

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 21 MAY 2014**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON THE HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT SERVICE**

1.00 This report will update members on the progress of the Housing Asset Management service improvement work streams.

2.00 **BACKGROUND**

2.01 The Asset Management Team have been progressing a number of service improvements to enhance quality of services delivered to tenants and provide the foundations for sustained good performance.
The work areas currently being progressed are:

- Staff Development and Training
- Second phase Fleet Review
- Implementation of mobile working
- Improve reputation and performance
- Delivery of Capital works scheme and achievement of WHQS

2.02 **Main Highlights of 2013-14: -**

- Full implementation of a fit for purpose staffing structure
- Introduction of a revised and reduced Schedule of Rates
- Improved performance across all categories of repairs
- Agreement of a revised business plan to achieve WHQS by 2020
- Improved performance on Voids and Gas servicing
- Full delivery of Capital Programme, again outperforming the promises made in the Choices Document

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Staff Development and Training

The team has worked closely with the Housing Training Manager throughout the year to provide both necessary and added value training to all members of the service.

There are many mandatory courses, such as legislative training in Gas Servicing and Electrical, however many additional courses have been identified and provided throughout the year which have benefits for not only the individuals being trained but also quality of service to tenants. Following is a list of some of the training provided over the last year: -

- Site Managers Supervisors Training Scheme
- Asbestos Awareness
- Dealing with Complaints
- Equality and Diversity
- Working at Heights
- Carrying out effective appraisals
- Various ILM's – Team Leader/Manager
- Data protection
- Customer care
- Risk Assessments
- Attendance Management

The multi skilling programme continues to be delivered through Coleg Cambria which will provide all trades staff with the required skills to become fully competent in a range of tasks that will allow them to attain a Level 2 NVQ in Multi Skilling. Attainment of this qualification will assist the trade operative to:

- a) improve the quality of their work
- b) complete more work in one visit
- c) improve productivity
- d) assist in the delivery of the repairs by appointment process

This will also have a positive impact for tenants and on customer satisfaction as it will provide the platform for a higher rate of jobs being completed on the first visit. Cohort 2 are now undertaking the programme and those who have completed various modules are being encouraged to apply their new skills as part of their roles on-site.

2014-15

The following training has been identified for the forthcoming year which contributes to both service requirements/continuity and also development for individual and whole service growth: -

- Manual Handling
- Lone working
- Child protection/safeguarding

- Solar Panel Maintenance
- Dealing with Aggression and Violence
- Boiler Maintenance
- Fire Safety Awareness

Specialist training has also been identified for elements of the workforce, such as Advanced Scaffolding Training, where there is an opportunity to train team members to undertake work currently carried out by external contractors. This will generate efficiencies within the service which can then be re-invested back into maintaining the housing stock.

In 2013-14 there were 885 training days provided within Asset Management compared to 490 in 2012-13. This represents an increase of 81%. Although training within the service has increased there is no evidence of a negative impact on service performance. In fact, the number of jobs undertaken has increased during the year and performance has continued to improve.

3.02 Review of the vehicle fleet

A Corporate Fleet review has been underway within the Council to review the ownership model of the Councils fleet identifying potential efficiencies in cost, utilisation and working practices. Housing Asset Management have been represented at the Fleet Transformation Board throughout the project and have been working closely with the Fleet service to identify a new fit for purpose fleet for Housing. The proposed new ownership model will generate efficiencies within the service through both cost of vehicles and improved productivity as a result of revised arrangements for vehicle servicing and safety checks. A new fleet will require reduced checks and reduced visits to the Fleet workshop for MOT's and alike and will result in reduced downtime for tradespersons meaning more jobs can be completed. The new fleet will also enhance the image of the service through an improved and more professional fleet of vehicles. An efficiency saving of £50k has been identified in the Housing Revenue Account on Fleet costs for the 2014-15 financial year.

3.03 Mobile Working

As a result of the issues encountered on the mobile working project Senior Officers from Housing and IT met with the Housing Director of Capita to discuss the ongoing concerns and seek proposals from the provider to address the issues and identify a robust solution to provide an effective, fit for purpose Mobile Working solution for the future. Flintshire's representatives presented a strong argument to highlight the issues that the Authority has encountered as part of the project including a lack of support and pro activeness from the software provider to implement an effective solution. Assurances were sought that the provider would take responsibility and a lead on proposing a revised model for mobile working.

