

Report HDR-SS-11-15

To: Chair Burley and Members of the Social Services Committee
From: Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Housing
Meeting Date: June 13, 2015
Subject: **Housing Department Review Progress Report**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution SSC64-15; Endorsed by County Council July 7, 2015 per Resolution CC97-15;

Recommendation(s)

THAT Report HDR-SS-11-15 regarding the housing department review progress report be received for information.

Background

In 2013 GGA- Management Consultants were retained to review the services provided by the County of Grey Housing Department relative to the management of its social housing portfolio and its role as Service Manager with other social housing providers.

Objectives of the review

- Improve housing service delivery and corporate building management where practical.
- Enhance operating efficiencies using best practices
- Ensure administrative policies and procedures are aligned to achieve the housing department's goals and objectives.

The review was carried out in three phases:

- Initial research
- Service review and stakeholder consultations
- Develop service delivery assessment, improvement opportunities and final report and recommendations.

Results: Opportunities for Improvement and Recommendations

- Management Vision and Leadership

- Financial Management Must Focus on Greater Accountability and Cost Control
- Improve Housing Operations and Property Management
- Initiate More Comprehensive Asset Planning and Management
- Upgrade Management Information Systems and Technology to Support Service Delivery
- Improve Organizational Effectiveness

Progress Report

While infrastructure is a very important aspect of Grey County Housing, we ultimately provide a service for our tenants of Grey County Housing. Service delivery changes and enhancements will allow staff to implement the 39 recommendations and other areas of improvement identified by staff and tenants to improve quality of life for our tenants and at the same time efficiently maintain buildings. An engaged and improved process with tenants, staff, agencies and public is needed to meet the current and future demands for affordable housing. At the same time fiscal responsibility, accountability and looking for efficiencies is needed to maintain and sustain our aging infrastructure and assets. The following is an update on the progress of our 39 recommendations from the housing department review.

Management Vision and Leadership

1. Prepare Vision Statement for Housing
2. Housing Department Management should: provide more leadership
3. Housing Department Management should implement Housing and Homelessness Plan
4. Housing Department Management Should Lead Implementation of Service Review and Recommendations
5. Plan for and Take Advantage of Any Existing and New Federal or Provincial Funding Programs to Achieve Affordable Housing Options

In the last ten months the housing department has undergone staff transition which has led to a new Director, Housing Manager and Housing Programs Manager.

The Housing Department is working towards a vision for our department based on our logo. **Grey County Housing...Colour It Home.**

This mantra will guide the department through our daily processes, changes and future endeavors. The housing department provides services not only to our tenants of Grey County Housing but many other residents throughout Grey County as a whole. The Grey County 10 year Housing and Homelessness plan looks at a continuum of housing services from homelessness to homeownership. The plan outlines initiatives for improving access to housing, increasing the supply of affordable housing and

collaborating with community partners. A copy of the Grey County 10 year Housing and Homelessness Plan can be found on the Grey County website at the following link: [Housing and Homelessness Plan](#).

The Housing department and Social Services Department launched the Grey County 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan in October 2014 and an annual report will be presented to committee and council at a later date.

As part of the 10 year plan, Grey County Housing has committed to 200 new affordable units of housing and 300 renovations of affordable housing through various programs over the next 10 years. The Investment in Affordable Housing Program provides funding for five years for the rent supplement, homeownership, rental build and Ontario Renovates programs. The recent extension of funding of the Investment of Affordable Housing program has allowed Grey County to commit to 150 new affordable housing units through the rental build, rent supplement and homeownership program and maintenance of 140 units of housing through the Ontario Renovates program in the next 5 years.

