

EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

in respect of the

BEST VALUE FUNDAMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

for

EMPTY PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

upon instructions from the

HOUSING DEPARTMENT CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT

of

SCOTT G HARRINGTON BSc FRICS FBEng MAE

dated

19TH OCTOBER 2001

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Formal details

1.1.1 My name is Scott Harrington and I am the managing director of Hyde Harrington, Chartered Building Surveyors, Architecture and Property Consultants based at 5 Fisher Street, Carlisle, Cumbria.

1.1.2 My specialist field is building and construction works, repairs and improvements to local authority-owned housing, building surveys, building defects, dilapidations and party wall matters. My curriculum vitae is shown at Appendix A.

1.2 Instructions

1.2.1 By letters received on 26th June 2001 and 28th August 2001 instructions were received to undertake the role of external Challenger to the Best Value Fundamental Performance Review – Empty Property Management.

1.2.2 My instructions were to undertake the review in line with the Review Handbook concentrating solely upon the period from the Notice of Termination by the existing tenant that the property is ready to let up to the point where the keys are accepted from the Council's contractor after repair and improvement works are undertaken.

1.3 Disclosure of interests

- 1.3.1 Prior to my involvement in this matter I confirm that I was acquainted with a number of employees at the Council from various departments. My company has undertaken a number of projects for the Council in recent years and I have also personally acted as expert witness in a small number of housing disrepair claims brought against the Council.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

2.1 The relevant departments

2.1.1 I have referred to the following throughout this report:

- i) The Housing Department (who initiate the repairs to the properties and from whom my instructions were received).
- ii) Carlisle Works (the Council's works department who undertake repairs to the council-owned property, including properties that become void when vacated by tenants).

2.2 The issues to be addressed

2.2.1 Evaluation of the Council's policy in relation to empty property management, the Council's approach to Customer Satisfaction, undertaking a comparison of the Council's policy with their actual performance and evaluating the Council's performance compared with other authorities.

2.2.2 To challenge the above existing processes by which the council operate and either confirm support to the operations in place or propose alternatives, including:

- i) Assessment of whether the tenants are satisfied with the service and the way it is delivered.

- ii) assessment of whether the existing approach to the property management is focusing service delivery on what is actually wanted.
- iii) comments upon the level of service compared to other authorities and RSLs.
- iv) proposal of options which reduce or increase services or which provide them on an entirely different basis asking fundamental questions as to the reasons, role and responsibilities relating to the service provided and also whether there are new ways of using staff and their skills/experience?
- v) Assessment of whether the costs of the function can be justified, whether it is the best use of the Council's resources and consideration as to whether anyone else could economically provide the service instead of the Council.

2.2.3 In undertaking the review, the Council's population of just over 100,000, the stock of just over 8000 properties, the slow migration from urban to rural areas and the general decline in demand for council housing are acknowledged as being external influences outside the scope of this report.

3.0 EXTERNAL CHALLENGE

3.1 Generally

- 3.1.1 I have inspected many hundreds of local authority-owned residential properties both during construction and refurbishment works, re-let repair and improvement works, as part of pre-acquisition surveys, stock transfers and also in assessing the causes of specific defects.
- 3.1.2 I have examined documentation requested from the Council and have also met with staff within both the Housing Department and Carlisle Works. I have had extensive access to records and current data held by the Housing Department in so far as the timescale for this commission has allowed such an examination.
- 3.1.3 In the interests of time and also in focussing my mind upon the aspects of the service that I consider can be explored to lead to an overall improvement, I have not set out a long list of those aspects of the service with which I concur. However, I would say that it is abundantly clear to me that the Council takes its responsibilities to its tenants seriously and, over the years, has implemented a number of initiatives to improve the service provided.
- 3.1.4 My report therefore concentrates mostly upon areas which, in my view, can be explored further to improve the performance of the Council to its tenants with regard to empty property management.

- 3.2 Evaluation of the Council's policy in relation to empty property management, the Council's approach to Customer Satisfaction and evaluating the Council's performance compared with other authorities.

