



member services

Scottish building and housing Accolades 2009

FINALIST SUBMISSIONS

An APSE e-publication

Contents

Page	Item
2	Introduction
4	Best Scottish Building and Housing Employee Initiative
9	Best Scottish Building and Housing Team
20	Best Scottish Partnership Working in Building and Housing

Introduction

Building and Housing has never been so high on the Government's agenda with its important contribution in an attempt to address the serious housing shortage. The recognition of this issue has been welcomed by Scottish local authorities. The Building and Housing group have embraced the ethos of addressing issues to make them more efficient whilst embracing the Best Value regime.

The purpose behind this e publication is to showcase the best practice examples which exist within Scottish local authorities following the recent accolades at Peebles Hydro. Yet again, the finalist submissions highlighted the good work being done by councils when dealing with service delivery. There are also closer working relationships with authorities which have added to the partnership approach currently being adopted.

Sometimes building and housing services is overlooked, but local authorities work tirelessly in order to achieve a high standard of service delivery. The standard of entries was excellent and yet again, the authorities should be complimented on showcasing just how good a service they provide to the public.

I would especially like to thank my fellow judges for helping to make this a memorable experience and I would readily welcome the chance to judge again next year. Hopefully it will be easier job to do then.

Pat Taggart



Pat Taggart, Scotland Principal Advisor
Association for Public Service Excellence
Council Offices, Floor 11, Almada Street, Hamilton ML3 0AL

Best Scottish Building and Housing Employee Initiative

Sponsored by PFT Scotland

Winner: South Lanarkshire Council

South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) recognises that its employees are its most valuable resource. Within the Council, Property Services has a proven reputation as a successful and innovative public service employer.

The following headings cover the initiatives successfully introduced over the past few years.

- Workforce Planning
- Maintaining Work/Life Balance
- Investors In People
- Graduate Scheme / Apprentice Programme / Trainee Programme
- OHSAS 18001

All of the above provides ongoing development and support to employees allowing them to operate within a busy and crucial role in providing front line service delivery for our various customers.

Workforce Planning

Workforce planning was formally introduced to Property Services in 2007 to aid in achieving the core business objective of meeting our increasing customer needs.

It is about identifying where the business wants to be and mapping the route towards this objective in a manner which encourages more strategic longer term planning in line with anticipated demands and pressures.

The intention is the right people, with the right skills in the right place at the right time.

Property Services has been recognised for its work in developing and implementing a robust Workforce Planning framework. Planned recruitment intakes (29 new posts in one single advert in April 2008) have led to a much improved response from the recruitment market concurrent with significant savings in recruitment and associated management time costs.

Work/Life Balance:

As recently as November 2008 all craft employees were transferred on to an agreed 37hr working week, with the introduction of a salaried payment scheme based on areas of performance rather than traditional productivity bonuses measures.

Graduate Scheme / Apprentice Programme / Trainee Programmes

Property Services introduced a Graduate programme in 2004, bringing in 13 graduates in the first year alone. A regular intake now occurs for a range of different service areas and skills. The concept is simple, take the embryonic skills of the individual and provide them with the opportunity to grow and add value to the skills base of Property Services.

The Council operates an annual apprenticeship programme, commensurate with a review of projected resource and skills needs (ref: Workforce Planning). Whilst primarily focused towards prospective school leavers, the scheme has recently been developed to incorporate adult apprenticeships to further support the comprehensive programmes of work on offer within SLC. To date, 216 apprentices have been employed.

SLC is involved within different training programmes that endeavor to re-locate trainees from all backgrounds into full time employment. A specialist unit within Property Services develops trainee skills, ranging from joinery work to literacy skills. The result is the completion of a recognised qualification with Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire. Success in this area has gone from strength to strength with 59 candidates being reintroduced to full time employment in 07/08 and a total of 309 over the last six years.

OHSAS 18001

Property Services gained accreditation to OHSAS 18001 in October 2007. As a specification for Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) management systems, the standard provides a systematic approach to identifying hazards, eliminating these or reducing their risks.

The following key areas are addressed by OHSAS 18001:

- Planning for hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control
- OHSAS management programme
- Structure and responsibility
- Training, awareness and competence
- Consultation and communication
- Operational control
- Emergency preparedness and response
- Performance measuring, monitoring and improvement

Implementation of OHSAS 18001 provides evidence to our employees that we have a health and safety system that is compliant with the highest standards, further demonstrating our commitment to their personal health and well being as a core business priority.

Summary

By valuing the fundamental role of the employee through this range of mechanisms, initiatives and policies, Property Services has achieved recognition across the country for consistently good performance.

The role of the trade union is key to every aspect of the above and South Lanarkshire has always ensured that employees are effectively represented at each and every level to ensure clear ownership and transparency.

SLC remains one of the largest organisations in Scotland to achieve the IIP standard which demonstrates a strong commitment to people development as a means to delivering results for the organisation, its customers and its people.

Cllr Alex McInnes accepts the award from John Walker of PFT



Best Scottish Building and Housing Employee Initiative

Sponsored by PFT Scotland

Finalists

Finalist 1: Falkirk Council

The project commenced in Sept 2007 to provide an alternative entry route to a Painting and Decorating Apprenticeship for young people who did not meet the traditional entry criteria on leaving school. These young people had a history of non attendance, non achievement and left with little or no attainment.

The Pre Apprenticeship project engaged eight summer school leavers who had not entered employment, education or training on leaving school and young people undertook a complimentary programme of core skills, vocational skills, work experience and personal development up to December 2007. In January 2008 the participants undertook a pre-entry award in Painting and Decorating at Forth Valley College and attended on a day release basis for 26 weeks. The participants achieved their entry level qualification in July 2008. Six of the candidates successfully matched all the criteria established at the outset and commenced a 4 year Modern Apprenticeship in August 2008.

The project has helped to improve the scope and range of services on offer for young people who were unemployed, unqualified and unskilled on leaving schools. The project provided an alternative route into work based training which is a new and unique approach to service delivery.

Secondly, the 4 days work experience was provided by Building Maintenance Division and in collaboration with Housing Services the trainees undertook work on empty and void houses bringing them back into the available housing stock for rent at an accelerated pace at no additional cost to housing services. The ETU deployed a project Officer to provide the on the job coaching, training and support.

As a result of the project other Council services are exploring this type of approach to expand and increase the entry level opportunities for work based training for young people who would traditionally miss out.

Achievements

The project saved the costs of resulting from inactivity amongst young people who are unemployed but more importantly generated income by bringing into the available properties empty and void houses which were previously unfit to rent.

This made the approach between Housing services, Building Maintenance Division and ETU more efficient and resources were focused on real work with tangible benefits for the participants, Council and community in general. The Pre Apprenticeship also attracted external funding so the project was implemented at no additional costs to the Council.

The working environment was improved as the staff involved with the young people could see evidence of real change and progression as they learned new skills and gained experience and were able to start as BMD employees from a more productive foundation. The young people integrated into the service more readily which greatly improved the induction process and the working environment for supervisors and colleagues.

The project could not be delivered without effective cross service working between Building Maintenance Division, Housing Services and the Employment and Training Unit. The innovative approach to creating new entry routes to apprenticeships whilst training young people and re-decorating empty and void houses required the co-operation, flexibility and support from a range of Council officers. Commitment from key staff coupled with elected member support resulted in an innovative project which delivered across a range of best value and service plan performance indicators.

The cross service working enabled:

- Quality on the job work experience
- Empty and void houses to be more quickly turned around available for rent
- Accredited off the job training and the attainment of entry level qualifications
- The offer of employment on a 4yr year Apprenticeship for participants
- Cost neutral to the Council due to external funding

The integrated nature of the programme would not have succeeded without a collaborative and joint approach across Council services.

The broader community have also been involved through attending presentations about the programme, particularly residents in regeneration areas and communities involved in the local planning process. Ongoing engagement with service users (participants) happens informally on a regular basis and through a formal review process every four weeks.

Employees were involved throughout the project in developing and delivering a unique, innovative and integrated approach to service delivery.

