



Scrutiny Review of Registered Housing Providers in Haringey

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**A REVIEW BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

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Foreword

Registered Housing Providers (RHP) are a growing part of the social housing landscape. In Haringey alone, about 60 individual providers manage almost 12,000 homes. Whilst some of these providers manage many hundreds of or even thousands of homes, the majority manage fewer than 100.

Having such a large number of housing providers inevitably presents many *challenges*. How can the Council effectively engage with so many local providers? How can the Council help providers to work more efficiently together to better meet the needs of local people? This review has sought to help address some of these key questions.

The review has revealed many good examples of how housing providers work together to help improve services for local tenants. Furthermore, it has been apparent in this review that there is a considerable appetite for new and improved ways of working together, especially in such straitened times.

It is hoped that this report and the recommendations contained within it will help build on the good work that is already taking place in the housing sector in Haringey.

Finally, I would like to thank the representatives of local housing providers who came to the consultation events and provided invaluable feedback to the review and to all the panel members who have assisted in the review process.



Cllr Alexander (Chair of the Scrutiny Review Panel)

Other panel members: Cllr Adje, Cllr Beacham, Cllr Christophides, Cllr Schmitz and Cllr Watson

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Registered Housing Providers (RHP) are independent not for profit organisations that provide a number of housing services to help meet local housing needs (e.g. social rented housing, supported housing and shared ownership). In addition, RHPs may also offer a range of extended services to support individual tenants and the communities in which they live (e.g. employment training, youth provision and estate services). In this context, RHPs are key local partners and local authorities should construct strong and effective partnerships with these organisations to support the effective delivery of local public services.
- 1.2 There are as many as 60 Registered Housing Providers (RHP) which own or manage social housing in Haringey. Whilst such a broad range of providers can help to meet the diversity of housing needs in the borough, the absolute number of housing providers 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.
- 1.3 To enable the Council and RHPs respond to these challenges, Haringey Overview & Scrutiny Committee commissioned an in depth review. This review assessed the effectiveness of the local infrastructure to support engagement and partnerships between the Council and RHPs. In addition, the panel also explored ways in which the Council could support partnerships among and between RHPs and to help them identify shared solutions to common challenges and to enable them to work together more effectively in the provision of housing and other community services.

The review process

- 1.4 The overarching aim of this review was:
- 'To ascertain how the Council may support improved cooperation and partnership work among local RHPs to help develop shared solutions to common problems.'*
- 1.5 Within the overall aim of the review, the scrutiny panel sought to focus on a number of areas and to address a three key questions:
- how effective is the relationship between the Council and RHPs?
 - how can the Council support greater partnership work among local RHPs?
 - how can the Council support those RHPs considering the rationalisation of housing stock?
- 1.6 A wide range of local stakeholders were included within the review process including council officers: Strategic & Community Housing Service, Housing Enablement Team and Homes for Haringey. National organisations also gave evidence to the panel including the Tenants Service Authority (the social

housing regulator) and the National Housing Federation (the national association for social housing providers). Other local authorities were also consulted and gave evidence to the panel to help benchmark service provision and identify good practice.

1.7 Most importantly, RHPs that own or manage housing stock in Haringey were involved throughout the review process. RHPs were consulted at the commencement of the review to ensure that aims and objectives were correctly focused. In addition, a dedicated consultation session was held at which local RHPs (n=12), met to with the panel and officers to discuss engagement, partnership and stock rationalisation issues. Furthermore, an on-line survey was created to facilitate broader representation among local RHPs within this review.

1.8 Data drawn from local stakeholders has been analysed and has been presented within four key themes:

- engagement between the Council and RHPs
- service standards and regulation of social housing
- partnership working
- stock rationalisation.

Engagement (sections 6.1- 6.21)

1.9 The Council has a duty to engage local housing partners and develop strong working relationships to help deliver on local priorities. Working in partnership can help to increase the capacity, coordination and effectiveness of local services. The panel noted that RHPs are important contributors to local housing and community partnerships because:

- as the main providers of social housing, they are key players in meeting the housing needs of the local community
- in addition to housing services, they make considerable investments in neighbourhood and other community services investors (e.g. worklessness, environmental projects)
- as a front line service, they have important knowledge about the needs of local people
- RHPs are involved in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

1.10 The panel noted that there is a developed engagement infrastructure in Haringey which supports dialogue between the Council and local RHPs. From consultation with other local authorities, the panel noted that this infrastructure is not dissimilar to that provided elsewhere in London. The main components of this engagement infrastructure were identified as:

- RHP representation on local strategic partnership boards
- the operation of liaison forums (e.g. development forum, lettings forum)
- an annual conference for RHPs
- a 'Partnership Agreement' between the Council and RHPs.

1.11 RHPs that were consulted on the effectiveness of the local engagement infrastructure considered that generally, this provided a sound platform for communication and engagement between the Council and RHPs. The review

noted that there were high levels of awareness and attendance at local liaison forums, though there were a number of suggested improvements which could help make these more effective. These were identified as:

- reassessment of the terms of reference of liaison forums to minimise overlap
- creation of an annual meeting calendar across liaison forums to better able RHPs to plan attendance and that papers are systematically distributed to local RHPs
- ensuring that liaison forums are more outcome focused and deliver more practical benefits to local tenants.

- 1.12 A Partnership Agreement is also in operation between the Council and local RHPs to help bring engagement and closer working relationships between local agencies. The review noted that approximately one half of all local RHPs are a signatory to this agreement, and from the perspective of RHPs this had helped to increase awareness of local priorities and improved local engagement. There was a perception however that the agreement should be more widespread among RHPs and should become a more proactive tool in which to link RHPs to local priorities and services.

Standards of social housing and regulation (sections 7.1-7-30)

- 1.13 With a large number of RHPs owning or managing housing stock in the borough, it is inevitable that differences may emerge in the way that housing services are managed and the variations may result in the nature and level of services provided to social housing tenants. Some of the common issues to emerge included:

- different approaches to estate management issues (e.g. grounds maintenance, caretaking, car parking)
- responsibility for communal areas, particularity in respect of cleaning and rubbish collection
- inconsistent approaches to property maintenance (e.g. response times and quality of services)
- inconsistent and disjointed approaches to dealing with anti-social behaviour.

- 1.14 The panel noted that pursuance of a local 'common housing standards' agenda had largely been superseded by the creation of the national service standards for social housing (by the Tenant Service Authority) and the establishment of the process of 'local offers' (agreed priorities between tenants and their landlords). Furthermore, the panel noted that locally agreed service standards for tenants would be impractical to develop given that many RHPs manage housing stock across a number of local authorities.

- 1.15 In its evidence to the panel, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) noted important changes to the regulatory framework for social housing to be introduced through the forthcoming Localism Bill. The panel noted that the emphasis of this Bill was to move towards a more localised system of housing regulation, its main provisions in this respect being:

- an emphasis on economic regulation through the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA)

- current regulatory role of the TSA transferred to the HCA and reduced to a backstop function (i.e. only dealing with cases of serious failure)
- greater emphasis on scrutiny and performance monitoring of housing providers at the local level (e.g. local authority, local Councillors).

1.16 As a consequence of the above, there is an expectation that local officials will play a more active and developed role in social housing regulation, particularly those relating to the resolution of tenant issues. To support this role, the panel have made a number of recommendations to support more proactive engagement and partnering role between RHPs and local officials. These include:

- updating and distributing RHP contact details to local councillors (e.g. the details of RHPs owning or managing housing each Ward)
- RHPs to inform local councillors when estate/ street walkabouts to take place
- where multiple housing providers are in operation in a local areas, estate or street walkabouts are synchronised
- Ward councillors to periodically hold surgeries on multi-landlord estates.

Partnership Working (sections 8.1-8.48)

1.17 The panel noted that number of RHPs working in the borough presented both challenges *and* opportunities to the local housing sector. The panel noted that the variety of RHPs that work in the borough offer an extensive pool of knowledge, skills and expertise in housing and other community issues and that there was a strong commitment within the sector to support local housing priorities. It was recorded that such diversity, skills and commitment offered a potentially rich seam of partnership opportunities in Haringey.

1.18 The panel noted that there were already good examples of local partnerships in the borough (joint procurement, pooled investment, shared services) which had helped to deliver tangible benefits to local stakeholders (RHPs and their tenants). It was noted that existing local partnerships had helped to deliver:

- increased capacity for services provision
- improved coordination of services
- more effective and efficient use of resources.

1.19 From the consultation processes undertaken within this review, it was apparent to the panel that RHPs face a number of challenges in partnership working and in developing other joint enterprises with housing providers. From this evidence, the panel noted that the main barriers to more effective partnership working included:

- identifying potential local partners (which providers own/manage properties and where)
- facilitating dialogue between providers
- lack of knowledge of local services and community organisations which may contribute to partnerships
- leadership and commitment from major RHPs and the Council
- the specific challenges that some providers face (such as smaller providers or those that manage street properties).

- 1.20 The panel noted that there was already evidence of commendable practice, which could guide and inform partnership work across the borough. The panel noted how Homes for Haringey and other RHPs had initiated the *Campsbourne Pilot Project*; an innovative partnership to respond to housing and other community issues on this estate in Hornsey. The panel noted that the achievements of this project derived from the practical and proactive approach taken by partners that focused on using the skills available to deliver practical benefits to local residents. The panel felt that this approach could provide a template to support the development of other housing partnerships across the borough.
- 1.21 From the Campsbourne Pilot Project and other successful partnerships across the borough, the panel noted that there were a number of critical elements to successful partnership working which should be recognised in efforts to promote and develop such work further. These included:
- establishing 'quick wins' for partners to help build trust and confidence
 - collaborative tenant consultation provided a sound 'evidence base' and platform for joint working plans and relationships
 - ensuring that partnership was a link-up of front line officers as well as managers
 - ensuring that creative and committed officers were supported in respective organizations.
- 1.22 From its examination of local partnership working in the housing sector the panel noted that the local engagement framework supported such processes, but there were additional developments which the Council could enact to further support this work. The panel recommended:
- that social housing stock is mapped through Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to enable RHPs to identify potential partners and collaborative opportunities
 - that a mechanism is devised which enables local RHPs to describe current and planned work programmes, to share good practice and identify partnering opportunities
 - ensuring that the work of other local services and community groups is linked to housing partnerships
 - ensure the partnering role of the Enabling Team is maintained within any restructuring of Strategic and Community Housing service.
- 1.23 Given the diversity of areas in which RHPs were already working together in partnership and the benefits that have been obtained, the panel concluded that there was significant and wide ranging potential to meet local housing and community needs through further supporting effective partnership working among RHPs.
- Stock rationalisation (section 9.1-9.52)**
- 1.24 Despite many mergers that have already taken place within this sector, the panel noted there were a number of housing providers whose housing stock was dispersed over wide areas and in many local authorities. In some instances, RHPs managed stock in over 100 local authority areas and held on average, less than 1% of their stock in each local authority area.

- 1.25 The panel noted that managing a small number of properties in a local area (stock dispersal) was not necessarily problematic as long as this was underpinned by high levels of client satisfaction, a demonstrable commitment to the locality and evidence of sound local partnerships to support local housing needs. Detached models of housing management however, have raised a number of challenges for the housing sector which included:
- inconsistent cooperation among RHPs
 - increased unit costs to RHPs
 - limited accessibility and accountability of RHPs to the local authority and their tenants
 - difficulties in securing commitment to service improvement
 - difficulties in engaging quickly and effectively to resolve local issues of concern.
- 1.26 In Haringey, the panel noted that of the approximate 11,000 homes managed by RHPs, just nine managed 200 or more properties locally. The majority of RHPs working in the borough (65%) managed fewer than 100 properties.
- 1.27 The panel noted that whilst stock rationalisation was not the answer to all problems in the social housing sector, on the evidence presented in the review, it was felt that in some instances this process could make a valuable contribution to the improvement of housing and other community services. In particular, the panel noted that more localised management of housing services could help to:
- improve local partnerships – with the local authority, other RHPs and other community organisations
 - improve community engagement - through greater understanding of community and tenant issues
 - improve cost effectiveness of services – through improved economies of scale and local partnerships.
- 1.28 From the consultation with RHPs, it was noted that some RHPs were active in the rationalisation of dispersed stock and a number had already had defined asset management strategies in place which underpinned this. But it was evident to the panel that stock rationalisation was not a straightforward process, and that RHPs faced a number of challenges in this process which included:
- the identification of possible partners with whom to swap or transfer stock
 - difficulties in finding interest in the acquisition/ management of old housing stock
 - complex legal and financial processes in property sales or exchanges (agreeing values, charges on properties)
 - the levying of VAT on local management arrangements was a disincentive to the formation of such agreements
 - requirement to consult and tenants and obtain their agreement.
- 1.29 To support RHPs that may be considering stock rationalisation, the panel made a number of suggestions in which the Council could support this. Most importantly, on the evidence of RHPs and other local authorities, it was

apparent that the development of a local stock rationalisation policy would help to identify how stock rationalisation can contribute to local priorities and help to identify roles and expectations of RHPs in this process. Other supporting developments that could be made by the Council included:

- GIS mapping of social housing stock to help RHPs identify partners with whom to swap, sell or purchase housing stock
- the adoption of a brokerage role by the Council, helping to link up RHPs that are interested in stock rationalisation
- support the adoption of a similar brokerage role at the sub-regional level.

1.30 Perhaps the most positive contribution that could be made to stock rationalisation by the Council however, was to lead by example. As an owner and manager of social housing stock (through Homes for Haringey) some of which is dispersed in other local authority areas, the panel noted that it may be beneficial to conduct an assessment of *all* its housing stock to identify units which may be beneficial to rationalise ownership (i.e. in other borough) or management (i.e. where it has a minority interest on a multi-landlord estate).

2. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

To develop and improve engagement between the Council and local Registered Housing Providers it is recommended that:

- a) the terms of reference of existing liaison forums (development and lettings) are reassessed to:
 - assess the need and viability of a dedicated management forum
 - ensure that duplication across forums is minimised
 - that objectives and agendas are more outcome focused
- b) that an annual calendar of meetings is developed and published in advance of all liaison forums
- c) that associated papers/reports for liaison forums are systematically distributed to local RHPs
- d) that the agenda for the Integrated Housing Board is distributed to all RHPs in Haringey
- e) that the Partnership Agreement between the Council and RHPs is extended further among local RHPs and becomes a more proactive tool through which to link the priorities and services of both RHPs and the Council.

Recommendation 2

To support further liaison and partnership and to assist local officials in local scrutiny and performance management of RHPs:

- a) that contact details of RHPs are updated and periodically distributed to all Councillors (with a named liaison contact)
- b) that Councillors are notified of those RHPs that manage or own properties in their respective wards
- c) to facilitate Councillors casework enquires, further consideration be given to the development of a mechanism which allows Councillors to identify specific housing providers (Council as an intermediary)
- d) that RHPs inform Councillors of estate/ street walkabouts that take place in their ward (with 2 weeks notice)
- e) that RHPs synchronise walkabouts on multi-landlord estates/ streets
- f) that Councillors consider holding ward surgeries within multi-landlord estates on a periodic basis
- g) that training be provided for local Councillors on their future role for the regulation of housing regulation as detailed under the Localism Act.

Recommendation 3:

That options for re-commissioning of the STATUS survey should be explored, possibly in partnership with other neighbouring authorities, or within the North London Regional Sub group.

Recommendation 4

To further support and develop partnership work across the local housing sector it is recommended that:

- a) the critical learning and successes of the Campsbourne Pilot Project be disseminated across the borough to guide and inform partnership work on multi-landlord estates and across the sector more broadly
- b) that the role of the Enabling Team in facilitating partnership work among RHPs on multi-landlord estates should be retained and extended within Restructuring Haringey Programme (i.e. its move from the housing service to the Place Directorate)
- c) that all social housing stock is mapped through Geographical Information Systems¹ and that an accompanying dissemination strategy be devised which supports the communication of this information to social housing partners with a view to promoting local partnerships (and other local priorities)
- d) that further engagement is developed between RHPs and broader Council services (e.g. environmental health, ASB, domestic violence) to help extend knowledge of local services and collaborative opportunities (possible develop a directory for physical resources, such as meeting places, which may also be available to RHPs)
- e) that given their extensive local knowledge and experience, Homes for Haringey be encouraged to continue to play a lead role in developing and supporting local partnership opportunities
- f) a mechanism is devised that helps to capture, collate and share information from the work of local housing providers that identifies and supports partnership opportunities, share good practice and identify other collaborative ventures across the borough.

Recommendation 5

That the Council should adopt a lead role in the rationalisation of social housing stock and support those RHPs considering the rationalisation of local housing stock through:

- a) the development of a local stock rationalisation policy:
 - which sets how the aims and objectives of that policy will help to support local priorities
 - details the roles and expectations of local housing providers
 - which is supported by published local guidance for RHPs
- b) ensuring that all social housing in the borough is mapped through GIS to facilitate contact and dialogue between RHPs
- c) the adoption of a brokerage role to facilitate contact and dialogue between RHPs with a mutual interest in stock rationalisation, and, that such a role be actively pursued in where local conditions would support more coordinated housing provision (i.e. multi-landlord estates)
- d) ascertaining if a regional brokerage role could be adopted through the North London Strategic Alliance (other sub-regional body) to support stock rationalisation processes among RHPs

¹ If there are insufficient resources to do this on a borough wide basis, then a more selective approach may be adopted that prioritises those areas where there are known to be multiple housing providers.

- e) provide a stock rationalisation lead and example by conducting an assessment of all its housing stock (in and out of borough) to identify those properties that may be beneficial to rationalise ownership or management
- f) encouraging all RHPs to review the management of local housing stock and subsequent commitment to the borough, and where this falls short, to encourage partnership or stock rationalisation opportunities with other local providers
- g) acknowledging the particular challenges that smaller RHPs may face in with stock rationalisation (and partnership working) and to develop mechanisms to support their local engagement
- h) ensuring housing disposals through stock rationalisation do not lead to a reduction in the overall social housing estate and where possible ensuring to address the east /west imbalance in social housing in the borough
- i) considering whether the planned annual conference for RHPs could be dedicated to consider local partnerships and stock rationalisation opportunities.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 Registered Housing Providers (RHPs) are valued partners in the delivery of social housing and other community support services to local authority residents. It is therefore important that local authorities and RHPs work closely together to ensure that services are coordinated, responsive and delivered as efficiently as possible to local tenants. However, with as many as 60 RHPs managing housing units in Haringey, this presents a number of challenges to both the council and RHPs (e.g. effective engagement strategies, different service standards experienced by local tenants, how providers manage dispersed stock and stock rationalisation).
- 3.2 To enable the Council and RHPs respond to these challenges, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee commissioned an in depth review. This review, which was undertaken by panel of local councillors, assessed the effectiveness of the local infrastructure to support engagement and partnerships between the Council and RHPs. In addition, the panel also explored the ways in which the Council could support local partnerships among and between RHPs to help them identify shared solutions to common challenges and to enable them to work together more effectively in the provision of housing and other community services.
- 3.3 Within this review process, the panel heard evidence from a wide range of informants, including Council Officers, Homes for Haringey (the Arms Length management Organisation of the Council), the Tenants Service Authority (the social housing regulator), the National Housing Federation (housing association representative body), other local authorities and of course RHPs themselves. It is hoped that the conclusions and recommendations reached within this report, will guide and inform the policy and practice of the Council in working with RHPs in the future.

4. Background

National Policy Context - to 2010

- 4.1 The Hills Report, *Ends and Means* (2007)² and the Cave Review, *Every Tenant Matters* (2007)³ and provided a national policy framework for social housing up to May 2010. The Hills report which looked at the future role of social housing confirmed that:
- because of high demand and limited supply, tenants of social housing were most likely to be among the most vulnerable in society
 - tenants of social housing should be given more choice about their homes and be able to become more involved in how they are run
 - security of tenure was important, tenants, though additional flexibility may be needed (i.e. to help tenants move and apply for jobs)
 - social housing remained the best option for delivering mixed communities.

² *Ends and Means: the future roles of social housing*, J Hills, DCLG / ESRC (2007):

³ *Every Tenant Matters*; a review of social housing regulation M Cave, DCLG (2007)

4.2 Most importantly, in the context of this review, a central recommendation of the Hills report was that local authorities and RHPs should work more cooperatively together to develop and improve local housing provision. This cooperation should extend beyond the provision of housing services to include other neighbourhood and community services (e.g. employment opportunities, care services and ASB).

4.3 The Cave Review focused on the regulation of social housing. The key recommendations of this report included:

- the development of a single regulator for all social housing (i.e. the establishment of the Tenant Services Authority)
- the establishment of the Homes and Communities Agency to deal with housing investment and development issues
- that providers undertake more work to engage and empower tenants.

National policy context – post 2010

4.4 The accession of the coalition government in May 2010 brought fundamental changes to national policy and has heavily influenced all areas of public policy. The requirement to reduce the national deficit has led to reduced funding for most areas of public policy, including housing. Budget reductions have impacted on all aspects of housing policy including:

- reduced scope for funding new affordable housing through the Homes and Communities Agency
- reduced funding for housing capital investments (i.e. Decent Homes Programme)
- reductions to housing benefit and other associated entitlements for tenants.

4.5 In addition to budgetary constraint, new housing policies have been put forward. In November 2010, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published a consultation paper on the future of social housing: *Local Decisions: a fairer future for social housing*.⁴ The stated aims of proposals within the consultation were to:

- make the system fairer, striking a proper balance between the needs of new and existing tenants
- ensure that the support which social housing provides is focused on those who need it most for as long as they need it
- give local authorities and RHPs new powers to best meets the needs of individual households and their local area.

4.6 A number of key proposals were outlined within this consultation which, if enacted, would influence the way social housing is provided by the local authority and RHPs. A summary of the main proposals (to be introduced in the *Localism Act 2012*) include:

- the introduction of **flexible tenancies** (for new tenancies and new stock) where social housing providers will be able to grant tenancies of varying length (minimum 2 years) to reflect local housing need.