Previous initiatives regarding empty property management

- 3.2.1 I can see that the Housing Department and Carlisle Works have looked in detail at the processes by which the service is offered to tenants. A report entitled 'Value for money and Performance Review study – Inspection of Housing Repairs – Final Report – September 1999' was prepared following meetings held to address known deficiencies in the overall service.
- 3.2.2 It is clear from the report that both the Housing Department and Carlisle Works considered that improvements could be made and, from my observations during my own involvement in the best value review process, I can see that a number of these improvements were put in place.
- 3.2.3 It is clear, however, that a number of issues that were discussed have not been taken forward in a way that is providing best value to the Council's tenants and these are discussed further later in this report.
- 3.2.4 I can see that the recent appointment of Sean Parnaby has been a factor in moving a number of these matters forward and it may be that his involvement in preparing the Best Value review report has moved this further forward.

3.2.5 The detailed appraisal of the Council's stock and demand for such housing in the report produced by Sheffield Hallam University in August 2000 appears to have developed a number of thoughts already held by the Council's staff. It is clear that this has a direct impact upon the ability of the Council to go on improving its empty property management and the dynamics of this driving force are acknowledged in my review in this report.

3.2.6 However, I do have concerns that the prioritising of repairs to areas considered to be 'hard to let' naturally results in those areas having an even faster rate of decline as less and less money is invested in them over time. This seems to be a policy decision outside the scope of my involvement and I have therefore not made any further comments upon it.

3.2.7 The 'Void Pilot Scheme – Procedures' document has clearly also come about as a result of the ongoing attempts by the Housing Department and Carlisle Works to improve the service being offered to tenants. The previously prepared 'Void Procedures – additional Guidance Notes – revised September 1997' also demonstrates that the service has been the subject of ongoing review and improvement.

The Council's approach to Customer Satisfaction

3.2.8 Surveys of both customer satisfaction and staff awareness of the empty property management process have also been undertaken by the Housing Department and the responses analysed in reports dated August 2001. Issues raised from the questionnaires are again commented upon later in this report.

The Council's performance compared with other authorities

3.2.9 The Council's performance in relation to national benchmarking and also comparable data obtained from other authorities and RSLs is stated in the Best Value Fundamental Review report as showing the Council to be performing poorly.

3.2.10 Whilst summarised data provided by National Housing Federation and other RSLs is open, in some instances, to interpretation and is influenced by external factors, from my own analysis of the data I have seen I can confirm that the Council's performance appears to be at the lower end of the scale.

3.2.11 It is my view, therefore, that it must follow (notwithstanding the acknowledgement that there are aspects of eviction, transfer and abandonment that, in some instances, may distort the figures available) that the Council's performance should be improved to a point where it is providing the best value reasonably possible to its tenants by way of its empty property management, whilst keeping a sense of proportionality.

3.2.12 It is apparent from my reading of the various reports and pilot schemes and my discussions with the staff both within the Housing Department and Carlisle Works that it is accepted that improvements are needed but there are different views as to the way that this is best achieved.

Best Value Fundamental Performance Review (Empty Property Management) – Report

3.2.13 I have read the Council's above report and, as far as I am able from my discussions with various members of staff and my evaluation of the documentation that I have received, I can verify that the processes and consultations set out therein have been undertaken in the way described.

3.2.14 I consider that the consultations have been appropriately extensive and that the Housing Department has obtained information and commented dispassionately upon its own role and performance in delivering the service to its tenants.

3.2.15 It can be seen from the Action Plan appended to the report that an approach to implementing the findings has already been formulated.

3.2.16 As mentioned earlier, a number of the aspects of the 'challenge' process have already been undertaken in-house and real progress made in a number of specific areas which are detailed in the Best Value Fundamental Performance Review report. My role has therefore developed into one mostly related to verifying that the processes described have been undertaken and then to highlighting residual matters that appear to require further input in order to improve the Council's performance.

3.3 'Challenge' process including eight principal aspects relating to tenant satisfaction, tenant-wishes focussed service, comparison with other authorities, proposals for alternative service delivery, alternative roles and responsibilities, costs and use of staff:

3.3.1 Assessment of whether the tenants are satisfied with the service and the way it is delivered

- i) It can be seen from the customer survey data that the tenants have a number of complaints regarding the service provided by the Council. Clearly, it is necessary to appreciate that a number of the comments (regardless of their critical nature) are likely to be related to the personal perception of individual tenants which might perhaps ultimately be found to be coloured by other factors unrelated to specific empty property management matters, should further consultation be possible.
- ii) The Housing Department should be applauded for including such comments in the appendices to such surveys when they might, at a glance, be seen to reflect badly upon their own performance.
- iii) However, leaving such comments aside (and notwithstanding the fact that local demand and other external factors are outside the control of the Housing Department), there is an underlying discontentment on the part of the tenants regarding the level of service provided.