Falkirk Council has been visited by other Local Authorities interested in developing a similar model through the national strategy for creating More Choices More Chances for young people. The local Workforce plus partnership is keen to build on the approach as another excellent example of a public sector academy establishing the programme as an exemplar of good practice.

Summary

The Pre Apprenticeship programme has demonstrated that young people if given the opportunity can attain, achieve and succeed. Through creating alternative entry levels and providing a second chance within different environment young unemployed males with a poor education history, no skills and low esteem have transformed their life chances.

It is the Employee Initiative of the year because it has successfully intervened and demonstrated that there can be other entry routes to work based training and that young people can and do change if given the right support. The Council has also benefited from the work experience elements by getting work completed that would otherwise not have been done within the same timescale creating more houses for rent at a quicker rate.

The project demonstrates excellent productive joint working across services creating multiple benefits for the public purse and the Falkirk area.

Best Scottish Building and Housing Employee Initiative

Sponsored by PFT Scotland

Finalists

Finalist 2: West Lothian Council

Service plans within local authority service areas traditionally are large documents created on an annual basis, filed by managers and probably not seen again until the following year's submission.

West Lothian Council in its drive to continually seek improvements in the service adopted the WLAM Model. This model enables a quality driven agenda to be adopted and laid the foundations for 'cultural change' to reflect quality improvement and ensure continuous improvement in the services we offer to our customers.

Part of this model facilitates opportunities to be given for employees to contribute and be to part of service enhancements and one such initiative (service plan leaflets) helped drive service plan detail to be effectively communicated throughout the whole organization.

Achievements

Employees are the most valuable asset within any organization and one such employee initiative that resulted from the use of our WLAM model, helped to improve the communication of the service areas objectives, past and future.

The employee also suggested that service plans could be condensed down to folding b5 leaflet size, where content could contain pictures and objectives of the organization, that could be easily understood, easily distributed and in a format that appealed to employees to read.

The management team sent recognition to the employee for the suggestion and advised that a pilot leaflet would be undertaken. In principle this was broken down into four main areas of interest.

Firstly a service overview of the year just completed, which would highlight volumes and types of work haven been being carried out by the organization/service area.

Secondly a section on successes the service area had been involved in the past year with bullet point details.

Thirdly a section giving more pictures and details on a specific success highlighted in the past year.

The fourth and last section would highlight forthcoming initiatives being adopted by the organization/service area over the next twelve months, in bullet point detail.

The leaflet front cover size is 210mm x 100mm. This pocket size leaflet was an immediate success with all our employees taking an interest, noting and reading the contents of this publication. The production of this leaflet was undertaken by the Council's in-house printing service area, created on a word document and folded to give 6 pages of service plan information.

The ease by which this could be printed, distributed and ease of reading helped benefit the service area in keeping its employees informed on it goals and objectives.

Summary

The pilot was extended to all service areas and adopted by the Council and its simplicity could allow for other Council networks to undertake and take up a successful communication strategy for such service plans or other high level documentation.

In concluding, by adopting and taking recognize of employee initiatives, West Lothian Council have found an effective communication strategy for informing its employees on what otherwise was perceived as being a dry document and mostly shelved year in year out.

Now it is an effective communication tool and is eagerly awaited by all employees and with the input of different pictures and details each year, helps to maintain the service plan interest from an employee's perspective on the organizations past and future ventures.

From the most basic of publications derived an employee initiative that made a perceived dry document an organization's bestseller.

Best Scottish Building and Housing Team

Sponsored by BRC Specialist Products

Winner: East Dunbartonshire Council

Gas Safety - A Multi Team Solution for Maximum Service Delivery

In 2005, following the reporting of a poor gas safety performance, senior officers within East Dunbartonshire Council (EDC) established a multi service team tasked with delivering a seamless safe, effective and efficient gas repairs and maintenance service to tenants across East Dunbartonshire. This was to ensure that failures experienced in the past across gas safety issues were being tackled and improved, and to ensure that the council were fully compliant with the Landlords responsibilities under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations and offer the level of service that customers expect.

The new team, which incorporated representatives from Property Maintenance Housing Services and Legal Services, set out to address the areas of poor performance and non compliance and to make EDC one of the best performance Local Authorities delivering a successful Gas Servicing, Repairs and Maintenance Service.

Since then the team has overcome various barriers and has achieved or improved the following:

- In February 2008 East Dunbartonshire Council reported that 100% of all council houses had a current gas certificate. This 100% level of compliance has been maintained since then to the present date.
- A fully operational Legal Process was introduced to support the operational team and assist in the team driving up performance and compliance figures. They also ensured that problematic access issues were being addressed through the District Courts to allow forced entries to be undertaken.
- Communities Scotland indicated in their recent Housing Regulatory Inspection Report, published in March 2008, that EDC had "significant improved its performance in gas safety checks".
- Communities Scotland also reported a 92% decrease in the number of houses not having a current gas certificate between June 2007 and December 2007.
- Property Maintenance achieved and recorded performance at 99.5% for emergency and breakdown repairs during 2007. This level of performance has continued throughout 2008.
- Every member of the team has been totally committed to improving compliance and performance. This can be demonstrated by reference to the current performance levels.
- A comprehensive Gas Safety Procedures Manual, developed by the team, has been in operation since January 2006 and has contributed greatly in the delivery of this service to the tenants and the council.
- New ICT system implemented in 2006 for managing and monitoring gas equipment and processes associated with legal responsibilities.
- A fully operational appointment system was developed and implemented in 2005 for gas servicing offering the tenants a choice of a.m. or p.m. slots. This has assisted in the gas service compliance figures.
- The Central Heating replacement programme is now in place to deliver the requirements of the SHQS by 2015.
- Property Maintenance provides a daily position statement, along with completed Gas Servicing Certificates (CP12 form) to the landlord representatives on the team. This identifies gas services undertaken on previous day and "no accesses" encountered by the heating technicians. This information allows other members of the team to instigate Stage 2 of the procedure manual, if necessary.
- The Gas Servicing, Maintenance and Repairs Contract was won in competition by Property Maintenance and brought back in house in October 2005 after a two year period gap where the work was undertaken by British Gas. This demonstrates the commitment to deliver a value for money service.
- Property Maintenance, in collaboration with the Housing Repairs Service, is working with a boiler manufacturer to achieve the status as an accredited installer of solar panels. This will assist the council in the delivery of the green agenda and assist in the ongoing agenda to eradicate "fuel poverty".

- In August 2007, the Gas Team added another dimension to the gas servicing process. This initiative ensures that every smoke alarm and CO2 detector is checked, tested and recorded and where necessary replaced in every house. In instances where houses do not have any smoke alarm fitted, the team have instigated a process to ensure that a mains connected alarm is fitted within a 20 working day period following the gas service. This was welcomed by Communities Scotland during the recent Housing Regulatory Inspection.
- A recent inspection by CORGI identified Property Maintenance as a “Low Risk” domestic gas installer and acknowledged the level of training, procedures and quality of the work undertaken by them in this area.

Andy Hays from East Dunbartonshire council accepts the award from Leslie Baxendale of BRC Special Products



Best Scottish Building and Housing Team

Sponsored by BRC Specialist Products

Finalists

Finalist 1: Falkirk Council

Until January 2008, Falkirk Council's housing service sat within Housing & Social Work Services. The Building Maintenance Division (which sat within Corporate & Commercial Services) was the main repairs and maintenance contractor. Whilst, there was co-operative working to ensure that a repairs service was delivered to our tenants, the two parts of the service – the building team and the housing team – were distinctly separated within the Council reporting to two different service directors.

The Housing Service was inspected during 2007 by Communities Scotland, who had a statutory responsibility to inspect all social landlords. As part of the process, the Property Maintenance & Asset Management aspects of housing services are scrutinised. As a result of Falkirk's inspection, this part of the service received a C grade which indicated a fair performance – highlighting some key strengths as well as some weaknesses within the service.

In January 2008, on the basis of the findings from the housing inspection report, the Council took the opportunity to radically review how the housing service was delivered and agreed to a six month pilot of integrating Housing Services with Corporate & Commercial Services.