⁴ *Local Decisions: a fairer future for social housing*, DCLG, (2010)

- the introduction of **affordable rent tenancies** (for new tenancies and new stock) where social housing providers can charge above social rent and up to 80% of 'local market rent' for affordable housing. Tenancies still to be allocated within local allocations procedures and rental income to be used to develop new affordable homes
- new procedures to **devolve social housing finance** where councils will keep rental income from lettings (Housing Revenue Account)
- the development of a **new tenancy standard** to improve local challenge and scrutiny of local housing providers through the creation of tenant panels
- the establishment of a **new regulatory framework** where the Tenants Services Authority is abolished and greater expectation that tenancy complaints will be resolved at the local level through a designated person (e.g. Councillor or MP).

- 4.7 The combination of reduced central funding and new policy proposals will undoubtedly impact on the social housing landscape and the policies and practices of both statutory (local authority) and independent (RHPs) housing providers. But perhaps most importantly, as in other times of fiscal constraint, there will be considerable pressures on all social housing providers to:
- provide value for money for the services they deliver
 - seek new ways of working to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness (e.g. shared services)
 - prioritise services to those most in need
 - concentrate on services which are core to their business.

Social Housing in the UK

- 4.8 In the UK, the social rented sector has traditionally been characterised as that of municipally built, owned, and managed housing stock. In recent decades however, a more pluralistic model has evolved, in which now include Registered Housing Providers (RHPs), Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMO) as well as services that continue to be directly provided by a local authority.

- 4.9 RHPs, are now the largest provider of social housing and account for nearly half (48%) of all lettings in this sector. ALMOs, which manage housing stock on behalf of a local authority, are also significant providers where nationally, they manage approximately 20% of social housing stock. Local authorities however themselves remain a significant provider of social housing in their own right and continue to own and manage 32% of housing in the social rented sector.

What are Registered Housing Providers?

- 4.10 RHPs, (previously known as registered social landlords or housing associations) are not-for-profit organisations, which own, let or manage social rented housing. As a not-for-profit organisation, revenue acquired through rent is generally reinvested to help maintain existing homes or build new ones. In

2009/10, RHPs built over 45,000 new homes, making them the most important supplier of new affordable housing.⁵

4.11 RHPs are independent publicly funded organisations, whose activities are directed by a board of stakeholders. Each RHP has its own constitution which may delineate or distinguish the services that each provides. For example, whilst some RHPs may focus on the provision of general needs housing, others may focus activities on more specialist housing services such as supported accommodation for elderly or disabled people, or for particular community groups (i.e. black and other minority ethnic groups).

4.12 RHPs own or manage approximately 2.5 million homes, the majority of which is for general needs. The nature and volume of housing provided by RHPs is summarised below:

<u>Housing Type</u>	<u>'000</u>
General needs	1,826
Supported housing	102
Housing for older people	316
Leasehold properties / shared ownership	140
Other	53

4.13 There is considerable variation in the size of RHPs and the scale of their operations, thus whilst a small number may manage or own in excess of 45,000 homes, many more have considerably smaller business involving 1,000 homes or fewer. Although there have been many consolidations and mergers in recent years, recent figures (2010) suggest the sector is predominated by a large number of smaller providers where of the approximate 1,500 RHPs:

- 379 manage or own more than 1,000 homes
- 63 manage over 10,000 homes.⁶

4.14 In addition to housing services, RHPs also make significant contributions to neighbourhood and other community services. Such investments are varied and diverse and are used to support a wide range of community initiatives such as tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB), supporting employment and training projects or environmental improvements. Total community investment is estimated to be £440m.

Local Policy Context

4.15 The Haringey Housing Strategy was developed by the Integrated Housing Board (IHB) as an over-arching policy document to set out the boroughs approach to housing over a ten year period (2009-2019). This multi-agency strategy aims to create neighbourhoods in which people want to live with a balance of different types of homes which offer quality, affordability and sustainability for current and future generations. Its key aims are:

- to meet housing need through mixed communities which provide opportunities for residents

⁵ What is a housing association? National Housing Federation 2010

⁶ 2010 Global accounts of housing providers, Tenant Services Authority (2011)

- to ensure housing in the borough is well managed, of high quality, and sustainable
- to provide people with the housing support and advice that they need
- to make all homes in the borough a part of neighbourhoods of choice.

4.16 In order to achieve these aims the housing strategy outlines an approach based on the following principles:

- partnership between organisations, agencies and residents in the borough
- strong relationships with government and national agencies (such as the Homes and Communities Agency and Tenant Services Authority) that will get the best deal for residents in Haringey
- engagement with residents and communities so that decisions and service improvements are shaped by what they want.

4.17 As is the case in other London boroughs, demand for housing in Haringey is high, which is reflected in rising house prices and a strong demand for affordable homes. Local demand for housing is expected to increase further as the population of the borough is anticipated to increase by as much as 10% over the next 20 years.

4.18 Further evidence of high local housing need is exemplified through:

- a growing housing register; with 20,000 households on the register and where more are joining each year than are being found homes⁷
- approximately 3,400 households live in temporary accommodation
- high levels (21%) of unsuitable housing (mostly overcrowding) in the private rented sector.

4.19 Residents surveys and other local consultations underscore the importance of the availability of social housing to local people. Data from the place survey (2008/9) found that the availability of affordable decent housing was among the six most important issues of concerns for local people and was similarly ranked among those issues which needed most improvement locally.

Social Housing in Haringey

4.20 Of the 98,000 dwellings in Haringey, a majority (72%) are privately owned, the remainder being owned by the council (through the ALMO) (17%) or by a RHP (11%) (Figure 1). Compared to regional and national figures, stock ownership is different in Haringey: Council owned stock (17%) is more than twice that recorded nationally (8%), conversely, the proportion of housing stock which is privately owned in Haringey (72%) is less than the national average (82%) (Figure 1).

4.21 Owner occupation (49%) is the largest group by tenure in Haringey, followed by social rented (29%) and private rented (22%). When compared to the national picture, housing tenure in Haringey is characterised by lower rates of owner occupation and higher rates of renting within both the social and private sector (Figure 2).

⁷ Figures relate to 2010, also noting that the Council has a new Housing Allocations Policy.

4.22 Of the 28,000 households in the social rented sector in Haringey, 16,000 are managed by Homes for Haringey (being the ALMO of the Council) and 12,000 owned and managed by RHPs. Analysis of the social rented sector in Haringey from 1997-2009 suggests two distinct trends: a decline in council owned stock (-17%) and greater provision through RHPs (+30%) (Figure 3).

4.23 Social rented housing is not uniformly distributed across Haringey, with wide variations recorded when comparing east and west of the borough and across individual wards. In a number of wards (e.g. White Hart Lane) social housing accounts for over ½ of all tenures, yet in others (e.g. Muswell Hill) just over 10% of tenures are social rented (Figure 4).

RHPs in Haringey

4.24 RHPs manage a range of properties in Haringey. Whilst the majority of these properties are for general needs purposes, other more specialist lettings are also included such as hostels, almshouses, cooperatives, supported housing, sheltered housing and support for specific needs groups (e.g. Key workers, BME groups and older people).

4.25 The number of RHPs in Haringey is difficult to accurately state given the size of some of these organisations. Data from Housing Net (the directory of social housing), which includes more specialist social housing providers as well as general needs indicates that there are 62 different housing providers in Haringey. Data from the TSA (which restricts data to those RHPS managing general needs dwellings) estimates that there are 41 housing providers in Haringey.

4.26 The national pattern of stock ownership or management by RHPs (see 4.6) is mirrored in Haringey, where a small number of large stock holders are accompanied by larger numbers who have a much smaller stock holding in the borough. Analysis of the level of stock held by local RHPs (using TSA and local data) demonstrated that of RHPs with stock in Haringey:

- 28 out of 43 (65%) managed 100 homes or less (Figure 5a)
- 10 out of 43 (23%) managed between 101 and 500 homes (Figure 5b)
- 5 out of 43 (12%) managed more than 500 homes. (Figure 5c).

4.27 Using this same data, it is noted that the five largest RHPs in the borough (listed below) together manage between 60-65% of housing in this sector (excluding Homes for Haringey). The full distribution of stock holding among RHPs in this sector in Haringey is contained in Figure 6.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------|
| ▪ London & Quadrant | 2,421 |
| ▪ Metropolitan | 2,345 |
| ▪ Circle 33 | 1,840 |
| ▪ Sanctuary | 849 |
| ▪ Family Mosaic | 819 |

4.28 As with Council owned stock, housing owned or managed by RHPs is not evenly distributed across the borough with wide variations recorded across different wards. Thus, while there were 2,442 homes owned or managed by

RHPs in Bounds Green ward, in Muswell Hill the comparative figure was just 100 homes (Figure 7).

- 4.29 The complex distribution RHPs housing provision is further illustrated in Figure 8, which depicts individual stockholding in each local authority ward in the borough. This demonstrates that up to 20 different RHPs may own or manage social housing in individual local authority wards. Furthermore, even in those wards with fewer than 500 social housing units, these may be owned or managed by as many as 16 individual RHPs. Thus for example:
- in Northumberland Park ward 524 housing association units are provided through 16 providers
 - in Highgate ward 166 housing association units are provided through 11 different providers.

Challenges and Opportunities of the RHP landscape

- 4.30 The supply of social housing through a large number of RHPs has both advantages and disadvantages for the local social rented sector. It is apparent that such a large number of housing providers presents a number of challenges for the way that housing and other community services are coordinated, managed and delivered locally; in particular:
- communication and engagement between the Council and RHPs and among RHPs themselves
 - differences in the way that local housing is managed
 - variations in the nature and level of housing standards experienced by local tenants
 - efficiency and effectiveness of local housing service provision.
- 4.31 The large number of RHPs can also bring diversity and choice to the social rented sector. Such diversity of provision can help Council to respond to local housing needs that are both varied and complex. Other opportunities presented through the diversity of local provision include:
- broad variety of knowledge, skills and expertise available to solve local housing issues
 - potential to increase the pool of resources available to tackle housing issues.
- 4.32 The review will aim to assess how these challenges are addressed, and explore how best to such opportunities can be incorporated in to local housing provision.

5. Methods

Aim and objectives of the review

- 5.1 The panel agreed that the overarching aim of the review was:

‘To ascertain how the Council may support improved cooperation and partnership work among local registered housing providers to help develop shared solutions to common problems.’

5.2 Within this overarching aim, the review of RHPs encompassed a number of key themes and component objectives which are summarised below.

The relationship between the Council and RHPs:

- to assess the effectiveness of communication and support structures between the Council and registered housing providers and identify ways in which these can be improved
- to assess the effectiveness of the Partnership Agreement and other initiatives to support engagement between the Council and RHPs
- to compare services provided in Haringey against other local authority provision
- to assess local and national interventions to promote common management standards among RHPs
- to assess what role the council should have in performance monitoring and facilitating locally scrutiny of registered housing providers.

The potential for improved partnership working among RHPs:

- to identify obstacles to partnership working in this sector and how these can be overcome locally
- to identify what role the council can play in facilitating partnership work in this sector
- to identify ways in which local providers may work cooperatively for more efficient service provision (sharing best practice, pooling skills, sharing facilities)
- to identify models of partnership working among registered housing providers and identify if these can be replicated more widely across the borough.

The potential for stock rationalisation among RHPs:

- to assess the benefits and challenges faced by RHPS in stock rationalisation processes
- to identify what role the council can play to support those RHPs considering stock rationalisation in Haringey.

Review process

5.3 A review panel of six non-executive Members was convened to conduct this scrutiny review. Panel members were Cllr Adje, Cllr Alexander (Chair), Cllr Beacham, Cllr Christophides, Cllr Schmitz and Cllr Watson.

5.4 The review used a range of methods to ensure that Members had access to the necessary data to assist them in meeting the objectives set out above. Data was collected predominantly through a series of panel meetings, at which a number of key informants attended to present evidence (both oral and documentary). In total, 5 panel meetings were held at which the following stakeholders attended:

- Cabinet Member for Housing
- Council Officers (Strategic & Community Housing Service)
- Homes for Haringey (Arms Length Management Organisation)
- Tenants Services Authority

- National Housing Federation
- Other London Boroughs
- Registered Housing Providers

- 5.5 Given the centrality of RHPs to this review, two distinct processes were used to elicit their views within the review process. Firstly, a dedicated panel meeting was held for local RHPs who were signatories to the Partnership Agreement (see 6.13). In addition, to extend participation in the review, an on-line survey was developed and distributed to a wider group of 47 local RHPs.⁸ In total, representatives from 12 RHPs attended the panel meeting⁹ and 18 responded to the on-line survey. Quantitative data from the survey has been analysed and reported in its entirety in Appendix B. Representatives from Homes for Haringey (the ALMO) was also included in both consultations.
- 5.6 A number of London boroughs were directly contacted as part of this review to help compare and assess local service provision. A telephone consultation was conducted among a sample of other north London boroughs assess what services they provide to RHPs and to identify good practice in respect of local engagement structures and Council approaches performance management, partnership working and stock rationalisation.

6.0 Engagement with Registered Housing Providers

Importance of local engagement with RHPs

- 6.1 The Council has a clear '**place shaping**' responsibility to create strong, vibrant, and sustainable communities in which local people want to live. In doing so, the Council has a duty to engage and work in partnership with local agencies that may share these aims and who can contribute to plans that deliver them.
- 6.2 The Haringey **Housing Strategy** (2009-2019) sets out a number of objectives to improve the diversity, quality, affordability and supply of housing in the borough. To support the delivery of these housing objectives, the Council will need to engage and work with a number of key housing partners, most notably RHPs.
- 6.3 The relationship between the Council and RHPs is of course particularly important for **new development** and the management of existing social housing in the borough. RHPs are significant providers of social housing in Haringey; together they manage about 12,000 homes or 44% of all social housing in the borough. Furthermore, as in many other local authorities, RHPs continue to be responsible for almost all new affordable housing built in the borough. In this context, engagement with RHPs is critical to help meet the housing needs of local residents.

⁸ The survey sent to RHPs from the Council's RPH database and TSA data for the borough.

⁹ Metropolitan, Circle 33, Family Mosaic, Sanctuary, Apna Ghar, Hill Homes, Genesis, Peabody, Hornsey Housing Trust, London & Quadrant, Newlon and Innisfree.

- 6.4 RHPs are also a significant investor in **neighbourhood services**. RHPs fund a wide range of initiatives that provide direct support to their tenants (e.g. training and employment opportunities) or in the communities in which they live (e.g. environmental projects or ASB). Engagement between the Council and RHPs is therefore important to ensure that such community investment is coordinated and compliments provision elsewhere in the borough.
- 6.5 As providers of social housing, by definition, RHPs work with those residents who are amongst the most **vulnerable people** in society.¹⁰ It is therefore important that the Council (both housing services and its wider family of services) engage and work with RHPs at both the strategic and operational level to ensure that services which are provided for those most in need are coordinated and appropriately targeted.
- 6.6 RHPs, as a front-line provider of housing and community services, may also have further knowledge on the needs of local residents or the communities in which they live. Engagement and cooperation between the Council and RHPs therefore can help to **share intelligence**, which may help to plan more responsive services. Similarly, aligned priorities, shared skills and pooled resources may increase the capacity of both the Council and RHPs to meet local housing and community needs.
- 6.7 In its evidence to the panel, the TSA noted that there was an expectation in the current regulatory framework that RHPs should be willing and active local partners as this is specified within the '**community and neighbourhood standard**' of national service standards (see 7.8). Aside from any regulatory requirement, however, in the context of public sector spending reductions, engagement makes economic sense to RHPs in that it may help to identify partnerships or joint enterprise opportunities that may help to reduce costs or deliver other efficiencies.
- Engagement infrastructure in Haringey
- 6.8 Given the benefits which may be accrued, is important that there is local infrastructure to support engagement between the Council and RHPs, and indeed, and among RHPs themselves. The panel heard evidence from both the Cabinet Member for Housing and officers from the Strategic and Community Housing Service (SCHS) which outlined the nature of the engagement framework in Haringey. The components of this framework, most of which had been in place since 2009, are described below.
- 6.9 Engagement between the Council and RHPs is supported at both the strategic level and on a more operational basis through a number of formal structures. To ensure that the views of RHPs are represented at key partnership and policy making boards in the borough, the panel noted that one place at the **Standing Leadership Conference** and four places on the **Integrated Housing Board**¹¹ were reserved for local RHPs. At the strategic level, the

¹⁰ Ends and Means: the future of social housing, J Hills, DCLG / ESRC (2007):

¹¹ Four places are for representatives of RHPs and one for the Homes for Haringey (ALMO)

panel also noted that local RHPs were also active contributors to the development of the Housing Strategy (2009-2019) and other related housing policies (i.e. Homelessness Strategy).

- 6.10 The panel noted that a number of liaison forums were supported by the SCHS to facilitate engagement and partnership on key local housing issues; the **Development Forum** (i.e. the supply of new affordable housing) and the **Lettings Forum** (i.e. nominations for social housing). The panel also noted that there were other opportunities for RHPs to engage on a more thematic basis, such as through the **ASB Forum** which is hosted by the Community Safety Team.
- 6.11 The panel noted evidence from the Cabinet Member for Housing which highlighted that the Integrated Housing Board had facilitated many useful discussions around local housing policy, many of which would have been of interest to a wider RHP audience. It was suggested therefore, that the agenda for the Integrated Housing Board could be distributed more widely to allow broader participation among local RHPs.

Recommendation 1d : That the agenda for the Integrated Housing Board is distributed to all local RHPs.

- 6.12 The panel noted that the SCHS also holds an annual **conference** for RHPs. This event aims to bring together RHPs working in Haringey to discuss local housing issues. The conference also provides a further opportunity for RHPs to influence local housing strategies and policies.
- 6.13 A **Partnership Agreement** was introduced for RHPs in early 2010. This is a framework for partnership working among local RHPs. Although this agreement is not binding, it is a statement of intent and signatories provide a commitment to support the council in the delivery of key strategies as well as detailing roles and expectations in key local housing issues (e.g. management and repairs, nominations and lettings, development). 23 local RHPs are a signatory to this agreement.
- 6.14 Day to day relationships with RHPs (and those commitments within the Partnership Agreement) is maintained through the **Housing Enabling Team** (part of the SCHS). Regular and ad-hoc meetings are held with RHPs to discuss local housing issues (e.g. development opportunities, estate management issues). The Enabling Team also provides a lead for Members' enquires that relate to estate management issues on RHP or mixed landlord estates.

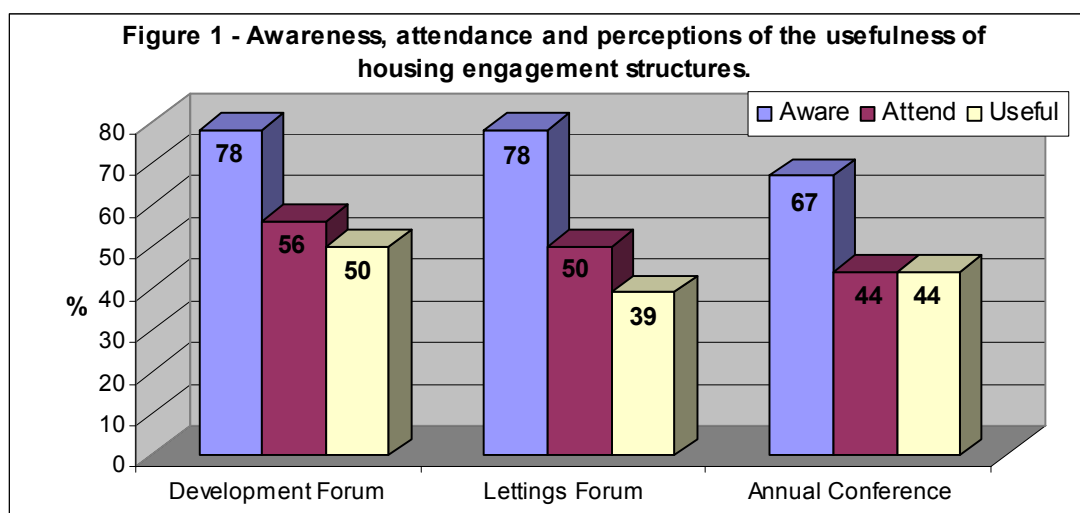
Views of RHPs on local engagement structures

- 6.15 The views of RHPs themselves are of paramount importance in assessing the effectiveness of structures within the local engagement framework. The review used a number of processes to help capture this data; a focus group and an on-line survey. The following provides a summary of the evidence and conclusions drawn from this evidence, though the full report of the on-line survey is contained in Appendix B.

6.16 At the outset, it is important to highlight that RHPs face a number of challenges which influence their **capacity to engage** with other housing agencies at the local level. These are important as they appear influence subsequent assessments of local engagement structures. These are can be summarised as:

- dispersal of housing stock may require RHPs to engage with a number of authorities / localities (4 RHPs had stock in 51+ local authorities)
- staff reductions / staff turnover limits capacity and continuity for local engagement
- smaller RHPs may lack resources which may inhibit capacity for engagement
- larger RHPs need to ensure that appropriate officers are sent to meetings.

6.17 RHPs were broadly of the view that local engagement structures provided a **sound platform** for communication and engagement between the Council and RHPs. The evaluation found relatively high levels of awareness of local engagement structures; though actual attendance and perceived usefulness was proportionally lower (Figure 1).



6.18 A consistent theme within the responses was that engagement forums were most effective and useful where agenda items related directly to the business of RHPs or where the agenda of the forums focused on delivering **practical outcomes** for tenants. In this context, whilst existing engagement forums were felt to be useful, it was felt that their effectiveness could be improved through:

- a reassessment of the terms of reference to minimise overlap between forums
- making forums more outcome focused (delivering practical and tangible benefits to local tenants) as well as information sharing
- advanced publication of an annual calendar of meetings within the engagement framework to allow RHPs to plan attendance
- ensuring that relevant papers (e.g. agenda/reports/ minutes) of forums are systematically distributed to local RHPs.

