

PUBLIC SERVICES NEWS!

AWICS

Independence.....Integrity.....Value
Adrian Waite (Independent Consultancy
Services) Limited



June 2006

Contents:

- **Derby City Homes awarded three stars and assessed as having excellent prospects for further improvement**
- **AWICS seminar on Sustainable Housing Business Plans and the Efficiency Agenda to feature Derby City Homes**
- **Fenland chooses Housing Association partner**
- **Fenland receive commendation for high levels of improvement in audit report**
- **European Charter for Housing issued**
- **The Capital Receipts Pooling Allowance and how it works**
- **Government Office Southwest makes progress**
- **Adrian Waite to speak at CIPFA conferences**
- **Cumbria, Dorset, Portsmouth & Tower Hamlets Councils pioneer partnerships with voluntary sector**
- **Services on offer**

'AWICS' provides a full range of ethical management consultancy and training services, principally to those who provide public services such as local authorities, schools, colleges, housing associations, health authorities, voluntary bodies and many more.

Derby City Homes awarded three stars and assessed as having excellent prospects for further improvement

Derby City Council established Derby City Homes as its arms length management organisation for the management of the City's 13,000 homes in 2002. Since then, AWICS has provided Derby City Homes with support through providing training courses. The Audit Commission published its most recent assessment of Derby City Homes in May 2006 and has awarded it three stars for providing an excellent service and considers that there are excellent prospects for further improvement.

The mission statement of Derby Homes is:

"To provide the people of Derby with the best housing service in the country by continuous improvement and by working with all our partners."

The Audit Commission assessed that Derby Homes is providing excellent housing services because of the following:

- There is a range of ways that services can be accessed effectively, some strong examples of effective customer care and there are clear service standards across the majority of service areas.
- There is a strong commitment to promoting diversity which has impacted on the delivery of services.

Page 1

Appleby Business Centre, Bridge Street, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria CA16 6QH
Telephone: 017683-52347 or 54005 Mobile: 07971-321863. Fax: 017683-54005.
E-Mail: Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk. Website: www.awics.co.uk.

Managing Director: Adrian Waite MA CPFA ACIH FIPSM.
Company Number: 3713554. VAT Registration Number: 721 9669 13

- A three-year, £93 million programme of improvement works, focused on achieving the Government's decent homes standard, has been very well co-ordinated and delivered in a customer focused manner.
- Day to day repairs are carried out promptly and satisfaction levels are high.
- Empty properties are repaired to a high standard.
- There are comprehensive systems in place to deliver gas servicing and performance in servicing is high.
- There has been very effective pro-active delivery of aids and adaptations through the major works improvement programme.
- Tenant participation is well developed with a range of opportunities to influence services at strategic and operational levels.
- Robust processes are in place for rent collection and arrears recovery, and these are well integrated with the provision of welfare benefits and debt advice.
- Tenancy management is comprehensive, there are effective procedures in place for tackling anti-social behaviour and activities are well co-ordinated with partners.
- There are strong caretaking services and annual estate inspections which inform effective environmental improvement programmes.
- Estates are well maintained and there is a clear focus on co-ordinating activities to strengthen sustainability.
- Information to leaseholders is of a high quality, service charges are dealt with effectively and repairs and improvement services are offered.
- There is effective engagement in choice based lettings and strong customer care in the lettings process.
- The majority of sheltered schemes have good facilities and those viewed were clean and tidy.
- There is a clear focus on value for money and this has had a significant impact on some areas of the service including the major works programme which has been the highest area of expenditure in recent years.

There were found to be excellent prospects for improvements because of the following:

- There have been a number of significant improvements which have directly benefited service users.
- Recent trends in the majority of performance indicators are positive.
- Aims and priorities for the future are clear, challenging and robust.
- Action plans cover the key areas for service development and these have been identified using best value principles.
- Plans are strongly focussed on addressing value for money issues.
- There is a strong performance management framework and a robust approach to risk management.
- There are effective relationships with the Council and other partners.
- Financial resources have been effectively assessed.
- Staff are effectively skilled, well motivated and there is a strong approach to human resource management.
- A comprehensive IT strategy is in place.
- Modern procurement methods have been used effectively in a number of areas and are expanding rapidly.

