

Halton Housing Trust Report to Halton Borough Council Progress Assessment & Position Statement: June 2009

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report is presented to provide a position statement 3½ years following the transfer of the Council's housing stock to Halton Housing Trust (HHT). It provides an update on progress following the earlier position statements given to the Council in accordance with the monitoring framework agreed prior to transfer.
- 1.2 The report identifies progress made by the Trust in the delivery of its key service areas.

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Trust continues to make strong progress in the range and quality of the services provided for our customers. This is underpinned by our recently published Corporate Plan, which provides a clear strategic direction and vision for our role and contribution in the wider success of Halton.
- 2.2 The key headlines within this report are:
 - 1. Core performance and the quality of services to our customers continues to improve
 - 2. The development of the Neighbourhood Investment Framework outlines how the Trust will invest up to £262 million in the Borough between 2009 and 2015
 - 3. The Decent Homes Programme will be delivered 12 months ahead of schedule
 - 4. The Trust has secured a positive first inspection outcome and is viewed positively by our regulator

5. There is a strong support and positive contributions towards the Council's priorities for the Borough and the Trust is working with a cross section of stakeholders to secure some real outcomes for people living within the Borough.
6. The development and acquisition of new homes to support the Council's Housing Needs Survey and Housing Strategy

3 Pledges to Customers

- 3.1 The Trust has continued to maintain good progress in the delivery of the 100 pledges made in the 'Offer Document to Tenants'. Progress is monitored against each pledge with a designated manager identified to ensure each pledge is delivered and progress to date recorded.
- 3.2 Regular summary updates of progress are reported in the customer newsletter "Haltonhousing". A detailed monitoring report is also formally reported to the Trust's Board, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and internally through the Trust's management team.
- 3.3 The current position is:
 - 88 pledges have been met
 - 10 pledges are in progress
 - 2 pledges have yet to be commenced
 - There are no pledges behind schedule or where targets have been missed.

4 Investment Programme

- 4.1 Delivery of the Investment Programme is progressing well, with all four partners reaching their optimum capacity. In 2008/09 investment of over £19.3 million excluding fees, in our homes delivered:

- 1,366 new kitchens
- 1,130 new bathrooms
- 1,051 electrical upgrades
- Over 600 rewires
- 232 loft insulations
- Over 10,000 new double glazed windows
- 755 external works/improvements

4.2 By March 2009 over 5,000 homes had some form of either internal or external works completed. Customer satisfaction with the programme is currently averaging well in excess of 90% and the quality of the work is achieving similar performance levels.

4.3 In 2009/10 the Trust will invest a further £18m in improving our customer's homes. This is broken down follows:

Programme for April 2009 – March 2010		
	Properties	Spend (£ M)
Internal Works	1566	9.4
External Works	3048	2.0
Windows	1138	2.4
Other/Acceleration		4.2
Total		18 million

4.4 The acceleration of our investment programme means we are able to deliver our investment programme approximately 12 months ahead of schedule at no additional cost. This will ensure the Trust not only meets the Decent Homes Standard by December 2009 but more importantly exceeds this through the delivery of the Halton Standard as specified by our customers.

4.5 To date the Trust has recovered £8.8m of VAT incurred on the investment programme through the VAT Shelter arrangement. A further £3m is due to be recovered during 2009/10, which will result in an estimated payment to the Council of £1.5m. As outlined in the Transfer Agreement, the Trust would welcome further discussions with the Council to explore any housing projects the VAT receipts could contribute towards.

5 Inspection

5.1 The Trust successfully completed its first housing inspection, the outcomes from which were published in August 2008.

5.2 The inspection built upon the previous progress made by the Trust in the delivery of the Service Improvement Plan (SIP), which was developed following the Baseline Service Review undertaken shortly after transfer in May 2006.

5.3 The headline feedback from the inspection included:

- Recognition of real and substantial change across the organisation
- A customer focused culture across our services – access to services, information for customers and the delivery processes
- Enthusiastic, positive and committed staff
- A number of positive messages on the leadership role of the Board and senior managers

5.4 With the exception of one action the TSA have now formally signed off our progress against the four inspection report recommendations. The feedback received has been that the Trust has been fully committed and focused on addressing the points raised within the Plan. Further detailed work on the one remaining action will be completed by July

2009. It is anticipated the TSA will then formally 'sign off' the Inspection Action Plan as being completed.

6 Corporate Plan

6.1 The Trust's new Corporate Plan (2009-12) was published in January 2009. This provides clarity on the role and remit of the Trust post the delivery of its investment programme.

