Meeting: **Integrated Housing Board**

Date: **5 April 2011**

Report Title: **Draft Overcrowding and Under Occupation Strategy**

Report of: **Strategic and Community Housing Services**

1.Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek views on the consultation draft of the Overcrowding & Under-occupation strategy and to request agreement to begin public consultation.

2.Summary

2.1 Following the publication of the previous government's Overcrowding Action Plan, all London boroughs were awarded 'Pathfinder' status and allocated funding to support initiatives to tackle overcrowding. The expectation was that Local Authorities would develop a clear strategic approach to tackling this problem.

2.2 In response to this, Strategic & Community Housing Services developed an Overcrowding and Under-occupation Action Plan which has led to a number of households successfully moving out of overcrowded or under-occupied accommodation.

2.3 The action plan has given us the foundation with which to launch this draft strategy which seeks to address overcrowding and under-occupation, not just in Haringey Council stock but across the whole of the social housing sector in Haringey.

3.Legal/Financial Implications

3.1 None identified

4.Recommendations

4.1 That the Draft Overcrowding & Under-occupation Strategy is approved for consultation subject to any changes required by the Board.

4.2 That the IHB note the attached consultation plan

For more information contact:

Name: Paul Dowling
Title: Senior Policy Officer
Tel: 020 8489 4301
Email address: paul.dowling@haringey.gov.uk

5.   Background

5.1   Haringey's Housing Strategy 2009-19 recognises that action is needed to combat overcrowding and prioritises the development of this strategy. Whilst considerable work on initiatives to combat overcrowding is already underway in Haringey, we now need to ensure that a co-ordinated multi-agency approach is adopted across the borough.

5.2   Following the publication of the previous government's overcrowding action plan, all London boroughs were awarded 'Pathfinder' status and allocated funding to support initiatives to tackle overcrowding. Over the period 2008 – 2011 an additional £15m was earmarked for this purpose with the expectation that local authorities developed a clear strategic approach to tackling this problem. Specifically the government called on local authorities to pilot housing options and advice services targeting overcrowded households.

5.3   Through the Pathfinder initiative the government encouraged authorities to adopt the Bedroom Standard of overcrowding. Although aspirational the definition is overly burdensome and partly as a result several local definitions of overcrowding exist. Through Haringey's Allocations Policy we have adopted a Haringey standard which will allow us to tackle those most in need. Through this strategy we will encourage providers to work with us to this standard.

5.4   Through Haringey's overcrowding action plan we have delivered a number of key initiatives to tackle overcrowding and under-occupation across our stock. This new strategy will   tackle these issues through effective partnerships across the whole of the social housing sector in Haringey.

5.5   Considering the current climate a clear strategic approach to tackling overcrowding and under-occupation is now more imperative than ever Changes to the welfare system are likely to have a   significant impact on the numbers of families presenting to councils as   homeless   and our ability to delivery new affordable housing has been   hampered   by cuts in grant funding.

5.6   Because of the significant challenges ahead, this strategy will seek to put into place initiatives to make better use of the limited social housing stock in Haringey. Principally, by working with partners to encourage under-occupiers to downsize we will be able to free up larger properties for those in need.

6.   Overcrowding & Under-occupation Strategy

6.1   The draft strategy has identified 6 draft priorities:

1. Strengthen partnership working Increase the supply of new homes
2. Assess the extent of overcrowding and under-occupation in Haringey and monitor the impact of the strategy
3. Increase the supply and availability of affordable homes
4. Deliver real options and promote choice

5. Make the best use of existing housing stock & improve living conditions

6. Maximise resources to facilitate the delivery of the Strategy

6.2 Although it is not usual practice to produce a delivery plan at this stage, the development work on Haringey's Overcrowding Action Plan has enabled us to include this draft to further stimulate discussion. It is envisaged that the delivery plan will be developed further following consultation with stakeholders.

7. Consultation

7.1 Subject to agreement of this draft there will be a period of consultation from May to July 2011 with a wide range of groups, organisations and   residents to make sure we have identified all the issues and help us   complete the strategy.

7.2 The final strategy will include the result of this consultation and we will state how and with whom we consulted. A separate document will be produced with detailed responses.

7.3 We will consult widely using Haringey Council's Consultation Framework, thus ensuring we fulfil the requirements of the Compact agreement. This strategy will be strengthened significantly by the input of other organisations and service users.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The development of this strategy has a strong foundation following the previous government's Overcrowding Pathfinder programme and Haringey's resulting action plan. However, as Pathfinder funding dries up it is important that we endeavour to continue the good work that has been started.

7.2 By working in partnership with social housing providers across Haringey as well as community groups through this strategy we can ensure that we make the best use of the limited resources at our disposal to tackle these issues.

8. Appendices

8.1 Overcrowding & Under-occupation Strategy – Draft for Consultation
8.2 Overcrowding & Under-occupation Strategy Consultation Plan