We have chosen Derby City Homes as the principal case study in our autumn series of seminars on 'Sustainable Housing Business Plans and the Efficiency Agenda' because of their record of achievement in this area and because of the existing business relationship between 'AWICS' and Derby City Homes. We are pleased that Phil Davies and his team have agreed to speak at our seminars.

Adrian Waite

Page 2

**Appleby Business Centre, Bridge Street, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria CA16 6QH
Telephone: 017683-52347 or 54005 Mobile: 07971-321863. Fax: 017683-54005.
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'AWICS' seminar on 'Sustainable Housing Business Plans and the Efficiency Agenda' to feature Derby City Homes

We are holding an autumn series of seminars on 'Sustainable Housing Business Plans and the Efficiency Agenda'. These will be held in venues around the country and will consider how retention and arms length management organisation authorities can prepare sustainable housing revenue account business plans that meet the government's 'fit for purpose' criteria in the context of the 'efficiency agenda'.

The sessions are designed for people with some knowledge of housing revenue account business plans and budgets and who want to improve the way they are tackling value for money issues. They need not be experts. Those who would benefit from attendance would include staff of local authorities and arms length management organisations that have responsibilities for housing management, housing finance, business planning or procurement. It will be of interest to those who are preparing for inspection and are wishing to achieve a good score on the audit commission's test of value for money. It will be relevant for elected members, members of boards of arms length management organisations, tenant representatives and staff of regional government offices with an interest in these matters.

The seminars will include four sessions covering:

- Introduction – Housing Revenue Account Business Plans, the 'fit for purpose' test, the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan model, the role of business planning in stock options appraisal, business planning and how it relates to the housing strategy and the asset management plan, business planning in retention authorities and authorities with arms length management organisations. The Efficiency Agenda – The Gershon report.
- Case study. Derby City Homes is a three star arms length management organisation with a recent assessment from the audit commission that their strengths outweigh their weaknesses on value for money. What has been achieved? How has this been achieved? What is planned for the future?
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plans in practice – What assumptions could and should be made in preparing business plans? Projecting future resources including housing subsidy and capital resources. How to be proactive in preparing business plans. Annual Efficiency Statements. The 'Forward Look Annual Efficiency Statement. Key Lines of Enquiry. What are the Government and Audit Commission expecting from local authorities in housing business plans and on efficiency?
- Conclusions – more case studies and examples of good practice, what does the future hold for business planning and the efficiency agenda? How should tenants and other stakeholders be involved in business planning? Can local authorities learn anything from Housing Associations? The Comprehensive Spending Review of 2007, Opportunity for discussion.

The case study from Derby City Homes will be presented by a member of the senior management team of Derby City Homes. The other sessions will be presented by Adrian Waite. The course is accompanied by a very useful guide entitled: "Sustainable Housing Business Plans and the Efficiency Agenda"

Venues and Dates

- London: Kensington Close Hotel – 26th September or 1st November 2006
- Warrington: The Rhinewood Country House Hotel – 3rd October 2006
- Tamworth: Drayton Manor Park - 10th October 2006
- Wakefield: Cedar Court Hotel – 17th October 2006

Details of these seminars can be downloaded from our website at:
www.awics.co.uk/services/housingbusinessplancourse.asp.

Adrian Waite

Page 3

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Fenland chooses Housing Association Partner

The Partner Selection Panel that has been evaluating the submissions of eighteen housing associations that are interested in purchasing Fenland District Council's homes has decided that its preferred partner is Circle Anglia Housing Association. Their recommendation will now go forward to the Council and it is expected that it will be accepted. The proposed Fenland Housing Association would therefore be part of the Circle Anglia Group alongside existing housing associations such as the Wherry Housing Association that now owns and manages the housing stock formerly owned by Broadland District Council in Norfolk.

What policies have been developed for the new Housing Association?

