

## **Post Inspection Improvement Plan**

### **Introduction**

GHA has developed this Improvement Plan in response to the Inspection Report issued by Communities Scotland (the Regulator) in September 2007. The Plan reflects GHA's determination to address the inspectors' recommendations and shows how we will harness knowledge and expertise and direct our resources to ensure we achieve measurable improvement in the performance of the organisation.

We believe that this Improvement Plan is comprehensive, based as it is on an in-depth understanding of the findings of the Inspection Report and on the knowledge, expertise, ideas and feedback resulting from the engagement of a wide variety of people from across GHA's housing network and beyond.

Even during the inspection process we were able to begin to make improvements in practices and processes and in reporting arrangements to the Board to enable it to scrutinise performance even more rigorously. For example, Business Performance Reports for the GHA Board will explicitly relate progress to the key recommendations of the Inspection Report and will be presented in a way that ensures the Board can also monitor progress in specific areas of the business.

The improvements proposed in the Plan are core to our business and engage everyone involved with GHA - from tenants and homeowners to contractors and stakeholders who influence our activities. GHA is already part of the Major Housing Organisation Forum – a benchmarking group which develops and shares best practice – and we will step up our benchmarking with peer groups, assessing housing trends and developing best practice across our activities so that we continuously measure our performance against industry standards.

Although GHA's 2007-2008 Business Plan was recognised to be well constructed, with good budgeting and accounting, inspectors considered there was not a strong enough focus on value for money and noted that rent collection was poor and worsening. The Improvement Plan recognises that these aspects of our performance are a prime focus for us and details how they will be addressed.

The drivers for our 2008/09 Business Plan will reflect the inspection findings and will also build upon the experiences from the Learning Journeys undertaken by volunteers from Local Housing Organisations (LHOs) during 2007. These Learning Journeys, undertaken in conjunction with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), allowed the volunteers to experience and reflect on examples of good practice in other cities, particularly relating to tenant involvement, housing management and neighbourhood renewal.

The volunteers also participated in a comprehensive evaluation and independent validation of their findings which have now been published on GHA's website.

In preparing our Improvement Plan we have drawn on the feedback from these Learning Journeys which has informed our understanding of the practical means by which tenant involvement in operational matters can be improved, including, for example, the introduction of tenant inspectors and using 'back to basics' principles in delivering housing management services.

In the immediate future we are particularly keen to seek tenants' views on the standards of service they expect. These will be taken into account in developing current and new services, for example in neighbour relations, concierge services, tenant consultation and tenant group support.

We also intend to introduce strategic monitoring groups to help set standards for many areas of activity detailed in our Improvement Plan. This will involve senior officers reporting on progress made to groups chaired by tenants or homeowners. We will also introduce customer review teams to monitor service delivery, highlight best practice and identify areas for action. The work of these groups will be clearly linked to the delivery of the Improvement Plan and the outcomes will be reported to the Board as part of our performance monitoring reports.

The Learning Journeys enabled participants to begin to examine and consider models for future tenant empowerment. The participants' feedback has helped us to begin to consider tenants' priorities around fundamental issues such as asset ownership, control and influence and reducing bureaucracy. This will feed into the process of the fundamental review of purpose, assisting in the formulation of options to be developed and tested with tenants and other stakeholders.

Our 2006 Tenant Survey showed that tenants have become more satisfied with GHA as their landlord, but we recognise that we must do more to respond to their needs and to encourage their suggestions for improvements, particularly in the provision of housing services. This will be therefore be embedded in all of our roles and responsibilities.

The Inspection Report highlighted tenant participation as an area of strength for GHA. We acknowledge, however, that we have to broaden engagement, empowerment and involvement of tenants with an interest in GHA. Our Improvement Plan demonstrates this.

In preparing this Improvement Plan, we adopted an inclusive approach through a Board-led working group comprising LHO Chairs and representatives of the Owners' Forum. Workshops were held at the Managers' Forum, the LHO Chairs' Forum and at the recent Tenant Participation Event. At these workshops, each key recommendation of the Inspection Report was examined in detail and actions considered. The discussions at these events resulted in a consensus around the approach we have adopted in the Improvement Plan.

