

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 17 NOVEMBER 2011
title: FEEDBACK FROM PERFORMANCE CLINIC
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To review and discuss the outcome of matters raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Clinic held on 18 October 2011.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – To match the supply of homes in our area with the identified housing need.
- Community Objectives – To make peoples lives safer and healthier.
- Corporate Priorities – To be a well managed Council.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 To help monitor our service delivery, the Council keeps under review a number of performance indicators on key issues related to the service area. Recent monitoring highlighted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was the subject of a performance clinic where issues were looked at in more detail and the opportunity to discuss the indicators took place with Members, the Chair of Health and Housing and the Head of Regeneration and Housing.

2.2 The performance clinic provides an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to obtain more information about what the indicators show, and to explore ways in which services can be improved, looked at in a different way or indeed review the monitoring process itself to see if it is providing information in the most appropriate way.

2.3 Information is generally presented on a quarterly basis and the data for quarter 1 presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified a number of alerts for the housing indicators.

3 HOUSING INDICATORS

3.1 Three housing indicators featured in the monitoring. These are:

- PIRH1 the number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished.
- PIRH5 – length of stay in temporary accommodation (hostel) (weeks).
- PIRH7 – number of affordable homes delivered (gross).

The table at Appendix 1 shows the most recent monitoring for April to September 2011 which includes the first and second quarter information that was considered at the performance clinic.

3.2 Information relating to the variances was also provided with the initial report to explain key points to take into account when looking at the indicators. What is useful to note is how closely the three indicators link together in terms of addressing needs, meeting the Council's obligations on homelessness and the challenging environment facing the Council in achieving delivery across these areas. It is also useful to note that many aspects affecting delivery fall outside the direct influence of this Committee.

3.3 The following information summarises the issues relating to each indicator.

PIRV1 – this area of work is becoming increasingly difficult as property owners have not got any capital to invest in their properties. In many cases owners are undertaking the renovations themselves and therefore progress is slow. Recent Committee approval to use enforcement powers has assisted with properties on the priority empty list and therefore some improvement will be seen as properties will be brought back into use.

PIRH5 – unfortunately, the lack of affordable units completed also affects the availability of affordable accommodation for households in temporary accommodation to move on to, without any new affordable accommodation being made available the Council is reliant on the private rented sector and allocations from Ribble Valley Homes for households and both these sources are very difficult to secure. The issue is becoming an increasing problem and the temporary accommodation is permanently full for this reason. This is the first period in which we have been unable to identify movement out of the hostel and is an important indicator of the underlying economic circumstances that are featuring in the area for some people.

PIRH7 – during the first quarter of 2011, there were no new affordable units delivered, (that is completed), however, in quarter 2 it can be seen that a significant number have now been completed against the annual target. This reflects the quirks of the development industry and the effect of the point at which data is collected. 18 units at Barrow Brook have recently been completed and 25 units at Primrose Village were handed over on 20 September, therefore falling outside the first quarter's monitoring. In addition, a number of landlord/tenant grants will also be completed in the current quarter and will have featured in subsequent monitoring.

3.4 There was a good wide ranging discussion around these issues which concluded in relation to the delivery of affordable homes, that given the nature of site delivery, it would be more appropriate to monitor delivery on a six monthly basis. This would align with monitoring of general housing provision and was a more suitable timeframe to reflect what happens on the ground. There was no proposal to alter targets themselves which continues to be viewed as appropriate.

3.5 The nature, mix and increasing demands placed upon the Council in relation to temporary accommodation was also discussed in detail. It is evident that we have faced a steady increase in demand for accommodation and fundamentally unless there are properties coming on stream, there are limited opportunities to support people into permanent accommodation. It is worth noting that this is recently illustrated by the availability of properties at Primrose Mill, which have enabled people to move out of the temporary facilities. This will be reflected in the next monitoring period. It was agreed to revisit the indicator in the new year, rather than consider changing it now in order to be able to see what the impacts of national

policy might be, in particular on the ability to access private sector rented stock as a result of benefit changes.

- 3.6 The indicator relating to the number of private sector and vacant dwellings returned into occupation was an area where it was considered the target should be reviewed and the opportunity to consider how we could improve the number of premises brought back into occupation should be looked at. Overview and Scrutiny Committee have requested that the issue is given further consideration by Health and Housing Committee and that views are fed back to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December.

4 EMPTY HOMES – ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

- 4.1 In summary, over the last three years, the number of private sector vacant dwellings returned to occupation has been 7 in 2008/07, 25 in 2009/10 and 11 in 2010/11.