Council officers have been developing new policies for the Fenland housing association that are designed to improve homes, neighbourhoods and services for tenants. This is being done in consultation with the Tenants' Forum and the Shadow Board.

So far, policies have been discussed on:

- Complaints Policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Gold Service
- Resident Involvement
- Income Maximisation
- Repairs and Maintenance

The complaints policy describes how tenants' complaints will be resolved.

The draft tenancy agreement is the new tenancy agreement that tenants would have following a stock transfer.

The Gold Service policy is one of providing improved services to tenants who keep up to date with their rent, keep to their tenancy agreement and do not commit anti-social behaviour.

The resident involvement policy covers anyone who would be living in a housing association home – including tenants, leaseholders and (importantly in the future) any new shared owners and residents in temporary accommodation or supported housing.

The income maximisation policy covers rents and service charges and includes methods of payment, encouraging payment, arrears and enforcement action.

The Repairs and Maintenance policy aims to build upon the existing high levels of satisfaction amongst Fenland tenants and to provide a still more excellent housing repairs and maintenance service.

The Shadow Board will soon be looking at policies for:

- Anti-Social behaviour management
- Special needs housing
- Equality and diversity
- Allocations and lettings

Copies of the draft policies are available on request from Fenland District Council's freephone helpline 0800-169-0655.

Some facts about stock transfer

Different people have different points of view on housing stock transfers. A lot of information is put out by Councils, Housing Associations, campaign groups and individuals that can be confusing or even conflicting.

This is one of the reasons why Independent Tenants' Advisors are appointed – so that tenants can get information that is independent, accurate and objective.

The government has set out the way in which Councils should carry out housing stock options appraisals and the way in which they should carry out a housing stock transfer. An important part of this is that the process should be tenant led. This means that the appraisal was carried out by a tenant-led working group that concluded that stock transfer was the best way of increasing investment and improving services in Fenland's Council homes. A consultation with tenants in May 2005 showed that 52% of those who responded supported the idea of a transfer to a Housing Association.

The options appraisal looked at all the options that are available. This included the Private Finance Initiative pathfinder. The Council was advised by its consultants that this was not a suitable scheme for Fenland and that stock transfer would be the best way to increase the resources available. In practice very few Councils have used the Private Finance Initiative for improving their Council Housing and it has only tended to be suitable for small numbers of homes in a very poor condition in an urban area.

The planned ballot of Fenland tenants in November 2006 is not the only opportunity that tenants have to decide the future of their homes. Options Fenland is all about making sure that tenants know what is happening and can have their say. This includes deciding which housing association will become Fenland's partner.

The stock transfer is being managed by a 'Transfer Options Development Group' that consists of six tenant representatives, three Councillors and three Council staff. They and I are very concerned to ensure that all tenants are able to find out whatever they want about the stock transfer proposals. After all, nothing will happen unless the tenants vote for a stock transfer in the ballot.

How can tenants get involved?

Tenants can contact the Independent Tenants' Adviser through a freephone helpline on 0800-028-3365.

Tenants can also get involved through their local Tenants' Association. Contacts for the Tenants' Associations are shown below:

- Chatteris – Colin Greenwood 01354-693782 or Keith Haylett 01354-693048.
- Manea - Nicola Morris 01354-688098.
- March – Jean Key 01354-652933.
- Thorney Toll – Tony Coleman 07961-957878.
- Whittlesey –Irene Henson 01733-208368.
- Wisbech – Ron Butcher 01945-582094.

Adrian Waite

Further information on our activities as Independent Tenants' Adviser at Fenland can be found on our website at: www.awics.co.uk/fenlandita.asp.

Fenland receive commendation for high levels of improvement in audit report

AWICS have been working with Fenland District Council since 2004 as the Independent Tenants Advisor during the housing stock options and stock transfer processes. The Audit Commission has commended Fenland District Council on its recent improvements.

