

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board to be held in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 1 July 2010 at 18:00.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 10 June 2010 (attached).
- 3 Public Question Time.
- 4 Declaration of Interests
To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- 5 Core Council Review/Housing Structure - presentation by the Community Services Manager
Reporting Officer: James Barrah
- 6 Housing Client Review - report of the Community Services Manager (attached)
Reporting Officer: James Barrah
- 7 Income Management Service Standard - report of the Housing Estates Manager (attached)
Reporting Officer: Paul Hadley
- 8 Somerset West Social Housing Partnership - Adaptation Agreement - report of the Housing Services Lead (attached)
Reporting Officer: Stephen Boland
- 9 Housing Revenue Account Consultation - verbal update by the Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager
Reporting Officer: Martin Price
- 10 Tenant Services Authority - verbal update by the Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager
Reporting Officer: Martin Price

Tonya Meers
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

25 October 2010

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

If a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

Full Council, Executive, Committees and Task and Finish Review agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.tauntondeane.gov.uk



Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

For further information about the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on 01823 356382 or email d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please telephone us on 01823 356356 or email: enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Tenant Services Management Board Members:-

Councillor R Bowrah, BEM

Councillor S Brooks

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Thursday 10 June 2010 at 6pm in Parmin Close Meeting Hall

Present: Mr Baker, Councillor Court, Mrs Drage, Mr Edwards, Mr Etherington, Mr Galpin, Mrs Hegarty, Mr Pearson and Mr Watkin

Officers: Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Donna Durham (Democratic Support Manager), Paul Hadley (Estate Manager), Tim Haynes (Property Manager), Helen Mockridge (Administrative Officer – Democratic Services) and Martin Price (Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager)

Others: Councillors Mrs Court-Stenning and Stuart-Thorn
Paul Carter, Finance Director, Southwest One
Robin Tebbutt, Housing Quality Network

(The meeting commenced at 6pm)

13. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved that Dustin Etherington be elected as Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

14. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Resolved that Ashley Baker be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

15. Apologies

Apologies: Councillors Bowrah and Brooks, and Mr Hellier.

Substitution: Councillor Ms Court for Councillor Brooks

16. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 29 April 2010 were taken as read and were signed.

17. Declaration of Interests

All members of the Board present, declared personal interests as Council house tenants.

18. Introduction to Local Authority Housing Finance

Considered report previously circulated, concerning Local Authority Housing Finance.

Local Authorities had to account for their spending and income to satisfy Government regulations. Most day to day spending was included in an account called the General Fund. This included such services as collecting refuse, leisure facilities and community development work.

Local Authorities that had a council-owned housing stock, also had a duty to maintain an account called the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This account related to the spending and income for the management and maintenance of the houses.

Spending was also split between day to day spending (salaries) and day to day income such as rents which was called revenue.

Spending to maintain the properties was called capital and capital expenditure generally involved large sums of money.

The HRA was a 'ring-fenced' account and contained the spending and income related to the dwellings owned by the Council. Local Authority housing mainly consisted of:

- General Needs Housing – houses, flats bungalows; and
- Sheltered Accommodation – usually for elderly and vulnerable people, sometimes with communal facilities.

The HRA could also be used for spending and income relating to other facilities such as garages.

Income was split between rental income (mainly rental income), charges for services and facilities (cleaning communal areas and grounds maintenance work) and Housing Subsidy Grant/Payment. The Housing subsidy was calculated by the Government based on estimated income and spending for each Local Authority's HRA. The calculation changed annually.

Spending was split between management costs (salaries and staff) and maintenance costs (responsive work and work on empty properties).

Local Authorities had to set their own HRA budget and had to avoid an end of year deficit.

Capital Spending was described as buying, building, replacing or enhancing an asset. The main capital spending for Local Authorities was for the renovation and improvement of its houses, in order to meet the Decent Homes Standard. The main funding areas for capital funding was through the Right to Buy scheme, prudential borrowing, major repairs allowance, revenue contribution to capital, Government grants and other capital receipts for the sale of land or garages.

When producing their capital plans, Local Authorities would need to identify housing capital spending requirements, decide which were the most important, identify capital resources and finally draw up a programme that met the priorities within the available resources.

Resolved that the report be noted.

19. Housing Revenue Account Reform

Mr Tebbutt, Housing Quality Network gave a presentation on the Housing Revenue Account proposals.

The response date for the Government consultation was 6 July 2010. A report would go to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and then to the Executive, before a decision would be made by Full Council.

At present, the Government effectively took each Council's rents and let them have some spending money back. Spending money could be more than rents (subsidy) or less. If less (negative subsidy), the Council would have to pay an amount to the Government, based on the Government's assumptions of what the Council's rents and expenses should be. Each Council was expected to collect more in rent than it spent on management, maintenance and major repairs.

Subsidy was based on an assumed debt level. For most Councils, the actual debt was lower than assumed and for Taunton Deane Borough Council, there was an assumed debt of £30m and an actual debt of £14.5m in 2010/2011.

Taunton Deane's HRA subsidy position for 2010/2011 was reported and the negative subsidy was £6,010,351. The Government used the money it received in negative subsidies to pay out subsidy to other Councils.

In the future, the amount Councils paid would increase and the amount received from Government would go down.

The Housing Quality Network had undertaken modelling of the current system, which included the following for Taunton Deane Borough Council:

- The Revenue account made contributions to capital expend and maintained at least its minimum balance throughout;
- There were shortfalls in capital funding from year 6 (2015/2016) onwards; and
- A cumulative shortfall of £76m was outstanding by year 30 (2039/2040) at the price base of that year.

The proposal was effectively that debt would be switched from those HRAs with higher debt to those with lower debt. In practice lower debt Councils would make a 'one-off' payment to the Government, which they would borrow. The subsidy system would then cease.

There was a variant proposal which the previous Government favoured of reducing the payment to Government (£4.9bn) to £3.6bn to allow Councils to build new homes. Taunton Deane Borough Council would pay £86m under the 'base' proposal and £81m under the variant.

Taunton Deane Borough Council's position under the HRA reform was reported. Figures quoted were based on reasonable assumptions. There were no capital shortfalls, the debt would be repaid in year 16. The revenue account would remain at minimum balance to year 16 and would then climb.

The model would be most sensitive to inflation, changes to the current capital assumptions, increase in rents above inflation and interest rates.

The HRA would take on some of the external risk it was currently insulated from, including:

- Real increases in costs;
- Interest rates;
- Changes to rent policy; and
- Changes to the benefits system.

The offer as it stood, subject to minor change, was the only one likely to be available in the near future. The Communities and Local Government had previously said it needed all Councils to agree if the proposal was to be implemented without legislation. If one or more Councils refused, and legislation was required, the prospectus stated that implementation would be delayed by at least a year.

The Chairman thanked Mr Tebbutt for his informative presentation.

Resolved that:

- (1) The HRA proposals be supported;
- (2) The model be put in place as early as possible; and
- (3) New homes be built as a priority, using any money generated as a result of the proposals.

20. Terms of Reference

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed Terms of Reference for the Tenant Services Management Board.

The Tenant Services Management Board was charged with the responsibility for ensuring the best possible standards of housing service to deliver to all Council tenants. It would assess the housing service of the Council and say where and how it could be improved. The Terms of Reference had been previously circulated for consideration and included the following:

- The Aims and objectives of the Board;
- Membership;
- Equal opportunities;
- Chairman and Vice-Chairman and their duties;
- Agenda and supporting papers;
- Statements, questions and petitions to the Board;
- Meetings;
- Exclusion of the press and public;
- Voting;
- Quorum;
- Board sub-committees or working groups;
- Annual General Meeting;
- Training opportunities;
- Information and consultation;
- Code of Conduct;
- Dissolution and removal of Chairman and Vice-Chairman;
- Changes to the Terms of Reference; and
- Interpretation and Review of the Terms of Reference.

Members of the Board suggested that the following amendments were made:

- 4.2 should be deleted;
- 4.5 should read 'The Councillor referred to in 4.4 can be any Councillor of the two main party groups except a member of the Executive;
- 4.9 – Board members should be elected every two years and the selection of which Board members retired, would be discussed at the Annual General Meeting; and
- 10.7 – Tenant Services Management Board minutes should also be distributed to the Shadow Executive Member for Housing.

Resolved that, subject to the amendments being incorporated, the Terms of Reference for the Tenant Services Management Board be agreed.

21. Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct had been submitted for consideration by the Board. Members of the Board had to be aware of their responsibilities to represent all tenants of Taunton Deane Borough Council and to make decisions in an efficient, fair and responsible way. The Code of conduct set out the standards that the Board were required to achieve and all members had to sign a declaration that they agreed to observe the terms of the Code. The Code of Conduct included the following:

- Standards of Conduct;
- Personal Conduct;
- Non-Attendance;
- Conflicts of Interest;
- Confidentiality;
- Conduct during Meetings;
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct;
- Disciplinary and Appeal Procedures;
- Political Affiliation; and
- Expenses.

