
HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2008/9

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Bill Dixon,
Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Cliff Brown, Director of Community Services

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the resources available for housing capital investment during 2008/09 and to recommend a programme to utilise these resources.

Background

2. Members agreed the Council's 2008/09 Capital Medium Term Financial Plan on 28 February 2008, including the Housing Capital Investment Programme. Prior to works commencing this detailed report is required to approve the physical works and formally release the Capital resources. Table 1 below details the estimated housing capital resources for 2008/09.

Table 1: Estimated Capital Resources 2008/09

Resources	£000's
Major Repairs Allowance (a)	3,859
SHIP Funding (Private Sector) (b)	242
SHIP Funding (DFG's) (c)	383
Prudential Borrowing (d)	2,743
Capital Receipts (e)	1,200
Disabled Facilities Grant (f)	282
RCCO (g)	1,871
Total	10,580

- (a) The Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) is 100% grant funding received from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The MRA can only be used for capital improvements to the Council's housing stock.
- (b) Private Sector SHIP Funding is provided on an application basis by the Regional Housing Board. Previously this funding was given purely as a borrowing approval, but now comes as a capital grant. This funding is to be used for Private Sector investment according to the new Private Sector Financial Assistance Policy and energy efficiency measures for vulnerable households.

- (c) SHIP Funding (DFG's) comes from the same source as (b), and is a contribution to Private Sector Disabled Facilities funding that the Council provided from the old supported borrowing (HIP) allocation to match fund the DFG grant from central Government.
- (d) It was agreed at Council on 22nd July 2004, to retain the Council housing stock in-house and use prudential borrowing of up to £20m, over the next 6 years, to meet the new Darlington Standard for Council housing. This is the second year that prudential borrowing is being utilised.
- (e) Comprising 25% of usable capital receipts from the anticipated sale of Council houses, under the Right to Buy scheme.
- (f) Communities and Local Government (CLG) contribution to the provision of adaptations for people with disabilities in the Private Sector, representing 60% of the guideline DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant) expenditure of £282,000 for 2008/09. Adding the SHIP allocation for DFG's (c) to this gives a total DFG budget of £665,000.
- (g) The Revenue Capital Contribution is funding from the Housing Revenue Account used to fund major capital works.
3. The priorities identified through the Housing Business Plan to be funded from the estimated capital resources for 2008/09 are shown in Table 2 below:-

Table 2: Housing Investment Programme 2008/09

Programme	£000's	Total
Planned Maintenance & Renewals		
Adaptations ⁽¹⁾	340	
Heating Replacement ⁽²⁾	750	
Internal Planned Maintenance ⁽³⁾	3,368	
Dinsdale Court ⁽⁴⁾	2,700	
Structural Repairs ⁽⁵⁾	95	
Warden Link and Sheltered Housing ⁽⁶⁾	82	7,335
Estates & Community Improvements		
Community Centre, Skerne Park ⁽⁷⁾	700	
Environmental Works ⁽⁸⁾	419	
Footpaths/Construction ⁽⁹⁾	343	
Fencing ⁽¹⁰⁾	300	
Garage Improvements ⁽¹¹⁾	139	
Repairs Before Painting ⁽¹²⁾	128	
Roof work ⁽¹³⁾	309	2,338
Private Sector		
Private Sector Renewal ⁽¹⁴⁾	142	
DFG Grants ⁽¹⁵⁾	665	
Private Sector Energy Efficiency works ⁽¹⁶⁾	100	907
Total		10,580

