

Housing Select Committee			
Report title	Lewisham Homes –Year End Review 2012/13		
Key decision	No	Item No.	4
Contributor	Head of Strategic Housing		
Class	Part 1	Date:	16 th May 2012

1. Summary

- 1.1 Lewisham Homes went live on 22nd January 2007 and currently manages 13,000 social housing tenancies and 5,000 leasehold properties within the borough, on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2 The management agreement requires a delivery plan to be agreed annually between Lewisham Council and Lewisham Homes, and for this to be monitored twice a year. This report highlights progress made at year end against delivery plan targets, for the period April 2012 to March 2013.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with:
 - Details of end of year performance against the 2012/13 Delivery Plan agreed with Lewisham Homes;
 - An update on Decent Homes funding to improve properties managed by Lewisham Homes.

3. Recommendation

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

4. Background

- 4.1 The previous Government required all local authorities to carry out a stock options appraisal by July 2005 to determine how Decent Homes would be achieved for all Council housing stock. Lewisham Council completed its stock options appraisal in June 2005, and a comprehensive Decent Homes Strategy was developed that was endorsed by Mayor and Cabinet on 8th June 2005. Lewisham's Decent Homes Strategy outlines Lewisham's mixed investment approach including Lewisham Homes which is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO).

- 4.2 Lewisham Homes is a non-profit making company, limited by guarantee, and the Council is the sole shareholder. The Board is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation and meets six times a year to monitor performance, agree the strategic direction of the business and make key decisions. The Board consists of 15 non-executive directors made up of 3 Council Members, 5 independent members, 5 tenants and 2 leaseholders.
- 4.3 The management agreement sets out a requirement for Lewisham Council to approve a Delivery Plan for the ALMO. The 2012-15 Business and Delivery Plan was approved by the Lewisham Homes Board in May 2012, and by Mayor and Cabinet on 11th July 2012. It sets out how Lewisham Homes plans to deliver excellent services to all its customers, and is in line with the overall vision of the Council and its partners in the Local Strategic Partnership.

5. Lewisham Homes Priorities for 2012/13

- 5.1 The Lewisham Homes mission is to deliver great housing services for thriving neighbourhoods. The mission is underpinned by the following strategic objectives and key priorities:
- Excellent services –
 - Improve customer satisfaction;
 - Improve our approach to equality and diversity and customer care.
 - Quality Homes -
 - Deliver the Major Works Investment Programme to meet Decent Homes standards;
 - Deliver decent neighbourhoods;
 - Review and revise the asset management strategy;
 - Support Lewisham Council to improve housing for older people;
 - Build new homes.
 - Sustainable business -
 - Reduce costs to sustain long term investment;
 - Strong long term partnerships that help deliver mutual objectives;
 - Expand the scope of the Repairs Service (Direct Labour Organisation (DLO));
 - Welfare reform – Communicating with and supporting residents on the changes.

- Community focus
 - Create a community based resident led organisation;
 - Create a charitable trust to invest in neighbourhoods.

- Employer of choice:
 - Create a stable organisation, with the right culture to deliver change;
 - Improve staff satisfaction.

6 Performance against Delivery Plan targets

- 6.1 Attached to this report as Appendix A are tables reporting on performance against the Delivery Plan targets for the year ending 31st March 2013, and trend data for the last two years. A RAG system indicates whether KPIs have met target and the direction of travel. Analysis of this performance data is set out by service area in section 6 below.
- 6.2 A table showing the tasks due to be completed in the 2012/13 Delivery Plan is attached as Appendix B. Using a RAG system, this indicates whether tasks have been completed, and an explanation is provided where tasks have not been completed by their target time.

7 Major Works Investment Programme

- 7.1 The 2012/13 original, revised budget, and outturn for capital major works investment is shown in the table below. All budgets were scrutinised in October 2012 and budgets revised where necessary.