Recommendation

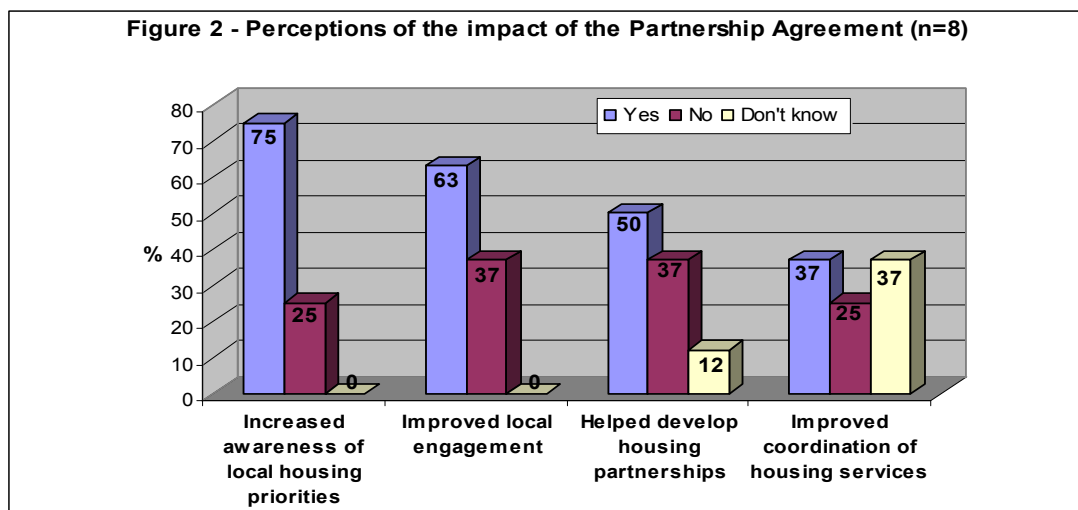
1a : the terms of reference of existing liaison forums (development and lettings) are reassessed to 1) assess the need for a dedicated management forum 2) ensure that duplication is minimised and 3) objectives and agendas are more outcome focused

1b : that an annual calendar meetings is developed and published in advance of all liaison forum meetings

1c : that associated papers/reports for liaison forums are systematically distributed to local RHPs

6.19 Within the on-line survey, it was noted that dealing with ASB was a common concern among a number of RHPs. It was noted that the **ASB Forum** in Haringey had proved valuable, in that it had helped RHPs to engage with other agencies and to develop a common approach to this issue locally. It would appear however, that that this forum has operated irregularly, and would benefit from more consistent meetings.

6.20 RHPs views on the Partnership Agreement were tested through the on-line survey. From the 18 responses received, 8 indicated that they were a signatory to the Partnership Agreement and therefore able to provide informed evaluative feedback. Whilst it is clearly difficult to draw firm conclusions from such a small sample of respondents, it has provided an illustration of the benefits and challenges of the Partnership Agreement between RHPs and the Council. In terms of the benefits of the Partnership Agreement, analysis demonstrated it could help to increase awareness of local housing priorities, improve engagement and help to facilitate the development of local housing partnerships among RHPs (Figure 2).



6.21 Overall, there was little qualitative feedback from RHPs about the Partnership Agreement, which perhaps reflects the relative infancy of this initiative (it had only been in operation for about 12 months at the time of this assessment). What comments were received through consultation however, suggested that further benefits may be obtained if more local RHPs were to become signatories to the Partnership Agreement and if this was to become a more **'active'** local document.

Recommendation 1e: That the Partnership Agreement between the Council and RHPs is extended further among local RHPs and becomes a more proactive tool through which to link the priorities and services of both RHPs and the Council

Engagement structures in other local authorities

- 6.22 It was important to assess how other housing services in other local authorities engaged with RHPs to benchmark the engagement framework in Haringey. In this assessment the review panel assessed evidence from:
- a telephone survey with other London housing services in London (n=5)
 - the experiences of local RHPs in other local authority areas
 - specialist contributors (e.g. TSA and the NHF).
- 6.23 In attempting to benchmark local engagement, the panel were mindful of evidence from the National Housing Federation (NHF). This noted that there was no 'ideal' engagement framework and that each local authority should aim to develop a model which best reflected local housing conditions (housing needs and priorities) and was suited to meet those resources available to local stakeholders (number and size of RHPs).
- 6.24 From the evidence presented by RHPs, other local authorities and the NHF, it was apparent that the overall engagement framework in Haringey (i.e. an overarching policy group with a number of sub-liaison groups) is not dissimilar to that provided elsewhere. Of those 5 local authorities contacted, all appeared to have (in some form or other) both a development forum (supply of affordable housing) and a lettings forum (nominations and lettings for affordable housing). Additionally, local authorities operated a number of theme based forums on specific housing issues (e.g. ASB, homelessness, housing benefits).
- 6.25 An **annual conference** to discuss a topical housing issue of local importance, also figured prominently within the RHP engagement frameworks of other local authorities. Conferences were seen to offer real benefits by helping to bring local RHPs together and providing additional focus to help resolve local housing issues. These annual events also enabled RHPs to share information, exchange good practice and identify local partners.
- 6.26 Analysis of the evidence from both the NHF and from RHPs themselves would suggest that whilst a defined local engagement infrastructure is important, effective engagement occurs where this is underpinned by a defined purpose or practical outcomes. It was suggested to the panel therefore, that if a clear business case was presented to RHPs which offered practical benefits for their tenants, then effective engagement (and partnerships) would naturally follow. In this context, there was little evidence beyond those issues raised by RHPs themselves, to support the need for any substantive restructure of the engagement framework for RHPs in Haringey.

7.0 Service standards and regulation of social housing

Current issues

- 7.1 With such a large number of RHPs managing social housing in the borough it is inevitable that this may result in variations to the standard in which social housing is provided. This may include:
- differences in the way that social housing is managed (i.e. responsiveness of repairs services)
 - differences in the level of services experienced (i.e. how frequently estates are cleaned)
 - different approaches taken to resolving tenant issues (i.e. how ASB is dealt with).
- 7.2 Differences in the way that housing services are provided may result, not only from the number of housing providers in any one locality, but also from the resources available to individual RHPs and other housing providers. Of course, this does not relate just to financial resources, but also the skills or expertise available of staff within these organisations. Ultimately however, such differences can lead to variations in the way that social housing is managed and of course experienced by tenants.
- 7.3 The panel noted that there were a number of issues arising from multiple housing providers and variations in service levels provided by RHPs. It was reported to the panel that multi-landlord estates had been the focus of a number of local problems. Different housing practices and procedures of RHPs working in such close proximity precipitated a number of issues:
- different approaches to estate management issues (e.g. grounds maintenance, caretaking, car parking)
 - responsibility for communal areas, particularity in respect of cleaning and rubbish collection
 - inconsistent approach to property maintenance (e.g. response times and quality of services)
 - inconsistent approaches to anti-social behaviour.
- 7.4 In scoping this review however, panel members assessed that the need for inquiry in to common standards among RHPs had largely been superseded by developments at the national level, that is, the establishment of National Services Standards (see 7.8) and the requirement of RHPs to develop local offers for their tenants (see 7.9). It was expected that the development of national service standards would help to bring greater consistency to housing management among all social housing providers.
- 7.5 Furthermore, evidence from the NHF and RHPs themselves indicated that attempts to develop a rigid 'common standards' approach at the local authority level would be challenging given the dispersed nature of housing stock. In this context, it would be impractical for RHPs to develop and manage housing stock to individual standards established in each local authority area in which they held stock.

National Service Standards for social housing

7.6 The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the regulator for all social housing in England. The TSA is responsible for ensuring that social housing landlords provide decent homes and good housing services to their tenants. Its remit covers all social housing providers, including that directly provided by local authorities or appointed ALMOs as well as RHPs.

7.7 The overarching aim of the TSA is to raise the standards of service among social housing providers. The statutory objectives of the TSA are to ensure that:

- supply of well-managed social housing is adequate
- tenants have an appropriate degree of choice and protection
- tenants have the opportunity to be involved in its management
- landlords operate efficiently, effectively and economically
- landlords are financially viable and properly managed.

7.8 In April 2010, the TSA established a new regulatory framework for social housing. Here RHPs must demonstrate compliance with six service standards:

1. **tenant involvement** – developing customer choice and empowerment
2. **home** – improving the quality of accommodation, providing an effective repairs and maintenance service
3. **tenancy** – fair and efficient allocations, fair rents, secure and appropriate tenure
4. **neighbourhood and community** – neighborhood / communal areas kept clean and safe and work in partnership help promote social, environmental and economic well being in the community
5. **value for money** - manage resources in a cost effective way
6. **finance and viability** – ensure standards for governance and that providers are financially viable.

Local offers

7.9 The panel noted that 'local offers' also contribute to standard setting process for social housing providers. National standards, as set out above, are supplemented through local offers; these are service agreements reached between landlords and tenants on issues that matter most at the local level. Local offers can therefore include (for example) how local estates are managed, how repair services are run or how tenants are involved or consulted and help to reach localised agreements between landlords and tenants.

7.10 All social housing providers are required to consult local tenants in developing a local offer. In an area where there is more than one social housing provider, the panel noted evidence from the TSA, which indicated that it would be appropriate for RHPs to consult collaboratively and to develop a shared local offer. The panel noted that all local offers developed by RHPs became operational in April 2011.

The current regulatory framework

7.11 The panel noted that as independent bodies, regulation of RHPs rests predominantly with the TSA. Unlike the ALMO however, there are also no

formal lines of accountability between RHPs and the local authority area in which they may manage housing stock. The TSA gave evidence to the panel which outlined the approach that it took to the regulation of all social housing providers.

7.12 The panel noted that a '**co-regulatory**' approach was adopted by the TSA, which involved both the boards of social housing providers and the TSA themselves:

- the **boards** of social housing providers are expected to use a self assurance process to ensure that the organisation complies with required performance and financial standards
- the **TSA** makes a number of assessments which inform its regulatory judgment using data gained from inspections, audit of annual reports, analysis of complaints and validations from external partners.

7.13 Co-regulation has also developed a more '**localist**' approach which has brought greater prominence to the relationship between social housing providers and their tenants. This is exemplified through greater accountability in this relationship by the establishment of 'local offers' and **tenant scrutiny panels** (which help assess local performance).

7.14 The panel noted that the TSA sought to adopt a **risk-based** and proportionate regulatory approach and whilst it does have powers to intervene, it seeks to use these sparingly. The emphasis of the TSA was therefore on supporting self-improvement and closer working between social housing providers and their tenants. The TSA can take housing providers through a voluntary undertaking process, which requires them to commit to specific actions to ensure compliance to standards within the regulatory framework.

Future changes to the regulatory framework

7.15 In its evidence to the panel, the TSA highlighted a number of important changes for the future of social housing regulation. It was noted that the **Localism Bill** has proposed the abolition of the TSA with the regulatory functions being transferred to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). This will result in three important changes to the way social housing is regulated:

- an emphasis on economic regulation through the HCA
- backstop role for consumer regulation for HCA
- greater emphasis on scrutiny and performance at the local level

7.16 Modifications to the regulatory framework will place greater emphasis on **economic viability** and **governance** issues. The panel noted that sound governance and good financial management were of critical importance to RHPs, not just because of the current economic conditions, but also because such regulatory assessments were fundamental to their business operations. The panel heard that economic and governance assessments were used by lenders as a measure of confidence in RHPs which determine the level and rate at which monies are loaned for new development.

7.17 It is envisaged that what regulatory functions remain with the HCA in respect of consumer issues (e.g. tenancy, housing management, decent homes) will be reduced to a **backstop role**. Thus, although there will still be a role for a national regulator, it will operate on a more reactive basis which will mean that:

- routine inspections of housing providers will be discontinued
- the HCA will only intervene where cases where 'serious failings'¹² have been identified.

7.19 With more of a backstop role being adopted by the national regulator, this will transfer some of the regulatory burden away from central government to the local level. Thus, within the new regulatory framework, there will be greater emphasis on scrutiny and monitoring the performance of social housing providers at the local level, particularly in relation to resolving 'consumer issues' (i.e. tenancy issues). In this context, there will be an enhanced role for **local authorities** and **Councillors** and **MPs** in helping to resolve housing issues for tenants of social rented sector:

- Councillors to represent tenants where local complaints procedure has been exhausted
- assist economic regulation through scrutiny of business performance
- RHPs should cooperate with Councillors in resolving local complaints
- providing evidence to the Ombudsman to further cases of serious failure among RHPs.¹³

Recommendation 2g : That training be provided for local Councillors on their future role for the regulation of social housing as detailed under the Localism Act.

Supporting local involvement with housing providers

7.20 The panel explored the implications of greater local involvement in the regulatory process and to assess how such expectations could practically be supported.

7.21 The panel noted evidence from the NHF which indicated that RHPs should already be adept at working with local councillors and have the necessary systems in place to deal with their enquiries. The NHF were mindful however, that any further developments to support local scrutiny should be both balanced and proportionate. Thus, whilst local councillors can rightly expect to engage and challenge RHPs where their services fall below agreed standards, RHPs may be less receptive to regulatory engagement which is prescriptive or unnecessarily burdensome (such as a common standards agenda).

7.22 The panel noted evidence from the SCHS that contact details of local RHPs had been distributed to local councillors to assist them in their ward casework.

¹² These are serious failings against national service standards or other regulatory requirements. It is expected that this definition will be developed within the Localism Bill as it proceeds through parliament.

¹³ Review of Social Housing Regulation DCLG, 2010

The panel noted that had been a very useful tool and that it would be helpful if this information were updated and redistributed to local councillors.

Recommendation 2a : That contact details for RHPs are updated and periodically distributed to local Councillors.

- 7.23 The panel noted additional information would be needed to assist councillors; in particular, details of which RHPs own or manage housing stock in their respective wards. The panel felt that this information would help councillors to establish contacts and to develop positive relationships with local RHPs. The panel indicated that this could represent a step forward for the early identification and resolution of local housing issues. The panel also noted that such information may also facilitate more coordinated and cooperative response to local housing issues where one or more RHPs may be involved.

Recommendation 2b : That Councillors are notified of those RHPs that own or manage properties within their respective wards.

- 7.24 As the ownership or management of individual RHP properties may not always directly be apparent to members, it is likely that some further mechanism is needed to support individual casework of local councillors. It was suggested that a local database of RHP properties could be maintained by the SCHS, which upon request, would provide some reference for local councillors that could help to support the resolution of local housing issues or enquiries.

Recommendation 2c : To facilitate Councillor casework, further consideration should be given to the development of a mechanism that would allow the identification of specific housing providers (Council as an intermediary)

- 7.25 From the consultation with RHPs, it was noted that RHPs regularly undertook estate walkabouts to identify emerging issues for tenants, such as fly tipping hotspots, graffiti and maintenance of communal areas). Both the panel and RHPs were of the view that estate walkabouts offered the opportunity to share local information and identify solutions to local housing and other community issues. In particular, the panel noted that:

- councillors could obtain further information about RHPs, their priorities and work plans for local areas
- RHPs may capitalise on the knowledge, skills and experience of local councillors in respect of tackling community issues, local resources available and potential collaborative partners.

- 7.26 Whilst acknowledging potential logistical problems, the panel suggested that where possible, all RHPs should synchronise walkabouts (on multi-landlord estates or streets where there are multiple providers) as this would help to develop a more collaborative approach to local housing issues. The panel noted that this was an expectation within the Partnership Agreement (see

6.13), and that RHPs should inform the council and local councillors when estate walkabouts would take place.

- 7.27 From the consultation undertaken with RHPs the panel noted that there was broad agreement for greater collaboration in estate walkabouts. A number of RHPs noted that estate walkabouts were already scheduled in advance and widely publicised on websites and other media, though admittedly this was mainly targeted towards social housing tenants.

Recommendation

2d : That RHPs inform Councillors of estate/ street walkabouts that take place in their ward.

2e : That RHPs synchronise walkabouts on multi-landlord estates/ streets.

- 7.28 In addition, it was also suggested that councillors may wish to consider holding local surgeries on multi-landlord estates where these occur within their wards. It was noted that this may also assist local councillors to identify housing and other related issues of common concern among local residents and help to develop coordinated approaches to resolve these.

Recommendation 2f: (Where these exist) that Councillors may consider holding ward surgeries on multi-landlord estates on a periodic basis.

Status Survey

- 7.29 The panel noted evidence from the cabinet Member for Housing concerning the abolition of the standardised tenant satisfaction survey (STATUS survey). This was an annual survey social housing tenants, which helped to provide a comparison of tenant satisfaction for key services among social housing providers. It was noted that this survey, which was carried out by an external organisation, provided an independent assessment of the performance of social housing providers.
- 7.30 The panel noted the importance of the STATUS generating independent assessments of the housing services. It was noted that this survey provided useful borough wide information about tenants' experiences social housing tenants and that options for its retention should be explored.

Recommendation 3: Options for re-commissioning of the STATUS survey should be explored, possibly in partnership with other neighbouring authorities, or within the North London Regional Sub group.

8.0 Partnership working

- 8.1 As has been previously documented, greater cooperation and collaboration among housing providers may contribute to improved housing and community services. Not only can such partnerships help to increase the capacity of local organisations to meet local needs, but effective engagement and collaborative

working can also ensure that services are more coordinated, efficient and delivered in the most cost effective way.

- 8.2 Given the potential contribution of housing partnerships to help meet local housing needs, the panel sought to make a number of assessments within the review which could further support and extend partnership working in this sector. In this context, the review looked at the following:
- the nature and extent of current partnerships within the sector
 - challenges to effective partnership working
 - benefits of partnership working
 - critical elements for successful partnership working
 - models of good practice
 - the role of the council in supporting effective partnerships.

Partnership working within the local housing sector

- 8.3 From the analysis of evidence presented from local housing providers (both RHPs and Homes for Haringey), it was clear that there were numerous examples of successful local partnerships, many of which had delivered positive and tangible benefits to these social housing providers and their tenants. Whilst many housing providers were clearly not new to such partnerships, others evidently had less experience, and from this the panel concluded that there was further potential to extend local knowledge gained from this experience.

- 8.4 Through the on-line consultation and in evidence presented directly to the panel, social housing providers described a wide range of partnerships. It was evident that there was considerable variation in both the nature and scale of these partnerships and that in some instances, these extended beyond the housing sector to other statutory and community organisations (e.g. police, social care and youth support services).

- 8.5 Analysis of this same data demonstrated that the nature of partnerships was individual and in many cases, specific to the housing or community issue which brought housing providers together. It was possible however, to discern a number of characteristics or features which helped to define the nature of these partnerships:

- **Joined up approaches:** alignment of priorities for more coordinated service provision such as dealing with ASB in a local area with more than one housing provider
- **Joint procurement:** shared commissioning and or tendering processes for purchasing common services e.g.
- **Pooled resources:** joint investment for common priorities or common services, such as in community investments (e.g. neighbourhood resources)
- **Shared services:** joint commissioning and funding of a service spanning one or more organisations (e.g. customer contact centre, repairs services)

- 8.6 Whilst it was apparent that RHPs were engaging within partnership working, the extent to which such partnerships occurred in developed Haringey was less clear. Of the 18 respondents to the on line survey, just 8 RHPs were able

to provide practical examples of partnership projects actually taking place in Haringey. From this it could be concluded that there is considerable potential to further develop partnership working in the borough among housing providers.

Benefits of working in partnership

8.7 From the consultation with RHPs, it was evident that a number of practical benefits had been obtained from partnerships which had been developed with other housing providers. Analysis suggested that although there were wide ranging benefits for RHPs, these could be categorised in to three broad themes:

- increased capacity for service provision
- improved coordination of services
- more cost effective provision of services

8.8 As one might expect, the union of two or more housing providers helped to **increase the capacity** of RHPs to respond to local housing and community needs. It was noted however, that increased capacity was achieved through more than just pooling of financial resources, indeed, but also through bringing together the combined **skills** and **expertise** of officers in respective partner organisations.

8.9 It was also apparent that working in partnership had also allowed housing providers to share local knowledge and information which had helped to improve the coordination of services. Such an approach can help in the planning and delivery of services, and remove possible **duplication**, which was known to be an issue for community investments made by housing providers. Critically, cooperation between providers has helped to develop a more **comprehensive response** to housing and community issues, as is exemplified in the following experiences of two local RHPs:

“We have worked with RHPs, Councillors and the police to improve security and tackle ASB.... joint working ensured comprehensive approach to tackling problems and these have been resolved.” (RHP)

“We have undertaken joint work to tackle ASB on estates and local neighbourhoods, sharing information and issuing ABCs¹⁴ where youths are causing problems on estates away from the one they live on.” (RHP)

8.10 In evidence to the panel, housing providers also noted that there were considerable **cost efficiencies** that could be achieved through greater cooperation and partnership working at the local level. Pooling resources and joint procurement had helped to deliver better **value for money** for services, as too had the development of shared services. In particular, RHPs noted that there were considerable cost savings which had been achieved in relation to management of local housing:

¹⁴ Acceptable Behaviour Contract, a formal agreement in written between an individual and the RHP (or other statutory body).

'We have worked with [a large provider] on two estates to improve safety and security in response to resident requests.... When it comes to repairs & maintenance on the estate we can benefit from economies of scale in getting work done.'

- 8.11 In summary, the benefit of partnership working was in harnessing the pool of local resources (in whatever shape or form) and focusing these combined efforts in addressing local housing and community priorities of local residents.

The challenges for local partnership working

- 8.12 It was evident to the panel that local housing providers (both RHPs and Homes for Haringey) faced a number of challenges in seeking to develop local partnerships. Analysis of consultation data from RHPs (see Appendix B) and in evidence received from Homes for Haringey and NHF identified a number of key challenges which inhibited the development of local partnerships and other joint enterprises, these included:

- identifying potential partners
- facilitating dialogue between housing organisations
- availability of localised information
- street properties
- leadership and commitment
- smaller RHPs
- legal and technical issues

- 8.13 The panel had already noted that the number of providers working in the borough together with the dispersed nature of housing stock, made local engagement difficult. In terms of partnership working however, a more specific challenge was the **identification of potential partners**, that is, which housing providers owned (or managed) stock in the borough and exactly where this was located. Without this information housing providers could not identify potential partners, such as other housing providers on the same estate or the same street, with whom they may collaborate in the provision of housing or other community services.