A week-long event took place in November 2007 for Board members, LHO Committee Members and Staff to work through the Improvement Plan and to secure ownership of the implementation programme.

After the Regulator has commented on this Plan, we will prepare a detailed Implementation Plan to ensure that we systematically address the findings of the inspection.

The recommendations are grouped in two broad categories:

Section A: Strategic Planning and Governance

Section B: Operational Performance

In the Appendices, there are a series of Improvement Responses in tabular form for each of the key recommendations and for Customer Service Improvement issues noted under Section B.

## **Consultation and Public Monitoring Process**

Our approach to stakeholder engagement, public monitoring and accountability will build on our good practice to date and we will seek every opportunity to enhance, develop and respond to tenant, homeowner and other stakeholders' views. This is key to our engagement and empowerment objectives and processes detailed in the draft Engagement Strategy which has now been approved by GHA's Board for consultation. We are committed to openness and transparency in everything we do and we will involve all our stakeholders in meaningful dialogue on all aspects both of our operations and of our strategic direction.

Our approach to the measurement of tenant satisfaction was recognised as an area of strength and good practice by the Inspection Team. We will now extend this, to ensure that we effectively monitor our progress against the Improvement Plan commitments. We are also committed to the same process for our homeowner satisfaction surveys.

Our ambition is to increase tenant satisfaction levels to the national average and thereafter to exceed the average, and to sustain it at that level. We further aim to exceed national satisfaction levels within specific categories of service delivery and to continuously benchmark our findings with major housing organisations and peer groups.

We will widen the opportunities for tenants who are not normally actively involved to participate and contribute in a variety of ways. We will continue to hold Tenant Participation and Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) events for tenants and homeowners. Learning from the approach adopted by Communities Scotland in the Inspection process, we will organise an annual tenant conference, the first to be held in Spring 2008. In order to encourage as many tenants as possible to participate, this conference will be promoted through the Key magazine, which is distributed to all GHA tenants. The activities of our Tenants' Panel will also be extended to include sensitivity checking on our direction and assumptions on tenant empowerment as well as service development and delivery.

We will use these opportunities to measure the impact of our performance and progress against the Improvement Plan milestones and to complement our formal tenant satisfaction programme.

We will work with tenants and homeowners to evaluate the impact of their involvement in the implementation of the Improvement Plan, reporting our progress and measuring our effectiveness through:

- Performance reporting to the Board
- Strategic monitoring groups and customer review teams
- The Key – (Scottish Corporate Communication Awards winner April 2006 and shortlisted for 2007 award))
- Factoring Matters
- Chairs' Forum
- RTO Group / RTO event
- 2008/09 Tenant Satisfaction Survey
- Owners' Forum
- GHA website

In relation to Recommendation 1, we have developed a discrete consultation process as part of our overall Engagement Strategy, drawing on the experience of our tenant participation techniques to engage directly with those GHA tenants whose aspirations are to influence the long-term strategy of GHA. This process respects the position of those tenants who will progress through the Gateway process and ballot to SST and whose future direction will therefore be determined post SST by receiving organisations. The process is described in Annex 1 to the

response to Recommendation 1 (Annex 1) which contains narrative in relation to the process as well as a timeline showing projected activity each quarter to March 2009 (the Strategic Review Timeline) and which includes the opportunities for stakeholder consultation.

## **SECTION A**

### **Strategic Planning and Governance**

This part of the Improvement Plan responds to the first two key recommendations of the Inspection Report, referred to here as Recommendation 1 and Recommendation 2.

#### **Recommendation 1: Fundamental Review of Purpose**

##### **Outcome**

Drawing from a wide variety of consultation feedback, including the 2006 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, the Learning Journeys and ongoing stakeholder engagement, GHA will carry out a fundamental Strategic Review (the Strategic Review) of GHA's purpose in order to develop and define GHA's future purpose and onward business strategy. The review will include consideration through consultation of a range of possible options for taking forward the strands of the purpose and strategy which are set out in Annex 1. These options will then be subject to extensive discussions and testing with all interested parties. The outcome of this process will be a clear definition of our future long-term business strategy and a framework and organisational model designed specifically to fulfil that purpose.