Financial Management Must Focus on Greater Accountability and Cost Control

6. Improve Budgetary Accuracy
7. Improve Recording of Expenditures
8. Provide Improved Justification for Cost Estimates in Capital Budget
9. Budget Reporting to the Social Service Committee Should be the Responsibility the Housing Director
10. Follow Proper Procedure for Change Orders
11. Complete Annual Analysis of Capital Expenditures
12. Develop a New and Longer Approved Contractor List
13. Work with Finance Department to Ensure all Contractors Have Proper Credentials and Insurance
14. Follow Tendering Policies and Procedures as Established by Finance Department.
15. Improve Tender Specifications and Documentations
16. Provide Staff with Training on Financial and Purchasing Policies and Procedures

The Housing department is working closely with the Finance department to improve budgetary accuracy within the various lines of our budget. Our aging infrastructure and change in clientele is being reflected in our changing and increasing budget needs. Resources are being reviewed to provide more accurate estimates to each line item, to understand where resources are needed, identify improvement areas and investigate better pricing options. Move outs are having an impact on our operating budget as repairs to aging units are needed including bath and kitchen repairs, painting and

flooring. On average Grey County Housing has 118 move outs per year. These expenses are being tracked to get a better understanding of impact on the budget and look at ways to lessen this impact. Custodians are now given a set budget to ensure supplies are kept within budget. Budget is reviewed on a monthly basis with property management staff and quarterly with Finance Staff.

More information is now being recorded on work orders and invoices are being compared to work orders and to standing contractor prices to ensure accuracy. A list of contractors interested and qualified to complete work in Grey County Housing is being used and currently being reviewed again by staff from Purchasing and Housing.

Housing staff are working with Purchasing Staff to ensure all tendering processes are followed including proper procedures for change orders and ensuring all contractors have the proper credentials. All property staff attended the Contractor training and Purchasing Staff have attended staff meetings for discussion and training as necessary. Project specifications, drawings and documents for tenders are updated, contain accurate and complete information and now available electronically.

Action Items: Review of standing contractor list, tender for supply items

Improve Housing Operations & Property Management

17. Establish and Document Standard Operating Procedures for Housing Administrative Processes
18. Ensure Housing has Improved and Appropriate Space as County Offices are Redeveloped
19. Review Geographic Organization of Staff and Allocation of Responsibilities.
20. Develop a Policy for Use/Introduction of Community Relations Workers
21. Fill Vacant Executive Administration Position in conjunction with LTC
22. Provide Legal Training and Support for Property Supervisors when Action Must be Taken with Respect to a Tenant at the Ontario Landlord & Tenant Board
23. Establish new Process for Collecting, Reporting, Tracking and Using Maintenance Requests to Improve Client Service & Supports Asset Management
24. Establish Formal Planned & Documented Preventative Maintenance Program
25. Establish Cleaning Standards for County Housing and Other Buildings
26. Housing Department Management Should Review its Use of In House & External Resources for Maintenance & Custodial Services

Documentation of administrative processes is underway for various positions within the department and a policy a month is being worked on by various members of the department. Policies under development/completed are for arrears, pursuit of income, tenant insurance, standard operating procedures around water system management and many more.

Housing is working with architects Ventin Group to ensure appropriate space in the County Building for staff and for improved service delivery for our clients. Geographic areas of the County have been split up among property supervisors down the Highway 6 corridor and the Highway 10 corridor to improve on time spent on the road and mileage costs incurred with visits to buildings.

Community Relations Workers now have a set routine for introduction to our residents to supply information on services and how to access services. A tenant handbook is delivered to each resident two to three weeks after move in. This visit allows the Community Relations Worker to make an introduction and assess if further visits for referrals to services may be needed. Recently all 25 Grey County Housing Buildings had a coffee time run by Community Relations Workers to survey our residents about what were their challenges and services they would like to see in the buildings. Tenants reported transportation, eating healthy on a budget, common room updates, access to internet and fitness programs and as areas of concern or need.

An administrative Assistant position has been filled and provides assistance for the Housing and Information Technology Departments.

Action items: A tracking system for maintenance requests, a formalized preventative maintenance program and cleaning standards for our buildings are in process as well as a review of our contract services.

Initiate More Comprehensive Asset Planning & Management

- 27. Develop Comprehensive Asset Plan & Process for Periodic Updating
- 28. Use the Asset Plan to Inform Construction & Changes to the Five Year Capital Plan
- 29. Complete Building Condition Assessments According to a Regular Schedule

Building condition assessments were completed in 2013 and used to form the 2016-2020 draft capital budget forecast.