Table 1 – Major works budgets and expenditure for 2012/13

	2012/13 Original Budget (£m)	2012/13 Revised Budget (£m)	2012/13 Expenditure (£m)	Expenditure to Revised Budget (£m)
Decent Homes Partnering Contracts	25.57	28.96	26.44	-2.52
Security, mechanical & electrical etc.	12.18	11.23	9.35	-1.88
Total	37.75	40.19	35.79	-4.40

- 7.2 During 2012/13 expenditure on Major Works was £35.79m against an original budget of £37.75m representing an underspend to original budget of £1.96m. The budget forecast was revised at the mid-year review to

£40.19m to reflect the impact of over programming, therefore the final position represents a £4.4m underspend against this revised budget.

- 7.3 The majority of this under expenditure relates mainly to performance issues with the contract delivering Decent Homes work in the North of the borough. These issues have now been resolved and Lewisham Homes has taken the decision not to renew an extension to the contract with the consultant representing Lewisham homes in this area. We expect performance in 2013/14 to be significantly better.
- 7.4 The under spend in security, mechanical and electrical projects was mostly attributable to one project which came back from tender significantly lower than the pre-tender estimate and the delays caused by the due diligence required to ensure the contractor could deliver for the rates set out in their tender.
- 7.5 In December 2012, the Greater London Authority (GLA) confirmed that £9m Decent Homes Backlog Funding would be brought forward within 2012/13. This brought Lewisham Homes Decent Homes Backlog Funding from £11.5m to £20.5m in 2012/13 and put a requirement on Lewisham Homes to ensure 1585 properties were made decent by the end of the financial year. These targets have been met. Overall, Decent Homes contractors have carried out £26.4m of work and made the requisite number of properties decent.
- 7.6 Satisfaction with the programme remains high at 91% although this is below the 96% target, and residents who have had the work are commenting on the positive difference the works have made on their lives. There has also been considerable input from the contractors as part of their community investment promises and this has been set out in Section 7 of this report.
- 7.7 The revised Decent Homes profile agreed with the Greater London Authority (GLA) in respect of the Decent Homes Backlog Funding is as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2 – No. units to be made decent in respect of Decent Homes Backlog Funding

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
Funding (£m)	14.0	20.5	24.0	36.0	94.5
Target (units)	993	1313	1505	2137	5980
Actual	1025	TBA*			

* To be announced

8 Repairs & Maintenance

- 8.1 The repairs service is meeting most of its targets:
- 99.6% of repairs were completed on time, against a 99% target;
 - 98.3% of repairs were completed on the first visit against a 95% target;
 - tenant satisfaction with completed repairs is slightly below the 95% target at 94% but is an increase from 93% last year;
 - the repairs contact centre has answered 91% of calls within 20 seconds, which is above the 90% target.
- 8.2 The introduction of software to help diagnose repairs required has improved the accuracy of repairs orders raised by contact centre staff, enabling greater certainty in the management of variations. The number of repairs orders with variations has reduced within the last year from 22% to 19% which in turn should contribute to a higher level of completion on the first visit. The variation by payment value with repairs has reduced from 12.4% in 2011/12 to 7.8% in 2012/13, which improves efficiency.
- 8.3 The volume of repairs complaints has continued to reduce from 305 responded to in 2011/12 to 231 in the current year. This is partly the impact of introducing 'real time' satisfaction surveys which allows the service to address issues straight after the repair. The Independent Adjudicator has commented on a particular reduction in complaints about dampness and condensation, following specific initiatives to improve the way these issues are dealt with.
- 8.4 The repairs service is increasing the amount of works that are carried out by the DLO with subcontracting now accounting for only 14.4% of work, compared with over 15% last year and over 17% three years ago. Subcontracted work is predominantly of a specialist nature, for example, scaffolding and asbestos removal.
- 8.5 A pilot to use the DLO to deliver some of the Decent Homes works is currently underway, which if successful will allow further economies of scale to be realised, making the DLO more viable and relying more on local labour.
- 8.6 The number of open Disrepair cases is currently on target at 50. Lewisham Homes has limited control over the number of cases instigated and the focus is to work with the solicitors to close cases as quickly as possible. Although the average length of time of open Disrepair cases is not meeting the target of 450 days, it has reduced from 554 days (in 2011/12) to 506 in 2012/13.