6.2 The Plan sets out four 'Trust Themes', which run through everything the Trust does and was developed after consultation with employees, stakeholders and customers. These form the basis against which the Trust allocates its resources. These are also reflected as forming the basis for the budget and business planning process.

1. Customer culture
2. Inclusive and open
3. Right thing right place
4. Making the best use

6.3 Under each of these headings the Plan sets out a series of priorities and then success measures and targets against which our progress can be transparently measured and where appropriate challenged. Performance against our Trust Themes will be reported to our Board, customers, colleagues and stakeholders.

7 Annual Review

7.1 In summer 2009 the Trust will be publishing its annual review for 2008/09. This will be circulated to all customers, key stakeholders and Councillors. The document provides a useful summary of some of the key achievements by the Trust over the last year.

8 Tenant Services Authority Regulatory Compliance

8.1 The TSA as Lead Regulator for Housing Associations maintains a keen interest in the development of the Trust. Since transfer, the Trust has received regular regulatory visits to assess progress against the Regulatory Code.

8.2 Feedback from the TSA is that the Trust is progressing well and they have no areas of concern. This was reflected in our recent risk downgrading from 'high' to 'medium' in our Regulatory Plan.

9 Governance Update

9.1 It is a requirement of the Trust's constitution that there is a regular review of the membership of the Board. The Board is made up of five customers, five independents and five nominees from the Local Authority.

9.2 A Governance Review Group has been reconstituted and has been meeting regularly since January 2009. The main focus has been on the recruitment of the new Chair. However other ongoing considerations include changes to M&A's, Board Member governance training scheme, Board Member remuneration, Customer Board Member succession planning and the Board's 'ambassadorial' role.

9.3 At the next AGM in September 2009, the two recently vacated Customer Board Member positions will be filled following an election process being undertaken throughout the summer.

9.4 Customer Board Members are appointed through an election process. A leaflet is due to be sent to all our customers advising them of these opportunities and drop in sessions are being held at a variety of

locations over the next few weeks so that customers can find out in more detail what being a Board Member actually involves. The Trust has also attended the Customer Forum to outline the role of Customer Board Members

- 9.5 The Board have previously agreed a two stage process for recruiting to the position of Chair and Independent Board Member. Stage 1 (internal applicants) has been completed with the only internal applicant being taken forward to stage 2 (external advert). The timetable has been developed to ensure the appointment is made by July 2009.

10 Access to Services

- 10.1 The Trust now holds and uses profiling data for over 91% of its customers. We are using this information to tailor the delivery of services to customers with particular needs and extending its use to ensure we have accurate representation in customer involvement activities and the decision-making process of the Trust.
- 10.2 Over the next six months, the Trust will be using the customer profiling data and our recent involvement in the TSA's 'National Conversation' to further develop and widen representation and involvement from a cross-section of our customer base. This includes the delivery of Project ICE (Improving the Customer Experience). This is a fundamental review of how we deliver our services. The overall purpose is to ensure that the type and subsequent delivery of services truly reflects our customers' needs.
- 10.3 Arrangements are in place to increase the face to face contact staff have with customers and to increase their presence on estates. This has included an increased use of home visits and participation on

estate based events. Examples include the arrears blitzes and the regular programme of estate walkabouts. Our Construction Services Team has been restructured around the three housing management areas. This has improved the sense of ownership in each area, improved performance levels and comparisons between teams, and reduced travelling time/ journeys.

- 10.4 The Trust has committed to the use of the Halton Advice Bus and has already identified dates when we want this to be available to provide services to our customers in the areas in which they live.
- 10.5 Involvement opportunities are clearly communicated to customers. A series of leaflets are in place that set out the opportunities for customers to become involved. New customer visits shortly after a customer takes a tenancy with the Trust are used to promote opportunities and to identify if people are willing to become involved. The newsletters clearly publicise the opportunities to become involved and to provide feedback.
- 10.6 Further improvements have been made to improve access via the telephone system. Customers are provided with direct dial numbers for officers and their local office through any communication. Clear protocols are in place for the use of voicemail, with all staff trained on the system. Changes to the telephone system have been made in response to customer feedback. Customers also highlighted the need to reduce the number of options available to them. In addition the Trust has also followed the Council's approach by introducing 0303 numbers for our repairs and ASB services ensuring customers with mobile phones are able to benefit from low rate call charges.

