

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING SERVICES**

### **KEY ISSUES – STRATEGIC AND COMMUNITY HOUSING SERVICES**

#### **Business Plan objectives:**

1. To halve the number of homeless households in Temporary Accommodation, by March 2010, through effective homelessness prevention, smarter working, better partnerships and the provision of a range of housing options.
2. To maximise the development of affordable housing, by attracting investment and ensuring effective partnership working, to meet the needs of residents and help build strong and environmentally sustainable communities.
3. to ensure the efficient management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock by developing a robust client function in respect of Homes for Haringey's finance and performance managements arrangements, together with a structured approach to determining and communicating the council's requirements.
4. To tackle homelessness, overcrowding and under occupation by making best use of Haringey's social housing stock, bringing empty homes back into use encouraging housing mobility, extending and promoting choice based lettings, and removing barriers to the private rented sector.
5. To achieve the continuous improvement of Strategic and Community Housing Services, ensuring that it is well managed, fit for purpose, customer-centred and provides good value for money.

#### **Key functions of Strategic and Community Housing Services:**

- The development and implementation of the overarching housing strategy and its sub strategies, covering such matters as homelessness, private sector housing, affordable warmth and the supply of affordable housing.
- The provision of a robust ALMO client function that ensures 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), the maintenance of a housing register and the letting of social housing.
- The procurement, management and letting of temporary accommodation.

## **Recent key developments and events:**

- Implementation of the new staffing structure continues, with teams and services being realigned to improve service delivery, communication and joint working.
- Haringey's 10 year Housing Strategy was approved by Cabinet in April 2009 following extensive stakeholder consultation and, at a multi agency event held in September 2009, stakeholders reviewed and celebrated the first year's excellent progress in implementing Haringey's Homelessness Strategy 2008-11.
- An Affordable Warmth Strategy is due to be approved by Cabinet in October 2009, and work is already underway to develop a multi agency Move-On Strategy designed to 'free up' accommodation in hostels and supported housing in order to make optimum use of the housing-related support provided, assist hospital discharge and reduce the Council's use of residential care.
- The review of the Council's Management Agreement with Homes for Haringey is progressing well and will be completed by December 2009.
- Work is continuing with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) – as part of the 'single conversation' – to develop Haringey's first Borough Investment Plan, identifying our investment needs, opportunities and priorities for the next 5 years. The Investment Plan will be submitted to the HCA in December 2009.
- An Emergency Accommodation Reduction Project was established in May 2009 to reduce the number of homeless households in expensive, nightly-purchased Emergency Accommodation from almost 1700 to just 200 by April 2010 when new subsidy arrangements (affecting the amount of money that councils can claim towards the cost of temporary accommodation) come into effect.
- As part of the drive to reduce costs and the Council's use of Emergency Accommodation, tenders have been obtained for the procurement of up to 400 units of supplier-managed private sector leased accommodation. These tenders have been evaluated and will be reported to Cabinet in October 2009.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation (TA) has continued to reduce and, by the end of September 2009, the figure stood at 4123. This was 435 fewer than at the end of March 2009. It is hoped that, by the end of October 2009, the number of households in Emergency Accommodation will reduce to less than 1300 and the number of households in TA will reduce to less than 4000.
- Consultation has started on the development of a new housing allocations policy that addresses the current and future needs of the borough, is more transparent and easier to understand, and helps to manage applicants' expectations. Consultation with Members started at a Leader's Conference on 8 October 2009.
- Strong relationships are being established with a growing number of private landlords offering good quality, well managed accommodation in Haringey and neighbouring boroughs. The Landlords Forum continues to attract a lot of support and, during the past six months, the Private Sector Lettings Team has helped more than 400 households move into private rented accommodation.

## **Key issues and challenges for 2009/2010**

- Accelerating the reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation (to achieve the end-of-year target of 3,500) and successfully reduce the number of households in Emergency Accommodation to 200.
- Procuring temporary accommodation in a manner that delivers improved value for money and minimises the financial impact of the new housing subsidy arrangements that come into effect in April 2010.
- Forecasting the financial impact of the new housing subsidy arrangements on the Council and Strategic & Community Housing Services, taking into account the changing tenure and property size of the portfolio of temporary accommodation.
- Preparing for the Audit Commission's inspection of Homes for Haringey and any Short Notice inspection of Strategic & Community Housing Services.
- Targeting specific neighbourhoods where it is suspected that the owners of a lot of licensable HMOs have failed to apply for an HMO licence (and increasing the size of the fees charged if the owner has failed to make an application in a timely way) in order to maximise compliance with the HMO licensing scheme.
- Attracting the necessary investment to develop new affordable housing in the borough and promoting a wide range of affordable housing options, including home ownership and private rented accommodation.
- Embedding the new staffing structure, developing and empowering staff and managers, and establishing a strong customer focus and performance culture. Reducing the number of agency/ temporary staff where possible.
- Looking to drive up quality standards using a number of measures including audit and monitoring of customer experiences.