- 8.14 Helping local social housing providers to identify potential partners is an important first step to support the development of local partnerships. A second consequential challenge which was identified by RHPs was the need to **facilitate dialogue** among social housing providers. Without local structures to support dialogue and communication, it was difficult for local RHPs to identify potential collaborative opportunities.

- 8.15 The panel also noted that the property portfolios of some RHPs lent themselves to potential partnership opportunities better than others. For RHPs that owned or managed properties in defined or discrete locations such as on multi-landlord estates, the case for local partnership was more straightforward than those RHPs who managed predominantly **street properties**. The panel felt that particular consideration should be given to such RHPs in the development of strategies which aim to support local partnership work.

- 8.16 Similarly, there was the perception that not all RHPs may have the same resources or local knowledge to enable them to take a **lead role** in partnership opportunities. In this context, the panel noted that there was an expectation that large RHPs with a significant presence in the borough or were a majority stock holder in a defined location (i.e. on an estate) would lead in the development of local partnership opportunities. It was noted that a lack of leadership had in some instances, hindered the progress of local partnerships.
- 8.17 A significant challenge identified by RHPs for local partnership work, was the difficulty of maintaining **commitment** for collaborative projects. RHPs noted that in addition to the large number of housing providers, the sector had also been associated with a high turn over of staff which had hindered the momentum and continuity for partnership projects.
- 8.18 In seeking to develop local partnerships, the panel noted that **smaller stock holders** faced particular challenges, not because they were not interested in participating or supporting such collaborative approaches, but because they do not have the capacity to engage. The panel noted that a key challenge for partnership projects was how to engage and support the participation of smaller RHPs.
- 8.19 RHPs also faced a number of **legal and technical** challenges in forging local partnerships. Social housing providers noted that the development of local partnerships may not always be straightforward, as occasionally there may be complex lease arrangements for certain properties which may restrict the potential for partnership working. Similarly, it was noted that the development of some shared services between providers may incur Value Added Tax (VAT), which can be a financial deterrent to such partnerships.¹⁵
- 8.20 Models of good practice – Campsbourne Estate and other local projects
Despite the challenges faced by housing providers, the panel noted many examples of good practice from local RHPs and Homes for Haringey which exemplified the creative and positive ways in which local housing and other agencies had worked together. The following provides a summary of a number of such projects and their successful approach.
- 8.21 *Campsbourne Pilot Project*
The panel noted that the Campsbourne Pilot Project was a partnership of social housing providers on the Campsbourne Estate in Hornsey, which included 4 RHPs¹⁶ and Homes for Haringey. This project aimed to identify areas for joint working and to develop common approaches in response to locally identified priorities. The project was established in April 2010.
- 8.22 It was apparent that there were a number of defined processes which underpinned the work of the Campsbourne Pilot Project which included:

¹⁵ This position may soon change however, as in June 2011, the HMRC launched a consultation on the levying of VAT on RHPs for shared services and management arrangements. (*Inside Housing*, June 30th 2011).

¹⁶ Circle 33, Metropolitan Housing and London & Quadrant and Hornsey Housing Trust.

- defined strategy to **engage housing providers** within the locality
- the development of **practical partnerships** among participating organisations, particularly among front line staff who work with tenants
- collaborative approaches to **tenant engagement** and consultation to identify strategic priorities across RHPs
- an audit of **community initiatives** funded by RHPs on the estate.
- the **alignment of priorities** and **pooling of investments** to increase investment and make services more efficient.

8.23 One of the key successes of the Campsbourne Pilot Project was that it had engendered a more **proactive approach** to housing management issues among participating RHPs. In its evidence to the panel, Homes for Haringey noted that this project had helped to re-orientate the organisation to focus equally on issues of **place** rather than solely on **tenancy**. This had helped to develop a more planned and coordinated response to local housing issues.

8.24 It was noted by the panel that there were a number of key elements in the approach of the Campsbourne Pilot Project have contributed to its success. These were identified as:

- building **trust and confidence** in working relationships between RHPs
- focusing on **quick wins** to secure ongoing support and participation
- providing **leadership** to help coordinate partnership work
- developing **simple strategies** which focused on identified priorities
- **minimising formal reporting** to promote engagement.

8.25 From the evidence received, it was apparent to the panel that the Campsbourne Pilot Project had established a successful model for cooperation and partnership work among RHPs at the local level. It was noted that this project had delivered real and tangible benefits to the local community which extended beyond traditional housing issues. Indeed, the panel noted that the successes of the Campsbourne Pilot Project had been broadly acknowledged both locally and regionally.

8.26 Given this recognised success, there was a broad consensus among the panel and other participants within the review that the partnership model adopted by the Campsbourne Pilot Project could be used as template to further extend partnership work in similar locations across Haringey (i.e. multi-landlord estates). Furthermore, experience and key learning points derived from the project could also be used to guide and inform strategies to develop partnership working among RHPs across the borough.

Recommendation 4a: That the critical learning and successes of the Campsbourne Pilot Project be disseminated across the borough to guide and inform partnership work on multi-landlord estates and across the sector more broadly.

Housing Enablement Team

8.27 The panel received evidence from Cabinet Member for Housing which noted the positive contribution that the Housing Enablement Team made in facilitating partnership work among RHPs and other Council services to help

resolve housing and community issues on multi-landlord estates. Key aspects of the work of the Enabling Team were noted to include:

- responding to and resolution of tenant complaints
- supporting dialogue and action among RHPs (joint estate walkabouts and shared action plans)
- introducing the wider family of Council services to help resolve local issues (e.g. Anti Social Behaviour, SNT, Resident Consultation)
- establishing an approach which supports longer term cooperation among providers to help tackle ongoing and future housing issues.

8.28 Two examples of the work of the Enabling Team were provided to the panel. On **Eleanor Close**, a partnership among three RHPs (ASRA, Family Mosaic and Lien Viet) was facilitated by the Enabling Team. A number of local issues had arisen which included a lack of coordination in redecoration and housing improvement cycles, street cleaning not being synchronised and persistent low level ASB across the estate. Following an estate walkabout with RHPs, a local Councillor and the team, an action plan was developed which involved RHPs and other organisations (e.g. Safer Neighbourhood Team). The panel heard that this has resulted in significant improvements for the estate.

8.29 The Enabling Team facilitated three RHPs (Family Mosaic, Paddington Churches and Apna Ghar to work collaboratively to resolve local security and ASB issues on **Academia Way**). After a site visit, RHPs agreed that the entrance doors should be upgraded to make them more secure and prevent public access. As a result of this work, it was noted from the police had received fewer crime reports from this location.

8.30 It was emphasised that although interventions may have been relatively small these had achieved significant service improvements for local tenants. In particular, the panel were impressed with the way that the Enabling Team had helped to bring RHPs together to help resolve community concerns on multi-landlord estates. It was apparent that there have been some real achievements from this team in helping housing providers to work more cooperatively together. The panel noted however, that the Enabling Team is to be restructured which may impact on its capacity to fulfil existing roles (set out 8.27). The panel were keen to ensure that this work is retained within future restructure (as specified in Rethinking Haringey).

Recommendation 4b : That the role of the Enabling Team in facilitating partnership work among RHPs on multi-landlord estates should be retained and extended within Restructuring Haringey Programme (i.e. its move from the housing service to the Place Directorate)

Elements critical to the success of effective partnership

8.31 The panel were keen to identify elements which were critical to successful outcomes in partnership working and which could further inform the development of new partnerships in this sector across the borough.

- 8.32 In evidence to the panel, the NHF noted that there were a number of issues which were important to successful partnership working in the social housing sector. The panel noted from this evidence that:
- successful partnerships were dependent on **creative and committed officers** in respective organisations
 - **quick wins** were important to help build trust and encourage ongoing support for the partnership
 - **sharing good practice** helped prevent organisations having to 'reinvent the wheel' and sharing local successes helped encourage further work
 - ensuring that partnerships were informed by **local knowledge** of housing issues and utilised local resources available
 - engaging and **consulting tenants** provided guidance for partnership priorities and actions, and helped to build support within the community.

- 8.33 Evidence from RHPs and Homes for Haringey confirmed many of the essential ingredients for successful partnership working to that identified by the NHF. In addition however, RHPs and Homes for Haringey also noted that effective partnerships were dependent on:
- ongoing opportunities for focussed discussions to help identify issues of common concern among providers
 - planned work that was focused, time-limited and had defined outcomes
 - the inclusion of front-line staff.

How best can the council support local partnerships?

- 8.34 In its consideration of partnership work among RHPs, the panel concluded that there were examples of this taking place in Haringey, many of which had already delivered tangible benefits to local communities. It was also apparent however, that there was significant potential to develop this work further given the willingness of local providers to identify local partnership opportunities and the wide ranging benefits that could be obtained.

- 8.35 From the evidence received, it was also apparent to the panel that the Council could play an enabling role in supporting the development of local housing partnerships. This enabling role in supporting local housing partnerships was identified in the following areas:
- helping RHPs to identify potential partners through geographical mapping
 - providing leadership in those areas where partnerships would be most beneficial in supporting the needs of local people
 - providing links to other Council services, community organisations or other local resources which may contribute to local partnerships
 - helping to disseminate examples of good practice, among RHPs and share, skills and expertise in the sector
 - helping to coordinate social housing tenant involvement – to identify common issues and approaches.

Helping to RHPs to identify potential partners

- 8.35 The panel heard evidence from a number of informants who indicated that the mapping of social housing in the borough was fundamental to facilitating partnerships in the housing sector. The panel noted that the SCHS together with the Geographical Information Systems service (**GIS**) within the Council

had already undertaken some preliminary work to map social housing provision across the borough. The panel noted that through this process it was possible to map the stock distribution of individual RHPs as well as more detailed mapping for more localised areas (Appendix C). GIS mapping of social housing was a labour intensive process however, and the panel noted that additional investment would be required if this were to be rolled out across the borough.

- 8.37 The panel noted that RHPs and Homes for Haringey were both of the opinion that detailed GIS mapping of social housing represented a significant opportunity to develop and improve local engagement and partnership working across the social housing sector. This assertion was substantiated within the evidence from other local authorities, which noted that GIS mapping of social housing stock had been integral to their work with RHPs.
- 8.38 The panel also noted evidence from other local authorities which suggested that once GIS mapping had been undertaken, other data could be overlaid (e.g. child poverty, ASB, benefits take up) which may help to plan and direct other services more effectively. Similarly, the panel heard that Homes for Haringey had profiled its housing stock and had begun to map service hotspots for ASB, youth disengagement and other locally held data.
- 8.39 Panel members also noted that the mapping of social housing may also help to empower local residents and communities. It was suggested to the panel that the mapping of social housing could also help residents to link up with other neighbouring residents to form local residents or community associations. Such organisations would help to share information and develop common approaches to community issues.

Recommendation 4c: That all social housing stock is mapped through Geographical Information Systems¹⁷ and that an accompanying dissemination strategy be devised which supports the communication of this information to social housing partners with a view to promoting local partnerships (and other local priorities)

Leadership role

- 8.39 It was evident that in supporting partnership there was also an expectation that the Council would provide additional support, beyond that of putting housing partners in touch with each other. Analysis of consultation data also suggested that it may also be appropriate for the Council to adopt a lead role in developing local partnerships, particularly when this related to local priorities or objectives. This was exemplified in statements provided in the on-line survey of RHPs:

'[The Council] could lead on identified areas for joint working to ensure all appropriate partners are actively involved.' RHP

¹⁷ If there are insufficient resources to do this on a borough wide basis, then a more selective approach may be adopted that prioritises those areas where there are known to be multiple housing providers.

8.40 Whilst it was acknowledged that the Council already takes the strategic lead and developing partnerships for more strategic areas of work (e.g. Homeless Strategy), it was felt that there may also be a role for the Council to help potential partners know the local area better, what services are available and, what other providers are doing and how they can contribute to local projects.

8.41 This was verified within responses to the on-line survey which suggested that the Council could facilitate further partnership work through making RHPs more aware of what resources might be available locally, such as links to council services, local community groups active in the area or physical assets (e.g. community buildings) which could support such joint enterprise.

'Keep a register of community resources - community rooms/halls that could be shared with other local RSLs or the council.' (RHP)

'We would also like to see periodic meetings with practical issues are on the agenda. This, again, will enable us to work in partnership to improve service delivery. [We] suggests that specialist services are invited to these meetings, for example, the noise section of Environmental Health, ASB or domestic violence advisors or other workers with similar specialism.' (RHP)

Recommendation 4d: That further engagement is developed between RHPs and broader Council services (e.g. environmental health, ASB, domestic violence) to help extend knowledge of local services and collaborative opportunities (possible develop a directory for physical resources, such as meeting places, which may also be available to RHPs)

8.42 As the ALMO, the panel noted that Homes for Haringey was in a good position to have a detailed knowledge of local housing issues, such as tenants concerns and issues affecting local housing stock. The panel also noted that Homes for Haringey had consulted extensively with local tenants which had helped to further extend their understanding of local housing. It was recognised that this local knowledge and understanding developed by Homes for Haringey had the potential to increase their place shaping role, particularly when this was applied in collaboration with other RHPs.

8.43 The panel noted that this had to some extent already been exemplified through the Campsbourne Pilot Project, where Homes for Haringey had demonstrated the benefits of a more proactive model to housing management. In this context, and with their extensive local knowledge of local housing issues, the panel noted that Homes for Haringey has a key role leading and supporting local housing partnerships.

Recommendation 4e: That given their extensive local knowledge and experience, Homes for Haringey be encouraged to continue to play a lead role in developing and supporting local partnership opportunities.

Disseminate Good Practice

- 8.44 In evidence submitted to the panel, it was clear that there is already good partnership work already being undertaken by social housing providers. RHPs noted however, that the challenges and successes of such projects may not be widely known outside the partnership. In this context, it would be helpful to have a local mechanism which could share information about local partnerships and disseminate good practice among local housing providers. Such information could help housing providers share information and skills and help to coordinate and improve partnership opportunities (i.e. 'reinventing the wheel').
- 8.45 Evidence received from a number of other local authorities noted that they published an annual review of RHPs. Such reviews were used to collect performance data (i.e. new homes, tenant satisfaction, compliance with decent homes standard) but also a vehicle to collate information about the broader activities of local RHPs, particularly those that supported the authority's local objectives. In this context, the panel noted that the annual review of RHPs in some authorities had become a tool through which to showcase and share good practice among RHPs and the wider community.
- 8.46 It was clear that a similar such tool or process could be used to support partnership work across Haringey, as this could help to capture and disseminate the work of RHPs more widely, may help RHPs identify possible partnership opportunities.

Recommendation 4f: That a mechanism is devised that helps to capture, collate and share information from the work of local housing providers that identifies and supports partnership opportunities, share good practice and identify other collaborative ventures across the borough.

Tenant Consultation

- 8.47 In evidence to the panel, a number of RHPs highlighted that other authorities have held successful borough wide tenant conferences. It was noted that these had been a very helpful process through which to engage tenants from all RHPs and had helped to identify areas of common concern. More importantly, this approach had helped to develop shared solutions to some of the problems identified by tenants. In this context, the panel noted that tenant conferences had been a useful process through which to:
- inform local priorities
 - help housing providers to align and coordinate services
 - support local partnerships.
- 8.48 The panel also noted that tenant consultation was critical to the success of local partnership projects (such as the Campsbourne Pilot Project) which underlined the need for this to be undertaken on a collaborative basis as more than one RHP existed. The panel also noted that collaboration among providers was also possible in consulting tenants of street properties, where a number of RHPs had instigated some pilot work. The panel concluded that tenant consultation was clearly important to partnership working and other joint enterprises.

9.0 Stock rationalisation

Stock dispersal

- 9.1 National data presented to the panel, provided further insight in to stock dispersal issues among RHPs. This data noted that in terms of general needs dwellings, individual RHPs may own or manage properties in up to 178 different local authority areas.¹⁸ Even accounting for the size of individual RHPs, it was still noted that it was not uncommon for RHPs to manage (on average) less than 3% of their housing stock in each local authority.
- 9.2 Further evidence of stock dispersal in relation to the size of RHPs which was provided to the panel is presented below:
- Among larger RHPs (10,000+ units):
 - the RHP with the most dispersed stock managed properties 31,000 properties across 178 local authorities (average of 177 units or 0.6% of stock in each local authority)
 - 4 RHPs managed housing stock in more than 100 local authorities
 - 3 managed (on average) fewer than 200 properties per local authority
 - Among middle ranking RHPs (5,000-10,000+ units):
 - the RHP with the most dispersed stock managed properties 8,000 properties across 90 local authorities (average of 89 units or 1.1% of stock in each local authority area)
 - 2 managed properties in more than 50 local authority areas
 - 6 managed (on average) fewer than 200 properties per local authority
 - Among smaller RHPs (2,500- 5,000 units):
 - the RHP with the most dispersed stock managed properties 4,900 properties across 111 local authorities (average of 44 units or 0.9% of stock in each local authority area)
 - 9 managed properties in more than 25 local authority areas
 - 21 managed (on average) fewer than 200 properties per local authority
- 9.3 Equally significant however, this same data set identified that some RHPs may have a significant 'tail' in there housing portfolios where a small number of properties are managed in a relatively large number of local authority areas. Thus from this data it was noted that:
- one RHP holds fewer than 10 properties in **35** local authority areas
 - one RHP holds fewer than 30 properties in **59** local authority areas
 - one RHP holds fewer than 30 properties in **48** local authority areas.
- 9.4 More locally, the panel also noted social housing ownership in Haringey was also dispersed (see 4.26-4.30). To reiterate, it was recorded that a majority (65%) of RHPs own or manage less than 100 properties and just 21% of RHPs manage more than 200 properties (Figures 5a-5c). In some local

¹⁸ RSLs geographical dispersal suggests scope for rationalisation R Cowley in Social Housing V.16 No.10 October 2009

authority wards, as many as 16 RHPs may be involved in the provision of just over 500 homes.

- 9.5 It was also noted to the panel that the Council itself was a significant stock holder, and of the 16,000 social rented properties managed by Homes for Haringey on its behalf, a number were located outside Haringey. It was noted that due to historical factors, approximately 450 properties were dispersed across three main locations: along Haringey borders with Enfield and Hackney and more remotely, in Waltham Cross. It was noted that the disposal of any stock would need be negotiated with housing providers willing to take on the stock (e.g. price, decent homes investment, local nomination rights) and that tenants consent would need to be obtained.

The challenges of dispersed stock

- 9.6 Dispersed social housing stock is of course not by definition problematic, as RHPs or other social housing providers may continue to manage a relatively small number of properties in large number of local authorities effectively and to the satisfaction of their tenants. As the Homes and Communities Agency have suggested however, individual RHPs which manage properties over a number of key areas face a number of challenges:

- managing key strategic relationships across a number of areas (how many can they manage?)
- ensuring that there is sufficient engagement at the local level to develop key local partnerships that support tenants and their community
- are there areas where they manage housing stock where there is little prospect of new development?

- 9.7 In terms of stock rationalisation, the panel noted evidence from the TSA which suggested that it does make related assessments of RHPs in terms of how they manage their assets and the value for money of the services that they provide. The TSA have suggested, for example, that managing 45 properties instead of 450 properties in a local authority may impact on the unit cost and quality of services provided to tenants. As independent providers however, the decision to rationalise housing stock remained with individual RHP boards.

- 9.8 The TSA has however published a toolkit to support stock rationalisation and suggested that the following questions should be used to guide RHPs in assessing whether stock rationalisation should be considered:¹⁹

- Is dispersal or distance from management centres a barrier to service improvement?
- Are residents in dispersed stock less satisfied than those in concentrated stock?
- Does it cost significantly more to maintain dispersed stock?
- Does it take longer to respond to local problems, such as anti-social behaviour, in areas where homes are dispersed?

¹⁹ Location, location, location, Achieving efficiencies through stock rationalisation TSA 2009

- Is it possible to engage with the wider agendas, among them regeneration, neighbourhood management and tackling worklessness, in areas where homes are thinly spread?
- Are too many RHPs in one neighbourhood a barrier to progress with these agendas?

9.9 Evidence submitted to the panel from other local authorities noted that stock dispersal among RHPs had given rise to a number of challenges at the local level. Of particular importance, it was noted that RHPs with dispersed stock sometimes had an underdeveloped local presence (e.g. a housing office or housing officer) which meant that there was little opportunity to engage with the local authority and other local stakeholders. With little local engagement it was suggested that some RHPs did not have a complete understanding of local concerns which inhibited their ability to develop effective responses.

9.10 From evidence given directly to the panel and through the telephone audit of local authorities, it was apparent that there were a number of challenges to the housing sector where stock was dispersed and where RHPs had little local presence. Some challenges identified by other local authorities included:

- detached housing management services resulted in inconsistent engagement and cooperation and accountability issues for tenants and local authority
- difficulty of securing commitment to service improvement when there was not the critical mass or capacity to engage effectively/ multiple small providers
- inconsistencies in the management of estates/ properties
- difficulty engaging quickly and effectively with remote RHPs
- poor coordination community investment by RHPs i.e. ASB, wordlessness etc.

Increased Unit costs

9.11 Managing a limited number of stock in distant local authority may have financial impact on RHPs as well as for their tenants. The unit costs of RHPs vary considerably depending on a number of factors such as regional wage variations, social deprivation where stock is held and the nature of stock held (i.e. general needs or supported housing). The panel noted that there was evidence to suggest that dispersal of housing stock contributed to additional costs for RHPs, where:

- stock held in pockets of less than 100 per local authority was associated with higher costs of £1,300/unit per annum
- stock held in pockets of less than 50 per local authority was associated with additional costs £2,300/unit per annum.²⁰

9.12 From this same data, it was calculated that the 83,000 general needs units which are owned by RHPs with fewer than 100 units in a local authority area were associated with additional costs of approximately £100m per annum.

