

**Scrutiny Review Registered Housing Providers
Panel Meeting 7th February Draft Minutes**

Present: Cllrs Alexander (Chair), Adje, Beacham, Christophides & Watson

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Cllr Schmitz

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 None received.

3. Late items of urgent business

3.1 None received.

4. Minutes of previous meetings.

4.1 These were agreed by the panel.

5. Homes for Haringey

5.1 HfH provided a verbal presentation to the panel on issues pertaining to partnership working within the registered housing provider sector. The following provides a summary of the key points made and subsequent panel discussions.

5.2 Homes for Haringey (HfH) is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), managing housing stock on behalf of Haringey Council. HfH was created as the main delivery vehicle for the decent homes programme in the borough. The management agreement has been extended until 2016.

5.3 HfH is primarily a housing management organisation, which is reflected in their funded activities and overall budget (i.e. just 5% is for environmental improvements). In terms of capital investment in HfH stock, this is delivered through Decent Homes, though it was evident that there would be significant reduction in funds administered through this programme in the future.

5.4 It was noted by the panel that with the development of the Tenant Services Authority a much stronger lead had been taken with regulation of housing associations. New standards had been developed which came in to effect on April 1st 2010 and these were applicable to the whole of the social housing sector, not just housing associations. HfH were thus included within these new service standards.

5.5 The panel noted that there were a number of ways in which HfH works with other housing associations and on collaborative housing projects within the borough. It was noted that:

- HfH are members of the Integrated Housing Board with other housing associations to discuss strategic housing issues in the borough
- HfH have undertaken a pilot project working with other housing associations to look at issues on a multi-landlord estate (Campsbourne)
- HfH participates in other local forums such as Asset Management, Customer Access and ASB
- It was noted that together with a number of other housing associations, HfH were active contributors in the affordable warmth group

5.6 The panel noted that HfH have a good knowledge of local housing stock and issues affecting local tenants. The panel noted that HfH had undertaken some intensive consultation exercises to support this, as illustrated through the local door knocking exercise to collect data from local tenants. It was felt that this knowledge has the potential to increase the place shaping role of the organisation (in collaboration with other organisations).

5.7 It was reported that HfH do provide housing management services for a number of smaller Housing Associations in the borough, for example, out of hours repair service. The panel noted that whilst this area provided considerable developmental and expansion opportunities for HfH, it was also an area of high risk, as the organisation did not have as developed knowledge about this housing stock as their own. This was not a straightforward issue as there were many complicating factors, including VAT implications.

5.8 The panel were keen to understand what the main issues facing HfH in working with local housing associations. A number of points were made to the panel which included:

- There are so many housing associations/ registered social landlords in the borough which makes engagement difficult
- And following on from this, it is difficult to engage with housing associations without knowing which associations have stock where. In this context the panel noted it would be beneficial if social housing stock was GIS located and mapped. GIS mapping would also help link to Experian social mapping tools.
- There is lots of community investment undertaken in the borough through housing associations and it would be useful to have further knowledge of what is provided by whom
- Partnership arrangements may not always be straightforward as there may be complex lease and transfer arrangements in place around social housing stock (e.g. a housing association has 8 properties in Broadwater Farm which are leased from the Council).

Agreed: that GIS mapping of social housing in the borough is developed to facilitate partnership in this sector at both operational and strategic levels.

5.9 In terms of stock transfer, the panel noted that the council itself had approximately 400 properties external to the borough in Waltham Cross, Enfield and Hackney. These properties are managed by local housing associations or by HfH. In Waltham Cross, two estates had voted to transfer

over to a RSL and one to remain with the council. An option appraisal paper has recently been presented to Cabinet about the future of these properties. Any future disposal may reduce expenditure and increase capital receipts.

- 5.10 The panel noted that housing associations receive dedicated funding for community improvement projects such as training, employment, ASB and other community projects. Of importance to the review was the degree to which these are provided singularly or in partnership and whether there was the potential for joint service provision or if synergies and efficiencies could be obtained through collaborative provision.
- 5.11 It was felt that new technologies and software would play an increasing role in facilitating partnerships in this sector. The panel heard that Hfh had profiled housing stock and were beginning to map service hotspots for ASB, youth disengagement and other locally held data. With this data and greater knowledge of where housing association stock was located, more coordinated work with housing associations could take place.
- 5.12 The panel were keen to understand what might lay beyond the 2016 for Hfh, when the current management agreement expires. The panel heard that Hfh had a good local track record; successful in securing decent homes funding and delivering improvement, had a strong track record in tenant engagement and were active partners in a wide range of local service planning and delivery. Whilst the housing policy landscape and finance structures were changing rapidly, it was felt that this track record put them in a strong role for continuing this work.
- 5.13 Hfh responded to a number of issues raised directly by the panel concerning partnerships with housing associations:
- ASB: the council's ASBAT team coordinates this work for high profile issues of ASB irrespective of tenure. Hfh deals with lower level issues with its tenants.
 - Sub letting: Hfh works closely with council in this field and the work in the authority is supported by two fraud officers. There is not a lot of partnership work in this field with other local housing associations (assuming larger associations have their own officers)
 - Community projects: as was demonstrated through pilot work, housing associations fund a broad range of community activities but these are not necessarily joined up with the work of the council or other housing association undertaking similar work in the area
 - Estate walkabouts: there was the potential to have joint estate walkabout where there were multiple landlords, and this was noted to occur with one larger landlord (L & Q) on one estate. Landlords are not systematically invited.
- 5.14 The panel noted that there may be synergies and efficiencies from more coordinated or integrated provision of community services provided by housing associations. Although partnership work was key to the delivery of more coordinated provision, the panel were keen to understand the

challenges in this approach. From their experience of such initiatives, HfH noted that following were important:

- Getting interested parties around a table discussing issues of common concern
- Building relationships and building trust on projects
- Dialogue to help map out common services
- Tenant consultation – common processes

5.15 HfH reported to the panel that a lot of work had been done to improve resident involvement and engagement structures. The panel noted that in recent HfH board elections there was a high turn out of 48%. It was noted that additional work was about to commence with a pilot project to improve resident involvement for all tenures.