##### **Future Direction**

The Inspection Report notes that “GHA will have a landlord role in the medium to longer term”. It also notes that the “potential strategic advantages in a citywide organisation” and a “clear forward direction for GHA will be fundamental to drive improvements across the organisation”. Reference to the potential strategic advantages in a city wide organisation in the Inspection Report is consistent with key drivers in the Scottish Government’s Green Paper, Firm Foundations, such as the advantages of bulk procurement in the core objective of increasing the supply of all types of new housing across all tenures and exploiting maximum efficiency through long term partnership arrangements.

GHA held a seminar on the implications of ‘firm foundations’ to inform our response to the consultation document and its impact on the future direction of GHA.

Aspects of GHA’s purpose are clearly defined:

- Delivering on the tenant promises
- Service development commitments identified in the transfer Business Plan
- Tenant empowerment as fundamental to the leadership and direction setting of the organisation

To date and with the view of GHA as a transitional vehicle, the organisation has operated as a more passive landlord albeit delivering on the tenant promises. In considering the future of the organisation the tenants who embarked on the Learning Journeys sought to explore the focus and workings of some of the best housing associations in England, Scotland and further afield. The clear initial indications from those Learning Journeys are that tenants’ expectations are for a more proactive landlord.

GHA welcomes the opportunity to carry out a fundamental review of purpose by consulting and engaging with our tenants and stakeholders to set a long-term business strategy and to develop a new organisational model for the GHA of the future. This Strategic Review will be undertaken in the context of GHA’s key objectives of delivering high quality housing and regeneration for our tenants and excellent services for our tenants and homeowners. Key to these discussions on our purpose will be the development of a new tenant empowerment model and the process for the transition of GHA into that new organisational model.

By way of setting the context for the Strategic Review, GHA has through our consultation draft Business Plan 2008/09 began to articulate for testing with stakeholders, both the operational and strategic focus for the GHA of the future.

The draft Business Plan captures some of the key aspirations and drivers from the Learning Journeys as endorsed by Chairs Forum during autumn 2007. These drivers were further tested at a Tenant Participation event in November and the feedback was refined and the aspirations

captured in 08/09 Business Plan. The draft Business Plan was tested with our funders and agreed by GHA's Board in November 2007 and is currently out for consultation.

The draft Business Plan articulates GHA's future role in several areas, including:

- **As a landlord:** the focus in this area will be on customer experience, defined by excellent service and tenant influence. This will include bringing local influence and decision-making to bear in areas such as the customer service specification, the local priorities and specification of the investment programme and, importantly, neighbourhood renewal. Improvements in services to owners will also form part of the customer experience. All of this will be viewed in the context of an organisation which will deliver value for money and will utilise our ability to take a citywide approach, drawing on our size and capacity to ensure the optimal use of resources. In essence this is an opportunity for GHA to deliver even more than the tenant promises which were agreed at ballot and which GHA is already honouring.
- **As a contributor to neighbourhood renewal:** an increasingly mainstream element of GHA's activities, encapsulating the combination of local focus and the wider opportunities across the city to ensure that GHA delivers better homes and also better lives.
- **As a lead partner and delivery agent in transformational regeneration:** working with other stakeholders across the transformational regeneration areas and achieving new build homes for some of our tenants.
- **As an agent for change:** consistent with the drive for value for money and the optimal use of resources to deliver housing and regeneration outcomes, GHA will explore opportunities to take a more entrepreneurial approach to the use of our assets and partnering arrangements, both with the public and the private sector.

The draft Business Plan 2008/09 marks the beginning of the process to develop and test options for GHA's future strategic and organisational structure which will be carried through after the Business Plan is finalised, by way of the discrete process which is described in Annex 1.

GHA will build from the direction which came from the Learning Journeys outputs by developing the following four strategies (across which there be interdependencies):

- a Customer Service Strategy,
- a Regeneration Strategy,

- a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy,
- an Empowerment Strategy to be reflected in the new organisational model as referred to below.

GHA will develop and test these four strategies to define purpose and future direction. Additionally, value for money was raised as a key agenda item both in the Inspection Report and in the Green Paper. GHA will therefore develop a Value for Money strategy as the Strategic Review proceeds. This will address operations, regeneration and organisational form and, consequentially, will feed into the other four strands of the Strategic Review.