Following the meeting the software provider tabled a proposal to move Flintshire from the current mobile working system onto a new mobile working solution developed by the provider's partners. Before committing to any revised agreement with the provider it was agreed that a site visit should be conducted by Housing and IT Officers to an Authority where the proposed system has been implemented in order to view the new solution in a working environment. This would also provide an opportunity to discuss the system, implementation and any issues encountered by another party in order for Flintshire to assess viability, risks and benefits before making any commitment to progress with a new solution.

The site visit was conducted on 23rd April and proved to be very beneficial in terms of understanding system benefits, project implementation, planning, risks and potential issues and learning points. The revised product has developed considerably from the previous solution and provides far more flexibility as a mobile working product in terms of integration to current systems, business processes and device compatibility. The revised solution is device independent and therefore allows for a wider choice and greater flexibility for varying devices for different teams and tasks. The product also allows for the development and amendment of the interface on devices which will enable these to be tailored for the end user purposes. The system allows for the attachment of departmental forms which will enable a greater level of information to be sent to the devices and will considerably aid the effectiveness of this solution in the Gas and Electrical departments in terms of certification.

An effective mobile working solution has always been a priority for the service to develop and realise potential efficiencies. Successful implementation will provide the platform to enable other key developments such as effective van stock management and job scheduling. With a robust proposal from the supplier both in terms of a project plan and cost schedule it is proposed to develop an internal project board to oversee a project team and plan to progress implementation of a revised Mobile Working Solution. The project will be undertaken in three stages: -

- Stage 1 – Evaluation of proposal – March – May
- Stage 2 – Pilot implementation – June – September
- Stage 3 – Full rollout – October - January

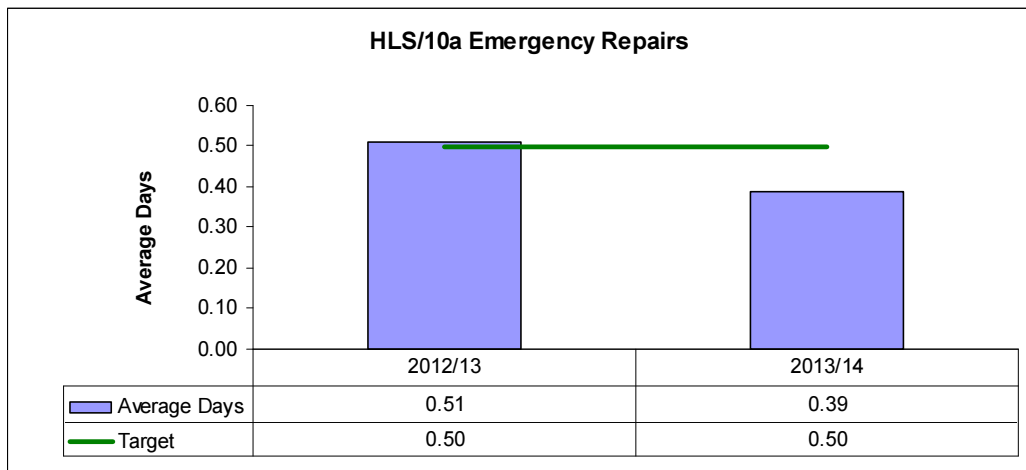
3.04 Improve reputation and performance of repairs service

The team has achieved significant improvements in performance across all categories of repairs over the last 12 months and continues to work towards further improvement with the aim of achieving top quartile status for the service.

The table below provides the performance outturns for repairs for the 2013-14 financial year and also compares the current results with the outturns for the previous financial year.