²⁰ Understanding unit costs of housing associations – regression analysis Tenant Services Authority SA 2011

What is stock rationalisation?

9.13 Over a period of time, RHPs may develop housing portfolios which incorporate stock that is owned or managed either remotely or as part of multi-landlord estates. In many instances, this may not be problematic, but this can precipitate issues for stakeholders concerned:

- RHPs – though increased costs as compared to other units
- Tenants – through variations in the level and quality to which housing is managed
- Local Authorities – through difficult engagement or securing involvement in solving a local problems (e.g. ASB)

9.14 There are a number of processes however in which a housing provider can rationalise its housing stock, and focus business operations within a smaller number of localities which can contribute to improved outcomes for stakeholders concerned. There are four main stock rationalisation processes which can be summarised as:

- **stock swaps** – where, for example, a RHP with a small amount of stock in a local area swaps over this stock to another with a larger presence and the reverse process takes place in another local area.
- **stock transfers** – where stock ownership is transferred to another RHP
- **management or leasing agreement** – where an RHP retains ownership, but housing stock is managed or leased to another local RHP
- **disposal** – where housing stock on the open market.

9.15 Nationally, there is substantive evidence that RHPs have actively taken up the stock rationalisation agenda, with a number having explicit stock rationalisation programmes. A number of the larger stock rationalisation programmes which have been recorded include:

- Origin HA, which transferred 632 homes to other RHPs which reduced the number of local authorities it works with from 26 to 17²¹
- Orbit housing transferred 841 homes in the South West Region to another RHP to help improve the range and quality of housing services to those tenants²²
- Family Mosaic have developed a stock rationalisation programme where less than 100 units are owned in an area these are transferred to another RHP, and where 100-500 units are owned it has tried to set up management agreements with RHPs which have a larger local presence.

9.16 The panel noted evidence from the on-line survey of RHPs which noted that a number of local housing providers had undertaken some stock rationalisation, and similar to other providers elsewhere, had developed an stock rationalisation policy. Survey data suggested that just over half (56%) of local RHPs had undertaken some form of stock rationalisation, though just 6% undertaken this process actually in Haringey (Appendix B).

²¹ Stock transfers J Obertelli, *Inside Housing*, Jan 2011

²² Location, Location, Location: achieving efficiencies through stock rationalisation Tenants Services Authority (2009)

- 9.17 Among the stock rationalisation processes reported to the panel by RHPs it was noted that successful stock rationalisation partnerships that had occurred between local partners, though not necessarily had occurred within Haringey:
- Innisfree HA had been the beneficiary of a stock transfer from Family Mosaic of 49 units which were adjacent to its head offices in Camden.
 - Metropolitan Housing Trust noted that it was difficult to maintain same level of services or commit to neighbourhood areas in which it had fewer than 1-200 properties. It was therefore considering a stock rationalisation programme in which it was seeking to half the amount of local authorities in which it maintains properties to 30. Haringey, in which it managed over 2000 properties, would remain one of its core boroughs.

What are the benefits of stock rationalisation?

- 9.18 The panel noted evidence from the TSA which suggested that there were a number of possible benefits that could be obtained from stock rationalisation processes. From a number of case studies of stock rationalisation it was noted that improvements were derived in three key areas from the rationalisation of housing stock:

- improved partnerships – with the local authority, other RHPs and other community organisations
- improved community engagement - through greater understanding of community and tenant issues.
- improved cost effectiveness of services – through improved economies of scale, improved local partnerships.²³

- 9.19 The panel heard evidence from a number of other **local authorities**, some of which had supported an explicit stock rationalisation programme within their area. From this evidence, it was noted that stock rationalisation had helped to improve local relationships with RHPs and had secured more focused and active contributions from housing partners. Some of the key benefits of stock rationalisation identified from other local authorities were:

- improved concept and more focused contributions to neighbourhood management – ensuring that RHPs are committed to local communities
- improved cost efficiencies for housing management
- improved services for tenants – bringing housing management closer to residents and greater linkage with other local services
- providing more focused and targeted support for vulnerable residents.

- 9.20 **RHPs** which were consulted in the review described a number of benefits to their organisation from stock rationalisation. A consistent theme in this evidence was that a more developed understanding of local tenant and community issues was obtained when housing management was devolved to a more local provider. RHPs noted that an established local provider taking on housing stock may also have resources in place to support tenants (i.e. a housing office or housing officer) which helped to deliver a more **responsive service**. This was exemplified in the submissions of RHPs:

²³ Location, Location, Location: achieving efficiencies through stock rationalisation Tenants Services Authority (2009)

'Most importantly, [stock rationalisation] has been beneficial to the tenants who now have a better housing management service.'

'We transferred four sheltered housing schemes in South Devon to a local organisation which was better placed to provide a more responsive service.'

- 9.21 Such stock rationalisation was also seen to be beneficial to RHPs in receipt of housing stock (whether owned or managed), in that this had helped to increase its **presence** in an area where it has established business interests, and delivered more **efficient housing management** through improved economies of scale. In this context, it was evident that there may be multiple benefits for such RHPs including the improvement of housing stock and increasing tenant satisfaction:

'Benefits for us were that it increased our stock in a key Borough, implemented a decent homes programme and completed within 6 months and increased resident satisfaction in the area.'

- 9.22 Stock rationalisation was also seen as a process through which additional **capital investment** might be secured for investment in housing stock. It was noted that some RHPs, for example, may not have the necessary capital to ensure all of its housing stock meets the decent homes standard. Therefore the disposal or transfer of stock to another RHP that had sufficient capital to invest for such purposes could be seen to be beneficial to both RHPs and of course, tenants:

'We transferred 600 properties in Croydon to [another provider] who had the resources to bring them up to Decent Homes Standards and already had a large presence in the borough.'

What challenges do RHPs face in stock rationalisation?

- 9.23 It was evident to the panel, that irrespective of the potential benefits, stock rationalisation was not straight forward, indeed, it was noted that this could be a complex, lengthy and resource intensive process.
- 9.24 It has previously been reported that RHPs faced significant challenges in identifying other housing providers in the development of local housing partnerships, and this was also the case for stock rationalisation opportunities. From the consultation data it was noted that RHPs found it difficult to **identify potential partners** or had insufficient local contact to ascertain if there were mutually beneficial opportunities to rationalise housing stock. Identifying potential partners was also noted to be difficult for:
- smaller RHPs as they may not have as many established working relationships with other providers
 - RHPs whose property portfolio comprised of mainly street properties had limited natural partnerships
 - RHPs whose housing stock was old and in need of investment.
- 9.25 The actual process of stock rationalisation was also cited as a barrier to successful link-ups and completions. RHPs noted that there were complex legal and financial processes which needed to be undertaken as part stock

rationalisation which could impede progress or indeed, curtail its progress. Some of the key stumbling blocks included:

- agreeing **values** for stock to be transferred between RHPs
- **charges, legal title** restrictions or other **planning permissions** which may limit the buyers opportunities to develop the stock
- **VAT** on housing management arrangements²⁴
- legal and other project **costs** associated with transfers
- obtaining **consent** of tenants.

- 9.26 For smaller RHPs, stock rationalisation can be particularly problematic as they may lack the overall capacity or resources to operate an asset management strategy or the resources to actively engage in a borough where they may have comparatively limited stock. In this context, there was a belief that stock rationalisation had been focused within larger RHPs as the scale of their operations and the dispersed nature was conducive to stock swaps with other large RHPs. A number of smaller RHPs noted that this limited development opportunities for their own organisations.
- 9.27 Stock rationalisation was also noted to have risks for RHPs as stock transfers and leases may have longer term implications. Changes in stock holding clearly affect RHPs asset management strategies and their subsequent ability to borrow money and develop new housing. There are also inherent risks in taking on the ownership or management of housing stock of which there has been little previous knowledge or experience.
- 9.28 Stock rationalisation not only presents challenges for RHPs, but this process can also raise issues for other local stakeholders, such as the local authority and of course tenants. For the local authority, stock rationalisation can present a number of challenging issues, most significantly ensuring that stock rationalisation does not lead to a decline in affordable homes available (i.e. where stock is sold to a non RHP).
- 9.29 It was also noted to the panel, that the Council was an owner of housing stock, which is managed through Homes for Haringey (the ALMO). As has been recorded earlier, housing stock owned by the Council is also dispersed with approximately 450 units located in other boroughs. Similarly, it may also be appropriate for the Council to rationalise stock it owns or manages within the borough, for example, where it has a minority interest on a multi-landlord estate. Thus the Council and Homes for Haringey, are faced with many of the same challenges as other local RHPs in respect of stock rationalisation.
- 9.30 The transfer of ownership or management of housing stock can also precipitate concerns among those tenants involved. Social housing tenants are by definition those people in greater need and the transfer of the management of their tenancy may create some anxiety among them. RHPs noted that stock transfers were especially worrying where sheltered

²⁴ As stated earlier, this position may change as HMRC have launched a consultation on the levying of VAT on RHPs for shared services and management arrangements. (Inside Housing, June 30th 2011).

accommodation was involved and considerable work needed to be undertaken to allay the concerns tenants.

The role of the Council support RHPs considering stock rationalisation?

9.31 The panel assessed what role the Council could take to support those RHPs considering stock rationalisation. Whilst it was acknowledged that the Council cannot dictate such processes, it has a legitimate role in shaping and improving local communities and may seek to influence the plans and agendas of local organisations to help meet local priorities and objectives.

9.32 A consistent theme in the responses of RHPs themselves in this review was that if the Council was to adopt a proactive role in stock rationalisation, then this should be accompanied by greater clarity in the aspirations of the Council for stock rationalisation, in particular how these relate to local needs and priorities. Furthermore, RHPs noted that if a more proactive approach to stock rationalisation was developed, this would need to be consistently supported across the business of the Council. This was exemplified in responses to the survey:

'The [Council] needs to be more specific as to what they want from us [providers]. We sometimes get mixed messages, for example, we are asked for wheelchair units but lettings are not always forthcoming. Planners also make things difficult to manage and let e.g. no cars, communal roof gardens...and unrealistic sustainability agenda.'

'Willingness of housing, legal and planning colleagues to vary planning consents or lift charges where restrictions are proving a barrier to stock modernisation or meeting housing need.'

9.33 In this context, and in relation to the above comments, it is suggested that the development of a stock rationalisation *policy* may be of benefit, as this would clearly set out the Councils ambitions and the strategic priorities. Such a policy could also help to identify roles and expectations of housing providers and identify how priorities can be supported through the broader activities of the Council.

Recommendation : That the Council should adopt a lead role in the rationalisation of social housing stock and support those RHPs considering the rationalisation of local housing stock through

5a : the development of a local stock rationalisation policy that sets out:

- how the aims and objectives of that policy will help to support local priorities
- the roles and expectations of local housing providers
- which is supported by published local guidance for RHPs

9.34 As has been noted earlier (9.24), a barrier to those RHPs considering stock rationalisation was the identification of potential partners. In this context, there was an expectation from providers that the Council should adopt an enabling role and facilitate contact between local RHPs. To support this

enabling role, a consistent request among RHPs and other informants to the panel was the need to map all social housing stock in the borough through GIS. Mapping of social housing units, was seen as instrumental in facilitating contact and dialogue among local RHPs.

Recommendation 5b: Ensure that all social housing in the borough is mapped through GIS to facilitate contact and dialogue between RHPs

- 9.35 The Council was noted to have an established Enabling Team which had regular dialogue with a number of local housing providers. Communication between and among RHPs however was less certain and in this context, there was strong support for the Council to adopt a **brokerage role**; in which it facilitated contact between RHPs that were interested in stock rationalisation. This was exemplified in the responses of one RHP to the on-line survey:

‘Act as a broker where you identify a larger or more remote [registered provider] for whom Haringey is not a core borough. Suggest likely recipients and bring them together.’

- 9.36 It was noted that such a brokerage role could save time and expenditure of those RHPs that are interested in stock rationalisation in the borough:

‘If we were to consider taking on other [registered providers] stock in the borough we would wish the [Council] to hold a dialogue with those partners first to ensure that they had a desire to consider such a transaction. A lot of time ‘could be wasted shopping around to no avail.’

- 9.37 The panel also noted that a brokerage role to support stock rationalisation could also be focused on a particular area, to help bring greater coordination in the efforts to resolve local issues of concern. The panel noted that an area based approach to stock rationalisation had been adopted within another local authority, and had helped to develop a more coherent and consistent approach to housing issues among 14 RHPs in an area of high social deprivation and persistent ASB.

Recommendation 5c: That the Council adopt a brokerage role to facilitate contact and dialogue between RHPs with a mutual interest in stock rationalisation, and, that such a role be actively pursued in where local conditions would support a more coordinated housing provision (i.e. multi-landlord estates).

- 9.38 The panel noted that other councils were actively considering stock rationalisation policies. It was therefore noted that if such a brokerage was to be adopted by the Council, it may be practical to synchronise such an approach with other local authorities on a sub-regional basis. In evidence to the panel, it was noted that other sub-regional housing partnerships had taken an active role in stock rationalisation. It was noted that the SE London Housing Partnership Group aimed to facilitate stock rationalisation within the region through:

- encouraging RHPs to conduct asset management strategies and assess the distribution of housing stock across the region
- dissemination of good practice
- challenge of RHPs with outlying stock about future plan
- support of small local RHPs in acquisition of stock from larger RHPs.

9.39 At the consultation with RHPs, it was also noted that there was the potential for greater partnership work among councils on cross border issues. It was recorded that there could be potential in developing sub-regional stock rationalisation brokerage role through the North London Strategic Alliance (or other similar body).

Recommendation 5d : that the Council should ascertain if a regional brokerage role could be adopted through the North London Strategic Alliance (other sub-regional body) to support stock rationalisation processes among RHPs

9.40 As an owner and manager (through Homes for Haringey) of social housing stock, the Council faced many of the challenges that RHPs currently face in relation to dispersed stock. It was suggested moves to transfer stock to another housing provider could deliver more localised management and help to reduce costs. In addition, transfer could also possibly increase access to Decent Homes funding as well as increasing capital receipts for the Council.

9.41 The panel noted evidence which suggested that the Council was already active in the area of stock rationalisation. It was noted in evidence from the SCHS, that tenants of some remotely held housing stock (in Waltham Cross) had already been consulted by the Council with a view to transfer to local RHP ownership. Depending on the consent of being obtained, it was anticipated that a report would go before Cabinet to discuss and agree future options for this stock. It was noted that there may also be a small number of rationalisation opportunities within the borough, where for example, the Council has a minority holding on a multi-landlord estate.

9.42 In the context of the above, it was suggested that the Council should continue to lead by example in support of any agreed stock rationalisation policy or process. Such an active policy should encompass an assessment of all social housing stock, internal and external to the borough, to assess whether stock transfer, localised management or other stock rationalisation process would be of local benefit.

Recommendation 5e: That the Council provide a stock rationalisation lead and example by conducting an assessment of all its housing stock (in and out of borough) to identify those properties that may be beneficial to rationalise ownership or management.

9.43 From the consultation with RHPs and from evidence from the SCHS itself, it was noted that there were a number of risks associated with a stock rationalisation policy which need to be assessed and managed locally. These were identified as:

- to need protect the diversity of social housing provision
- to ensure that stock rationalisation does not lead to disposal, and loss of borough social housing estate.

9.44 The SCHS emphasised to the panel, that stock rationalisation was not solely about reducing the incidence of stock that wasn't locally managed. In the view of the SCHS, stock rationalisation was primarily concerned with promoting *good housing management*; where RHPs provide a good service to local tenants, worked with the local authority and other RHPs and were committed to supporting local priorities. In this context, the size of the RHP or its stock holding in the borough did not necessarily matter.

9.45 It was apparent therefore, that a stock rationalisation policy supported by the Council should be accompanied by an active process of engagement and dialogue with all local RHPs (irrespective of their size), to enable them reflect on their commitment and contribution to the local area, and where appropriate, encouraged to seek partnerships or stock rationalisation opportunities for local stock holding. The panel also noted that the Council would welcome dialogue from those RHPs who considered that the management of local stock was too expensive, or found it difficult to provide an adequate level of service.

Recommendation 5f : The Council should encourage all RHPs to review the management of local housing stock and subsequent commitment to the borough, and where this falls short, to encourage partnership or stock rationalisation opportunities with other local providers

9.46 The role of the small RHP in stock rationalisation processes should also warrant further consideration within in any stock rationalisation policy, as it was clear that smaller RHPs were important to maintaining the diversity of housing service provision and the delivery of more specialised housing services. This needs to be acknowledged in any approach to stock rationalisation adopted by the Council to ensure that the important contribution that **smaller RHPs** make to the local housing sector is retained.

9.47 Furthermore, given the specific challenges faced by small RHPs (e.g. resources, staffing and contacts) further work may be needed to identify how they can be best supported to engage further locally (e.g. partnerships or stock rationalisation).

Recommendation 5g: That the Council acknowledge the particular challenges that smaller RHPs may face in with stock rationalisation (and partnership working) and to develop mechanisms to support their local engagement.

9.48 The panel heard evidence from the Cabinet Member for Housing and SCHS which noted that a strategic aim of the service was of course, to retain and develop further social housing within the borough. Thus there was natural concern that stock rationalisation, in some instances, could lead to the loss of local social housing stock if a disposal approach was taken by RHPs.

- 9.49 The panel noted therefore, that those RHPs considering disposal as mechanism through which to rationalise of local stock holding, should actively engage with the Council to identify a strategy to ensure that investment within the social rented sector is maintained.

Recommendation 5h: That the Council should ensure housing disposals through stock rationalisation do not lead to a reduction in the overall social housing estate and where possible help to address the east west imbalance in social housing in the borough.

- 9.50 Whilst RHPs may have a duty to cooperate with the local authority and other services, evidently some RHPs are more able to engage locally than others. The panel noted evidence from other local authorities which noted therefore that it was important for the Council to promote the possible benefits of joint enterprise (cost reduction, improved services and more satisfied tenants) to encourage local engagement.

- 9.51 The panel noted that a local authority had successfully used its annual conference for RHPs to focus on partnership and stock rationalisation. The panel noted that this provided an opportunity for local RHPs to discuss work programmes and identify partnering and rationalisation opportunities. It was noted that there were many practical achievements which stemmed from this conference, which included:

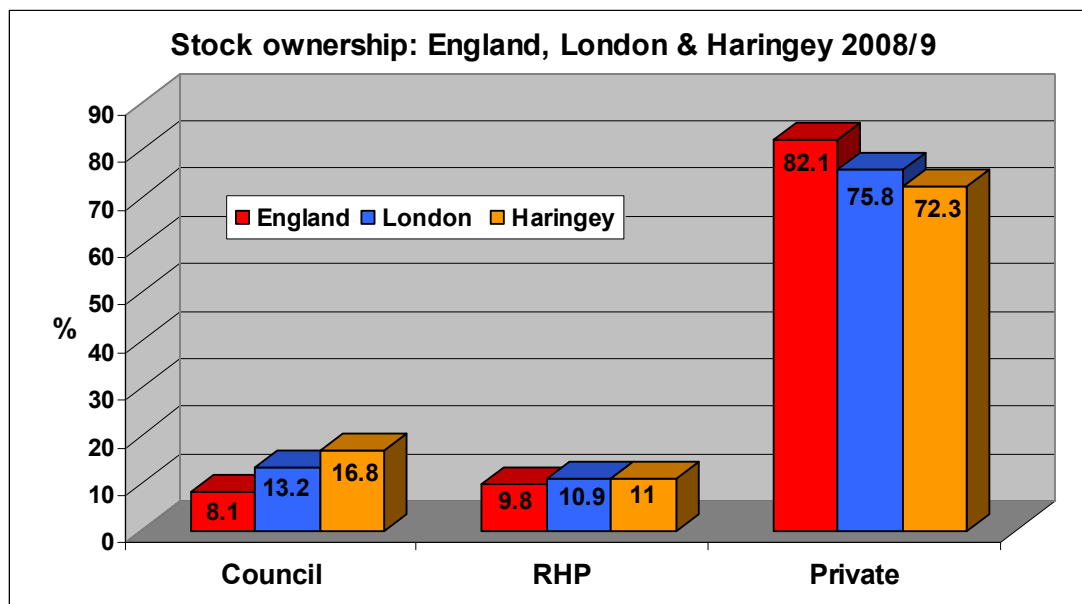
- sharing of local good practice
- one local RHP which worked with elderly and disabled people, took on the management of other special needs stock held by other RHPs in the authority.

Recommendation 5i: That the Council consider whether the planned annual conference for RHPs could be dedicated to consider local partnerships and stock rationalisation opportunities.

- 9.52 As has been documented earlier in this report, RHPs that may be considering stock rationalisation may face a number of significant challenges, which may be complex, lengthy and time consuming. Further still, as has been seen above, stock rationalisation is not without risks to all local stakeholders involved; the local authority, tenants as well as RHPs themselves. In this context, RHPs consulted within this review reiterated that stock rationalisation may not be the answer to all the ails of social housing, though it may help housing providers to refocus provision and garner further support and commitment to local communities and services.