Falkirk Council submitted its Improvement Plan to the Scottish Housing Regulator in May 2008 for approval and it was acknowledged that the Property Maintenance & Asset Management section was rigorous and demanding in terms of the scope and depth of service improvements identified and the timescales fixed to complete them.

The six month pilot proved to be a success with performance and tenant satisfaction increasing. As a result, the Council agreed to make this structure permanent in June 2008 and the new service is called Corporate & Neighbourhood Services.

Empty House (Voids)

This pilot was started on 6th May 2008 and has been running for approximately four months. A combined team of Neighbourhood Officers and BMD staff pre-inspect and instruct necessary repair works.

Using a single integrated voids team has ensured there is a consistent approach to inspection and ordering of necessary works and improvements have been made in areas such as:

- Periodic electrical checks are now routinely undertaken in all empty houses. This more rigorous testing regime together with the completion of any electrical remedial works identified during each check ensures that all Council houses are being let are in a safe condition for occupancy.
- A 2% (40k) reduction in expenditure on repairs following relet of voids as a result of applying consistently the voids standards.
- All cold water storage tanks within void properties are routinely being inspected for legionella.
- A reduction in the void turnaround time (termination to re-let) from 81 days to 36 days
- An increase in customer satisfaction from around 91% to 95%
- Greater volume of pre-inspections now undertaken by Neighbourhood Office staff prior to the property being vacated to identify major repairs and re-chargeable works.

Given the significant improvements achieved, and the high level of customer satisfaction, this combined method of working has been implemented on a permanent basis.

Repairs by Appointment

The repairs by appointment pilot started in three local office areas in late 2007. This proved to be successful and was expanded to cover all Housing areas during May and June 2008. Details of the scheme are noted below:

- There are approx 320 appointments available per week which represents around 25% of all response repairs carried out, while still ensuring that the flexibility of the workforce to deal with emergency repairs is not affected.
- The trades within the appointment service include: joiners, electricians, plumbers, plasterers and slaters.
- Over 95% of all repairs have been carried out at the appointed time and 84% of repairs have been completed on one visit.
- At present uptake is of around 56% of available appointments however work is ongoing to increase uptake through improved publicity.

Inspect and Repair

This project allows some internal works previously inspected by Housing staff and then passed to BMD, to be inspected by BMD maintenance operatives and where possible carry out the necessary repairs during the same visit. The benefits achieved through this initiative are:-

- A reduction in time previously spent on minor repairs inspections, which allows staff to concentrate on tenancy and other estate matters.
- Repairs reported through this service are completed on average 5 days quicker, thereby improving the service to the customer.
- Repairs are now inspected and repaired, where possible, in one visit therefore minimising disruption to tenants.
- A reduction in variations to the original job order, i.e. getting it right first time.

On the Spot Repairs

The On the Spot repairs service was introduced in 2006. This initiative allows customers to have small repairs carried out whilst the operative is in the property, which have not originally been reported.

Computerised Repairs Diagnostic Tool Kit

A new computerised diagnostic system has been purchased to provide staff with guidance on repairs and direct them to the most appropriate action and/or guidance for tenants.

- The system has been in operation at the Contact Centre for one month and it has now been rolled out to One Stop Shops.
- Staff training has taken place with all Customer First and Contact Centre staff.
- A web based system to allow tenants to report repairs online will be available within the next few months.
- Tenants Repairs Handbooks which mirror the web based system will be issued in December 2008.

The repairs diagnostic toolkit will standardise information and guidance to tenants and ensure that accurate work instructions are issued.

Summary

this submission for the best Scottish Building & Housing Team has been made in recognition of the service improvements that have been introduced during 2008 as a direct result of the housing management teams and building maintenance teams merging together and developing new improved working practices which have resulted a more effective and efficient services for our tenants.

Significant improvements have been made to the property maintenance service within a short period of time. None of this would have been achievable without the will, commitment and determination of the building and housing teams to work together and drive through the service improvements.

Best Scottish Building and Housing Team

Sponsored by BRC Specialist Products

Finalists

Finalist 2: Fife Council

In March 2004 the Policy & Resources Committee of Fife Council approved a Best Value framework for the council and that Building Services be designated an S.T.O in terms of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

It was also agreed to replace the M.T.C. arrangements with a partnership arrangement between Housing, Local Services and Building Services. The principles being to focus on providing quality, responsive service to our customers and the requirements of Best Value in Terms of the requirement to demonstrate continuous improvement and a balance among quality, cost and efficiency.

This significant change to traditional working arrangements required the following:-

- Agree and introduce Partnership arrangements.
- Restructure the service to reflect the client using the principles of People, Performance, Partnership.
- Review Terms & Conditions by removing the Bonus Scheme and replace with salary.
- Target improvements based on Service Improvement Plan.
- Cultural change – Break down Client / Contractor Barriers / Staff empowerment.
- Single performance culture and a focus on Team Working / Flexibility.

This new agenda presented Building Services with a real opportunity to shape the Housing Maintenance and Repair Division into a modern progressive and dynamic service provider.

Achievements

The first and most important challenge was to design and introduce structural arrangements that was capable of taking the modernization agenda forward and setting out the desired cultural criteria in terms of vision, direction, motivation management, trust achievement and a firm focus on performance and results.

Planning to Perform

Significant structured planning has been involved to map out directions/improvements to incl. structured/focused inductions, consultation, development days, thematic groups and work force engagement.

Team Development

- Introducing Professional Qualifications – SVQ 3-4-5
- Contribution Management
- 360o Assessments
- Succession planning through our Apprentice Scheme.

Results

Our Customer's View

- Tenant satisfaction surveyors indicate 95.5%.
- Trades Person's Conduct 100% satisfaction.

Our Clients/Partner's View

- Key Performance Indicators have improved from 88% completion of works within target to 94.13% currently
- Financial efficiencies achieved with BS returning money to the HRA for re-investment.

Building Services View

- Quality Control checks introduced with positive results.
- Standard of work 99.6% satisfaction.
- Time on job 98% satisfaction.

Attendance Management

- Manual & Craft 2005 8.7% 2007/2008 6%
- APT & C 2005 4.78% 2007/2008 0.91%
- Improved Internal Communications through thematic meetings, tool box talks and Newsletters.

National View

- Recognition through A.P.S.E.
- Recognition as the leading provider in Scotland for Apprenticeships.

Political Scrutiny

- Council endorsement on Performance May 08.

Independent Scrutiny

- 2008 E.F.Q.M. Audit findings.
- Excellent E.F.Q.M. Assessment, strengths detailed:-

Major Restructure Complete

- Seen a big difference with new Management Team.
- Management have good ideas and are enthusiastic.

E.F.Q.M. Improvement

- Score 2004 - 250 pts
- 2008 - 351 pts = 40% improvement

Awards

- Fife Partnership Excellence Award Growing your own workforce.
- Short-listed UK A.P.S.E. Construction Team of the Year.
- Short-listed for Scottish UK Apprentice of the Year.

Summary

This submission sets out how Building Services, Housing Maintenance team in Partnership with Housing and Local Services have made the fundamental transition from a CCT environment to a service that can demonstrate and evidence our commitment to Best Value, placing the needs and expectations of our customers at the heart of our service provision.

Prior to the new Partnership arrangements the Housing Maintenance Team was a Traditional DLO/Contractor with no real focus on its people such as staff development, team building, empowerment etc, with limited understanding of performance and strategic management. A draconian bonus scheme was also in operation, which in many cases acted as a de-motivator and the communications throughout the service both internal and external was poor. The new Management team clearly identified the urgent need to change both the structure and more importantly the culture if the service was to meet the challenges ahead.

The significant improvements achieved have exceeded all expectations in terms of:-

- Customer Engagement & Satisfaction
- Improved Repairs Performance
- Transformed it's staff into a "Can Do" Culture
- Established and developed a partnership with Housing Services and Local Services Network
- Modernising Terms & Conditions move from bonus to salary arrangements
- Embedded a Performance Management Framework
- The Development of Teams and Individuals
- National Recognition for Training/Development
- Tangible Progression from an old fashioned contractor to a modern day service provider.