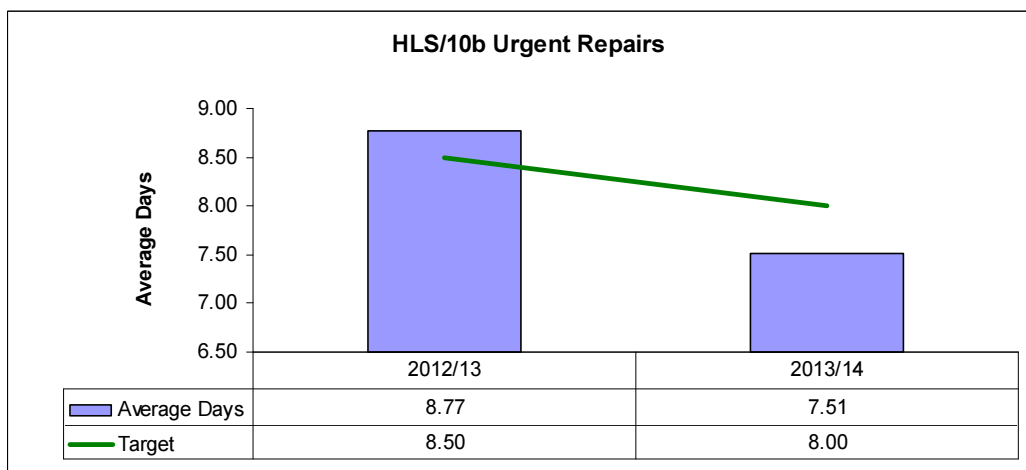
Year	Emergency	Urgent	Non urgent
2012-13	0.51	8.77	43.58
2013-14	0.39	7.51	23.03

Emergency Repairs



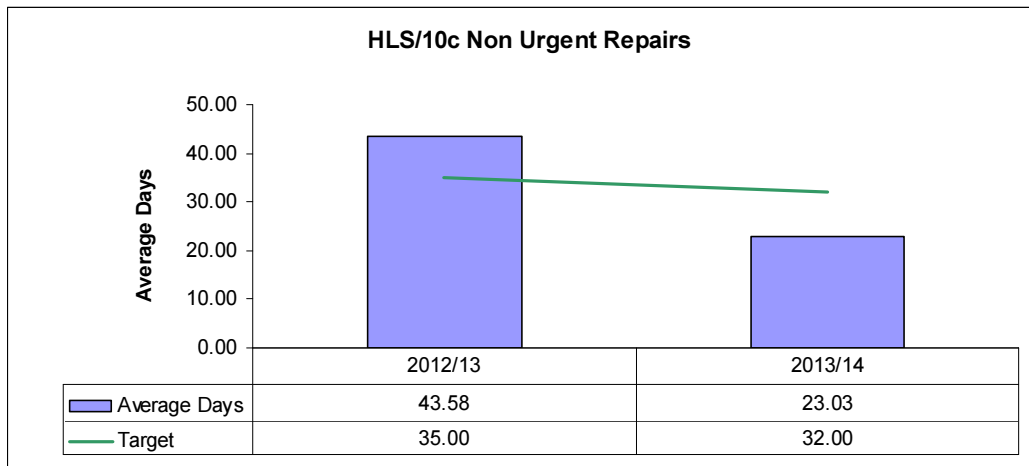
Performance on Emergency repairs has consistently achieved the target throughout the year for the first time which is a result of improved control measures introduced and improving the awareness throughout the service of performance targets and processes.

Urgent Repairs



Performance on Urgent repairs has further improved from the previous financial year and has achieved the reduced target.

Non Urgent Repairs



A further significant reduction in the average days taken to complete a non-urgent repair. Performance in this category is the most improved with performance in 2011-12 being as high as 82 days during the year.

Housing Asset Management are also predicting to have completed over 49,000 jobs in 2013-14 which is over 3000 more than last financial year and a further 2000 more than the 2011-12 financial year. This is an important point as performance has still been significantly improved whilst also carrying out a considerable number of additional repairs through the year.

As the Housing service moves towards Housemark benchmarking, with the aim of achieving top quartile status, the performance focus will shift in Housing Asset Management to concentrate on percentage of repairs completed within target time. The service has already instigated the change in focus; however a research exercise will be conducted over the 1st quarter to identify the internal targets set by comparator organisations. This is a vital exercise to ensure that when benchmarking, the service is reporting accurately and comparing data and outcomes consistently with other organisations.

3.05 Voids

Performance on Voids has also improved over the year with overall turnaround times reducing considerably from past outturns. There are still improvements to be made on Void performance to drive down the turnaround times further however this year has shown good progress. The performance for all properties in 2013-14 was an average of 42 days compared to 47 days for 2012-13.

Work on-site days consistently beat the target of 21 days for normal properties at 18 days (with an average of 39 days for major works properties, those being kitchen/heating/bathroom replacements etc).

