

March 2009

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Government Revises Guideline Rents

Housing Minister Margaret Beckett announced on 6th March 2009 that there would be new support to help councils to cut their planned rent increases for tenants in the current economic climate. The average guideline rent increase for 2009/10 will be halved from 6.2% to 3.1% for local authority tenants, to encourage councils to reduce the amount tenants would have to pay for the coming year. Mrs Beckett announced that the Government would make funding available to support local authorities to make the changes, and revise their rents for 2009/10 accordingly. The government calculates that the changes to the guideline rent increase means tenants should see a marked drop in their proposed average rent increase for the coming year from around £4 per week to approximately just under £2.

Mrs Beckett said:

"We are facing challenging economic times and it is right that this Government offers real help now to council tenants. We have listened to what councils and their tenants have said to us about the planned rent increases, and we are determined to help tenants get a fair and affordable deal."

Authorities will presumably implement rent increases as planned in April 2009 and then apply for additional subsidy following which they will presumably reduce rents

The announcement states that authorities can bid for additional subsidy if and only if, they are preparing to revisit the level of rents set and reduce them by that amount. This is interesting in that it indicates that Councils will get extra subsidy. However, this extra subsidy is conditional on a revisit of rent level – defined as ‘reduce them by that amount’. But – how is ‘that amount’ defined? Does it mean by 3.1% or does it mean a halving of the proposed rent increase?

It is suggested that authorities will be invited to apply for the additional subsidy at the end of April 2009. This clearly indicates that Communities and Local Government will be issuing guidance to explain what is on offer and they will be expecting a response by the end of April. So, authorities will presumably implement rent increases as planned in April 2009 and then apply for additional subsidy following which they will presumably reduce rents and backdate the reduction to April 2009 involving giving tenants a refund. The implications for limit rents, caps and limits and housing benefit

appear unclear. It is also unclear whether there will be any incentives or penalties to encourage reduced rent increases.

If, as it appears, there are to be additional resources in the housing revenue account in 2009/10 through a reduction in guideline rents, this raises the question of what is the source of these resources. The Treasury has consistently stated that the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review has established budgets for all public services that are effectively 'set in stone'. However, it has allowed resources to be brought forward from future years due to the recession. If the additional resources that are to fund the reduced guideline rents are brought forward from what was planned in future housing revenue account subsidy determinations then this implies that guideline rents will increase more steeply and/or that management, maintenance and major repairs allowances will increase by a smaller amount in 2010/11 than was originally intended. The long-run effect on housing revenue accounts and on rents may not be as beneficial as it first appears.

Perhaps the additional resources would have been better used on achieving the decent homes standard for that significant proportion of council tenants who currently have no hope of their home ever being improved to even this most basic of standards?

The procedure that the government has followed appears to be remarkable:

During the autumn of 2008 the government took the unusual step of going out to consultation on the 2009 and 2010 subsidy determinations. This included consultation on two different ways of calculating guideline rents. Following this they issued and consulted on draft determinations in November 2008 and final determinations in December 2008. Throughout the whole of this process the emphasis was on stability and no change on the grounds that no significant changes should be made to the housing revenue account subsidy system until the review of housing revenue account financing had been concluded. In February 2009 Councils set Housing Revenue Account rents and budgets based on the housing revenue account subsidy determination.

Then in March 2009 the Government has revised subsidy determinations after Councils have issued the increased rent notification letters, suggesting that Councils apply for increased subsidy at the end of April and then reduce rents subsequently, providing tenants with a refund.

Having spoken to housing managers, accountants and elected Members in a number of authorities my perception is that most authorities will be proceeding with rent increases as planned in April 2009 and will not be considering reduced rent increases or rent reductions until the details of the government's proposals have become more apparent.

This announcement, following the extension of the date for rent convergence to 2017 last year and to 2024 this year, suggests that the government has all but abandoned its objective of achieving convergence between local authority and housing association rents.