Appendix A - Charts

Figure 1 – Stock ownership England, London, Haringey (2008/9)



Source: DCLG

Figure 2 – Housing tenure in England and Haringey (2008/9)

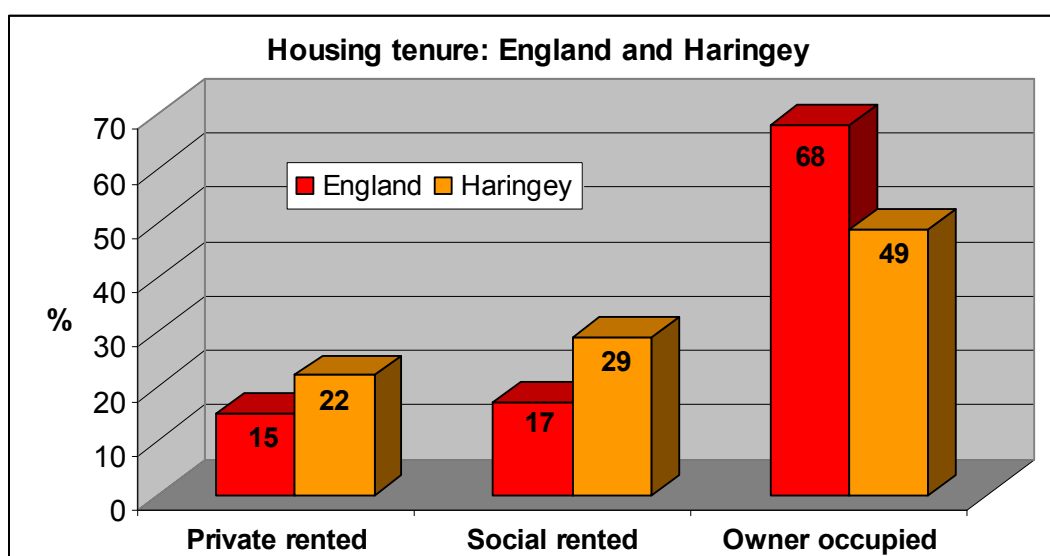


Figure 3 – Social housing dwellings in Haringey 1997-2009

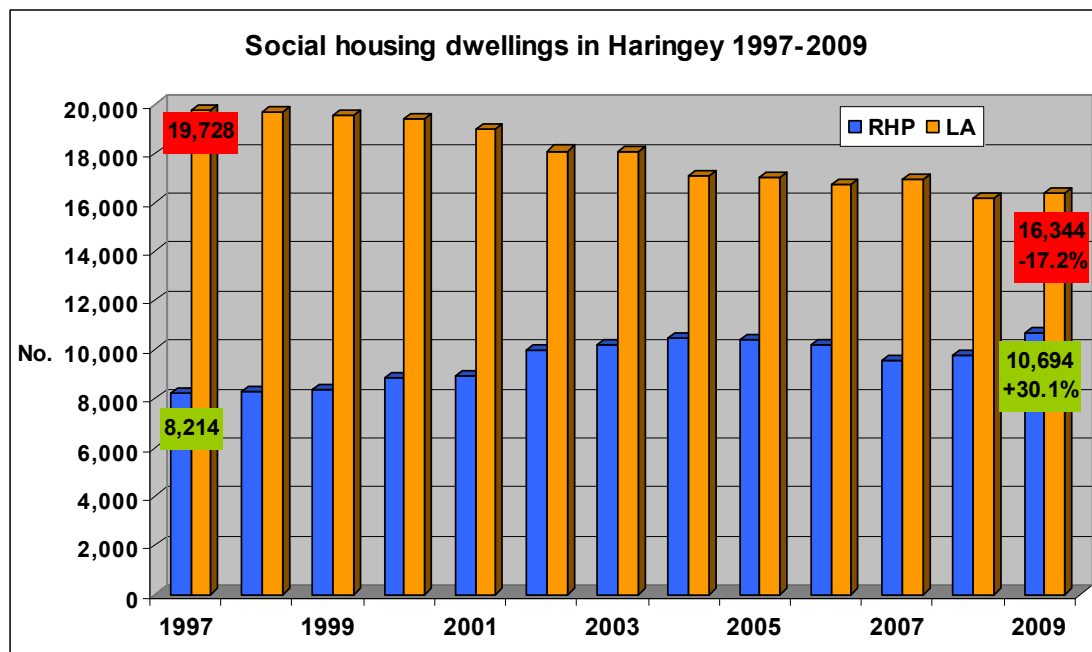


Figure 4 – Social rented housing in Haringey by Local Authority Ward.

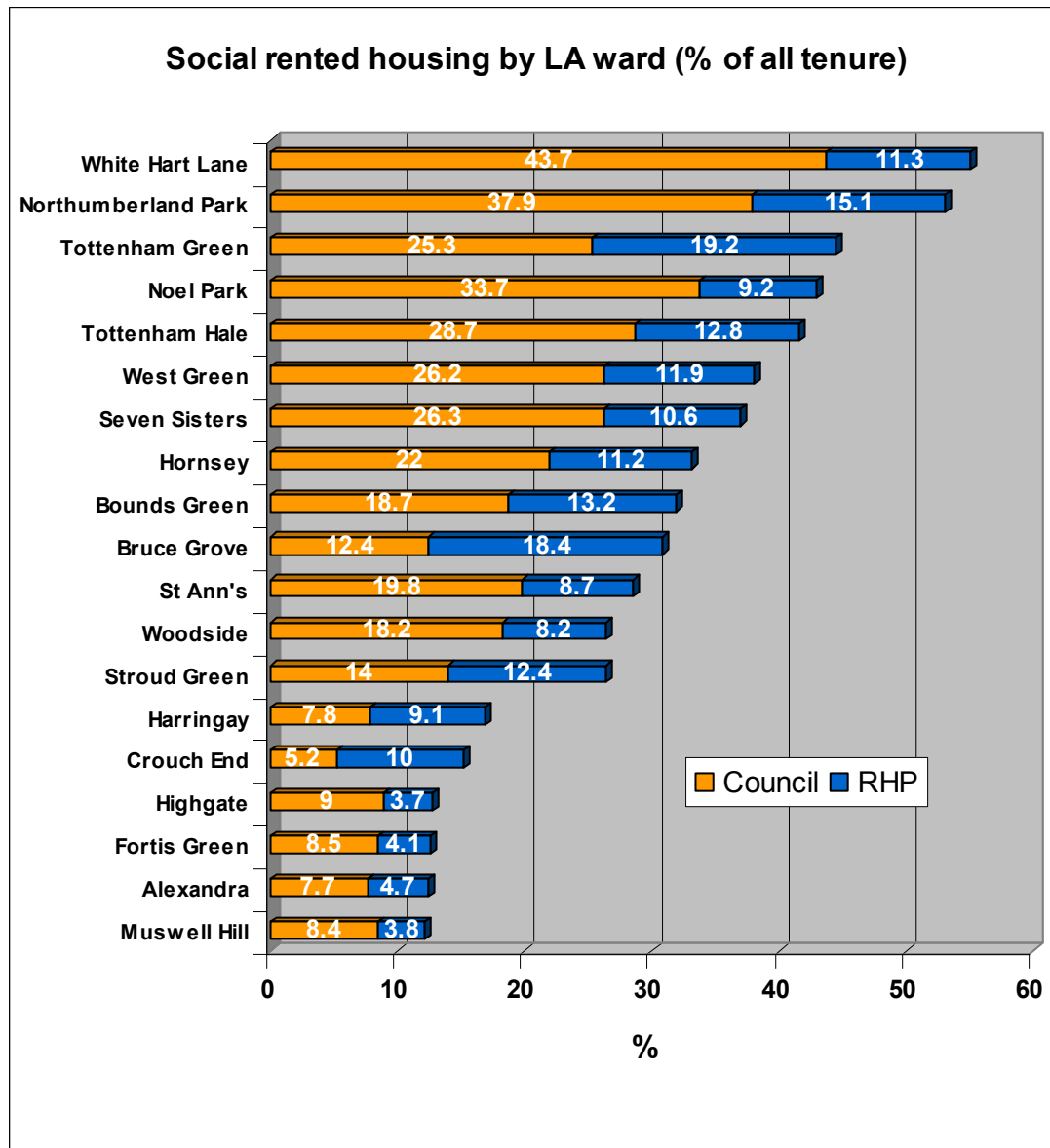


Figure 5a - Distribution of RHP stock size 0-100 units.

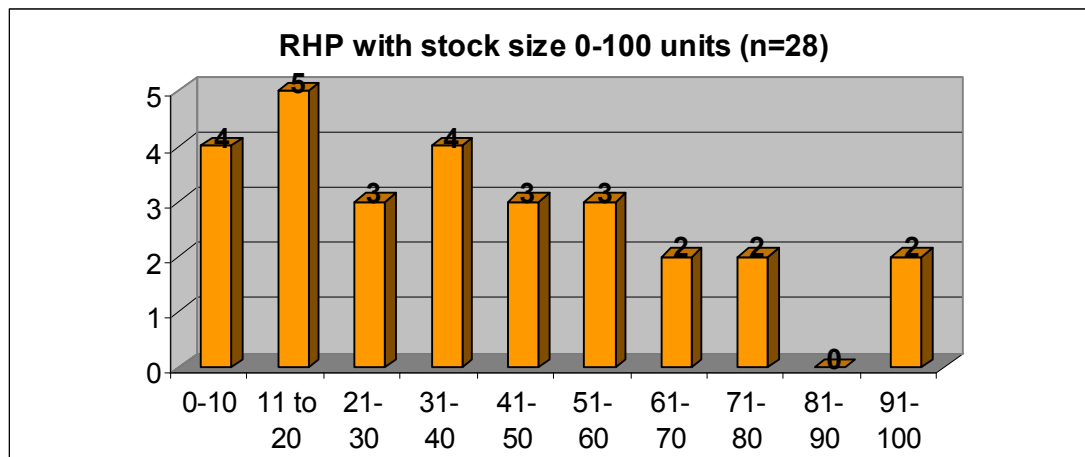


Figure 5b - Distribution of RHP stock size 0-500 units.

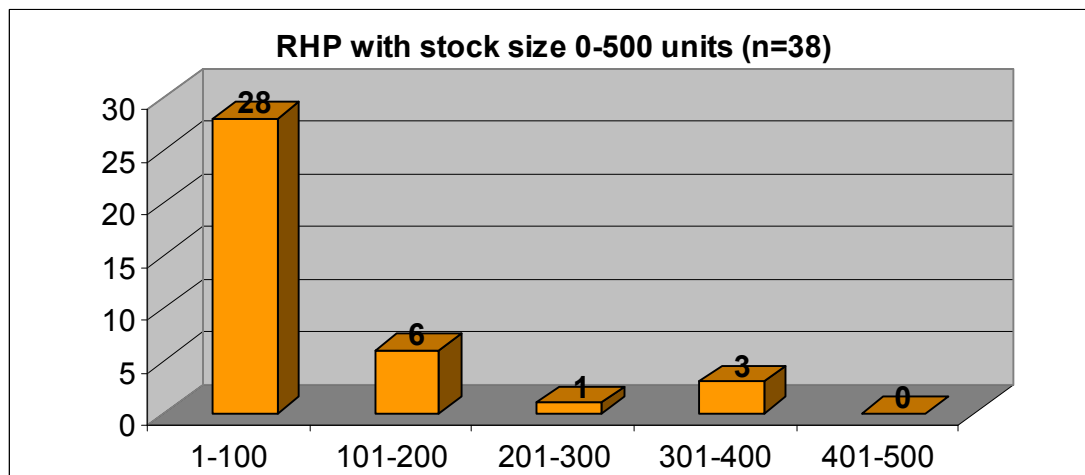


Figure 5c - Distribution of RHP stock size 0-2,500 units

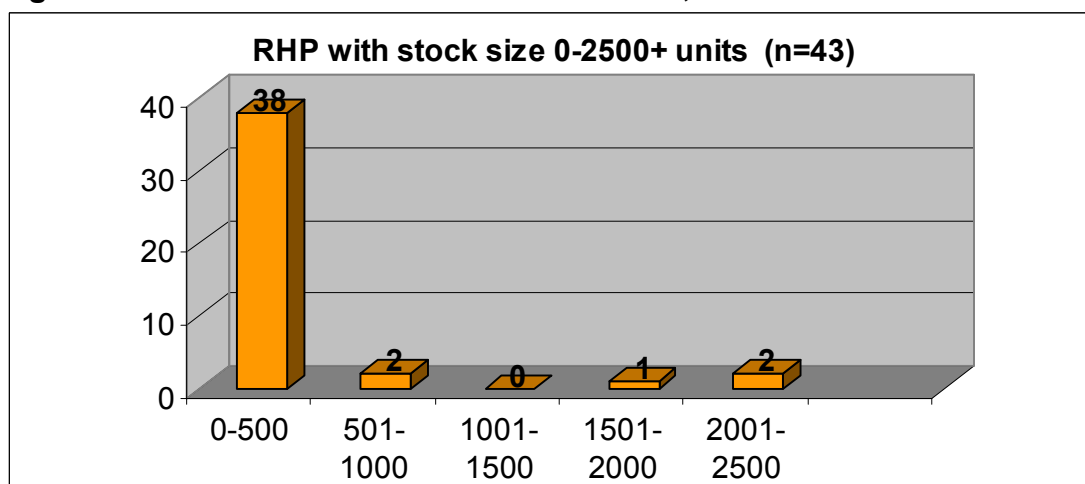


Figure 6 – RHP stock numbers in Haringey (2010)

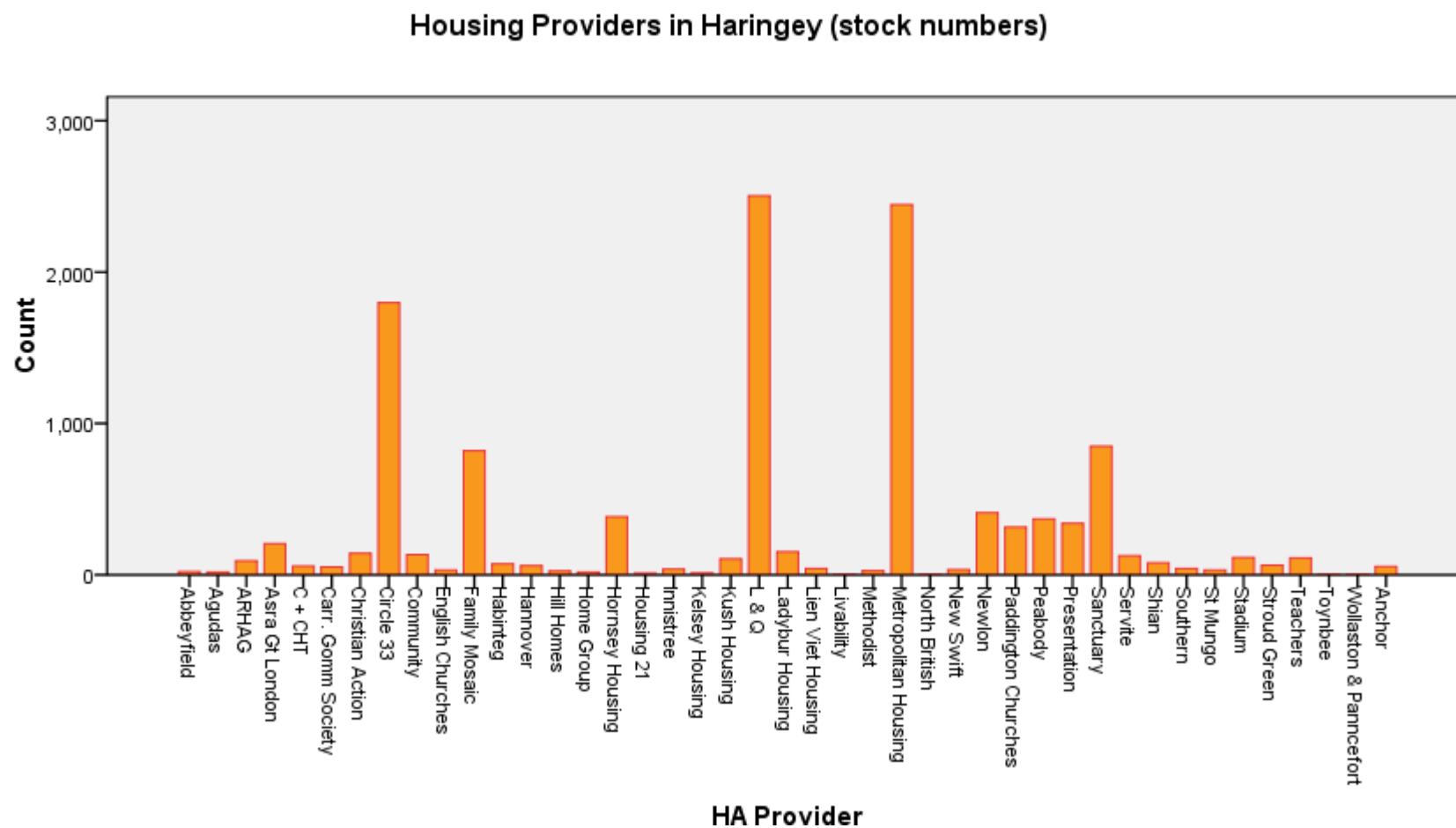
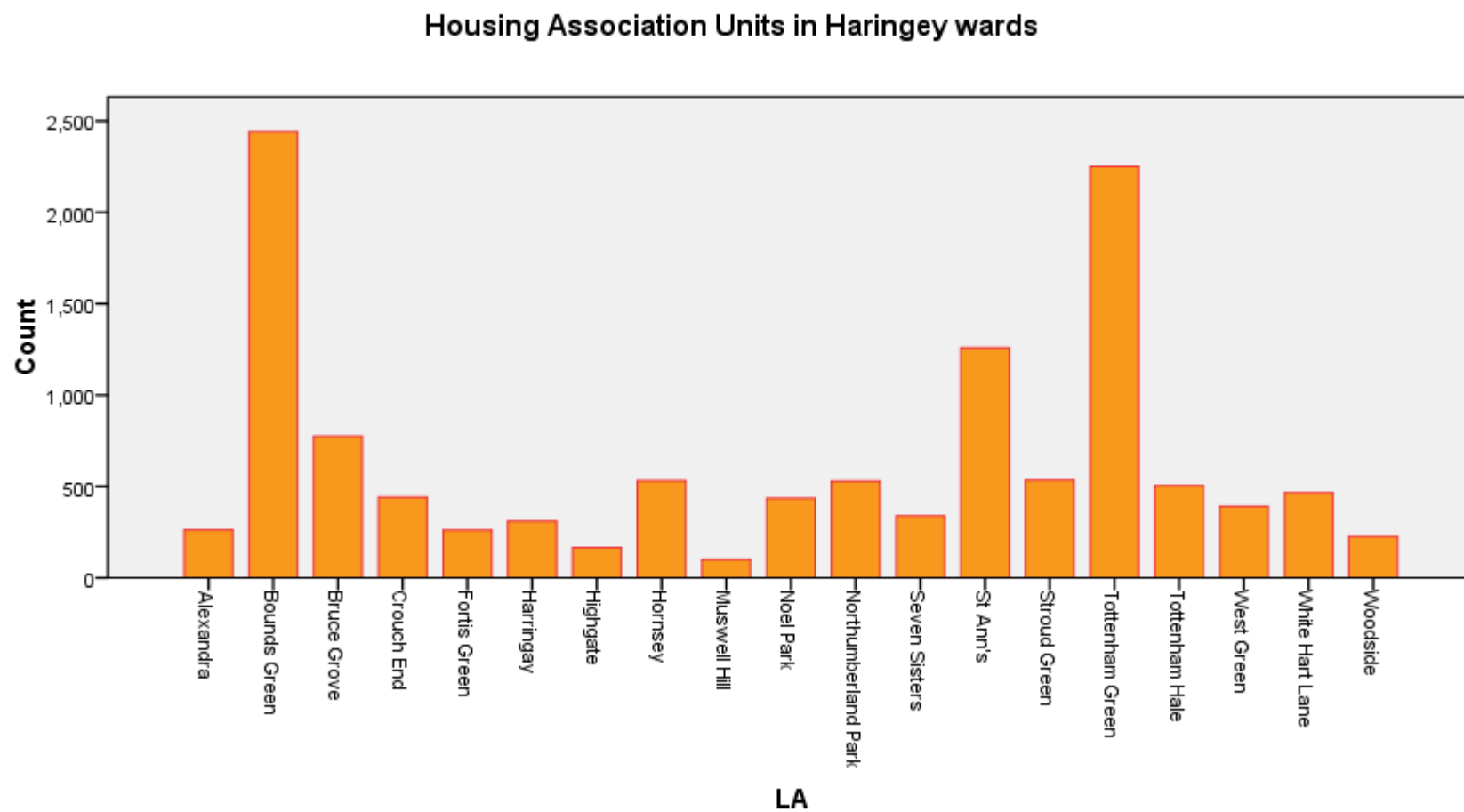
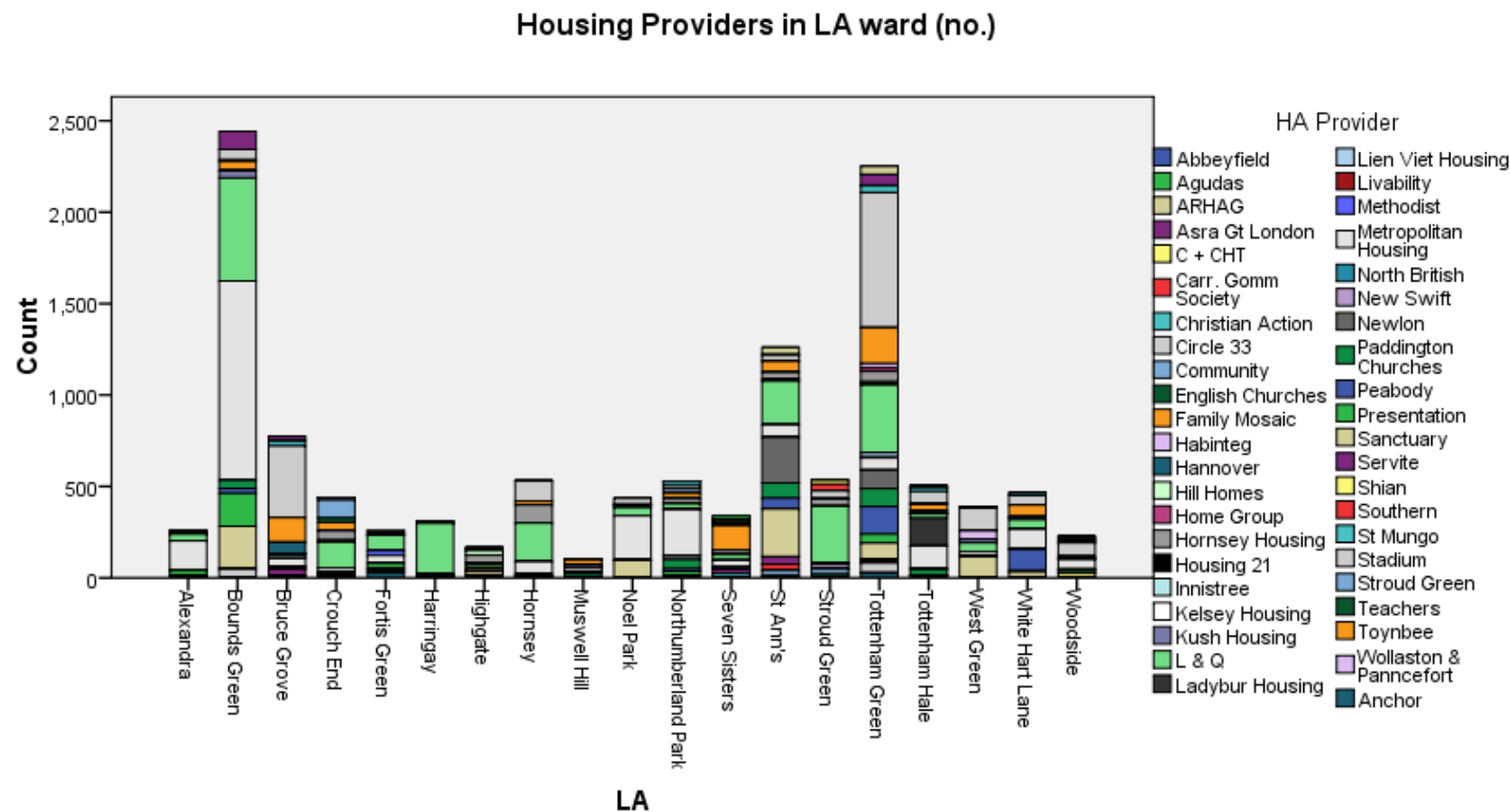


Figure 7 - RHP stock held in Haringey by Local Authority Ward (2010)



Figure

Figure 8 – RHPs providing housing in Haringey by Local Authority Wards (2010)



Appendix B

Scrutiny Review of Registered Housing Providers in Haringey

Engagement, partnerships and stock rationalisation:
findings from a survey of survey of local housing
providers.