Best Scottish Building and Housing Team

Sponsored by BRC Specialist Products

Finalists

Finalist 3: South Lanarkshire Council

South Lanarkshire Council's Property Services offers a proven 1st class professional service to traditional internal local authority customers, community partners, the private sector and other local authority providers.

Within Property Services, Project Services is particularly prominent amongst other local authorities, offering services in design, strategic property management, asset management, water quality and many more areas.

Equally, the Building Services function provides an award winning frontline repairs and maintenance service and has a proven track record in a wide variety of new build projects.

Collectively, what does Property Services do?

- Delivers major investment programmes in the areas of housing improvement, primary school modernisation and general services (public/leisure facilities)
- Maintains all Council property, including 26,500 council homes and around 2,000 other public buildings
- Manages the Council's 24 hour emergency contact centre and town centre CCTV monitoring system; and
- Provides a design and property advise service for the rest of the Council and many community partners

Achievements

Property Services have removed traditional client/contractor barriers and have developed integrated/specialist teams to deliver key projects. Improvements achieved include: -

Primary Schools Modernisation Programme

The combined Design and Building Services function provides a mixed economy of provision in this programme. Both the refurbishment works (approx 16 schools) and the new build programme (Approx 64 Framework Schools: and 20 Village Model Schools:) will see all SLC primary schools brought up to the highest standards both in terms of design and sustainability improvements.

The benefits of this approach are: -

- Integrated Team - Single Ethos
- Mixed Economy – Guaranteed Delivery
- Professional Service from inception to completion and beyond
- Built for the Community by the Community (local workforces employed)
- Transparency and Performance Accountability
- Shared Ownership

HomeHappening - Scotland's largest council housing improvement programme

This £200 million programme will see the installation of 25,000 new Kitchens and 22,500 Bathrooms along with other external fabric and environmental improvement projects. This year has seen:

- The installation of over 15,500 (to Sept 08) new Kitchens and Bathrooms including improving the homes of 1,431 tenants to date during the current financial year (2008-09). (H&TR Committee Report Nov 08)
- Overall HomeHappening customer (tenant) satisfaction has been driven upwards from an average of 96% to 99%

Housing Repairs - Performance Improvement

Over 145,000 repairs to council houses were undertaken during 2007/08 over 96.8% of which were completed within national target timescales (well above the Scottish Average of 89.4%) (Resource Plan 08). In addition, 89%

of tenants were very satisfied/fairly satisfied with the overall repairs service. (H&TR Committee Report Nov 08)

Harry Smith Lifestyle Centre - Lanark

Following a competitive process, Building Services successfully constructed the first phase of this £9million project to provide a new state-of-the-art complex in Lanark. Designed by Smith Finlay Architects with the project managed in conjunction with the in-house team, it has received attention from across sectors, demonstrating the capacity and skills of the public sector and the employees of Property Services.

Integrated Management System

In September 2007, Property Services successfully added the OHSAS 18001 Health and Safety Standard to our ISO 9001 accreditation. Coincidentally, the number of reported accidents fell by 17% between 05-06 and 06-07.

Property Services now successfully operates under an Integrated Management System which allows the business to continually improve its methods of operation for the benefit of our clients and customers.

Summary

From complex refurbishment projects, to excellence in new build, South Lanarkshire Council's Property Services delivers.

Over the past few years Property Services has:

- Improved the homes of over 15,500 tenants via the largest council house modernisation programme in Scotland – HomeHappening
- Embarked on the in-house design and build of a substantial Primary Schools Modernisation Programme including 20 new build village schools
- Maintained a high level % of Housing Repairs completed on time at 96.8% (well above the Scottish Average of 89.4%)
- Successfully constructed the first phase of a £9million investment to provide a new state-of-the-art Harry Smith Centre Lifestyle complex in Lanark
- Achieved the internationally recognised OHSAS 18001 certification across all Property Service functions. further improving the health and welfare management of its employees
- Previously won the best performing building maintenance service of the year in APSE's Performance Networks
- Removed traditional client/contactor barriers and developed integrated/specialist project teams for a number of key projects, offering a professional Service from inception to completion and beyond to customers from all across the public, private and social enterprise sectors

Throughout all of the above, Property Services has strived to deliver the best service possible to its customers; to deliver in the spirit of continuous improvement and; to work as a team with other services and partners.

Best Scottish Building and Housing Team

Sponsored by BRC Specialist Products

Finalists

Finalist 4: West Lothian Council

During 1997, building services successfully tendered for the Housing Repairs Term Maintenance Contract. This fostered a greater working relationship in attempts to achieve a more 'customer focused' organization, which complied in principle with the spirit of the Best Value regime. From the customer's perspective, the success in determining a housing department's delivery of services derives mainly from the effectiveness of its housing repair service. Therefore, the operational performance of building services is critical to the effectiveness of a housing department's service delivery. This high level of dependency encouraged joint working between both organizations, whereby creating a bond and team spirit between the housing department and building services.

Achievements

Over the last decade, this teamwork has successfully worked with each other and transformed the repairs service during this time. West Lothian Council is now seen as a leading authority for its repairs service and continually drives improvements in the service area to meet customers increasing demands and expectations.

The housing and building services team has obtained external recognition of its repairs service improvements by being awarded a Charter Mark award for its repair services and this has been retained three times over the past decade. The team takes pride in being the first and only Scottish Council to have obtained Charter Mark status for its repair services thus far.

The team's accolade in service achievements were recognized by Communities Scotland regulation inspection audit in 2006 and so far is still the only Scottish Council to be awarded an 'A' rating for both its housing management and housing repairs through this inspection process. Our customers and employees see all of these awards as an outcome of the continual success of our team working arrangements and commitments.

Regulation inspectors have made comment that through our team working, we have been able to address obstacles in improving the repairs service that other authorities have either just gave up or have had extreme difficulty with and have still not overcome.

For example, the implementation of a spot bonus to all operatives reduced the fear of loss of earnings and allowed the operatives to concentrate in making sure that repair orders were carried out by the target timescale and improved the repair service performance from 67% to over 90% complete within target timescale.

Another example was the removal of a blame culture that existed between service areas and this was addressed through implementation of a no blame culture, regular monthly performance meetings at a senior level, where decisions could be made quickly in providing solutions to areas in need of improvement.

Empowerment was given to trade operatives to dislodge the previous lack of trust between service areas and this gave the trades the flexibility they needed to complete repairs at first visit and to address requests from our customers for additional repairs. This practice removed the trade stigma of 'it's not on my line, you will have to report it to the housing office' and currently 96% of our repair jobs are completed at first visit.

We also have been offering repair appointments to our customers for the past ten years and our team's continual seek for improvement in the service, recognized that sometimes it's not enough to say sorry, when appointments are not kept and the frustration that this causes to our customers in time off work, having to rearrange another appointment etc so we have went the extra mile and implemented a compensation scheme to our customers where we pay £15 where we fail to keep our prearranged appointment timescale. This has helped to reassure our customers that we take our commitments seriously and has increased our appointments kept performance to 99.93%.

Summary

The teams drive in developing for the future provision of housing services have enabled a flexible, adaptable and responsive organization that can continually meet the demands placed upon us from our customers, through a

framework for providing continuous improvement that has been embedded within the organization and ownership adopted by our teams through the WLAM Model.

This model has enabled a quality driven agenda to be adopted and laid the foundations for 'cultural change' to reflect quality improvement and ensure continuous improvement in the repairs service.

In concluding, the team's enthusiasm has made full use of the working under the principles of Best Value, particularly in relation to developing local solutions for local needs.

The team have embraced the ethos of 'steering not rowing' for strategic leadership for service delivery and have taken full advantage of this window of opportunity to learn from other Councils and dictate ourselves in steering our own future, rather than wait for the traditional prescriptive initiatives imposed by central government for the benefit of our local community housing service needs.

