

Meeting: Integrated Housing Board

Date: 10 December 2008

Report Title: Feedback from the Consultative Forums

Report of: Assistant Director for Strategic and Community Housing Services

Summary

At its meeting on 15 October 2008, the Integrated Housing Board agreed to the development and implementation of a consultative framework for housing stakeholders in Haringey. It was agreed to support 3 stakeholder forums – for private landlords, RSLs and developers, and advice providers.

The Landlords Forum and the RSL/Developers Forum have now met and the purpose of this report is to provide the Board with feedback.

Recommendation

It is **recommended** that the Integrated Housing Board notes the summaries from each of the forums and takes the feedback into account in its discussions about the development of the new 10 year Housing Strategy.

Background

The **Landlords Forum** met on 13 November 2008 at the White Hart Lane Sports Centre. It was a well attended meeting with around 100 people in attendance, including more than fifty landlords and rental agents.

The main item for discussion and consultation was the 10 year Housing Strategy. After a short presentation, voting technology was used to capture the views of landlords. The results are included in Appendix 1.

The Landlords Forum was organised jointly by the Housing Service and the Housing Benefit Service, and included a presentation that updated landlords on the implementation of the Local Housing Allowance. Not surprisingly, this was a lively session and, again, a summary of the main points made has been included in Appendix 1 of this report.

A collection of “stalls” in the hall provided landlords with the opportunity to speak with the Empty Property Officer and staff from the Housing Benefit, Private Sector Lettings and Private Sector Initiatives teams about a range of matters, including energy efficiency and affordable warmth.

The **RSL/Developers Forum** met on 25 November 2008 at the West Green Learning Centre. Attendance was good, with 12 Housing Associations and 2

developers represented at the meeting.

Once again consultation on the 10 year Housing strategy was the main agenda item. The results are included in Appendix 2.

The RSL / Developers Forum was organised jointly by the Housing Service and the Planning and Regeneration Service, and included an update on the main Planning issues and the development of the Local Development Framework core strategy.

A representative of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) provided the meeting with a useful update on the priorities of the HCA, and the North London Housing Sub Region's Co-ordinator provided an update on the work that is going on to commission a housing market assessment.

The key points from the Forum are detailed in Appendix 2.

For more information contact:

Officer: Phil Harris

Title: Assistant Director for Strategic and Community Housing Services

Tel: 020 8489 4338

Email address: phil.harris@haringey.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1: LANDLORDS FORUM OF 13 NOVEMBER 2008

INTERACTIVE SESSION – YEAR HOUSING STRATEGY

The landlords were invited to answer 11 questions. The questions, and the landlords' answers, are set out below.

Question 1 - How many properties do you manage?

1-3.....27%
4-9.....13%
10-20.....8%
More than 20.....52%

Question 2 - What proportion of your properties are “Buy to Let”?

None.....12%
Less than half.....14%
More than half.....31%
All.....43%

Question 3 - How many of your properties are houses in multiple occupation (HMO)?

None.....52%
1-3.....24%
4-9.....10%
10-20.....10%
More than 20.....4%

Question 4 - Where in the borough are most of the properties you manage?

In the East.....26%
In the West.....13%
In the Centre.....25%
All over.....36%

Question 5 - Are your tenants mainly...?

Families with children.....52%
Young adults, aged 16-24.....0%
Older adults aged 25+.....5%
A mixture of the above.....43%

Question 6 - In which of these areas does your stock need most investment?

Health and safety.....15%
General repairs.....41%
Energy efficiency.....27%
External appearance...17%

Question 7 - What are the biggest issues you have had with tenants over the last 2 years?

Property left in poor condition.....45%
Non-payment of rent.....39%
Anti social behaviour..... 8%
Overcrowding..... 7%

Question 8 – As a landlord, what is important to you about the neighbourhood in which your properties are situated?

Environmental issues.....12%
Crime and ASB.....51%
Availability of local amenities.....16%
Transport links.....20%

Question 9 – What support can we give to help you be a responsible landlord?

Advice on the responsibilities of landlords.....36%
Enforcement of legal standards..... 25%
Voluntary accreditation scheme.....13%
Training for landlords.....26%

Question 10 – What will be the main effects of the ‘credit crunch’ on private rented housing in Haringey?

An increase in rented accommodation.....29%
A decrease in buy to let as investors sell.....14%
The housing market will stay the same.....6%
Rents will increase.....39%
Rents will decrease.....8%
None of the above.....4%

Question 11 - Do you see yourself expanding your operation over the next 3 years?

Yes.....51%
No.....24%
Maybe....25%

UPDATE ON THE LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE (LHA)

Following the presentation from the Deputy Head of Benefits and Local Taxation, there was a lively question and answer session.

Most of the landlords’ criticism of the scheme was levelled at central government policy, rather than the local administration of the scheme.

Landlords expressed dissatisfaction with two elements of the LHA scheme:

- The fact that, in most instances, the LHA is paid direct to the tenant
- The inability of existing tenants to opt into the LHA scheme, since LHA is only payable for new tenancies. The landlords acknowledged that the rent levels that could be supported through the LHA scheme were generally higher than under the old scheme.

FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS WITH LANDLORDS

Landlords noted the Council's new approach to tackling homelessness (as set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2008-11) and its plans to reduce its use of emergency accommodation and play a more effective role in procuring assured shorthold tenancies.

A number of landlords expressed interest in working more closely with the Council in the future and left their contact details.

APPENDIX 2: RSL / DEVELOPERS FORUM OF 25 NOVEMBER 2008

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ABOUT 10 YEAR HOUSING STRATEGY

Following a presentation, everyone was invited to consider two questions:

1. What are the 3 key priorities for the next 10 years?
2. How can we mitigate the effects of the 'credit crunch' and what opportunities are there to exploit?

The headline points resulting from the discussions were as follows:

The key priorities

- The maximisation of new housing supply across all tenures.
- The need for flexible tenure options – rent to buy; home ownership to renting; broadening the range and accessibility of shared ownership options.
- Support for home owners – mortgage rescue and flexible tenure (see above) and new innovative mortgage products
- Sustainable well designed energy efficient housing
- Improving housing management standards and better co-ordination of housing management between RSLs and the Council

Responding to the 'credit crunch'

- Taking the long term view, it offers opportunities – land values are falling; construction costs are falling; next year will start to see distressed sales.
- While market sales are difficult, Planning authorities will need to be more flexible on the mix of new developments.
- As cross-subsidisation is no longer feasible, there is a need for new subsidy arrangements for affordable housing, such as discounted public land.