



# **Housing & Property Maintenance Service**

## **Community & Housing**

### **Service Plan 2008/09**

# Introduction

Flintshire County Council's housing stock consists of over 7500 properties, including houses, bungalows, flats, maisonettes and sheltered accommodation. In addition, there are over 1800 Council garages.

The Housing & Property Maintenance Service has an important role in helping to deliver key aspects of the Council Plan and best value services to Flintshire residents, strengthening the approach to more responsive, customer-oriented services.

New methods of working were introduced in 2006/07, in order to drive up productivity. 2007/08 also proved to be a challenging year for the Service, due to the need to improve financial forecasting and put into place a robust reporting tool to support managers, enabling more effective performance management of operatives. Work also began on more effective use of subcontractors across the service, together with measures to maximise the flexibility and productivity of operatives within the various teams.

The Housing & Property Maintenance Service remained in the early stages of recovery throughout 2007/08, but the three interlinked Canton projects - to be rolled out in 2008/09 - will put into place the building blocks for a fit-for-purpose service, well-prepared to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Welsh Assembly Government's requirement to bring the housing stock up to Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

This Service Plan for 2008/09 sets out the issues and actions necessary to modernise service delivery, address backlogs of work and improve end-to-end time in order to increase customer satisfaction cost-effectively for the Council.

June 2008

# 1. What we do: Purpose of the Service

Flintshire County Council operates a Housing & Property Maintenance Service, located within the Directorate of Community & Housing. The Service provides a client as well as an in-house contractor (DSO) function and there are close links for the client function with the wider 'client' role within the Directorate; for example, Voids Management, Capital Works and Grants.

The main activities are emergency, urgent, non-urgent and void repairs to the Council's housing stock. Some small capital works are currently undertaken, but this is a relatively small element of the overall operation. Repairs, maintenance and voids work is sub-contracted out by the DSO side of operations, as necessary, but kept to a minimum.

The Capital Works Team deal with major works/planned and programmed schemes, using external contractors only. This team is not part of the Housing & Property Maintenance Service and currently located at Flint Offices.

The Welsh Assembly Government requires the housing stock to be brought up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

***The purpose of the Housing & Property Maintenance Service is to provide an effective, efficient and cost-effective housing repairs and maintenance service to Flintshire tenants that is customer-orientated - to do the job right, first time and on time.***

This is in accordance with the Directorate's 30 year Housing Business Plan and the following Council Aims as detailed in the Council Plan for 2007-10:

- Customer Focus – Putting People First (Aim 1)

*Improvement goal for the Service: We will ensure that our customers consistently receive an excellent standard of service*

*Measure: Improve customer satisfaction (M1)*

*Action: Review customer care standards and procedures and increase customer focus through improving service availability and systems (A3)*

- Healthy and Caring Communities (Aim 3)

*Improvement goal for the Service: We will ensure that all have access to a home that best meets their needs*

*Measures: Reduce the average repair times for emergency, urgent and non-urgent repairs (M3 and M4)). Improve classification processes for housing repairs (M5). Contribute to reducing the average re-let times for void properties (M7)*

*Actions: Provide effective, efficient service delivery to contribute to meeting of Welsh Housing Quality Standard, by 2012, in line with the Council's 30 year Housing Business Plan (A4a)*

- Making the Most of Our Resources

*The Service will contribute to making the most of resources by ensuring that we have a skilled and motivated workforce focused on customer care and capable of embracing change, maximising value for money, using information to improve the way that services are delivered and planning for organisational change.*

The Service is currently split into three business units – Responsive Repairs, Minor Works/Voids – both providing the traditional DSO contractor function - and Quality Customer Care, providing mainly client, but some contractor functions (the capital 'client' function is undertaken by the Capital Works Team and the Voids 'client' function falls partly within Housing Management).

### **Quality Customer Care**

Reporting and co-ordination of housing repairs and maintenance via the call centre, pre and post inspection of housing repairs and maintenance, customer satisfaction, landlord services such as gas, oil, solid fuel and electrical servicing, legionella and asbestos monitoring

### **Responsive Repairs**

Emergency, urgent and non-urgent housing repairs and maintenance, Fleet Management, Apprentices. Approximately 50 operatives, undertaking 48,000 jobs per annum

### **Minor Works/Voids**

Void properties repairs and maintenance and minor works, Stores. Approximately 35 operatives, working on over 600 void properties per annum, a large proportion of which are refurbishments, due to the historic lack of investment in the housing stock identified in the Stock Condition Survey

### **Administration Team**

All administrative functions, including data collection for Payroll, sickness absence monitoring and tender processes

## 2. Where we are now: Baseline Statement

The Housing & Property Maintenance Service had been seen as a failing service, with a declining surplus from 2000 and deficits on the DSO Trading account from 2003/04. There have been approximately 20 audits undertaken since 2003 and the service was the subject of a Public Interest Report by the Council's External Auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers, in 2006. In December 2007, a follow-up review by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that 'the substantial issues faced by the service are being actively tackled'.