Best Scottish Partnership Working in Building and Housing

Sponsored by Travis Perkins

Winner: Falkirk Council

Background

The Scottish Government has set 2015 as the target date for Local Authorities and registered social landlords (housing associations) to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) for their housing stock and then maintain the housing stock at an appropriate standard. Falkirk Council has agreed a stock strategy for the Council's own housing stock which concentrates on stock retention and meeting the SHQS is a key element of this strategy.

We recognised that improvements in housing standards would lead to an opportunity for the Council's in-house Building Maintenance Division to take full advantage of these upcoming commercial opportunities. We needed to make sure we had the capability to take on large scale projects and through that provide long term sustainability and financial security for our workforce. This could only be achieved by moving into areas of work that traditionally had been carried out by private contractors.

It became apparent that we needed to adapt and take our workforce in a new direction – away from the day to day maintenance work to high cost capital investment projects - and attract new staff to meet forthcoming challenges.

The Council made a commitment to improve the Council's housing stock by re-rendering the external fabric of houses. We wanted to be part of this exciting initiative.

Through a series of discussions with our private sector partners we were made aware of advancing technology within the private sector that was in many cases changing the way rendering was being carried out. This was our opportunity to work with partners to develop new working methods and provide best value for the council tax payer.

Together we came up with a unique solution and developed a new product along the way.

Achievements

Staff commented on how much easier it was to spray render than the more traditional manual application. This could not have happened without a strong working relationship with our private sector partners, experts in their field and a willingness by our workforce to try new ways of working.

The Partnership delivered a range of benefits -

- The elimination of lifting render onto two storey scaffolds.
- The reduction of RSI through repeated wrist action when applying render by hand
- The reduction of HAV's (hand, arm vibrations) through use of gas fired fixings.
- Consistent mixture allowing a better finish.
- Cleaner applied product allowing more time to render and less time cleaning up
- Increase in staff morale and a sense of pride of being the first group to adopt a new modern working practice
- We can improve more houses in a shorter period of time
- Meet new European legislation which makes it difficult to mix render on site

Operational Achievements

Working with our partners and internal team we exceeded expectations.

- Productivity increased by over 100% - this was achieved by the ability to use the render machine fully during the winter months as full coverage could be achieved in four hours instead of two days using the traditional method. Other areas of success have been a reduction in the wastage of render material, savings on scaffolding hire charges and improvements in our ability to forward plan.

- We have managed to address the local skills shortage - a major factor within the building industry. The mixing pump has minimised the requirement for skilled labour on rendering work which has allowed us to re-deploy skilled staff on other works and take on additional capital works.

The greatest achievement was realised in the close relationships formed with our external partners to the extent that new products were solely developed for Falkirk Council and are now successfully used within private industry. Our relationships have also helped forge trust, respect and common goals as we are regularly asked to test new products developed by our partners.

Falkirk Council is now in a position where we are the only authority using this equipment, reversing a national trend by carrying out Capital/Investment works using our own staff. This has allowed savings to be re-invested so that potentially more works can be carried out. Challenges have been overcome and new modern working methods means our service can compete with the external market.

Summary

Innovation and a willingness to adopt and test new ways of working have resulted in a strong bond being formed between Falkirk Council and four private sector companies. Brought together by Falkirk Council, and driven by a need for change, this unique partnership has truly brought major benefits for all those involved – and housing tenants.

The Players

- Falkirk Council – Scottish local authority
- Kilwaughter – Render Manufacturer
- TRI-FIX – Plant & Equipment
- B.R.C. – Rendalath System
- G & R Ross – PFT G5 Pump UK Agent

Profits and business are growing for all four organisations, jobs are secure, best value achieved and Falkirk Council is leading the charge for change.

Investing in its housing stock means better homes for tenants, job security for the workforce and a better service – all because of this unique partnership.

And we're getting a good deal. Our partnership allows us to plan ahead and secure fixed rates which in turn save valuable time on estimating future contracts.

We have changed the perception that only private sector companies can recruit and retain quality tradesmen. Falkirk Council is now in the position where we are experiencing a change in the trend... we are now being approached by tradesmen seeking employment with a local authority rather than the private sector. We have improved our reputation with our customers who say we provide superior quality workmanship whilst dramatically reducing the time spent on site.

It has been recognised by all parties involved in this groundbreaking partnership that working together achieves more rewards, better working practices and shared benefits. At Falkirk Council we are committed to continuous improvement and the sustainability of best value.

Steve Tapley Falkirk council accepts the award from Kerri McCall from Travis Perkins



Best Scottish Partnership Working in Building and Housing

Sponsored by Travis Perkins

Finalists

Finalist 1: Aberdeen City Council

Background

Aberdeen Foyer has established Foyer Works as a social firm providing employment opportunities for severely disadvantaged young people. Aberdeen Foyer is a successful local charitable organisation working to prevent and alleviate youth homelessness and unemployment for young people and their community.

Foyer Works, in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, provides a property maintenance service to various housing associations, private clients and voluntary organisations. The project has created 3 supervisors jobs, one of whom is seconded from Aberdeen City Council. They can support up to 6 people at any one time coming through Aberdeen Foyer's employability programmes who would otherwise struggle to find mainstream employment.

Trainees all reside in areas of multiple deprivation within Aberdeen, some have been excluded from employment because they were homeless, have drug issues or have served time in prison. Foyer Works gives them the opportunity to learn new skills and increases their chances of becoming employable. This work complements the councils' vision of being Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking and a better place to live and work for all.

Each team consists of one tradesman/supervisor and two trainees, who take part in a variety of housing repair and maintenance work. This includes dwelling redecoration, joinery work, electrical appliance testing, house clearance, cleaning work and transportation. By working in small teams, trainees acquire trade skills and develop their interpersonal and team work skills.

A new training programme has been established which builds on the trainees personal development and practical skills. Regular reviews enable them to recognise their progress and identify any training needs. These are added to the existing training schedule which includes health and safety, personal awareness, communication, problem solving, service delivery and job seeking skills. Trainees produce a comprehensive document which illustrates these skills to potential employers when job seeking.

Achievements

10 trainees have been appointed to work in the maintenance business; 2 are currently employed full time, 3 are in the process of completing their 13 week training programme with Foyer Works and 2 have recently left after gaining employment in the construction industry in Aberdeen. Only 2 failed to complete the 13 week training programme and only 1 left at the end of their contract.

Over 140 jobs have been undertaken and completed to the customers' satisfaction. These include Aberdeen Foyer, Aberdeen City Council, Castlehill Housing Association, Instant Neighbour, Langstane Housing Association, Cornerstone Community Care, Inspire-Partnership Through Life Ltd., as well as work in the private sector. There are ongoing discussions with potential new customers to establish a wider range of work suitable for the progression of the business and for increasing training opportunities.

Securing sponsorship

At the beginning of 2008, the project was solely supported by Aberdeen Foyer and sales. The partnership is delighted to have received sponsorship from ExxonMobil. It is extremely satisfying that this private company recognises the impact this project can make have to the lives of people who are generally written off by society.

Challenges

Work flow has been an issue. The team working with Aberdeen City Council Building Services are fully occupied and this arrangement is working well and to plan. However, the take up rate of the service from Housing Associations was a slower than anticipated, primarily as a result of lower rates of unoccupied housing than expected. Work is increasing but remains a challenge to ensure that jobs are appropriately scheduled and teams

are kept fully occupied and productive. The challenge has been recognised, the Council has embraced the project and recent meetings with Housing Associations indicate a continued desire to work together, so this situation should improve.

Competitively pricing quotes for work has also been challenging as the organisation competes for work with quotes from experienced, qualified tradesmen. Also, the timescales required to complete a job can be slightly longer with trainees. This is being addressed through comprehensive discussions.

A final challenge occurred in March 2008, when the Project Co-ordinator stepped down from his role for personal reasons. His duties were temporarily split between two existing staff members from both Aberdeen Foyer and Instant Neighbour, another local charity with similar aims. This challenge has now been overcome with the secondment of a full-time business manager, which is having positive results on performance.

