

**DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BUDGET SCRUTINY PANEL AND THE DRAFT RESPONSES OF THE CABINET**

**CO2**

**Recommendation 1**

Whilst the overall objective of carbon reduction is one of the most important for the future of the borough, the annual carbon report could be improved by being better structured. Future reports and, when developed, the borough-wide strategy could particularly benefit from;

- o Greater clarity and detail on how objectives will be reached; and
- o The use of accessible language to make them easier to promote to the local community and beyond.

**Cabinet's response**

The recommendation is noted however there is no reference to resources.

The 4020 Action Plan (once developed) with the support of the Carbon Commission (expected to conclude in April 2012) will provide greater clarity on how objectives will be reached.

**Recommendation 2**

The calculation of expended and saved carbon is an issue and the Panel felt that some of the claims made are hard to justify: they could either be over or under estimates. The Panel is of the view that more could be done to accurately measure CO2 burdens and the impact of savings on energy bills, such as cost benefit analysis.

**Cabinet's response**

There is a robust process in place for the assessment of project viability and performance validation, consistent with best practice in this sector.

## CO2

### **Recommendation 3**

The Sustainable Investment Fund (SIF) has been very successful and consideration should be given to expanding the fund to accelerate and increase the number of projects in the Council and to ensure that as much of the fund as possible is in circulation (recycled) at any time.

### **Cabinet's response**

The SIF has already been expanded from £0.5m to £1m in view of its success.

### **Recommendation 4**

The biggest single area of council activity that generates CO2 is education. The Panel is disappointed that, despite significant investment, comparatively small CO2 savings and cumulative cost avoidance has been recorded so far. The schools SIF programme should be reviewed and, if significant improvements are proven to be feasible, consideration given to additional investment from central Council reserves. It was also of great concern that there was little understanding of the significant differences in CO2 savings made by mainstream SIF and Schools SIF.

### **Cabinet's response**

The Building Schools for the Future programme has considerably increased the contribution that schools make to the Council's overall carbon footprint; however these improvements were necessary to provide high quality teaching facilities.

The Schools SIF programme is not suffering from a lack of funds and additional investment is not required. Awareness raising by Councillors, those involved in Governing bodies and the wider school communities could help to increase take up of SSIF.

Future projects include an innovative arrangement with En10ergy that has engaged 6 pilot schools and grant funded environmental audits. If the project is successful this could be rolled out more widely.

The pre-requisite time had not yet elapsed that would provide the necessary data to evaluate the effectiveness of several school SIF projects.

## CO2

### Recommendation 5

The Panel notes the core-funded salaries of £125k of the ERT Carbon Management and Sustainability Team as well as the grants received set out in Table 2 of Appendix 2 of the submitted report. The Panel requests that, in the interests of transparency, greater clarity be provided on where the grant money is being spent, particularly on "feasibility and business planning".

### Cabinet's response

Full details of the studies and reports are available on the Haringey 4020 website<sup>1</sup>. Key studies included:

1. Investigating the technical potential for energy efficiency measures to housing and business models to deliver the Green Deal.
2. Solar renewable technical pre-feasibility and business plan for Council owned stock (leading to the development of a £16m investment package)
3. Green enterprise potential in the Upper Lee Valley (covering Enfield, Haringey and Waltham Forest)
4. Electricity supply licence feasibility work, geared towards small scale producers of electricity such as local authorities installing Solar PV and Combined Heat and Power Plant, enabling them to obtain a better price for electricity produced.
5. Decentralised energy master planning guidance for local authorities, enabling local authorities to take a borough wide rather than piecemeal approach to network development

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.haringey4020.org.uk/index/useful-information/lcf\\_studies.htm](http://www.haringey4020.org.uk/index/useful-information/lcf_studies.htm)

## CO2

### **Recommendation 6**

The Panel notes the examples of future funding opportunities including schemes involving European funding. They are of the view that there is limited evidence in the report that these are being maximised and seek reassurance that bids have and will be made.

### **Cabinet's response**

European funding has been secured and further funding is expected to be secured in future as detailed in the Scrutiny report, this includes European Regional Development Funding in 2011-12 and funding from ELENA expected in 2012-13.

### **Recommendation 7**

The Panel felt that more information could have been included within the report on the Green Deal. It notes that the government consultation on the draft Green Deal proposals is expected to be released within the next few weeks and that the Carbon Commission will help develop the Council's approach. It requests that the Council, in its response to the consultation, emphasises that opportunities and loans offered by the Green Deal should benefit the "fuel poor". Furthermore, it requests assurances that, when implemented, the scheme will be fully advertised by the Council and that all residents, particularly the fuel poor, will be encouraged and enabled to take advantage.