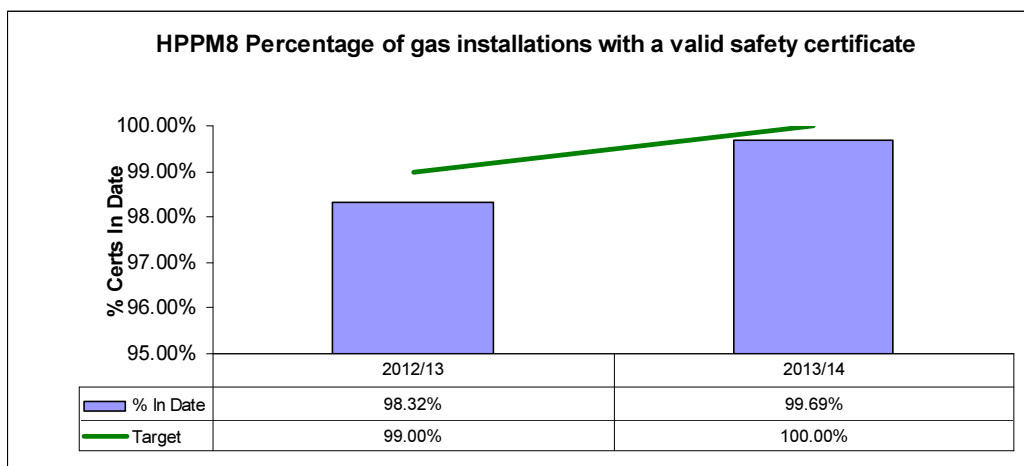
There have been a number of improvements to management

arrangements and business processes during the year which has driven the improvements and further developments are planned for the forthcoming year to continue progress. These include: -

- Revised Voids standard
- In-house WHQS kitchen team
- Improved performance reports

3.06 Gas Servicing

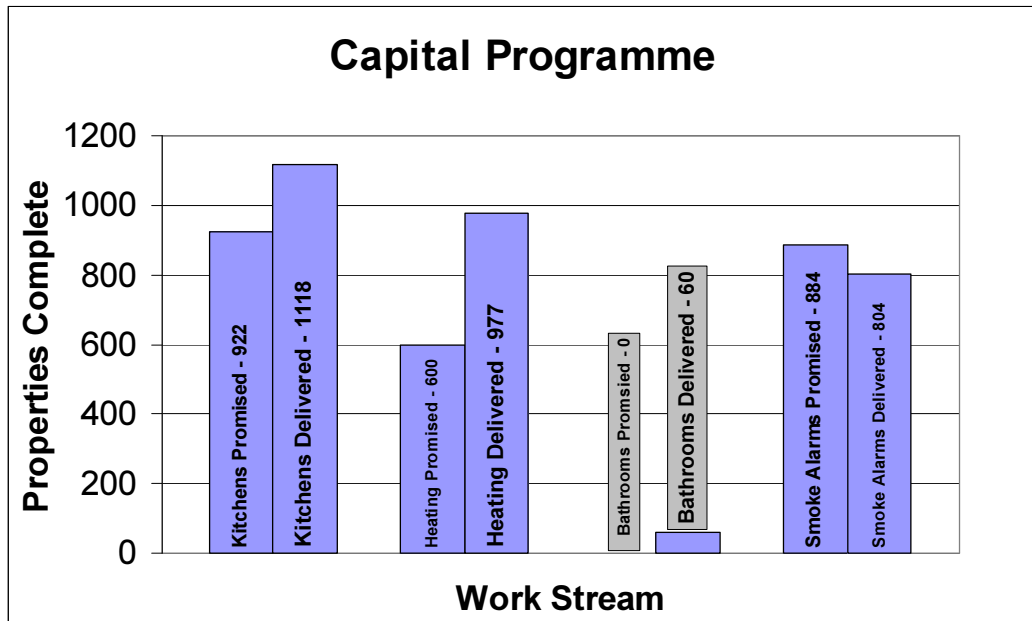
Good progress has been made to improve performance in CP12 certification during the financial year. Performance has improved from 98.32% in 2012-13 to 99.69% in 2013-14. The target remains 100% and the team is committed to working with Housing Management to achieve that in 2014-15. The improved position is largely down to improvements in business processes and teamwork on difficult cases. An exercise is currently underway to trial a revised legal process to gain entry to difficult properties and following the results of this pilot it is proposed to review the Gas Procedures. A number of site visits have also been conducted to other Local Authorities and Housing Associations in order to understand other processes which may improve our internal procedures.



3.07 Capital Works and Welsh Housing Quality Standards

The Capital Works programme for 2013/14 was intended to provide 600 Heating upgrades, 922 Kitchen replacements and 884 Smoke Alarms. As stated in the original Tenants Choices Document, there was no programme for Bathroom works, however some funding was allocated and the Capital Works Team were able to target some Bathroom Replacements.