A Recovery Plan (see 3. Key Priorities) had been put into place from January 2007 and the £101K surplus for 2006/07 exceeded the target of a reduced deficit of £329K (this target was set following a deficit of over £900K in 2005/06). However, this was seen as only the first step on the road to recovery - particularly challenging is the need to balance priorities and resources, ensuring effective and efficient workflow management and focusing on the delivery of a more customer-oriented repairs service, with significantly reduced end-to-end time – of critical importance, as the urgent and non-urgent response times for 2007/08 were the worst in Wales.

Throughout May and June 2007, an independent health check was carried out by a leading specialist DSO consultant (Burgess Associates) and many of the recommendations contained in the subsequent report reflected issues highlighted in the Service Plan 2007/08 and action points in the Recovery Plan.

The three interlinked projects to be rolled out in 2008/09 are:

- New Schedule of Rates
- Diagnostic Reporting software
- Mobile Working (initially cost-effective tracking devices on vans)

These will help to correct the underlying issues, but it will take time for the full benefits to be realised, therefore dramatic improvements are unlikely during 2008/09, particularly the first half of the financial year. However, the drive to increase productivity through measures already implemented will continue.

## SLOT Analysis

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skilled and experienced workforce with in-depth knowledge of Flintshire and the Council's housing stock</li> <li>• Understanding of customer base with tenant participation and involvement</li> <li>• Improved workforce understanding of need for change to enable service to be 'fit for purpose'</li> <li>• Customers satisfied with quality of service generally</li> <li>• New methods of working for operatives introduced and embedded throughout last quarter of 2006/07 and 2007/08</li> <li>• Independent Health Check undertaken throughout May/June 2007</li> <li>• Deficit and underlying reasons successfully tackled in 2006/07 and throughout 2007/08</li> <li>• New Schedule of Rates to be rolled out from April 08, aiming to demonstrate DSO competitiveness and drive up productivity, without greatly increasing cost to the 'Client'</li> <li>• Improved financial forecasting and robust reporting tool to support managers introduced in 2007/08, enabling more effective performance management of operatives</li> <li>• Bid for diagnostic reporting in 2007/08 successful, to be rolled out in first quarter of 2008/09</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-standing lack of clarity regarding strategic direction and high Elected Member involvement, key factors leading to continual fire-fighting</li> <li>• Problems with categorisation of repairs – wrong balance, diagnostic repairs will help address, but will take time</li> <li>• Average end-to-end times too long in both responsive repairs and voids (PIs) - backlogs of work, customers dissatisfied with speed of service</li> <li>• Unrealistic expectations from politicians and senior managers, leading to mixed messages and a demoralised and de-motivated workforce</li> <li>• Poor communication system-wise and team-wise between Service business units and Capital Works and limited support services</li> <li>• Longstanding staffing resource issues and delay with implementing more appropriate service structure at Canton</li> <li>• HR will not permit negotiations with TUs over working hours/extra leave, although Pilot Scheme operatives are Red Book and not part of Single Status</li> <li>• Unable to link pay with productivity (possible with the new Burgess SOR), due to HR concerns re: Single Status</li> <li>• Full mobile working prohibitively expensive - trackers on vans cost-effective, but no sense of urgency outside the Service</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A competitive, fit for purpose service with a strong customer focus will be well-placed to meet growth and development opportunities afforded by the requirement to bring the housing stock up to Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012</li> <li>• Strategic partnerships with contractors and suppliers</li> <li>• Increased flexibility and ability to operate in a more business-like manner, together with extra resources if housing stock transferred</li> <li>• Further options under increased power to trade (Local Government Act 2003) if housing stock is retained</li> <li>• Experience elsewhere indicates dramatic increases in productivity if pay is linked – possible with the new Burgess SOR</li> <li>• Making the Connections – establish links with other North Wales Local Authorities; already in place for procurement, but chance to link with Denbighshire CC for trackers on vans</li> <li>• Relocation to new premises – will improve morale and motivation of the workforce, communication with Capital Works Team and image with customers, contractors and suppliers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic under-investment in housing stock flagged up in Stock Condition Survey 2007, but this Service is blamed for high unit cost for repairs</li> <li>• Lack of strategic direction and poor understanding of DSO issues such as significance and competitiveness under Best Value/Wales Programme for Improvement would leave the Service vulnerable, especially with its history and the longstanding underlying issues</li> <li>• Without 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology to enable effective and efficient support and workflow for the DSO side of operations, the Service will be exposed and vulnerable in what will be a highly competitive external environment</li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> Century dinosaurs within small core of workforce and TUs. Resistance to change and poor understanding of need to balance and target use of contractors, sub-contractors and workforce could lead to outsourcing</li> <li>• If the service cannot demonstrate that it is 'fit for purpose', it is at risk of being outsourced, whether the housing stock is retained or transferred</li> <li>• Insufficient and expensive corporate service support</li> <li>• Although DSO operatives are Red Book Crafts, not part of Single Status, the Authority may take a one-size-fits-all approach and prevent re-linking pay and performance</li> </ul>

## Our performance

Financially, for 2007/08, there was a budgeted deficit of £380K. Considerable effort went into identifying the value of outstanding income more accurately in 2007/08 through the development of a robust reporting tool that also supports management on the ground to enable more effective performance management of operatives by first line managers. It was identified that the final outturn figure would substantially exceed the budgeted deficit target of £380K.