Resolved that the Code of Conduct for the Tenant Services Management Board be agreed.

22. Forward Plan

The forward plan was submitted for consideration.

Resolved that the forward plan be agreed.

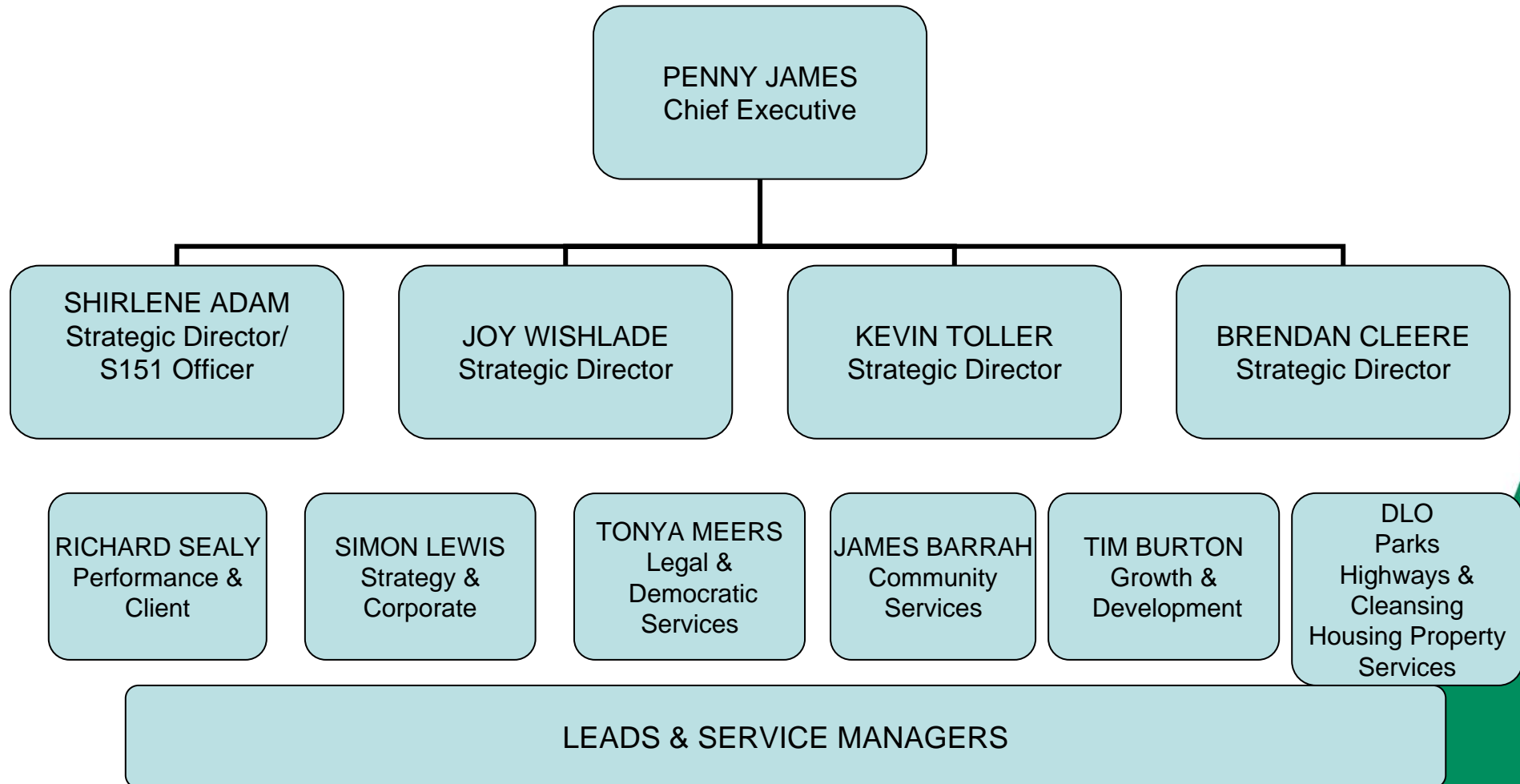
(The meeting ended at 8.50pm)

Declaration of Interests

Tenant Services Management Board

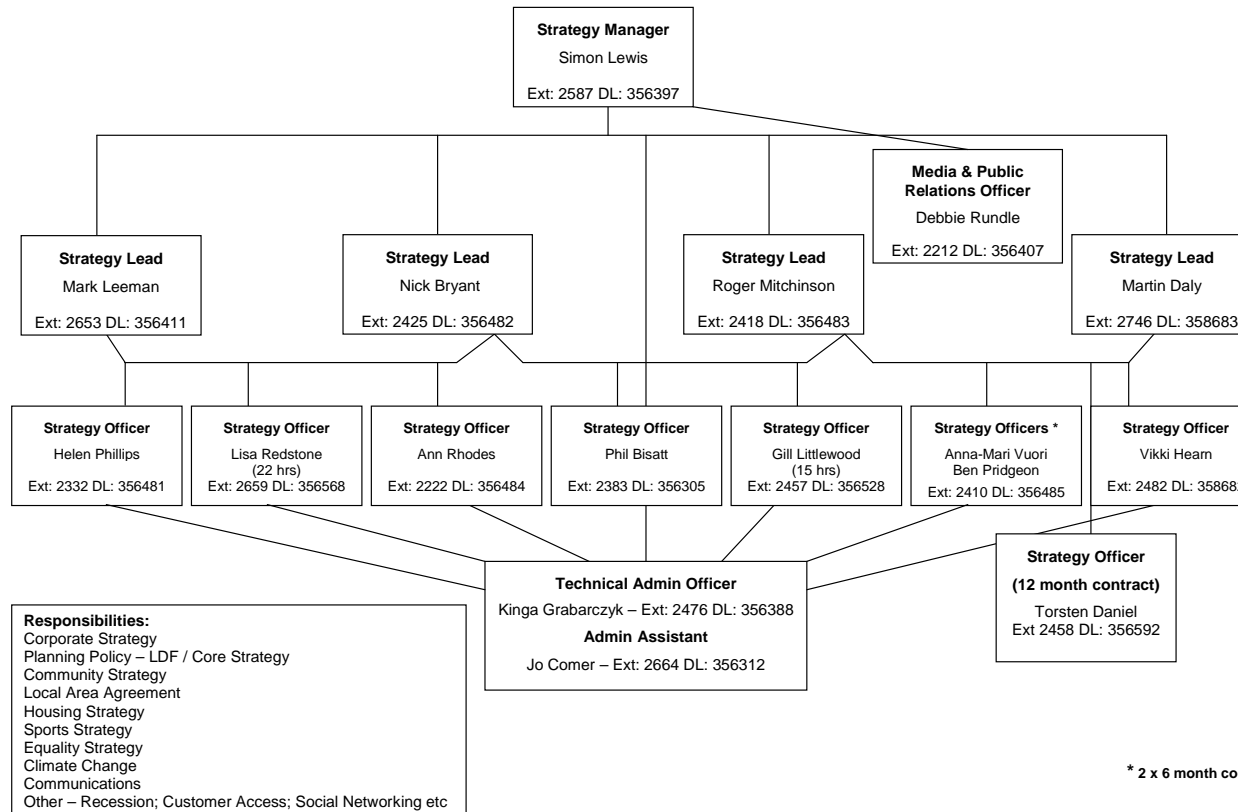
Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants - Mr Baker,
Councillor Brooks, Mrs Drage, Mr Edwards, Mr Etherington, Mr Galpin,
Mrs Hegarty, Mr Hellier, Mr Pearson, Mrs Vanstone, Mr Watkin