The target for 2011/12 is currently 10; looking over the year it is currently anticipated that with ongoing projects we are likely to achieve a further 7 units making 9 expected against the target. In terms of the target, it is probably not appropriate to change it at this point in time. In fact we have progressively reduced the target over previous years to reflect anticipated delivery and to reflect a more realistic position. The target would be subject to review in the annual process which would take account of past trends and anticipated impacts on delivery.

- 4.2 A key factor that is expected to impact significantly on delivery going forward is that grants are no longer available to fund the very successful purchase and repair schemes that have been operated in Ribble Valley, particularly by Adactus Housing Association. Their schemes have brought back into use typically 7 or 8 properties each year. Similarly, the use of the Council's landlord and tenant grant scheme is in some instances becoming less attractive to landlords who can achieve higher rentals within the private sector. It should be noted however, that this scheme is now expected to be the vehicle with which we will close on our targets for this year. As an option to support this area of work, we are reviewing the possible opportunity that a commuted payment scheme from new developments in lieu of affordable housing on site may provide.
- 4.3 In general terms the Ribble Valley is different to many other areas in relation to vacant properties. The area does not suffer from derelict and abandoned properties to any scale. Many of our empty homes are not dilapidated and whilst on occasion can be viewed as untidy, currently do not present the kinds of vacancy issues that face other parts of the country. In most cases, we find that owners are genuinely very aware of the asset and intend to realise the value albeit over a long period. Some properties are frequently the subject of probate cases or can belong to people that have moved into long term care homes.
- 4.4 Existing monitoring relates to the properties empty for more than six months. A little over 20% have been empty for more than 4 years. Empty properties on the long-term list have letters sent to the owners encouraging their return to use. Members will be aware that there are currently only six properties that warrant priority action and where Members have approved action that could lead to compulsory purchase if a reoccupation date cannot be reasonably agreed. Housing officers continue to liaise regularly with the owners to monitor progress. In reality, where reasonable work is being undertaken to renovate premises, it is very much a last resort, in Ribble Valley circumstances to use enforcement and CPO powers, especially where we wish to do so with any chance of success.

- 4.5 In general, whilst empty homes continue to be an issue, overall it is not a major area of concern in terms of local environmental impact. Nonetheless it is very much a concern that properties capable of being used are not available. There are limited opportunities however to force owners to bring properties back into occupation and the impact of reducing financial incentives to support reuse are also having an effect. Consideration needs to be given to future funding incentives, but properties should continue to be monitored. Members may wish to consider the realistic extent to which the Council should seek to pursue enforcement on empty homes and the need perhaps for a campaign to be developed to promote the reuse of houses.
- 4.6 It is suggested that the existing target is reviewed as part of the annual target setting process rather than trying to change the target mid year. It is still considered to be a reasonable target based on past performance for the existing year. What is more important is to have regard to the issues that are affecting delivery this year which need to be taken into account when setting the target for next year. What is suggested however, is that the reporting mechanism itself is adjusted to reflect a quarterly based trajectory which would reflect more closely quarterly performance.

5 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – None.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
 - Political – Delivery on housing related matters is a key ambition.
 - Reputation – Reviewing performance demonstrates effective management.

6 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Consider and discuss the issues raised and ask the Chief Executive to report the outcome of the discussions to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.2 Agree the existing target for the indicator RVH1 remains unchanged but that the quarterly monitoring is reviewed to reflect a quarterly trajectory.
- 6.3 Ask the Strategic Housing Working Group to consider initiatives to return vacant properties into residential use and to report back to this Committee.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

For further information please ask for Colin Hirst, extension 4503.

Housing Performance Indicators – Quarter 2 (April – September 2011)

APPENDIX 1

PI Status			
	Alert		Unknown
	Warning		Data Only
	OK		

PI Code	Short Name	Type	2007/08		2008/09		2009/10		2010/11		Q1 2011/12		Q2 2011/12		2011/12		Current Performance	Trend	Expected Outcome
			Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target			
PI RH1 (BV64)	No of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished	Number	14	20	7	20	25	15	11	15	2	10	3	10	3	10			Close to Target
PI RH5 (BV183b)	Length of stay in temporary accommodation (Hostel)	Number	11.5	8	7	9	6.25	6	11.75	6	20	10	N/A*	10	N/A*	10			Miss Target
PI RH7 (NI 155)	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	Number	40		49	46	64	50	65	55	0	15	20	30	20	60			On Target

* No households have left temporary accommodation during this quarter which means the length of stay cannot be calculated. However, this indicates that the length of stay has exceeded the 12 weeks of the quarter. Quarter three's calculation will be in excess of 12 weeks.