9 Void Management

- 9.1 There has been a significant improvement in voids performance following a series of process enhancements in 2010/11. This has helped to maximise rental income and ensure properties are empty for shorter periods of time.
- 9.2 Performance is strong for the proportion of rent lost while properties are vacant. Rent loss through vacant properties was 0.81% (or £564k) for 2012/13, compared to 1.39% and 1.98% in the previous two years. This represents a 1.17% saving in rent loss, which amounts to a cash equivalent of £400k a year saved compared to 2011/12 and £800k a year saved compared to 2010/11, based at current prices.
- 9.3 Similarly, less time has been taken to re-let properties – an average of 62 days at the end of September, compared with 95 days last year. Three quarters of all 650 properties were let in 49 days or less, well within the 55 day target. However the average of 62 days is adversely affected by 15 hard to let sheltered housing flats and other properties with specific issues. These 15 were all empty for over a year; without them the average relet time would be 45 days.
- 9.4 A new system using mobile technology is enabling officers to input void specifications and photographs from site. This will increase productivity, speed up void re-let times and help gather evidence for recharging former tenants for neglect.
- 9.5 Squatting is less of a problem than it has been with 4 voids squatted at the end of March compared to over 20 during 2011. Three of the four have been squatted by People Before Profit.
- 9.6 The current focus is to reduce void re-let costs. The strategy for this includes:
- reviewing the rates for works carried out;
 - revising the way asbestos works are dealt with, as costs are currently higher than they could be;
 - reviewing the void re-let standard, so all newly let properties comply with the Decent Homes Standard – this is a more efficient approach and should increase satisfaction for new tenants;
 - recharging for tenant neglect.

10 Estate Management

- 10.1 There has been an increased focus to improve the quality of estate management and the environment for residents over the year. The caretaking and cleaning service is regularly quality checked, and in

2012/13 90% of inspections undertaken achieved a pass rating. This is lower than the 93% achieved last year but this is partly as a consequence of introducing a more rigorous quality standard for 2012/13.

10.2 The overriding objective going forward is to improve customer satisfaction with the estates management service. Satisfaction with caretaking was at 64% for the year as a whole, below the 70% target, but the trend is improving with resident satisfaction at 72% in the final quarter. The improvement is coming as a result of commencing the implementation of a Service Improvement Plan, based on the following themes:

- Understanding our residents views;
- Communicating our service offer and services provided by the Council;
- Improving services;
- Managing people and performance;
- Developing our communications and publicising success.

10.3 Improvements during the year include:

- Introducing new ways to deal with indiscriminate disposal of domestic rubbish in our blocks. The 'Love where you Live' pilot on 2 estates engaged residents and identified issues important to them. It focused on some specific environmental improvements such as deep-cleaning of communal areas, improved signage, cleaning and painting handrails and refuse chute hoppers, and working with residents to encourage better waste disposal practices. It highlighted new ways to gather evidence and take enforcement action, where appropriate, which will help improve the environment on estates. Initial feedback on the initiative has been very positive and we plan to roll out the initiative to 2 further estates this year as well as monitor the long term impact on the first 2 estates.
- Developing an approach to properly maintain currently unmanaged areas of estates. An exercise to identify these areas has been completed and the action plan includes: working with a Social Enterprise agency and local residents to agree future use and management of some of the areas potentially as allotments or communal gardens, and working with the Council to include some small plots in the landscaping contract.

10.4 The proportion of garages let stood 94% at year end. During the year we have reviewed our garage stock holding numbers and are no longer including garages empty pending demolition or being used by Lewisham Homes for storage in the calculation. Garage arrears reduced during the year from £16k to £11k. The focus for our work for the remainder of the year will be on getting the remaining garages let.