The chart below identifies the work streams managed by the Capital Works Team, comparing the number of properties the Authority promised to deliver, against the number of those properties actually achieved



The four main streams of internal works; Kitchens, Heating, Bathrooms & Smoke Alarms; were completed by seven main contractors, one of which was the in-house DLO team; who completed approximately 600 Smoke Alarm installations.

The main Kitchen Contract was split as reported in the previous year; where 70% of the works were allocated to Keepmoat and 30% of the works were allocated to Wates. GM Jones were also allocated a small number of properties to complete whilst they were completing Major Voids.

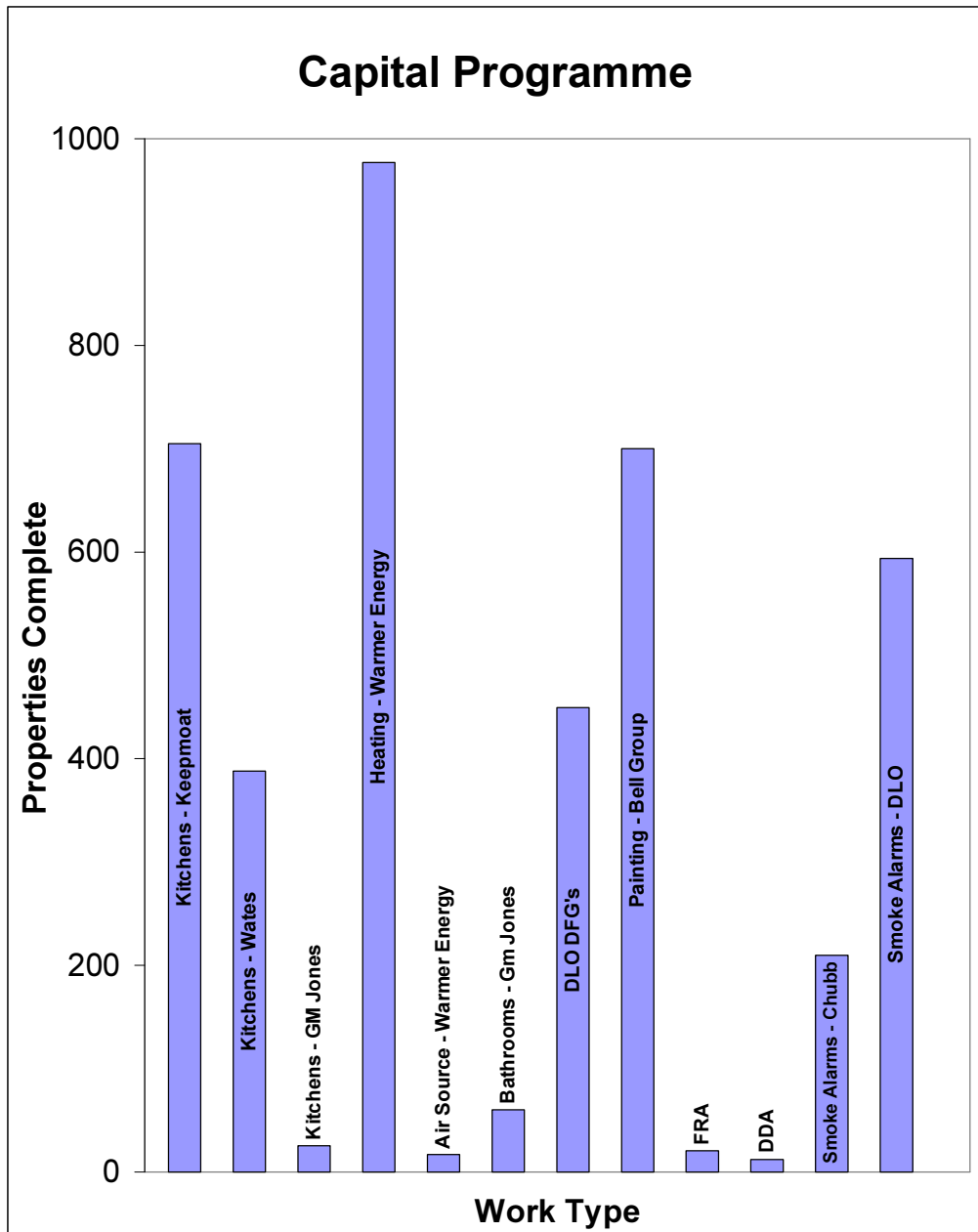
The Heating Installations were completed by Warmer Energy who also completed a small number of Air Source Heat Pumps in Buckley and Trelawnyd.