11 Investing in Neighbourhoods

- 11.1 The Trust recognises that to create and support vibrant and attractive communities, it is essential to work in partnership with customers and key partners, providing neighbourhoods where people feel safe and where they want to contribute to the long term sustainability of their community. In each community a dedicated Housing Officer is supported by identified staff within the lettings, income recovery, estate services and construction services teams providing continuity, detailed local knowledge and a customer-centred approach.
- 11.2 Housing Officers hold regular scheduled estate walkabouts to ensure that any estate management issues can be picked up and resolved immediately. This usually also includes the Chief Executive, a Director or member of the Senior Management Team. A standard inspection form is completed and all those present on the walkabout receive a copy of the completed pro-forma indicating what issues were identified, what action needs to be taken and who is responsible for delivery and by when. Improvements made include repairs to communal areas and improvements to communal entrances.
- 11.3 During the summer months these walkabouts are held during the late afternoon/ early evening to maximise the opportunity for more customers to become involved.
- 11.4 Local staff have worked closely with the Council and customers on alley gating schemes across the borough in order to design-out crime and reduce incidents of ASB. The Trust has also introduced a locally devolved estate budget of £10,000. This allows Housing Officers to draw on resources to target hot spot issues on their patch and address environmental issues such as tree pruning, bulb planting and minor

gate repairs. The Customer Forum (which replaced the previous HHCV's) has the final decision on how this money is spent.

- 11.5 The Trust's Business Plan and the subsequent Neighbourhood Investment Framework (NIF) agreed by the Board in January 2009 contains provision for up to a potential maximum of £40 million investment on the Environmental Improvement programme (EIP) up to 2015. To the end of March 2009 £546k had already been spent, mostly on adhoc repairs and replacements of fencing/brick walls (primarily where there were Health and Safety concerns). There had also been expenditure on some larger environmental projects to the communal areas of specific schemes to improve the immediate environment and address ASB hot spots and low demand.
- 11.6 The Trust has commissioned Groundwork Merseyside to undertake a series of four consultation exercises. The objective was for Groundwork to work with Housing Officers, partners and customers to identify the key environmental improvements that are required for each area to enable an informed Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) to be developed and delivered.
- 11.7 At the end of each phase of consultation an Area Improvement Action Plan has been produced. This summarises the views of customers and the final of four reports, received in May 2009.
- 11.8 A number of key issues have already been identified by customers as areas for concern in relation to the estate environment. These include:
- Youth nuisance
 - Anti social behaviour
 - Fly tipping
 - Landscaping

- Community Facilities

11.9 A recurring theme is emerging from these consultation exercises in that customers generally want to see the following issues addressed:

- Fencing, boundary walls and gates
- Off street parking and driveways
- On street parking provision

11.10 As part of the Trust's Neighbourhood Investment Framework (NIF) the Board have approved investment up to a potential maximum of £262 million between 2009 and 2015 for the following:

- Improvement programme (DHS and non DHS works)
- Management costs
- Environmental works
- Development opportunities
- Repairs and maintenance
- Interest costs

11.11 The Customer Services Committee (CSC) have developed a prioritisation formula against which the Trust is now able to determine the order in which it approaches the repair and replacement of boundary fencing. A programme of works for the delivery of the first phase totalling £1.6 million is currently being drawn up. This process will also help to inform how the remaining potential £38 million up to 2015 will be spent.

11.12 The Trust will be producing an easy reference guide to the NIF for its customers. This will be made available at all our customer contact points, on our website and an article included within the next Customer Newsletter. There will also be a formal launch of the NIF with the associated publicity.

11.13 The Groundwork findings will be considered at the next CSC meeting in September 2009. Following this a separate guide to the EIP will also be published. This will adopt a similar approach to that used for the delivery of the investment programme.

12 Community Investment

12.1 The Trust has established an annual budget to support/sponsor local community/sports projects.

12.2 This funding enables the Trust to have contact with groups in the local community with whom it would not normally have a relationship with. However a number of these provide support and offer services of the benefit of Trust customers. For example, the sponsorship of a local sports group, which in turn enables the Trust to embrace and involve customers including harder to reach groups i.e. young people.