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

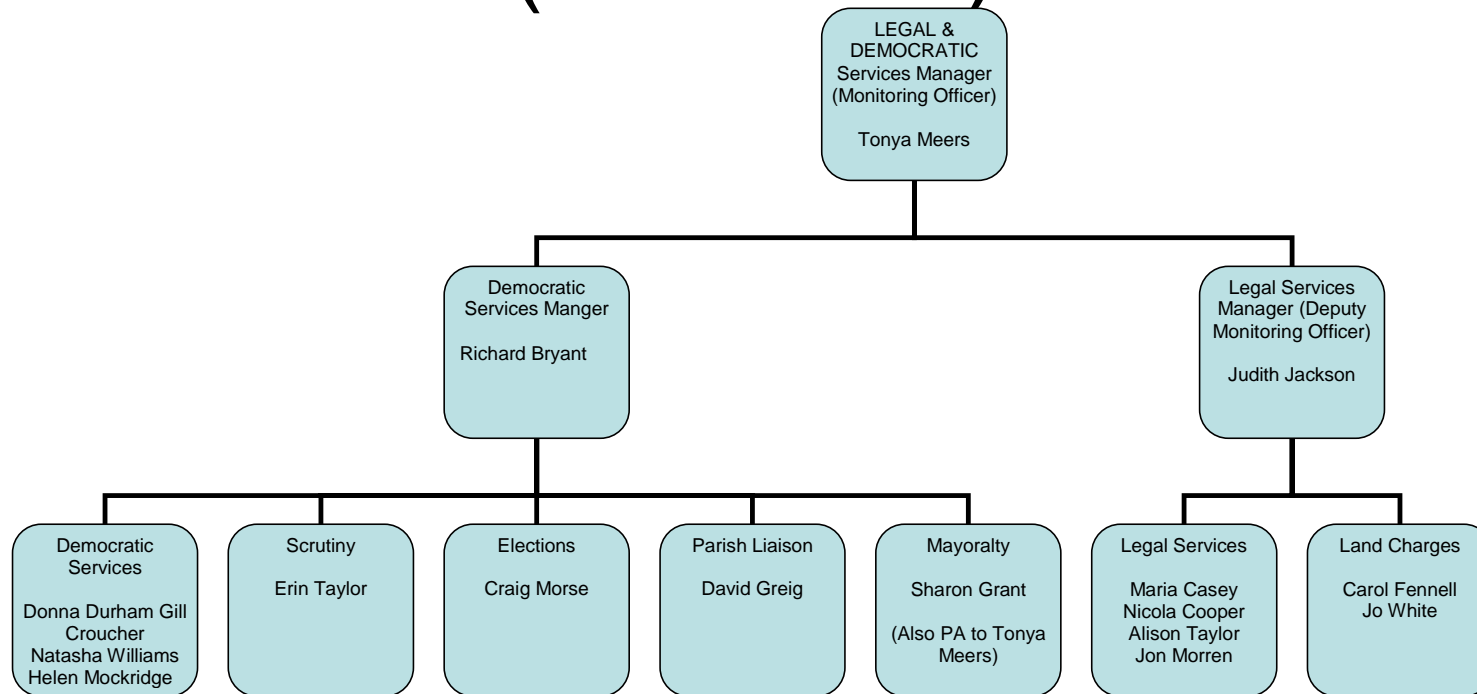


STRATEGY (Theme 1)

Strategy Unit Structure (April 2010)

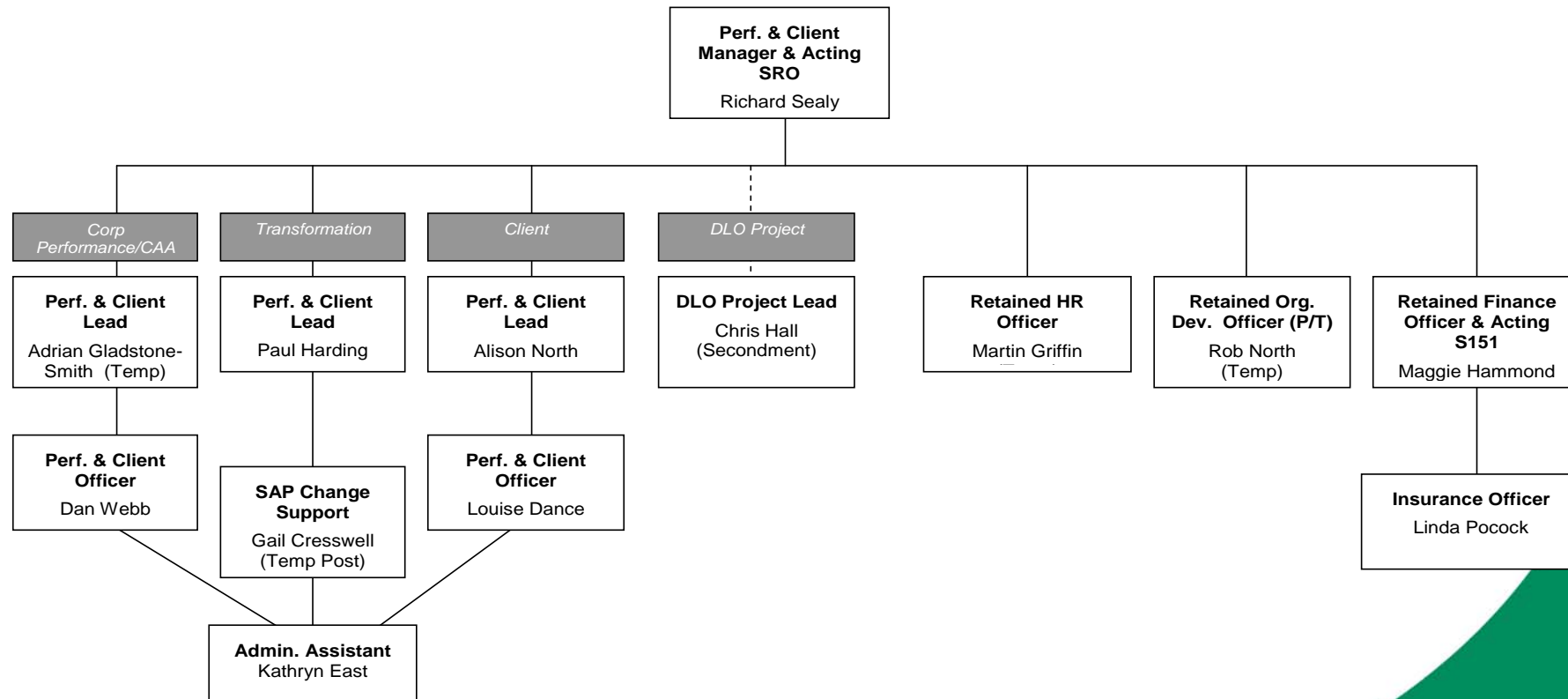


LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC (Theme 1)



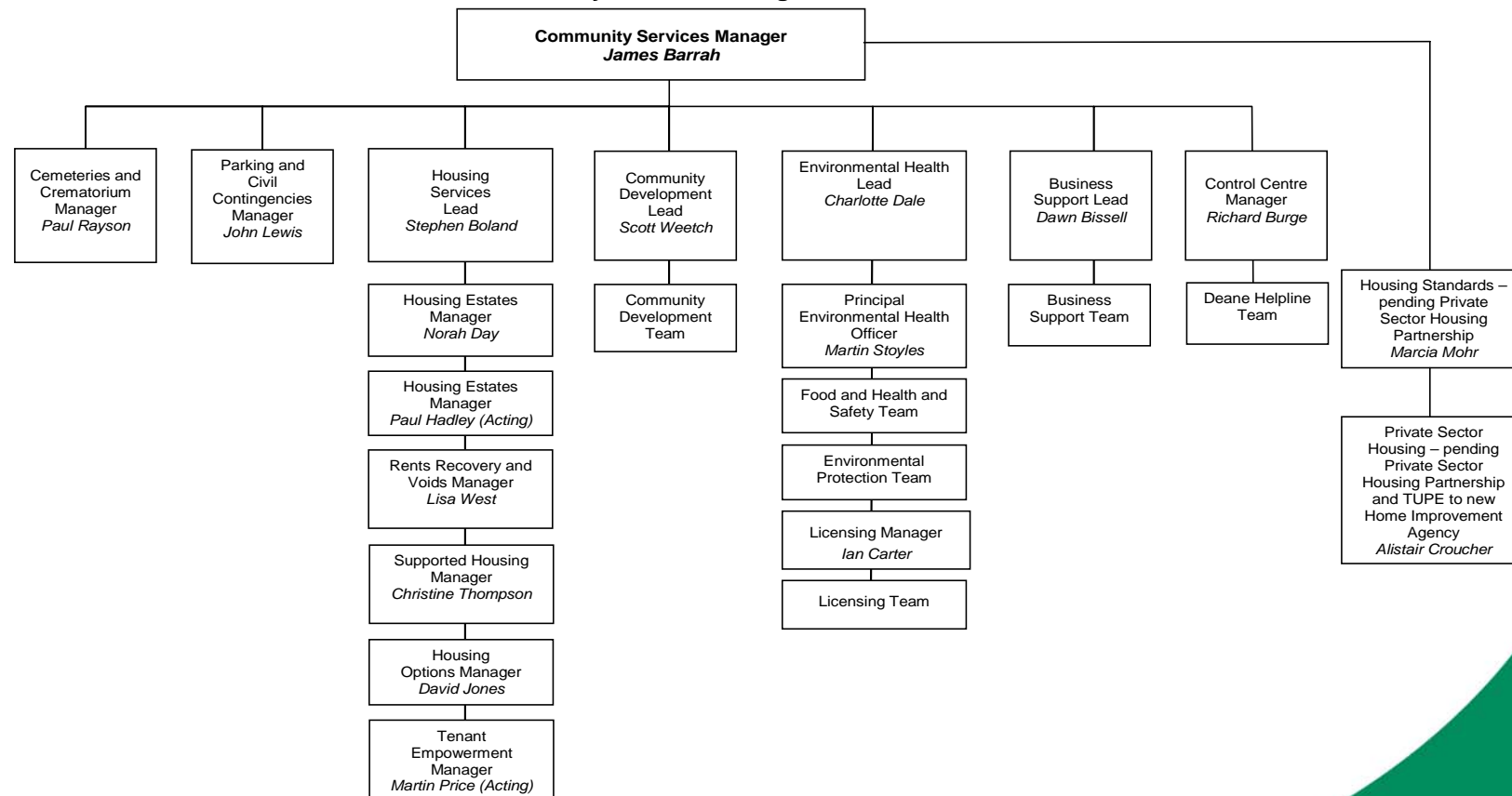
CLIENT & PERFORMANCE (Theme 1)