The statistics for 2006/07 and 2007/08, showing the breakdown of repairs in each category, are as follows. It should be noted that the balance is wrong between the categories – too many reported and categorised as emergency and urgent repairs, to the detriment of PI figures for repairs that can be planned. Diagnostic reporting will help to correct these underlying issues, when introduced from the second quarter of 2008/09.

	2006/07	2007/08
Emergency repairs	15%	19%
Urgent repairs	37%	31%
Non-urgent repairs	11%	17%
Other*	37%	33%

\* Planned Maintenance/Cyclical Maintenance/Voids Works

The Housing & Property Maintenance Service participates in benchmarking through the APSE Performance Networks, which compares the DSO's performance with a family group of other Local Authorities. The WHO4 statistics for 2006/07 indicated that Flintshire's urgent and non-urgent performance indicators were the worst in Wales at 19.5 and 138.19 calendar days respectively.

Work to streamline processes and increase effectiveness and efficiency continued throughout 2007/08, in order to improve end-to-end time for our tenants. However, the new systems/technology could not be in place before the first and second quarters of 2008/09 and it was acknowledged that dramatic improvements throughout the rest of 2007/08 were unlikely, although the drive to increase productivity through measures already implemented continued.

In July 2007, the Independent Health Check included a benchmarking exercise against 20 similar DSO operations to measure competitiveness and value for money. It found that the DSO side of operations is in a recovery stage, but started from a low base. It also found that the DSO had been badly advised in the past and that the present pilot salary scheme was unsupportable.

The PI figures for Emergency, Urgent and Non-urgent repairs for 2008/09 are detailed as follows:

The emergency figure of 0.92 calendar days for 2007/08 falls within the target of one calendar day and shows an improvement on the 2006/07 outturn figure of 1.34 calendar days.

The 2007/08 urgent figure of 16.68 calendar days is a small improvement on the 2006/07 outturn figure of 19.5 calendar days, reflecting the drive throughout 2007/08 to make improvements within existing systems and increase productivity through measures already implemented. It had been flagged up that dramatic improvement was unlikely in advance of the introduction of a new Schedule of Rates in the first quarter of 2008/09, with Diagnostic Reporting and Mobile Working to follow. It is pleasing to note that the more significant improvement in the non-urgent figure for 2007/08 was not at the expense of this performance indicator for urgent repairs.

The 2007/08 non-urgent figure of 88.94 calendar days is a significant improvement on the 2006/07 outturn figure of 138.19 calendar days, reflecting the drive throughout 2007/08 to make improvements within existing systems and increase productivity through measures already implemented. However, this still reflects the difficulty in planning effectively when too many emergency and urgent repairs are undertaken. The big push to improve this indicator throughout Q1 of 2007/08 was successful and sustained throughout 2007/08. It is pleasing to note that this improvement was not at the expense of the performance indicators for emergency and urgent repairs, which both show a small improvement for 2007/08.

It had been emphasised that dramatic improvement was unlikely in advance of the introduction of a new Schedule of Rates in the first quarter of 2008/09, with Diagnostic Reporting and Mobile Working to follow.

Reference And Indicator Set	Indicator Description	2007/08 Targets	2007/08 Outturn	<b>On target</b> <b>Slightly miss target</b> <b>Below target</b>	Measures taken to sustain/improve performance over the year
HLS/010a	The average number of calendar days taken to complete Emergency repairs	24 hours	0.92	On target	Exceeded target and improved from 1.34 calendar days for 2006/07
HLS/010b	The average number of calendar days taken to complete Urgent repairs	7	16.68	Below target	Small improvement on the 2006/07 figure of 19.5 calendar days
HLS/010c	The average number of calendar days taken to complete Non Urgent repairs	50	88.94	Below target	Substantial improvement on the 2006/07 figure of 138.19 calendar days

The above results confirm that although there has been a small improvement in end-to-end times from 2006/07 for both emergency and urgent repairs and a significant improvement for non-urgent repairs, much work remains to be done.

Aim 3 of Flintshire's Draft Council Plan for 2007-10 is shown below, showing measures 2, 3, 4 and 5, which are targets for Housing & Property Maintenance Service:

**IMPROVEMENT GOAL:** We will ensure all have access to a home that best meets their needs.

**This goal relates to the Improvement Priority:** Meeting Housing Needs

**AREAS OF IDENTIFIED RISK (2007/08):**

	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Lead</b>
<b>R1</b>	Requirement for an agreed strategy to secure investment in the Council's housing stock.	High	C&H
<b>R2</b>	Improvements required in the housing grants processes.	High	C&H
<b>R3</b>	Requirement for an agreed housing strategy.	High	C&H
<b>R4</b>	Availability of suitable accommodation for 16-17 year olds looked after by the Council.	High	C&H