12.3 Recognising the increasing demand for the community fund the Trust has increased the annual budget to £4,000 for 2009/10.

12.4 In addition, the Trust's funders Lloyds TSB agreed as part of the long term financing agreement that they would donate £100,000 to the Trust. The Board agreed that the £100k would be split over four years with an annual allocation of £25k.

13 Right to Buy Receipts & Trends

13.1 In reflecting a similar position across the region, Right to Buy (RTB) sales have continued to slow down. This has led to the Trust reviewing the sales assumptions contained within its business plan.

13.2 The following table shows the position to date :

Year	Completions	Average Valuation	Average Discount	Average Proceeds
2005/6 (part)	18	£76,756	£24,786	£51,970
2006/7	79	£80,896	£24,826	£56,070
2007/8	35	£82,093	£26,000	£56,093
2008/09	14	£78,931	£26,000	£52,931
2009/10	5	£76,000	£26,000	£50,000

13.3 During April 2009 the Trust repaid £385k of RTB sale proceeds to the Council as per the RTB Sharing Agreement. This is in addition to a previous payment of £4 million since transfer.

14 Enquiries, Complaints and Compliments Process

14.1 Improvements have been made to the internal processes to capture and share the learning outcomes from complaints received.

14.2 The Trust has also previously launched a customer suggestion scheme as well as customer and employee recognition schemes to encourage and increase the availability and use of informal feedback mechanisms. Both schemes are subject to a review later this year to ensure they continue to meet the needs of our customers

15 Joint Working

15.1 The Trust continues to develop its strategic role across Halton. We actively contribute to the Halton Strategic Partnership (LSP) Board. In

practical terms we contribute to local initiatives on homelessness, crime and disorder, health and employment and to the Neighbourhood Management pilot schemes. We also chaired the Halton Housing Partnership Board until March 2009, helping to deliver the Council's Housing Strategy and ensuring there is a housing input and gain from other key decision-making groups.

- 15.2 The Trust continues to be an active member of various strategic bodies working across Halton on matters related to more vulnerable members of the community. Examples include the Children's Trust Board, the Neighbourhood Management Board, Equalities and Cohesion Group, the Employment Learning and Skills Sub Group and the Safer Halton Partnership Board (including the DV Sub Group).
- 15.3 The Trust has taken lead strategic responsibility for the development of a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme within the Borough. The move towards a CBL scheme enhances the level of choice that can be achieved, can lead to increased stability of communities and longer term cohesion. It is anticipated that CBL will be introduced with effect from 2010. In the interim period the trust has undertaken a review of its allocations service which will ensure a number of short term improvements to the service are introduced in advance of CBL.
- 15.4 The Trust continues to manage the nominations and Council's waiting list under contract.
- 15.5 Project ICE will also lead to the development of an increasingly mobile approach to the delivery of our services. This will include a heavy emphasis on taking services out to the communities in which our customers live and work. The drivers for Project ICE include:
- Inspection report findings

- Customer survey results – including 83% of customers preferring to contact us by phone
- Call handling arrangements not fit for purpose
- Leases on offices due to be reviewed during 2011
- Feedback from employees
- VFM of existing service delivery arrangements
- New regulatory standards

15.6 The initial scoping project commenced in May 2009 and is scheduled to report in September 2009. A consultant has been appointed to lead on the review and include all aspects of customer facing services.

15.7 In conjunction with the Council the Trust has already had some early thoughts and discussion on how multi agency services could be delivered using increasingly mobile solutions and facilities. This will also require the Trust to review its existing arrangements and use of HDLs across the borough.

16 Contributing to the Council's Priorities

16.1 The Council has five strategic priorities for the borough which will help to build a better future for Halton. Examples of where the Trust has contributed to each of these include:

A Healthy Halton

- Initiatives delivered in conjunction with the PCT in central Widnes Neighbourhood Management pilot area targeting men over the age of 40 and the 'Teeth to Toe' project
- Health Trainers from the PCT attended the Trust's Employee Conference 2008 and are actively working with the Trust to deliver

health training and Lifestyles assessments to all staff in conjunction with the Trust's own Health and Wellbeing initiatives.