How do we know that a reduction in rents is the best use for additional funding for the housing revenue account? We are not aware of the thought process within government that led them to the conclusion that additional resources should be applied to reducing rents. No consultation took place either with local authorities, tenants or other stakeholders. Perhaps the

additional resources would have been better used on achieving the decent homes standard for that significant proportion of council tenants who currently have no hope of their home ever being improved to even this most basic of standards? Do we know which option tenants would have preferred? No. Why? Because a government that states that it is fully committed to tenant participation and consultation has not asked them.

A number of authorities are planning stock transfers during 2009/10. These authorities have set their rents for 2009/10 based on the housing subsidy determination. However, they have also established housing association business plans based on a rent path based on the 2009/10 housing subsidy determination and the rent influencing regime.

These authorities therefore appear to be confronted by a choice between:

- Leaving proposed 2009/10 rents as they are.
- Reducing rents as outlined above in 2009/10 only to increase them to the level envisaged in the housing association business plan at the point of transfer.
- Reducing rents as outlined above in 2009/10 and leaving them at levels below those envisaged in the housing association business plan.

I suspect that none of these choices would be attractive.

During stock transfer ballot campaigns the issue of rent is often important. Opponents of stock transfer often claim that transfer of stock to a housing association is likely to lead to a higher increase in rents than would have been the case with stock retention. Since 2002 supporters of stock transfer have been able to argue convincingly that this should not be the case as rents would follow the same path regardless of whether or not a stock transfer took place. This is clearly no longer the case and significant rent increases at the point of transfer would send a clear signal that stock transfer leads to higher rents.

There is a detailed briefing paper on this announcement and its implications on the 'AWICS' website. To download a copy please visit: [http://awics.co.uk/documents/briefing_papers/housing/Government Revises Guideline Rents 12-03-2009.pdf](http://awics.co.uk/documents/briefing_papers/housing/Government_Revises_Guideline_Rents_12-03-2009.pdf)

We are currently holding our 2009 series of seminars on 'All You Want to Know about Local Authority Housing Finance'. These seminars provide an introduction and overview of this important subject and refer to this announcement and its implications. Details are available on the 'AWICS' website. For details please visit: [http://awics.co.uk/RegionalSeminars/ViewCourse/local authority housing finance england 09/](http://awics.co.uk/RegionalSeminars/ViewCourse/local_authority_housing_finance_england_09/)

Adrian Waite

Since 2002 supporters of stock transfer have been able to argue convincingly that rents would follow the same path regardless of whether or not a stock transfer took place. This is clearly no longer the case and significant rent increases at the point of transfer would send a clear signal that stock transfer leads to higher rents

Scottish Housing Regulator issues report on Dundee City Council

The Scottish Housing Regulator published its inspection report on Dundee City Council on 9th March 2009. It awarded the council a 'fair' rating for its services to homeless people, but 'poor' ratings for its asset management and repairs service and for its housing management service.

The purpose of inspection is to provide an independent external assessment of the effectiveness of housing service delivery, and make recommendations to help improvement. The inspection was carried out during August and September 2008 with Adrian Waite on the team as an Associate Inspector specialising in finance, efficiency and value for money.

Michael Cameron, Head of Inspection at the Scottish Housing Regulator, said:

“Our inspectors found that Dundee City Council has some strengths but that these are significantly outweighed by a range of weaknesses, some of which are major. The Council has not always delivered minimum requirements, and it does not focus effectively on improvement.”

The purpose of inspection is to provide an independent external assessment of the effectiveness of housing service delivery, and make recommendations to help improvement

Inspectors gave the following grades:

Housing Management	D	Poor
Asset Management & Repairs	D	Poor
Services to Homeless People	C	Fair

The report included the following conclusions on efficiency and value for money:

“In 2007/08, the Council charged its tenants an average rent of £50.34 per week, up from £48.41 in 2006/07 which was above the Scottish figure of £46.65. It has increased its rents by around 4% each year since 2005/06, although its total rental income is reducing each year through Right to Buy sales and demolitions. These factors constrain the Council’s ability to grow its housing income. The Council has stated that these rent increases are necessary to fund an increase in its capital investment programmes in order to maintain and improve its houses to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015. However, as we report above, we found weaknesses in the Council’s planning for the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and it has not demonstrated that it plans its repairs and investment programmes to achieve value for money.