### **Cabinet's response**

No specific expenditure on Green Deal should be considered until after the government consultation has concluded.

## CO2

### **Recommendation 8**

The panel was a little disappointed with the slow progress of the 40/20 Club, acknowledging the significant role that large and small businesses and community groups could play in achieving Borough wide CO2 reduction targets. Greater efforts could be made to tap into local resources as part of the development of the 40/20 Club as well as the promotion of cross borough working.

### **Cabinet's response**

This is a new initiative and the Cabinet continues to seek opportunities to increase the level of community engagement. Any specific recommendations from Scrutiny on how to achieve greater community engagement would be welcome.

### **Recommendation 9**

The Panel requests that they be supplied with details of the potential impact on CO2 emissions of council housing stock resulting from changes to Decent Homes funding as part of government spending reductions. It recommends that the Chair write to the Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change expressing that concern at:

- a. The loss of Decent Homes funding and requesting that the government consider appropriate action to ameliorate the effects on the fuel poor; and
- b. The reduction in the FIT tariff proposed by the government and that this constitutes part of the Council's response to the ongoing consultation on the issue.

### **Cabinet's response**

Noted. Councillor Goldberg would welcome a copy of the correspondence from the Chair of Scrutiny to the Minister of State for Energy and climate Change

## CO2

### Recommendation 10

That consideration be given to accelerating progress with the expansion in the number of car clubs.  
Cabinet's response

Since 2009, the number of users of car club spaces has grown from 700 to 4000 (Oct 2011). Car club spaces have grown to 96 (87 on road and 9 off road), as at April 2011. The Council has plans to increase the number of spaces to 150 by the end of 2013-14, and aims via this expansion to ensure that all residents and businesses will be within a 5 minute walk of a car club space. Under the existing business plan model and funding arrangement, the Council's service provider – Zip Car (formerly Streetcar), these targets should be achievable. The Council will aim to accelerate the expansion via a new contract proposal which will come in after June 2012; that will allow “a multiple operator contract” instead of the current single operator contract.

### Recommendation 11

That, in respect of LIP schemes, action on improving traffic flows be prioritised through measures.  
Cabinet's response

All schemes are scrutinised by ourselves and TfL on traffic flow impacts. In some cases, TfL will not permit schemes which would have a detrimental impact on traffic flows, which has meant that we have had to reduce our proposals to improve facilities for pedestrians, e.g. at Turnpike Lane/High Road junction.

Buchannon have completed a study on our LIP proposals and have recommended that we expand on personalised travel planning programme and provide eco-driver training as part of our Smarter Travel programme, on the two measures which would have the most impact on reducing carbon emissions from road traffic. The first would reduce CO2 by reducing car use and this may also lead to improvements in traffic flow if there is less traffic on the road. The eco-driving would influence driver behaviour and also reduce CO2 emissions.

A balance needs to be struck however, as an emphasis on improving traffic flows in our LIP schemes would be likely to lead to increase in road capacity for cars and this would be likely to be detrimental to pedestrians (removal of crossings); cyclists (removal of cycle lanes and advance step lines); public transport (removal of bus lanes) and also road safety (widening traffic lanes) for example.

## HOMELESSNESS and TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

### Recommendation 1

That the service carefully considers whether further investment in the assessment process would lead to a faster identification of those not ultimately deemed to be eligible for Temporary Accommodation and therefore save money. The Panel recommends that a business case be produced to consider this and that the DCLG target of 33 days be set as a target to assess eligibility. Performance against this target should be reported to both Cabinet and Scrutiny.

### Cabinet's Response

Although timely decision making can save the Council money if it avoids or reduces the use of temporary accommodation, decisions must be accurate. This objective can be achieved through effective casework management, and not just through the investment of additional resources in the assessment process.

The target of 33 working days was included in guidance issued by the DCLG more than 20 years ago. It has no legal status and is no longer regarded as an effective measure of performance, since it does not take into account the complexity of the case, whether or not interim accommodation is being provided or, indeed, the prospects of the Council accepting a re-housing duty.