The development of these strategies including consultation with stakeholders on each of them forms the heart of the Strategic Review and the milestones for carrying out this work is in Annex 1. The outcomes will be brought together to conclude the Strategic Review and will be captured in the 2009/10 Business Plan.

### **Resolution to SST**

The Green Paper, Firm Foundations in a paragraph relating the Glasgow says “we want to see tenants being given a greater say in the management of the houses and their neighbourhoods, including through second stage transfer where it what tenants want and where it is sensible and financially achievable.”

Consistent with this comment, the future direction for LHOs will fall into two streams. First, where organisations are able to progress to complete second stage transfers through the Gateway process they will find GHA a willing seller and the long term future for those tenants will be determined by their new organisations. The Strategic Review Timeline sets out the likely timeline for progress of these transfers. Second, for the tenants who will remain with GHA it is crucial that a new empowerment model is developed, based on and led by the aspirations of the tenants themselves, the be encapsulated in the Empowerment Strategy (as referred above) which will be developed as shown on the Strategic Review Timeline.

The background and issues in relation to SST are well documented in the Inspection Report, including the fundamental point that “the main stumbling block for SST is the funding gap between the transfer prices GHA needs to set and what the LHOs can afford to pay”. This reality

was reinforced by the business cases submitted to GHA Board in October 2007 where those LHOs which were able to meet the transfer value all did so as a result of being able to rely on funding and efficiency drawn from their own existing asset base.

GHA remains committed to transacting those SST proposals which are currently being progressed which meet both the transfer value and the Gateway process criteria as well as gaining the support of tenants at ballot and meeting funders' and regulatory requirements.

It remains to be seen whether there would be an appetite among tenants in the longer term future for SST and, indeed, whether prospective organisations could raise the financial resources required to effect it. Another crucial issue would be whether tenants would consider that transfer of assets/ownership would deliver better housing and regeneration outcomes and offer better value for money than other organisational models or forms.

### **Organisational Model**

As part of the Strategic Review, there will be discussions with tenants, the LHO network and other stakeholders on options for the future structure of GHA. This will help inform our transition into a new organisational model focused on tenant empowerment within a resource-efficient environment.

Key to this consideration will be:

- Implications for the current Remodelled Management Agreements. The Inspection Report commented on the complexity and form of GHA's unique operating model. It states that "it is less clear that the development [of the operational model] was balanced with a rational consideration of broader customer-service objectives, organisation effectiveness and value for money";
- The outcomes of the Learning Journeys which considered a number of organisational models in Britain and Sweden and from which one of the key issues for tenants was the effectiveness of tenant involvement and the benefits of a reduction in bureaucracy in organisational and governance arrangements; and
- A focus on value for money and resource efficiency in delivering housing and regeneration outcomes for our tenants.

The group structure of GHA will be reviewed in the context of GHA's role in regeneration, the potential for refinancing and the opportunities which exist to explore more entrepreneurial activities and any developments in the group structure will be reflected in the governance review.

## **Moving on from the Transfer Business Plan**

Flowing from the review of fundamental purpose, GHA intends to re-examine with stakeholders, particularly the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council (GCC), elements of the Transfer Business Plan and of the documentation which was entered into at the time of the original transfer. This will allow all parties to consider the extent to which these documents remain relevant in the context of the shift in GHA's purpose and onward business strategy flowing from the Inspection recommendation on the fundamental review.

Among the issues to be considered include:

- the grant agreements with the Scottish Ministers, including arrangements for funding of new build housing;
- the Disposals Clawback Agreement, which deals with proceeds from disposal of assets and, crucially, contains the land protocol for dealing with sites which are made available following demolition of GHA's stock;
- the Right to Buy Agreement (which deals with proceeds from right to buy sales); and
- the totality of the original transfer agreements with GCC, consistent with continuing to honour the tenant promises.

The outcome of the Strategic Review and of the revised arrangements resulting from the discussions mentioned above would be reflected in GHA's consultation draft of and subsequently the final Business Plan 2009/10. The Scottish Government has confirmed that it is comfortable with this timescale.

