

## **KEY ISSUES - HOUSING SERVICE**

### **Key elements of the Service**

The Strategic and Community Housing Service covers the Council's housing functions, across all sectors, the main ones being as follows:

- The development and implementation of the overarching housing strategy and its sub strategies, covering such matters as homelessness, private sector housing, fuel poverty and the supply of affordable housing.
- The provision of a robust ALMO client function and a structured approach to determining and communicating the Council's requirements, in order to ensure that Homes for Haringey manages and maintains the Council's housing stock efficiently and to the required standards, and delivers Haringey's decent homes programme within budget and on time.
- The development and implementation of an affordable housing programme, in partnership with registered social bodies, to provide affordable homes for rent and purchase.
- The improvement and enforcement of standards in private sector housing, including houses in multiple occupation, empty homes, the private rented sector and homes requiring substantial renovation.
- The assessment of housing applicants' housing and support needs (including homeless households living in temporary accommodation, and social housing tenants seeking a transfer) and the letting of social housing.

## Recent Key events:

- In 2007, Homes for Haringey became the first Sixth Round ALMO to be awarded a '2 Star' inspection rating from the Audit Commission. This paved the way for the Government awarding £198 million additional capital funding to support the delivery of Haringey's decent homes programme.
- To date, more than 500 of Haringey's Council homes have been made decent through the decent homes programme.
- The number of households living in Haringey's temporary accommodation (TA) has reduced by more than 500 during the past six months, and currently stands at 4,943. Increased use of the private rented sector, together with effective homelessness prevention and the more efficient assessment of homelessness applications, has reduced the number of placements in TA.
- Haringey's multi agency, three year homelessness strategy, published in July 2008, was developed in an inclusive manner and has received widespread support from a wide range of stakeholders who are committed to its successful and timely implementation.
- A total of 315 affordable homes were completed in 2007/08. During the period 2006/08, Haringey spent 97% of its National Affordable Housing Programme allocation, some £86 million.
- The Hearthstone domestic violence advice and support service received an award from the Mayor of London, recognising it as a centre of excellence, and is soon to increase the range of services operating from its premises when it re-opens, following extensive refurbishment, in December 2008.
- Some excellent work has been undertaken to tackle fuel poverty in Haringey, drawing on substantial funding from the North London Sub Region. Efforts to bring empty properties back into use have proved equally successful, with a total of 7 properties approved for compulsory purchase and another 20 being the subject of Council applications for enforced sales.
- Work is ongoing to improve the performance of the Strategic and Community Housing Service. Progress is scrutinised by a Housing Improvement Board which meets fortnightly and is chaired by the Council's Chief Executive.

## **KEY ISSUES & CHALLENGES FOR NEXT YEAR:**

- The new staffing structure for the Strategic and Community Housing Service is designed to improve efficiency, accountability and quality of service. Subject to Cabinet's approval, the new structure will be implemented over a three months period up until February 2009.
- Haringey's target of halving its use of temporary accommodation by March 2010 is a very challenging one and is reliant on the continuing success of homelessness prevention measures and the procurement of a plentiful supply of good quality, affordable private rented accommodation.
- The recent downturn of the economy has had a dramatic impact on the availability of mortgage finance and public confidence in home ownership. It is also likely to reduce the number of homes built by developers. A Members training session has been arranged that will also include an update on the Government proposals to deal with the effects of the "Credit Crunch".
- If the economic situation continues, homelessness (fuelled by a growing number of mortgage repossessions, including those obtained for buy-to-let) may increase, and landlords who are struggling to meet increased mortgage payments may take longer to carry out repairs.
- Changes to the subsidy regime for temporary accommodation have already had a significant impact on the Council's income. Details of the new subsidy regime, due to come into effect in 2010/11, have not yet been published.
- Delivery of Haringey's decent homes programme is on track but requires close monitoring to ensure that it is delivered within budget and on time.
- Significant changes and improvements are planned for the way in which the Council and Homes for Haringey deals with voids and the letting of social housing. These improvements will reduce void turnaround times, increase transparency, and enhance the customer experience.
- Discretionary HMO licensing is being considered for two pilot areas in Haringey, as a means of regulating HMO activity in those neighbourhoods.
- Haringey's new housing strategy, scheduled for publication early in 2009, will provide a new overarching framework within which to address the borough's existing and future housing needs in partnership with a range of stakeholders, including the new Homes and Communities Agency.