Options for reducing the amount of time it takes to assess the homelessness applications of households living in temporary accommodation (and for introducing new targets that support this objective) will now be reviewed and evaluated. Arrangements will be made for performance against the new target(s) to be reported to Cabinet and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

## HOMELESSNESS and TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

### Recommendation 2

That a strategy and action plan be written with an outcome of reducing the time spent in TA by 15% per annum.

### Cabinet's Response

Haringey already has a very effective strategy for minimising the Council's use of temporary accommodation (TA) and there are already very effective measures in place (including auto-bidding and the Housing Allocations Policy 2011) to minimise the amount of time that households spend in TA.

The outcome proposed by the Panel is ambiguous and unrealistic.

- A 15% reduction in the time that households spend in TA is equivalent to 6 months for households requiring a one-bedroom home and more than 12 months for households requiring a two-bedroom home.
- Over a 3 year period, a cumulative reduction of "15% per annum" would amount to a reduction of 38%. This is equivalent to a reduction of almost 14 months for households requiring a one-bedroom home and almost 32 months for households requiring a two-bedroom home.

As the number of permanent homes available for letting is reducing each year and there is no evidence that the supply of assured shorthold tenancies will increase in the foreseeable future, homeless households are likely to spend a lot more time, rather than substantially less time, living in TA.

For these reasons, the Panel's recommendation is not accepted.



## **HOMELESSNESS and TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

### **Recommendation 3**

The number of people who are in Housing Association accommodation as temporary accommodation be explored with a view to encouraging Housing Associations to change the tenancies on these properties to secure tenancies.

### **Cabinet's Response**

This is not possible. The TA that is managed by housing associations is leased from private owners for a period of 3 - 5 years. They are obviously not in a position to offer secure tenancies on properties that are owned by someone else. For this reason, the Panel's recommendation is not accepted.

### **Recommendation 4**

The panel acknowledges the issues suffered by Haringey due to neighbouring boroughs not complying with the Pan London agreement. Therefore the panel recommends that this is taken up at the highest level to ensure that other authorities stick to this agreement and that the Leader and the Lead Member for Housing write to their counterparts urging observance of the agreement.

### **Cabinet's Response**

This matter has already been resolved by the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Housing. At a meeting on 28 November 2011, Islington Council agreed to reduce the amount of money it pays for its TA in Haringey and become part of the Joint Agreement signed by Haringey, Enfield, Barnet and Camden. The Deputy Director has also met with Council Officers from Waltham Forest on 29 November 2011 and is confident that Waltham Forest will reduce the amount of money it pays for its TA in Haringey. It seems very interested in becoming part of the Joint Agreement signed by Haringey, Enfield, Barnet and Camden. If there are any further breaches of the Pan London Agreement, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing will again support Officers to ensure that other boroughs comply with the Agreement.

## HOMELESSNESS and TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

### Recommendation 5

That there should be a further consideration of the option to build new council stock or purpose-built temporary accommodation to help reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation and save revenue costs in the longer term.

### Cabinet's Response

In 2012-13, significant changes will be made to the funding arrangements for council housing and these new freedoms and flexibilities are expected to make more capital resources available for housing. The Council will be producing a business plan that will set out how these resources should be used, taking into account the level of investment needed to maintain and improve existing properties and, of course, the opportunities for regeneration and development.

Building temporary accommodation will not reduce the number of people in TA or, indeed, achieve net revenue savings in the long term.

### Recommendation 6

That capital receipts realised on the sale of Council housing properties should be ring-fenced and used to increase the stock of council housing in the borough.

### Cabinet's Response

The Government has recently announced changes to the Right to Buy scheme and has stated its intention to ensure that every home sold under this scheme is replaced by a new affordable home. The precise details of how this scheme will work have not yet been announced.

Under the existing Right to Buy scheme, a proportion of the capital receipts are retained by the Council and it is likely that this will continue. The Council is free to decide its own policy as to how these receipts (and other receipts from the sale of HRA properties and land) are allocated. This will be considered as part of the Council's preparations for the new funding arrangements for council housing

## **HOMELESSNESS and TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

### **Recommendation 7**

That options be explored to attempt to bring in more investors for example partnerships with institutional investors. That a feasibility report be produced to explore this.

### **Cabinet's Response**

These options, together with the various investment models and vehicles, will be considered by the Council in the context of the freedoms and flexibilities that are expected to accompany the new funding arrangements for council housing.

### **Recommendation 8**

That there should be an increased effort to confirm the eligibility of people already in Council housing. That the Council investigates the possibility of data sharing across departments to assist in this.

