |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|---|
| Centurion Walk Old Chester Road | 02/07/06 | Agree to close |
| Beaufort Business Centre | 23/08/06 | Agree to close |
| Coniston Crescent Sheltered Scheme | 23/08/06 | Agreed to close |
| Craddock Avenue Sheltered Scheme | 17/08/06 | Agree to close but examine option of relocating to Spondon Library |
| Sandcroft Court Sheltered Scheme | 31/07/06 | Agreed to close and combine with Blagreaves Library surgery |
| Blagreaves Library | 31/07/06 | Keep open but change to Wednesday morning. |
| Filbert Walk Sheltered Scheme | 12/09/06 | Agreed to close |
| Sure Start – Marlborough Road | 28/06/06 | Community Panel agreed closure when Sure Start ceased operating. |

3.19 It is therefore proposed to close the following surgeries with immediate effect:

- Centurion Walk
- Beaufort Business Centre
- Craddock Avenue
- Sandcroft Court
- Coniston Crescent

Surgeries will therefore continue at the following locations:

- Blagreaves Library
- Spondon local housing office
- Chaddesden Park local housing office
- Cowsley local housing office
- Brook Street local housing office
- Osmaston local housing office

3.20 It is further proposed to investigate a possible surgery at Spondon Library and to change the opening times for the Blagreaves Library surgery to Wednesday mornings.

3.21 An alternative option to link in with local elected members surgeries is being examined. Under this proposal, a housing officer would be available to help deal with housing problems at source, which would reduce the number of enquiries from elected members. A further progress report on this will be brought back to the Local Housing Boards

3.22 **Enquiry Centre**

The usage of the enquiry centre continues to be high. Appendix 4 shows the level of usage over recent months and performance against target. There have been some performance difficulties, arising from staff holidays and sickness over the summer period. However it is anticipated that performance will recover with full staff establishment.

The future plan for the Enquiry Centre is to extend its work incrementally so that all customer calls to Derby Homes are made to the Enquiry Centre as a 'one stop' call centre.

3.23 Saturday Opening

We also intend to consider extending the Enquiry Centre opening hours to include 9.00am – 12.00pm on Saturday mornings. This service would potentially replace the three local offices which are open on Saturday mornings at Alvaston, Mackworth and Sussex Circus. Early analysis of customer usage indicates that footfall is low at all locations and extended telephone access would provide a more accessible service for our customers.

3.24 Website

The usage of the website continues to grow. Appendix 5 shows the level of 'hits' on the website and numbers of rent transactions and repairs reporting.

The development of the site includes translated documentation and high level accessibility.

4. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Derby Homes can decommission and change services at local housing offices, for example hold surgeries, but cannot close offices without the City Council's permission.
- 4.2 Any proposals for future changes of use for local housing offices will also be subject to the approval of the Council and wider consultation with tenants, leaseholders and other service users.

5. FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS PLAN IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

- 5.1 Cost efficiencies of £89,769 connected to the closure of 11 local housing offices were identified and removed from the 2006/07. This action was necessary to enable a balanced budget to be prepared.

However, although the funding was removed on a full year basis for 2006/7 only 2 offices closed. The other offices are operating on a much reduced service provision basis. This arrangement means the savings of office

closure have not been achieved.

The Council agreed to increase the management fee by £24,000 in 2006/7 in recognition of the increased running costs of keeping the offices open.

There is still a deficit of £65,769 in 2006/07. This will continue into future years if the offices remain operational.

5.2 The use of Osmaston, Cowsley and Chaddesden Park Local offices for co-located services will incur annual expenditure of approximately £30,000. These costs will need to be funded by the partnering organisations of the co-location scheme.

5.3 In addition further costs may be incurred to:

- Upgrade the ICT facilities
- Make the offices Disabled Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant.

These costs would also be a shared responsibility of the co-locating organisations.

5.4 The capital costs of converting the offices back to housing stock would be avoided but this would be off-set by the loss of rental income.

5.5 An opportunity may exist to generate lease income from outside agencies such as the Fire Service.

6. PERSONNEL

6.1 Staff consultation on all changes has taken place. Training of staff, on IT and new duties, arising from surgeries and home visits, are all being addressed.

6.2 There are several health and safety implications from working alone on home visits, in surgeries and from co-located working. Full risk assessments will be carried out and appropriate actions undertaken.

1.1.4 The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report

- Legal and Confidentiality
- Environmental
- Equalities Impact Assessment
- Health & Safety

If Board members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the phil.davies@derbyhomes.org - Tel 01332 711010 meeting please contact the author, or the Chief Executive,

Author: Murray Chapman, Housing Services Manager. Telephone 01332 711054.

Email murray.chapman@derbyhomes.org

Background Information: None

Supporting Information: None

LOCAL HOUSING BOARD NORTH

6 JULY 2006

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SERVICE ACCESS REVIEW – PROPOSED CLOSURE OF LOCAL HOUSING OFFICES

Report of the Director of Housing and Customer Service

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This progress report updates Board Members on the implementation of the Service Access Review and the work undertaken to meet the recommendations of the Council Cabinet in January 2006.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Local Board notes the progress of the implementation of the Service Access Review.
- 2.2 The Local Board approves the consultation with Community Panels on surgeries and Saturday opening services and temporary leasing of the Austin Housing Office to Adult Learning Services.

3. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Derby Homes Board approved the Service Access Review on 28 April 2005. The Board agreed a schedule of Local Office closures, complemented by the opening of a number of local surgeries and the extension of home visits.
- 3.2 In January 2006 the Council Cabinet accepted the report, subject to further recommendations of the Community Regeneration Commission. The recommendations were:
 - To approve the arrangements proposed for four full-time offices, three part-time offices and a further five offices, offering limited opening
 - To approve the closure of three part-time offices, Littleover, Chellaston and Spondon as soon as practicable
 - To ask Derby Homes to carry out further consultation on the closure of three of the limited opening offices, Cowsley, Chaddesden Park and Spondon, with a view to resolving the situation by summer 2006

- Provide further information about outreach work and expansion of resources released through closures and reductions in opening hours
- Details of contacts made by residents in areas of office closure
- To produce a report as soon as its available, on the offices currently under review: Cowsley, Chaddesden Park and Osmaston.

- 3.3 On 20 February 2006 revised office opening times were implemented and the offices at Chellaston and Littleover were closed. Nine surgeries were operational across the city.

During June 2006, the housing officers from Brook Street, Osmaston, Cowsley, Chaddesden Park, and Spondon moved into the six main offices shown appendix 1. This coincides with the setting up of the centralised Allocations and Voids Team, which will allow housing officers to spend a greater proportion of their time on the estates.

Currently, we are delivering a comprehensive training programme to Housing Officers, which covers the knowledge and skills appropriate to enable them to be successful in their roles.

- 3.4 There are a number of issues currently being progressed which need to be finalised over the next few months

- A review of the current surgeries
- The development of co-located front line services
- Extending services in a more flexible way, including home visits
- The long term future of former housing offices
- Review of Saturday morning service provision.

3.5 **Surgeries**

The numbers of customers using the surgeries is very low. We propose to look more closely at the locations of the surgeries, increase publicity, and consult with Community Panels for their views.

Appendix 2 shows the weekly levels of use by customers at the surgeries during the period 22 February 2006 to 7 June 2006.

3.6 **Co-location**

The co-location of services is an important way forward for Derby Homes. The delivery of front line services from the New Sinfin Library since January 2006 is proving a success. An average of 30 customers a day uses the service.

A further co-location from the office on Village Street to the Austin Community Enterprise Centre at Browning Circle has taken place and has been operational since 26 June 2006.

Further opportunities are being investigated in Alvaston, with a possible move to the library.

Opportunities may emerge through the development of Neighbourhood Management and these will receive important consideration.

A further report will be brought to the Local Board on progress.

3.7 Existing Services, including home visits

Housing Officers have been allocated to each office, and each have a patch. We will publicise the Housing Offices to their tenants and leaseholders and their availability at their office base, in surgeries, by mobile phone and home visits.

3.8 Longer term future of Local Officers

The Brook Street Office is now used as a staff base for the Arrears Team and we are continuing to operate twice weekly 2 hour surgeries. Proposals for the future use of the other offices, some of which are subject to final approval from the Council are as follows:

- Derby Homes has been approached by the Adult Learning Centre to lease the Austin Housing Office for two years from August 2006. They are currently operating from the Village Learning Store, which is due to be demolished to make way for a new school. Since 2003, over 800 local adults have benefited from access to learning through the Learning Store. The Village Learning Store will be located at Normanton Infants School from November 2008. In the longer term, there are proposals to return the two units that comprise the Austin Housing Office, to housing stock. In the meantime, this proposal will generate income for Derby Homes.
- The Littleover Office has closed and works have commenced to return the office to a flat.
- At the moment there are no firm long term proposals for the Osmaston Office. The Neighbourhood Management Team has expressed some interest and other organisations may come forward. In the meantime the office is open as a surgery.
- The Chellaston Office has now closed and the lease has expired. Works have been completed to remove all Derby Homes fixtures and fittings.
- The Cowsley Office is being used as temporary base for Derby Homes staff to use whilst the Sheltered Housing Service is being remodelled. We will also continue to use the building for surgeries.
- The Chaddesden Park Office will continue as a surgery for the present

until further locations are finalised.

- The Spondon Office will remain as a surgery until all tenants leave the Derbyshire blocks.

A project plan is in place that covers the practical arrangements for office closures and altering the use of others. This includes the removal and redeployment of all equipment, telephone lines etc.

3.9 Saturday Morning Service

This is currently provided at Sussex Circus, Mackworth and Alvaston 9.00 am to 12 noon each Saturday. It would be possible to provide a Saturday telephone service by extending the Enquiry Centre to include Saturday mornings. It is proposed to consult with Community Panels on this proposal.

4. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Derby Homes can decommission and change services at local housing offices, for example hold surgeries, but cannot close them without the City Council's permission.
- 4.2 Any proposals for future changes of use for local housing offices will also be subject to the approval of the Council and wider consultation with tenants, leaseholders and other service users.

5. FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS PLANNING INCLUDING EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

Cash savings will arise from the closure of offices, and efficiency savings will arise from staff time being reallocated to other duties outside of the office.

6. PERSONNEL

Staff consultation on all changes has taken place. Training of staff, and health and safety issues, arising from surgeries and home visits, are all being addressed.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report

- Legal and confidentiality implications
- Environmental implications
- Equalities implications

Contact Officer: Murray Chapman, Housing Services Manager. Telephone 01332 711054.
Email murray.chapman@derbyhomes.org

Background Information: None

Supporting Information: None