- iv) An analysis of the data is provided in the survey reports and is commented upon in the Best Value Performance Review report. However, an inspection of the results from the staff questionnaire shows very clearly that the Council's own perception of the service provided is, on any analysis, when considered in percentage terms as a proportion of those taking part in the survey, at a lower level than it should be and it is therefore inevitable that there will also be a good level of reliability in the views expressed by the tenants in their responses to the questions put to them.
- v) It can be seen that the tenant's perception (Chart 1) is that a total of 81% think that properties are filled "slowly" or "very slowly". The Council's staff's perception (Chart 3) is that 38% consider that the general standard of repair and decoration in empty properties about to be offered to new tenants is either "poor" or "very poor". As 25% answered "don't know" to this question, 38% of the 76% that responded (i.e. *half* the staff who answered) think that the service in this respect is poor or very poor and one in four do not know.
- vi) The views that are held by the staff in relation to the standard of modernisation in empty properties about to be offered to new tenants is that 19% of the 76% who answered consider the standard to be poor or very poor (i.e. one in four).
- vii) 54% of staff also responded (page 4, first question) by stating that they are either unaware (17%) or only know some of the empty property procedure (37%). Only 16% have received training on the empty property procedure.

- viii) It is clearly desirable that all of those asked questions about the procedure should, if there is to be a reasonable expectation that tenant's queries are to be addressed correctly, know the procedure thoroughly. In general terms, 16% equates to 6 out of every 7 people not having had appropriate training and this is something that should be addressed as a starting point to providing a better service to the Council's tenants.

3.3.2 Assessment as to whether the existing approach to the property management is focusing service delivery on what people actually want.

- i) I am not sure that the service should actually be focussed, per se, on what the tenants actually want but on what can effectively be provided given reasonable resources.
- ii) In all likelihood, these two things will be the same but it should be remembered that some tenant's expectations will be unrealistic. For example, the Council would not be failing to provide Best Value simply because (to use an extreme example) a tenant expected extensive repairs including new heating, a new kitchen and decorations to be undertaken within 2 days of the property becoming vacant.
- iii) However, for the reasons stated above and later in this report, it is my view that the service is not currently meeting the tenants' reasonable expectations.

3.3.3 Comments upon the level of service compared to other authorities and RSLs

- i) I would be pleased to prepare a detailed report based on the statistics provided by the National Housing Federation
- ii) However, it is clear from the data obtained that the average re-let period achieved by the Council is substantially longer than the DETR's target of 4 weeks and the average for RSLs of 4.8 weeks although it is acknowledged that the average in the North West for RSLs with in excess of 5000 units is 5.6 weeks.
- iii) The increased time taken by the Council to deal with the empty properties is at odds with less funding being spent, in general terms, by the Council than those other authorities which take less time to make the properties ready for occupation. One comment made by a representative from Carlisle Works was that it was thought that the re-let time would be longer with the Council's properties than others (the perception therefore being that a poor comparison was therefore not a reliable one) but this is not borne out by the data I have seen.
- iv) Other comments are made regarding aspects of the service that might be improved (bearing in mind comparisons to other authorities and RSLs) below.

3.3.4 Proposal of options which reduce or increase services or which provide them on an entirely different basis, asking fundamental questions as to the reasons, role and responsibilities relating to the service provided and also whether there are new ways of using staff and their skills/experience?

