

26 March 2012		ITEM 5
Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Housing Offices Re-Configuration		
Report of: Linda Sinclair. Interim Head of Housing		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Accountable Head of Service: Linda Sinclair. Interim Head of Housing		
Accountable Director: Graham Farrant. Chief Executive.		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: This report is in response to a request from Overview and Scrutiny for information concerning the future potential for the reconfiguration of local housing offices.		

Comment [sj]: PLEASE CLICK THIS BOX ONCE and enter the date of the meeting (in font 16, not capitals)

Comment [sj]: Please leave this for completion by Democratic Services

Comment [sj]: PLEASE CLICK THIS BOX ONCE and enter the name of the Committee you are reporting to (in font 16, not capitals)

Comment [sj]: PLEASE CLICK THIS BOX ONCE and enter the title of your report (in font 16)

Comment [a j]: Please enter the name and job title of the person who will be presenting the report

Comment [sj]: Please enter details of any Wards and Communities affected by the

Comment [sj]: Yes/No/Not Applicable – a 'Key Decision' is generally one affecting more

Comment [sj]: Please state the Head of Service's name and job title

Comment [sj]: Please state Director's name and job title

Comment [sj]: State whether your report is Public or Exempt. If Exempt (i.e. not to be given to

Comment [sj]: Briefly set out the purpose of your report

Comment [sj]: Please provide a summary of the key points in your report

Comment [sj]: The recommendations should be set out in bold in the form of the

Comment [sj]: You should briefly explain why the report is on the agenda - See para. 5.3 and 5.4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The HRA Business Plan was approved by Cabinet at its February meeting. The Business Plan sets out how the Council will manage its housing stock over the next 30 years in terms of its finances, stock investment and maintenance, and service delivery to tenants.

The Business Plan Action Plan was also approved and this sets out in strategic terms how the Council will improve its services over the next 5 years. This strategic framework provides the context within which any future potential for the reconfiguration of local housing offices will be considered.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1.1 That this report is noted for information.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

2.1 Currently, there are 5 outlying local housing offices:

- Corringham.

- Chadwell (customer facilities provided from the Chadwell library).
- Tilbury.
- South Ockendon.
- Purfleet.

The sixth local office is located in the Civic Offices and serves the Grays area.

2.2 The HRA Business Plan was approved by Cabinet at its February meeting. The Business Plan sets out how the Council will manage its housing stock over the next 30 years in terms of its finances, stock investment and maintenance, and service delivery to tenants.

2.3 The Business Plan has set out two key objectives which have been agreed:

1. To ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations by meeting the housing needs of the most vulnerable and homeless in the community, and to maintain the services and homes of existing tenants;
2. To help create and support sustainable communities within the Council's housing stock and surrounding neighbourhoods.

2.4 It is clear from the above objectives, that critical to the success of the Business Plan is the need for a visible and pro-active local presence by the Council. This is necessary within neighbourhoods that contain Council housing estates. A local presence has many benefits.

2.5 Such a presence helps the Council to understand and work more closely with local communities more effectively; it helps the Council to gain the trust and support of local communities, particularly when tackling anti-social behaviour, hate crime, vandalism, arson and other criminal activities that blight the lives of tenants and other residents and damage Council housing and estates. It also helps the Council to monitor the delivery of service performance at a local level to ensure that services are being delivered to all areas in a consistent and fair way.

Local Housing Offices act as champions for their areas concerning all services not just those delivered by Housing. Local Housing staff attend Locality Action Group meetings with the police and other agencies to discuss anti-social behaviour and crime. They also participate and contribute to the Partner Walk-About days; they attend local community forum meetings and support local voluntary groups with activities and events; they also support local businesses and shops.

2.6 The HRA Business Plan Action Plan was also approved by Cabinet. This plan sets out in very broad strategic terms how HRA services to tenants and leaseholders will be improved over the next 5 years. It is intended to plan these service improvements more specifically this year and present more detailed proposals to Cabinet. Amongst such proposals will be the consideration of the future development of local housing offices. This will include the options available to the Council to combine the reconfiguration of

housing offices with the rationalisation of its service outlets into multi-service outlets (community hubs) to achieve better service outcomes and value for money.

3. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:

3.1 At this stage, there are no particular issues or options for Overview and Scrutiny to consider as detailed proposals concerning this issue are yet to be developed.

4. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

4.1 Consultation concerning any service developments that affect tenants will require full consultation with tenants. Also, as part of the Business Plan, any service proposals are subject to scrutiny by the Tenants Panel, who will be able to make recommendations as appropriate to be considered by Members.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

5.1 The Council is currently considering ways in which it can provide service access to residents that is more cost effective and that delivers better service quality outcomes. The Council's Asset Management Plan was also approved at the February Cabinet meeting, and there are clear links made between this plan and the HRA Business Plan in terms of the overall use of Council assets. The concept of community hubs (multi-service outlets) is currently being considered as part of the better use of Council assets.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michael Jones**
Telephone and email: **01375 652772**
mxjones@thurrock.gov.uk

At this stage, there are no direct financial implications associated with this report. However, as the options are further explored, then financial implications may arise as a result of the re-configuration.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Telephone and email: **01375 652087**
dlawson@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no direct legal implications at this stage, although as proposals are developed, legal advice should be sought.

Comment [s]: Other headings may be appropriate. The report should outline the reasoning that leads to its recommendations and **must** include:

1. a brief summary of options considered;
2. consultation outcomes
3. a risk assessment.
4. Whether the responsible cabinet members have been consulted/contributed to the report (NB professional and political advice must be clearly distinguished)

- See para.5.5 of the report writing guidelines.

Comment [j]: This should include any consultation with Ward Members and Shadow Portfolio Holders, as well as any public or statutory consultation

Comment [a]: Please refer to Section 5.7 of the Report Writing Guidelines

Comment [sj]: This section should always be completed – if they are dealt with fully in another part of the report, they also need a brief cross reference here. The names and job titles of the officers providing the implications should be

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.2

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.3

6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
 Telephone and email: **01375 652472**
sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no specific implications at this stage. However, should proposals develop concerning the reconfiguration of local housing offices, there are likely to be implications concerning access to services for people with disabilities, people without internet or phone access, and people on low incomes, who may not be able to afford travel costs to the nearest Council service outlet.

6.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

No other implications

7. **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The future development of local housing services will be taken forward as part of the strategic action plan in the HRA Business Plan as agreed at Cabinet in February 2012.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- HRA Business Plan

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- None

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Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.4

Comment [sj]: This should inform the recommendations in the report

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 8. If any Papers are to be placed in the Members room that relate to this report, you should also list them here

Comment [sj]: List the Appendices referred to in the Report

Comment [sj]: Insert the full contact details of the author of the report