

AT A MEETING  
of the  
**CPA HOUSING IMPROVEMENT  
PLAN WORKING GROUP** held at  
the Council House, Walsall on  
**Thursday 24 February, 2005** at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Councillor C. Ault (Lead member)  
Councillor Barton  
Councillor Coughlin  
Councillor D Pitt  
Councillor I Shires  
Councillor Yasim  
Kathy McAteer  
Andrea Little  
Jason MacGilp

**13. Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

**14. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

Councillor Pitt declared a personal non prejudicial interest as the brother of the portfolio holder for Housing and Community Safety.

Councillor Walker declared a personal non prejudicial interest as the partner of the portfolio holder for Regeneration.

**15. Notes of the Meeting held on 14 January 2005**

The notes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record.

**16. Updates of figures and targets for homelessness**

Andrea Little updated the working group:

2003/2004 770 decisions  
429 legal duties to provide housing

The current six months update was:

491 decisions  
278 legal duties to provide housing

The year end projected figures were  
556 legal duty to house or an increase of 30% on the previous  
year.

The figures for stays in B & B were as follows:

Average stay: in weeks

2.24	Current
8.3	03/04 outturn
6	02/03 outturn

The government target was 6 weeks Therefore there was a huge improvements  
against a backdrop of increasing demand.

The figures for applications that are investigated with 33 days are

03/04 outturn	54%
04/05 to date	76.4%

Members enquired about referral routes and it was explained that there were  
many different possible routes and the rising profile of housing advice was  
increasing demand.

The main reasons of homelessness were outlined and these included

Family exclusions  
Breakdown of families including domestic violence  
Loss of private rented accommodation.

Members queries whether there were many out on borough placement or  
whether there were placements from other boroughs. It was confirmed that  
there were occasional out on borough placements but only where necessary.

Resolved

That the report be noted and the improvements be welcomed.

**17. Council's Capital Strategy for Disabled Facilities Grants/Occupational  
Therapy**

Kathy McAteer confirmed that £4 million for capital had been allocated for  
2005/2006 with £3 million per year thereafter up to 2009/10 to clear the  
backlog.

The management arrangements for this service were under review and work  
was being done to identify the capacity of building contractors to do the work.  
Work with Walsall Housing Group regarding minor works was progressing with  
more work to finalise the details required.

Five additional support workers had now started under the supervision of Occupational Therapists so waiting lists should start to decrease. Cross working with PTC was progressing with the appointment of a new integrated Head of Service. The integrated community equipment store was performing well and was in the top quartile for performance.

**18. Update on Housing CPA Improvement Plan**

Jason MacGilp informed the working group that an external critical friend had been appointed and officers were working on producing an overall strategic statement about what they were trying to achieve to implement the improvement plan and that would be reported to the group. The actions from the improvement plan would be embedded into service plans for 2005/2006.

The improvement plan had been submitted to the Audit Commission. Actions were being updated each month and tracking evidence would be included. The document would be constantly updated and at present the overall project was on track to be achieved. It was noted that the new Housing Strategy had now been deemed fit for purpose by GOWM and this was significant progress as only 5 authorities in the West Midlands had achieved this.

Cllr Shires questioned progress on Item 616 and it was reported that the work was estimated to be completed by September 2005 and that the indicator would be moved from Red to Amber.

**19. Feedback from Members**

Councillors fed back to the meetings he had held with officers. Councillor Coughlin was concerned about how to raise awareness about choice and move so members could help their constituents.

Councillor Walker

Cllr Walker was meeting with officers and would report back to the next meeting.

**Action**

It was agreed that Jason MacGilp would organise an awareness session on choice based letting to help members in their community leadership role.

**20. Work programme**

It was agreed that the work group would continue to monitor the CPA Housing Improvement Plan. It would also look at access to housing services information, available to local people and DFG/OT issues

Members were interested in being involved in mystery shopping and Jason MacGilp agreed to investigate how members would become involved with a clear remit.

It was also suggested that partners such as the Older Person's Partnership Board or other user group would be invited to make special presentations to future meetings. Engaging with some partners would probably mean attending their meetings and it was agreed that Kathy McAteer would examine how best to arrange this.

The following actions were agreed:

**Actions**

1. Jason MacGilp would investigate how members could be involved in mystery shopping
2. A list of user groups would be produced to the next meeting and officers would provide guidance on how to approach them.
3. Dates of future meetings would be circulated.