11 Housing Management

- 11.1 Lewisham Homes now has full responsibility for the housing management of sheltered schemes. A protocol was agreed with the sheltered team and its successful implementation was reviewed in 2012/13. The tenancy team holds fortnightly surgeries at each scheme and has forged good working relationships with the Council's Sheltered Housing Support Team. A programme of improvements to the communal areas of the sheltered schemes was completed during the year, including redecoration new carpets and furnishings where required.
- 11.2 A drive to improve housing officer visibility has included attendance at all Tenant and Resident Association meetings.
- 11.3 Support for vulnerable tenants has continued to be a key priority for the service. A training programme in safeguarding awareness for relevant officers, operatives and caretakers has been delivered, which will help ensure issues relating to vulnerable adults and children are identified and reported. Tenant profile information continues to be recorded, including specific vulnerabilities, which is used to further support tenants.
- 11.4 The strategy to tackle social housing fraud includes a combination of intelligence led and strategic planned checks with each property being visited at least once every three years. Nearly 200 occupancy checks have been undertaken each month this year compared to an average of 124 last year, with 47 properties recovered that had been illegally sub-let or abandoned.
- 11.5 As part of the 2nd year of the 3 year ASB Strategy the following have been implemented:
- Responsible Dog Ownership continues to go well. Since April 2012 we have held 7 estate based events and micro-chipped 74 dogs. We have had excellent feedback from residents and have also received an award from the RSPCA;
 - We have developed a 'witness support' package requiring staff to routinely assess any relevant health and safety issues affecting witnesses, as well as the degree of support they are able to access from friends and family;
 - We have developed a Hoarding Protocol in partnership with the Council. The Head of Housing Services is Chair of the borough's Hoarding Panel with responsibility for overseeing implementation of the Hoarding Protocol. The Panel is proving to be a very successful way of engaging key partners to assist vulnerable residents who are hoarders and whose tenancies may be at risk because of ASB complaints against them. So far, 2 cases have

been referred to the panel from Lewisham Homes and these were commended for the quality of work undertaken before the referral;

- We worked with residents to introduce a gardening scheme aimed at assisting vulnerable residents clear their overgrown gardens, whose tenancies may also be at risk because of ASB complaints against them;
- We have developed and delivered tailor-made customer care training for ASB and Tenancy officers;

11.6 Satisfaction with handling cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB) has reduced from 54% last year to 43% for this year. This is still higher than the 38% achieved in 2010-11 and performance improved each quarter this year, peaking at 50% in the 4th quarter.

11.7 The number of complaints about ASB has reduced from 27 in 2011/12 to 17. More cases progressed to Stage 2 but fewer cases were upheld and far fewer cases progressed to Stage 3. These reductions point to a more customer focused investigation at Stage 1.

11.8 Plans to improve the approach to ASB going forward include:

- Strengthening evidence to tackle noise nuisance by investing in more noise recording systems;
- More robust case management with improvements in staff training, data collection/analysis, communications with residents;
- Increased use of mediation
- Reviewing security patrol arrangements
- Increasing enforcement of tenancy breaches within public spaces

12 Leasehold Management

12.1 Service charge collection performance improved in 2012/13 to nearly 104%, although this did not meet the 106.5% target; this was due to £112k added to the debit at the end of the year for the 2011/12 actual cost adjustment. Leaseholders are not asked to pay this adjustment until 2013/14; without this adjustment 106.5% was collected. Service charge arrears reduced by £140k (or 4% of the annual charge) to 22% of the annual charge.

12.2 During 2012/13 £1.36m was collected in relation to major works bills which was £237k more than we charged during the year, so the debt decreased by 21% of the annual debt. However, due to three year payment terms offered to leaseholders, there was still £2.6m of major works debt outstanding.

12.3 There is a range of support initiatives and payment options for resident leaseholders with large major works bills, which are well promoted. These

include the three year interest-free payment option, as well as access to caseworkers and debt advice agencies.

- 12.4 The coming year will see an increase in the scale of external work being undertaken through the Decent Homes Programme. Leaseholders have been given the opportunity to attend the sign-off of works as part of the programme, which is intended to help deal with issues as they arise and maximise collection of charges due.
- 12.5 The level of Right to Buy applications are more than three times greater than last year as the maximum discount was increased to £75k, and then further increased to £100k. At the end of March, 189 new applications had been received, compared to 58 applications for 2011/12. However, this has not yet led to increased sales – with only 17 completions in 2012/13 compared to 18 in the previous year.