### **Cabinet's Response**

Homes for Haringey is already working very closely with Council Officers to tackle the issue of tenancy fraud and sub-letting. Data is shared between Homes for Haringey, Community Housing Services and the Council's Anti Fraud Team to identify anomalies, risks and potential tenancy fraud.

The Anti Fraud Team is routinely provided with a wide range of data (relating to such matters as tenancy succession, the way in which rent payments are being made, and the way in which properties are being used) in order that it can be compared and validated with other data.

In order to detect and prevent fraud, the Council will be commissioning a credit reference agency to compare the data that the Council holds on its housing stock with the data that is held by the credit reference agency. This exercise will identify anomalies between the data sets which can then be reviewed and investigated by Tenancy Management staff and the Anti Fraud Team.

Given the amount of work that is already being done to confirm the eligibility of people who are currently living in Council housing, it is considered that no further action is needed in relation to this recommendation.

## HOMELESSNESS and TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

### Recommendation 9

That there be a more determined effort to address the issue of under-occupancy in order to free up larger homes for families in need of this accommodation, particularly where there may be older people no longer able to manage larger properties.

#### Cabinet's Response

Haringey already has a very comprehensive and effective multi agency strategy for addressing under-occupation in social rented housing. This strategy was the subject of extensive consultation with stakeholders and was, in fact, considered by members of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

As well as appointing dedicated staff to tackle under-occupation and overcrowding, the Council has introduced a new Housing Allocations Policy (incorporating a Local Lettings Policy for Newlon Housing Trust's new housing development at Tottenham Hale) which prioritises under-occupiers living in social rented housing and provides financial incentives for council tenants who are willing to transfer to a smaller home. It is also working very hard to identify and contact people who are under-occupying social rented housing. It is acknowledged, however, that more information is required to enable the Council to better understand the profile of its population in council housing.

Consideration is being given to how best to promote mutual exchanges in the light of the Government's welfare reforms which are expected to restrict, from April 2013, the amount of Housing Benefit paid to most tenants of working age who are under-occupying social rented housing. Given the amount of effort that has already been invested in tackling under-occupation in Haringey – and the fact that under-occupiers cannot be compelled to move out of their homes – it is surprising that the Panel has concluded that “a more determined effort” is required to deal with under-occupation. In view of the commitments made in the Overcrowding & Under-occupation Strategy – and the work already being done to tackle under-occupation – it is considered that no further action is needed in relation to this recommendation.

## HOMELESSNESS and TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

### Recommendation 10

Whilst the panel recognises that there is no longer a national target for reducing the number of people in temporary accommodation the panel recommends that there be a local target of a 5% reduction for each year over the next three years.

### Cabinet's Response

As members of the Panel are aware, it has been agreed with the Cabinet that the target for the number of households in TA will remain at 3,100 for the next 2½ years up to, and including, 2013-14.

To stabilise the number of households in TA at 3,100 until 2013-14 would be an excellent achievement, given the economic situation. Rising unemployment, together with the unprecedented levels of homelessness resulting from the Government's welfare reforms and the reduction in the level of investment in affordable housing, threatens to increase the number of households in TA.

As homelessness is set to increase and the supply of affordable rented housing is expected to decrease, the Panel's suggestion that a TA reduction target of 155 (5%) per annum is unrealistic. Even a target of 3,100 is extremely challenging.

For these reasons, the Panel's recommendation is not accepted.

## HOMELESSNESS and TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

### Recommendation 11

That the Council puts increased emphasis on bringing voids back into use and sets a Local Target to be met to allow these properties to be brought back into use as quickly as possible. Any failure to meet this target during 2012-2013 should be the subject of a report to Scrutiny for the first meeting of the 2013 municipal year so that the Committee can decide on what further action to recommend.

### Cabinet's Response

Excluding void properties earmarked for disposal or conversion, there were a total of 101 void Homes for Haringey properties (general needs and supported housing) that were empty and awaiting repairs and/or re-letting at the end of November 2011. This is less than half of what it was a couple of years ago. At present, there are six void properties that are very costly to repair. However, it is proposed that four of these properties will be brought back into use (and the other two sold) during the early part of 2012/13. The Council and Homes for Haringey place considerable emphasis on bringing void properties back into use and already have a challenging local target of 25 days to bring routine voids back into use. Between September and November 2011, the average void turnaround time (for general needs and supported housing) was as follows:

- September 2011 – 32.95 days
- October 2011 – 26.86 days
- November 2011 – 26.88 days

The average turnaround time for general needs housing only was as follows:

- September 2011 – 28.19 days
- October 2011 – 22.68 days
- November 2011 – 24.33 days

## HOMELESSNESS and TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

### Recommendation 12

That the good service currently provided by the Housing Benefit service to private landlords who provide Assured Short hold Tenancies to homeless households be maintained to discourage landlords from letting their properties through other organizations.