Fenland District Council has made major improvements in the way it plans and delivers services to the people of Fenland, according to the Audit Commission. The results of the auditors' Direction of Travel Report have been welcomed by the Council. The auditors recognised the significant improvements that have been made as a result of a sea-change in the structure and focus of the authority. The auditors believe that the Council has proved it has the structures and the will to deliver better and better services for the people of Fenland

Starting from a low base a little over two years ago, the new management team and councillors have worked together to produce what the auditors are now calling good and sometimes significant progress in implementing improvements. The auditors also highlighted for praise, the council's heavy investment in building the foundations that enabled dramatic changes to take place. Singled out for particular praise were the huge improvements in the performance of the council's Benefits Service, which has registered a 60% improvement in just one year. This has raised the Council's position in the Government Performance Indicators ratings from the bottom quartile to the top.

The Benefits Fraud inspectorate report, which formed part of the auditor's assessment, found that the improvement plan for the Benefits Service was well integrated into the Council's corporate monitoring and evaluation procedures and that, as a result, it was well-placed to deliver further improvements in performance. Fenland District Council was also praised for its effective financial management for the third year running. The auditors also went out of their way to praise the way the tight rein on the purse strings has contributed to improvements across the board, particularly over the past 12 months. Notice was also given to the Council's successful commitment to delivering a first class customer service including the huge numbers of people using the council's four Fenland @ Your Service shops and the telephone call centre as evidence.

The Council's efforts in embracing new technology to increase the responsiveness to consumer demand were singled out as a success. The new website (that is linked to the websites of partner organisations, including AWICS) and the resources diverted to meet the Government's IEG targets played a significant part in the auditor's evaluation of the council's management of service change to meet customer needs and the delivery of value for money. Consultation and communication has been at the heart of the council's decision-making processes and this was recognised by the auditors, who acknowledged that over the past 18 months consultation workshops on priority services and a postal survey of 3,000 residents helped to shape the draft corporate plan for the next four years.

Leader of the Council Geoffrey Harper, said:

"This report spells good news for the council and for the people of Fenland because it shows we have the structures in place to deliver better and better services. We have made root and branch changes to our structures and focused on what local people tell us they want.

"I am delighted that all our efforts are bearing fruit and that they are being recognised by Government appointed auditors. The Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team have proved to be a formidable team when it comes to delivering quality services against a background of Government-imposed demands for year-on-year 2.5 per cent savings to our budget."

Adrian Waite

Page 6

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European Charter for Housing issued

Despite the decision of the European Parliament in July 2005 to make expenditure on housing renewal eligible for European structural funding, housing is a matter that is generally seen as a national rather than a European competence. However, in April 2006 an all party group of members of the European Parliament 'Urban Logement' published proposals for a European Charter for housing that would make 'healthy, decent and affordable accommodation' a fundamental right of all European Union citizens. The Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament that consists of the European Parliament president and the chairs of the political parties have now adopted the Charter.

The Charter outlines the potential of housing policies to contribute to the social, economic and territorial cohesion in the European Union. It also stresses that sustainable urban development must be complemented by sustainable housing policies which promote energy efficiency and stem urban sprawl. The Charter urges the use of European Union funds to renovate social housing. The Charter identifies housing as a problem in all European Union states, calls for housing to be 'integrated into the economic, social and territorial cohesion policy of the European Union' and says:

"Housing is a field at the heart of the social problems met by all European Union countries. Many European cities experience real housing difficulties such as high cost of housing or antiquated buildings, which undeniably affect the quality of life of the citizens.

"The lack of decent accommodation at a moderate price constitutes an obstacle to competitiveness, employment and social inclusion insofar as it weakens even more the most disadvantaged people. Without a proper home it becomes really difficult to find a job, study or simply live in the way that one has the right to live in Europe.

"The purpose of this proposal for a European Charter for Housing is to raise the question, at a European level, of the housing problem in Europe, an issue today largely influenced by many European decisions.

"This text also represents an opportunity to enunciate several principles, such as the right to housing, and to stress the need for the European Union to lead community policies that are able to create a favourable and incentive framework for the Member States' housing policies."