Summary

The early success of two trainees moving into employment bodes well. Relationships across all organisations have been constructive and positive feedback has been regularly received on the quality of work. Early lessons are being taken on board and the revised costings and management arrangements should help ensure the business has long term viability.

Finalists

Finalist 2: City of Edinburgh Council

Background

Edinburgh Building Services (EBS) has been providing a range of building maintenance services for the Housing Department of City of Edinburgh Council since 1994. The service operates with an annual turnover of £24m per annum, completing 250,000 jobs for a range of clients including local housing associations, employing some 400 staff on a mixture of craft and administrative functions. However, the service was struggling.

- The quality of work was poor leading to a decline in customer satisfaction. One in four jobs were rated as unsatisfactory by tenants.
- Recruitment and retention problems meant staff turnover peaked at 30% compared to a Council average of 9%.
- Senior positions within the EBS management structure remained unfilled after several attempts to appoint.
- Uncertainty and short-termism, generated by nearly 10 years of compulsory competitive tendering, left staff feeling isolated from the Council and consequently morale was low.

A bold decision to bring in Pinnacle was the first step to making the necessary changes. Pinnacle had been identified by the Council as an organisation that had experience of tackling failing services. Agreement was reached whereby Pinnacle appointed a long term 'change team' to manage and support EBS front-line operations.

The EBS/Pinnacle partnership has introduced a raft of changes to an organization that needed too change to survive. What makes this programme stand out is the way that the change has been introduced, implemented and structured to allow each party to play to their relative strengths. But perhaps most fundamentally the EBS/Pinnacle team have prompted, initiated, and encouraged change but have trusted the workforce to recognize that they were the main agents of change and to then act on it.

Achievements

A series of joint workshops covering all EBS/Pinnacle managers and supervisors created a new vision for EBS:

"to be the best housing repairs service in the UK, on paper and in practice."

The EBS/Pinnacle partnership has been keen to create an outward, forward looking organisation. This has been achieved by encouraging external challenge and by identifying and learning from best practice – not just from other housing repairs services but from the best in public sector management irrespective of the discipline.

So has the EBS/Pinnacle partnership been a success?

- Tenants now only have to wait 5 days for an appointment compared to 8 weeks in 2003.
- The time taken to repair empty homes has been more than halved from a high of 20 days in 2003 to just 8 days now.
- The number of complaints has been dramatically reduced from an average of 250 per month to around 100 per month.
- The number of adaptations and kitchen and bathroom refurbishments completed has risen from 135 a year to 330.

Organisationally, EBS looks and feels different.

- The number of agency staff has been reduced from over 80 in late 2003 to just 4 at the start of 2008.
- The training budget has grown from just £5,000 in 2004 to £150,000 in 2007/8 – all self funded through improved efficiency.

And the work of the partnership has been acknowledged by the winning of these awards:

- Chartermark (with 6 good practice recommendations)
- Training Journal- Change Management Team of the Year 2007 (Building and Construction)
- MJ Achievement Awards- Pay and Workforce Achievement of the Year 2008
- ROSPA Bronze Award- Health and Safety at Work 2008 (the first Scottish building services department to win a bronze award)

Summary

Edinburgh Building Services has benefited from a partnership of equal partners. Pinnacle psg Maintenance has become a trusted and valued partner by delivering a better performing, more customer focused service that ensures staff have a voice in the organisation.

The Council and Pinnacle have been focused on one overriding objective – to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the housing repairs service. The partnership has moved from identifying priority areas for short-term reactive improvement, to building capacity to deliver longer term, more sustainable improvements that will see the partnership deliver consistently high performance.

The success of the partnership has been externally validated with Tribal HCH reporting that:

“the DLO had made substantial improvements... a can do culture with staff feeling empowered and highly motivated...the business drivers for externalization do not exist”.

The validation of the progress made by the partnership has led directly to a new and even more exciting phase of development for EBS and the partnership is now firmly established as a model for public/private partnerships.

Best Scottish Partnership Working in Building and Housing

Sponsored by Travis Perkins

Finalists

Finalist 3: Midlothian Council

Background

A lack of affordable housing, within Midlothian, has arisen in the main due to recent high property prices and low average household incomes these two factors along with low levels of Housing Association Grant (HAG) investment in the area have led to a large increase in waiting lists for affordable housing, with approximately 2500 applicants on the Council House waiting list.

Increasing cases of overcrowding and families with little hope of obtaining a family house were the catalyst required to commence a hugely ambitious regeneration project, adding some 20% additional new stock to the existing housing portfolio at a cost of £110m and due for completion in 2010/11.

The ultimate success of the project will be a reduction in the Housing waiting lists, the ability to provide appropriate accommodation for Homelessness presentations, the reduction in the ever increasing bed and breakfast costs and addressing the identified needs of residents. The new homes can also be measured on their future ability to accommodate tenants' changing circumstances e.g. medical adaptations and fuel running costs.

The intention of this project is to add a significant number of new homes to the existing stock to address the immediate and long term issue in Midlothian. The new housing will also add to the sustainability of local communities through improved housing type, access to housing and affordability.

Achievements

1. Partnership Working

Local Community and Council

The Council and Lasswade Rugby Club, through joint working were looking to deliver a real investment for the Poltonhall Community, estimated at £10m. In addition to this the Council invested an additional £1.2m upgrading the sports facilities at the recreation ground, working with SportsScotland and the Big Lottery Fund.

This site was selected firstly, as The Council were looking for land in the area, secondly as the local Rugby Club were looking to sell surplus land to provide funding for upgrades to their facilities and thirdly as this land was adjacent to land which was owned by the Council. In addition consideration was given to the proximity of the new site to an existing well established Council house development and local Primary School. These factors are paramount in order to foster a sense of attachment and belonging.

The housing development forms part of the overall £10m improvement strategy of this 10.8 hectare site, which also incorporates new football pitches, new rugby pitches and stand, refurbishment of existing changing room facilities and pavilion, installation of a new 3rd generation all weather pitch and floodlights, new multi use games area and enhanced children's play area.

Council and Contractors/Key Suppliers

The recommendation to deliver the entire Housing project as one is unique to this project and a "partnering" philosophy was adopted rather than a project by project basis. This followed recommended industry, OGC, Scottish Government and Communities Scotland procurement advice.

Procurement was completed in 2006 and we have in place four design teams, two contractors and three key suppliers. The suppliers are also used for concurrent upgrading of exiting stock to Scottish Housing Quality Standard, by 2015. These suppliers, working with the Council's Project Management Team, aim to deliver the project by 2010. The approach adopted is both innovative in strategy and delivery mechanism. Traditionally, houses were delivered on a project by project basis in an environment with no incentive to work together or make sure the project was done as well as possible. After the initial developments, future build award criteria for contractors/ consultants are based both on price and quality of performance in terms of previous programme adherence, liaison with neighbours and complaints, snagging etc.

2. Contribution to broader local regeneration

Burnside Road, Gorebridge

Joint master plan of adjoining house sites with Melville Housing Association (a Registered Social Landlord) to build 62 houses for the Council and 32 houses for Melville Housing Association, utilising external Housing Association Grant funding.

Priorities/Objectives Met:

- New Housing
- Additional Registered Social Landlord funding into Midlothian

Barleyknowe Crescent, Gorebridge

Joint master plan of site to build 60 Bed Care Home with adjacent 10 Extra Care Homes frail elderly included in 60 house development.

Priorities/Objectives Met:

- New Housing
- Extra Care Housing for Elderly
- Construction of new 60 bed residential care home

3. Value for Money

Economy

Delivered by a competitively tendered mechanism and benchmarked against national comparators including public and private sector construction projects. The project has also allowed in tandem with our refurbishment of the existing stock, to procure at very competitive levels standard building items by using economies of scale previously unavailable.

Efficiency

A firm philosophy, at the beginning of the project was established, that reworks or redesign due to poor communications and understanding of expectations should be minimised. The internal team has been intentionally kept small, to ensure a clear working brief at all times with designers, contractors and suppliers.

