

Audit Committee – 25th March 2010

5. Update on Homelessness Service Action Plan

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Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide members with an update on the Homelessness Service Audit Action Plan.

Recommendation

To note the actions and progress made, and the need to extend the implementation date for action 8.1.

Background

Since the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) carried out its review in March 2007, significant progress has been made within housing to ensure there are adequate controls in place and risks well managed.

During the final quarter of 2008/9, SWAP reviewed the homeless service and the overall outcome of the audit was that reasonable assurances could be given as most of the areas reviewed were found to be adequately controlled, and generally risks were well managed. (See appendix A, page 3).

Progress Made on the Action Plan (see appendix B, pages 4-6)

The Committee will be aware that progress has been made since the last report on the Policy Framework for the use of the Homeless Prevention Fund.

Only one action remains uncompleted on the action plan arising from the latest audit, which concerns the development of improved management information for aged debtors.

Work has commenced, aged debt management information reports have been defined and are planned to be automated through QSP business objects. These new reports will provide the service with a breakdown of debtors by nominal and enable automated statements to be issued to the debtors.

Staff structures have been re-organised to ensure sufficient capacity exists within the service to ensure we can swiftly recover debts. Implementation of these new arrangements has been delayed through staff illness, however, interim temporary staffing measures have been deployed to cover the short-term impact of staff illness.

In addition to this, the Assistant Director and Service Manager have put plans in place to develop a new revenue collection policy and management process by the end of Q1 2010/11 to underpin the improved aged debt reporting. This work will aim to ensure we focus our efforts on identifying those who can't pay from the people that have the means to but won't, providing a more robust, fair and equitable basis for recovery.

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Progress in these areas will be tested by SWAP in May 2010.

Summary

Work has started on improving financial controls and procedures within Housing, including a clear policy framework for the Homeless Prevention Fund. During the next quarter we will have in place clear reporting for aged debtors to ensure maximized recovery. We will have recruited for the Finance Officer post, which will increase capacity.

Financial Implications

None.

Background Papers: *Audit Committee Agenda and Minutes October 2009.*
District Executive Homeless Prevention Fund Review and Demonstration of Value for Money October 2009
Internal Audit Report of Homelessness Service June 2009
Audit Committee Agenda and Minutes December 2007
Internal Audit Report of Homelessness Service March 2007