



Board

28 July 2009

Items for Information

1. Introduction

The attached are for information:

- (i) Chief Executive's Report
- (ii) Health and Safety Quarterly Report
- (iii) Delegated Decisions 15 June to 17 July 2009
- (iv) Minutes :
 - Audit Committee held on 21 April 2009
 - Property Committee held on 18 May 2009
 - Finance Committee held on 18 June 2009

2. Recommendation

Board is asked to receive these items for information.

Contact Officer:

Maureen Dickson, Company Administrator and Board Support Officer, ext 28624

Board

28 July 2009

Chief Executive's Report

Report by John P Lee

FOR INFORMATION

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report aims to give Board a taste of some up and coming national developments that are influencing the work that YHN is involved in currently and that they may be asked to look at in more detail at some future date.

2. Your Homes Newcastle Strategic Objectives

- 2.1 The current and future developments discussed in the report will influence the delivery of all our current strategic objectives:
- Support and care to communities
 - Three star excellent services
 - A quality workforce
 - Refurbishing and building homes

3. Key Issues

3.1 TSA – New fund for local deals between landlords and tenants

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) has launched a new fund to identify and promote best practice by social housing providers in England.

Providers such as housing associations, local authorities and ALMOs are invited to make bids of up to £9,000 to support the development of agreements between landlords and their tenants to develop 'local deals'.

The aim is to enhance the level of service in response to particular local needs and strengthen landlord accountabilities to their local community.

The TSA is also keen to learn from providers who already involve their residents in the design and delivery of locally responsive services so that this existing best practice can be shared and used to inform the development of the TSA's Standards

Framework. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday August 5.

3.2 **Housing Revenue Subsidy system**

Housing Minister John Healey has pledged to publish a consultation document 'before the summer recess' on the reform of council housing finance. This follows the review of the Housing Subsidy System that has been going on since 2007 that has looked at options for a sustainable, long term system for financing council housing that would be fair to both tenants and taxpayers.

In a written statement to the House of Commons, Mr Healey told MPs that he intended to 'dismantle' the current subsidy system and replace it with a 'devolved' system of responsibility and funding.

He confirmed to the House the principles on which this will be based

- provide more flexibility in finances and more transparency in the operation of the system
- devolve control from central to local government
- increase local responsibility and accountability for long term planning, asset management, and for meeting the housing needs of local people

Change on this scale is complex and will require primary legislation. The consultation will set out how moving to a self-financing system will require an adjustment of debt levels for most authorities. At present around £17bn of housing debt with annual servicing costs of around £1.1bn is spread across the 202 councils in the system. The self-financing model would enable each council to manage directly and fund their own debt.

In addition to revenue redistribution, councils are currently required to pay Government different proportions of the receipts from Right to Buy sales and sales of other HRA assets. There is a strong case for allowing councils to retain all of their capital receipts which could give councils the ability to develop a comprehensive strategy to maintain, improve and develop their housing. The consultation document will therefore set out proposals to end the pooling of all housing capital receipts.

He said about ALMOs - "The benefits delivered by Arms Length Management Organisations that manage council housing services should not be affected by a change in the system for financing council housing. We see a strong future role for ALMOs which are valued by their tenants. We would expect ALMOs to continue to develop their housing management capacity and to look for opportunities to extend the range of services they offer, including to other landlords, where this would improve efficiency and effectiveness.'

Additionally he said - "A fully self financing locally devolved system cannot be implemented in a single step but I want to move as rapidly as possible to put these reforms in place and the consultation document will set out my proposed timetable.

"However, there are steps we can take without delay. So I am announcing that from today we will exclude all new build council housing from the HRA subsidy system which means that councils will retain in full the rent and capital receipts from these homes.'

3.3 **Building Britain's future – the Housing Pledge**

Prime Minister Gordon Brown promised a £1.5 billion boost to the building

programme as part of the Housing Pledge, one of a series of pledges as part of Building Britain's Future.

On 31 June he announced a further £1.5bn to build an extra 20,000 affordable and energy efficient homes, increasing the scale of the programme for the next two years to a £2.1bn investment for 110,000 new affordable homes. This includes a fourfold increase in plans for new council homes. Together, these changes will enable councils to become once again significant providers of new housing, with further flexibility to do more, where councils can act rapidly and offer good value for money. He indicated a desire to maximise efforts behind building of new affordable homes and confirmed that they are closing the open market HomeBuy scheme to new applicants and in future the low cost home ownership programme will be directed to schemes which support new build homes.

Local Authorities will have a new role both in leadership in identifying new sites, and through direct development of new homes, building on the £100m announced in the recent Budget. The cash injection should also have a positive impact on house builders, simultaneously meeting the need and demand for new houses.

The Housing Pledge – and the £1.5 billion funding – breaks down into four key areas, with indicative funding amounts as follows:

- Up to £750 million for the HCA's approved investment partners – housing associations, ALMOs and private developers – through the Agency's National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) for around 12,500 new homes
- Up to £500 million to kickstart stalled housing and regeneration schemes, to deliver around 4,000 new homes in addition to the £400 million Programme announced in April's budget. In view of the new funding, and the high level of bids already received, the Agency anticipates taking forward more than £400 million worth of schemes from the initial bidding round
- Up to £250 million for direct development by local authorities of around 3,000 new homes, again in addition to the £100 million announced in the Budget
- A public land programme for around 500 new homes initially, designed to bring new construction players into the housing market using land in public ownership which the HCA and other public sector organisations would contribute in return for an equity share in the development.

His pledge also included reform of the allocation system yesterday as part of an attempted relaunch.