### Cabinet's Response

Community Housing Services will continue to work closely with the Housing Benefit Service to ensure that private landlords who are offering ASTs to homeless households nominated by the Council continue to be satisfied with the speed and quality of the service provided.

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND ASSOCIATED LEGAL COSTS

### Recommendation 1

The Panel welcomes the creation of the Transformation Board and acknowledges the good work described in order to stabilise the service. However the Panel feels that it would have been beneficial to set this Board up 18 months earlier.

- a. The Panel welcomes the work strands identified in the scrutiny report which are set out in detail in the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) and are being progressed through the Transformation Board. The Panel asks that it be given the opportunity to scrutinise the SIP in full before its agreement by the Cabinet.
- b. The Panel feels that particular emphasis should be placed on 'challenging the length of time some children are looked after and moving children to permanent solutions more quickly'; this should be achieved through a sharper focus on exit plans.
- c. The Panel notes that part of the role of the Transformation Board is to monitor the continued overspend within CYPS, and we consider that even if all the major strands of the Board's work are delivered any substantial departmental overspend in the current financial year and/or 2012-13 will be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the consideration of further recommendations.

### Cabinet's Response

Whilst these views are noted the CYPS has been under Government intervention for the last three years and as such has been called to report to the DfE on its Improvement Plan; the focus of which was inevitably different to that of the current Transformation Board. It would not have been practical or efficient to run a parallel process to the scrutiny of government at an earlier stage

- a. The Strategic Improvement Plan will cover the full remit of CYPS work and will in effect be officers' business plan for delivering the service agreed with the Lead Member. These are not usually subject to call in from Finance Scrutiny Committee. However we accept that this Committee should be able to call in any continuing areas of overspend during the course of the next financial year for scrutiny;
- b. Looked After Children all have "Care Plans" which set out the longer terms plan for their care. These are subject to review at least twice a year and the service plans to address these issues raised here through refreshing that process and enhancing the role of the Independent Reviewing Officers.
- c. See a) above. The Directorate is committed to minimizing any overspend in 2011-12 and ensuring the range of actions set out in the SIP will deliver a balanced budget in 2012-3.



## **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND ASSOCIATED LEGAL COSTS**

### **Recommendation 2**

The Panel recognises the importance of prevention and early intervention services and recommends that any additional investment in Children's Services should be targeted in this area. In particular investment should be prioritised for pre-school and infant age children.

### **Cabinet's Response**

There are currently no additional resources identified for investment in Children's Services. Where any additional resource becomes available the service should look first to the Children and Young People's Plan needs assessment to identify priority areas for investment. This by no means precludes the Early Years but any investment must be subject to a compelling business case.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Panel feels that the absence of a Universal Health Visitor Service is unacceptable and welcomes the work being done with Health Colleagues to put one in place. The Panel recommends that arrangements for the re-provision of a Universal Health Visitor Service be put in place as soon as possible

### **Cabinet's Response**

This is an area for Health colleagues to address.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Panel recommends that the review of in-house residential care provision for looked after children be accelerated and that there be clear evidence of outcomes for children and value for money considerations being included as part of any change proposals.

### **Cabinet's Response**

A review of in-house residential provision is included as part of the 2012-13 budget proposals from the service and work is already progressed in evaluating the available options and discussing them with the Lead Member. It is intended that proposals in this area will be presented to Cabinet in February 2012 for implementation in July 2012.

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND ASSOCIATED LEGAL COSTS

### **Recommendation 5**

The Panel feels that in order to make best use of resources there needs to be more flexibility in the Legal Aid funding regime including consideration of Legal Aid funding being provided at an earlier stage to support alternatives such as legal negotiations and save court time. The Panel therefore recommends that the Lead Member for CYP write to the Ministry of Justice.