Performance & Client Team Structure (effective from 1 Apr 2010)



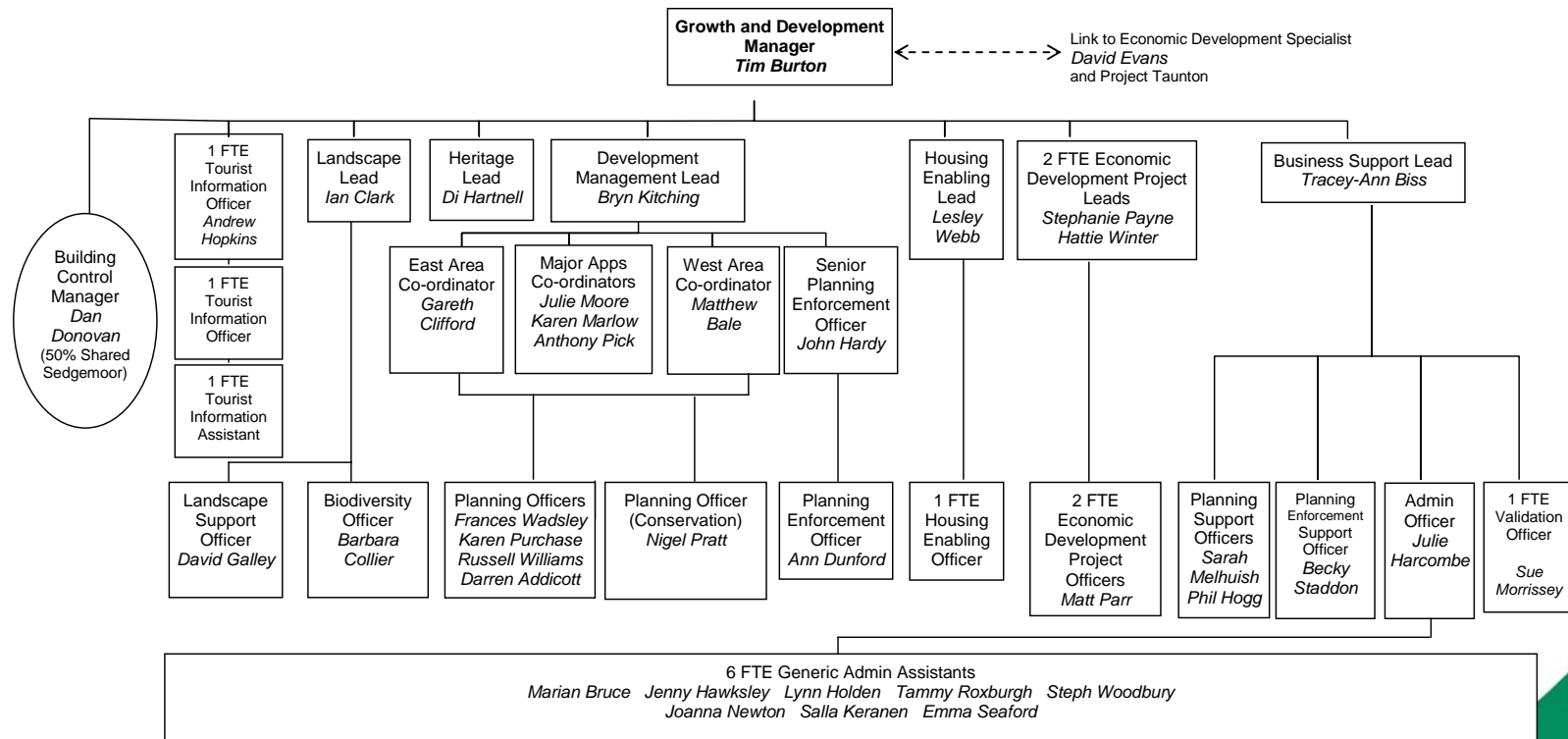
COMMUNITY SERVICES (Theme 4)

Community Services Management Structure

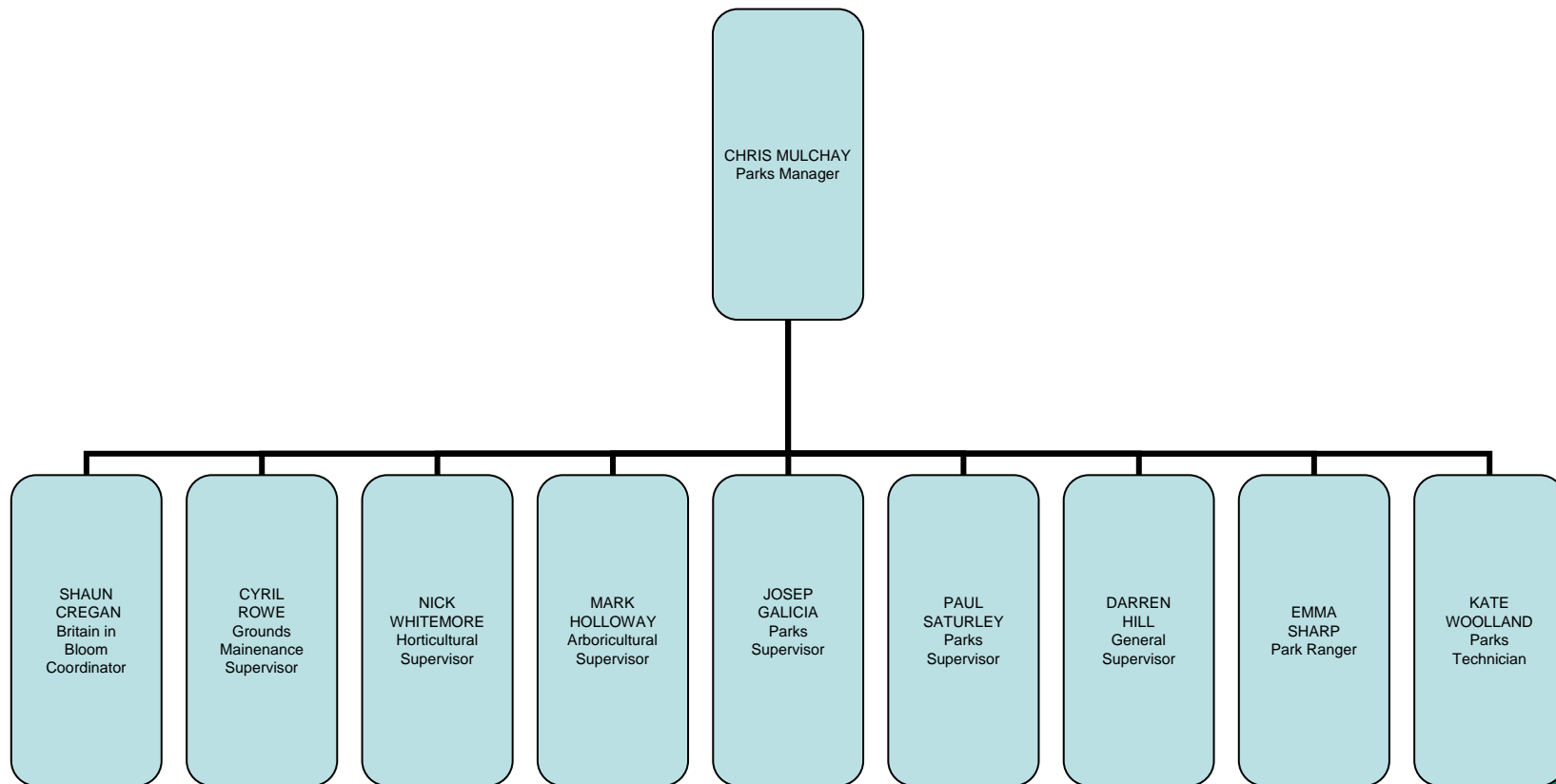


GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT (Theme 2)