- Staff from across the Trust have attended mental health awareness sessions being run by the PCT. Further specific and targeted mental health awareness training will be developed later this year in conjunction with the PCT for delivery to more staff across the Trust
- Discussions on going with the Council to develop cooking on budget sessions for customers to attend. The first of these are due to be held in the autumn.

Halton's Urban Renewal

- By March 2009 over 5,000 homes had some form of either internal or external works completed
- In 2008/09 the Trust invested of over £19.3m our homes
- In 2009/10 the Trust will invest a further £18m in improving our customer's homes
- The acceleration of our investment programme means we are able to deliver our investment programme approximately 12 months ahead of schedule at no additional cost
- As part of the Trust's Neighbourhood Investment Framework (NIF) the Board have approved investment up to a potential maximum of £262 million between 2009 and 2015
- Six development opportunities are currently being actively considered by the Trust

Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

- The Trust has signed up to a Local Employment Partnership with Job Centre Plus
- We actively support the Education and Business Partnership by managers and staff attending school based activities and initiatives

- Actively supporting young people to experience work in the workplace in areas across the Trust (including young people with learning difficulties) via the Trades Circus
- An apprenticeship scheme and local employment requirement have been built into the new landscape contract with Vale Contract Services
- Provision of office accommodation for the Neighbourhood Employment Officer
- The Trust is currently exploring opportunities to support the development of one or more social enterprise / increased use of local unemployed labour through a range of partnership working.

Children and Young People in Halton

- Membership on the Children's Trust Board
- Contribution to the new Children and Young Peoples Plan
- Partnership working with local schools on community events, sponsorships, estate walkabouts, introduction to work initiatives and have planned a financial awareness session for primary school children as part of the 'Bee Money Wise' campaign
- Ongoing support through the Community Sponsorship Fund for groups including the Kingsway Bike Club, dance troops, children's football and rugby teams as well sponsorship for a budding local young tennis player
- Financial support for the ongoing maintenance of a number of play areas in and around Clayton Crescent
- Support for the Halton Young Carers Service run by HITS as one of the Trust's two nominated charities for 2009/10

A Safer Halton

- Funding of two PCSO's
- A comprehensive programme of Estate Walkabouts

- Involvement in Community Safety events i.e Mischief Night and targeted Police/ community safety initiatives,
- Contribution towards costs of Community Safety activities such as Frenzy and the mini scooter initiative
- Launch of the Trust's Good Neighbour Awards
- Development of an out of hours service for reporting ASB
- Full compliance with the Government's RESPECT standards
- 12 month secondment of one of the Trust's ASB Officers to the Community Safety Team
- Review and launch of Trust's ASB Policy and Procedures
- Active member of partnership forums
- Provision of an ASB diversionary budget
- Member of the Domestic Violence Sub Group of the Safer Halton Partnership and MARAC delivery agent for the Sanctuary scheme

17 Homelessness and Allocations

- 17.1 The Trust has continued to work with the Council to look at ways to improve the accessibility and quality of homelessness services. This has included an increased emphasis upon preventative initiatives.
- 17.2 The process review undertaken by the Trust at the Council's request prompted a more fundamental review and internal challenge of the homelessness service provided by the Trust under contract to the Council.
- 17.3 The review led to the successful transfer of the homelessness service and the management of Grangeway Court back to the Council.
- 17.4 The previous amendments to the Trust's Allocations Policy have been successfully implemented. These changes have not had any adverse

impact upon lettings to local residents with over 98% of allocations still being made to people currently residing within the borough.

- 17.5 Following consultation with current and prospective customers on their preference for the CBL framework, the Trust is undertaking an interim review of the existing Allocations Policy. The review will address the issues raised by customers, which relate to the lack of clarity of the existing policy, confusion with the points system and availability of information once registered on list. The Trust is also due to have a peer review of the existing allocations service completed in June 2009 with the results then feeding into the wider review process.
- 17.6 The allocations review will be completed by December 2009. A pilot in the Runcorn area commenced November 2008. This includes an enhanced level of face to face contact with applicants at the very early stages of the housing application process and the provision of wider housing options and advice. From April 2009 this has now been extended across all the areas in which the Trust works.
- 17.7 An information leaflet has been developed for new customers detailing what they need to consider when moving into their new home, including budgeting for the costs of running a home. The Trust also undertakes a sustainability assessment with all customers as part of the pre-offer process to assess if they have any specific needs - financial or any other requirements,

18 Adaptations

- 18.1 The Trust has been a strong advocate of the approach adopted by the Council in developing an increasingly strategic approach to the delivery of adaptations across the borough. This underpins over £1.5m invested by the Trust in adaptations for its customers since transfer.

we are working in conjunction with the Council on the delivery of one of the first module pods in the borough. We are also providing a purpose built bungalow on our development at Clarke Gardens to meet the needs of a complex adaptations case which has been on the waiting list for several years.

