

District Council CPA Self-assessment Pro-forma for Meeting the Decent Homes Standard

1. What is the council trying to achieve in relation to the standard? Does the council know the condition of their housing stock and their compliance with the decent homes standard?

SUB DHS QUESTIONS	COUNCIL STATEMENT
<p>1.1 What is the council trying to achieve in relation to the standard?</p>	<p>In December 2001 Cheltenham Borough Council decided to pursue the creation of an arms length management organisation that would manage and maintain its entire housing stock. This organisation was established as Cheltenham Borough Homes on April 1 2003 and is responsible for procuring and managing the delivery of the Council's housing capital programme, including the achievement of the decent homes standard.</p> <p>CBH's delivery plan (December 2002) sets out clear, concise targets for achieving the DHS and one of its values states <i>"The tenants deserve homes that they can be proud of, which meet their needs and comply with appropriate standards of quality. We aim to ensure the Council is able to provide the best quality rented homes using materials within our programmes that are environmentally friendly and sustainable. We will work contractors in partnership to ensure that all stakeholders receive the quality they deserve."</i></p>
<p>1.2 How good is the base information to help the council understand what needs to be done to meet the DHS?</p>	<p>The Council undertook a stock condition survey of 100% external and 80% internal inspections in 2000. Rand Associates independently validated the conclusions. It showed that whilst (26%) met the Government's decency standard, 74% of stock at that time failed to achieve that minimum standard. The result of the survey was consistent with an ageing stock, requiring considerable investment in kitchens and bathrooms. Other improvements identified were rewiring, central heating, roof and chimney replacement, works to the external structure including improving the thermal efficiency. In general houses were in better condition than flats.</p> <p>The stock condition information is updated regularly with details of improvements carried out and Codeman software is used to interpret the information and develop the investment programme.</p> <p>The stock condition survey identifies properties where the considerable investment required is such that other options are being considered and the Council have already demolished certain properties in the Hesters Way area in order to address localised problems of low housing demand and structural concerns.</p> <p>It is envisaged that further local option appraisals will be undertaken, using a process of Net present values, resident and future tenant feedback, and an assessment of social and policy issues.</p>

<p>1.3 Has the council evaluated a range of options that would enable it to achieve the DHS and other objectives?</p>	<p>Following an Option Appraisal (carried out by Beha Williams Norman) a series of reports examined the options for council housing, subsequent bidding for conditional funding and setting up arrangements for an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO).</p> <p>In December 2002 Cheltenham made a formal application under Section 27 of the 1985 Housing Act to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to establish an Arms Length Management Organisation (Round 2) and following approval from ODPM Cheltenham Borough Homes was established on April 1 2003.</p>
<p>1.4 Are there robust strategies and plans in place to help the council meet the DHS?</p>	<p>Cheltenham Borough Homes December 2002 delivery plan (approved by Council in December 2002, and ODPM in March 2003) has a number of key objectives, which include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ all backlog repairs being completed by end of 2006 ❑ all homes reaching decency targets by 2010 ❑ over 90% of homes reaching decency standards by 2007 <p>Key stakeholders including Cheltenham Borough Homes Board and Cheltenham Borough Council, Tenants Forum have been involved in the setting and monitoring of Decent Homes targets. This is through the production of regular performance monitoring information and in the annual review and production of Cheltenham Borough Homes delivery plan.</p> <p>As part of the annual review of its delivery plan Cheltenham Borough Homes are currently developing a seven year investment programme that will achieve the targets identified above. The initial draft programme will be property specific and will be used for consulting with staff and tenants on the nature of works to be carried out, to identify priorities and to assist in determining how the procurement strategy will be implemented.</p> <p>In July Cheltenham Borough Council approved an amendment to its Standing Orders agreeing principles for introducing partnering arrangements on contracts to deliver the investment programme which meet Egan principles.</p> <p>During September tenants were trained to enable them to actively participate in the selection of contractors and they will be involved in the setting of service standards, evaluating tenders and monitoring contractors performance; this work will commence in October.</p> <p>A sub-group of the CBH board is reviewing the approach to investment, and mechanisms to further involve tenants. In January 2004, an investment conference for tenants will be held, with follow up focus groups. The aim is to have a 7 year</p>

	programme that is transparent to tenants and other stakeholders, sets firm priorities and targets, but can also meet changes in circumstances over that time.
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2. Is the council delivering its plans to meet the decent homes standard?

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<p>2.1 Has the council maximised its capacity to deliver the DHS?</p>	<p>The Delivery Plan approved by Council in December 2002, and ODPM in March 2003, identifies that the delivery of the DH investment programme will be by the use of CBC's resources and additional supplementary credit approvals obtained through the ALMO programme.</p> <p>The procurement strategy agreed by CBH Board in June 2003 will deliver the programme using a mixture of traditional fixed term, lump sum contracts and partnering arrangements. Discussions are currently underway with external partnering advisors to establish how those works will be procured and a seminar will be held with local and national building contractors to obtain their views on work packaging and their capacity to deliver.</p>
<p>2.2 Are work programmes designed to meet the DHS and have these been delivered?</p>	<p>The investment programme identified in 1.4 above has been developed in conjunction with local housing staff and tenants and focuses on a detailed two year property specific rolling programme which builds on works undertaken through previous year's capital programmes. The 2003/04 programme has the following priorities for action: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continuing the encapsulation programme of upgrading non-traditional (concrete) properties with ineffective insulation, <input type="checkbox"/> Following up the 02/03 encapsulation programmes to remedy other decency failures e.g. rewiring, new kitchens bathrooms <input type="checkbox"/> Upgrading ineffective central heating boilers <input type="checkbox"/> Remedying failures to the external structure by repointing external walls and replacing defective lintels <input type="checkbox"/> Remedying properties failing space standards when they become void <input type="checkbox"/> Updating stock information database as work to individual properties completed <p>Undertake a rolling stock condition survey targeting properties missed from the 2000 survey & updating other information</p>

3. How well does the council monitor its progress and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?

KEY DHS QUESTIONS	COUNCIL STATEMENT
<p>3.1 How well does the council monitor its progress towards meeting the DHS?</p>	<p>Annual targets are set for the numbers of properties to be made decent through the annual HIP submission and quarterly returns to ODPM. Progress towards meeting the DHS are monitored on a four weekly basis by CBH Senior Management Team at an individual contract level with regular quarterly reports submitted to the CBH Board Finance Committee and CBC. Appropriate actions are taken to manage slippage and under spend by virements between budget heads and accelerating or slowing down contracts.</p>
<p>3.2 How well does the council learn from itself and from others?</p>	<p>CBH seeks to achieve continuous improvement by benchmarking performance externally through Housemark and the ALMO benchmarking club. Extensive research is carried out of 2 and 3 star ALMO's and Local Authorities on current best practice and visits are made to other organisations by staff and tenants to investigate new methods of working. Examples of such visits have included Hounslow (performance management and repairs service), Poole (void management) and further visits are scheduled in December/January to St. Albans on delivery of the repairs service including appointment systems.</p>