

21 Sep 09

**DEFENCE HOUSING AUTUMN HOUSING FORUM – ST GEORGES’ COURT
LONDON – Fri 18 SEP 09**

Present

Chair	Air Cdre Elaine West	Head DE Ops Housing Dep Hd DE Ops H (Estate Management) Dep Hd DE Ops H (Delivery) Dep Hd DE Ops H (Strategy and Plans) DACOS DNPers W&S (Rep RN CEStO) Army Housing Col (Col PS4(A)) DACOS Community Support (RAF) Chair NFF Chief Executive AFF Chair RAF FF Housing Specialist AFF SO1 RAFIB (RAF CEStO) DCDS Pers SCW Accom Pol Rep LF DInfra AD Infra Plans (Army CEStO) DE/Ops Housing HEO (RAF)
Secretary		

In Attendance

MD MODern Housing Solutions (MHS)
Operations Director MHS

Apologies

Asst Hd DE Ops H (Business Support)
RNEO DRNEO (RN CEStO)
LF DInfra AD Infra Plans (Army CEStO)
DACOS Infra HQ Air (RAF CEStO)

<u>Item 1 – Introduction and Welcome</u>	ACTION
<p>1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting outlining the challenges faced over the summer months and the incremental successes achieved by the Department. It was her intention to deal with any failures head on and to produce appropriate recovery plans.</p>	
<u>Item 2 – FY09/10 Improvement Plan</u>	
<p>2. The latest iteration of the Improvements Plan was dated 21 Jul 09 and was more focused than previous versions. The next CEStO round would be conducted in Oct 09. The improvement Plan update was as follows:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">a. Some 800 SFA will be improved this year and 46 projects are currently running. Additional funding from outside the MOD has is also being pursued for energy efficiency initiatives, ie loft insulation for 4,000 SFA and there are plans for cavity wall insulation in the future.</p>	

<p>b. The Strategic Facilities Plan also aligns with the above upgrade projects and will be instrumental in addressing SfC 3 and 4 SFA, along with larger maintenance programmes.</p> <p>c. By way of demonstrating VFM, DE Ops Housing had commenced an initiative to market test a selection of future projects, thus providing greater competition and competitive rates.</p> <p>d. Meanwhile, SfC3 and 4 SFA remain a priority for all available works funding in accordance with Departmental targets. DE Ops Housing is now well armed with maintenance performance data, more comprehensive asset management information and Defence operational priorities to target improvements effectively.</p> <p>3. There were 3 issues arising:</p> <p>a. The RN reps sought clarity on the announced demolitions at Rowner estate of 85 SFA.</p> <p>b. The DCDS Pers Accom Pol rep asked for detail on where the completed 450 SFP properties were located.</p> <p>c. The Chair of the RAFFF for the SFP Plan to be updated and reissued.</p> <p>Action: DE Ops H to investigate the Rowner estate demolitions and provide a response to the RN H Col, to provide detail on the 450 SFA improvements and re-issue the SFA Plan idc.</p>	<p>DH DE Ops H (Estate Management)</p>
<p><u>Item 3 – Housing Complaints Handling Procedure</u></p>	
<p>4. The review into the Complaints Handling Procedure is now complete and indicated the following:</p> <p>a. Absence of complaints handling governance.</p> <p>b. Cumbersome complaints IT system.</p> <p>c. Ineffective Housing and Technical Officer (HO and TO) involvement.</p> <p>d. Imprecise attribution of DE Ops H and MHS ownership.</p> <p>e. Customer service staff training required improvement.</p> <p>5. The recommendations were as follows:</p> <p>a. HO complaints appointments needed to be established</p>	

<p>and action timelines governed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. DE Ops H's 'Anite' requires a simplified complaints system, based upon the 'Works Manager' model. c. Revised HO and TO Terms of Reference, together with common Objectives, needed to be issued jointly. d. MHS staff needed to be embedded into DE Ops H Customer Service staffs. e. Staff Customer Service training would be strengthened. <p>6. The new Housing Complaints Procedure would be communicated in forthcoming news letters and in the next version of the Occupant's Handbook later this calendar year. Indeed, improvements had already been witnessed through the satisfactory resolution of numerous complaints over the last quarter and a reduced complaints trend noted.</p>	
<p><u>Item 4 – House-Mark Forum</u></p> <p>7. House Mark is a professional body for Housing Associations designed to share best practice and pertinent legislative developments to its members. The NAO recommended that DE Ops H benchmark its performance with Industry and to develop best practice, so this Forum appeared to represent an opportunity. There remains a comparison difficulty between national housing associations and DE Ops H, particularly in manning levels and standards of housing, but sufficient commonality existed for membership to be considered further.</p>	
<p><u>Item 5 – The 48-Hour Handback</u></p> <p>8. The 48-hour handback was introduced as a minimum period for HPC to demonstrate to DE Ops H that a property was to standard in all respects for occupation. Although the concept was good, there had been mixed results. Key issues were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Staff availability and the additional appointment workload and the DE Ops H Optitime diary linkages with MHS Work Manager. b. Refresher training at Reference Houses to be completed by Nov 09, but should include MLOs where appropriate. c. HPC following its own procedure for works and inspections from receiving an SFA and then failing to report on garden preparation and internal cleanliness. d. All SFA hand backs were now being recorded. 	