**MEASURES AIMED FOR SUCCESS:**

	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Lead</b>
<b>M1</b>	Increase the percentage of potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least six months from 82% in 2006 to 83% by 2008.	C&H
<b>M2</b>	Reduce the percentage of clients who stay in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for longer than 30 days by 2010.	C&H
<b>M3</b>	Reduce the average repair times for:	C&H
<b>a</b>	• Emergency repairs completed from 4 calendar days in 2006 to 0.5 of a calendar day by 2010.	
<b>b</b>	• Urgent repairs completed from 23 calendar days in 2006 to 4 calendar days by 2010.	
<b>c</b>	• Non-urgent repairs completed from 166 calendar days in 2006 to 28 days by 2010.	
<b>M4</b>	Increase the percentage of:	C&H
<b>a</b>	• Emergency repairs completed within 1 calendar day from 89.82% in 2006 to 99% by 2010.	
<b>b</b>	• Urgent repairs completed within 7 calendar days from 53.91% in 2006 to 99% by 2010.	
<b>c</b>	• Non-urgent repairs completed within 50 calendar days from 38.60% in 2006 to 75% by 2010.	
<b>M5</b>	Improve classification processes for housing repairs by 2010:	C&H
<b>a</b>	• Reduce the percentage of reported repairs classified as emergency from 18.49% in 2006 to 7%.	
<b>b</b>	• Reduce the percentage of reported repairs classified as urgent from 40.9% in 2006 to 13%.	
<b>c</b>	• Increase the percentage of reported repairs classified as non urgent from 7.1% in 2006 to 20%.	
<b>M6</b>	To achieve 30% affordable housing on all housing planning applications over one hectare or twenty-five units in size.	E&R

## Our achievements

- New methods of working to increase productivity introduced from October 2006 further embedded – working in geographical areas, imprest stocks on vans, Canton not used as start and finish point in order to reduce down time. Improved PI figures for 2007/08
- Trading account deficit of over £900K for 2005/06. Financial turnaround for the Trading Account in 2006/07; the surplus triggered removal of the 10% plusage on contractor invoices which historically benefited this account. Subsequent budgeted deficit of £380K for 2007/08; this target significantly exceeded. Development of a robust management reporting system at Canton in 2007/08 enabled Finance to more accurately predict income across all categories and allow operational managers and supervisors to more effectively performance manage operatives in 2008/09. Budgets reviewed with C&H Finance
- Ongoing more effective utilisation of IBS and improved data management – including gas servicing, voids monitoring, pre and post-inspections; service representation at IBS Technical Sub-group Meetings and greater ‘ownership’ at Canton
- Ongoing training and development needs for all staff began to be identified and progressed through an effectively and efficiently rolled out appraisal process, aiming to meet the needs of both office-based staff and front-line operatives. Apprentice plumber/heating engineer within the Service chosen as Senior Apprentice of the year by Wales HVACR Training Group, six new apprentices taken on
- Successful bids for introduction of new technology in 2007/08 – new Schedule of Rates first step, then Diagnostic Reporting. Full mobile working via hand-held PDAs prohibitively costly, but tracking devices on vans identified as a cost-effective way forward for 2008/09 (no target date yet). Delays in first half of 2007/08 for the three Canton projects, but new Project Manager appointed from September 2007 – on target for rolling out the new SOR from April 2008, Diagnostic Reporting (Northgate Information Solutions) from July 2008
- Many longstanding HR issues addressed, but cannot all be resolved until a more appropriate service structure is in place – service redesign issues, specialist advice and guidance identified as necessary
- Overtime issues for managers and supervisors dating back to 2000 resolved through agreement with staff and their representatives – cost savings for 2007/08, circa £20K
- Service volunteered to trial the new environmental auditing procedure for Green Dragon and received positive feedback, as well as useful advice for both the current site and alternative sites when relocated

## Key risks

As described in the SLOT Analysis, a competitive, fit for purpose service with a strong customer focus will be well-placed to meet growth and development opportunities afforded by the requirement to bring the housing stock up to Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012, eg bidding for work currently all contracted out by the Capital Works Team. Key to this is the introduction of the new SOR, Diagnostic Reporting and Mobile Working. Delays and/or resource issues affecting development of a 'fit for purpose' service present serious risks to the Authority around finance, reputation, management, objectives, assets and customer/tenant. Delays would also impact on sustainability – the Authority's ability to maintain and improve Flintshire as a place to live, work and visit through the efforts of its Housing & Property Maintenance Service.

**Without an up-to-date, market-tested Schedule of Rates and 21<sup>st</sup> century technology to enable effective and efficient support and workflow for the DSO side of operations, the Service will be exposed and vulnerable in what will be a highly competitive external environment.**

There are backlogs of work, some of which is capital work that has not previously been recognised as such. Other work was carried over from 2005/06, when the 'client' decision was taken in the last quarter of that financial year that the DSO would only undertake emergency and urgent repairs. Not only did this encourage customers to claim that their repair requests were all emergency or urgent, but the restrictions on subcontracting throughout 2006/07 meant that these jobs remained on hold due to resource/capacity issues for the DSO workforce.

Lack of strategic direction generally and poor understanding of the various client functions across the Directorate is a risk to the Service. With regard to the management of void properties, this has meant that the DSO is turning round more per week than ever before at the same time as it is perceived that the current voids service is inadequate and inefficient. There were DSO workforce resource/capacity issues, combined with restrictions on subcontracting throughout 2006/07. A high proportion of minor works/voids work is refurbishment – again, this is capital work (previously only recognised in a limited way through capitalisation of voids) and illustrates the poor condition of the housing stock due to historical lack of sufficient investment.