3.4 Changes to Supporting People Funding

On 26th November 2008 the Government announced changes to the funding of the Supporting People Programme which were implemented from April 2009. The funding had previously been ring-fenced within Local Authorities to fund housing related support, an arrangement that had been in place since 2003, and which had meant that Local Authorities could only use the funding to provide services to residents in line with their Supporting People Commissioning Body Strategy. The funding could not be used by Local Authorities to fund other non housing related support priorities.

The ring-fencing was removed from April 2009 and 2009/10 is to be treated as a

transitional year where more freedom will be given to Local Authorities to allocate the funding according to local need but will still be regarded as a grant for housing related support. From 2010/11 however the Supporting People Grant will be placed into Area Based Grant, the allocation of which is determined by Local Strategic Partnerships. The Local Strategic Partnership may prefer to invest resources in other areas than Supporting People services.

In addition to the potential impact of the removal of the ring-fencing of the Supporting People Grant we must also consider the potential impact to funding for YHN's Support and Care Services of the Comprehensive Spending Review which is likely to follow the general election next year. A reduction in public sector funding for the Area Based Grant could result in less finance being made available for existing Supporting People services.

Whilst the risk to YHN of reductions in Supporting People Grant is real, YHN has undertaken various actions to manage this risk which include;

- Reducing Supporting People Grant for services no longer viewed as housing related support, such as housing management and housing needs.
- Improving Quality Assessment Framework scores from Level B and C to an improved Level A and B. The recent Supporting People inspections of the Young People's Service resulted in 17 A's and 1 B in the assessment of its 3 services, (Hostel, North Kenton block and Floating Support), whilst the Advice and Support Service received 4 A's and 2 B's.
- Made competitive bids in terms of both quality and cost during the commissioning process as evidenced by the winning of the tender for young people's floating support services.
- YHN has contributed to the Supporting People Strategy Review and are well placed to help meet Supporting People strategic priorities aimed at meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people such as homeless, young people, people in social care, those that the Council has a statutory duty to support, etc. In other words the harder to support excluded groups.
- National Indicators 141 and 142 are measures within the Local Area Agreement.
- YHN has proposed to build a Young Parents Scheme.
- YHN has proposed to build Learning Disability Scheme's which could lead to considerable financial savings to Supporting People.
- YHN has grown Telecare Services in line with the Supporting People Strategy and is well placed for future growth in this field both within Newcastle and the surrounding Tyneside area.

4. Work in Progress

4.1 Fire in high rise in Camberwell

You will have heard about the tragic accident on Friday 3 July at Lakanal House in Camberwell, London, where 6 people lost their lives as a result of a fire. The Housing minister reassures all LAs that speedy investigations are taking place which will determine the cause and extent of the fire.

The Secretary of State has asked the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, Sir Ken Knight, to provide an independent overview of progress with the fire investigations at Lakanal House, Havil Street, Camberwell on Friday 3 July. Sir Ken will report back to the Secretary of State on progress and emerging findings as a matter of urgency.

Sir Ken's Terms of Reference for his report include the fire safety matters applicable to this building and operational procedures and practices undertaken by London Fire Brigade at this incident.

Until this work is complete we shall be offering tenants reassurance through the next edition of Homes and People about the fire procedures in place in blocks and about the practical measures that they can take to protect themselves from fire. If tenants are concerned they can contact their local FRA and the Fire Kills website www.firekills.directgov.co.uk has plenty of up to date fire safety information.

Current situation

YHN has approximately 50 high rise blocks of flats and 11 of the blocks of flats have one stair.

Shieldfield House has been subject to a recent inspection and is programmed for a full fire risk assessment (priority). Within the fire risk assessments carried out to all YHN high rise buildings it has been identified that smoke and fire separation are key factors in maintaining a safe means of escape for all tenants.

In December 2008 the Board agreed to allocate funding to improve fire safety standards in our high rise buildings.

In January 2009 a 3 year project was started to fit (approximately 6500) smoke seals and intumescent strips to fire doors within the common areas of the high rise buildings.

At 6th July – 11 blocks have been upgraded and 2 blocks are in progress of being fitted. Of the single stair blocks, 3 of the 11 have been fitted with smoke seals and intumescent strips to the doors affecting the means of escape. ie:- Moorland, Beaumont and Brockwell Courts.

As a priority we will arrange for the appropriate doors within all single stair high rise blocks to be fitted with smoke seals and intumescent strips.

A number of the high rise buildings are occupied by Sheltered Housing tenants. These buildings have a fire alarm system within the flats and the common areas and the alarm system is monitored by CCAS.

All flats in none Sheltered buildings are provided with smoke detectors which alert the tenants of a fire situation within their own flat.

There are no communal area fire alarms in any YHN high rise high apart from the Sheltered Housing blocks (this is normal practice).

All YHN high rise housing blocks have a fire procedure notice on each floor landing, normally located adjacent to the lifts. This notice gives information on emergency procedures to be adopted during a fire situation.

Each flat within high rise buildings is designed to be a fire compartment which allows for a single stair exit route to be used. Within the communal passageways or lobby's all doors are required to be of a suitable fire resistant standard (normally 30mins fire resistance).

The fire doors from the flats and the fire doors within the common areas and the doors to the stairs are designed to provide time to allow tenants to escape from a fire.

An observation from pictures of the London fire shows that the flats had old single glazed windows. Single glazing in a fire situation will often shatter thus exposing the outer surface of the building (the weather boarding) to flame and subsequent fire travel from one flat to another. Double glazing would provide an improved fire spread safeguard. Information received from the projects team indicated that 9 of the 11 single stair blocks have been fitted with double glazed windows. The two outstanding, Vale House and Shieldfield House are programmed for upgrade.