“The Council’s Housing Services reported management and supervision

expenditure has risen between 2005/06 and 2007/08; its cost rose to £761 in 2006/07 up by £325 on the previous year. This was partially due to its restructuring of the sheltered warden service and its transfer to the Housing Department in 2006. It has budgeted for increased costs in 2008/09 of £819, the highest supervision and management cost of all Scottish councils and 19% above the average. Its costs are increasing more rapidly than the retail price index and the average for Scottish councils, despite reductions in the number of houses it manages.

“The Council told us that it feels its relatively high costs and rents are justified by its service delivery levels. However, its generally poor service outcomes and variable levels of service user satisfaction, challenges this view. The Council does not have a clearly articulated value for money or efficiencies strategy for its housing service.

“The Council’s housing debt is amongst the highest in Scotland, and its financing costs are relatively high. It has identified prudential borrowing as one component of its funding of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Its capacity for further prudential borrowing will be challenged – given the current position of the Council’s Housing Revenue Account with relatively high management costs, loan charges and rents – if it does not realise its anticipated receipts from land sales or if these are delayed. It does not have a clearly articulated contingency position if risks in its planned funding strategy for the Scottish Housing Quality Standard materialise.

“The Housing Department was restructured in 2005/06 and has undergone a significant period of change... However, we found that while the Council’s work on its restructuring was aimed at improving service delivery, it does not have a clear focus on value for money.

“The Council cannot demonstrate a focus on value for money in its procurement of works contracts for housing repairs and investment. It has recently introduced a corporate procurement strategy and has completed some benchmarking with other local authorities on costs, but it has extended its contracts with Building Services without assessing whether these continue to provide value for money. Its current review of the partnership agreement has identified reductions in repairs costs against pre-partnership levels, although it has not fully assessed this against broader benchmarks. Audit Scotland raised the demonstration of value for money in procurement as an issue for the Council in its 2005 Audit of Best Value and Community Planning.”

The Council must submit an improvement plan to the Scottish Housing Regulator within eight weeks of the report being published, and must inform tenants of the inspection findings. A draft action plan for council housing in Dundee has already been approved by a council working group that includes representatives of all political parties. The Council says that the plan will be consulted upon widely and will be developed in conjunction with tenants.

The Council told us that it feels its relatively high costs and rents are justified by its service delivery levels. However, its generally poor service outcomes and variable levels of service user satisfaction, challenges this view. The Council does not have a clearly articulated value for money or efficiencies strategy for its housing service

Councillor George Regan, Housing Convenor at the Council, was quoted in the 'Scottish Housing News' as saying:

"Although I acknowledge that there is room for improvement, the report confirms that our tenants are generally satisfied with our housing services. There is nothing that cannot be fixed and we have the determination and commitment to our tenants in Dundee to ensure we continually improve the service we provide.

we need a review of areas that need attention and an action plan to make sure that improvements are delivered. A Best Value Review Group is being proposed to take forward the action plan

"That is why we need a review of areas that need attention and an action plan to make sure that improvements are delivered. A Best Value Review Group is being proposed to take forward the action plan. This group would include representatives of the Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations (DFTA) and other tenants' groups across the city because it is important that we work with people who are renting our homes to ensure they are getting the best service from the council."

However, Councillor Jimmy Black of the Scottish National Party was quoted as saying:

"SHR says our performance on gas safety, house letting and many other areas has been poor. Even the homelessness section, which gets a C, is heavily criticised because it may not be giving homeless people the right information and help.

"The report also says that we have very high levels of debt and questions our ability to fund the improvements needed for the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Given my previous comments about a housing crisis in the city, I'm concerned that the Housing Department does not have anything like enough information about levels of demand and housing need in our city. We say there's low demand for the houses we're knocking down, but the fact is that we don't really know."