The authors of the Charter concede that:

"Housing is not a European Union competence, yet interactions between community policies and matters concerning housing are many and increasing, and show multiple dimensions."

However, they propose that:

"In accordance with the constitutional tradition of the Member States, the right to accommodation should be set up as a fundamental right of the European Union and integrated as such in the Charter of the fundamental rights consistent with the revised social Charter of the European Council; whereas, as such, its implementation cannot be left to the sole discretion of market forces, since this right to housing can only be universal".

The Charter states that housing is:

- A necessary good, a fundamental social right and a component of the European social pattern
- A key factor for social inclusion and protection of the social cohesion of the European Union
- A lever for economic cohesion of the European Union
- An inescapable component of European Union territorial cohesion

Page 7

Appleby Business Centre, Bridge Street, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria CA16 6QH
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- A fully fledged component of the European Union's sustainable urban development

The Charter sees the role of the European Union as follows:

"The European Union should make sure that its policies contribute to establishing a favourable and incentive framework for the Member States' housing policies, in accordance with the Community interest... and the Union's objectives, notably in terms of cohesion and sustainable urban development".

Alain Hutchinson a Belgian Socialist MEP and one of the authors of the report said that housing was 'hard to find and expensive' in all the major cities of the European Union. He said:

"Our aim through this Charter is to generate awareness within the European Union and to draw the attention of Europe's institutions to this matter and ensure that a housing policy can be developed at the level of the European institutions and the Parliament."

Angelo Grasso, President of CECODHAS the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing, welcomed the initiative saying that the Charter represents an:

"Important step which would lead to greater knowledge of the issue at European level and help ensure that housing is taken into account more in the design of EU policies"

However he stressed that that the subsidiary rule still applies strictly to housing and that this Charter makes no attempt to transfer competencies on housing from national governments to the European Level. He said:

"Housing is, after all, a local issue which is dealt with most effectively at local level."

Claire Roumet, secretary general of CECODHAS, said that the Charter:

"States that housing is a human right and people should have an affordable place to live - it also seeks to ensure that the mortgage market makes housing affordable."

Liz Atkins, director of strategy at the National Housing Federation, said that the Charter, although not legally binding, made the case that housing had a vital role to play in wider social and economic prosperity and that:

"These are important messages that decision makers at all levels need to be aware and reminded of. European Union policies have an impact on housing and social housing providers".

The main messages of the European Charter on Housing are that:

- All European citizens should have access to appropriate housing
- There are housing problems in all member states that have a negative impact on economic development and social cohesion
- The European Union already has policies that impact on housing and objectives that can be met only if housing issues are addressed

The European Charter on Housing proposes addressing these issues through an enhanced role for the European Union in housing including the use of the structural funds for housing renovation.

Adrian Waite

Free briefing papers on European issues can be downloaded from the AWICS website at:
www.awics.co.uk/briefing/economicdevelopment.asp

Page 8

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The Capital Receipts Pooling Allowance and how it works

Where a local authority uses its general housing receipts for affordable housing or regeneration, there are circumstances in which they are exempt from the 'pooling requirements' under which 50% are payable to government. The informal guidance note on the pooling of capital receipts issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published in March 2004 and amended in July 2005 states with regard to the capital allowance that:

"The Capital Allowance is a new term for an existing concept. Under the set-aside regime, authorities could reduce the reserved (set-aside) part of a capital receipt if, for instance, that reduced part is to be spent on affordable housing. The Capital Allowance continues this provision in the pooling regime.

"The Capital Allowance constitutes a sort of 'pot' which local authorities top up by specified types of expenditure. The value of the pot may be drawn upon to reduce certain capital receipts ('other' receipts) before calculating the pool able amount. The balance of the Capital Allowance - the value of the pot - falls each time it is applied to reduce a receipt.