- i) A number of matters became apparent to me during my meetings with staff at both the Housing Department and Carlisle Works. These matters appear to be underlying problems when reference is made to the responses to the questionnaires completed by both the tenants and the Council's own staff and also the feedback from the meetings I have had with various members of staff.
- ii) I would have preferred to have had the opportunity of undertaking a detailed analysis of various functions within the Council to enable me to be in a more informed position before compiling this report but such involvement does not appear to be appropriate to this report, in itself. I therefore raise a number of issues and make comments based upon my involvement to date on the assumption that these can be discussed further and taken forward by appropriate working groups.
- iii) Whilst I think that the ongoing efforts made by all those involved in delivery of the empty property management is commendable and has produced real benefits, it can be seen that these processes need to continue and reach a natural conclusion. The Council will be familiar with methods by which such matters can be addressed and the questionnaire surveys and existence of working groups are clear evidence of the Council having already initiated such improvements.

iv) However, an independent person chairing or 'driving' the working groups may, in some instances, facilitate working practices with which the Council may not immediately be familiar. This chairperson may either be a consultant with some knowledge of the process or someone within the council who is far enough removed from the staff to be able to take a dispassionate view.

v) Such review processes are separate studies in themselves and are far beyond the scope of this report. However, the headings that, in my view, require further detailed appraisal, beneath which I have made comments and suggestions for further discussion, are as follows (such comments being made with the delivery of best value to tenants being uppermost in my mind):

a) expertise and training of property inspectors

- It is clear to me from the comments made by staff and also from an examination of the previously used Property Inspection forms, that there was neither consistency in the way that the forms were completed and, almost certainly, the way in which the inspections were undertaken.
- The vast majority of the forms were completed in a way that only gives Carlisle Works an impression of the work and would have inevitably resulted in duplication of visits to collect data that could be collected adequately, in one visit.

- I understand that these procedures have now been changed but that they are still in hard copy format with insufficient time available to fully evaluate the new process.
- Whilst there may be benefits in increasing the pre-stocking of, and number of, vans used by Carlisle Works, this will not, in itself, resolve the work identification and ordering problems currently experienced and would also create additional material-tracking difficulties which would lead to increased administration.
- Additional training (involving Carlisle Works) for the property inspectors, who I do not criticise by making these comments, would develop their knowledge of the way in which materials are ordered by Carlisle Works and the amount of detail required. Such training would obviate the need for additional visits or reduce such visits to an absolute minimum.
- It would not be possible to undertake such training effectively if it was not also integrated with an improvement in the way records are kept during such inspections (previously 'Repairs and Improvements Property Inspection' forms). There was insufficient room on those forms to record the information required.
- Even if such forms were more appropriately designed for the task it would still be inevitable, even after further training, that there would be differences in the way that the information is recorded.

- The use of hand-held pre-programmed Psions, or similar data recording devices, completely eliminates inconsistencies, takes the property inspector through the order of the inspection asking questions at each stage and records the information electronically to allow down-loading onto a computer system upon return to the office.
- It is a simple programming task to extend such repair items to automatically call up the repair code from the schedule of rates which will allow further reductions in administration.
- It is interesting to note that the property surveyors state that 50% of their time is spent on administration which is a very high level of office based time compared to the site based tasks being undertaken.
- Many companies, including our own, have designed computer programme packages on a number of occasions and, when we receive instructions to undertake condition surveys, we adopt such approaches to data recording due to the significant time savings that are gained.
- Improvements in such time economies will allow property inspectors to see more properties per week and release staff to undertake other roles (see below).

- It is assumed that, as the budget for such repairs and re-let improvements is likely to be of the same order each year, it would not necessarily follow that the re-let periods would reduce automatically as a result of more properties being inspected (as there will be a finite amount of funding available each year for such work).
- However, there would certainly be improvements in the number of properties inspected due to the lack of duplicated inspections, queries over which rates should be used, queries regarding sizes, colours and types of materials, etc, and a reduction in the property inspectors' time spent in dealing with such administrative queries.
- This would, if I understand the dynamics of the situation correctly, result in the waiting list reducing which would result in a higher rental income, part of which could be made available for an incentive scheme (see below) fund for the improved performance.
- This approach would need to be undertaken in line with the development of the schedule of rates which I understand does not currently appear in the Action Plan appended to the rear of the Best Value Fundamental Performance Review report as it is being addressed as a separate exercise.