July 2011

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 There are approximately 60 registered housing providers with housing stock in Haringey. This presents a number of issues for both the Council and registered housing providers, including consistency in housing standards, partnerships in local housing sector and stock rationalisation.
- 1.2 A review was commissioned by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to investigate these issues. In particular, the review sought to assess the effectiveness of local engagement structures, and how best the Council can support providers that want to work in partnership with others or seeking to rationalise stock in the area.
- 1.3 As part of the scrutiny review process, local housing providers were consulted through a number of mechanisms including a focus group and an on-line survey. The following provides analysis of the both quantitative and qualitative data collected through the on-line survey of registered housing providers. This data and analysis will contribute to the conclusions and recommendations formed within the final review.

2. About the survey

- 2.1 The purpose of the survey was two fold: firstly, to capture a range of data from registered housing providers on a range of local housing issues; secondly, to maximise participation in the review process, particularly those smaller housing providers who may not have the resources to attend dedicated meetings.
- 2.2 In addition to information about individual providers (e.g. size of stock held, number of Local Authorities in which stock is held) the survey sought to collect a range of information from respondents including assessments of local engagement structures and what role the Council can play in supporting providers in developing local housing partnerships or considering rationalising local housing stock.
- 2.3 As well as collecting quantitative data, there were opportunities for respondents to provide qualitative comments to support any answers that were given. The survey was administered on-line through SNAP survey tool. Electronic copies of the survey were distributed to 47 registered provider contacts held by the Strategic and Community Housing Service of the Council. The following is an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data received through the survey.

3. About those who responded?

- 3.1 In total, 18 registered housing providers responded to this survey. This produced a response rate for the survey of approximately 38%. This can be considered a satisfactory response given the accuracy of any database (churn rate of housing contacts) and the method of survey distribution.
- 3.2 Data about registered housing providers that responded was collected through the survey to illustrate the characteristics of the organisations that

responded. This data demonstrated that, in terms of size, the survey was completed by a broad range of housing providers: 33% of respondents managed fewer than 1,000 housing units whilst 44% managed more than 10,000 units (Table 1). In respect of housing units managed in Haringey, most respondents (66%) managed fewer than 500 housing units (Table 1).

Table 1- Housing units managed by registered housing providers.			
Total housing units managed nationally		Units managed in Haringey	
0-1,000	6 (33%)	0-100	8 (44%)
1,001-5,000	2 (11%)	101-500	4 (22%)
5,001-10,000	2 (11%)	501-1,000	4 (22%)
10,001+	8 (44%)	1,001+	2 (11%)

3.3 The type of dwelling which respondents managed in Haringey was predominantly general needs housing (67%), though a smaller proportion (28%) managed units which provided sheltered or supported accommodation to local residents. The remainder provided a mix of general needs and specialised housing services.

3.4 The survey sought to ascertain the number of local authority areas in which providers managed housing stock. Analysis of this data demonstrated that most providers (94%) managed housing stock in more than one authority, with just over half (55%) managing stock in 20 or more local authority areas (Table 2). Most respondents (78%) however, considered Haringey to be a 'core' authority in which the housing provider was actively engaged with local housing issues (Table 2).

Table 2 – Housing provider engagement			
No. of other LAs where stock is managed		Haringey is a 'core' authority	
0	1 (6%)	Yes	14 (78%)
1-10	4 (22%)	No	4 (22%)
11-20	3 (17%)		
21-50	6 (33%)		
51+	4 (22%)		

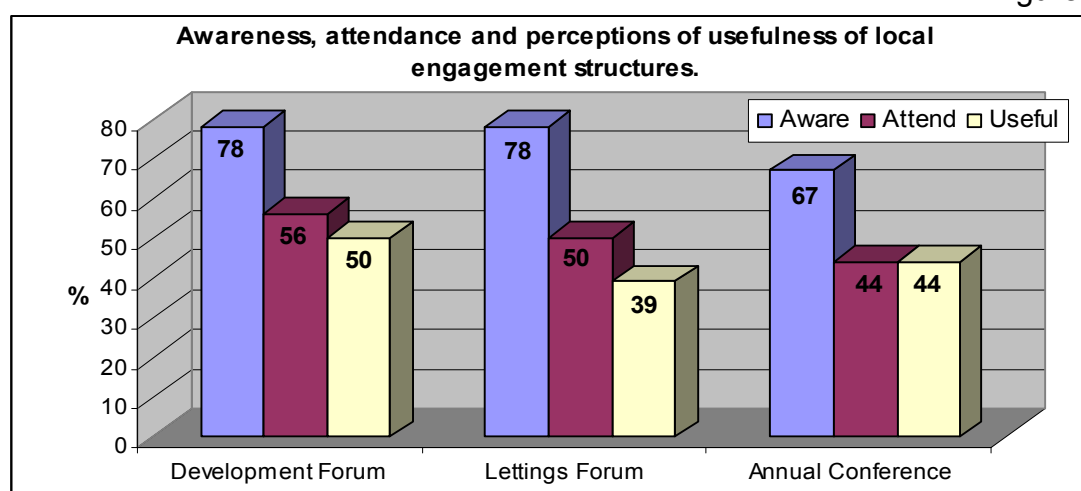
4. Engagement structures in Haringey

4.1 A number of engagement structures are operated through the Strategic and Community Housing Service to support partnerships among local housing providers these include; development forum (for new build), lettings forum and an annual conference themed around a local housing issue. Survey respondents were asked if they were aware of these engagement structures, whether representatives from their organisation regularly attended and if these were found to be useful.

4.2 It would appear that most respondents were aware of the various engagement structures supported by the Council: 78% of respondents were aware of both the development and lettings forums, while 67% were aware that an annual conference for RHPs is run each year (Figure 1).

Proportionally fewer respondents (range 44-50%) indicated that representatives from their organisation attended engagement forums (Figure 1). In respect of the perceived usefulness, the development forum (50%) was rated higher than the lettings forum and the annual conference (Figure 1).

Figure 1



- 4.3 Analysis of qualitative comments provided by registered housing providers suggest that the overall engagement framework provided in Haringey was not dissimilar to that provided by other local authorities. Although analysis elicited little direct feedback on the operation of any individual forum, it would appear that respondents were, on the whole, broadly satisfied about the overall engagement framework and it was noted that it enabled partners to keep up to date with local issues and policy developments:

'Generally good.'

'Generally satisfied.'

'The engagement structures are fine.'

'The Borough is good at involving its partners and keeping us updated especially about policy changes and new ideas.'

- 4.4 Positive perceptions of the local engagement were not however universal. It was evident from the response of one smaller provider, that they do not appear to be included within local engagement and communication processes:

'There is little engagement. I can't remember being invited to any of the forums mentioned above. Not sure if this is because we are a small provider.'

- 4.5 Analysis of responses identified a number of themes as to how the current engagement framework could be improved. A number of respondents suggested that more notice should be given as to when engagement forums take place together with more detail of what is planned to be discussed. This would allow providers to plan attendance and ensure that appropriate staff represent housing providers at meetings:

'There is never enough notice for me as an area manager to attend regularly, can this be considered please?'

'Better notice will certainly help.'

'Agendas need to be sent well in advance so the correct staff attend.'

- 4.6 To support this process, a number of respondents suggested that it might be beneficial if a housing engagement calendar was developed at the beginning of the year which included all meetings of the engagement forums. This calendar would enable housing providers to plan attendances at respective forums and allow wider and more consistent attendance:

'An annual calendar of meetings and forums would be helpful.'

'It would be helpful to have an annual schedule of meetings and action plan.'

- 4.7 Clearly, given varying scale of their operations and competing demands on RHPs, it may not be possible for representatives to be present at all engagement forums. In this context, it was noted that it was important that such forums (e)mailed out agendas, reports and minutes to ensure that providers were kept up to date about local housing issues and topics under discussion at local forums, even if they could not attend in person:

'Ensure invites to forums and discussion papers, minutes are e-mailed out so we are kept informed of developments.'

- 4.8 Providers noted that whilst engagement structures were integral to information sharing and supporting local partnerships, in the current climate of declining resources and increased pressures on officer time, there was a limit on the number of forums which representatives could feasibly attend:

'There is a danger of too many meetings when you bear in mind how many other LAs have expectations of their RSL partners.'

- 4.9 Similarly, providers felt that in the context of pressurised resources, it was important that engagement forums retained a clear remit and focus and where possible, were linked to specific outcomes. Therefore housing providers noted that it may be beneficial to assess the terms of reference and expected outcomes of local engagement structures to ensure that the work of these bodies was coordinated and delivered tangible benefits to participants:

'Improve links between development and housing management forums [as there is] increasing overlap....'

'Whilst forums are very useful to share information it would be a good to measure the outputs from the forums.'

'We feel that more could be done in these fora to encourage partnership working and resolve ongoing issues. It must be commented that these are useful bodies, but more work is needed to make them more effective.'

- 4.10 A recurrent theme in providers' contributions was that the usefulness of engagement meetings to RHPs was determined by the perceived relevance of issues discussed. Thus whilst there was broad approval of the local engagement framework, there remained some uncertainty as to the benefits of meetings offered through the regular forums as opposed to ad-hoc, issue focused meetings:

'[Meetings] are useful only to some extent depending on the relevance of them to our service.'

'I am torn between the value of having one-off meetings around specific subjects and the need to have a regular forum where [housing association] reps can meet regularly with Haringey officers.'

'Whilst we do find the formal engagement structures useful we also feel that bilateral meetings are important to discuss specific scheme based issues.'

- 4.11 As RHPs manage housing units in other areas and have experience of other engagement frameworks, respondents were also asked to identify good practice which could be developed in Haringey. In addition to those already outlined above, another possible development was suggested was an annual meeting between the Council Executive and housing Chief Executives,

'Islington has an annual breakfast meeting with the Leader & Cabinet member for housing, senior council officers and the Chief Executives of associations working in the borough. This has worked well in the past.'

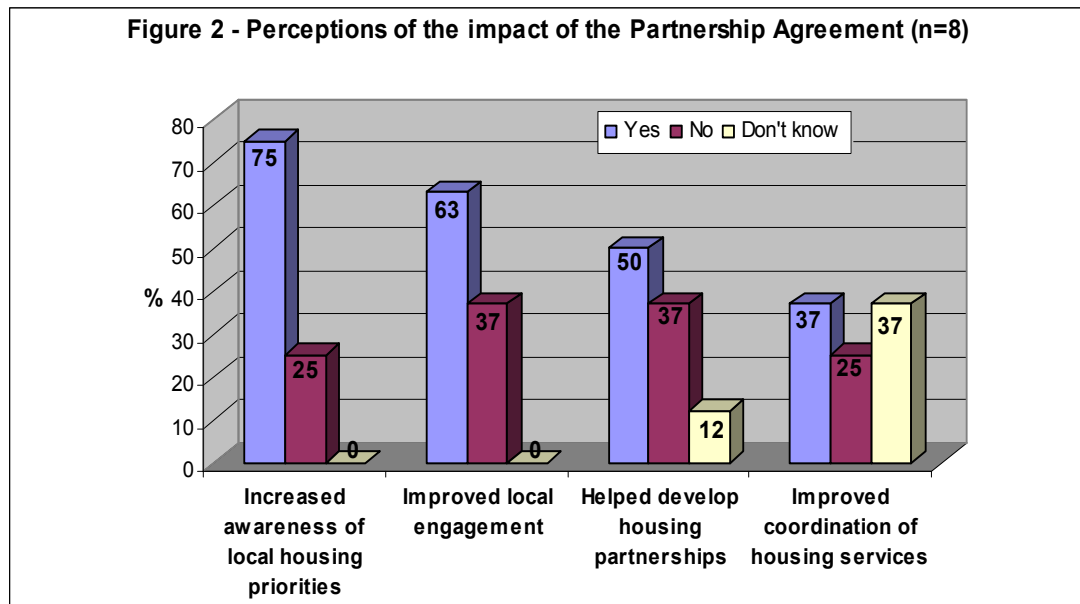
5.0 Partnership Agreement

- 5.1 The Council operates Partnership Agreement for local registered housing providers. This is a voluntary agreement, and although this is not legally binding sets out the roles and expectations of registered housing providers and the Council in responding to local housing needs. As well as providing details of local priorities, it also includes standards and processes for dealing with nominations, lettings, housing management and repairs.
- 5.2 The survey sought to ascertain whether respondents were aware of the Partnership Agreement and whether their organisation was a signatory. Analysis of these responses demonstrated that among this group of respondents, just over one-half (56%) were aware of the Partnership Agreement, though proportionally fewer (44%) were an actual signatory (Table 3).

Table 3 – Awareness and signatory to Partnership Agreement			
	Yes	No	N/A
Aware of the Partnership Agreement	10 (56%)	7 (39%)	1 (6%)
Signatory to Partnership Agreement	8 (44%)	6 (33%)	4 (22%)

- 5.3 Those respondents who indicated that they were a signatory (n=8), were invited to comment on how the Partnership Agreement had impacted on work

on local housing issues. Whilst a majority of respondents indicated that the agreement had increased awareness about local housing priorities and had helped to improve local engagement, respondents were less certain about its role in developing local housing partnerships and in coordinating housing services (Figure 2).



- 5.4 Given the absolute numbers of respondents that were signatories to the Partnership Agreement, there were correspondingly few qualitative comments to support the above analysis. Whilst there was some interest among non-signatories to know more about the Partnership Agreement, others perceived that further work may be needed to ensure that the commitments detailed in the agreement are translated in to practical outcomes:

'I am new to the area and would very much like to be part of a partnership agreement.'

'It doesn't feel like a very "live" document.'

'In our experience this is of limited value. Not sure what difference it makes as it is important that we work with you.'

6.0 Partnership Working

- 6.1 The review sought to ascertain what partnership work was already in place among local registered housing providers and to identify what role the Council could play to further support this work. Respondents were asked to describe examples of partnership work and to indicate the challenges and benefits experienced from such approaches.
- 6.2 In total, 11 respondents provided examples of work that they had undertaken in partnership with other housing providers, eight of which involved projects within Haringey. Analysis of these responses also demonstrated that

partnership projects are diverse, not only in terms of their scale but also in relation to the nature and focus work undertaken.

- 6.3 Analysis of qualitative data reveals that housing providers were working together on a very broad range of issues and processes, and that partnerships included not just RHPs, but also local Arms Length Management Organisations. It is also important to note, that local partnerships were not just among housing organisations, but often included other local statutory and voluntary agencies:

'[In] Haringey we have worked with (a registered provider), Councillors the Police and Community Safety at Academia way to improve security and tackle ASB on the estate.'

- 6.4 Examples of different types of partnerships included joint procurement (i.e. of a mediation service), pooling organisational resources (i.e. for community investment) and the development of localised management arrangements or shared services (e.g. on multi-landlord estates).

'[We] work with other RSLs to deliver estates services in Sussex and Kent very successfully taking the lead role in multi landlord estates and running the estates community centres on their behalf.'

'We have worked on the Campsborne project with Homes for Haringey and also on joint Neighbourhood Investment projects.'

'In Hackney - joint procurement of Mediation Provider involving main housing providers in borough including Hackney Homes.'

- 6.5 Further analysis reveals that a number of benefits were obtained through localised partnership arrangements between local housing providers. Three distinct benefits emerged from analysis of this data; improved knowledge, more coordinated response to local issues and improved cost effectiveness of services provided. These benefits were evident in the following excerpts from respondents:

'We have worked with RHPs, Councillors and the police to improve security and tackle ASB.... joint working ensured comprehensive approach to tackling problems and these have been resolved.'

'We have worked with other providers to reduce anti-social behaviour. This joined up approach has ensured that problems are resolved before they become serious.'

'Good VFM achieved through combining purchasing power.'

'We have worked with [a large provider] on two estates to improve safety and security in response to resident requests.... When it comes to repairs & maintenance on the estate we can benefit from economies of scale in getting work done.'

- 6.6 Given the range of areas in which RHPs are working together and the potential benefits that may be obtained, this would appear to further underline

the significant and wide ranging potential of partnership working among local housing providers.

- 6.7 Respondents were also asked to describe the challenges that registered housing providers faced in developing local partnerships, and what role the Council can play to overcome these. Given the number of providers and the geographical dispersal of their properties across the borough, it may be difficult for providers to identify potential partners. In this context, respondents indicated that it would be helpful if the Council could assist by helping to identify other housing providers with whom they may potentially collaborate:

'Help with identifying partners.'

'We would like to see the London Borough of Haringey work with us to identify potential partners in order to allow us to continue to deliver excellent services to our residents.'

- 6.8 Identifying potential housing partners and the case for partnership work may be relatively straightforward where for instance, a small number of providers manage significant numbers of properties in a discrete area (such as an individual estate). For those RHPs that manage predominantly street properties (individual or small groups of housing units on residential streets) whose properties may be more dispersed, the challenges are that much greater not only in identifying other housing providers with whom they may potentially collaborate but also the case for partnership work:

'All of our properties are either small discreet blocks or street properties. Not sure what sort of partnership working would be appropriate/workable.'

- 6.9 It was evident that in supporting partnership work more was expected of the Council than just helping RHPs to identify potential partners that may manage properties on the same estate or adjacent street. Analysis would appear to suggest that it may also be appropriate for the Council to lead and facilitate links among providers with common services or concerns across the borough, or perhaps lead in developing local partnerships to respond to local priorities or objectives:

'Yes, helping us to identify what other partners want to work together... in other areas we have provided domestic care to a housing scheme or had involvement from another housing org for the housing side of support whilst we provide the care.'

'[The Council] could lead on identified areas for joint working to ensure all appropriate partners are actively involved.'

- 6.10 Other areas which presented a challenge to local housing partnerships also stem, in part, from the number of housing providers that manage properties within the borough and the distribution of housing stock. Both large and small housing providers may manage stock in a number of local authority areas and may manage relatively few units in some of these local authority areas. Given

these practicalities, it may be difficult to obtain the leadership and ongoing commitments from RHPs to support effective partnership working:

'The challenges have been around getting commitment to joint working.'

'We have worked with [a large housing provider] on two estates to improve safety and security in response to residents requests. As the largest landlord on both estates we expected more leadership from [them] which would have speeded up the changes put in place.'

- 6.11 Smaller housing providers in particular, may experience practical difficulties in developing local partnerships given the amount and time-span over which they may be able to commit resources. Involving smaller registered housing providers in local partnerships however, may require further consideration:

'In the current climate, with limited resources, we are asked to contribute to costs. (As a small provider] we have the same problems and cannot commit large resources. We need to find a way of working together on joint schemes if appropriate, but need to find a way that we can pay for them as we use them rather than commit to a large programme.'

- 6.12 To promote partnership working, a number of respondents also indicated that it would be helpful to know more about what resources were available locally which could be used to facilitate or support this. This involved not only physical resources, but also the availability of specialist services which may be able to contribute to partnership projects undertaken by housing providers:

'Keep a register of community resources - community rooms/halls that could be shared with other local RSLs or the council.'