Full details of the Dundee City Council inspection report can be found on the Scottish Housing Regulator website at:

www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/SHR_INSPECTIONREPORTS.hcsp

AWICS is holding its 2009 session of 'All You Want to Know about Local Authority Housing Finance in Scotland' in Falkirk on 12th May 2009. This seminar is a useful introduction and overview of this important subject. Further information is available on our website at:

www.awics.co.uk/RegionalSeminars/ViewCourse/local_authority_housing_finance_scotland_09

Adrian Waite

The Future of Supporting People

Over recent weeks and months, representative agencies such as SITRA and The National Housing Federation (NHF) have been responding to Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) proposals and consultation on how to successfully administer the Supporting People (SP) program. The debate chiefly surrounded three questions. Should there be local flexibility or national consistency in deciding who pays towards care and support and how much they should pay? How should funding be targeted – should everyone receive a basic amount of funding or should people pay what they can afford? And should there be the same funding system for everyone – or should working age adults with disabilities from birth and older people with more “predictable” care needs in later life have their care and support needs funded from different systems? Among the questions not being asked is “What are the problems with the development of new services and why are housing associations disengaging from the programme”?

The received wisdom has been that Supporting People funds will be unring fenced and placed within Area Based Grant (ABG) administered by local authorities and steered by local area agreement targets, though at the time of writing this is not as yet certain. Alternative proposals include removing the ring fence and devolving Supporting People to authorities as an independent fund. There remains an argument that the ring fence should be retained to protect the fund that supports a wide range of vulnerable people to live as independently as possible. After all, the pilots conducted in several local authority areas have only run for six months and since most Supporting People funding is the subject of contracts with support providers, few of which will have come to an end during the limited pilot period, there has been little real opportunity for change following the ring fence removal. In addition, Phil Woolas, when he was the responsible minister, had confidently informed providers at a conference that the ring fence would stay in place for the period of this spending review.

OK so what is the big problem? Why is Supporting People such a difficult programme to establish an administrative framework for?

In its sixth year since inception (which in turn followed a three year transition from the previous system), Supporting People has failed to deliver on many of its intended objectives. Where is the straightforward single funding stream for all supported housing services? Where is the consistent framework to provide supervision and support? Where is the system that would save providers time to deliver support rather than chase funding? What about the system that would give RSLs confidence to invest in specialist supported housing? What about the partnerships that would bloom between local authorities and service providers? All lost in the process of taking a fairly complex funding system, simplifying it and then making it twice as bureaucratic and complex as the system it replaced. What we now have is a one size fits none system, in desperate

Supporting People has failed to deliver on many of its intended objectives. Where is the straightforward single funding stream for all supported housing services?

need of significant change.

Many, me included have suggested that the approach taken by local authorities in commissioning services is counter innovative and does not promote partnership between housing/providers and the authorities. Local authorities are not in any way experts on many of the service user groups supported by the programme (there was not and is not any statutory duty to provide supported housing services to recipients of services). The experts in many cases were the charities, housing associations and voluntary agencies that provide the services and often identified the needs. Supporting People was meant to set up a partnership between authorities and providers to jointly address the needs of service users.

Many, me included have suggested that the approach taken by local authorities in commissioning services is counter innovative and does not promote partnership between housing/providers and the authorities

But if the ethos of Supporting People was partnership, why are the structures so designed as to make any form of 'partnership' impossible under current Supporting People procurement?

If I want a boiler replaced, I commission a plumber. That does not establish a partnership. That makes him my servant. Commissioned services do not create partnership.

Before the introduction of Supporting People in 2003 there was a real market economy in the supported housing world. We had mixed funding; grant aid and highly portable Housing Benefit (almost the ideal form of "personalisation" for social rented tenants).

Now we have a planned economy in which services are commissioned centrally on behalf of clients for whom the commissioners have no responsibility. The chosen form of procurement – Tenders. This is a huge waste of provider resources in chasing tenders (one of the things that Supporting People was meant to help avoid).