Effectiveness

The project delivery vehicle is proving to be effective by way of its commencement on site and firm costed plan for the next few years. In addition a Transfer Team has been established to assist with the quick letting of the completed houses.

Summary

Midlothian Council recognised the urgent need to address the acute shortage of affordable housing in the area. They have taken the ambitious decision to self-fund a new social housing construction programme with external funders addressing the other 40% of the identified shortfall.

The project is well managed, achievable in all aspects and shows clear innovation, imagination and ambition. There is evidence of sound management, with a clear strategy, which has been communicated to staff and other stakeholders. There is clear evidence of partnership working at the Poltonhall development, in conjunction with the new house development, improved recreational facilities were funded by the local Rugby Club and improvements were made to the local Primary School, through monies received from the Big Lottery Fund.

All properties have been constructed, to include the following design criteria:

- Low maintenance
- Low running costs for tenants
- Energy efficient to Eco Homes Standard
- Access to be compatible with 'Housing for Varying Needs' standards
- Demonstrate compliance with Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) Building Regulations for dwellings, achieving 100 - 107
- Achieving a National Home Energy Rating of between 9.6 and 10

Finalists

Finalist 4: North Lanarkshire Council

Background

Around the millennium, NLC changed the method of delivering its construction services from a DLO operation to working in partnership with the private sector.

One of the downsides of this decision was that control of developing employment opportunities, in particular apprenticeships in the area was removed from the ambit of the council, previously a significant employer of apprentices. This was allied to a general downturn in training within the construction industry. It thus left an opportunity gap which the council determined to rectify, if its residents were to gain sustainable training and employment.

Thus Regeneration Services in its previous guise as Policy & Economic Development embarked on creating an integrated programme of training opportunities in partnership with the private and tertiary sectors.

These employment programmes use the council's procurement processes and arrangements with termed contractors to ensure a measure of apprentice and other construction training opportunities accrue for its residents. Adopting this approach has enabled the council through the training and employer engagement team, to return these opportunities for all of its residents.

This has been set against a backdrop of diminishing financial resources, this was solved by innovatively combining funds from New Deal, TFW, ESF and co-financing with CRF, we have continued this financing regime by adding CPP and Fairer Scotland funding. This financial package achieves greater synergy for council social inclusion aims with greater impact for local residents in the most deprived areas of Lanarkshire to change their lives.

The programme faced initial considerable challenges trying to convince partners of the scope of taking unemployed residents and turning them into productive valuable employees. This was overcome by communication with employers and convincing them firstly to offer work placements for trainees to prove their worth. Employers are now involved from the start at interview and guarantee employment once trainees satisfactorily complete a training programme.

There was also reticence on the participants side as they were suspicious of official training as previous experience was not fulfilling and did not lead to employment. This was again overcome by having awareness sessions and using various community intermediary organisations to convince them there was rewards to be had from undergoing training. Word of mouth from previous successful trainees is now the main driving force of recruitment, which gives forward a powerful message of quality and results.

The quality of the training programme has come from asking employers what they require and delivering through our main training partner Motherwell College. A recent HMI inspection report commends the programme and the results obtained.

Achievements

Working alongside community intermediary partners has allowed the effectiveness of the employment programmes to cascade into areas where suspicion of official agencies existed and to reach long term unemployed residents. Jobcentre plus and Scottish Enterprise are on board with the council and allow a degree of flexibility to pertain as they view the results achieved as significantly above average for similar national programmes.

We have developed a number of construction related programmes to allow access to opportunities for our residents, these are:

Second chance apprenticeships works with young people aged 18-24 who missed the chance of gaining an apprenticeship, have been unemployed for a relatively long period of time and are new deal eligible. Selected trainees referred to the project undergo an interview process for pre-apprenticeship training course with partner

Motherwell College. The interview and training ascertains ability and commitment to completing a full apprenticeship. Employment opportunities with local construction companies are then found for those that complete the training to progress to a full apprenticeship. Since being developed 3 years ago, some 130 young people have undergone the training, with 122 of those successfully gaining a full apprenticeship.

Customised training is a training & employment initiative. Working closely with employers experiencing skills shortages, a bespoke training programme suitable to their particular work is put together and suitable training commissioned from a range of providers. The client group in the main is Training for Work clients. Guarantees of employment are conveyed to the trainees if they successfully undergo and complete training. This has resulted in 80 trainees with 52 of them gaining employment

Safer Homes this is an intermediary labour market training operation and connects the fitting of various home based safety measures in council houses with training unemployed residents for subsequent work. This part of the operation began 6 years ago and has seen around 600 residents getting involved but for one reason or other around half complete the programme, with 200 finding full time employment

All of the above specialist teams come under the responsibility of training & development or employer engagement within Regeneration Services, with a high degree of flexibility and cross fertilization of arrangements. As the programmes improve and grow bigger, the knowledge within the team increases and innovative solutions to endemic and enduring unemployment are sought and found.

Links with other services within the council gives an 'early warning' about council spend and allows the team to exploit opportunities for future training & employment. Our private sector partners number around 100, these are individual companies who have become involved with us.

As our successes get more widely known the numbers of referrals has been increasing. This has led to the council commissioning extra training and using other funding streams to facilitate. We are aware however of our responsibilities of training for actual work opportunities and avoid training for training sake.

Second chance apprenticeship recruitment has seen a four fold increase in referrals and a more than doubling of projected numbers undergoing training but consequently going into employment.

Customised training recruitment & training has also seen an exponential rise in numbers. Our research with partners has seen new training being developed in Roads, Railways, Plant Operatives and Timber Kit Erection, with continuation and expansion of the service into admin' training opportunities.

The success of Safer Homes was recognised by an individual project award in 2004 and is continuing its record of making residents homes safe while producing training & employment outcomes for participants.

Summary

Recognising its social inclusion commitment and role within sustainable employment creation for its residents, has seen North Lanarkshire Council put a high degree of resources toward this endeavour and has been innovative in bringing extra financial streams into the mix. However all of this and the efforts of the whole team has been worth it as life changing opportunities have resulted for some of most deprived citizens.

Our Council motto is People and Service first, we believe this.

Best Scottish Partnership Working in Building and Housing

Sponsored by Travis Perkins

Finalists

Finalist 5: South Lanarkshire Council

Background

The largest council-house-modernisation initiative in Scotland, HomeHappening is South Lanarkshire Council's programme to significantly improve the quality of its housing over a six-year period, mainly through the replacement of kitchens and bathrooms right across the local authority area.

This £200million housing-investment programme was launched after tenants had, in 2003, expressed overwhelming support for stock retention. This support was given on the basis that the housing stock would be brought up to the South Lanarkshire Standard.

Tenants were also consulted on and approved – in advance – the 'inflation plus 1% per annum' formula for increasing tenants' rents to (partly) pay for the capital investment in HomeHappening. To further encourage tenant participation, consultation and involvement, the Council's Housing and Technical Resources also facilitated the creation of eight Local Area Housing Forums in South Lanarkshire and the creation of the Business Plan Implementation Group.

The target is to replace all 26,000 kitchens and bathrooms by 2011. However, it is not just kitchen and bathroom replacement that is being carried out, vast as that undertaking may be – there are also External Fabric and Roofing Upgrade Projects to make sure homes are wind- and water-tight, and environmental improvement projects (including upgrading footpaths and walkways, installing access ramps and improving bin-stores, garage locks-ups, flood-prevention and boundary-fencing) programmed into the HomeHappening plan.

By the end of the last financial year, more than 14,000 properties had been completed, with a further 3,900 expected to be completed during 2008/09. This has been achieved through a close-knit and finely-tuned relationship with our partners, Building Services, Cambuslang-based CCG (Scotland) Ltd, who carry out around a third of the kitchen and bathroom installation work, and suppliers Symphony (kitchens) and Graham (bathrooms).

The success to date of the programme has resulted in a shift in corporate culture within the Council from mere 'delivery of services' to achieving demonstrably high levels of 'delivery of services with customer satisfaction'.

Achievements

Effective partnership working has been crucial to the successful delivery of the HomeHappening programme.