An appropriate balance for contracted and subcontracted work now needs to be sought – work began in the last quarter of 2007/08, to be reviewed end March 2008 - and effective coordination and cooperation with the Capital Works Team around the Stock Condition Survey and the WHQS is vital. Lack of clarity and uncertainty over whether and how this should best be tackled is a risk.

In addition, the current Service structure/reporting lines are unsuitable for effective service delivery. The Service was restructured into 'business units' in 2003, but many Job Descriptions are over seven years old and there are longstanding staffing issues and long-term use of agency staff.

**Unrealistic expectations of the Service in advance of new systems/technology to enable this, combined with pressure to reduce budgets for repairs before the WHQS is met will lead to a demoralised and de-motivated workforce and damage the reputation of the Service, the Directorate and the Council.**

There is insufficient service support generally – this view is not a reflection on individuals, but is an observation on lack of resources across the board. In addition, Council may decide to go for 'one size fits all' regarding Single Status and prevent H&PMS from restoring a suitable building maintenance incentive pay scheme for DSO operatives - HR will not, at present, permit the Service to begin consultation on replacing the current Pilot Scheme Remuneration Agreement with an alternative banded salary scheme which has the potential to get more jobs done with minimal cost implications, nor to move forward with resolving longstanding issues around start and finish times and six and a half extra days holiday per operative per annum (which is possible within the current Pilot Scheme reviews).

Finally, there is risk ('customer' risk) in assuming that we know what our customers want, due to the urgent need to move things forward. For the Service to be more market-led/customer-oriented, we need to take special care to engage with our customers and allow them to be part of decision-making at the planning stage, eg diagnostic reporting and preferences for an appointments system.

The risks with the greatest impact are detailed on the spreadsheet below (Flintshire County Council Risk Assessment Template 2008/09).

Risk Ref.	Risk Description
CAH-07-HPM2	Continued lack of clarity regarding wider 'Client' function within C&H; ineffective co-ordination of DSO Responsive Repairs and Minor Works/Voids with Capital Works and Stock Condition Survey to achieve WHQS (all PERFORMANCES risk identification)
CAH-07-HPM4	Council may decide to go for 'one size fits all' regarding Single Status and prevent H&PMS from restoring a suitable building maintenance incentive pay scheme for DSO operatives (Objectives, Reputational, Management, Customer)
CAH-07-HPM1	Delays with Canton Projects - failure to implement new SOR, Diagnostic Reporting and Mobile Working within timeframes (Financial, Objectives, Reputational, Management, Assets, Customer, Sustainability)
CAH-07-HPM3	Delays with implementing new HQ structure/reporting lines (Financial, Objectives, Management, Assets)

**SPREADSHEET TO BE ATTACHED**

## The views of others

The Housing & Property Maintenance Service had been perceived as a failing service by senior management for several years and attracted blame for the high unit cost of repairs per property, but the Stock Condition Survey 2007 highlighted the fact that lack of investment in the housing stock is also a key factor. Throughout 2007/08, it began to be perceived that many improvements were taking place and there was a better understanding of some of the issues preventing the Service from moving forward as quickly as managers would wish.

In some quarters, the Housing & Property Maintenance Service's separate client function and the DSO side of operations were mistakenly thought of as indistinguishable, but this is also now better understood.

The workforce has a negative perception of the large number of consultants and interim senior managers, often with conflicting views, imposed on the service over the past few years. There is a view amongst many that the Service has tended to be used as a football with regard to the merits, or otherwise, of housing stock transfer. Press coverage relating to the Service tends to be negative.

Customer satisfaction surveys indicate that most tenants are happy with the quality of work undertaken, but feel that they have to wait too long. Elected Members tend to take the same view.

### Customer Satisfaction Surveys

A random selection of tenants are contacted by telephone daily to answer set questions about the quality of the works they have recently had undertaken by the Housing & Property Maintenance Service.

The questions are as follows:-

1. Was the job done right?
2. Was it done on one occasion?
3. Was it carried out quick enough after reporting the job?
4. Were they satisfied with the actual work which is divided into the following categories for grading:-
  - a) Excellent
  - b) Very Good
  - c) Good
  - d) Fair
  - e) Poor

The type of repair is recorded, i.e. whether the works were emergency, urgent or non-urgent. The number of 'no responses' is also recorded, i.e. if the

tenant is out when the call was made. The main criticism has been that the job was not carried out quickly enough. The feedback is very positive as to the standard of work.

## **What this means for us**

Much progress was made throughout 2007/08, but this was still only the beginning of a series of far-reaching changes that will allow the Housing & Property Maintenance Service to develop into the competitive, customer-oriented service that its customers, staff and the people of Flintshire deserve. There is a need to build on the strengths of the Service and balance priorities and resources, ensuring effective and efficient workflow management to the DSO from the client function, focusing on the delivery of a more customer-oriented repairs service, with significantly reduced end-to-end time. This will be particularly challenging in 2008/09, as the three Canton projects are rolled out and changes embedded.