Bureaucrats who know nothing about supported housing draw specifications. They appear to have learnt little in the five years of SP. Copious nonsense is included in tender documents, which stifles any form of innovation. There is total paranoia about accommodation-based services because LAs can't find a means by which they can be tendered in the future and accommodation based services need partnership between providers and authorities. Local authorities want complete control. There is a major change towards floating support, which excludes people who need and want housing based services. Tender processes absolutely forbid and preclude any form of partnership or joint working – yes 'consortiums' can apply, but they are consortiums of providers designed for their own benefit (otherwise why do them?), not joint working with statutory agencies.

If we look at the options, we could do worse than looking at the construction industry and the development programmes of housing associations. In many ways the options available show the advantages of partnering arrangements. There are fundamentally three routes to delivery:

Standard form of contract, Bill of Quantities Tenders: in which the client decides what they want, get it designed and costed and put out to tender

- a) Design & Build: where the client has an idea of what they want then asks the builder to work it up to a scheme, designed and costed, from a small number of preferred builders.
- b) Partnering: in which the client knows where they want to take their business and roughly what they are likely to need into the future. The client then selects a preferred builder to partner with. The builder gets to know clients needs and works to achieve them with no wasted resources

What we have under Supporting People now is (a). What we pretend we have is (b).

With regard to the three questions asked by CLG, the inconvenient answer is that different solutions to the three questions work for different parts of the Supporting People sector. This is because Supporting People contains a massive range of services, from home improvement agency work to direct access hostels for the homeless.

So what should happen now and what are the answers to the three posed questions? Well firstly to answer the questions, I think you may find that the answer is yes on all counts. There should be both local flexibility and national consistency. Some client groups should get a basic amount, others should receive an assessed amount and some of these may contribute to their support costs. There should be a similar funding system for similar client groups receiving similar services.

To achieve all of this, there needs to be a fundamental overhaul of the system, which should be broken up into “fit for purpose” funding streams. Providers need to decide what each of their schemes does and where it should be placed.

Firstly funding for those clients for whom an individual budget would be appropriate should be shunted back to local authority social service departments. The reality is that splitting the care and support functions leads to un-official cross-funding and dual bureaucracy. Putting all the “care” clients into social service driven system would in reality save one level of bureaucracy. Sheltered housing should go to local authorities as a separate funding stream.

Specialist housing projects owned and managed by RSLs should be funded through the Homes and Communities Agency, who have the power to revenue fund RSLs. This would restore RSLs confidence, to once more invest and innovate in the area of specialist housing for people with support needs.

Projects owned by voluntary agencies, largely delivering homelessness services, should be funded through local authority housing departments

there needs to be a fundamental overhaul of the system, which should be broken up into “fit for purpose” funding streams. Providers need to decide what each of their schemes does and where it should be placed

We do need to finally get the funding and regulation of supported housing services right. We need a system that encourages all parties to work together for the benefit of vulnerable people, including those unpopular groups on the margins of our society

through their homelessness grants. Others providing services for people who are social service priorities should likewise be funded through social service departments. Floating support services likewise should be funded through housing or social service departments depending on their focus.

We do need to finally get the funding and regulation of supported housing services right. We need a system that encourages all parties to work together for the benefit of vulnerable people, including those unpopular groups on the margins of our society. Above all local authorities need to loose the dogma of commissioning services through tendering and recognise that joint commissioning means all partners getting together to develop a service to meet the identified needs of vulnerable people.

Following the writing of this article, the government has announced that from April 2009 the ring-fence will be removed. Supporting People Grant (SPG) will be paid to local authorities as a 'named' grant under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 in a 'transition' year which will enable local authorities more freedom to allocate the funding according to local need, but will still be viewed as a grant for housing related support. From April 2010 SPG will be placed into Area Based Grant, the allocation of which will be determined by Local Strategic Partnerships.

This decision seems to recognise some of the issues raised. It does not however propose a lasting solution to the concerns of providers who deliver services to vulnerable people.

Maurice Condie

Chief Executive of Byker Bridge Housing Association and Treasurer of the Institute of Public Sector Management

AWICS is currently holding the 2009 series of 'All You Want to Know about Housing Association Finance' in venues around England. For more information please visit:

http://www.awics.co.uk/RegionalSeminars/ViewCourse/housing_association_finance_england_09.