The HomeHappening Partnership Core Group constantly reviews operations to identify and exploit new and more-efficient ways of working. All programme performance information and analysis is either jointly undertaken and/or shared openly between, and with, all partners.

Moreover, the performance of the Partnership Core Group itself has been measured and reviewed using the Strategic Partnership Assessment tool developed by the Strategic Partnering Taskforce at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The ODPM assessment showed consistent partnership performance by HomeHappening across each of the six Partnership Principles, which comprise the need to:

1. Recognise and accept the need for partnership;
2. Develop clarity and realism of purpose;
3. Ensure commitment and ownership;
4. Develop and maintain trust;
5. Create clear and robust partnership arrangements;
6. Monitor measure and learn.

The private-sector supply partners are closely involved in planning and preparation for implementing the housing improvements. Representatives from the supply partners sit on the Core Partnership Management Group and on various working parties aimed at problem-solving and improving performance.

HomeHappening scored highly on Criteria 2 (developing clarity and realism of purpose), with the assessment stating that HomeHappening's purpose (i.e. the housing improvement plan) is "very clear and realistic" and that the "need for

the partnership is recognised and accepted". Overall, the assessment showed that the HomeHappening partnership monitors, measures and learns well from its performance and that partnership working-arrangements are "clear and robust".

To deliver HomeHappening, South Lanarkshire Council knew that an innovative and pioneering partnership-based approach was the only way to make best use of public and private resources. Accordingly, the external partners' representatives sit alongside council representatives on the HomeHappening Partnership Core Group to manage, monitor and review the programme's performance against key performance indicators (KPIs), which comprise:

- Financial management (to budget);
- Customer service (quality and satisfaction);
- Performance (to timescales);
- Continuous improvement/Best Value (cost reductions, efficiency improvements);
- Contractor/supplier KPIs (delivery, 'right first time').

To achieve high customer-satisfaction with the outcome of the improvement work in tenants' homes, bespoke customer-service training programmes were developed for the HomeHappening constructor partners (Building Services and CCG Ltd) and, in addition, a 24-strong team of dedicated customer liaison officers (CLOs) was recruited to the programme.

Regular and continuing staff training – including producing a dedicated customer-service training film and the creation of the unified Code of Conduct for both internal and external construction partners – has been equally important in stakeholder communications. The 112-page HomeHappening Procedures Manual, covering the complete process from start to finish for each of the main work-types, was also distributed to staff to ensure consistency and quality of service-delivery to customers (in our case, tenants).

Customer liaison officers provide the 'bridge' between the constructors (builders) and customers (tenants) before and during work being carried out in their homes. The CLOs anticipate, identify and resolve any customer-issues and tenants' needs that may arise on-site.

The involvement of the CLOs and the high level of integration and communication between the HomeHappening partners have allowed the programme to adapt to the individual needs of tenants and properties. This enables adapted designs to be offered to elderly or disabled residents and makes it possible to deal, on a Best Value basis, with other associated issues, such as rewiring or asbestos, while the kitchen and bathroom replacement work is being carried out.

Summary

Does HomeHappening's partnership approach work? The answer lies in the response from the tenants who have to date been part of the programme (and, in effect, the tenants are an additional partner in the scheme).

Every tenant who has their kitchen and/or bathroom replaced is asked to complete a customer-satisfaction survey and, from the programme's inception, overall HomeHappening customer (tenant) satisfaction was driven upwards from an average of 96% to 99%. In the last financial year, 2007-08, the programme achieved for the first time a 'double-top' peak rating of 100% customer satisfaction for both product and service.

This level of customer satisfaction, along with the volume and variety of work carried out under the programme, could only have been achieved through a successful partnership rather than the more traditional contractor/sub-contractor approach.

Regular and productive communication, standardised levels of quality and common goals have generated a one-team, customer-led approach with a strong focus on customer-service that is wholeheartedly supported by our partners.

As a result, more than 16,000 council properties have so far received home improvements from HomeHappening, which is almost two-thirds of the way to the target of 26,000 properties. More importantly, customer satisfaction – the 'proof-of-the-pudding' – has consistently remained at almost 100%, and has on some occasions achieved the top rating.

Such achievements can only be realised through partnership working of the highest order, and the model devised by South Lanarkshire Council for the HomeHappening programme is a perfect example of this theory becoming a proven success.

Finalists

Finalist 6: West Lothian Council

Background

West Lothian has one of the fastest growing populations in Scotland. An unprecedented level of demand for social housing, currently in the region of 12,000 registrations, exists within the Council Area.

In 2007, West Lothian Council agreed to embark upon a programme of new build Council housing. This is the first new build council housing to be provided in more than 20 years. Two legislative changes enabled this approach to be taken: -

Firstly, the opportunity for prudential borrowing enabled Councils to take investment decisions that are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

In addition, the modernized right to buy has made created an environment which is now less financially onerous on the Council when sales are made to sitting tenants in the future (i.e. significant reduction in discounts to tenants and retention of asset value to the Local Authority).

It was agreed that the Council houses would be procured in phases on the basis of a two-stage developer-led, design and build contract procured in accordance with OJEU rules.

The first phase is for 248 units, a mixture of houses and flats. A tender process was undertaken with 7 developers noting interest and Gladedale Partnerships were appointed as the successful developer in July 2008. Work has commenced on site with an estimated completion in early 2011.

A second phase of up to 452 units will be developed, with an anticipated commencement in early 2010.

Achievements

1. The provision of new build housing at costs significantly below the equivalent private sector and RSL provision.
2. The house types have been developed specifically by Gladedale for West Lothian Council but have the potential to be used by any social landlord.
3. The sites being developed are in areas of high demand.
4. The new housing will help to meet the Council's obligations in regard to the eradication of homelessness by 2012.
5. All housing is being constructed to housing for varying needs
6. Bespoke wheelchair units are also being provided to meet the requirements of identified families.
7. A mix of houses and flats to suit single people, couples and families.
8. From procurement to site start has taken less than 18 months.
9. The houses are energy efficient and low maintenance.
10. There has been a high level of commitment to the project across all Council departments; including enabling decisions to be made quickly at the appropriate level.
11. The project has strong political commitment both at local level and nationally. It will be the first provision of new build Council housing under an SNP Council and Government.
12. Gladedale have demonstrated a high level of commitment to providing local employment and training opportunities. This provides important economic benefits and opens up the possibility of local skills acquisition.
13. Gladedale's policy is always to seek and work with sub contractors and suppliers operating in the areas where they are developing. This has direct benefits for the local area and provides increased and sustainable employment opportunities to local residents.

14. It demonstrates the Council's ability to take an innovative approach to deliver on key policy fronts such as affordable housing and prudential borrowing.

Challenges

- (1) Commencing the procurement at the height of the construction boom
- (2) Identifying sites most closely meet the demand
- (3) Delivering a quality product for a finite amount of funding
- (4) Providing the developer with a brief that would meet the Council's requirements but with enough flexibility to allow the developer to make key commercial decisions.
- (5) Ensuring that this model works and can be replicated for a second phase.

Summary

This project demonstrates what can be achieved through partnership working and there is clearly a high level of commitment and cooperation between the partners to deliver quality housing at economic costs - significantly below the equivalent RSL and Private Sector provision.

The homes being provided have been designed to meet a variety of needs and are accessible, sustainable, energy efficient and are built in areas where people want to live. They demonstrate the best of what can be achieved by a Council working in partnership with the private sector.

The timing of this project is important in light of the downturn in private sector construction as it provides opportunity for local employment and training at a time when the building industry, generally, is under considerable pressure.

It is a major example of what can be achieved by pulling key policy strands together (i.e. delivering on the affordable housing policy, making use of prudential borrowing and addressing 2012 obligations on homelessness).

LOCAL SERVICES LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Association for Public Service Excellence
Floor 11, Council Offices, Almada Street
Hamilton, ML3 0AL

email: enquiries@apse.org.uk
tel: 01698 454 015
Fax: 01698 454 183
web: www.apse.org.uk



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



GB 11409



GB 11132



GB 14074