## **Process**

The overall timescale for carrying out the Strategic Review and articulating GHA's onward business strategy will be by completion of the 2009/10 Business Plan. The draft Business Plans in each of the next two years, as in previous years, will be the subject of a consultation process after approval by GHA Board and, in addition there will be extensive opportunities for further consultation as described in Annex 1. GHA's Board as the governing body will have overall responsibility for the process and will be closely involved throughout the whole process through approval of the strands of the strategy. The Board has approved the change in the remit of the Business Transformation to include the Strategic Review and that Committee will now meet monthly.

GHA's Engagement Strategy provides a framework for consultation and engagement with tenants, the LHO network and key stakeholders on the issues involved in the Strategic Review. As indicated above, GHA has developed a discrete consultation and engagement plan for Recommendation 1 (which will be amended if appropriate in response to feedback) and will ensure that ample opportunity is available for tenants, the LHO network and other stakeholders to consider all options, including a wider process for testing ideas, setting priorities and articulation of preferred options in relation to the issues raised above and in the context of the parameters to be set by GHA's Board following feedback as the process evolves.

The consultation on each of the strategies will include a set of key questions for consideration by the full range of stakeholders.

Key questions to be considered will include those around

- housing outcomes and services
- the best form of tenants empowerment
- GHA's role in regeneration, including in TRAs and taking account of the key drivers in the Green Paper
- Ways of ensuring value for money both as regards the impact on service provision and organisation form
- The future role of LHOs in the context of a new organisation model.

Consultation feedback will be given weighty consideration by GHA's Board prior to the approval of the strategies and consideration of their implications on defined organisational purpose.

Reference is made to Annex 1 for further detail on the Strategic Review.

**Annex 1 to Recommendation 1 is attached at the end of this Improvement Plan.**

## **SECTION A**

### **Strategic Planning and Governance**

#### **Recommendation 2: Comprehensive Review of Governance**

##### **Outcome**

With the benefit of external advice and key stakeholder consultation, a wide ranging review of governance will be undertaken to reflect the outcomes of Recommendation 1 and ensure that GHA's governance is fit for purpose.

##### **Strategic Overview of Improvement Proposals**

The Inspection Report notes that: "GHA has not fully assessed the overall skill requirements of the organisation, and in particular the Board, to identify skill gaps. This restricts its ability to plan effectively for the succession of the Board members and office bearers. GHA has formally defined the skills it requires of its Board members, and it uses this when recruiting independent members. Several Board members we spoke to emphasised the importance of extending the skill and knowledge base of the Board. We saw that the Board relied heavily on some of the independent members, particularly to deal with more complex financial issues. The constituency nature of the Board is well understood; however, this means that GHA has direct control of recruiting independent members only, and this restricts its capacity to recruit members with the Board skills it needs".

GHA agrees with the Inspectors' comments that: "GHA's governance structures and processes need to have the right strategic focus and equip it with the skills and knowledge to develop future purpose and business strategy". GHA's existing governance arrangements were put in place to effect the transfer and, as GHA determines its revised strategic directions, a wide-ranging review of governance will require to be undertaken to ensure an appropriate mix of skills, experience and composition to take forward the strategic direction and the outcome of the consultative discussions regarding proposals for a revised organisational model. Improvement Response 2a in Section C sets out the process to be followed.

While the strategic framework at Recommendation 1 is being developed and subjected to testing with tenants and other relevant stakeholders, we will be considering the ramifications on our existing governance arrangements to support the emerging direction of the organisation and we will carry out and implement a governance review with external advice to reflect the final strategic direction, including importantly the outcome of the consideration of a revised organisational model flowing from the Strategic Review.

In relation to the membership of the advising group, we would envisage that this could also include a representative of the Chairs' Forum, GHA's private sector funders, Communities Scotland's successor and a representative from a major RSL in England.

The process is set out in in Section C.

### **Immediate actions**

In addition, there are a number of actions required to be effected prior to the formal commissioning of the review pursuant to Recommendation 1. The Inspection Report highlighted areas where action could be taken to strengthen the existing governance arrangements and these are detailed in Improvements Response 2b in Section C. Several of these have already been or are in the process of being addressed.