Integration of a Web-based Performance Management Framework

Bolsover District Council considers that meeting their commitments to the people of Bolsover district is a massive challenge.

They want a district of clean, safe and flourishing neighbourhoods, where all their services serve people well and achieve a consistent standard of excellence. They consider that this means that they must improve performance and focus on the issues that make a real difference to their residents.

The Council was rated as an 'excellent' Council, following its Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection in June 2007 and the Council has put into place a challenging improvement plan in their efforts to remain an 'excellent' authority.

In this article, Robin Raily, the Council's Performance and Quality Officer, explains their web based performance management framework.

Bolsover District Council's Performance Management framework development lends weight to the adage about people being at the heart of IT and not the kit! Having developed a simple MS Access-based piece of software – but importantly with a web browser up front – in 2005, Bolsover District Council decided it needed a more complete package that pulled together all the elements of a Performance Management framework.

We wanted it to be accessible – easy to see, easy to read and work with and simple to form around our existing business processes. The system we have developed, christened PERFORM II, links together Corporate Aims and Objectives, Service Plans, Performance Indicators, political responsibilities, individual strategies and initiatives together with appraisals.

Phase 1 (PERFORM I), the Access-based package, first developed in 2002, allowed Officers to come to terms with reporting their performance measures – electronically - directly to a central point on a regular timetabled-basis. But by choosing a basic template that satisfied the main parameters of performance measurement - target setting, milestoneing, linkage of activities – the Authority has been able to concentrate on the basis necessities. That is, getting managers to report regularly and consistently. You need to crack this before performance measurement will truly drive Performance Management.

Previously, all the data gathered by the PERFORM I system, was laboriously downloaded to Excel worksheets and presented to Members as part of a regular timetable of sub-Scrutiny meetings. But it's the early establishment of this process that gives such a strong member involvement to the present framework. These monthly meetings, each one of four with 7 Scrutiny members, deal directly with the performance of particular service areas. The groups can closely examine a suite of indicators, activities and progress with Service Plan key tasks

The Council was rated as an 'excellent' Council, following its Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection in June 2007 and the Council has put into place a challenging improvement plan in their efforts to remain an 'excellent' authority.

and oversee medium term Corporate Objectives. Individual initiatives are monitored and each group undertakes its own Scrutiny Review programme and Cabinet Members report on their portfolio responsibilities on an 'invited' basis. As a result, the Executive can be held to account and all Members have a detailed understanding of their service responsibilities. Where there are misgivings about what's reported to them or concerns about performance, an exception report is created and sent 'up' to the main Scrutiny group.

The whole system is administered by 3 Officers, a Scrutiny and Policy Officer, a Planning and Performance Officer and a Performance and Quality Officer. Each of the 3 Officers understands each of the processes involved allowing 'cross skilling' and a broad understanding of the activities of each of the Member groups. The PERFORM II system sits at the centre, the mechanism that links all the data and information together. What the Authority has not lost sight of is: The software is only the tool.

PERFORM's success is how it has facilitated a 'right first time' culture. In the early stages of development, the software was formed around the needs of the authority rather than the other way round. Larger, outwardly more sophisticated software packages tend to dictate development parameters and direction (e.g. Balanced Scorecard, EFQM), whereas, PERFORM was developed in the authority's 'likeness'. We decided, in simple terms, what it would look like – our Corporate image – what we wanted to do and what we wanted to achieve. The software company delivered a basic training package to 3 Officers at their premises and then assisted the Authority along on its journey with regular helpdesk input. At this stage, these first steps threw up questions about how our framework linked together and anomalies in our thinking.

The software producer, TEN Systems, encouraged the authority by not being prescriptive about which direction and way the Council should develop the package. The Council was assisted in the development so its own initiatives and existing framework could be integrated.

We also decided that it should be 'open access', that is, all those Staff and Officers with access to the authority's intranet can see at any time any aspect of the Authority's performance. The only check put in place was warning advice being given to Heads of Service about data protection and the display of personal information,

This 'heart on our sleeve' approach is contributing to the development of a 'no blame' culture as everybody's performance is on display and not 'buried' in reports. Even if some staff never actually look at the system, when Officers are typing free text or data into the system, they are 'psychologically' laying themselves open.