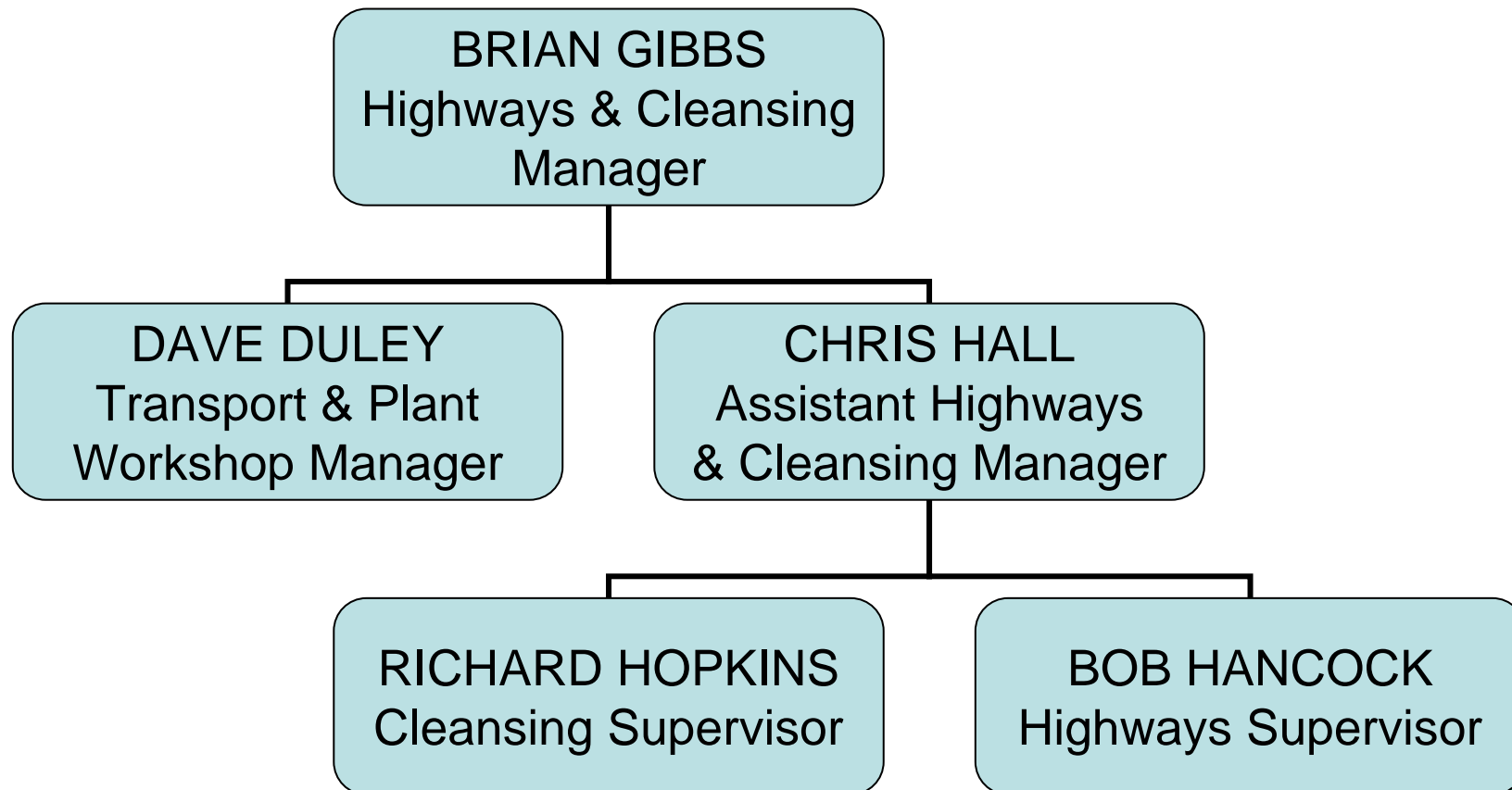
Growth and Development Organisation Chart



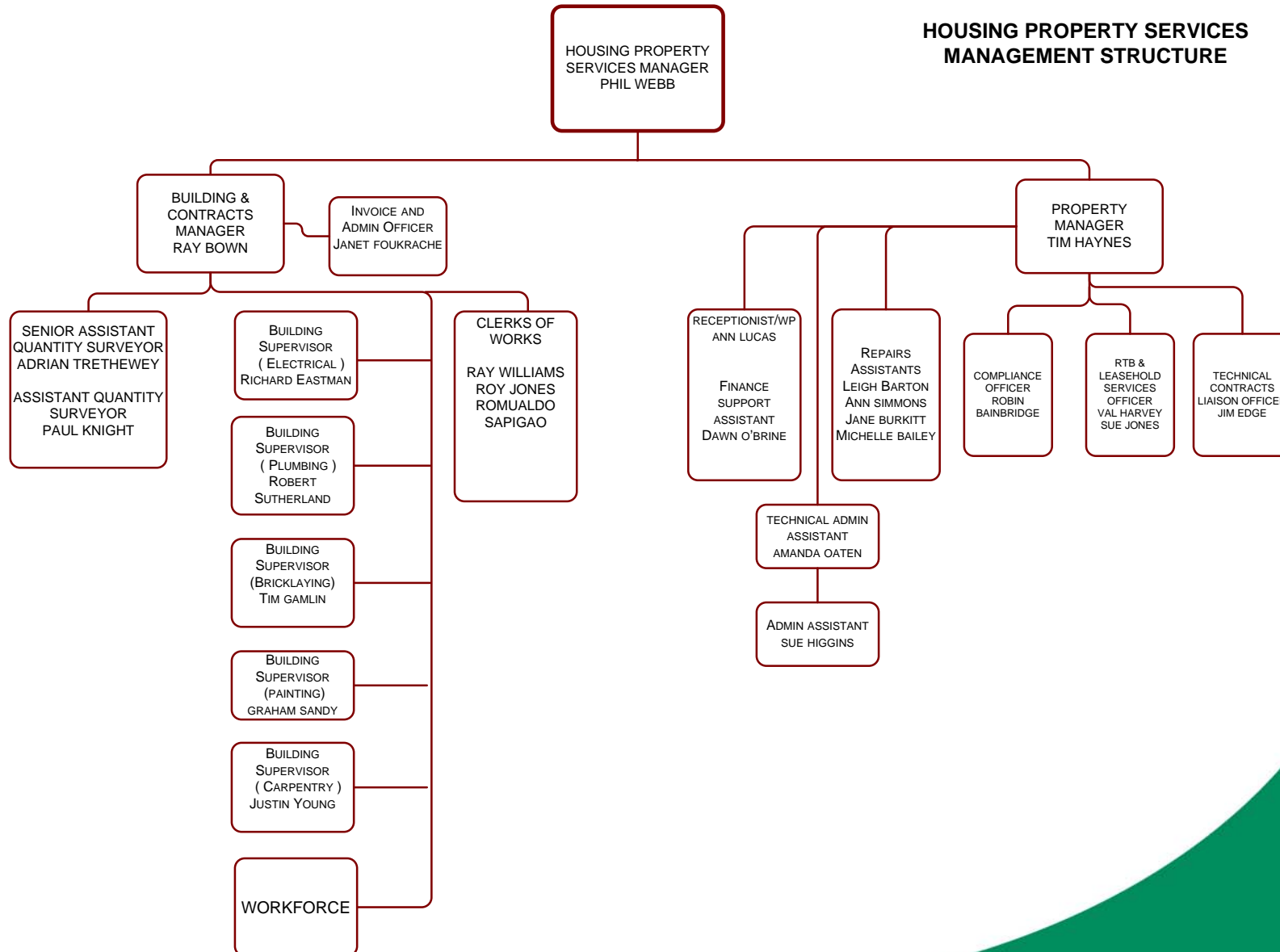
DLO – PARKS SECTION (Theme 3)



DLO – HIGHWAYS & CLEANSING (Theme 3)



**HOUSING PROPERTY SERVICES
MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**



Housing Client Review – High Level Project Plan

1. Introduction

Following the independent review by consultants Turner and Townsend, the Council has decided to accept the recommended approach in relation to providing better separation between the Housing Client function and the workforce.

This paper outlines the staff resources required to implement this decision, together with a high level project plan and project governance arrangements.

2. Establishing a Project Team

Implementing the Council's decision will require the establishment of a Project Team with adequate resources at its disposal.