13 Customer care

- 13.1 Tenant satisfaction with Lewisham Homes' services was tested through a survey conducted in July. This showed the proportion of satisfied tenants has remained stable at 69%, and that the proportion very or fairly dissatisfied had decreased from 28% to 20% since the previous survey in 2010. Further analysis is in progress to identify specific issues for tenants and this information will be used to improve services.
- 13.2 Performance for dealing with telephone calls has improved compared to last year – 88% were answered on time against a target of 90%, a 4% improvement from 2011/12.
- 13.3 The response to Mayor, Councillor and MP enquiries just missed the target of 90% responded to within ten working days. Performance for the year was at 88%.
- 13.4 Performance for responding to complaints on time has worsened, with only 76% of complaints meeting target times, which is well below the 90% target. This is mainly due to the poor performance of one of the contractors for the Major Works Improvement Programme – only 28% of these complaints were responded to on time. This issue has been addressed and the contractor hit the target with 93% on time in February and March. Excluding complaints about Decent Homes, performance was 92%.
- 13.5 It is common for the volume of complaints to increase during an improvement programme – and 27% of complaints received during the year relate to this programme. Excluding complaints about Decent

Homes, the volume of complaints is falling with 144 (or 19%) less complaints in 2012/13 compared to last year.

- 13.6 The response to complaints is improving. We resolved 84% of formal complaints at the first stage compared to 80% last year and a target of 80%. Of the 111 complaints that were raised to stage 2, we resolved 82% of them at stage 2. This is significantly better than our 75% target and 69% performance last year.
- 13.7 Steps have been taken to deal with the contractors concerned at CEO level, and there were signs of improvement in September. Solutions implemented the contractors have included increasing the ratio of liaison staff to properties and better quality control and communications on site.
- 13.8 The Independent Adjudicator's (IA) annual report for 2011/12 was a positive one. The IA has stated that there were less stage three complaints about pest control issues and dampness/condensation than previously. Although the volume of ASB complaints rose to 11 from 2 in the previous year, only 3 were upheld. The IA had also seen improvements in the quality of responses.
- 13.9 The Online Services campaign is underway for the second year in a row. The campaign, which started July, runs through till the end of the year and aims to get more residents signed up to the portal. This will allow them to view rent and service charge statements online and register for other online services. Since the beginning of the campaign there has been a 10% increase in sign-ups and this is expected to continue.

14 Income Collection

- 14.1 Despite difficult economic conditions and welfare reforms, income collection rates are improved on last year's performance. Rent collection for the period was 98.87%, an improvement on performance from 98.7% in the previous year.
- 14.2 The proportion of accounts over seven weeks in arrears reduced slightly from 8.9% of tenants to 8.8% during the year. This was despite the courts allowing a higher proportion of possession cases to be adjourned.
- 14.3 Collection rates for former tenant arrears have also improved. Former tenant arrears as a percentage of the debit is 1.59% which is better than 2.23% last year and achieves the 1.75% target. We achieved the low former rent arrears without writing off too much arrears. We wrote off 1.23% of the rent roll, which is better than the 1.96% last year and meets the 2% target.