Additional safety checks

Either on site sheltered housing officers or concierge staff carry out daily checks to ensure that all communal areas and means of escape routes are free from combustible materials and fire doors are functioning correctly. All faults are reported and repairs carried out.

Neighbourhood Services maintenance teams also carry out regular checks to all buildings systems.

5 Next Steps

5.1 Will report regularly to Board about developments in these areas

Contact Officer: Diane Creighton extension 28701



Board

28 July 2009

Quarterly Health and Safety Report

Report by Director of Finance and Resources

FOR INFORMATION

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report informs Board of the current position with regard to accident/incident statistics, health and safety training and work in progress within the area of employee operational safety and assets and programming.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Board is recommended to note this report for information.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The Fire Safety Officer is continuing a prioritised programme of fire risk assessments to ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The programme is on target to complete the remainder of the communal areas of multi storey flats together with a prioritised programme of fire risk re-assessment of other YHN premises.
- 3.2 A number of health and safety training courses have been held during the quarter. (see para 5.3).

Two sessions of the new Health & Safety Awareness for Employees training has been delivered with excellent feedback from delegates. The course is tailored to YHN employees and is a half day session incorporating interactive elements for the delegates.

- 3.3 Health and safety inspections have been carried out in the period (see para 5.4).

Following inspections of YHN premises, feedback is given to managers and recommendations are tracked to ensure progress against health and safety indicators.

4. **Your Homes Newcastle Strategic Objectives**

4.1 The management of health and safety and the regular monitoring of health and safety performance of employees contributes to the objectives of:-

- Support and care to communities
- Three star excellent services
- A quality workforce
- Refurbishing and building homes

5. **Summary**

5.1 Accident statistics – 1 April to 30 June 2009.

There were 16 accidents to employees reported in the period.

Most resulted in minor injuries but one accident was reportable to the Health and Safety Executive as the employee were absent from work for more than three days following a manual handling injury when delivering furniture. The employee was referred to Occupational Health for further advice and has returned to work.

5.2 Incident statistics – 1 April to 30 June 2009.

There were 15 incidents reported during the period involving 18 employees.

14 of the incidents involved verbal abuse during telephone conversations, during visits to tenants properties, at YHN premises ie housing offices and concierge lodges and one incident involved a stray dog.

All incidents of verbal abuse and/or anti social behaviour to employees were made by tenants or their family.

The tenants involved in the incidents have received letters regarding their unacceptable behaviour from the local manager and/or HASBET and a PRI placed on the internal system if appropriate. Police were involved with two of the incidents.

All employees were supported by their managers following the incidents and offered further training or counselling if appropriate. No employee required counselling following the incidents.

5.3 Health and Safety Training – 1 April to 30 June 2009

In accordance with the YHN training plan the following courses have been delivered by the Senior Health and Safety Officer and contracted trainers.

- Display Screen Equipment – 22 employees
- Fire Safety Awareness – 55 employees
- Dealing with difficult situations – 27 employees
- Personal safety training for staff involved with enforcement – 9 employees
- Emergency first aid appointed person training – 9 employees
- Evac chair key trainer & operator training – 4 employees
- Manual Handling training – 7 employees
- Moving and handling training – 10 employees
- Health & Safety Awareness for Employees – 28 employees

5.4 Health and safety inspections – 1 April to 30 June 2009

The following premises/services were inspected during the period:

- Margaret Collins House sheltered housing scheme
- The Spinney sheltered housing scheme
- Bamburgh House sheltered Housing scheme
- Dr Ryan House sheltered housing scheme
- Iris Steedman House sheltered Housing scheme
- Milecastle House sheltered Housing scheme
- Leagreen Court sheltered Housing scheme
- Cruddas Park CHO

The inspection and traffic light reports have been sent out to the relevant manager and will be followed up as part of the monitoring and review process.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The consultation process with staff side health and safety representatives continues to work well with meetings held quarterly.

7. Work in Progress

- 7.1 The Health and Safety Plan for 2009/10 is now finalised and in progress.
- 7.2 Fire safety training is currently under review. Three tailored training sessions have been delivered successfully to date at specific sites where employees are based. Further sessions are planned.

8. **Assets and Programming update**

8.1 Construction, Design and Maintenance (CDM)

Peter McFaul has taken on the role of the CDM Co-ordinator role within assets & programming. A traffic light system spreadsheet is issued to NCC (client) on a monthly basis on both notifiable and non-notifiable projects to ensure both YHN & NCC are fulfilling their duties under the CDM regulations.

8.2 Asbestos Management

Approximately 85% of properties under the decent homes programme have been surveyed.

All offices and communal areas to all other buildings e.g. sheltered and multi storey buildings have had a Type 2 asbestos survey carried out.

8.3 Legionella Management

Controls are in place for all premises. Multi Storey Building remedial works is in progress with tenders still being sought.

The changes to YHN Property Services Management structure has been updated in the policy for the prevention of health risks from legionella bacteria.