A 'core' Project Team comprising the following officers is proposed:

Officer	Role
Brendan Cleere	Lead Director and Project Sponsor Responsibilities include overall ownership and direction of project plan and risk register.
James Barra	Project Manager Responsibilities will include development and delivery of project and risk management plan activities, staff communications, liaison with staff and Unison.
HR Advisor - TBC	Responsible for advising on all workforce and employment related issues (e.g. Pensions) and processing related HR activities.
Finance Advisor - TBC	Responsible for advising on all financial aspects of the project.
Meryken Then-Bergh	Project support and administration

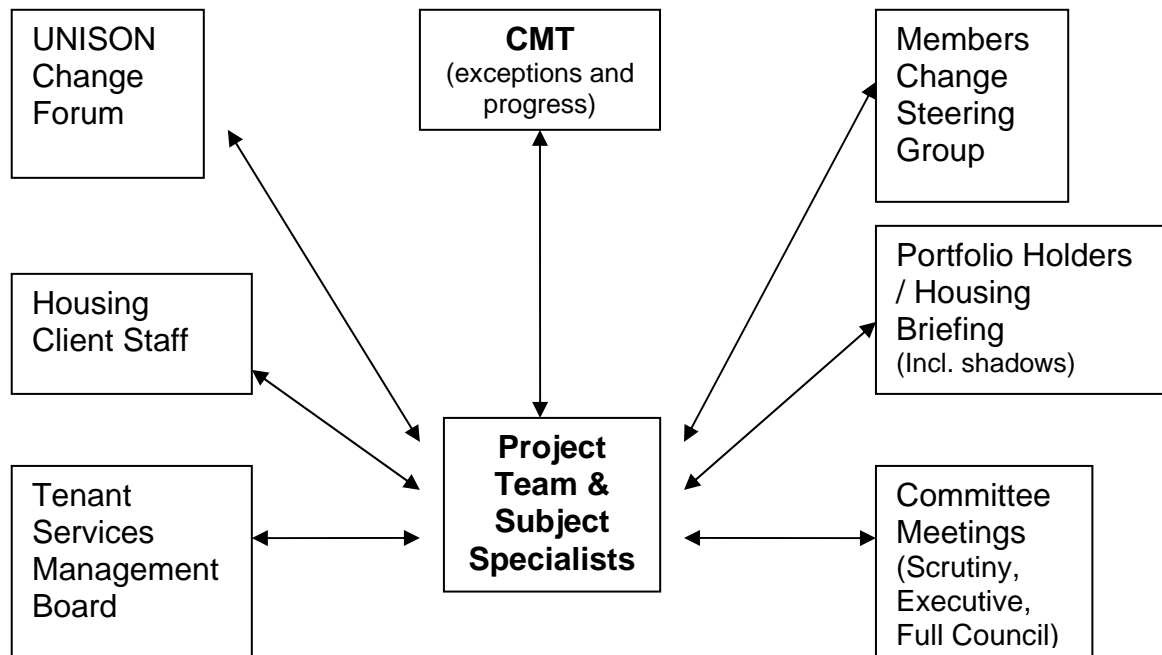
Outside of the core team, a wider pool of 'subject specialists' will be required at key stages in the delivery of the Project Plan, as follows:

- **Housing Manager - Property** – Phil Webb and Property Manager Tim Haynes – as subject experts and current management of function.
- **Housing Services Lead** – Stephen Boland to assist with Landlord service issues and overlap.
- **Richard Sealy** – advice on SWOne implications and overlap with client team.
- **Martin Daly** – for advice on Strategic Housing implications.

3. Project Governance Arrangements

A detailed project plan will be developed and overseen by the Project Manager.

Overall project governance arrangements are summarised in the diagram below:



UNISON Change Forum (UCF) meets on a monthly basis and will receive regular progress reports from the Project Team. UCF will give views to the Project Team throughout the Project.

Housing Client Staff will be informed and involved in the project at all key stages, with all staff briefings taking place as appropriate.

Tenant Services Management Board will provide tenants' input at all key stages of the project.

CMT will receive regular updates from the Project Manager and also deal with issues on an 'exceptions' basis.

The **Members Change Steering Group** meets on a monthly basis and will receive high level progress reports from the Lead Director/Project Manager.

Committee meetings will take place as required throughout the project, where formal input or decision is required to enable the project to move to the next stage.

4. Project Context – “What we know”.

a. Budget and consequent staffing cuts in the HRA in order to achieve Decent Homes necessitated closer working relationships between the Housing Client function and the DLO workforce. This has allowed the service to continue and derives some benefits. However, following the independent review by consultants Turner and Townsend of the DLO services the following recommendations were made:

“ Currently the Asset Management function is managed through the DLO. The Property Manager is responsible for both Building Services as well as Asset Management services. This was established under one structure following the tenant's vote on stock transfer in 2006 and the subsequent need to make substantial annual revenue savings in the housing revenue account.

There is acknowledgement that the current structure has afforded some positive characteristics primarily based upon the strong working relationship between client and contractor and the commonality of location. However, Asset Management is usually managed from within the estate management function and not by the Property Maintenance Service.

It is our view that the Asset Management function should be separated and placed within a client function role. We consider this recommendation to remain valid whichever option (including Stay As-Is) is selected to deliver services going forward. Our logic here is that we envisage significant financial pressure by way of CR10 and beyond such that value for money and the evidence supporting the delivery of value for money will

require a clear separation of duties. It is generally not acceptable for the monitor of value to be the deliverer of the monitored service.”

- b. In addition the Audit Commission have recently expressed some concern about the current arrangement and in particular the need to be able to demonstrate clear value for money and improving performance by a rigorous Housing Client function and how this influences the activities of the workforce.
- c. Previous cuts in the HRA referred to above have created a significant shortfall in staff capacity in the service, particularly at a supervisory level. The review of the service will seek to address this point. Current management of the service have developed some proposals in relation to this.
- d. There are also a range of temporary staffing arrangements in place in the service that need to be resolved.
- e. The review will initially run in parallel with the wider DLO review, however it will be concluded on a much shorter timeline as a new Housing Client service needs to be in place and fully operational and be able to respond to any of the wider changes taking place in the DLO.
- f. Some staff are currently unclear about which project they need to have regard to as their roles could either fall on the client side or on the workforce (potential contractor) side. Clarity is required as a matter of priority in relation to this point.
- g. There has been a clear way forward identified in relation to the development of a high level Asset Management strategy for the Housing stock. In addition, plans are emerging in relation to developing a new, detailed Asset Management Action Plan for the Housing Stock.
- h. The recent Advice and Assistance visit by the Audit Commission has a number of recommendations in relation to the service that need to be addressed, some urgently. It is anticipated that the Housing Service will be subject to full Audit Commission inspection in the Autumn.

5. Scope of Service – Housing Client Responsibilities

The list below outlines the current responsibilities of the service, which are therefore in scope for this project. In addition there are activities currently undertaken by the Landlord Service such as Void Management, where Housing Client may have a role in the future and will therefore be considered as part of this review.

- Repair and maintenance of Council housing assets – planned and responsive (Properties, garages, sewerage treatment works, shops, land).
- Management of Capital investment programme (Properties fit for purpose – Decent Homes, kitchen/bathroom upgrading, doors, windows, roofs).
- Gas servicing
- Electrical testing (17th Edition, smoke alarms)
- Asbestos data-base
- Energy Performance certificates
- Health and Safety
- Asset management database
- NROSH
- Satisfaction monitoring
- Right to Buy
- Leasehold management
- Sale of Land
- Rights of access
- Audit Commission requirements

These specific functions involve the following activities and therefore these skills will be required in the new service.

- Assessment of current stock conditions
- Future planning for short, medium and long term asset developments
- Specifying works
- Specifying standards
- Financial planning
- Tendering for work
- Negotiating and agreeing contracts
- Monitoring contracts
- Checking works
- Reporting performance
- Reporting to tenants/customers
- Receiving repairs requests
- Allocating repairs works

APPENDIX A

Housing Client Review – Indicative Project Plan

No.	Category	Apr10	May10	Jun10	Jul10	Aug10	Sep10	Oct10	Nov10
1	Project Start up								
2	Comms & Engagement								
3	Risk Management								
4	Project Manager to hold staff workshops								
5	Fact finding other LA's /RSL's								
6	Develop proposals/new structure								
7	Staff consultation (including a formal consultation period if required)								
8	Decision making and implementation								



Tenant Services Management Board – 1st July 2010

Income Management Service Standard

Report of – Paul Hadley/Norah Day (Estates Managers – Housing Services)

Executive Summary

This report has been produced to propose a new service standard for Income Management for Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services.

It outlines the service tenants in council housing can expect from Housing Services on managing their rent.

It provides details of the specific elements of the service with approximate costings for implementation of the standard.

It will show the areas where current service can be improved and how it is intended to make those improvements.

The impact on tenants will be explained and a timetable for implementation will be given which includes how we intend to inform tenants of this service standard.

1. Purpose of the Report

To provide the Tenants Services Management Board (TSMB) with the opportunity to comment and shape the service standard for Income Management.

2. Background to this report

Housing Services are responsible for ensuring tenants make prompt payment of rent and the efficient recovery of outstanding rent debt from a customer group some of which are the most economically disadvantaged members of society.