- 14.4 Much of the Income Service's work during the year was focussed on preparing for welfare reform. Staffing resources were increased to deal with the impact of welfare reform. A comprehensive communications campaign has highlighted the changes to affected tenants, and has included a DVD produced in conjunction with other London ALMOs.
- 14.5 Close working with the Council's Universal Credit Pilot team has led to a better understanding of the impact of the changes and developing strategies for households affected by the benefit cap. Targetting households affected by the 'bedroom tax', there were individual conversations with almost all households affected, which has helped them to understand the implications of changes. Support has been provided for tenants to plan how they will deal with the changes, as well as promoting employment initiatives and assisting with transfer applications.
- 14.6 The Financial Inclusion Strategy has continued to be implemented, and key successes during the year were:
- Securing an additional £112,000 of backdated welfare benefits for residents;
 - Community Investment Programme recognised at the NFA Annual Awards in the Most Effective Partnership category;
 - 107 more residents joining Lewisham Plus Credit Union (1360 residents are now members);
 - 12 residents have progressed from initial contact at either a work club or work placement to permanent employment or apprenticeship.
- 14.7 Going forward, key initiatives will include:
- Two additional themed campaigns during the year to complement the successful winter campaigns;
 - Targeted SMS messages and a housing benefit take up campaign;
 - Monitoring the impact of the 'bedroom tax' and working with residents and the Council to provide support to minimise the impact;
 - Working with residents and the Council to devise solutions to those affected by the benefit cap;
 - Preparing for the implementation of Universal Credit, including working with the Council and Lewisham Plus Credit Union on a pilot providing 'JamJar' accounts for 50 residents.

15 Health & Safety

- 15.1 The health and safety framework has been refined as part of a continuous improvement process. The company health and safety policy was

reviewed in the period and approved by the Board, to ensure that this is in line with latest legal requirements and good practice.

- 15.2 After an independent audit carried out by British Safety Council (BSC) of Lewisham Homes health and safety framework a four star rating was achieved in January 2013. This is an improvement from the three star rating obtained in 2010 and shows a very positive direction of travel. The overall score achieved was 88.76% which was 4% short of achieving a 5 star rating. The BSC particularly recognised and praised our approaches to fire safety, safeguarding, checking of DLO operatives and vehicles, and safety inspections.
- 15.3 Gas safety continues to be a high priority for the Council and Lewisham Homes – the performance for the legally required annual gas safety checks remains high and achieved 100% at year end, compared to 99.97% and 99.98% in the previous two years.
- 15.4 Fire risk assessments for all properties have been completed in line with policy. Actions arising from the assessments are programmed and closely monitored to ensure they are delivered. A new contract for fire risk assessments is in place and there are now dedicated officers for fire safety.
- 15.5 A pilot sprinkler system has been installed in one of the sheltered housing blocks. This was a ground breaking pilot as it was the first of its type in London and was worked on in partnership with the London Fire Brigade. This has been heralded as good practice because it greatly increases protection to residents by suppressing a fire in its early stages. Lewisham Homes has been taking part in a good practice seminars organised by the LBF to promote this approach.
- 15.6 A programme to complete required asbestos surveys in low rise blocks, including converted street properties has now been completed. A suited lock system has now been fitted to these properties as part of this which will help future surveys, maintenance and safety risk assessments.
- 15.7 The policy for the management of water hygiene has been reviewed to ensure good practice and legal compliance, and this was implemented from September. It includes a robust strategy to address testing and inspection in all properties, including converted street properties.

16 Resident Involvement

- 16.1 Residents are encouraged to be involved through a wide range of forums and activities, including the Residents' Business Plan, which gives residents a say in how services are delivered. A Residents' Scrutiny

Committee is now established and complements the work of the Area Panel. The committee has initially scrutinised the caretaking service, supported by an independent advocate, and will be reporting on this in June 2013.

- 16.2 In line with the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing, local offers have been developed in consultation with residents. These set out the service standards for key services. An annual report to tenants reports on progress in meeting these standards. The 2011/12 report has been made available to all residents and is on the Lewisham Homes website.
- 16.3 The Community Investment Programme, delivered in partnership with the Decent Homes contractors, is meeting a number of objectives including supporting residents back into work; delivering skills based opportunities to carry out basic repairs; and opportunities for young residents to get involved. The success in delivering the programme has featured as a model for best practice in the National Federation of ALMOs publication 'Now that's a Bright Idea' and was a finalist in the NFA Awards 2012 for Most Effective Partnership.
- 16.4 The Back to Work opportunities for residents include the apprenticeship programme, work experience, twice monthly Work Clubs and the High 5 programme. Progress to date includes:
- 36 apprenticeship places including 20 with Decent Homes Programme contractors. Five apprentices from 2011 were offered extended contracts and a further two are now in full time positions with Lewisham Homes;
 - 24 Work Clubs with over 176 attendees;
 - 499 work experience days;
 - Five 'High 5' Programmes: 57 residents have graduated from the programme in 2012/13 and 11 of those have gained full time employment; 6 are now studying; 2 undertook work experience, and 1 is in voluntary work.
- 16.5 The Decent Homes contractors have also funded the following initiatives through the 2012/13 Community Investment Programme (CIP):
- £10,000 - High 5 Employability Programme;
 - £163,000 – community facility upgrades with the following outcomes:
 - Two community facilities now in use, from previously unused spaces;
 - One upgrade of an existing community facility;
 - Four further locations are being refurbished during the coming year.

