



Briefing for:	Member Panel
Title:	Scrutiny Review - Registered Housing Providers
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1 Purpose:

- 1.1 To provide the scrutiny review panel with a briefing on the Council's relationship with Registered Housing Providers; the effectiveness of the current framework and support structures that underpin this relationship, and a review of the first year of operation of the Council's Partnership Agreement for Housing Associations.

2 Working with Registered Housing Providers:

- 2.1 Registered Housing Providers (effectively housing associations) are natural partners with the Council as they provide valuable support in a number of key areas. For example, Councils and housing associations share common aspirations for:

- Ensuring the appropriate number, type, quality and mix of homes to meet the needs of our communities;
- Ensuring the effective planning and design of homes and neighbourhoods;
- Ensuring that areas are well managed, and that there is a closer integration between services so that they promote our residents' wellbeing and create strong, inclusive, sustainable and prosperous communities;
- The provision of care and support services that meet the needs of vulnerable citizens;



- Reducing carbon emissions from existing and new homes and minimising unnecessary consumption of global resources

2.2 Good local working in pursuit of these aspirations involves:

- Working together to develop and promote the strategic objectives of the area;
- Taking account of the views of all residents' – including frequently marginalised groups through approaches that reflect the needs of residents rather than institutions;
- Encouraging a diversity of service provision, with different organisations playing to their strengths in development, housing management, and the provision of a wider range of services;
- Working together to ensure good environmental stewardship, tackle antisocial behaviour and support the police and other agencies to tackle crime and disorder;
- Committing to genuine partnership, with a shared ownership of the formation and delivery of local strategies;
- Managing funding and resource consumption innovatively so benefits for local people are maximised and resources are put to best use;
- Managing and developing skills and ways of working for our employed and contractor workforce.

2.3 Housing associations are therefore encouraged by government both through investment and regulation to play an active role in local communities and should:

- Engage with local authorities;
- Contribute to local housing strategies;
- Take an active role in local strategic partnerships;
- Work closely with other housing associations to ensure consistent approaches;
- Take a strategic view of their stock holdings.

2.4 A clear framework for engagement is necessary to ensure that Councils can maximise the potential for working together with housing associations. This is basically similar to the areas set out in the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for the strategic housing role and in particular ensure:

- An understanding of housing needs and the housing market – what type of housing needs to be delivered;
- Clear direction at both Member and officer level to ensure delivery of housing is central to the Council's business;
- That relevant infrastructures are in place;
- A partnership approach to delivery.



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- 2.5 It is particularly important that the Council and housing associations work closely together during the current economic recession and time of public sector financial constraint to make the best possible use of resources available to vulnerable communities.
- 2.6 Many housing associations are looking at ways of plugging the gap in services left by Councils as they are forced to scale back their activities, particularly around community investment and worklessness. New arrangements for commissioning housing associations to provide these services could help ensure the Council is able to influence services to local residents.

3 Partnership with Registered Housing Providers in Haringey:

- 3.1 Haringey Council has a good relationship with its housing partners including housing associations. During 2008 Strategic & Community Housing Services reviewed the existing arrangements in order to develop an infrastructure for the meaningful engagement with key external partners for the delivery of Haringey's Housing Strategy.
- 3.2 A framework was developed in consultation with Council Senior managers and external partners. This framework was put to the Integrated Housing Board and agreed in October 2008.
- 3.3 Strategic & Community Housing Services supports liaison and partnership working between itself and Registered Housing Providers through the operation of a number of strategic and housing forums. This infrastructure consists of:
 - An Annual Housing Conference involving housing association partners to discuss key strategic issues and influence the direction of Haringey's Housing Strategy;
 - The Integrated Housing Board (theme board of the Haringey Strategic Partnership) including the key housing association partners for high level strategic discussions;
 - A regular Registered Provider/Developers Forum to consider issues relating to the supply of new affordable housing;
 - A regular Registered Providers Lettings Forum to consider issues relating to the allocation and letting of affordable housing including nominations to housing associations.
- 3.4 This framework has been in place since 2009. All forums are active and generally well attended.
- 3.5 Haringey's Housing Strategy was developed by the Integrated Housing Board as an over-arching policy document to set out the borough's approach to housing over a ten year period (2009-2019). This strategy



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identifies a vision for housing in the borough and established a number of strategic objectives.

- 3.6 The Strategy is a partnership document incorporating stakeholders from across the spectrum of housing-related activity in the borough, including the Council, Homes for Haringey and housing associations. Housing associations are involved in the development and delivery of the Housing Strategy and all its various sub-strategies, for example the Homelessness Strategy 2008-11 through providing both permanent and temporary accommodation.
- 3.7 A recent Audit Commission Re-inspection judged Haringey Council as having improved; now providing allocations, lettings and homelessness services which have excellent prospects for improvement. The Audit Commission's judgement made the following observations regarding partnership working including housing associations:

"An effective homelessness strategy is in place and being delivered by partners. There is now a comprehensive approach to preventing homelessness and offering housing options... There has been a significant reduction in the use of temporary accommodation, increased support to the households that remain, and bed and breakfast targets have been met."

4 Haringey Partnership Agreement for Housing Associations:

- 4.1 The 2008 review concluded that preferred partner arrangements (where the Council worked exclusively with half a dozen preferred housing association partners) were not working and needed to be reviewed.
- 4.2 Preferred Partnership Status has therefore been replaced by the development of a Partnership Agreement between the Strategic & Community Housing Services and all Registered Housing Providers.
- 4.3 Introduced at the beginning of 2010 this agreement sets out a framework for partnership working among local housing providers and although it is not legally binding, is a statement of intent by signatories. Key elements of the Partnership Agreement include:
- A commitment to support the council in delivering its key strategies (e.g. Community Strategy, Council Plan, Wellbeing Framework, Greenest Borough);
 - Roles and expectations for key areas of local housing service provision such as nominations and lettings, management and repairs and development & marketing;



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- Cooperative and consistent approaches to other community priorities such as tackling anti social behaviour and domestic violence and ensuring appropriate safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.
- 4.4 The Partnership Agreement has now been in operation for twelve months and all of the Council's main local Registered Housing Provider partners have signed up, more than doubling the amount of housing associations we now work with. Very few housing associations have chosen to opt out. The Agreement was developed in partnership with the housing associations and approved by the Integrated Housing Board.
- 4.5 Day to day relationships with housing associations and monitoring of the Partnership Agreement are maintained by the Housing Enabling Team. Officers hold regular meetings with colleagues from housing associations to discuss development opportunities and estate management issues and put in place measures to ensure high quality services are maintained. The Enabling Team also provides a lead for Members' enquires that relate to estate management issues on housing association or mixed landlord estates. The Agreement is regularly reviewed and the conclusions of the scrutiny review about how effective this Agreement has been in developing cooperation and partnership work with Registered Housing Providers are welcome.