



ARTICLE NO: 1(a)

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS UPDATE 2010/11

Article of: Executive Manager Housing and Property Maintenance Services

Issue: 1

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs V Hopley

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SUBJECT: HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY

LG/BC/2.927mud
1 June 2010

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF ARTICLE

1.1 To inform Members that a House Condition Survey will be carried out across the Borough.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Local authorities are required to keep housing conditions in their area under review on a regular basis. This is done by carrying out house condition surveys every five years.

2.2 The Council last carried out a house condition survey in 2005.

2.3 The results of the survey will help identify areas where resources need to be committed to improve housing conditions for vulnerable people and inform the Private Sector Housing Strategy.

3.0 CURRENT POSITION

3.1 Capital Consultancy Ltd (CPC Ltd) have been appointed to carry out the survey on behalf of the Council. CPC Ltd is an established company that specialise in carrying out such surveys.

- 3.2 A sample of approximately 1,200 addresses has been randomly selected to be surveyed and those households will receive a letter asking them to take part.
- 3.3 The survey will commence on 7 June 2010 and last for approximately 8 weeks.
- 3.4 The results of the survey will be presented to Members in November 2010.

4.0 ISSUES

- 4.1 CPC Ltd provides a free phone number to enable selected residents to confirm the identity of the surveyor attending their property and the validity of the survey.
- 4.2 The Council's Customer Services Department has also been advised as it is anticipated that some residents will contact the Council to confirm the validity of the survey.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 There are no proposals.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no sustainability implications.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Resources were identified and agreed by Members and this will be sufficient to meet the costs of the survey.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is no evidence from an initial assessment of an adverse impact on equality in relation to the equality target groups.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Copy of letter and frequently asked questions list sent to selected households

The Occupier
Address1
Address2
Address3
Address4
Post Code

ask for: **CPC Survey Office**
Tel number: **0800 783 1079**
fax number:
email:
our ref: REF NO
your ref:

Dear Householder

HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY

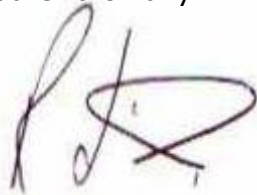
I am writing to ask for your help with a survey of the housing in West Lancashire. The Council has a legal responsibility to assess the condition of the houses in the area to help it make decisions such as how to allocate financial assistance, and how to help improve home energy efficiency. With this in mind, the Council is about to start a house condition survey. The survey is being carried out for the Council by CPC Ltd, who specialise in this type of survey for Councils across the country.

Your home has been chosen, in a random sample, for inclusion in the survey and I am writing to ask if you would assist in this task by allowing a surveyor to carry out a survey when he or she calls at your home. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. The Council receives collated information such as the percentage of houses that may qualify for financial assistance for repairs or insulation and will not use data for any other purpose. Data is presented in a statistical form that does not identify individual property details.

Each surveyor carries an identity card, which they will show to you at the beginning of the survey. If you are in any doubt as to the identity of the caller, please do not let them into your home and call one of the telephone numbers listed below. If you would like to arrange an appointment time with a surveyor this would be very helpful. Appointments can be made at a time to suit you including in the evenings and at weekends. To do this please contact the **CPC** Survey Office on Free phone **0800 783 1079** during office hours. Alternatively you can wait until a surveyor calls on you at your home.

The answers to some frequently asked questions about house condition surveys are set out on the reverse of this letter, which has been sent out from the offices of **CPC** Ltd who are carrying out the survey on behalf of the Council. Your co-operation with this survey will be of great assistance. It could help to secure increased funding from the Government for investment and assistance in West Lancashire. I would like to take this opportunity to thank-you, on behalf of the Council, in anticipation of your help.

Yours faithfully



Mr R V Livermore
Executive Manager Housing and Property Services

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HOUSE CONDITION SURVEYS

The Council is not alone in undertaking a house condition survey; indeed many local authorities have now carried out a survey in response to requests from Central Government to do so. Here is a selection of answers to questions that are frequently asked about this type of survey.

Why have I been asked to take part in the survey?

Answer: To help give the Council a true picture of housing conditions in West Lancashire.

How was I chosen?

Answer: Purely by chance. A computer generated random numbers to pick house numbers and addresses from a list of all addresses in West Lancashire.

Can this information be used for other purposes?

Answer: No. By law the data protection act specifically forbids the information from being used for other purposes such as Council Tax revaluation. CPC collate the data and the Council will not receive data from individual address.

How does this help give a true picture of housing conditions?

Answer: By surveying a random selection of dwellings (houses, flats or bedsits) the condition of all other dwellings in the area can be predicted.

How will this help get funds for West Lancashire?

Answer: Each year the Council has to bid for housing funding from Central Government. Without accurate information on housing conditions bids are likely to fail and funding might even be reduced.

Will I get any help by taking part?

Answer: The Council cannot always afford to give the full range of assistance it would like to. By taking part you can help the Council in its bid for Government funding to help people improve housing. Some of assistance may then be available to you, your family and friends.

Answer: Even if you are never likely to need assistance, by helping make assistance generally available it stops areas declining and property prices falling and may help preserve the value of your property.

What if there is nothing wrong with my house?

Answer: To be accurate the survey needs everyone selected to take part. Every dwelling that is missed makes the survey less convincing.

Answer: More modern dwellings in good condition can still be difficult to heat so the energy efficiency section of the survey becomes more important

What does the survey involve?

Answer: They are usually in your home for approximately thirty minutes of your time (much less in smaller properties or where there are few problems). You can also help by pointing out any known defects and answering a few questions for the social survey.

Why use an outside firm to assist with the survey?

Answer: They are specialists in this kind of survey and operate nation wide. They use surveyors from all parts of the country including locally.

How do I know if I can trust the surveyors?

Answer: The surveyors all carry an identity card bearing their photograph, which they will show to you on their arrival.