## **SECTION B**

### **Operational Performance**

#### **Recommendation 3: Develop capacity to manage investment**

##### **Outcome**

We will achieve a substantial and measurable improvement in GHA's capacity to manage investment (including demolition, new build and regeneration programmes), to optimise benefits from partnering arrangements and to ensure that the procurement and management of investment contracts is consistent, clear and open.

We will develop the capacity and capability of our staff to deliver effective management of the existing and future partnering arrangements for the investment programme, demolitions and new build. GHA has already taken steps to improve capacity and capability, engaging external specialist consultants in partnering arrangements and appointing an Interim Senior Manager to drive forward improvements in this area, prior to introducing this expertise longer term in the organisational structure.

We will ensure that bulk procurement will be compliant with European legislation.

We will improve on-site management and control of work in terms of quality of work, flexibility and courtesy at the heart of the delivery of the service. We will review our current consultation practices so that we can involve tenants and homeowners earlier and more effectively in assessing needs, determining priorities and deciding how works are conducted and managed. As mentioned earlier, we will introduce strategic monitoring groups and customer review teams.

There will be better engagement and communication with homeowners, particularly in dealing with financial matters, from estimating work through to billing and payment arrangements. We have published an informative Owner Investment Guide which is being distributed to homeowners. We will continue to explore with the Scottish Government and others, different ways for owners to contribute to the cost of housing improvements.

## **SECTION B**

### **Operational Performance**

#### **Recommendation 4: Establish strong and effective control of the response repairs service and compliance with legal responsibilities for gas safety and managing asbestos**

##### **Outcome**

We will ensure strong and effective control of GHA's response repairs service, to make sure that the service is operating to tenants' satisfaction and that our management of gas safety and asbestos meet all statutory requirements.

Since the Inspection Report we have appointed an interim senior manager with specific expertise to examine and report on our structure, processes and capacity for managing the existing repairs contract and to advise on improvements that will be reflected in the procurement, now underway, of the response, repair and cyclical maintenance service. We have conducted an independent audit of our contractor's performance on repairs and are introducing changes which will improve standards of quality and service.

We will have more effective and robust formal scrutiny of our repairs service and will take direct control of repairs ordering, processing and completion, with specialised training for our staff. We will introduce tighter controls of contractors, with tougher enforcement measures, and more flexibility to meet tenants' needs, particularly of those who are vulnerable. We are reviewing our current call centre arrangements and will introduce checks on performance. More comprehensive quarterly reporting to the Operations Committee on all aspects of repairs performance, including gas safety inspections is being introduced. Tenants will be engaged in improving the repairs service.

We have already increased awareness of gas safety issues. We have addressed the historic backlog of gas safety checks, have introduced weekly monitoring of gas servicing by LHOs and have moved to a ten-month cycle for gas servicing. We commissioned an independent audit of our contractor's performance on gas maintenance and will implement the action plan to improve this service. A comprehensive asbestos survey will be completed by March 2008 and the current asbestos database is being updated on a continuous basis.

## **SECTION B**

### **Operational Performance**

#### **Recommendation 5: Develop a value for money strategy**

##### **Outcome**

The whole organisation will be focused on achieving value for money and identifying real cost efficiencies in all it does, set in the context of realistic annual budgeting.

Key to this outcome will be achieving an attitudinal shift across the organisation to ensure that value for money – along with tenant satisfaction – becomes the key driver in all that we do. Our aim is to engage all management and staff in understanding and appreciating what we mean by value for money and to ensure that the organisation is more effective in setting accurate budgets and targets and being able to stretch budgets and resources without sacrificing on quality of service. We will stimulate more budget 'buy-in' across the organisation through individual performance agreements, team targets and continuously promoting the achievement of value for money. We intend to improve capability in this area by developing commercial awareness among staff.

We will improve monitoring and control of expenditure through regular business and project review, cost-benefit analysis and risk assessment along with improved capacity for project and contract management.

## **SECTION B**

### **Operational Performance**

#### **Recommendation 6: Develop a strategy for improved performance in collecting rent and letting empty properties.**

##### **Outcome**

GHA will develop and implement a strategy for improving performance on the collection of rent arrears and letting of empty properties

We will implement a rent payment strategy to promote rent payment. We will engage with tenants in a range of actions to achieve a measurable improvement in collecting rent, improving arrears performance and reducing the time that properties lie empty. We will set out a process for target review for 2008/9 and for improving performance management across the LHO network. We have established a rent strategy group to examine current best practice and standards nationally and we will tighten our arrangements for target-setting, collecting rents and pursuing arrears across our network.