"The Capital Allowance is the total of past or planned expenditure on affordable housing and regeneration. The Capital Allowance will be the value of:

- *The proportion of any resolution made by the authority under the 'in and out' rules that has not been used to extinguish the part of a housing capital receipt.*
- *The costs of expenditure incurred by the authority for the purpose of facilitating the disposal of an interest in land (obtaining planning permission, preparing land for development etc.)*
- *Spend, or resolution to spend, on provision of affordable housing or regeneration. The local authority should have a definition of what constitutes affordable housing in its business plan or housing strategy.*

"The value of the capital allowance increases as the authority resolves to spend more on affordable housing and regeneration projects and decreases as it is used to extinguish the pool able proportion of certain capital receipts. There is nothing to stop the authority 'topping up' the value of the Capital Allowance with more resolutions to spend, the Capital Allowance is expected to be a rolling total, there is no requirement for it to be fixed on an annual basis and it will fluctuate throughout the year."

The Department of Communities & Local Government has provided no further definition to that contained in the statutory instrument of expenditure that would fall within 'provision of affordable housing' for purposes of exemption from the capital receipts pool. They have confirmed that:

"The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister considers that by generating an exclusive list of such expenditure, it would almost certainly exclude some legitimate expenditure. This is why we depend upon the more inclusive definition of 'provision of affordable housing'.

"What we would expect this to tie into would be the definition of provision of affordable housing that should exist in the business plan or housing strategy of each local housing authority."

The legislation therefore applies to sale of land and excludes sale of dwellings. Authorities must also make a determination in advance that they intend to use the capital allowances legislation. The legislation provides a broad definition of affordable housing and regeneration and the government is prepared to use the Council's own Housing Strategy to provide more specific definitions.

Adrian Waite

Page 9

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Government Office Southwest makes progress

We have been working with a number of regional government offices since 2004 on evaluating housing stock options appraisals and providing training courses. This includes the Government Office for the Southwest.

One of the strategic objectives of the Government Office for the Southwest is 'Sustainable Growth' part of which relates to planning and homes. The desired longer-term outcomes are:

- The South West to have well-integrated and effective regional and local strategies for delivering sustainable growth, based on realistic and affordable plans for jobs, homes and services.
- The South West to have a more strategic approach to new housing investment based on increased knowledge of sub-regional housing market pressures and housing needs.
- There to be agreement on the role of the largest urban areas in attracting and delivering economic and population growth.
- Additional housing growth to support the development of mixed and sustainable communities that promote job opportunities and help to narrow inequalities in health, education, crime, worklessness and liveability.

To achieve this, the regional office has:

- Brought the work of the Regional Housing and Regional Planning Bodies closer together.
- Encouraged and supported the Regional Planning Body and local authorities in implementing planning reforms and driving up planning performance.
- With the Southwestern Regional Development Agency and the Southwest Regional Assembly, developed further the proposals in 'The Way Ahead' growth strategy and plan for their implementation.
- Linked spatial strategies with economic, housing and transport strategies.
- Promoted a programme of sub-regional Housing Market Assessments to inform future decisions on housing numbers and public sector interventions in housing markets.

For local government the desired longer term outcomes are that:

- Currently 'poor' and 'weak' local authorities improve performance.
- A more effective partnership is created between central and local government, exemplified by combined Local Area Agreements and Local Public Service Agreements delivering:
 - a) Improved services for children and young people; safer and stronger communities; healthier communities and older people; and local enterprise
 - b) Better advice and support for vulnerable adults; and
 - c) Stronger delivery-focused partnerships between local authorities and their partners.

To achieve this, the regional office has:

- Monitored and supported recovery plans of 'poor' and 'weak' local authorities and more widely supported capacity building.
- In areas of Government Office Southwest expertise, monitored and supported local authority performance improvement in individual services.
- Involved regional and local partners in developing the Government's ten-year vision for local government.
- Negotiated a new tranche of combined Local Area Agreements and Local Public Service Agreements (and a Local Public Service Agreement with Dorset County Council).
- Fleshed out the detail of Devon and Dorset Local Area Agreement pilots and ensured experience was shared with other parts of the region.