- The scheme would also need to take account of non-void property repairs but this does not seem to be an insurmountable obstacle, given a little thought.

b) Management of completion of works

- It is readily apparent that there have been different views held by the Housing Department and Carlisle Works as to what work can be left outstanding at the time the property is made available to the new tenants.
- It appears that this is being addressed by the meetings that are being held between the Housing Department and Carlisle Works so that an agreed list of acceptable works is left outstanding for the 10 day period during which Carlisle Works revisit to complete those items. However, this is a process that should be monitored by personnel other than those employed by Carlisle Works if it is to succeed in the long term.
- Notwithstanding the above, it is apparent from an inspection of the documentation made available by other authorities and RSLs that they hold a more conservative view as to what work is acceptable to be left outstanding and it is my view that this should be explored further so that the list is not unreasonably long.

- Certainly, there is substantial evidence in the questionnaire responses from the tenants that a lack of cleaning, works to the gardens and an apparent lack of explanations regarding the operation of the heating systems, is not considered to be acceptable. On the face of it, such views do not appear to be unreasonable.
- I understand that these problems are currently being addressed (since the questionnaire exercise) and the success of these improvements should be evaluated within, say, six months from the date of this report.
- It is my view that consideration needs to be given to creating a role for at least one member of the Housing Department staff (or possibly from an outside agency – the funds being available for such an appointment from the increased efficiency that would result from the other recommendations of this report) to undertake such inspections by way of quality assurance, hence increasing the level of value provided to the tenants.
- There does not currently appear to be any real accountability if target dates are not achieved and, whilst such accountability should not be seen in any way as 'policing' of or 'checking up' on staff, such quality control procedures are part and parcel of any organisation needing to ensure that they are providing a market-led product or service.

- If such a process is also linked to an incentive scheme, the likelihood of seeing improvements in the service provided will be high.
- The target dates of 1 week, 3 weeks and 6 weeks have, no doubt, been prepared following discussion regarding the acceptable time that should be required to undertake certain tasks.
- However, there will be dozens of different tasks undertaken on a day-to-day basis when working upon void properties and these periods do seem to be a little rigid to me. For instance, minor items such as changing a lock, easing a door, clearing rubbish, etc, may all perhaps be categorised as needing to be undertaken within a week but the work could be very easily organised within a day or two, thereby providing a better service to tenants (who will become exasperated at tasks that take an hour or two of work taking so long to organise).
- Staff at Carlisle Works have informed me that such work is not undertaken sooner purely because there is no pressure to do so. This is a natural reaction that is in line with the requirements that have been agreed and set down in the Void Procedures.

- Similarly, work that may be very difficult to organise within the longer periods (say, for instance, a job that is classified as being undertaken within 6 weeks when it can comfortably be undertaken just in excess of the 3 week threshold) also provides a lower value of service to tenants than might readily be achieved.

- Whilst a re-organisation of time periods to produce, say, six different periods for work (all pre-categorised and allocated against the job code on hand-held Psions when the property is first inspected) will not reduce the actual working time necessary to undertake a task, it will reduce the time that the tenants need to wait for the Council to perform.

c) Incentive schemes

- I am informed that the staff employed by Carlisle Works receive a bonus relating to tasks which are all classified as having a 'Standard Minute Value'. This is, without doubt, of no value at all to tenants as it is related to the time taken to undertake a task itself as opposed to when (i.e. the date) the task itself is actually carried out.

- If this type of incentive scheme is not currently related to providing any benefit to tenants it occurs to me that it may therefore not be justifiable in terms of Best Value to tenants by way of Empty Property Improvements (and, I am certain, other categories of repairs as well).
- It is my own experience that bonus schemes increase the performance of staff. However, it also my experience that poorly thought out schemes achieve very little, with the possible exception of discord, unless they are closely aligned and working in tandem with the agreed overall aims (i.e. in this instance, empty property management).
- It is my view that the scheme should be revised so that it allows the Housing Department and Carlisle Works to be 'pulling in same direction'.
- It is very unfortunate that only one of the organisations that delivers the empty property management service to the tenants has their remuneration structured to include a bonus scheme.
- There are common misconceptions with bonus schemes in that they provide extra income for staff for an output that should be expected of such employees anyway.

