



# 9 Social Enterprise

“BCB’s success means employment and training for the locals, an attractive and cared-for village, and pride within the community.”

*Mark Williams, Director, BCB*

The Berinsfield Community Business (BCB) went live in January 2002, providing a local housing service to the community.

The idea for setting up a social enterprise came from wanting to do more than physical regeneration in the village of Berinsfield. An Innovation and Good Practice Grant (IGP) from the Housing Corporation allowed Soha to develop the ideas into reality.

Initial start up grants to the BCB were provided by the District Council (£5000), Oxfordshire County Council (£5000) and Soha (£20,000).

## **What BCB does**

To begin with, almost all BCB’s business came from Soha, through its housing management contract. The contract covers arrears, tenancy issues, repairs and estate management.

Since 2002, the business has grown to include contracts for services including cleaning and grass-cutting. The housing management of Soha’s properties in Berinsfield still forms the core of BCB’s business. However, over the past 4 years, it has won an increasing number of contracts for other work. Recent new contracts have included cleaning and grass-cutting contracts for Soha and other Housing Associations, won through a process of competitive tendering.

## **Why a Community Business?**

The crux of BCB is that it is locally founded, in terms of location, approach to housing management and staff employed. 90% of all staff employed are residents of Berinsfield, and this is seen as highly desirable.





## Berinsfield Community Business

- ✓ Local employment means 'sticky money' – it stays in the local economy
- ✓ Responsive to local needs, improving service levels
- ✓ Improved resident satisfaction
- ✓ Training staff to perform multi-skilled roles
- ✓ Capacity building through training of board members.

### How is it performing?

Berinsfield Residents have given their feedback in a number of surveys, which showed a steadily increasing satisfaction. For example, satisfaction with the speed and efficiency of repairs has increased from 58% in 2002 to 70% in 2005. Overall satisfaction with the landlord was 85%: the highest level of satisfaction across Soha's properties. In October 2005, BCB was awarded Investors in People status.

### What are the problems?

With any such enterprise, there are bound to be some problems. There has been less back-up for staff cover, as BCB is a small organisation. There are some tensions between doing what Soha wants and what BCB (as a separate body) wants. However, performance is good and the growth of a sustainable social enterprise in such a short period of time is a clear endorsement of the model.

### Developing a Community Business - in figures:

#### 2002

3 staff employed  
 Turnover of £144,000  
 100% of business provided by Soha's Housing Management contract.

#### 2006

9 staff employed  
 Target turnover £300,000  
 75% business is grounds maintenance & cleaning, 25% core housing management