On occasions tenants have competing financial commitments that mean rent is not their only outstanding debt. Therefore in order to ensure that rental income is maximised it is essential that tenants fully understand:

- How they can pay their rent
- What support is available to them should they be in financial difficulties
- What actions landlord services will take if they fail to make regular rent payments

3. **Aim of the Standard**

To meet the requirements of the Rent Recovery Protocol and give tenants clear information on the ways they can pay their rent, and the support and assistance available to prevent arrears building up. It explains the firm but fair approach that Housing Services adopt to rental recovery and describes what tenants should expect if they fail to pay their rent when it is due. This will help reduce the number of legal notices served on tenants and County Court referrals. The standard outlines what information tenants can expect from the landlord, rent statements every 3 months and notification of when rental payments are due to change. A draft copy of the proposed standard can be found at Appendix 1. Once approved this draft will be formatted into an easy to read version by the Design and Print Department of TDBC.

4. **Approximate Costs**

The cost of implementing this standard can be met within existing budgets. The additional costs of mailing the quarterly rent statements are detailed below.

Item	Cost	Remarks
Mailing	£9,000	6,100 rent statements 4 times a year

5. **Impact on Tenants**

Tenants will be better informed on what to expect from their landlord and what is expected of them and the implications on non payment of rent. It will promote the regular and systematic approach to rent payment.

6. **Equality and Diversity**

Some tenants may need specific help to fully access the standard, where required officers will visit vulnerable tenants to explain the standard and then identify any specific needs, referrals for ongoing support maybe made at this stage. Additionally information may be required in different formats:

- Large Font
- Audio Version
- Different Languages
- Website page

7. **Timetable**

01/07/10 - TSMB review standard.

Mid July 2010 - Seek approval from Portfolio Holder Housing Services

Mid July 2010 - Standard sent to Design and Print Department

Start of September 2010 - Standard published, printed copies and on TDBC website

End of September 2010 - First quarterly Rent Statement sent to tenants

April 2011 - report impact of standard to TSMB

8. **Outcomes**

The outcomes that can be expected from the implementation of this standard are:

- Improved information to tenants on the landlord service.
- Increase in rental income which will result in greater financial resources available to the Housing Service.
- Ensure full uptake of available benefits to those tenants who qualify thus preventing the most vulnerable tenants from falling into greater economic poverty.
- Reduction of higher level arrears cases which will result in fewer legal notices served on tenants and a reduction in County Court referrals which will also prevent those most vulnerable tenants getting into greater financial debt.
- Performance will be monitored and reported back to TSMB.

9. **Information Plan**

If implemented it is intended to inform all tenants of the new standard by updating existing Tenant Welcome packs, writing a new page for Housing Website, providing information in the next edition of Deane Housing News and having leaflets available in reception areas of TDBC offices.

10. **Recommendation**

That the Tenant Services Management Board approves the proposed Income Management Service Standard as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

11. **Contact Officers:**

Paul Hadley, Housing Estates Manager, 01823 356332 Ext 2642,
p.hadley@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Norah Day, Housing Estates Manager, 01823 356331 Ext 2628,
n.day@tauntondeane.gov.uk

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Appendix 1 to Income Management Standard Report

Tenant Services Management Board 1 July 2010

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

PAYING YOUR RENT - INCOME MANAGEMENT SERVICE STANDARD

This service standard sets out what you can expect from Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services in terms of managing your rent.

We are committed to provide you with a service that meets your specific and individual needs.

We will:

- Offer you several ways of paying your rent:
 - Direct Debit
 - In person at the council offices in Deane House Taunton (0830 – 1645 Mon – Thur, Fri 0930-1615) or Wellington Community Office (0930 – 1600 Mon – Fri)
 - Via the Taunton Deane Borough Council website
 - By telephone on 01823 356356 (Mon – Fri 0800 – 1800)
 - The Post Office
 - Standing Order
 - By post
- Provide you with a Rent Payment Card if you choose not to pay by direct debit.
- Offer you advice and support when you sign your tenancy agreement, to assist you in making prompt payments and complete a Benefits check or a Housing Benefit claim form. This will help prevent you falling behind with your payments (known as having rent arrears) early in your tenancy.
- Contact you by letter, phone or email within 2 weeks of your rent account falling into arrears.
- Agree with you an affordable repayment plan should you fall behind with your rent payments. This could involve paying off the arrears in smaller amounts if you cannot pay the full amount straight away.
- Offer the opportunity to receive specialist debt & benefits advice from our debt & benefits advisor at an early stage of arrears showing on your rent account.

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- If you require more intensive support in managing your tenancy, with your permission we will make a referral to the appropriate support agency to make sure you receive the support you need.
- Visit you in your home within 4 weeks of your tenancy beginning.
- Escalate recovery action against you when your rent arrears increase or they have stayed static because you have failed to maintain any arrangement made to reduce the outstanding debt. This could involve us taking legal action to recover the rent payments you owe. You could also incur the court costs and it could harm your ability to get credit in the future if you apply for such as loans or credit cards. As a last resort you may lose your home. We will always inform you of any action we intend to take and give you an opportunity to reduce your arrears.
- Offer you a confidential interview to discuss your rent at a convenient time (within normal office hours) and place including your home if you are unable to travel to Taunton Deane Borough Council offices.
- Send you a quarterly rent account statement, but you can also request one at anytime.
- Publish an annual Rent Calendar in “Tenants Talk”, the tenants’ newsletter.
- Give you a balance of your rent account over the phone provided you can identify yourself as the tenant.
- Send you written notification if your garage tenancy is to be cancelled due to persistent arrears or failure or make regular payments to reduce the debt.
- Give you 28 days prior notification in writing when the amount of rent you pay is reviewed annually for any changes that take effect from April.
- Give you 14 days prior notification of any increases to your direct debit payments.
- Treat personal information as confidential.
- Ask you what you think of our services and use what you tell use to improve those services

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If you require further information please contact:

Estate Assistants,

Taunton Deane Borough Council,

The Deane House,

Belvedere Road,

Taunton,

TA1 1HE

Tel: 01823 356319

Email: estate.assistants@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Other agencies you can contact for support and advice include:

- Citizens Advice Bureau - Tel. 01823 282235, Email: advice@tauntoncab.org.uk
- TDBC Housing Benefit Department – Tel 01823 356321 or 01823 356322
- TDBC Debt and Benefit Advisor – Tel 01823 356542
- Jobcentre Plus – Tel 0800 055 6688
- Age UK – Tel 0800 169 6565
- National Debtline – Tel 0800 881 8891
- Shelter – Tel 0808 800 4444
- Consumer Credit Counselling Service – Tel 0800 138 1111

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TENANT SERVICES MANAGEMENT BOARD

1st JULY 2010

Somerset West Social Housing Partnership – Adaptation Agreement

INTRODUCTION

Since September 2009 a small group of social housing landlords have been meeting with representatives of Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council (the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership) and Somerset County Council to discuss possible improvements to the adaptations and housing options services for social housing residents in the 3 districts.

The attached draft agreement (with changes highlighted + some comments) aims to clarify responsibility for adaptations work through funding and practical support to get work completed. The partnership approach aims to improve the tenant experience of adaptations through reduced waiting times, clarifying who will do what and when etc. An action plan will be produced later to provide more of the detail to back up the agreement.

Stephen Boland, Housing Services Lead of Taunton Deane Borough Council, will provide the TSMB with a verbal update at its 1st July meeting on the development of the agreement to date.

Recommendation: Tenant Services Management Board Members to note the work being done so far and to offer their views and comments on the draft agreement

Somerset West Social Housing Partnership

Adaptation and Housing Options Agreement

1. The Partnership

Somerset West covers the Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and West Somerset districts. The 3 local authorities have agreed a partnership approach to the management of their private sector housing responsibilities – the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP). Private sector housing responsibilities include adaptations for people with disabilities living in all tenures.

In autumn 2009 the SWPSH Partnership Manager invited social housing providers to work with the Partnership to develop a new joint approach to adaptations and housing options for residents in social housing. This new partnership is the Somerset West Social Housing Partnership.

2. Background

Home adaptations have been identified as a key policy area in the National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society. They are expected to be included in Local Area Agreements and Comprehensive Area Assessments.

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) has produced six service standards to be introduced in April 2010 and is promoting a system of Local Service Standards to make sure that services delivered by social housing landlords meet the expectations of their residents.

There is a clear link to the Future Home Improvement Agency project.

The national systems for funding adaptations are complex and unclear. The adaptations process involves a number of agencies with different responsibilities and communication is often poor. Local authorities and social housing landlords have been encouraged to develop adaptation agreements by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the former Housing Corporation.

Residents needing adaptations are often faced with an unacceptable wait for work to be completed and are not always supported through the process.

Where adaptations are not the best solution residents may not receive the advice and support they need to explore alternative options.

3. Equality and diversity

[This agreement was developed with the help of residents and Compass Disability Services. A Disability Equality Impact Assessment has also been completed.](#)

4. Purpose of the agreement

The purpose of the agreement is to ensure that social housing residents are provided with a consistent, fair, timely, efficient and customer-focused adaptations service.