- £2,000 for community events, which helped to fund the residents' conference attended by 75 residents, and sponsor a residents' award.
- 16.6 Lewisham Homes has also delivered a range of workplace NVQs for residents to enhance employability skills – 78 residents have taken part in this and outcomes are being assessed.
- 16.7 Funding for the 2013/14 CIP, including funding for community based initiatives, has been based on the turnover forecast for 2013/14 and will be agreed in May 2013.
- 16.8 In addition to CIP, Lewisham Homes has a Community Fund, which enables residents to bid for small amounts of funding to deliver improvements to the environment or for the community, and can include improvements to safety or community cohesion. Eleven projects were delivered under this fund in 2012/13 including: gardening projects, improvements to communal areas in sheltered schemes; inter-generational projects; the schools out programme; and two digital hubs within sheltered schemes to help older people understand and access online services.

17 Financial Implications

- 17.1 The HCA announced the allocations for Decent Homes Backlog Funding in February 2011. Lewisham was awarded £94.5 million over 4 years. The allocations for 2013/14 and 2014/15 were agreed in September. Lewisham has spent £14m allocated for 2011/12 and £11.5m of the backlog funding will be spent in 2012/13. Due to the uncertainty of the future backlog funding and other strategic priorities for housing, the Council has undertaken an options appraisal. Lewisham Council consulted residents on four options for the future management and ownership of the council's housing stock. In January, Mayor and Cabinet decided to consult residents further on just two of the options.
- 17.2 Subsequent to the Mayor and Cabinet decision in January, the council asked Lewisham Homes to consult with residents on the two remaining options. This consultation is focusing on hearing residents priorities for their homes, estates and communities. It is also testing and increasing residents understanding and awareness of the options. The consultation, which started in February and concludes at the end of May, is taking place by either face to face interview or by telephone. It is structured to obtain the views of residents across all postcodes in the Lewisham Homes management area and across all age groups. Regular updates are provided to the Housing Matters Project Board.

- 17.3 Achieving value for money is a key objective for Lewisham Homes, and is supported by a value for money strategy. Many of the tasks within the Business and Delivery Plan relate to achieving value for money; for example, reviewing service level agreements, and carrying out service reviews.

18 Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications in this report

19 Crime & Disorder Implications

There are no specific crime and disorder implications.

20 Equalities Implications

- 20.1 Lewisham Homes Equality and Diversity Strategy was approved by the Lewisham Homes Board in May 2010. It has recently been reviewed and a revised strategy is due to be considered in May 2013.
- 20.2 Measures have been put in place to protect the most vulnerable tenants. Lewisham Homes has continued to collect profiling information for use in planning and improving services, and to flag up on the main database where tenants require support.
- 20.3 Lewisham Homes has continued to support the LB Lewisham Safeguarding Agreement, which helps protect vulnerable adults and children. As mentioned in 6.5.3 above, a training programme in safeguarding awareness has been delivered. Lewisham Homes is represented on the Adult Safeguarding Board and the LSCB Task Group looking at child sexual exploitation.

21 Environmental Implications

- 21.1 Currently 50.5% of Lewisham Homes' stock is non-decent. Improving sustainability and energy efficiency is an important part of the Decent Homes Programme which is making sure that homes are warm, safe and dry.

Background papers

There are no background documents to this report.

Please contact Scott Cook, interim Partnerships & Service Improvement Manager, on 020 8314 6534.