<p>Ops H, and were to be periodically analysed by both management teams (DE and MHS) to drive improvements. Hd Ops H had made this a key priority.</p> <p>9. It was suggested that occupants should record their move-in experience on the move in documentation in the same way that the 14-day snags were communicated.</p> <p>Action: DE Ops H (Delivery) to investigate the inclusion of a customer feedback loop post move in.</p>	<p>DH DE Ops H (Delivery)</p>
<p><u>Item 6 – Void Surge Programme 09</u></p> <p>10. Clear targets had now been set to bring SFA on line in areas of high demand and to contain the SSFA bill in areas of 'high churn'. In these areas incidents of Void Unavailable (VUN) SFA would be minimised. Furthermore, the concept of creating a buffer stock of SFA in areas of high demand was discussed as a clear objective for the future, whereby the 10% management margin should be made up of SFA ready for immediate occupancy.</p> <p>11. Last year over 1,600 SFA were returned to core stock and some 1,200 SFA are identified in the next tranche (VSP 09). Further, improved asset management had identified clearly targeted disposals. Where units were unable to justify retention but were not happy to approve disposal, the owning TLB was being asked to fund the upkeep.</p>	
<p><u>Item 7 – Customer Services to Assist Move In</u></p> <p>12. It was noted that a critical point of failure existed when families were unable to occupy their appointed SFA and a hotel was required. It was the intention of DE Ops H to introduce a standard HO Information Pack, containing customer-friendly details relating to the hotel standard, the family laundry arrangements, the handling of pets and the detail on the allowances package and JPA advances for the duration of their stay.</p> <p>13. Housing Colonels would be consulted on the detail of this Information Pack before it would be finalised.</p>	
<p><u>Item 8 – HIC Christmas Closures</u></p> <p>14. The HICs' last working day for this Christmas would be Tue 22 Dec 09 and first working day in the New Year would be Mon 4 Jan 09. Furthermore, Fri 18 Dec 09 would be a training day and the hic would close at 1200 hrs. The telephone message for these periods would be changed to explain the closure period and identify the emergency contact details for duty staff.</p> <p>15. It was noted that equal treatment should be afforded to the</p>	

<p>Summer Holiday period, where staff leave should be managed to avoid overstretch at a very busy time of year.</p> <p>Action: DE Ops H (Delivery) to consider management of Summer leave arrangements in the HICs and minimum management levels.</p>	<p>DH DE Ops H (Delivery)</p>
<p><u>Item 9 – Any Other Business</u></p> <p>16. Communications. DE Ops H would be developing a quarterly 'Commanders' Brief – Housing' to communicate housing performance statistics, works programme developments, asset management and housing information to the chain of command more effectively in future. There would be regional and zone updates that would supplement the Area Housing Information Pack information. Housing Colonels would be consulted in the first instance, together with Housing staffs and this communications vehicle would be constructed accordingly. The work would be led by [redacted] supported by AH DE Ops H (Business Support).</p> <p>17. Area Housing Plans. Strategic Area Housing Plans are being developed to clarify the future housing requirement in terms of improvements, disposals and procurement plans. The Plans would be aimed at Bgde level and hoped to be published by Jul 09 according to a set template. It was DH DE Ops H (Strategy and Plans) intention to brief the concept at the forthcoming DCOS Conference on 6 Oct 09.</p> <p>18. Pre-Payment Cleaning Scheme. The Pre-Payment Cleaning Scheme was now being rolled out and was proving to be successful.</p> <p>19. SFA Property Details. The SFA Property Detail information leaflets have now a standard template, including a photograph, agreed by the AH DE Ops H (Business Support) and the Family Federations. Roll out was planned for later in the year and updated NI SFA leaflets would follow in due course.</p> <p>20. SFA Summer Moves. It was noted that the summer months were a busy period, but that this period was made more chaotic by Service personnel not notifying the respective HICs of their assignment order details and housing requirements according to published guidelines. Many were playing the system and giving notifications designed to avoid relocation by quoting the 11-12 rule and some deciding not to notify at all (cuckoos) in the hope of staying put or retaining their SSFA. These cases were now being scrutinised and personnel discovered to be flouting the rules in favour themselves, would not be able to invoke other rules to protect the honest majority and, as a consequence, would be issued with Notices to Vacate. Both the Housing Colonels and the Families Feds were asked to support this tougher line in</p>	

<p>21. Funding for Disabled SFA. The works to adapt SFA for disabled Service personnel would no longer be from the Operational Contingency or Conflict Prevention Fund, but be sourced from the respective TLB. More importantly, all associated adaptations would be dealt with promptly, regardless of funding availability. Advanced planning of SNAs is also being considered in line with future operational deployments.</p> <p>22. E1132 Update. Development of the E1132 was on target for a Dec 09 release, together with improved handling processes. The E1132 would be devised to allow supplementary supporting documents to be attached electronically where necessary.</p> <p>23. Pressure on South-Coast SFA. The RN reps commented on the current pressure on SFA along the South Coast, particularly in Plymouth. It was noted that there was an increased demand for SFA nationally and this trend would continue whilst the housing market was slow. The RN CEStO was advised to reassess the RN/RM establishments together with their operational priorities to assure themselves that their future housing requirements were accurate.</p> <p>24. Farewell to . The Chair thanked for his contribution to Defence Housing during his 2 years in appointment. He had helped shape the contract and worked closely with DE Ops H to develop a successful partnership. He was wished well for the future in his new role within Carillion.</p>	
<p><u>Item 10 – Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>25. The date and timing of the next meeting will be notified idc.</p>	

Wg Cdr
Housing Executive Officer (RAF)
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