5. Partners to the agreement

The current partners are listed in schedule 1. Additional partners may join at any time by contacting the Lead Officer: *(does this need to be a partnership involving all parties or could separate agreements be signed with individual landlords as and when they have authority from their Boards to join in? It is possible that some landlords may take some time to get to the point of signing). I believe that because we will have an Action Plan in the appendices for closer working, RSL's will be happy to sign. The Action plan will be a way of recognising that we are not all at the same level or in some instances cannot be at the same level for financial or political reasons.*

Christian Trevelyan

Partnership Manager

Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership

Sedgemoor District Council

Bridgwater House

BRIDGWATER

Somerset

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6. Aims and principles

The partners agree to develop a service which:

- provides a strategic, efficient, effective, and integrated approach to adaptations
- is fair and equitable for residents
- is responsive, timely, flexible and respects the choices of residents
- achieves good quality outcomes and high levels of resident satisfaction
- is good value for money and makes optimal use of resources

The partners agree to support and promote:

- clear communication with individual residents
- positive joint working between partners

7. Key points of agreement

A detailed schedule is included at schedule 2

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Schedule 1

Partners to the agreement

This Agreement is between:

Somerset West Private Sector Partnership (comprising Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council)

Somerset County Council

Social housing providers

Home Improvement Agency (correct name to be inserted when Somerset-wide contract is completed)

Outline of individual agreement document signed by each RSL to include the amounts/work they are willing to fund – annual review + key contact details. It is possible that some landlords will feel unable to agree to funding at a higher level initially at least

Schedule 2

Adaptations		
Agreement category	Agreed approach	Expected outcomes
<p>Communication between partners</p>	<p><u>A contact questionnaire will be used to identify and record:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>One person at strategic level responsible for overseeing the adaptations service for each partner organisation</u> • <u>A person/s at operational level as the principal contact for the service for each partner organisation</u> • Information including address, telephone number and e mail address for nominated person/s. • <u>The contact questionnaire will be reviewed regularly and at least annually,</u> • A clear adaptations process to be agreed identifying the key stages and who is responsible for each one • The involvement and role of any in-house or independent Handyperson/HIA service to be clarified • The role and involvement of any in-house or private OT service to be clarified • Local authority to notify landlords of DFG applications and stage reached (means test, approval etc) • Landlords to follow agreed expedited process for providing consent for adaptation • Each partner to be informed of the contractor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication between partner agencies • Improved advice and information for partner agencies • Improved advice and information for residents • Clear procedures leading to improved understanding • No unnecessary delays in progressing DFG work

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<p>Communication with residents</p>	<p>selected to carry out adaptation work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adaptations service will focus on the needs of individual residents. • All parties to publish information in Plain English online and in other forms on adaptations policy, entitlement, priorities, funding and process. Wherever possible this information will be standardised. • Assessment of need will include an opportunity for residents to discuss preferences and options, including moving rather than adaptation • All residents will be provided with a written document setting out the work to be done, how, by whom and when. • The document will also give the name and contact details of a key worker to provide information and deal with any difficulties. • Resident feedback on the quality and outcomes of the service will be obtained through a self administered satisfaction questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents will be treated with respect • Adequate notice of appointments will be given • Appointments will be kept • Residents can find out what help is available • Residents understand the service • Improved advice and information for residents • Residents have choice in the type of service they receive • Residents know who to ask for help • Residents have the opportunity to influence the design and quality of the adaptations service
<p>Minor adaptations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner landlords will fund minor adaptations costing up to £1000/£3500 • Partner landlords will provide information on the budget available for minor adaptations each year • OT assessment will not be required for minor adaptations costing up to £1000, other than in exceptional circumstances • Partner landlords will arrange for minor adaptations work to be carried out by DLO, private contractors or HIA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced waiting times for residents needing minor adaptations • Residents deal with fewer people • Landlords take responsibility for the quality of work in their properties • Landlords have control over the specification of key components • Reduced assessment workload

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents to be given the name and contact details of a key worker to provide information and deal with any difficulties. Variations and exceptions to be negotiated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for Occupational Therapists (OTs) Reduced administrative burden for local housing authority Reduced dependence on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding No means testing of residents DFG funding focused on more complex and costly work Landlords with limited technical capacity/expertise can buy services from the HIA
<p>Major adaptations costing more than £1000/£3500</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DFG procedure with targets for each step to be agreed, streamlining the process where possible OT assessment to be provided in all cases Partner landlords may take responsibility for selecting contractors within parameters agreed with the local housing authority Partner landlords will contribute funding on a 50:50 basis for all major works/40:60 basis for work costing between £1000 and £10,000 net of any means tested contribution <p><i>(How exactly might the cost sharing proposal work? LA commits a certain amount of the DFG budget to Landlords at start of year as a partnership fund? Retrospective funding quarterly/at year end – risky for landlord paying up front and for LA.) Housing Association provides funding per grant and this is identified in the Grant Approval. Their contribution</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint visits reduce disruption for residents Residents understand what is to be provided and how it will be used Reduced dependence on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding DFG funding helps more people Reduced waiting times for residents needing major adaptations Landlord partners have a real stake in the adaptation of their stock

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 <#>Different funding arrangements already in place may be maintained by mutual agreement ¶
 Partners to agree arrangements where a resident intends to use an Individual Budget (full/mixed funding)

	<i>forms part of any identified tenant contribution.</i>	
Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partners will consider 'kite marking' contractors who have proven expertise in carrying out adaptations work and working with disabled clients <u>Where a fixed price quote system is used for certain works partner landlords will be consulted</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved quality of workmanship Improved service for residents
Purchase & maintenance of equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partners will work towards joint procurement of common items <i>and for lower costing schemes such as wet floor showers</i> Agreement will be reached on ownership, warranties and responsibility for maintenance post-warranty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved value for money, quality and lifetime cost of equipment Opportunity to share good practice in procurement
Removal, disposal and recycling of equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partners will agree arrangements for making best use of equipment that is no longer needed or life expired e.g. use of a single recycling organisation for stairlifts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycling keeps costs down Recycling may offer a rapid response to a short term need e.g. terminal illness
Monitoring of performance and record keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Partnership will meet <u>quarterly</u> to review performance. Performance of the Partnership will be measured on the SWPSHP approved system Covalent Once the Performance reports are agreed for each quarter, they will be published on the respective Council partners website Targets to be agreed for minor works and straightforward major works e.g. stairlifts, level access showers Landlords to record expenditure on adaptations and time taken to complete work they organise Landlords to ensure that adaptations of all types 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced waiting time for residents Benchmarking information for the partnership Continuous service improvement Clear evidence of adaptations work and resident satisfaction is available for future inspections and management purposes

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	<p>are clearly recorded on their property database or other dedicated database</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from residents to be reviewed regularly by the partnership along with performance information for all partners • The partnership to consider other ways of gaining feedback from residents e.g. a Partnership Focus Group 	
Modernisation, cyclical & planned maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlords to identify, protect or replace existing adaptations • Landlords to identify residents who may need adaptations and organise OT assessment where necessary • Adaptations to be provided where possible as part of the programme of works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced disruption to residents and work programme • Future expenditure on one-off adaptations minimised • Demonstration of disability awareness
Sharing best practice & innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners will share information on best practice using case studies where possible • Partners may volunteer to pilot new approaches to adaptation • <u>Any proposed pilots to be shared with the partners to this agreement before being launched</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking information for the partnership • Continuous service improvement
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The possibility of organising</u> Trusted Assessor training for landlord staff will be <u>considered by the partnership.</u> • Joint training may be organised from time to time to promote networking and discussion of common concerns/issues • Training may also be provided for resident groups/Partnership Focus Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved staff confidence in dealing with adaptations • Improved outcomes for residents • Reduced OT involvement in more routine cases
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership will review the success of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agreement will be relevant

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	agreement annually Intermediate reviews may be required e.g. if guidance is published by CLG, as a result of Audit Commission inspections	and up to date
Housing options		
Agreement category	Agreed approach	Expected outcomes
Knowledge and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners will cooperate in providing information on social housing and other options • The partnership will consider how best to help households needing re-housing in adapted or adaptable homes e.g. through CBL system, by proactive single advocate support • The partnership will consider adopting a categorisation system for all social housing e.g. non-adaptable, purpose designed/Lifetime Homes, adaptable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved guidance for residents • Reduced delay in re-housing
New build	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership will provide information to local authority enablers on the need for purpose designed/adaptable homes for specific households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved options for residents • Reduced delay in re-housing
Re-letting adapted homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners will develop a procedure for identifying adapted homes early in the letting cycle • Wherever possible adapted homes will be re-let to households needing the adaptation • Where extra adaptations are needed the partners will work together to expedite the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced void periods • Reduced delay in re-housing

[Glossary \(to be inserted before publication\)](#)