18.2 There is a clear commitment from the Trust to continue to work in close partnership with the Council to ensure we deliver further enhancements and value for money across this key service area. The Trust also recognises the significant capital allocation the Council made within its budget for 2008/09 for RSL adaptations. This has made a significant impact upon the existing backlogs and addresses some of the issues identified within the Housing Needs Survey and in conjunction with the £461K invested by the Trust helped to deliver the following:

- 118 Level Access Showers
- 2 Through Floor Lifts
- 17 Stair Lifts
- 2 Specialist Toilets
- 2 Home Extensions
- Over 480 minor adaptations ranging from grab rails to half steps and ramps

19 Customer First

19.1 The Trust has invested £250k in an extensive Customer First Programme. This Programme spans 20 months scheduled for completion in autumn 2009 and involves all members of the Trust's staff, Board and key partners.

19.2 The programme is split into three interrelated streams: equality and diversity; customer service; and management development. By adopting an inclusive approach, the Trust can ensure that everyone is aware of the expected standard of delivery of services to its customers. In addition, customers have been consulted on the content of various aspects of the programme and its subsequent procurement to ensure that it fully reflects customer views and opinions. This also fully takes account of the findings of the Audit Commission's inspection completed in May 2008.

20 Diversity

20.1 The Trust's Diversity Strategy 2009-12 aims to ensure that all our services respond to the needs and are equally accessible to all customers, irrespective of their age, disability, ethnicity, gender, faith of belief and sexual orientation. The Strategy ensures that the Trust will meet its legislative and regulatory requirements.

20.2 The Strategy will work towards the three specific areas locally relevant within Halton:

1. Tackle the issues of social economic deprivation through our approach to financial inclusion and improving employment opportunities
2. Support an increasing number of customers who have a mobility restriction with some initial action through the organisation's approach to aids and adaptations and partnership working with the council, health sector and other key providers
3. Proactively tackle the high levels of domestic violence through increased publicity, access to support services and meeting customer needs through improved home security and referral

frameworks in conjunction with a cross section of other organisations.

20.3 Our new Diversity Strategy builds upon the positive progress made to date in establishing a firm foundation for our activities. The Strategy takes this to the next stage of developing the Trust to become an inclusive organisation and culturally embed diversity across the organisation. It also provides the foundations for partnership working, maximising opportunities to create better neighbourhoods for our customers and improving quality of life within Halton.

20.4 In summary, the Trust has made a significant amount of progress in its approach to diversity. This is also reflected in our recent progress assessment against the Inspection Action Plan and associated recommendations in this area. However we are far from complacent and want to ensure the positive momentum we have developed is maintained and continues to deliver positive outcomes on the ground for our customers and key stakeholders. To facilitate this, the Trust is encouraging staff through the launch of a Volunteer Scheme to work with charities in Halton, the aim of which is to gain a better understanding of the needs of our customers.

21 Development

21.1 The Trust has appointed PLUS Housing Group (PHD) as its development partner. PLUS have completed a review of the 15 potential development sites identified by the Trust. The results of this review were reported to the Trust's Board in May 2008.

21.2 Six development opportunities are currently being actively pursued:

- Clarke Gardens (development of 18 homes) – well advanced – grant bid anticipated in June 2009
- Sunningdale Park – developer purchase of 11 properties – grant bid anticipated in June 2009 - completion by end of June 2009
- Wentworth Gardens - developer purchase of 5 properties – grant bid anticipated in June 2009 - completion by end of June 2009
- Houghton Street (12 homes) – scheme designed but awaiting HBC decision on land transfer
- Sandymoor - HCA to consider use of land for potential extra care housing development for older people
- Property buy backs – draft policy has been developed – PHD working on making grant bid during June 2009

21.3 Other opportunities are also being considered as they arise. Later this year the Trust is also utilising its customer profiling data to undertake some targeted consultation with customers who currently under occupy their existing home to establish their future preferred housing needs.