We will further develop means of referring tenants in difficulties with rent payment to relevant benefit and debt counselling agencies, in order to speed up rent payment to GHA. We will consider options for introducing specialist teams to manage arrears.

We are benchmarking and reviewing void management practices and processes and improving reporting. We will establish minimum standards for vacant properties and we will look to new ways of marketing properties for let. In addition we will improve linkages between investment programmes and void management.

## **SECTION B**

### **Operational Performance**

#### **Recommendation 7: Ensure that the current review of work with owners delivers real improvements in service**

##### **Outcome**

We will make a real and measurable difference to the services GHA provides for homeowners.

We are engaging more regularly and more effectively with homeowners to gain a better understanding of their concerns about housing investment and factoring services, delivered by GHA (Management) Limited. As part of our customer service review, we will set and promote standards for our services and improve complaint handling and communication. Through direct contact and customer surveys, we need to better understand how our service can be improved.

We will measure performance through structured customer satisfaction surveys in order to improve our control over contractor performance and billing.

We will be more proactive in informing owners of the benefits of improvements as well as the availability of grants and other forms of assistance.

We are particularly keen to improve the way we manage complaints and enquiries - and to differentiate one from the other, by recording them more formally and introducing a monitoring process so that we know how they have been resolved and use them to improve our service.

**SECTION B**  
**Operational Performance**  
**Customer Service Improvement**

**Outcome**

We will implement initiatives to improve performance on complaints and enquiries handling, service standards, information and advice, equality and diversity.

We will implement a thorough review of our complaints process and systems to simplify the process, to make it more accessible and to improve satisfaction with our services through learning from complaint resolution.

We will implement a review of service charter policy leading to the production of a new comprehensive service specification.

We will aim to implement best practice in information and advice for our customers.

We will actively publicise levels of service which tenants and homeowners can expect to receive arising from the service charter policy review

In terms of equality and diversity we will work towards assessing and meeting the needs of our diverse range of customer groups.

## **Appendices**

### **Tabular Improvement Responses**

There follows a series of Tables which set out in more detail GHA's improvement responses, except for the response to Recommendation 1 which is covered in Annex 1.

Matters will evolve over the two year period of the Improvement Plan and GHA will update the Improvement Responses, as appropriate, to reflect changes consistent with achieving the outcomes set out in Section B above.

## **Annex 1: Strategic Review**

### **1 Introduction**

In considering the process for the Strategic Review, consideration has been given to:

- The outcome or end point of the Review;
- The strands of strategies arising from the Review; and
- The discrete consultation arrangements for the Review, including milestone activities by quarter through 2008.

### **2 The End Point of the Review**

On completion of the Strategic Review and its component parts GHA will have identified and defined the characteristics of a fit for purpose housing and regeneration organisation founded on tenant empowerment which is capable of providing excellent and responsive customer services delivering value for money into which GHA will then transition.

Each of the strategies having had a stakeholder input and development and with subsequent consultation will provide the component parts of GHA's organisational purpose.

### **3 Strands of Strategy**

**As indicted in the response to Recommendation 1 above the strands of strategy which will flow from the review, and hence be implemented as GHA moves forward with its revised business strategy are:**

- a Customer Service Strategy : key to this will be a focus on the customer's experience and increased tenant influence through for example the creation of strategic monitoring groups and customer review teams and will include the customer service charter, revised complaints procedures, and consideration of a customer contact centre; modernised access to service delivery channels.