9. **Next steps**

9.1 Board will receive the next quarterly report in October 2009.

Contact Officer(s):

Ross Atkinson	Director of Finance and Resources Health and Safety Champion	Ext 28708
Karen Timms	Senior Health and Safety Officer	Ext 28725
Paul Hickey	Manager, Central Services	Ext 28665
Peter McFaul	Construction Risk & Safety Manager	Ext 27744

Background Papers – held by Senior Health and Safety Officer, First Floor, YHN House



Board 28 July 2009

Delegated Decisions – Schedule of non-confidential Delegated Decisions taken between 15 June and 17 July 2009

No	Directorate/Delegated Officer	Authorised Date	Subject	Cost/Budget Provision	Ward
1.	Your Homes Newcastle Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	6/18/2009	Staff Survey & Focus Groups 2009	Cost £20,530 Code 1YDA1/D404	All Wards
2.	Your Homes Newcastle Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	6/25/2009	District & Group Heating ? Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Heat Meters	Funding of the total expenditure amounting to £534,736 will be met from the Housing Investment Programme.	All Wards
3.	Your Homes Newcastle Breslin Sheila - YHN Head of Business Development	6/26/2009	Conversion of Elswick Community Housing Office	Funding of the total expenditure amounting to £96,174 will be met from the Office Accommodation Programme.	Elswick
4.	Your Homes Newcastle Lee John - YHN Chief Executive	7/10/2009	Installation of a Split System Inverter Heat Pump Air Conditioning ceiling mounted cassette unit, with the 2nd Floor Management Support Area YHN House	Cost £2,786 Code 1YCSA/B312	All Wards
5.	Your Homes Newcastle Scott Neil - Head of Housing Management	7/13/2009	One off roofing programme	To be funded from YHN minor works fund (HRA Repairs and Maintenance) £133,930.09	All Wards

Audit Committee

21 April 2009

(5.00 pm – 6.30 pm)

Present:

R Harral (In the Chair)
J Cuthbertson
G Knox
P J Morrissey
L Stephenson

In Attendance:

R Atkinson - Director of Finance and Resources
A Lister - Finance Manager – Financial Business Support
G Ellingham - IT Manager
S Wood - Interim Chief Internal Audit Officer, Newcastle City Council
C Mulley - Ernst and Young
T White - Democratic Services, Newcastle City Council

26 **APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from J Dallinson.

27 **ACTION LIST REVIEW**

Submitted: Action List from 15 January 2009 (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

Officers updated as follows:-

(a) **Corporate Governance – Code of Practice**

Internal Audit Review of new Code of Practice – R Atkinson – 23 July 2009.

(b) **Revised audit Committee Action Plan**

Short workshop meeting to be arranged for the Chair, with appropriate officers and G Clark of the Audit Commission, to determine when and by whom actions could be achieved.

(c) **Annual Assurance Statement – Newcastle City Council Delegated Decisions System**

R Atkinson reported that the Newcastle City Council Delegated Decisions system had gone live on 1 April 2009 but only on a manual basis at this stage. As a result G Ellingham was currently investigating the adaptability of current standard software on the market with the view of setting up a YHN system. Internal Audit would be asked to assess any in-house system.

28 **MINUTES**

The non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

29 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the confidential minutes of the previous meeting and the following items:

- Internal Audit work undertaken and reports;
- Update on progress against Internal Audit recommendations;
- External Audit Plan; and
- Internal Audit Strategic Plan and Annual Plan

30 **AUDIT COMMITTEE WORKPLAN**

Submitted: Report by the Finance Manager - Financial Business Support (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That the proposed Work Plan for the Audit Committee to the end of the Financial Year be approved.

31 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED – That the next meeting be held on Thursday 23 July 2009 at 5.00 pm, with a member pre-meeting at 4.30 pm.

32 **SCRUTINY CHECKLIST – INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTING**

Submitted: YHN Audit Committee Scrutiny Checklist – Internal Audit Reporting (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

RESOLVED – That the checklist be noted.

Property Committee

18 May 2009

(5.00 pm – 6.15 pm)

Present:

G Allison (Chair)

Also Present:

W Bowman, W Drury, J Reid, R Renton, J McLaughlin and M O'Callaghan

In Attendance:

S Breslin	- Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Business, YHN
J Vinton	- Investment Delivery Manager, YHN
N Scott	- Director of Tenancy Services, YHN
J Henderson	- Assistant Head of City Design
I Gallagher	- Head of Property Maintenance, YHN
T Peggie	- Investment Programme Officer, YHN
A Gibson	- Assets and Programming, YHN
C Heslop	- Property Maintenance, YHN
N Rippon	- Strategic Housing, Newcastle City Council
S Darroch	- Democratic Services, Newcastle City Council

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from J Common and D Langhorne.

33. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16 MARCH 2009

RESOLVED – That the minutes of meeting held on 16 March 2009 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising:-

(a) Sample Windows for Multis

(Minute No. 27 refers)

J Vinton confirmed that due to the potential for delays associated with submitting

a planning application for UPVC window replacement, it was intended that Vale House would be fitted with aluminium windows, thereby ensuring that the planned timeframe for carrying out the work was met. It was now planned that a pilot of UPVC window replacement would be undertaken at Shield House.

34. **RESPONSIVE REPAIRS CATEGORIES AND TIMESCALES – RESULTS OF CONSULTATION**

Submitted: Report by Head of Property Maintenance (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

I Gallagher introduced the report. He noted that a report recommending changes to repair categories and timescales had been submitted to Property Committee in January 2009. This had recommended that the number of repair categories be reduced from 8 to 4, subject to consultation with tenant and leaseholder groups and with City Build. Property Committee had subsequently granted approval in principle, pending consultation. As a result, YHN had conducted consultation with a tenant and leaseholders focus group and with the Tenant Federations Repairs Development Group. Three main issues had been identified.

- With regard to the proposal to combine the 2 and 4 hour out of hours service categories, into a single 4 hour response time, tenants had been assured that any emergency repairs would still be identified as such by Repair Call staff. Tenants had indicated they were happy with this change.
- With regard to the proposal to combine the 1, 3 and 7 day categories into a single category “7 days urgent”. The group had been informed that this new arrangement would not affect qualifying repairs under the Right to Repair Regulations.
- The proposal to remove the Rapid Response service had been outlined to the group. It had been confirmed that this would not affect operation of the standby service or the out of hours emergency service.
- Consultation had also been carried out with City Build to discuss the financial and resource implications of the proposed changes. City Build had indicated that the proposed changes provided an opportunity to improve services for tenants and leaseholders and were willing to work with YHN to implement the new arrangements.