From a whole-service perspective, there needs to be a clearly understood repairs standard and categorisation of emergency, urgent and non-urgent responsive repairs amongst all stakeholders - Diagnostic Reporting and the proposed new Tenants' Handbook will help these matters. A clearly understood repairs standard with regard to void properties by all stakeholders is also essential. Greater strategic direction, control and clarity is necessary over the HRA budgets linked to repairs and maintenance and the impact of the Trading Account on these budgets, together with acknowledgement by key stakeholders that difficult decisions may need to be made, politically and managerially, if a budget is capped.

## **3. Key Priorities**

- ❖ Close monitoring of Trading and HRM Accounts following introduction of new market-tested Schedule of Rates from April 2008, ensuring that income at least matches expenditure for the DSO Trading Account
- ❖ Further work with accountants to assess overhead and support costs, including those provided in-house, together with ensuring effective financial budget setting for both Client and Contractor functions
- ❖ Ongoing assessment and review of staff skills and performance through effective performance management, appraisals and personal development plans, for a skilled, motivated workforce. To include further development of the robust reporting tool that was introduced in 2007/08 to support first line managers in effectively performance managing operatives, as well as to enable accountants to more accurately project DSO income

- ❖ Continue active management of sickness and absence levels
- ❖ New technology – the Diagnostic Reporting Project must be kept on track to ensure correct categorisation of repairs (target date end June 2008), which will lead into the third project - trackers on vans identified as a cost-effective way of gaining some of the benefits of full mobile working in 2008/09, possibly by Autumn 2008, work on options ongoing. This is also key to a customer-oriented approach because of tenant involvement with Diagnostic Reporting and the associated Repairs Handbook for tenants. These links can be built on for future service planning
- ❖ Continue to increase utilisation of facilities/modules within IBS to improve workflow management and measure productivity levels
- ❖ Review of Pilot Pay Remuneration Scheme when given go-ahead by HR; to include introduction of 37 hour working week for operatives - currently 38 hours, but paid 37 hours with an extra 6.5 days holiday per annum. It is proposed to remove the 6.5 days extra holiday and standardise start and finish times for former Alyn & Deeside and Delyn operatives. The quid pro quo could be an early finish on Fridays and the opportunity for extra hours in line with a more customer-oriented approach, eg choice of appointment times for morning or afternoon, one late evening per week for appointments only, Saturday mornings, etc. Trade Unions already sounded out, customer views/involvement to be sought, but HR have blocked progress because of Single Status concerns, although these are Red Book Crafts operatives and not part of Single Status negotiations
- ❖ Service restructure planned for July 2007 delayed. Many longstanding staffing issues will now be addressed following the new Chief Executive's top-down restructuring into strategic directorates and subsequent reviews (including reduction in agency costs). Service restructuring will enable and support effective and efficient service delivery – appropriate Canton-based direction, control and systems need to be in place for customer-focus and productivity of operatives
- ❖ Improve communication with other Community & Housing teams, in particular the Capital Works Team, in order for there to be a joined-up approach regarding the outcome of the Stock Condition Survey and requirement to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012. The introduction of the relevant IBS module from April 2008 will allow the Service to view the Capital Programme on IBS, but communication and clarity between teams also needs to be further improved. Similarly, for voids management and other housing management, eg gas servicing
- ❖ Streamline processes to avoid delays in 'Responsive Repairs' for urgent and non-urgent planned repairs, improving PIs – delays create

increasing frustration for customers and Elected Members (many carried over from 2005/06, as well as those built up in 2006/07). DSO unable to address in 2006/07 due to no subcontracting and lack of DSO workforce resource/capacity, partially addressed in 2007/08

- ❖ Minor Works/Voids – need to decrease average turnaround time and batch up, contract and/or subcontract or permit the DSO to take on more operatives as the in-house contractor (this would get more back quicker, but not necessarily decrease average turnaround time due to underlying condition of housing stock). There are issues regarding Welsh Housing Quality Standard, links with the Stock Condition Survey and the Capital Programme. A high proportion of properties require refurbishment, which is capital work that provision has never been made for within the Capital Programme previously. From April 2008/09 coding capital work at source
- ❖ Quality Customer Care (the 'client' function within the Service) - work will continue throughout 2008/09 to streamline processes, improve workflow and promote more effective use of IBS, minimising inspections backlogs (links with Service restructuring, as the QCC Officer currently has eighteen direct reports) and improving PIs
- ❖ Comprehensive review of the Stores function required, including mapping of items held against those used following appointment of new Supplies Controller and staffing issues addressed. To link with the Gwynedd-led procurement exercise for North Wales Local Authorities that the Service became involved with throughout 2007/08. Also to push for a more integrated, standardised approach to procurement, encompassing Grants, Capital Works, Energy Unit, etc (leading to more joined-up thinking and economies of scale)

## 4. Resources

The Housing & Property Maintenance Service aims to make the best use of resources in 2008/09 to deliver a competitive and customer-oriented service cost-effectively, taking into account (also see 'Key risks', pages 14-15):

- Employees: Ongoing training and development in line with new Corporate Training Policy and needs of Service in line with restructuring (see pages 22 and 23)
- Finance: Continue working closely with Finance to review and monitor Trading Account and HRM, with particular focus on implications of new SOR from April 2008 (see page 24 for resources 08/09)
- Land & Buildings: Relocation from Canton Depot (location and timeframe yet to be determined)
- Information: Introduction of new technology (Canton Projects)
- Partnerships: Working with contractors, suppliers, customers and Gwynedd-led North Wales procurement exercise
- Planning Change: Roll out of the three Canton Projects and implications for the Service  
Outcome of Stock Options Appraisal

There are approximately 140 staff within the Service as a whole, including nearly 100 DSO operatives; joiners, plumbers, electricians, painters, bricklayers, labourers, plasterers, apprentices, stores staff, service drivers and administrative staff. The operatives are supervised by 6 Assistant District Maintenance Officers (ADMOs), who report to 2 District Maintenance Officers (DMOs), the Responsive Repairs Officer and the Minor Works/Voids Officer.