- If such schemes are to be successful they should be structured to take account of performance over and above what would be considered acceptable performance.
- It is impossible, in my view, for the overall service to tenants to be improved above a certain level (which has yet to be reached) unless additional incentives are offered.
- In a commercial organisation such exceptional performance can be justified by the increased income that would be generated. With a local authority the situation is less simple. However, whilst there is always job satisfaction gained from a job well done, there is little else to motivate the staff of the Housing Department (whereas Carlisle Works do have such an incentive).
- It seems to me that the overall service to tenants would be improved if both the Housing Department and Carlisle Works were working together in such a way that they needed to rely on each other for such a bonus.
- A short term reaction to this suggestion might be that such changes in employment culture cannot be contemplated as it would affect the Equal Opportunities of other staff not on a bonus scheme.

- However, leaving aside the possibility that such schemes could be introduced to other departments in any event and also that certain employment benefits are commonly only available to staff above a particular grade, such radical changes in employment culture were brought in by local authorities in London and the South East (and probably elsewhere at the same time) when company cars were offered as part of employment packages when previously such benefits had not been available.
- I see no reason at all why such a possibility should not be extensively explored as to dismiss it would, in my view, be overlooking a fundamental difference that currently exists between Carlisle Works and the Housing Department and would be ignoring the difficulties that exist with the current scheme which is not related to the date upon which work is undertaken (and is not consistent with providing Best Value to the Council's tenants).
- In short, a scheme based on a faster turn around time of void properties, with more accurately recorded inspection data automatically generating coded works orders that can be acted upon by Carlisle Works without duplicating some of the work already adopted by the Housing Department, will be of substantial benefit to the tenants and increase the Council's rental income.

- Even the prospect of the Housing Department being transferred to Riverside Housing Group in 18 months time allows time for discussion and a 12 month trial period for such a scheme, if there is a will to do it.
- One should ask oneself if Best Value can be achieved at all within the current structure.

3.3.5 Assessment of whether the costs of the function can be justified, whether it is the best use of the Council's resources and consideration as to whether anyone else could economically provide the service instead of the Council.

- i) Regrettably, I have little information as to the cost of the function as it is currently provided. Information would be required on staff salaries, office overheads and running costs to allow an informed decision to be made. I have assumed that this is therefore outside the scope of my involvement at this stage and I regret that I am unable to provide any helpful comments upon the specific economics of another organisation providing the service without such detailed involvement except to say that the introduction of hand-held data recording devices and the training alone would increase the annual rental income, year on year, currently received by the Council.
- ii) I would be delighted to assist further if this is considered to be part of the Best Value review process.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 I have set out my views based on my examination of extensive documentation, discussions with members of staff employed with the Housing Department and Carlisle Works and also my experience in dealing with numerous re-let repair works in recent years.

4.2 A summary of the recommendations made in this report is set out below:

4.2.1 Independently chaired and performance monitored ongoing review meetings.

4.2.2 Training of property inspectors.

4.2.3 Redesign of inspection data required by reference to other similar authorities and RSLs.

4.2.4 Redesign of lettable standard requirements (relating to acceptable outstanding work) by reference to other similar authorities and RSLs.

4.2.5 Introduction of hand-held data recording devices.

4.2.6 Post inspection monitoring and target date accountability linked with introduction and restructuring of incentive schemes.

4.2.7 Redesign of Schedule of rates.

4.2.8 Re-assessment of stipulated timescales within which categorised work should be undertaken.

4.2.9 Re-assessment of vehicle material stocking and overall vehicle provision by Carlisle Works.

4.3 I would be pleased to answer questions in connection with this matter.

4.4 I confirm I understand that my duty in preparing this report is to assist in the Best Value review process and that this duty overrides any obligation to the party who has engaged me. I confirm that I have complied with that duty.

4.5 I believe that the facts I have stated in this report are true and that the opinions I have expressed are correct.

4.6 I have endeavoured to include in my report those matters, which I have knowledge of or of which I have been made aware, that might adversely affect the validity of my opinion.

4.7 I have indicated the sources of all information I have used.

Signed

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SCOTT HARRINGTON BSc FRICS FBEng MAE

Hyde Harrington

APPENDIX A

Curriculum vitae of Scott G Harrington BSc FRICS FBEng MAE

CURRICULUM VITAE

My name is Scott G Harrington and I am the managing director of Hyde Harrington, Chartered Building Surveyors, Architecture and Property Consultants.

