

Chair:
Councillor Charles Adje

Deputy Chair:
Councillor Harry Lister

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has reserved the power to approve policies, plans and strategies that are specified in the Council's Policy Framework. (Part F.6 of the Constitution – The Budget and Policy Framework Schedule).
- 1.2 The Council's Policy Framework means (i) the plans and strategies required to be approved at full Council under the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) or (ii) those plans and strategies that the Council itself has determined shall be reserved to the full Council for approval.
- 1.3 This report covers one of those strategies which we considered at our meeting on 20 December 2005.

ITEM FOR DECISION

Housing

2. HOUSING STRATEGY

- 2.1 We considered a report which advised us that the Council's current housing strategy (2003-6) had been granted Fit For Purpose (FFP) by the Government Office for London (GoL) in August of this year following nearly 18 months of dialogue. The inevitable result of this delay had been that much of the background information and context in the strategy was out of date, as were the proposed actions. Particularly, there was little mention of the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and its implications. We noted that FFP status meant that the Council would not be required to submit an updated housing strategy to the Government for at least three years. However, to ensure that our business plans and housing related strategies were properly aligned to our overall housing strategy and to our community strategy priorities, we should and would be expected to keep the strategy current and maintain an up to date action plan.
- 2.2 The existing action plan, although meeting FFP criteria, did not accurately reflect work being undertaken to meet our objectives including such major initiatives as the ALMO or the Prevention and Options project which would radically alter the way we delivered services. Also the monitoring arrangements were not as robust or joined up as we would like. We noted that reviewing the Housing Strategy now and taking it through the Council decision making process would aid the ALMO inspection process and ensure we were focused on our priorities at this critical time.
- 2.3 The report proposed that the background, context information and actions in the Housing Strategy be updated while the existing objectives and overall vision were retained. The Council's housing vision would, therefore, remain as:

Meeting the Borough's current and future housing needs – and through doing so, making a major contribution to social inclusion and the socio-economic well-being of Haringey.

2.4 Our overall housing strategy objectives would remain as:

- *Improve housing services to residents across the tenures*
- *Maximise the supply of affordable homes, increasing access and housing choice*
- *Improve community safety, sustainability and cohesion in our most deprived communities and create opportunities for people to achieve and succeed*
- *Regenerate our neighbourhoods, achieving decent homes for all and improve the environment*

2.5 As part of the review of the strategy each of the key drivers had been looked at to ensure that our strategy and actions reflected current priorities and direction. The following drivers had informed the development of the strategy and the prioritisation of the actions.

National, Regional and Sub-Regional priorities –

- *Sustainable communities agenda had developed.*
- *Target of reducing temporary accommodation by half by 2010*
- *Increased drive to sub regional and regional working – context clearer than in 2003*

Local Strategic Context, including the Council's corporate priorities as stated in the Community Strategy -

Our priorities remained in line with the Community Strategy objectives and the updated strategy reflects the important role that housing had to play in achieving the overall aims of the Council and our partners. GOL recently recognised the effectiveness of the Housing Strategic Partnership in delivering outcomes by giving a green light to the housing contribution to the community strategy action plan.

The Haringey context and the local housing market, including supply and demand and property condition –

- *Demand continued to exceed supply*
- *Affordability remained a key issue*
- *Increased need and possible opportunity to access private rented options*

The prioritisation of limited resources -

- *Changes to the housing funding regime had major implications for our private sector grants programme and the delivery of our Private Sector Housing Strategy*
- *A successful ALMO and achievement of 2 and 3 stars would bring the investment needed to meet the decent homes standard*

Issues of concern for stakeholders -

- *Transience and the impact of high levels of temporary accommodation*
- *Impacts of new development*
- *For service users - options and customer care*

2.6 Consideration of the drivers had led to the identification of the following key issues and priorities:

Delivery of the ALMO -

The Council endorsed the proposal to create an ALMO in January 2005 and it received the backing of a majority of tenants (54%) in the ballot held in March/April 2005. A Shadow Board was established in October 2005 and Homes For Haringey would go live in April 2006.

Delivery of a robust remaining housing function –

The Government considered that the creation of an ALMO gave the remaining housing service an opportunity to concentrate on its strategic housing function. The creation of a new management structure for the Housing Strategy and Needs Service was the first step in ensuring that the service could meet the challenges ahead.

Implementation of the Homelessness Project –

The new 'prevention and options' approach, which would be delivered with our partners, marked a fundamental change in the way that our homelessness services were delivered. The project was likely to be implemented at the end of March 2005.

Achieving a 50% reduction in temporary accommodation by 2010 –

Our levels of temporary accommodation continued to rise against a backdrop of the ODPM expecting a 50% drop. A specific action plan that fed into this strategy was being developed.

Delivery of housing development that contributed to the achievement of sustainable communities -

Provision of new units to assist housing need while ensuring that the impacts were positive for the borough.

Regeneration of private sector housing -

Private sector housing played a major role in meeting housing need in Haringey, providing homes to over 70,000 households. The strategy sought to encourage the sector to provide affordable, accessible and decent homes for those wishing to rent or buy. Key activity included action on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), empty properties and rogue landlords. We would work with landlords through the Accredited Letting Scheme to improve standards and offer options to those in most need. The improvement of private sector housing was also a critical part of our neighbourhood regeneration activity.

Partnership working on housing and broader objectives -

Partnerships to deliver key objectives were well developed. Progress had been made in our joint working with both internal and external organisations. Particular work on anti poverty and fuel poverty would be undertaken.

Increased understanding of the market -

In the future the CPA would place greater emphasis on the Council's understanding of the market and planned interventions. The Strategy acknowledged that and the service was actively working towards building a far greater level of knowledge about Haringey's housing need and local housing markets. A major new housing needs survey had been commissioned and would report in March 2006 with sub-area analysis to ward level. In conjunction it was hoped that the sub-region would procure a detailed housing markets analysis across all 6 boroughs.

- 2.7 We noted that this process involved an updating of the strategy and that a more fundamental review of the strategy and its priorities would be conducted in 2007, following the development of the new Community Strategy and the receipt to updated housing needs and market analysis information.
- 2.8 We also noted that a key aspect of the update had been to ensure that the action plan had 'SMART' targets clearly linked to the achievements of the strategies objectives. The action plan covered the period from 2006 to 2008 and would be updated to reflect the most recent Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) guidance. The action plan would be agreed with key stakeholders. As our strategic objectives would require close partnership working with internal departments and key external agencies including Housing Associations, the health authority, and the voluntary sector with monitoring of the action plan carried out through the Housing Strategic Partnership and to this end it was proposed that the Head of Housing Strategy and Performance prepare a quarterly report, which would be considered by the Partnership.

WE RECOMMEND

1. That the process for updating and monitoring the Housing Strategy and the priority areas as highlighted above be approved.
2. That a summary version of the Housing Strategy be produced for publication and dissemination and that it be translated into the most appropriate community languages with an Information campaign undertaken to publicise it and the work being undertaken in the action plan.