Implementation of the proposed changes would be progressed subject to an IT change request, which would be submitted to Newcastle City Council’s IT Services. On completion of this, contract performance would be monitored over a three month bedding-in period.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and the proposed changes to repair categories and timescales as detailed in Section 3 be

approved subject to a three month “bedding in” period.

35. **YHN INVESTMENT PROGRAMME – CUSTOMER SATISFACTION 2008/2009
OUTTURN RESULTS**

Submitted: Report by Investment Delivery Manager (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

J Vinton introduced the report which set out customer satisfaction information on the Modern Homes Programme for the period April 2008 to April 2009. The Committee was asked to receive the report and identify any issues/areas for improvement.

The Committee was referred to Section 2 of the report which detailed the customer satisfaction results by quarter for 2008/09. In terms of satisfaction with the overall scheme, which represented the key performance indicator, it was noted that YHN had achieved a level of performance of 89% against a target of 90% for the year. Although, this represented a minor failure to meet the target across the year, performance in Quarters 3 and 4 had been well ahead of target at 93% and 96% respectively. Recent performance was therefore encouraging and it also noted that outturn also needed to be considered in the context of the recent changes to Replacement Rules.

The Committee was then referred to Appendix 1 which detailed key issues identified from survey returns for the period 1st January to 31st March 2009. It was noted that three sessions had been held with construction partners and tenant representatives to review performance and identify areas for improvement. Workshops would then be set up to take this work forward.

Appendix 2, detailing demographic breakdown of customer satisfaction for 2008/09 was noted. In general terms, male respondents had tended to be more satisfied than female ones and older respondents had tended to indicate greater satisfaction than younger ones. Respondents of mixed ethnic origin had been least satisfied although the number of actual survey returns from this group had meant that this was not considered statistically significant.

In terms of formal and informal complaints received by the Investment Delivery Team during 2008/09, although total numbers received were relatively low, the proportion of those upheld were significant which indicated that further work on quality assurance was required.

The Committee was also referred to Appendix 3 Outcomes For Tenants which detailed certain actions YHN had agreed to take in response to customer concerns.

It was acknowledged that the type of response received from tenants could be

influenced by the stage in any scheme at which the satisfaction survey was conducted and also the nature of the work being carried out. J Vinton commented that YHN staff had been given a target to conduct final customer satisfaction survey for all schemes within 3 months of completion of the contract.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and comments noted.

36. **REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE – JOINT PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT**

Submitted: Report by Contract Performance and Development Manager and Finance Manager (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

I Gallagher introduced the report which set out the performance and current financial position of the YHN Repairs and Maintenance contract for Quarter 4 of 2008/09. The following Key points were noted for the Committee's information:-

- Responsive Repairs and Day to Day Repairs were showing a combined overspend of £1.13m (not taking account of void capitalisation). In response to a query from the chair, I Gallagher confirmed that officers were broadly comfortable with the financial position. He referred the Committee to Section 4.1 of the report which set out the overall financial position. It was noted that in January it had been reported that a £784,000 projected overspend was expected at the end of the 2008/09 financial year. However, £482,000 had related to the painting programme. Since January 2009 capitalised repairs had reduced by £322,000, in part due to fewer tenants moving. This had resulted in a reduction in expenditure during the latter part of the year.
- The Committee was then referred to the Repairs and Maintenance (R&M) KPI results. There had been a slight change to the layout of the data so that information was now included to enable analysis against performance in the previous month, by year to date and performance against year end target. Comments on the new layout were invited.

The following specific points were then raised in relation to the data presented

- KPI 13 Percentage of Jobs Raised on Emergency Status continued to fail to meet the 9% target. An action plan was being developed and a meeting planned for later in the month between YHN, City Build and the Community Care Alarm Service (CCAS) to progress this.
- Outturn of Planned v Responsive Maintenance was moving in the right direction with projected outturn at 46% planned against 54% responsive. This was better than originally predicted. For 2009/10 it was projected that this would further improve to 53.8% planned against 46.2% responsive.
- It was confirmed that the process for obtaining gas warrants was now within

contract standards.

- A Committee member queried how it was assessed whether a job should be raised on emergency status. I Gallagher confirmed that the HCA gave guidance on this issue and YHN had also benchmarked against other ALMOs. As a result criteria had been developed and written down.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

37. **ANALYSIS OF REPAIR COSTS POST MODERN HOMES**

Submitted: Report by Head of Property Maintenance (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

I Gallagher presented the report. He explained that this followed information presented to Property Committee at the January meeting which had highlighted that there had been substantial R&M expenditure on some properties post modern homes. As a result, officers had been asked to investigate further. 5988 properties which had received an internal modernisation package between 1st February 2006 and 31 January 2008 had been analysed. A detailed trade analysis was also carried out on the 3,341 properties modernised between 1st February 2006 and 31 January 2007. The following key results were noted.