My professional qualifications are:-

BSc in Building Surveying	I attended what is now known as the University of Greenwich and studied part-time graduating in 1988.
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ARICS (MRICS)	I was elected an Associate of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in 1989. The term 'Associate' was re-named 'Member' in 2000 by the RICS by revisions to the Institution's bye-laws. This qualification is now known as MRICS.
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FRICS	I was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in 1997.
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FBEng	I was elected a Fellow of the Association of Building Engineers in 1997.
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MAE	I was elected a member of the Academy of Experts in 1999.
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My professional experience is as follows:-

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|-----------|---|
| 1978 - 80 | I was employed by W S Atkins & Partners, Civil & Structural Engineers in Epsom, Surrey as a structural engineering technician. |
| 1980 - 83 | I was employed by Galbraith Hunt & Partners, Structural Engineers in Sutton, Surrey as a structural engineering technician. |
| 1983 - 84 | I was employed by Stocker & Roberts, Chartered Building Surveyors, in Lewisham, South East London as an assistant building surveyor. |
| 1984 - 90 | I was employed by Roy Ilott & Associates, Chartered Building Surveyors, initially in Epsom, Surrey progressing to the post of senior building surveyor and subsequently opening and managing their office in Tunbridge Wells, Kent. |
| 1990 - 94 | I was employed by Peter Fall Cowie, Chartered Building Surveyors, opening and managing their office in Carlisle, Cumbria. From April 1992 I was an Associate Partner of the Practice. |

1994 - present

In April 1994 I formed Hyde Harrington with Tony Hyde with offices in Carlisle and Newcastle. I am now the managing director of the company following my partner's retirement from the practice in January 1997 prior to 'incorporation' in April 2000 and the later appointment of further directors.

Generally

Over the past twenty three years I have been constantly involved in the inspection of residential buildings in assessing and reporting upon defects plus the quantification and valuation of many building projects for local authorities and housing associations. In addition to acting as designer and lead consultant on various building project works I have been involved in a considerable number of building litigation matters as expert witness including giving evidence for two weeks in a ten week trial in the High Court before what was then the Official Referee. I have also been recommended by the courts on several occasions as Single Joint Expert and arbitrator.

Other matters

I have been a member of the Building Surveying Divisional Committee for Cumbria since 1991.

I sit annually on an Assessment Panel for the RICS Building Surveying Division Assessment of Professional Competence for surveyors taking their professional entrance interview.

I also sit on a Steering Group with a number of local solicitors and experts from different disciplines encouraging the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation.

I have spoken publicly on the subject of expert evidence on a number of occasions and also written articles on property matters for newspapers.

I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Consultant Building Surveyors.

I am also the current and a past chairman of the North West branch of the Pyramus and Thisbe Club, an organisation of surveyors involved in party wall work who assisted in drafting the Party Wall Act 1996 and are actively involved in promoting its correct implementation.

APPENDIX B

Documents which have been considered

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

1. Best Value Fundamental Performance Review for Empty Property Management – Report.
2. Best Value Fundamental Performance Review for Empty Property Management – Results from the Empty Properties Questionnaires sent to tenants and Council staff.
3. Voids Pilot Scheme – Procedures – 14th November 2000.
4. Void Procedures – Additional Guidance Notes – September 1997.
5. Draft Guidelines for Housing Officers Carrying Out Void Inspections as prepared by Wealden District Council.
6. Customer satisfaction survey results from other local authorities and housing associations.
7. The Dynamics of Local Housing Demand – A report prepared by Ian Cole, Susanna Greenwood, Paul Hickman and Emma McCoulough of Sheffield Hallam University – August 2000.
8. Value for Money and Performance Review Study – Inspection of Housing Services – Final Report – September 1999.

9. National Housing Federation data relating to average re-let times for empty properties from 11 other local authorities and housing associations and The Housing Corporation's 'Research 46' report setting out the 2000 performance indicators.
10. The Council's annual expenditure on void properties.
11. Sample work schedules and costs on selected properties.
12. Spreadsheets showing the time periods for each void property undergoing re-let repair work for 2000 ('archive') and September 2000 to August 2001 ('Central region').