



Report for:	Cabinet – 20 March 2012	Item Number:	
Title:	Scrutiny Review of Registered Housing Providers		
Report Authorised by:	Cllr Alexander, Chair of the Review Panel		
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Ward(s) affected: All	Report for Key/Non Key Decisions:		

1. Describe the issue under consideration

The scrutiny review of Registered Housing Providers was commissioned in 2010/11. This review sought to assess how partnership working among local housing providers can be further supported with the aim of delivering more effective and efficient services to local communities.

2. Cabinet Member introduction

Not applicable at this stage. Once approved by Overview & Scrutiny Committee however, the report will be presented at the next available meeting of Cabinet following which, an Executive response will be produced.

3. Recommendations

The attached report details the work of the review panel and the conclusions and recommendations it has reached. The Committee is asked to consider and approve the recommendations contained within the attached report.

4. Other options considered



The attached report details all the evidence considered by the scrutiny review panel.

5. Background information

There are approximately 60 independent registered housing providers (RHP) that own or manage social housing in Haringey. Whilst a small number of housing providers (n=5) manage over 500 properties locally, the majority manage fewer than 100 properties.

Whilst such a broad range of provision can help to meet the diversity of housing needs in the borough, such fragmentation of supply presents a number of challenges to both the Council and to RHPs, particularly in respect of:

- effective communication, engagement and liaison strategies between housing providers
- differences in the way that local housing stock is managed
- variations in the nature and level of housing standards experienced by local tenants
- efficiency and effectiveness of housing service provision.

In assessing how best the Council should respond to these challenges, the review gathered evidence from a wide range of sources including officers from local services and representatives from national housing organisations. Most importantly, local RHPs were integral to the review process and were able to submit their views via both survey and focus group methods.

The panel made a number of key conclusions from its assessment of the evidence:

- the Council has a sound engagement structure to support dialogue with local RHPs, though there are areas in which this can be improved
- the 'common housing standards' agenda has largely been met through the establishment of a national service standards framework and the development of 'local offers' to tenants by housing providers
- further work needs to be undertaken to help prepare local members and officers for an enhanced role in the monitoring and scrutiny of local RHPs
- there is evidence that effective partnership working among RHPs can help to increase capacity, coordination and efficiency of local housing services
- there is significant and wide ranging potential to meet local housing and community needs through further support of effective partnership working among RHPs



- although the rationalisation of the management of local housing stock presents numerous challenges, it can help to improve local partnerships, develop community engagement and increase cost effectiveness of services
- the Council should develop a stock rationalisation policy which supports those RHPs which are committed to the borough, work in partnership with other providers and provide a good service to local tenants

The scrutiny panel have made 5 recommendations (with component sub-recommendations). The recommendations of the review panel relate to the following areas:

- how the local engagement infrastructure between the Council and RHPs can be developed and improved
- how local members and officers can be further supported for an enhanced role in monitoring RHPs
- how partnership work can be further supported among local registered housing providers
- how the Council can support those registered housing providers considering the rationalisation of local housing stock.

The evidence for each recommendation (and sub recommendation) is referenced within the main body of the attached report.

6. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications

Some of the panel's recommendations are likely to involve direct costs for the council in particular the recommendations on the STATUS report and GIS mapping of Social Housing. It will be necessary to identify the funding required through reprioritisation of existing resources before any recommendations are implemented.

The Council is currently preparing a new HRA business plan in the light of the new self financing regime. This includes an assessment of its housing stock. Aspects of recommendation five that have an impact on the HRA will need to be incorporated into this work.

7. Head of Legal Services and legal implications

When the Localism Act 2011 comes into force later this year it will introduce changes to the regulatory framework for social housing which are noted at paragraphs 1.15, 1.16 and 7.15 to 7.19 of the attached report. In addition to these changes, under the Act the Council will be able to offer flexible tenancies instead of secure tenancies and will have to publish a Tenancy Strategy that other registered providers of social housing in this district will have to take into account when formulating their own policies in relation to tenure. These changes give rise to the need for a more joined up approach to housing provision between the Council and its partners as proposed by the review.



8. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

A number of RHPs make an important contribution to meeting the specialist housing needs of different communities in Haringey (e.g. black and other minority ethnic groups, older people, women experiencing domestic abuse). It is therefore important that any action to streamline or rationalise local housing management or ownership should maintain the diversity of supply and its role in meeting local housing needs.

As well as providing housing, RHPs are significant investors in community services such as environmental improvements, anti-social behaviour initiatives and employment and training projects. More coordinated provision as advocated by the review may increase the capacity and effectiveness of housing service to meet the needs of local communities.

The support for more localised management of social housing outlined in this review may help to improve local engagement between housing providers and their tenants. This may facilitate greater community cohesion through a greater understanding of the needs of tenants and the communities in which they live.

9. Head of Procurement Comments

Not applicable.

10. Policy Implication

Council priorities

A key theme running through the review was how RHPs can be supported in working together more effectively. The review has made a number of recommendations in this respect, and if implemented could the Council meet a key strategic priority: the delivery high quality, efficient services.

Recommendations contained within the review would also support key objectives of the local Housing Strategy (2009-2019):

- creating neighbourhoods where people choose to live
- ensuring that housing in the borough is well managed, of high quality and sustainable
- to provide people with the housing support and advice that they need.

The Housing Strategy has also outlined that partnership working in the housing sector will be a key process through which to achieve housing objectives. This is fully supported in the recommendations of the review.

Finance and value for money

The broad thrust of this review is to develop the effectiveness of local partnerships within the housing sector. The review has demonstrated how local housing



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partnerships can contribute to improved efficiency, increased capacity and greater cost effectiveness in the delivery of housing and other community services. If implemented, it is hoped that the recommendations of the review may extend these benefits more widely.

There are a small number of recommendations that have direct resource implications for the Council, most notably the need to map social housing through Geographical Information Systems (rec 4c and 5b). The panel felt that it was important to retain this recommendation given that:

- it was central to improving partnership work and stock rationalisation opportunities in the local housing sector
- there are broader benefits to the mapping social housing, that is, it can be used to guide and inform developments in other policy arenas (e.g. ASB, benefits uptake)
- it may be possible to implement on a priority basis (i.e. those areas where there is known to be multiple providers) and therefore spread implementation costs a wider timeframe.

The implementation of recommendations is dependent on service priorities and officer resources within relevant housing services, particularly in the context of planned departmental restructures (Rethinking Haringey).

11. Use of Appendices

All appendices are included in the main body of the attached report.

12. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

All references to published material used as evidence in this review is fully cited and detailed in the attached report.