### **Cabinet's Response**

The Family Justice Review has just reported and the Government's response to it is awaited. It may be possible to include this issue in any co-ordinated response that arises from this. Legal Aid funding has been progressively restricted by the capping of unit costs because it is understandably a finite resource but this delivers perverse consequences because of its limited availability. The capping of certain activities pre proceedings and within care proceedings is considered to be a contributory factor to the overall delays within care proceedings which increases the overall costs.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Panel feels that considerable savings and a better service for clients could be achieved by the use of electronic case management systems for the efficient transmission of legal case work documents. The Panel therefore recommends that the Leader should write to the appropriate body to urge the evaluation and possible adoption of this technology as soon as practicable.

### **Cabinet's Response**

We suggest that this recommendation might be more effective if it was re-worded to propose that officers collaborated with other local authorities to raise this issue with our local courts for a local solution. Electronic case management of care proceedings cases by the Courts is to be encouraged in place of the vast resource required to service such hearings by the printing, delivery and retrieval of paper bundles to and from courts for each hearing. The Ministry of Justice is the appropriate body to receive any such representations in respect of these concerns.

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND ASSOCIATED LEGAL COSTS

### Recommendation 7

The Panel welcomes the discussions taking place by the North London Strategic alliance around the creation of an arm's length service to undertake assessments in advance of court hearings. The Panel supports and encourages the setting up of such an organization and would recommend that the work is undertaken in close conjunction with the Barnet Branch to identify the court's needs at an early stage.

### Cabinet's Response

Agreed. There is existing regular liaison by both the Assistant Head of Legal and the Deputy Director for Children and Families with both the Designated Judge in the Barnet County Court which deals with the Council's more complex cases as well as the Barnet Family Proceedings Panel which deals with the more straightforward cases in the magistrates' court. Both levels of court are interested in understanding and contributing ideas to any new initiative by the Council to improve practice and reduce the delays in care proceedings for children.

### Recommendation 8

The Panel welcomes the work programme being undertaken by the North London Strategic Alliance around bench-marking and supports and encourages this work as it represents an opportunity to learn best practice by member councils.

### Cabinet's Response

Agreed

### Recommendation 9

The Panel expressed its concern over the relatively poor performance against comparator authorities in respect of numbers of adoptive placements. Where adoption is the most appropriate and best outcome for a looked after child the panel recommends that processes be put in place to speed up this outcome; this will include improving the efficiency of processes for identifying and evaluating the suitability of prospective adopters in addition to improving the time-frame for placing suitable LAC in adoptive placements.

### Cabinet's Response

These actions form part of the Strategic Improvement Plan

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND ASSOCIATED LEGAL COSTS

### Recommendation 10

The Panel expressed concern over the lack of a clear strategy for increasing the number of Foster carers in the borough, and that a new strategy should be delivered expeditiously:

- a. The Panel recommends that a new strategy to recruit foster carers should be developed with much better targeting of different demographic groups.
- b. The strategy should be clear about how an increased use of in-house provision will be met by a corresponding reduction in other, more expensive, external provisions as this was not borne out by the performance data submitted

The Panel recommends that a target should be set for increasing the number of available in-house foster families for our looked after children and young people by 15% in each of the next three years.

### Cabinet's Response

The Communications Team has recently put in place a successful new marketing strategy for fostering. This will be complemented by a Looked after Children's Sufficiency Strategy currently being undertaken to propose the numbers and types of placement we need in place for our Looked After Children population. This will be reported to the Corporate Parenting Committee to evaluate its effectiveness. Targets for the service must be based on the placement numbers expected; and so should await the outcome of the sufficiency strategy.

## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND ASSOCIATED LEGAL COSTS

### Recommendation 11

The Panel wishes to express its concern that proposed changes to the Housing Benefit regime could act as a disincentive to foster carers. The Panel recommends that a concession be provided so that spare rooms held by foster carers pending placement of a Looked after Children should be discounted from Housing Benefit calculations on 'spare capacity' and would ask that a robust response be made to relevant consultations on this aspect.

### Cabinet's Response

This is an uncosted proposal for which the business case would need to be assessed.

### Recommendation 12

The Panel encourages the service to consider reviewing the approach for families with complex care needs based on the 'Hackney model' of there being a single team working with a family right through the care plan. It recommends that, following such a review and evaluation, a pilot scheme be undertaken for families with multiple difficulties or complex needs unless compelling evidence is found to discount such an approach. Based on evidence of a stabilised workforce the Panel now believes that conditions are right to pilot such an approach in order to provide continuity of care.

### Cabinet's Response

We note the Committee's views. Proposals for work with Families with Multiple Needs are to be developed in a multi-agency group and to be in place for the end of the financial year.