Following on from last years successful Bathroom Contract, GM Jones were allocated a further number of properties and this was completed by October 2013.

The Team also worked closely with the in-house Adaptations Team, providing additional funds for the DFG upgrades, which resulted in an additional 140 WHQS Bathroom installations.

In addition to the four main streams of work, the team have also completed works following on from Fire Risk Assessments and to date have completed works to 20 communal areas. Further DDA Works targeting 12 communal areas has also been completed, helping the authority to fulfil its legal duties.

Following on from year end reports, without including tenant refusals; the following works have been completed to tenant's homes & communal areas.



Moving forwards into 2014/15, schemes and contractors are already in place for the following works; Fire Risk Assessment, DDA works, Kitchen Replacements, Heating schemes and Smoke Alarms. Additional funding has been identified in the Capital Programme for other work streams, including Bathroom Replacements, Roofing Replacements and Environmental Works.

During the tender process, members of the Tenants Federation are asked to attend Contractor Interviews and Site Visits so that they can become more actively involved in the procurement process. The Capital Works Team commenced this as a trial last year and with positive feedback received from the group, the team are looking to expand this process in the future.

The Capital Works Team has also appointed one permanent and one temporary Tenant Liaison Officer (TLO), who have been tasked to engage with the customer at first point of contact and evaluate the Contractors performance onsite.

The future role of the TLO will of course change as different contracts and works streams are procured. With the TLO now liaising between the Project Officer and the Contractor, the tenant now has another avenue of communication to utilise; and it is anticipated that this will improve the tenant's experience and journey through each stage of the works.

The Stock Condition Survey has now been completed and the analysis process has commenced; so that the team can upload the information onto the IBS system. Initial analysis of the raw data provided indicates that the survey supports the projections and figures contained within the agreed business plan. Further analysis will now be completed before the production of a final report. Once complete, the service will be able to identify when works are required to individual properties and also identify when certain components are failing. This will enable the team to accurately plan and budget future works.

Welsh Housing Quality Standards

Following agreement with Welsh Government of a revised business plan to achieve WHQS by 2020 a number of measures have been undertaken to progress delivery of the standard. These have included: -

- Development of a revised Asset Management Strategy
- Commissioning of a number of surveys; including Stock Condition
- Consultation at Tenants Conference
- Consultation at Scrutiny
- Developing the IBS system to support delivery and planning of the programme
- Continued delivery of the existing 6 year programme

The next step is to develop a revised delivery programme incorporating information and feedback from all of the above. This will be undertaken in the following 3 stages.

1) **PLANNING STAGES** – A) April to June 2014 - Major planning works are required to analyse workload and provide options for delivery; B) July to August 2014 – Workshops with members and Tenants to review options; C) September to October – Present at Scrutiny and Cabinet for discussion and approval.

2) **PROCUREMENT STAGES** – November 2014 to March 2015 – Procure all contractors for all streams of works ready for implementation.

3) **IMPLEMENTATION STAGE** – April 2015 to July 2015 – Ensure all contracts are implemented on site to begin delivery of the revised programme.

3.08 Priorities for the forthcoming financial year 2014-15

- Implement a revised Mobile Working solution in the service
- Achieve top quartile performance
- Improve van stock management
- Develop 6 year Investment Programme to achieve WHQS
- Establish Community Benefit Model as part of Capital Works Programmes

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to consider the report and to agree that now the service is delivering sustained improved performance that an annual report to committee be provided.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None as a direct result of this report

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

None as a direct result of this report, though works to maintain and improve the stock and repair and maintenance services provide a direct benefit to the lives and living conditions for some of the poorest Flintshire residents.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

None as a direct result of this report

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

None as a direct result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are a number of items which will require continuing negotiation and discussion with trade unions over the coming months.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

Consultation will be required as detailed above

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

Consultation with trade unions is ongoing, regular meetings are held with Trade Union representatives to discuss all aspects of the service.

12.00 APPENDICES

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Contact Officer: Nikki Evans
Telephone: 01352 701658
Email: nikki.evans@flintshire.gov.uk