A further aspect of this 'open' approach is that the software is set up so it recognises individuals by their network log-in user names and passwords. The system is tailored so the responsibility for individual indicators or activities is passed to particular Officers and they have to log on to the system to enter performance and progress data and information detail for their service activities. This gives 'ownership', an important aspect of 'right first time'.

The whole system is administered by 3 Officers, a Scrutiny and Policy Officer, a Planning and Performance Officer and a Performance and Quality Officer. Each of the 3 Officers understands each of the processes involved allowing 'cross skilling' and a broad understanding of the activities of each of the Member groups

A further aspect of this approach is, managers must have confidence that data and information being presented on their behalf – by the system – is accurate. The only way to ensure that truly is to give them responsibility for its entry. Also, by linking all the elements of the Performance Management framework together, the data and information only ever has to be entered once, thus, avoiding duplication and the inevitable inaccuracies that creep in but more importantly, reducing the amount of time spent on producing reports.

The key to good Performance Management is not just software; it's a package of integrated measures – Audit, Member involvement, Officer commitment – and a SIMPLE I.T. system!

Robin Raily

Performance and Quality Officer, Bolsover District Council and Vice President of the Institute of Public Sector Management

If you think that your organisation would benefit from learning more about effective performance management then why not visit our website to find out about our range of courses on the subject? You can find details on these courses here:

http://awics.co.uk/View/Page/in_house_training_performance_management/

'AWICS' is currently holding our 2009 series of 'All You Want to Know about Local Authority Finance' at venues around England. For more information, please visit:

http://www.awics.co.uk/RegionalSeminars/ViewCourse/local_authority_finance_england_09.

AWICS Publish new In-House Courses Booklet

AWICS have been working on getting a new booklet together to provide customers with more information about all of the different courses we can offer to companies.

The 12 page booklets provided for England, Scotland and Wales provides information on more than 30 of AWICS inhouse training courses. The courses cover a range of topic including:

- Local Authorities
- Housing Finance
- Housing Management
- General Management
- Management Issues
- Performance Management
- Personal Skills

AWICS have recently sent out copies of this booklet to many organisations although copies can be downloaded from the AWICS website:

http://awics.co.uk/View/Page/in_house_training_courses/

You can also find further information on all the courses from the website at the same page as the booklet downloads

Each of the courses can and will be specifically customised to the needs of your organisation including use of relevant local data with the courses being provided by our skilled training team:

- Adrian Waite – Housing Finance
- Steve Harriott – Housing Management
- Simon Alford – Public Sector Finance
- David Jackson – Project Management
- Kate Smyth – Housing and Regeneration
- Peter Sutcliffe – Management and Organisation
- Richard Myers – Information Technology

If you and your organisation would like to find out more about any of our training courses please feel free to get in touch with us and we will be happy to help.

Adrian Waite

Upcoming Regional Seminars

We will be holding a number of our Regional Events around the UK over the upcoming months.

- All You Want to Know about LA Housing Finance in England - February to June
- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Finance - April
- All You Want to Know about Housing Association Finance - March to July
- All You Want to Know about Budgets & Financial Management – May
- All You Want to Know about Housing Finance in Scotland – May
- All You Want to Know about Housing Finance in Wales – June
- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Finance in Wales – February

You can find more information about all of these regional courses on our website : <http://awics.co.uk/RegionalSeminars/Overview/>.

We have also just published our In House Training Courses guide for 2009 which includes information on all the courses we can provide. These are available specifically for England, Wales and Scotland from our website: http://awics.co.uk/View/Page/in_house_training_courses/

Other Services

In addition to our in house and regional seminars AWICS also provide a range of other services including:

- Management Consultancy including:
 - Business and Best Value Reviews
 - Advice on Procurement
 - Housing Finance
 - Housing Stock Options Appraisals
 - Housing Association Finance
 - Public Authority Accounting
 - Advice to Voluntary Bodies
 - Performance Management
- Independent Tenants’ Advice
- Publications

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