5.16 In respect of developing common social housing standards in the borough, the panel heard that many RSLs and housing associations may be wary of such an approach given the structure of these organisations (i.e. with stock dispersed over a wide range of boroughs). Developing common standards, would inevitably present logistical and workload problems if housing associations were to be developed with all local authorities in which stock was held. For smaller housing associations, this would be very difficult.

5.17 Nonetheless, there was a perception that some RSLs may have become very detached from tenants, especially where stock is dispersed across a wide geographical area. Thus the development of local offers by the TSA was established to help promote further engagement with tenants to reach agreement on standards which tenants felt to be important. All RSL and housing association are in the process of publishing their local offers so tenants can be clear about what to expect from their landlord. HfH was noted to be a 3 star service in terms of resident involvement.

5.18 The panel noted the new council structure which would see the implementation of Area Committees. It was felt that there should be further consideration as to how community work and projects developed through the housing sector are aligned and integrated in to these new decision making and accountability structures.

6. Campsbourne Pilot Project

6.1 Homes for Haringey gave a verbal presentation on the work of the Campsbourne Pilot Project, an initiative to bring together the work of a number of housing associations (n=6) on multi-landlord estates in Hornsey. The following provides a summary of the main points from this presentation and subsequent panel discussion.

6.2 This project commenced in April 2010. The aim of this project is to bring together the work of social landlords in this area to help develop and improve services for local people. The premise was that many landlords would be facing the similar issues in working with tenants in this area, so it may be more effective to work collaboratively in resolving community needs. Given

housing associations reticence on working on issues related to common standards, an operational approach was taken with the project, which aimed to look at partnerships and joint working arrangements at a more practical and localised level. It was felt that this approach would help to build up trust and sound working relationships among project partners.

- 6.3 During 2010, this project has undertaken tenant consultation with all social landlords and developed 6 strategic priorities. Social landlords involved in the project signed up to a partnership agreement, which although not legally binding, provided a statement of intent of stakeholders.
- 6.4 The pilot project sought to identify all the community initiatives that housing associations were providing in the locality. A number of common projects were identified across the partnership team including employment, language courses and youth training provision. The project has also undertaken tenant engagement on a collective basis across all social landlords in the area, with a singular tenant consultation survey developed for all social landlords in the area with a door knocking exercise. This had helped to understand local needs and shape local priorities.
- 6.5 It was reported that national stockholders may be relatively easy to engage in such partnership work given the scale of operations and the presence of dedicated workers to support such collaborative projects. It was however difficult to engage smaller stock holders, not because they were not interested in participating or supporting such an approach, but because they do not have the capacity to engage. The panel noted that a key challenge for projects like this was how to successfully engage and support the participation of smaller housing associations.
- 6.6 The panel noted that although some housing associations may have relatively small resources to invest in community services, if priorities were aligned and resources pooled, the potential value of community investment could be significantly larger and operations may be more efficient. The panel were keen to ensure that these principles should be explored further with housing associations through the consultation process and ascertain best practice in this sector.
- 6.7 Stemming from the work of the Campsbourne project (e.g. pulling together work on different community initiatives undertaken by respective social landlords, consultation with tenants) three distinct objectives have been developed:
- Develop community bids from the collaborative
 - Recruit a community development post to work across RSLs and with the local community
 - Develop a local residents association
- 6.8 The panel heard that the project had developed a number of key services in the community which had facilitated the development of this project. The panel heard that links had been made with the head teacher of the local

primary school in which pupils had contributed to the tenant consultation process. In addition, neighbourhood management had provided additional input in to the Campsbourne pilot project, and indeed, in a contributor to its success. It was noted that neighbourhoods are in the process of handing over related work.

- 6.9 The panel noted the successful development of this project and were keen to understand key learning points from it which would facilitate the application of this model in other locations across the borough. HfH agreed to submit further information to the panel on what lessons have been learnt and on the practicalities of this model being applied elsewhere.

Agreed: that HfH would submit to the panel a summary of the key learning points from the Campsbourne Pilot Project which may inform future use of this approach in Haringey.

7. Liaison structures in other Local Authorities

- 7.1 A brief overview of the liaison and engagement structures with housing associations at a number of other Local Authorities was presented to the panel. The purpose of this presentation was to help benchmark service provision in Haringey and to guide and inform later discussions on service provision. The presentation is attached for information.

- 7.2 It is anticipated that further data collection will take place with other authorities and analysed with data already presented to identify key themes and trends which will inform the review process.

8. Future evidence to the panel

- 8.1 The panel agreed a new date for the consultation with housing providers. This would be confirmed with panel members.

- 8.2 It was confirmed that the National Housing Federation and the Cabinet member for housing would be attending the next panel meeting (March 7th 2011). It was hoped that a representative from the TSA would still be able to attend, although a confirmation is awaited.

February 11th 2011
Cllr Alexander
Chair of Panel