- Electrical and plumbing trades had unexpectedly high levels of expenditure. Faults relating to each of these trades were identified as set out in Section 2.1 of the report.
- Proposed remedial actions to address these faults were noted in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the report. These included a review of the specification for bathroom taps with the intention of sourcing from one or two manufacturers; the application of warranties for faulty equipment; and a review of replacement rules for internal pipe work and radiators.
- In response to a query as to the cost implications of the proposed actions, I Gallagher noted there may be a short term cost implication if replacement rules were reviewed for replacement of internal pipework, but over the long term this and the other proposed measures should deliver savings on the R&M budget.
- In order to take this work forward, it was proposed that ongoing analysis would be undertaken and reported to YHN's Investment Executive which would analyse capital and revenue R&M expenditure and assess the impact of any investment programmes. Any expenditure due to failure of materials would be delegated to the Product Panel. The Panel in turn would provide reports to the investment Executive on new and innovative materials and best practice from other relevant organisations.
- In response to a query from a Committee member, I Gallagher confirmed

that warranty repairs would now be picked up by City Build and charged back to constructors much more quickly. As a result, it was expected that the levels of electrical and plumbing repair costs would decrease. In terms of some of the problems encountered with smoke alarms and trip switches etc J Henderson noted that many of these could be overcome by better education of tenants. Improvements to information for tenants on internal installations were planned and it was hoped that this would have an impact on reducing the level of call out. A Committee member noted that even with improved literature for tenants, there would still be a sustained level of calls from more vulnerable tenants who struggle to understand information provided. This was acknowledged. J Vinton suggested that it may also be useful to have instructions for customer installations laminated so tenants could keep them readily at hand.

- A Committee member queried the system changes made by YHN to ensure that the process for picking up warranty repairs was more streamlined and efficient. I Gallagher explained that initially there had been a reluctance by City Build to attend for warranty repairs. However, all staff were now fully aware that they were required to attend warranty repairs and to complete the necessary paperwork and pass this back to YHN maintenance team to ensure prompt billing of modern homes constructor partners. In addition, the IT systems underpinning this process were now much more robust. It was identified that it was not always possible to identify a warranty repair at the point the call was received. However N Scott noted that the combination of IT improvements and better education of City Build staff did seem to be having a positive impact on how this process was handled.
- The Committee member noted that levels of plastering seemed to be high. In response, it was explained that plastering levels often peaked post modern homes programme where rewiring work had been carried out or window replacements. In some instances it was simply a case that tenants decided to redecorate following completion of the works and found age related cracking which then required attention. On that basis, the current plastering levels very expected to reduce in the medium term.

The Chair thanked officers for the report which, he noted included a thorough and detailed analysis of the repair data.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and the recommendations agreed.

38. **REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION REPORT
QUARTER 4 2008/09**

Submitted: Report by Contract Performance and Development Manager (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

I Gallagher introduced the report. He referred the Committee to the survey results as set out in Section 4 of the report and welcomed comments on the

revised format.

It was noted that at the last meeting, a query had been raised regarding the high level of BME respondents who had expressed a neither/nor satisfied, dissatisfied response. In order to investigate this further, a consultation event had been arranged with 14 BME customers. This had looked at the customer satisfaction cards and the Repairs service in general. The meeting had been very productive and a number of key issues identified. The following specific points were noted for the Committee's attention:-

- It had been suggested that the satisfaction scale of responses should include very satisfied/satisfied/neither/dissatisfied/very dissatisfied.
- A number of BME tenants were unaware of the £50 incentive prize draw for returning responses. In future it was proposed that a photographer would take a photo (with the winning tenant's consent) to be published in Homes and People and on the YHN website.
- It was felt that it was acceptable for the cards to be written in English.
- Respondents had indicated that they liked the "smiley" faces as they were easy to understand.
- A number of customers had commented that they felt that the demographic information was irrelevant. The reasons for collecting this information had been explained.
- I Gallagher noted that in response to a suggestion at a previous meeting Question 19 on the R&M telephone survey had, , been altered to read "Do you consider yourself to have any longstanding illness".

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

39. **AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS REVIEW – TIMESCALES**

Submitted: Report by Investment Delivery Manager (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

J Vinton introduced the report which provided Property Committee with an update on the Aids and Adaptations workstream and provided key dates for completion of each element. The Committee was asked to note the work being taken forward and the completion date for each product.

In terms of progress to date, a draft policy had been developed which was currently being reviewed by legal services to identify any legislative implications. The policy document was planned for completion by 30 November 2009. Options for procurement of adaptations were also being investigated. Quality

assessment interviews were planned for June to enable final recommendations to be made.

The Committee welcomed the work being carried out, whilst highlighting the need to ensure that the proposals did not jeopardise the quality of the service provided. J Vinton acknowledged this, noting that in investigating opportunities for improved cost efficiency there still was strong recognition of the need to provide a flexible quality service. Consideration was also being given to whether there was an opportunity to recharge costs where tenants with adaptation requirements moved a number of times over a relatively short period.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and Property Committee agreed to receive an update report on policy and procedure at its September meeting.

40. **PRIORITISED CAPITAL PROJECTS**

Submitted: Report by Assets and Programme Manager (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

S Breslin introduced the report which set out the proposed list of previously unfunded capital projects that had been scored sufficiently high to warrant future capital allocation. An overall allocation of £4m had been approved by Board for 2009/10 to assist with progressing these projects. The Committee was referred to Section 3 of the report highlighting the PIC methodology (Priority Investment Calculator) which had been used to assess each scheme.

S Breslin noted that on completion of the Decent Homes Programme, further application of the prioritisation process would be required to produce a prioritised investment programme for the city to make best use of the money available to YHN at that time.

A summary of the proposed programme was noted for the Committee's information. It was confirmed that at present funding had only been agreed for 2009/10. Health and Safety based projects were noted to have been given priority. However, the Committee was advised that following further discussion, it was also hoped to be able to carry out work on a range of other schemes including environmental work, sheltered housing and communal areas.

The following comments were then raised in discussion:-

- In response to a query from a committee member it was confirmed that YHN had received indication that improvements to 5 Hartburn Walk would qualify for funding from the HCA.
- In relation to Daisy Hill Environmental Improvements Phase 2, it was noted that a significant amount of BNG and SHIP funding had already been allocated to the project. The remaining proposed capital would support

completion of this work.

