



Media Release

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HOUSING SERVICE UNDER REVIEW

Lowering numbers in the council's housing stock could lead to a reduction in the number of area housing offices within the Harrogate district.

Harrogate Borough Council's housing service is one of the top five performing authorities in the country. Recent surveys show that over 90% of tenants are happy with the service they get from the council and they will be the first to be consulted on proposals for streamlining and improving that service.

Since the five area housing offices were opened in 1992, the number of council homes has dropped from 5,277 to 3,947, largely because of tenants buying their homes under the government's Right to Buy scheme.

Over 70% of tenants contact the council by telephone and, coupled with falling stock numbers, this has led the council's housing managers to look at whether having five area offices is the most efficient way of delivering services to tenants in the future.

“The Knaresborough office has never been particularly popular with tenants, probably because of its location”, said Les Williamson, the Council's Director of Health and Housing. “And although proposals could also include closing the Jennyfields office, the community centre there will remain open. Closing the Knaresborough and Jennyfields offices will allow us to concentrate staff resources on our other three area offices, in Ripon and on the Bilton and Knaresborough Road estates in Harrogate, which all tenants will be able to use. This will free up more staff time for visiting tenants and those applying to the council for housing, in their own homes.

“The proposed changes can be achieved without redundancies and any savings made will be available to spend on improving other services to tenants, like repairs and improvements to their homes. “

The detailed proposals will come to the council's cabinet in the near future.

NOTE TO EDITORS: The council currently operates five area housing offices - three in Harrogate (Albany Avenue, Grantley Place and Kennion Road) one in Knaresborough and one in Ripon). These offices provide a range of services to tenants, including cash collection, repairs reporting and general estate management, and act as a local office base for housing management staff.

The council also runs a Housing Aid and Advice Centre in Victoria Avenue, which also offers a cash collection service, but primarily deals with homelessness and general housing advice enquiries from the public.