- a Regeneration Strategy, which will define the role of GHA working in partnership with GCC and other bodies, including from the private sector to develop and then implement models for transformational regeneration and new build provision across the city, drawing also on the policy drivers in the Green paper, Firm Foundations;
- a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy to develop on the considerable work to date and increasingly mainstream this activity across the city drawing on the feedback from GHA's tenant satisfaction surveys and the lessons learned from the Learning Journeys. ,
- an Empowerment Strategy, drawing on the outcomes of the Learning Journeys (eg the innovations such as customer review teams and strategic monitoring groups to be introduced through the engagement strategy and to be reflected in the Customer Service Strategy) and the discrete consultation process explained below, to develop enhanced tenant empowerment reflecting the twin track approach referenced in the main text response to Recommendation 1 to be carried through into a new organisational model for GHA (which will take account of the consequences for the RMA which is due for review) to be implemented through the governance review.
- a Value for Money Strategy to reflect the work carried out in response to Recommendation 5 and the renegotiation of the grant and other arrangements with the Scottish government referred to below;

As explained in the response to Recommendation 1 above, in tandem with carrying out and implementing the Strategic Review, GHA will proceed to deliver those SST transactions which are achievable under the Gateway Process as speedily as practicably.

#### **4 Consultation Process**

In developing our consultation process for the Strategic Review we have drawn upon our successful tenant participation techniques and the spirit of our 2007/10 Engagement Strategy, good practice and the principles of the Cabinet Office's 'The Standard' guide to putting customers at the heart of what we do – "the best organisations use customers' needs as the starting point for designing, delivering and evaluating their service". The process contains new opportunities to encourage engagement and consultation with those GHA tenants whose aspirations are to influence the long term strategy for GHA including the LHO network as well as engagement with other key stakeholders.

A timetable mapped out in quarters from October 2008 to March 2009 is contained at the end of this Annex 1.

Importantly GHA has already commenced significant work in this area with

- workshops at Chairs Forum, 24 October,
- the Tenant Participation Event, 6 November 2007
- a full week event – Theatre for Improvement - 19-23 November 2007.
- Seminars on the Scottish Government Green paper, Firm Foundations on 16 January as noted in the table below;
- Significant community engagement has taken place in relation to proposals which are being developed within GHA's transformational regeneration areas;
- A series of workshops for members of GHA's regeneration committee has already commenced to consider GHA's role in regeneration going forward and which include input from other regeneration organisations and agencies and from GCC's Department of Regeneration Services;
- GHA continues to sponsor and has hosted and attended seminars ( eg on 9 and 28 November) for Board members and staff on the longitudinal research being conducted by Gowell into the long term health impacts for GHA's tenants arising from GHA's investment programme.

As will be seen from the table, during 2008/09 we will provide further opportunities for tenant and stakeholder involvement including:

- LHO Chairs Forum – six weekly meetings
- Registered Tenant Organisation Group - bi-annual meetings
- Tenant Participation Events – twice yearly
- RTO Event – annual
- Tenant Conference, involving tenants who do not normally actively participate - to be established in Spring 2008 (with an additional conference in early October 2008) and then, annually thereafter
- Tenant panel and focus groups (for example in relation to the Consumer Service Strategy)
- Tenant research on specific questions relating to the purpose and strategic direction of GHA
- Further LHO network wide events building on the Theatre for Improvement event which took place in November 2007.
- Information provided through The Key.

The engagement with the Scottish Government is envisaged to take the form of a continued dialogue between GHA Board Members and Ministers, with a meeting already set for 7 February and there is and will continue to be an ongoing dialogue at officer level to reflect the manner in which the Scottish government wishes to interface with GHA in relation to the Strategic Review.

In relation to the grant and other agreements referenced in the main textual response to Recommendation 1, a scoping paper is close to be agreed and will be finalised for the 7 February ministerial meeting. This paper includes the setting up of a GHA/Scottish government project team to agree the would aim to develop proposals for agreement by June 2008, with the documentation being finalised by September 2008. GHA's funders have a keen interest and will be closely involved in this review.

GHA will engage with GCC at both elected member and officer level in terms of its role as strategic housing authority and as provider of development funding to RSLs. Discussions will also take place regarding the totality of the original transfer arrangements referenced above. GHA will meet with GCC to agree the practical arrangements through which GCC will engage in the consultaion on the Strategic review having regard to these roles and responsibilities. In relation to the transformational regeneration areas, there is already a dialogue underway involving GCC and GHA and with input from Scottish Government representatives.

GHA meets regularly with its funders and will continue to engage with funders throughout the entire process as the strands of the Strategic Review are developed.