

Annexe F – Consultation and Accountability

1. Consultation

1.1 In addition to the independent consultation exercise set out in **Annexe A** the Council undertook its own exercise between September 2002 and April 2003 in order to establish main themes for inclusion in this Strategy.

1.2 The consultation included views from the following groups:

- Applicants for grant assistance,
- Applicants awaiting grant assistance,
- Applicants who had work completed under a grant,
- Members of the Isle of Wight Private Landlords Forum,
- Estate Agents and Letting Agents,
- Voluntary Groups,
- Service User Representatives through our Homelessness Strategy Review,
- Elected Members,
- The MP for the Isle of Wight.

1.3 Key conclusions from this exercise were:

- *We should continue with our services to people with disabilities,*
- *We should assist where possible with services to older people,*
- *We should assist where possible with people being discharged from Hospital,*
- *We should deal with properties that have missing amenities and,*

- *We should concentrate on the worst properties*

1.4 We also invited comment on the additional assistance that the Council could offer householders. Key outcomes were that we should:

- *Provide information to residents on how to get finance for Home Improvements,*
- *Provide a Home Maintenance guide and,*
- *Provide an accredited builder scheme*

2. Service User Review

- 2.1 In order to ensure that services are appropriate to Islanders needs the Council will ensure that service users are directly involved in the review and monitoring of this Strategy.
- 2.2 The Principal Housing Officer will establish a group of service users and monitor the Strategy and policies on a six monthly basis.

3. Policy and Operational Matters

- 3.1 The Housing Renewal Strategy will come into force from 18 July 2003. The Principal Housing Officer will be responsible for deciding operational policies and procedures.
- 3.2 This Strategy, together with detailed policy on eligible items, grant conditions, duties to customers on current waiting lists and application forms shall be published before 18 July 2003.
- 3.3 Where a new form of assistance is developed, such as Home Maintenance services, the Principal Housing Officer shall report these to the appropriate committee for approval prior to implementation and operation.

4. Strategy Review

- 4.1 This Housing Renewal Strategy will cover the next five years.
- 4.2 We intend to review this strategy two years after it becomes operational and amend where appropriate. We will publish any revision and ensure that these are notified to the public.
- 4.3 Substantive changes to funding levels or changes to legislation may require earlier or more frequent strategy reviews.

5 Grants Review Panel

- 5.1 To ensure that the distribution of grant assistance is fair and consistent, a Grants Review Panel will be constituted.
- 5.2 The aim of a Grants Review Panel is to provide a mechanism for considering cases which fall outside of the usual application criteria. It will enable such cases to be discussed and prioritised on their individual merits, whilst retaining consistency of decision making.
- 5.3 Appeals about individual cases where there are no extenuating circumstances e.g. where an enquiry for application is refused, will be considered by the Principal Housing Officer. Appeals will not be considered by the grants review panel.
- 5.4 In some cases, the panel will determine a course of action. In others, generally where the situation is exceptional or sets a precedent, a report will be presented to the Head of Housing.
- 5.5 The panel will normally consist of five duly trained individuals working in Social Services, Housing, Supporting People, Legal Services and an Elected Member.
- 5.6 The quorum for a Panel meeting will be three members, one of which must be from Legal Services.

6 User Complaints

- 6.1 Service users unhappy with the service provided should initially contact the officer dealing with their case.
- 6.2 If after contact with the officer dealing with the case a customer is still dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further they should contact the Principal Housing Officer who will provide a full written response within 10 working days of any formal notification.
- 6.3 In the event of a full response not being available within 10 working days an interim response will be sent indicating that a full answer will be provided within 20 days of receiving all relevant facts in the Housing Office.
- 6.4 In the event that a customer is still dissatisfied at this stage the Council has a formal complaints procedure. Further details are contained in the leaflet: **"How to Complain"** – available in reception, by writing to us, by calling us on 01983 823040 or by emailing us at Housing@iow.gov.uk
- 6.5 Service users unhappy with the service provided have the right to seek independent arbitration from the Complaints and User Rights Manager, Social Services and Housing, Social 46 Sea Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5BL or by telephoning 01983 533289.

7 Appeals

- 7.1 Appeals about how the strategy is operated in individual cases e.g. where an enquiry for application is refused, will be considered by the Principal Housing Officer.
- 7.2 Appeals must be set out in writing and sent to the Principal Housing Officer, Housing Renewal, 7 High Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1SS. The appeal submission must include the specific grounds on which the appeal is based. Appeals will only be considered on the following grounds:

- That the Strategy has not been correctly applied,
- That the case is an exception and should be considered outside the remit of the strategy

7.3 Appeals will not be considered on the grounds that the appellant disagrees with the strategy.

7.4 A written response to an appeal will be given in line with published service standards.