

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Vision

for the Housing Management Service

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Introduction

Folkestone & Hythe District Council are in a unique position to create a new Housing Service for its tenants. To some extent the Council has a blank sheet of paper, not restricted by systems, procedures, previous methods of working and ways of communicating as well as staff wanting to play a part in shaping the new service. The new service has the opportunity to become the vanguard of the Council's transformation programme as it is not encumbered with history and being HRA funded it should be able to move swiftly and smoothly to adapt to new ways of working.

This paper outlines the vision for the new Housing Management Service; describing the delivery model that will provide operational clarity and accountability. The Vision is the long term destination for the Service; the initial work being to ensure the service is built on sound systems, processes and staff on which the culture and values will be shaped and embedded within the council.

The Vision

The vision for the service is based around the following key principles:

1. Tenants will be at the heart of the new service and are our best advocates.
2. The Health and Safety of our tenants and leaseholders is paramount. We will learn from the past and embed a culture of health and safety throughout the organisation.
3. Success will be measured by the annual tenant STAR survey (if existing surveys are not up to date then a new survey will be completed in Autumn/Winter 2020).
4. FHDC staff will consider it a stimulating and rewarding place to work and stakeholders find us easy, flexible and professional to work with. (This will be measured by internally managed surveys).
5. Digital efficiency across the service will provide tenants with access to their rent accounts, tenancy sign up, repairs reporting, and details of their home e.g. location of asbestos, SAP levels, future planned maintenance work. Work and visits will be organised around the customer; we will be sufficiently confident to share our performances on line and in real time, e.g. Trip Advisor style. Invoices will be electronic, paper confined to history whilst systems will be put in place for customers who cannot interact digitally. Staff will operate remotely with full access to the housing systems requiring a minimal office footprint.
6. The Service will integrate with the wider Council from day 1 fully embracing the case management approach to service delivery whilst allowing specialists to deliver their expert areas of housing, i.e. estate & building management distinct and led by a dedicated professional team, while being complementary to tenant management.

7. Neighbourhood management will be the backbone of the Service with Housing Officers and Area Surveyors being responsible for discrete geographical areas of the housing stock. Neighbourhoods will be determined by workload (rather than number of homes), and are likely to change with time and activity e.g. an area may have significant repair demand that will reduce after a planned maintenance programme has been completed. Flexibility across the resources in neighbourhood management will be key to providing resilience in the service.
8. The specialist functions will operate across the housing stock and work closely with the neighbourhood team.
9. A new Asset Management Strategy will be designed alongside an HRA Acquisition and Development Strategy. These two documents will provide the framework to enable us to manage and improve our existing stock and develop our new build programme. New homes will be site specific and aspire to be constructed to carbon neutral standards, they will embrace new methods of construction and digitisation, supporting future technology and the self-service vision for the Service for tenants and equipment.
10. The Service will be reliant on contractors providing services (and the service will therefore include staff skilled in procurement and contract management). As contracts expire all methods of service delivery will be explored, e.g. directly employing, the use of contractors, or a mix of both to improve service delivery through critical areas. Where contracts are let scoring will be weighted in favour of local SME's and supply chains and companies that provide local apprenticeships, trainees and other employment opportunities.

How the Vision will be achieved

11. With a go live date for the Housing Management Service of 1 October 2020 focus will be on creating the initial operating structure, appointing staff (or interims) with the right attitude that will help deliver the service whilst ensuring clarity of roles and embedding the performance management framework from the start.
12. The heavy lifting of embedding the new structure, processes and systems will be completed over the next 2 years whilst the culture will emanate from the existing Council during service integration and beyond. The service will evolve as strategies are implemented and service areas become more efficient driving continual improvement.
13. New ways of working will not be limited to transactional services and will extend to all areas, such as the selection of products and materials used in the housing stock that will enable self-diagnosis and reporting of faults providing just in time solutions to be delivered over break down and fix arrangements.
14. Delivering a people centred business, such as Housing, with the ongoing threat of Corona Virus has necessitated new ways of working. Where appropriate these ways of working will be embedded and at the same time further approaches to work will be needed to ensure safe practices for tenants, contractors and staff.

15. This vision will not be delivered until the housing service is fully integrated throughout the Council. Methods of working, training, governance, performance management etc. are the foundation on which the housing service will be constructed.

16. The vision sets out an efficient, customer centric way of working. Correctly delivered, it will reflect best practice (according to industry standards / House Mark etc.), drive continual improvement and create the conditions in which a truly excellent service will be delivered to FHDC tenants and leaseholders.

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