- A member noted that distribution of capital to projects across the city was not unduly focused in a particular area.

S Breslin acknowledged this point noting that the rationale for each decision had been fully developed. However, she noted that the £4m budget for 2009/10 represented a relatively small source of funding.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and comments noted.

41. **MODERN HOMES PROGRAMME – HARESIDE MID RISE WINDOW**

Submitted: Report by Investment Manager (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

J Vinton introduced the report. She explained that the report asked Property Committee to consider a proposal to transfer 60 properties in Newburn out of the Modern Homes Programme for window replacement into the painting programme. In doing so, Committee was asked to have regard to the concerns of residents to this proposal and a recently received petition.

J Vinton noted that single glazed high performance windows had been installed in the 60 properties in 1990.

It was explained that Hareside had been programmed to have external work completed in 2009/10. However following a reality check carried out by City Design it had been identified that the windows met the decency standard and would not therefore be replaced under current criteria. This had resulted in a petition being received from affected tenants.

In response to this, YHN had conducted a further survey on all 60 properties. This had indicated that the windows were in good condition with few pre-paint repairs required externally. The main problem identified by tenants was with drafts. However the survey had shown that this was largely attributable to ineffective window handles which would be rectified by pre-paint repairs. Only one window out of 450 had been identified for renewal.

In terms of the overall cost of the programme, the Committee was informed that full window replacement would cost £167,000 compared with £40,000 under a painting programme which would extend the current life to 2017.

There was agreement that it was important to be consistent with other previous decisions taken with regard to window replacement. However, long term it was recognised that it would be necessary to replace single glazed units. This could not however be justified under the modern homes programme when existing units were of decent quality.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the survey carried out mirrored that conducted at St Anthony's in Walker.

RESOLVED – That a repair and paint programme of work be carried out on the Hareside Mid Rise Estate at a cost of £41,635.

42. **YHN CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE UPDATE REPORT**

Submitted: Report by Assets and Programme Manager (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

S Breslin introduced the report which highlighted progress on the Capital and Modern Homes and other capital programmes outturn at Quarter 4 2008/09, along with programme projections to 2011/12.

The following key points were noted:-

- The decline in Right to Buy activity had increased the actual number of homes in YHN's portfolio compared with earlier projections while correspondingly reducing the amount of capital available for investment.
- It was noted that it was still projected that the programme could be delivered on time and within budget however, £12m remained unsecured. It was however still hoped that the PFI bid would be successful for Byker improvements. A decision on this was still awaited.
- In terms of delivery performance, completion rates were very good. Performance in terms of quality of work was also pleasing although it was recognised that there were some minor issues which, were being addressed.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

43. **YHN PROPERTY COMMITTEE TOUR**

Two potential itineraries were tabled for the Committee's consideration:-

RESOLVED – That Property Committee undertake a tour based on Option 1. This would take place prior to the next Property Committee meeting on Monday, 20 July at 2.30 pm.

44. **UPDATE ON WINDOW SPECIFICATION FOR MULTIS**

A Gibson reported that plans to carry out a trial of UPVC window replacement at Vale House would not now proceed. Time constraints associated with making

the necessary planning application would have caused undue delays with planned work. Window replacement at Vale House would now therefore proceed with aluminium.

It was now proposed that the UPVC window pilot would be carried out at Shieldfield House.

It was also confirmed that the independent survey commissioned following the recent dispute over the quality of windows in multis at Grafton House, Molineux Court and Heaton Park Court, had found in YHN's favour with windows being designated as fit for purpose. The survey work had however identified cold spots on some frames. It was therefore proposed to use a higher specification of aluminium windows at Vale House at an additional estimated cost of £40,000.

RESOLVED – That a trial of UPVC windows take place in due course at Shieldfield House. Aluminium windows would be installed at Vale House, these being of an improved specification at an additional estimated cost of £40,000.

45. **ITEM FOR INFORMATION – HOUSING DEVELOPER FRAMEWORK EVALUATION PROCESS**

Committee members were referred to the framework evaluation process which was attached for information in response to a query from a member at a previous meeting. It was noted that the document demonstrated how sustainability was included in the tender appraisal process. The minimum requirement of Code 3 for sustainability was the required level of attainment but any constructor achieving Code 4 would gain additional marks as part of the tender process.

RESOLVED – That the document be received for information.

46. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chair noted that the next meeting would be his last as Chair of Property Committee after which he would stand down from the YHN Board. He thanked everyone for their support and wished them every success in the future.

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of YHN Property Committee take place on Monday, 20 July 2009 at 5pm at YHN House, Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne.

NOTE: BUS TOUR TO START AT 2.30pm, in advance of this meeting

Finance Committee

18 June 2009
(2.30 pm – 3.50 pm)

Present:

A Mirza (In the Chair)
J Cuthbertson
B Bowman
D Slesenger

In Attendance:

R Atkinson - Director of Finance and Resources
A Lister - Finance Manager – Financial Business Support
K Embleton - Finance Manager –Revenue
C Nicholson - Finance Manager –Procurement and Payments
A Crute - Income Manager
A Hodgson - Head of Housing Management
N Rippon - Monitoring Officer
J Miller - Democratic Services

72. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from R Harral, G Knox and M O'Callaghan.

73. ROGER HARRAL

R Atkinson reported that the Chair had been very ill, but was now on the road to recovery. The Committee noted their good wishes for Roger.

74. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following report:-

Pest Control SLA Update

77. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising:-

(a) Concierge Review

(Minute no. 66 (b) refers).