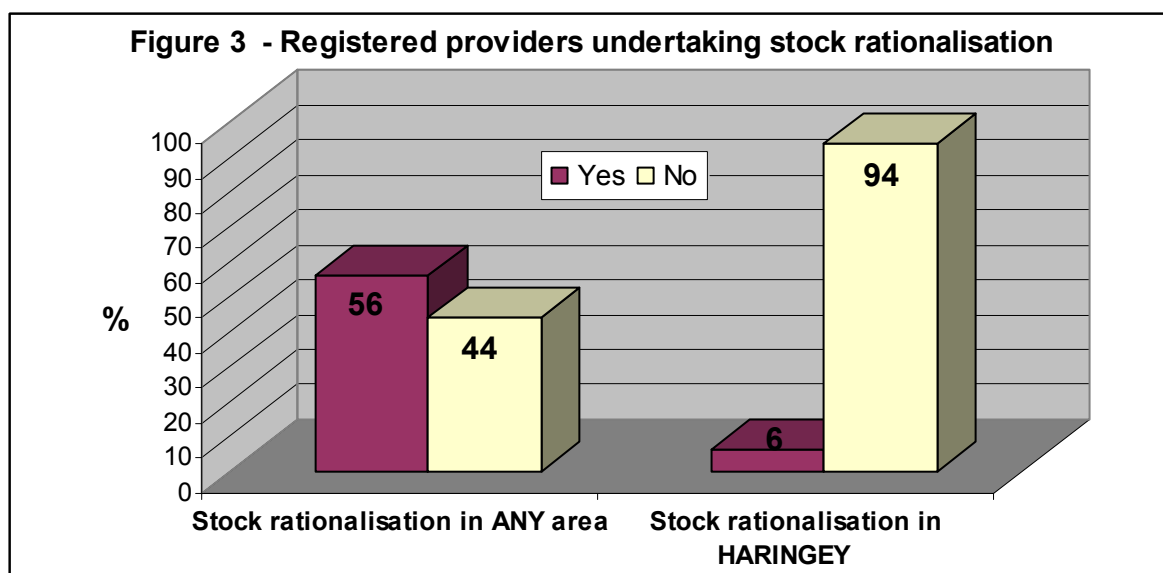
'We would also like to see periodic meetings with practical issues are on the agenda. This, again, will enable us to work in partnership to improve service delivery. [We] suggests that specialist services are invited to these meetings, for example, the noise section of Environmental Health, ASB or domestic violence advisors or other workers with similar specialism.'

- 6.13 Finally, there was a perception that although partnership working has many positive advantages, this was not always the most beneficial solution to local issues and that providers need to clearly weigh up the advantages of such arrangements:

'We have four separate shared services. In two instances we are the landlord and another organisation provides support and in two the reverse applies. These arrangements prevent continuity of service, are less efficient in terms of staff deployment and offer a less flexible service to tenants. [Don't] pursue partnership for the sake of it, if a service isn't broken, don't fix it.'

7.0 Stock rationalisation

- 7.1 The survey sought to ascertain whether RHPs had undertaken any rationalisation of the stock that they managed within their property portfolio and specifically within Haringey (e.g. stock swaps, stock transfer, stock sale, delegated management agreements). The survey also sought to identify examples of stock rationalisation and the possible benefits this has brought to providers. Further still, housing providers were asked to identify particular challenges in stock rationalisation and what role the Council can play to help overcome these.
- 7.2 It would appear that although stock rationalisation is taking place among RHPs, this is by no means universal, with just over half (56%) of respondents indicating that their organisation was engaged in some form of rationalisation of housing stock (Figure 3). This figure falls significantly in assessments of stock rationalisation in Haringey, where just 6% of respondents indicated that their organisation has rationalised stock in the borough (Figure 3).



- 7.3 Those respondents whose organisations had rationalised housing stock provided varied examples in which this had taken place and exemplified the different rationalising processes available to housing providers. Analysis would suggest that registered housing providers have engaged in the stock rationalisation process irrespective of the size of their organisation, or the nature of the housing stock that they own or manage (e.g. general needs and specialist housing).
- 7.4 Analysis of qualitative data would appear to suggest that stock rationalisation is firmly on the agenda of housing providers, with most actively considering such options, if not having undertaken such processes already. It is apparent that that providers are actively assessing the distribution and management of their housing stock and looking for opportunities to rationalise:

'We are considering rationalisation in a borough which is furthest away from our centre because it's small scale and makes sense to rationalise in this borough.'

'Where an organisation does not have a local office and has only a small number of units, it is also likely that that organisation is not looking to develop in the area and invest in partnership arrangements -it is in these circumstances that we would either be interested in taking on other stock or in [local authority's] where we are the minority player we would consider either disposal or management arrangements.'

- 7.5 Furthermore, it is apparent that a number of RHP are actively engaged in a stock rationalisation, in which housing stock is disposed in areas in which it has a minority interest and acquired in areas that are core to its business. This is exemplified in the response of a provider below:

'We have sold stock [to a registered provider] in Camden where we had small numbers, [this provider] was in a better position to provide local housing management service in the borough. We have done the same for general needs stock in Harrow,.... [and] have also recently taken on stock from [other providers] in Kensington & Chelsea.'

- 7.6 It is evident that providers have rationalised housing stock through a variety of mechanisms, including devolved management to another local provider, stock transfers, stock swaps and stock disposals. There would seem to be a preference however, perhaps among larger providers, to focus rationalisation on those processes that did not diminish organisational assets (i.e. devolved management and stock swaps):

'We are actively looking for other rationalisation opportunities, particularly through stock swaps.'

'We are not looking to diminish our asset base unless there are sound commercial reasons for doing so.'

Benefits of stock rationalisation

- 7.7 From the analysis of qualitative responses, it was apparent that there may be a number of benefits of stock rationalisation, both for the RHPs involved and for their respective tenants. Stock rationalisation that incorporated housing management being devolved to another more local provider, may have advantages given that this provider may have greater knowledge and understanding of local issues and may already have local resources in place (i.e. a housing office or housing officer). In this context, devolved management was perceived to be beneficial in that it provided a service that was more responsive to the needs of tenants:

'We have transferred some sheltered housing schemes to more local providers when for example they are in an isolated community away from where we work.'

'Most importantly, this has been beneficial to the tenants who now have a better housing management service.'

'We transferred four sheltered housing schemes in South Devon to a local organisation which was better placed to provide a more responsive service.'

- 7.8 Such rationalisation can also benefit those providers in receipt of housing stock (whether owned or managed), in that this may help the provider to increase its presence in an area where it has business interests, and possibly deliver more efficient housing management through improved economies of scale. In this context, it was evident that there may be multiple benefits for such providers:

'Benefits for us were that it increased our stock in a key Borough, implemented a decent homes programme and completed within 6 months and increased resident satisfaction in the area.'

- 7.9 Stock rationalisation was also seen as a process through which additional capital investment might be secured for investment in housing stock. Evidently some providers may not have sufficient capital to bring all housing in their portfolio to decent homes standard, and in this context, it may make sense to dispose of stock to a another local registered provider that sufficient capital to invest for such purposes. This can be beneficial to local both providers and of course, tenants:

'We transferred 600 properties in Croydon to [another provider] who had the resources to bring them up to Decent Homes Standards and already had a large presence in the borough.'

Challenges of stock rationalisation

- 7.10 Whilst there are evidently benefits, it is clear that providers may face a number of significant challenges in seeking to rationalise housing stock which they may own or manage. In previous analysis, it was noted that RHPs knowledge of other local providers underpinned the development of local partnerships. This was also important for stock rationalisation, in that providers cited that it was difficult to identify potential partners or had insufficient contact with other providers to enable potential rationalisation opportunities to be identified:

'Challenges faced were lack of frequent face to face contact with other [registered providers].'

'It can sometimes be difficult to find willing partners to engage with.'

- 7.11 Identifying collaborative partnerships to rationalise stock can be particularly challenging for small RHPs, as these may not have the established working relationships of larger providers or indeed, the resources to facilitate this. In this context, smaller providers may miss out on potential opportunities to positively engage with other providers seeking to rationalise housing stock:

'I think most of the larger RSLs know each other well enough to work directly with each other. I think smaller specialist local RSLs should be one the beneficiaries of stock transfers.'

- 7.12 Again, those providers whose housing stock predominantly comprised of street properties may face additional problems in identifying partners with whom to collaborate on potential stock rationalisation opportunities:

'We do not have many estates with multi landlords so we have few natural partnerships with other [registered providers] to draw upon.'

- 7.13 The existing condition of housing stock may also limit opportunities to rationalise housing stock. Older housing stock, which may require substantial investment, may be less attractive to potential partners in stock rationalisation:

'Where stock is old and in need of investment or has outdated design; it is unlikely that anyone else will be interested in it.'

- 7.14 Significant challenges still remain however, even when potential partners for stock rationalisation have been identified. There are evidently complex legal and financial processes which underpin stock rationalisation (disposal or local management). For some of these processes, it can be difficult for parties to reach agreement, particularly those concerning the value of the stock to be transferred. This was evidently a particular challenge to RHPs:

'The challenges were centred around values, agreeing stock condition.'

'It depends on the formula agreed for the price. This can be a deterrent.'

'Relative value is an issue and re-housing if the rationalisation involves disposal.'

- 7.15 Similarly, there may be existing legal conditions on the housing stock potential to be transferred which may need to be clarified before it can be transferred, sold or leased. In addition, providers may be in receipt of grants or loans in respect of such properties which may have legal and financial implications for providers wishing to dispose of stock and those seeking to acquire it:

'Historic charges and restrictions on title, and in planning permissions, which might affect a buyer's ability to refinance stock.'

'.... outstanding loan and grant.'

'.... repayment of grants.'

- 7.16 In this context, this can lead to lengthy legal processes which can be both time-consuming and costly:

'Protracted and costly legal process....'

'This frequently involves lengthy and detailed negotiation with consequent legal costs.'

'These are complicated and take up a lot of resources.'

Which can be particularly disadvantageous for smaller providers:

'There is also a need to keep costs down particularly for small providers.....'

- 7.17 Aside from legal and financial considerations, the needs and concerns of tenants also need to be factored in to the stock rationalisation process, and their consent is normally required where the tenancy is transferred. Understandably, the transfer of housing stock from one provider to another may precipitate anxiety among such tenants, particularly when these may be older or vulnerable people.

'The biggest obstacle was the bureaucracy of obtaining consent to dispose, otherwise the process was fairly straight forward.'

'Closure of sheltered accommodation can be worrying for tenants.'

'..... understandable resistance of residents to change in some cases, e.g. sheltered stock.'

Role of council

- 7.18 Respondents were asked to indicate what role the council could play to help support those RHPs who may be considering the rationalisation of stock in Haringey. Given the problems encountered in identifying possible partners, it is perhaps no surprise to record that a RHPs indicated it would be helpful if the Council developed brokerage role, in which it facilitated contact between local providers interested in stock rationalisation:

'It could act as a broker.'

'Brokerage.'

'Act as a broker where you identify a larger or more remote [registered provider] for whom Haringey is not a core borough. Suggest likely recipients and bring them together.'

'[The Council] can help identify and bring together interested parties and promote rationalisation as a beneficial option.'

- 7.19 Further analysis of responses provided more detail of what might be expected of such a brokerage role if this was adopted by the Council. It was clear that brokerage may involve more than bringing interested parties together, but actively working with registered housing providers to identify those who are interested and willing to engage in discussions about stock rationalisation. An active brokerage role in this respect could save providers that are interested in stock rationalisation considerable time and expense:

'Establish a register of associations wishing to participate in [stock rationalisation].'

'If we were to consider taking on other [registered providers] stock in the borough we would wish the [Council] to hold a dialogue with those partners first to ensure that they had a desire to consider such a transaction. A lot of time 'could be wasted shopping around to no avail.'

- 7.20 In addition, respondents noted that it would be helpful to have greater clarity about what the Council expected from providers in respect of stock rationalisation. Further still, it was apparent that if the Council was seeking to adopt a proactive role in stock rationalisation, it would be helpful if there were greater consistency and coordination across the business of the Council which supported this objective:

'The [Council] needs to be more specific as to what they want from us [providers]. We sometimes get mixed messages, for example, we are asked for wheelchair units but lettings are not always forthcoming. Planners also make things difficult to manage and let e.g. no cars, communal roof gardens...and unrealistic sustainability agenda.'

'Willingness of housing, legal and planning colleagues to vary planning consents or lift charges where restrictions are proving a barrier to stock modernisation or meeting housing need.'

- 7.21 What is apparent is that RHPs who may be considering stock rationalisation face a complex, costly and lengthy process in order to achieve this. In this context, and in relation to the above comments, it is suggested that what may be of benefit to RHPs, is the development of a stock rationalisation *policy*, which sets out the Councils ambitions and the strategic priorities. Such a policy could also help identify roles and expectations of local stakeholders and how best priorities can be supported through the broader activities of the Council.

8.0 Other issues identified

- 8.1 This final section provides a brief summary of issues that were raised by respondents, which although related (questioning within this survey) were not issues under primary investigation (engagement, partnership work and stock rationalisation).
- 8.2 Through the analysis of responses, it was evident that Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) was a common concern among RHPs. Within these responses it was clear that there has been engagement between the Council and among (and between) RHPs and that this has resulted in local partnerships to help tackle ASB:

'We have undertaken joint work to tackle ASB on estates and local neighbourhood, sharing information and issuing ABCs where youths are causing problems on estates away from the one they live on.'

- 8.3 It was apparent however, that alongside other issues, ASB could provide a focus for local engagement and partnership work with RHPs and would be useful to them. A number of providers noted the existence of a local ASB forum which has proved beneficial in the past. It was noted that the reconvening of this forum may be beneficial to local cooperation and partnerships among RHPs and in contribute to strategies to combat ASB:

'Re-starting ASB forum may be of assistance to improve multi-agency approach. Could lead on identified areas for joint working to ensure all appropriate partners are actively involved.'

'... the ASB Forum hasn't taken place for sometime due to structural changes within the Council. A return to a form of engagement around ASB would be useful.'

9.0 Summary and Conclusions

- 9.1 This report summarises both quantitative and qualitative responses provided within a survey of RHP who own or manage housing stock in Haringey. The report details the responses of 18 providers, and although this may only represent a probable 1/3 of all providers, respondents included a broad range of providers (e.g. size of provider, nature of provision). In this context, it is suggested that the views presented in this report provide an illustrative account of registered housing providers on the issues under investigation (local engagement structures, partnership working and stock rationalisation).

Engagement structures

- 9.2 There was broad agreement that the current engagement framework, operated by the Council for RHPs, was broadly in line with service provision elsewhere. From survey responses it would appear that RHPs are aware of the different structures which make up the engagement framework and representatives attend regularly.

- 9.3 Overall there was broad satisfaction with the current engagement framework. There were however, a number of suggestions as to how this framework could be improved:

- Ensure that all meetings within the engagement framework are scheduled in advance in an annual calendar
- Agendas, reports and minutes from engagement meetings are systematically distributed among all providers
- That all forums within the engagement framework have a clear terms of reference and tied to specific outcomes.

Partnership working

- 9.4 There was strong evidence of partnership working among registered housing providers. Partnership projects included a wide range of issues and processes and included both housing and non-housing partners. There appeared to be three main processes which underpinned local partnership working these were identified as:

- Joint procurement
- Pooled resources for community investment
- Shared services.

- 9.5 From the examples provided, it was clear that housing providers found that there was greater incentive to develop local partnerships where these focused on practical benefits to tenants, were tied to specific outcomes and were time limited. Analysis of the examples of partnerships between providers also revealed that there were three potential benefits to these arrangements:

- Improved knowledge and understanding of local housing issues
- Helped to develop a more coordinated and comprehensive response to local housing issues
- Improved the cost effectiveness and value for money of housing and other related services.

9.6 Respondents also identified a number of potential barriers to partnership working among RHPs. Knowledge of other RHPs that manage or own housing units in the locality is clearly prerequisite to forming collaborative partnerships, and respondents indicated that the Council could play a role in facilitating contacts among housing providers. Respondents also noted that registered housing providers were looking for leadership, commitment and support for partnership working from both the Council and large RHPs in the borough.

9.7 From the responses provided within this report, particularly given the scope of existing projects, it is apparent that there is significant potential to further develop and extend the range of partnerships currently in operation in the locality. Furthermore, such partnerships and the benefits that they may accrue may be acquired through limited further investment beyond what may be already provided (i.e. engagement framework).

Stock rationalisation

9.8 RHPs may have stock that is dispersed across wide geographical areas and located in many different local authorities. From the data gathered in this report, it was evident that, in some instances, it may be beneficial for RHPs and tenants, if housing stock was rationalised and business operations focussed in a smaller number of areas. The report has shown that housing providers are actively considering stock rationalisation and in some cases, have already initiated such projects (though very few of these have been in Haringey).

9.9 Analysis would appear to suggest that providers have engaged with different types of stock rationalisation including disposal, transfer and devolved management. Participating RHPs indicated that organisation and their tenants had derived a number of possible benefits from such stock rationalisation processes, which included:

- Enabled providers to acquire stock in an authority which is core their business which may:
 - improved economies of scale
 - provide greater value for money
 - Improved access to capital investment funds (for decent homes)
- Facilitated more localised models of housing management which may:
 - develop services more that are more sensitive to needs of tenants
 - improved quality of services to tenants.

9.10 Stock rationalisation is however, not a straightforward process. Indeed, RHPs that participated in this survey noted that the process of transfer of housing stock involved complex legal and financial transactions which can be both

lengthy and expensive (which can be a disincentive to smaller organisations). Particular hurdles identified by respondents included:

- Agreeing values of stock
- Legal constraints on stock
- Grants or loans associated with the stock.

9.11 One of the key barriers to those providers considering stock rationalisation was the available knowledge potential partners; that is, housing providers who may be considering to acquire or dispose of stock in the local area. In this context, respondents indicated that the Council could play an active brokerage role, to facilitate contact between local housing providers, or the establishment of a local register of providers willing to engage in stock rationalisation.

9.12 But perhaps most importantly, providers may be looking for further local guidance and support when considering stock rationalisation. To this end, the Council may wish to develop a stock rationalisation policy which sets out local priorities and objectives, the expectations of local stakeholders considering such approaches and the identification of any resources which may be able to support this process.

Appendix C – Mapping of Social Housing in Haringey

Figure 1 – Map of ALL social housing in Haringey (postcode)

Total Social Housing in Haringey
(all providers 31,814 Households)

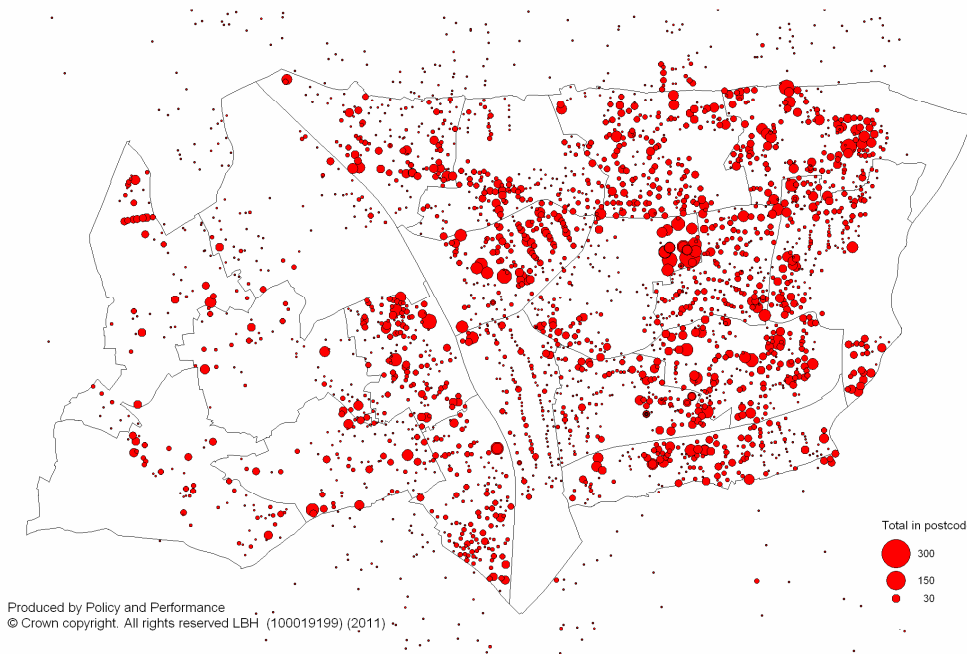


Figure 2 – Mapping of Social Housing in Haringey: 6 largest providers

Top 6 Social rented households in Haringey

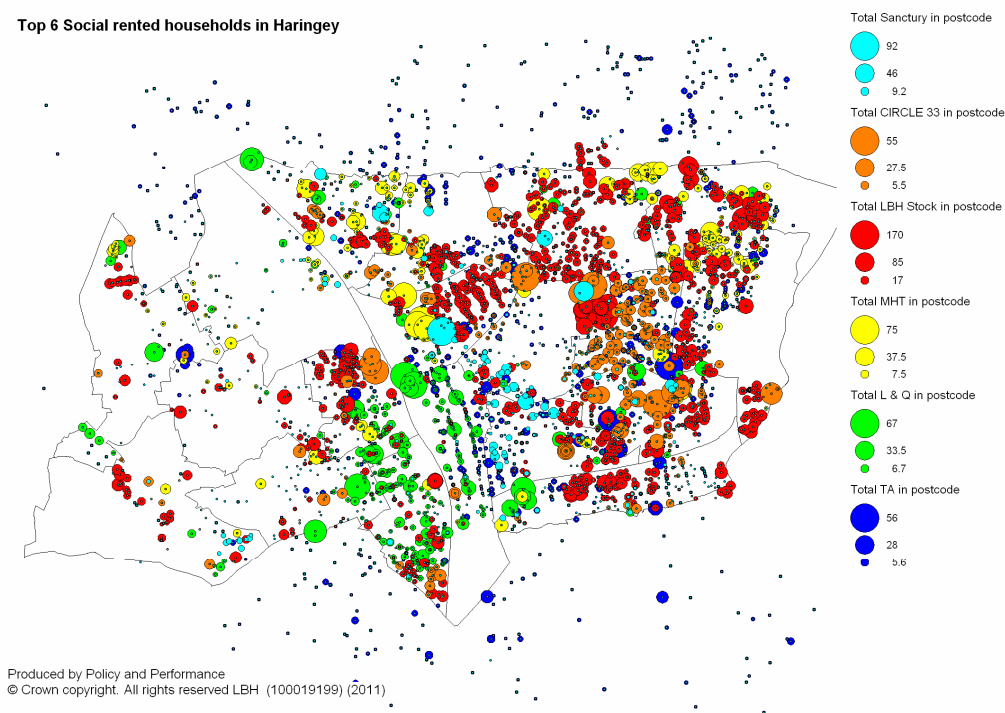


Figure 3 -Council and RHP owned stock in the White Hart Lane Area