Action Item: An asset management plan including a life cycle/regeneration plan for housing is needed and will be pursued in 2016/17.

Upgrade Management Information Systems and Technology to Support Service Delivery

- 30. Develop a Specific Housing Information & Systems Strategy & in the Meantime Make More Effective Use of the Yardi System & Existing Information
- 31. Monitor and Evaluate Housing Collaborative Initiative's System Development to Support Service Manager Role and Responsibilities.

32. Improve Website & Information on Housing Programs to Benefit Housing Department Tenants, Non Profit Housing Providers & County Residents.

A group of Service Managers are pursuing the development of a collaborative housing information system. This system will provide a data system for non profit housing programs, affordable housing programs and a coordinated waitlist. The program will be developed and provide support specifically for housing programs. Currently there is no comprehensive system available for non profit housing and affordable housing programs. The collaborative signed an agreement in May to have the first phase of the database developed.

Action Items: Website options are being explored with the IT department to include an on line application, details and pictures about buildings and units, links to community services and agencies, policies and procedures and program details for affordable housing initiatives.

Improve Organizational Effectiveness

- 33. Use Team-Building Approach to Improve Operational Policies & Procedures
- 34. Conduct Performance Appraisals & Support Staff Development
- 35. Encourage Housing Department Staff to Access Training & Other Human Resources Department Services
- 36. Educate/Review with Staff County and MMAH Policies & Procedures on a Regular Basis
- 37. Housing Department Management, Working with Human Resources Department Should Prepare a Succession Plan
- 38. Housing Department Should Work More Closely with Other County Departments to Share Resources.
- 39. The County Should Consider Dissolving the Grey County and Owen Sound Housing Corporation as a Legal Entity and Manage its Housing Portfolio as it Would any Other County Asset

Performance Appraisals are up to date and procedures are put in place to ensure future deadlines are met. The Housing department is working closely with other departments to ensure proper procedures and efficiencies are found. The housing department is working with Clerks department to ensure proper procedures with agreements, finance department to find efficiencies in our operating and capital budgets, purchasing to ensure appropriate processes are followed for tendering, IT department to enhance tenant access to high speed internet and on line access to information, human resources for training and health and safety, planning to provide incentives for affordable housing, and social services to find efficiencies and improvements in service delivery for like clients.

Action Items: Information is being gathered on the pros and cons to dissolving the Grey County and Owen Sound Housing Corporation.

Other Accomplishments

In the last ten months the housing department team has provided additional enhancements to buildings and client services.

- Implemented an asbestos management program to meet legislative requirements
- Implemented water treatment policies and procedures to meet MOE regulations
- Water room in Holstein now meeting provincial standards for filtration system
- Explosion proof cabinets installed in all 25 buildings for aerosol and explosive cans as per fire code
- Installed guard rails on cabs in elevators to meet compliance
- Installed CO2 detectors in all family units with installations in all apartment buildings in September 2015.
- Standing contractor list revamped in conjunction with Purchasing
- Application overhaul for simplicity
- Expansion of Good Food Box in all buildings
- 211 introduced and information provided to all tenants
- Coffee hours to survey tenants on services needed
- Updated information boards in all buildings
- In-services for tenants on Slips and Falls, Fitness Programs, Healthy Eating, Budgeting, conversation cafes.
- Pilot project to train tenants to provide Fitness Programs to Buildings through VON SMART exercise program.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

Considerations

Various program and budget implications will be planned for in future capital and operating budgets

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Undertaking departmental reviews address the following strategic objectives of the County Corporation as set out in the Corporate Strategic Plan:

Goal Six – Achieving Excellence in Governance and Service: To foster a culture and organizational structure that facilitates exceptional public service delivery.

6.2 Continue to explore ways to improve communications and collaboration within and between County departments and service areas.

6.7 Ensure that County services and programs are inclusive, accessible, and reflective of the diversity of the population.

6.9 Develop benchmarks and performance indicators to measure and track efficiency and effectiveness in priority service areas

Attachments

[Final Housing Review Report September 25 2013](#)

Respectfully submitted by,

Anne Marie Shaw
Director of Housing