

DECENT HOMES STRATEGY / ACTION PLAN

1 Business Plan Development

Uttlesford District Council is fully committed to Decent Homes and meeting full compliance with the standard by the target date of 2010 is a key Business Plan target.

2 Stock Information

The Council has historically implemented a strong maintenance regime based on its original Condition Survey carried out in 1992. Various programmes of planned improvements over this time have included re-roofing, kitchen and bathroom refurbishments, re-wiring, central heating installations, PVCu window replacements, cavity wall and roof insulation and over-cladding schemes to non-traditionally constructed homes.

The introduction of the decent homes standard highlighted the need to gather further data and the Council commissions stock condition surveys every 5 years in accordance with the Government's good practice on collecting managing and using housing stock information.

In recent years a 60:40 ratio of planned to responsive expenditure has been maintained.

3 Stock Condition Survey

For the purpose of the stock condition survey, the stock was broken down by archetypes and was further sub analysed within each archetype group. The sample survey was increased to 722 properties to improve the accuracy of the survey results. This level of inspection within the specified archetype groups has produced a level of accuracy for the survey results of 95% + or – 4.

This latest stock condition information indicates a Decent Homes rating of 89%. This is based on a stock portfolio of 2947 homes, of which 2625 are decent and 322 non-decent.

4 Current Decent Homes Data

There are currently 11Nr properties failing HHSRS. This accounts for 0.36% of the total stock and 7% of the total Decent Homes failures.

Under the disrepair criteria (Criterion B of the standard) there are 116Nr properties currently failing or 3.9% of the total stock. These are properties

that become non-decent at the beginning of each year as a result of deteriorating components that are already covered under the annual planned maintenance costs, namely doors and chimneys.

Criterion C of Decent Homes refers to modernity and identifies 6 criteria to test the dwelling stock. These are “kitchen layout, kitchen age, bathroom location, bathroom age, noise insulation and adequacy of communal areas”. A property has to fail 3 of the 6 tests in order to fail on its own merit. There are only 40Nr failures or 1.3% of the whole stock.

The final part of the Decent Homes Standard is Criterion D Thermal Comfort. 4Nr properties, relating to 0.1%, fail thermal comfort over the whole stock. There are no properties identified as having a SAP rating of below 35, which would cause a failure under the Excess Cold criterion.

5 Resources

The stock condition survey estimate of £280,000 would achieve full compliance of Decent Homes.

Capital funding for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is largely self generated through direct revenue contributions or through the Major Repair allowance (MRA). The MRA is used for planned capital works identified from the stock condition survey to maintain the standard of the housing stock. This comprises various works including re-roofing, GRP doors, PVCu windows, PVCu Fascia and soffit renewals (prior to the painting cycle), environmental improvements etc.

The annual estimate of housing capital expenditure for council house enhancements is £1.8m and future planned improvements have been targeted towards meeting the Decent Homes Standard.

With the current programme being aligned to Decent Homes, and with non-decent homes prioritised full compliance is anticipated prior to the target date of 2010.

The key target of meeting Decent Homes standard by 2010 means enabling current failing properties to comply with the standard and addressing newly failing properties up to 2010 due mainly to age and condition criteria. It is estimated that between 4% and 5% of properties per annum up to 2010 will become non-decent and these will require investment.

The high focus on Decent Homes, and meeting the Action Plan targets, are likely to result in other, perhaps less urgent capital programmes, being addressed later in the future. For example, replacement of old and badly laid out kitchens is aligned to Decent Homes so this work will become more

important, while environmental improvement programmes may be a lower priority.

6 Decent Homes - Priorities for Action:

- Target non-decent homes on all programmed improvements
- Void property surveyors to target non-decent homes if practicable and cost effective (preference given to planned expenditure)
- Properties failing space standards to be given long term consideration (de-canting, planning permission and building regulation approval will be required)
- Completely review current kitchen and bathroom specification
Develop further partnership type initiatives with supplier/contractor and 'Egan' "Rethinking construction" principles, especially concerning the procurement supply chain.
- Monitor properties on a year on year basis that become non-decent (through age criteria, condition etc) and programme for compliance
- Continue to inform stakeholders about Decent Homes
- Monitor compliance of each individual newly decent home with date, cost and work completed
- Update stock condition survey database as a programme of work is completed
- Next Stock condition Survey due to commence Autumn 2008.

7 Decent Homes Compliance Targets

2008/09 – 98%

2009/2010 – 100%

8 Conclusion

The challenging new decent homes standard is now driving the ongoing planned improvement programme for Uttlesford District Council's housing stock.

There is also a focus on properties that may subsequently become non-decent through deteriorating condition or age criteria. These are being dealt with by the same processes. Funding can be achieved through the housing capital programme and MRA.

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