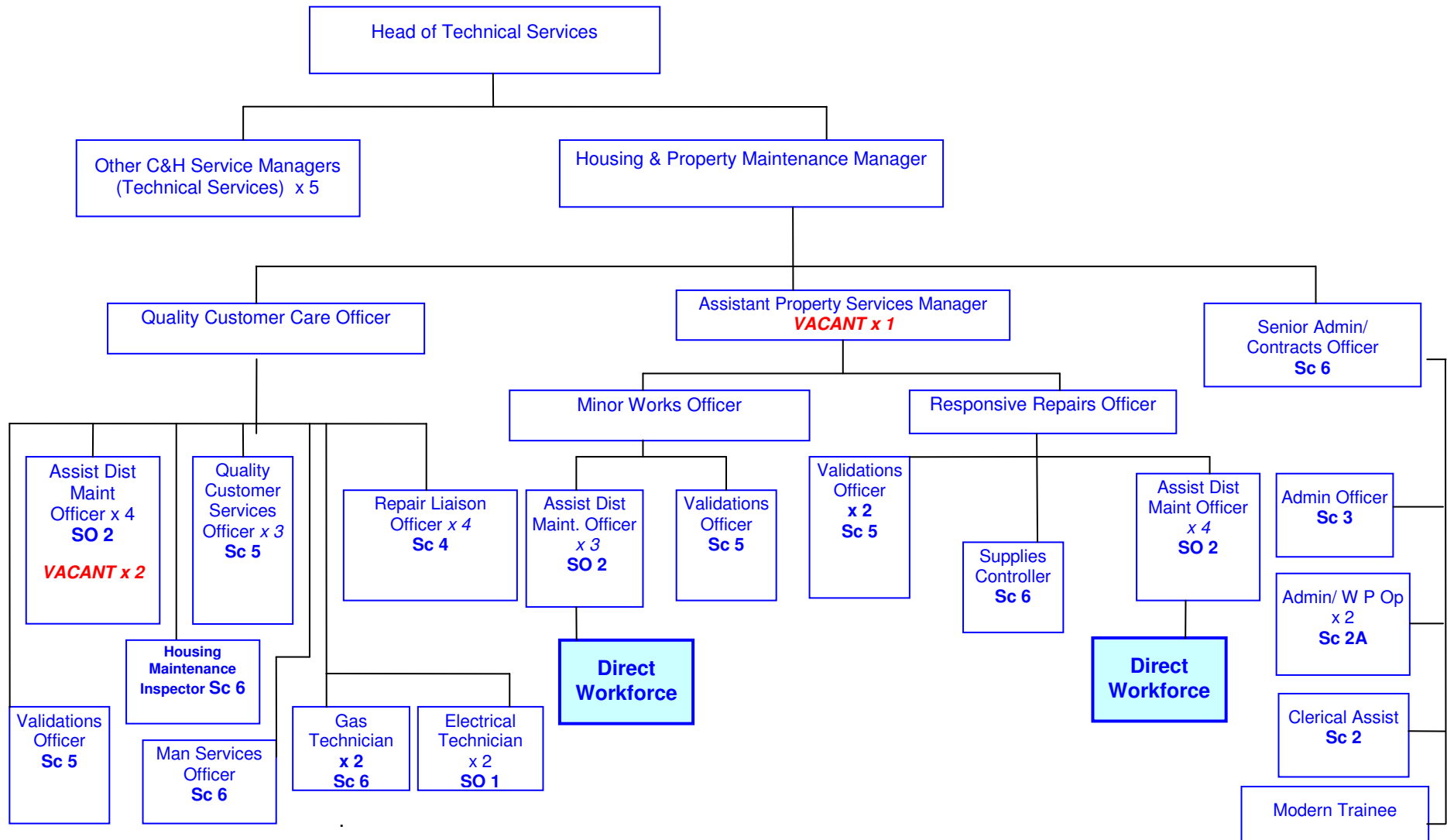
The Responsive Repairs Officer and the Minor Works/Voids Officer, together with the Quality Customer Care Officer and the Senior Administrator/Contracts Officer, report to the Housing and Property Maintenance Manager. The direct workforce is supplemented by the engagement of agency staff when necessary, although it should be noted that increased flexibility regarding 'hiring and firing' for service delivery is sometimes necessary and desirable for this type of service.

Longstanding staffing issues for Canton Depot-based staff will be addressed through a restructuring exercise, following consultation with staff and their representatives over the draft structure in Structure 2. Structure 1 shows the current structure of the Housing & Property Maintenance Service. It should be noted that with the new structure the current requirement for agency staff based at Canton would cease.