22 Job Evaluation

22.1 The Trust has secured final agreement following legislative scrutiny by the Trade Unions to support the Trust's proposals of the Job Family and Pay Frameworks. A ballot was held in April 2009 with over 50% of the employee population voting. Over 68% union members voted in favour of implementation.

22.2 The Job Family and Pay Frameworks were implemented from 1st May 2009, with any changes backdated to 1st April 2008.

22.3 The next steps are to:

- Deal with any appeals
- Review Competency Framework in line with Job Family levels

- Harmonisation of Terms and Conditions
- Determine robust rules for Pay Progression

23 Recent Achievements

- 23.1 The Trust was shortlisted from more than 300 entries for the Housing Heroes Awards. The Trust as a founding member of the New Generation Procurement Group entered the awards scheme and narrowly missed being awarded the Procurement Team of the Year.
- 23.2 Through an innovative joint procurement arrangement, the Trust has secured substantial savings on its insurance premiums. These benefits have also been extended to the insurance scheme offered to our customers. The learning from this procurement arrangement is also now being rolled out more widely across other service areas
- 23.3 The procurement process for the landscape/ grounds maintenance service concluded in January 2009. Our customers were integral to the specification and contractor selection process. The new contract commenced in April 2009 and is delivering an enhanced level of service including grey areas (garage and drying areas), fly tipping removal and regular cleaning of hot spots. The procurement has also resulted in savings of £130k.
- 23.4 Rent arrears are now at their lowest ever level since transfer at £620k (April 09). This was substantially lower than the year end target and is reflective of the proactive support we have provided for our customers to increase their ability to pay their rent through maximising their income. This builds upon the success of our Financial Inclusion Strategy which has received national recognition for both the document

and also the practical delivery of a number of initiatives and the organisational commitment to this work

- 23.5 Following concerted efforts made in the latter part of 2008/09 to improve both turnaround times and the quality of homes when relet to applicants, performance has improved to 36 days in March 2009. For the year as a whole, performance averaged 59 days. However a challenging target of 27 days has been set for 2009/10. This is underpinned by the introduction of new ways of working to secure further improved performance and greater efficiencies. We are also looking at the potential to incorporate measures to create employment opportunities for our customers through the development of a Social Enterprise for void cleaning.
- 23.6 Citrix has been implemented to allow employees to access their applications from any Internet connected computer. This allows for a more flexible approach to working, including home working and access to information when away from HHT offices. This will support the key outcomes from Project ICE and enable services to be delivered 'live' in customers' homes.
- 23.7 A National Peer Review Model is being developed by the Trust who are acting as the lead partner in conjunction with the Northern Housing Consortium. Nearly 100 staff from a cross section of organisations trained as peer reviewers. The Trust is also working with TAROE to develop Halton Customer Inspectors Framework.
- 23.8 The review of performance and working practices within Construction Services under the project heading of 'The Excellence Project' has focused on customer expectations and core repairs service needs. This has placed the service in a strong position to demonstrate value for money and provide the service customers expect going forward.

Initiatives include the introduction of a real time work planning tool which will improve consistency and appointments for customers and is supported by the introduction of a multi skilled repairs service.

24 Forthcoming Events

24.1 The Trust has a number of forthcoming events. These include:

- Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey – July 2009
- Employee Conference – 17th September 2009
- Employee Attitude Survey – September 2009
- AGM – 30th September 2008
- Good Neighbour Awards – December 2009
- Series of different events being held throughout the year which will cover different services but will be used to capture feedback from customers

24.2 The Trust has also committed to support two local charities for the 2009/10 financial year – Halton Haven Hospice and Halton Young Carers Service run by HITS.

25 Summary

25.1 The Trust has continued to make strong progress in delivering the promises made prior to transfer. The focus is now building upon the strong foundations to ensure we develop and grow as a business with a social conscience and play our part in the wider success and life chances for people across Halton.

25.2 As we continue to make improvements to our primary business areas and improving core performance the emphasis is now shifting towards considering our longer term new business growth and development opportunities. This will be underpinned through the continued



development of a stronger customer orientated culture throughout the organisation.

26 Contact

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