R Atkinson had passed on to H Garbett and N Scott - Finance Committee comments regarding the need to consider how Board members would be involved in the consultation process on the Concierge Review.

78. ACTION PLAN REVIEW

Submitted: Finance Committee Action List (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

(a) Major Works Invoice Recovery Path

A Crute explained that there was currently not a formal recovery path in Northgate for major works invoices. IT was to start work on developing this path on 24 July 2009, with a view to going live in September 2009. This would in future be reported back as part of the quarterly update reports. It was explained that whilst there was not currently a debt recovery path, the Debt Recovery Team were involved in work to recover these debts.

(b) Traffic Lights

It was noted that traffic lights to allow members to focus on areas of concern would be introduced following the AGM in September 2009.

79. YHN AND HRA REVENUE PROVISIONAL ACTUAL OUTTURN 2008/09

Submitted: Report by the Finance Manager – Revenue (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

K Embleton introduced the report which set out the latest provision on the projected actual outturn for 2008/09 and the resulting Medium Term Plan to 2013/14 for Your Homes Newcastle and the Housing Revenue Account. He drew members attention to the following key issues:-

- The revised estimated YHN Management Fee for 2008/09 showed an underspend of £1.7m and since the last detailed report submitted in January 2009.
- The HRA was showing an in year actual surplus of £4.3m for 2008/09.

R Atkinson pointed out that the £4.3m surplus was a headline figure. However, the Board had agreed to look at reserves of £5m for unfunded capital schemes.

R Atkinson reported that internally officers were starting to prepare for the possibility of 10% reductions in budgets. The intention was to look for potential reductions prior to the budget cut taking place, as the sooner reductions could be implemented the less extreme they would have to be.

The Chair of the Board commented that it would be prudent to have a plan of action that took account of 1%, 3%, 5% and 10% reductions in funding.

R Atkinson confirmed that the profile of this issue had been raised in the organisation. The Chair suggested that it may be necessary to look seriously at reviewing longer term plans including capital expenditure and this Committee may have an enhanced role in financially evaluating the processes used.

R Atkinson commented that the Board would have to determine priorities for the organisation. The Chair of the Board commented that this Committee could undertake much of the background work before this was submitted to Board for consideration.

It was noted that there was a query over the future of Supporting People funding.

Over the last three years the business financial planning process had been carried out with managers and it had been made clear that in future all growth bids had to be found from efficiency savings.

In terms of service charge deficits, it was reported that YHN were looking to mitigate these deficits.

K Embleton reported that where budgets were consistently underspent, this underspend would be removed from the relevant budget. Further detail on this would be contained in the report to the July meeting.

RESOLVED – That

- (i) the variations on the 2008/09 actual expenditure to the 2008-09 revised budgets for YHN and the HRA as detailed in appendix 1 and 2 of the report be received;
- (ii) the YHN/HRA Medium Term Plan position up to 2012/13 as set out in appendix 3 of the report be noted;
- (iii) the latest summary of procurement efficiency savings as set out in appendix 3a of the report be received;
- (iv) the summary of the latest position showing the deficits/surpluses on the Service Charge areas of service detailed in appendix 4 of the report be received.

80. YEAR END ARREARS POSITION

Submitted: Report by the Income Manager (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

A Crute introduced the report which set out the arrears position at week 52 (year end). She highlighted that total arrears had reduced by £389,403. This figure exceeded the target and was top quartile performance.

She outlined the reasons behind the increase in former tenant arrears as detailed in the report. She stressed that even when arrears were written off, accounts could be resurrected if additional information was obtained which meant that it was possible to trace the individual.

R Atkinson referred to the balance outstanding at the year end of £22,656 for leasehold invoices 2007/08 and commented that this was very good performance.

A Crute reiterated that an automated process in the form of a recovery path for major work invoices was to be developed, as explained earlier in the meeting. Work was to be undertaken pulling together all of the adjustments to the major works invoices quantifying the amount of work and value of that work.

This information would be submitted to the July 2009 meeting. It was noted that the Debt Recovery Team had brought in six times more income than the cost of the time which had proved that the investment had been worthwhile. A Lister reported that it had been possible to reduce the bad debt provision this year because of the improved debt collection rates.

The Committee formally recognised and appreciated the works and efforts of the staff involved in achieving this level of performance. They asked that thanks be passed on to all the staff involved. In terms of leaseholders 2008/09 it was suggested it would be useful when referring to percentages of invoices raised to indicate whether this related to numbers of invoices or sums of money.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

81. YHN CAPITAL PROGRAMME MOVEMENTS

Submitted: Report by the Finance Manager – Finance Business Support (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

A Lister introduced the report which detailed movements totalling £26,757k, in the 2009/10 YHN Capital Programme.

RESOLVED – That the movements detailed in the report be approved.

82. **CORPORATE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

Submitted: Report by the Director of Finance and Resources (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

C Nicholson introduced the report which identified the main changes to YHN's current (second) Corporate Procurement Strategy previously approved by Board in January 2008. These changes related to Financial Regulation 8 (appendix 5) and Action Plan (part five of the Corporate Procurement Strategy). He drew members attention to the flowchart which demonstrated the procurement process.

RESOLVED – That the changes to the Corporate Procurement Strategy identified in section 3.1 of the report be approved.

83. **FINANCE COMMITTEE WORK PLAN AND CONFIRMATION AND DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Submitted: Report by the Director of Finance and Resources (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

The following items were added to the July 2009 agenda:-

- Update of major works invoice recovery path – A Crute
- Update on IT strategy including IT road map of all schemes being worked on and planned.

RESOLVED – That the Work Plan be noted, subject to the above amendments.