The Service requires a skilled and motivated workforce focused on customer care and capable of embracing change, in line with 'Using Our Resources' in the Council Plan. The Service is targeting training appropriately, working closely with the C&H Training Manager appointed in 2007 and has improved sickness absence monitoring with the aim of reducing the average number of sick days – but also to ensure that all staff get the support that they may need to improve attendance.

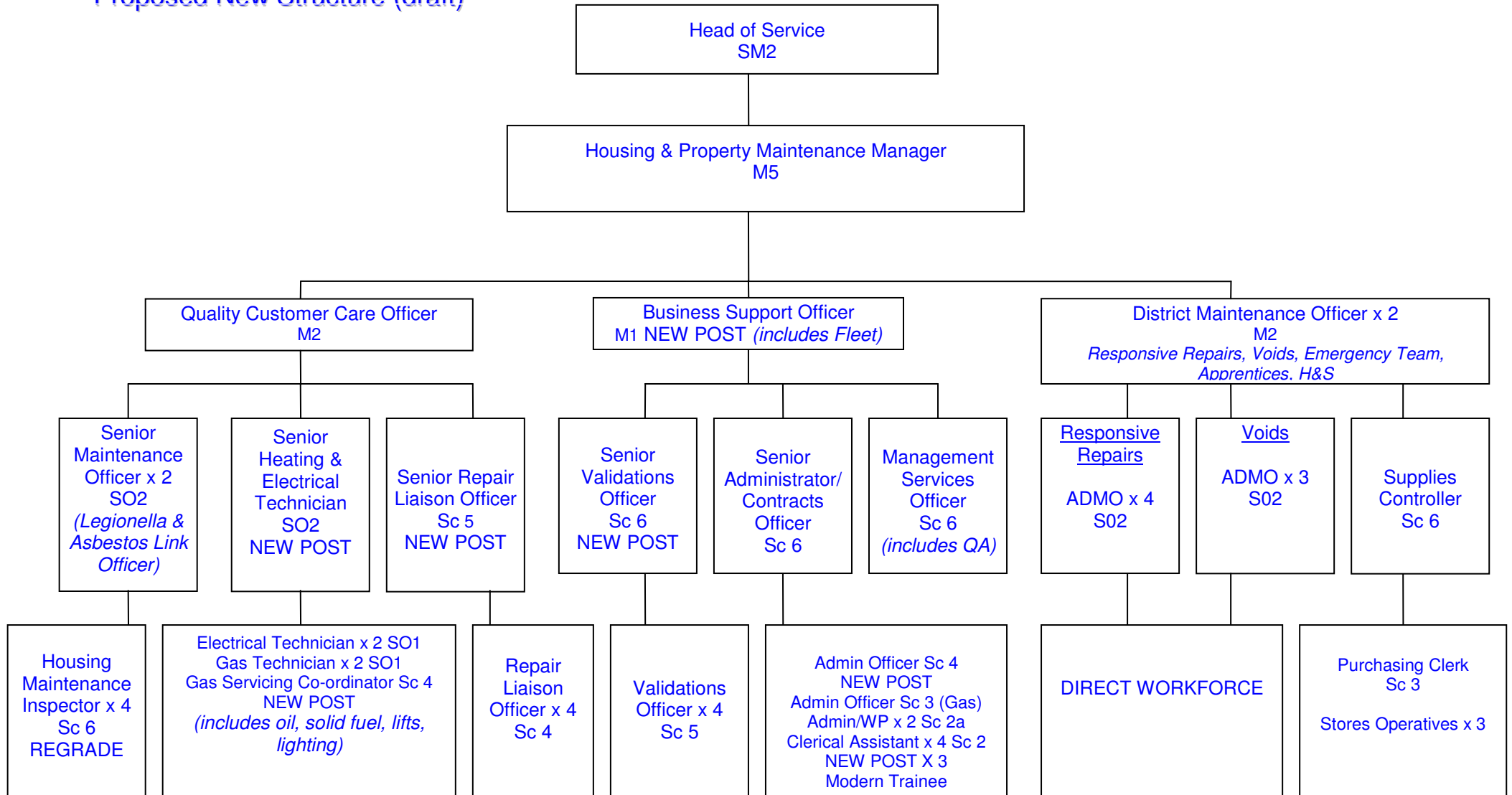
**Current Housing & Property Maintenance Service Structure**

**Structure 1**



## Structure 2

### Proposed New Structure (draft)



## Resources 2008-09

	2007/08 £000	Staffing FTE	*Potential budgetary issues for 2008/09	2007/08 IT Implications	2007/08 Asset Implications	2007/08 Legal Implications
Employees						
Premises						
Transport						
Supplies & Services						
Third Party Payments						
Transfer Payments						
Capital Financing						
Support Costs						
<b>Total Expenditure</b>						
Income: Grants from Council – Employees						
<b>Grants from Council – Other</b>						
External Grants – Employees						
<b>External Grants - Other</b>						
<b>Additional Revenue</b>						
<b>Total Income</b>						
Net Cost						

NB. Please indicate (\*) against any of the above headings if you are aware of any issues that may have implications for 2009/10 budget requirements.

A brief description of the issue needs to be noted underneath the template