Adrian Waite

Page 10

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Adrian Waite to speak at CIPFA conferences

Adrian Waite is to speak at two CIPFA conferences during the summer:

- Introduction to Housing Finance – Methods of Managing Housing Stock - 29th June 2006
- Statement of Recommended Practice and Best Value Accounting Code of Practice in York - 11th July 2006

The introduction to housing finance course is aimed at part-qualified or newly qualified accountants and those new to the Housing Sector who wish to gain an introduction to the main drivers in managing Local Authority Housing finances. Managers and Board members with non-finance related backgrounds will find it of use in gaining an overview of the leading issues.

Adrian Waite's contribution will be to speak on methods of managing housing stock:

<p>Methods of managing housing stock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The options:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Stock retention – making it sustainable- Arms Length Management – what follows Decent Homes?- Private Finance Initiative- Mixed options• Examining the financial implications of each option• The role of the accountant in options appraisal
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For more information or to book a place, visit the website of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy at:

<http://secure.cipfa.org.uk/cgi-bin/CIPFA.storefront/EN/product/VS21>

The course on the Statement of Recommended Practice and the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice provides delegates with a concise and well-focussed summary of the key issues of the moment on the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) and Best Value Accounting Code of Practice (BVACOP).

Adrian Waite will speak on Housing Revenue Account and General Fund Housing Services as follows:

<p>Housing Revenue Account and General Fund Housing Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Background and review of current Housing Revenue Account financial statements• The potential changes from the new Statement of Recommended Practice and Best Value Accounting Code of Practice for housing services• Reflections and discussion on the implications for the Housing Revenue Account and Housing General Fund• Potential future developments
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For more information or to book a place, visit the website of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy at:

<http://secure.cipfa.org.uk/cgi-bin/CIPFA.storefront/EN/product/VS14>

Cumbria, Dorset, Portsmouth & Tower Hamlets Councils pioneer partnerships with voluntary sector

Cumbria County Council, Dorset County Council, Portsmouth City Council and Tower Hamlets Borough Council have been chosen by the Treasury as one of four national partners to investigate how the voluntary sector delivers public services and how both national and local governments can improve their support for the voluntary sector. The Chancellor's 2006 Budget contained the following statement:

"As a further step towards supporting the third sector this Budget announces the participation of Cumbria, Portsmouth, Tower Hamlets and Dorset councils as local area pathfinders who have committed to explore ways in which the third sector can add value to the delivery of local services... The pathfinders' approaches will be shared with other councils through key national partners."

In March 2006, Treasury staff visited Carlisle to start the programme that is expected to last for four months. Cumbria County Council will be working with partner organisations including the Citizens' Advice Bureau, community transport groups and Councils for Voluntary Service in developing best practice in procurement, increasing capacity in the voluntary sector and examining how the voluntary sector compares with the private sector in delivering services.

Councillor Ian Stewart, cabinet member responsible for finance and central services at Cumbria County Council said:

"When you buy in services from the voluntary sector you're often buying in more than you think. You get levels of commitment that the private sector could never hope for. There's also a maze of income streams into the voluntary sector which means their services are often very competitively priced."

"This scheme is all about defining the parameters of the 'add-on extras' that the voluntary sector delivers... Choosing Cumbria along-side Portsmouth, Dorset and Tower Hamlets will give the Treasury a wide range of information to work with... Tower Hamlets has dozens of service providers clustered in one area. In Cumbria the population is a lot more dispersed and the number of service providers is smaller... "We'll be able to rural-proof policies that could be rolled out across the country."

Adrian Waite

Services on offer!

'AWICS' also offers a wide range of management consultancy and training courses in management and financial topics. These include: Business and Best Value Reviews, Financial Advice on Procurement, Housing Finance, Public Authority accounting, Performance Management, Lecturing and Training. For further information, please contact Adrian Waite on: Adrian.Waite@awics.co.uk or 017683-52347 or 54005.

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Adrian Waite (Independent Consultancy Services) Limited, Appleby Business Centre, Bridge Street, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria. CA16 6QH. Tel: 017683-52347 or 54005. Mobile: 07971-321863. Fax: 017683-54005. E-mail: Adrian.Waite@awics.co.uk