- (1) The adaptations budget (£340,000) is to deliver adaptations within the Council's housing stock to enable tenants with a disability to remain in their own home across the Borough.
- (2) New condensing boiler central heating systems will be fitted to around 210 dwellings throughout the Borough but predominately in Haughton, Park East and North Road. As utility companies have caused significant delays in programmes in earlier years due to missed schedules for installing new gas services to properties that are being converted from electric to gas central heating, a specific programme has been developed over the next five years to deliver such works, thereby speeding up future replacement.
- (3) A programme to upgrade kitchen, bathrooms, electrical rewiring, including security lighting and where appropriate TV aerials and communal works which will cover approximately 350 dwellings located predominantly at Harrogate Hill, Central, Rise Carr, Bank Top and Lascelles areas of the Town. The extra investment in this area will help towards delivering the commitment as part of the Darlington Standard to reduce the replacement cycle for these works from 30 years to 20 years.
- (4) Dinsdale Court will be demolished and a new modern sheltered scheme built to replace the existing sheltered scheme to meet the expectations of current and future elderly people. The new building will be modelled on the Linden Court scheme which is currently being rebuilt, meet Disability Discrimination Standards, improve accessibility to first and second floors, increase thermal comfort, and improve internal space standards within the individual units to enable lettings to less mobile elderly people, promoting greater independence.
- (5) A small budget has been set aside to address any structural issues that may be identified within the year.
- (6) £82,000 has been put aside to continue to provide upgrades to the Warden Call services (in addition to those picked up in the costs for remodelling works) within sheltered housing schemes and blocks of flats throughout the town, and to provide upgrades and modernisation to communal facilities in sheltered housing schemes such as common rooms and kitchens.
- (7) A new modern Community Centre will be built to replace an old, under utilised resource to promote neighbourhood sustainability.
- (8) £419,000 has been set aside to undertake environmental works at Firthmoor.
- (9) £343,000 is to be spent on improvements to footpaths at Firthmoor, Lascelles, and Bank Top.
- (10) £300,000 will be spent on fencing works in areas to be determined.

- (11) Improvements to the Council's garage blocks will continue in areas to be determined.
- (12) Joinery works in anticipation of the cyclical external painting programme will take place on those dwellings that require it.
- (13) £309,000 has been set aside for roofing works throughout the Borough.
- (14) £143,000 set aside to support the Financial Assistance Policy targeted at areas of poor private sector housing.
- (15) DFG grants will continue to be offered according to the mandatory limit of £25k, plus the additional optional "Top up" Financial Assistance Loan of up to £10K as agreed by Cabinet in 2005. The total budget for mandatory DFG grants is £665,000. This is based on SHIP3 funding (£383k) and a Government Office for the North East allocation of £282k.
- (16) Private Sector funding of £100,000, will help deliver targeted energy efficiency works in the private sector in partnership with utility services and match funding Government grants.

Aims and objectives of the Housing Investment Programme

4. The aims and objectives of the Housing Investment Programme are:

- To meet the increasing expectations of local authority tenants.
- To ensure that Darlington continues to meet an "enhanced Decent Homes" standard.
- To improve the thermal comfort, safety and well being of local authority tenants.
- Provide a cyclical programme of improvement works.

5. The programme is not designed to:

- Remain static and priorities will be continually reviewed in the light of updated information such as public sector stock condition information.

6. There are two reasons why the Council may need to consider this programme:

- Due to the nature of improvement works scheduled, there will be some inconvenience and disruption to tenants but this will be minimised through careful planning and consultation.
- There is a considerable financial commitment by the Council in delivering the programme but the commitment has been agreed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Outcome of Consultation

7. The proposed programme is line with Housing Business Plan priorities as agreed with tenants during the stock option appraisal process, and is aligned with the priorities for investment that have identified since that time. The Tenants Board were consulted on 10th January 2008 and supported the proposals.

Legal Implications

8. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers needs to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

9. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is considered that some of the improvement works identified in this report will be beneficial in reducing crime.

Council Policy Framework

10. The issues continued within this request do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

11. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this represents an urgent matter, in order that housing capital expenditure for 2008/09 can be commenced with immediate effect.

Key Decision

12. This is a key decision because agreement to the recommendation will result in the Council incurring expenditure that is significant. There will also be a significant effect on the communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards within the area of the Local Authority.

Summary

13. The annual Housing Investment Programme delivers essential home improvements for council tenants to ensure their homes meet their longer term expectations, a safe and secure environment and meet quality standards over and above Decent Homes.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that the Housing Investment Programme for 2008/09 be agreed and the funding released.

Reasons

15. The recommendation is supported to enable the works and projects identified in the Housing Investment Programme for 2008/09 to proceed.

Cliff Brown
Director of Community Services

Background Papers

Capital Medium Term Financial Plan 28 February 2008

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