

Report Title: **Housing involvement structures and the future of Area Housing Forums and Housing Management Board**

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): **[add reference]**

Report of: **Anne Bristow, Director of Social Services**

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Key**

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The report highlights the need for new housing consultative/involvement structures, given the changing nature of tenure in the borough and the creation of Homes for Haringey.
- 1.2 The report recommends the development of a new 'Integrated Housing Board', which would replace Housing Management Board and the Housing Strategic Partnership and allow involvement, consultation and strategic decision making across tenure.
- 1.3 Within this overall context, a decision is sought from the Executive on the future of Area Housing Forums and Housing Management Board.

2. Introduction by Executive Member (if necessary)

"Changing circumstances and new requirements dictate the need to adjust and extend existing mechanisms for consultation with and involvement of service users and stakeholders in all aspects of the housing service.

The report presents an outline for a comprehensive approach that encompasses users and providers of housing services across tenures, agencies and sectors, complementing the "landlord-related" new participation structures established by Homes for Haringey and building on the emerging more strategic role of Neighbourhood Assemblies and the HSP.

The proposals, if agreed, require further detailed development and consultation before they can be finalised and implemented. Therefore colleagues are asked to consider them at this stage as the basis for wider consultation and development, with a further report to come to a subsequent meeting of the EAB/Executive".

3. Recommendations

That Executive agree:

- 3.1 The idea of the creation of an 'Integrated Housing Board' in principle and that consultation is carried out with stakeholders and more detailed resourcing proposals are developed.
- 3.2 That the link between housing and the Area Assemblies is strengthened as a way of engaging residents in discussions on housing issues across tenure.
- 3.3 That Area Housing Forums and Housing Management Board are disbanded and the Council's constitution is amended to remove reference to these groups

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4. Director of Finance Comments

- 4.1 The Director of Finance notes the contents of this report and has no comments to add.

5. Head of Legal Services Comments

- 5.1 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted in the preparation this report. There are no legal implications, which arise out of the recommendations made in this report, beyond the need to amend the constitution.

6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 6.1 ALMO Tenant Participation Structure – paper to Shadow Board (18/2/06) and ALMO Transitional Working Group (7/3/06) (sets out new Homes for Haringey involvement structure)
- 6.2 Issues for consideration at special meeting of Housing Management Board on 27th March 2006 (explores potential roles for a potential successor to Housing Management Board).

7. Strategic Implications

7.1 The development of an 'Integrated Housing Board' would provide a forum to meet with stakeholders to discuss and consult on cross tenure issues.

7.2 The greater use of Area Assemblies to discuss housing related issues would ensure that housing was discussed in a wider borough context.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The Homes for Haringey funding allows for the resourcing of support only to the groups in the agreed involvement structure. This in effect means that no resources have been identified to support the Housing Management Board and the Area Housing Forums, if they were to continue to exist. There are no current resources on the Council side to allow this work to be taken on.

8.2 The resourcing implications of the delivery of an 'Integrated Housing Board' will be considered as detailed proposals are developed.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 If Members are in favour of adopting the recommendations to disband both the Housing Management Board and the Area Housing Forums, then the procedure to be adopted to amend the Constitution would require a report to be submitted to full Council via the Executive and General Purposes Committee.

10. Equalities Implications

10.1 The review of structures will include a consideration of ways to optimise options for involvement.

10.2 The Integrated Housing Board would consider issues across all tenures and focus on improvements for those in most need.

11. Consultation

11.1 Consultation with stakeholders would be carried out if the principle of an 'Integrated Housing Board' is agreed.

11.2 Extensive consultation was carried out during the formation of the new involvement structure for Homes for Haringey.

12. Background

12.1 It has become necessary to review the existing housing involvement and consultative forums for a number of reasons, including:

- the establishment of Homes for Haringey necessitates a review of all the relevant structures for informing, consulting with and involving tenants and leaseholders.

- increased Government emphasis on the Council’s role as strategic lead on housing means there is a clear need to work across tenure.
- a growing understanding of the importance of housing related factors in the achievement of our community strategy objectives, including issues affecting regeneration, community safety and environmental sustainability.
- the changing nature of housing in the borough, including:
 - the progressive reduction in council owned and managed social housing stock. Within this the nature of our estates have changed due to the ‘right to buy’ and now often include tenants, leaseholders, private tenants and owner occupiers.
 - the increasing contribution of housing stock owned and managed by RSLs, which is now approaching the size of the council owned rented stock
 - the increasing role of the private rented sector in meeting housing need
 - the further development of intermediary social housing initiatives (e.g. shared ownership, low cost ownership and key workers programmes).

12.2 Existing consultative/involvement structures have largely concentrated on the Council’s role as landlord and not on our wider strategic responsibility.

12.3 There are concerns that the current user involvement mechanisms are still not adequate for the purpose of achieving higher ratings from the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission in the recent voluntary inspection commented that, although “Tenant Participation in the Borough is well resourced it nevertheless appears inadequate in terms of results”. In particular the inspectors have commented that we are failing to extend involvement beyond just tenants and leaseholders.

12.4 The changing nature of housing in the borough and the Council’s greater strategic role has been reflected in our strategy and policy development but is not embedded in our involvement/consultative structures.

12.5 The main housing involvement forums are:

- Housing Management Board (HMB)
- Area Housing Forums (AHFs)
- Haringey Housing Strategic Partnership

Housing Management Board

12.6 Housing Management Board comprises fourteen residents and eight councillors. It was originally formed as the potential predecessor to an ALMO board in 2000.

- 12.7 It meets six times a year and is currently chaired by the Executive Member for Housing.
- 12.8 Housing Management Board has no decision-making powers. Its role is consultative and it acts as an advisory board for the Executive Member for Housing.

Area Housing Forums

- 12.9 Five Area Housing Forums currently exist – one for each of the old housing management areas: Broadwater Farm, Hornsey, North Tottenham, South Tottenham and Wood Green. (There are now only 3 areas under Homes for Haringey.)
- 12.10 They meet four times a year and are openly advertised. Any council tenant or leaseholder can attend, and councillors from each area also attend. Area Housing Forums are chaired by Members.
- 12.11 Area Housing Forums have no decision-making powers other than the election of resident members of Housing Management Board.

Haringey Housing Strategic Partnership

- 12.12 The Haringey Housing Strategic Partnership is a sub group of the Well Being Partnership, and is the only forum dedicated to discussing strategic housing issues with partners. The current terms of reference are attached as appendix 1.
- 12.13 It meets four times a year and is chaired by either the Executive Member for Housing or the Head of Housing.
- 12.14 The Partnership acts as a consultative forum and agrees the Councils Housing Strategy and other related strategies and plans. It is also a forum for sharing information and best practice.
- 12.15 Members of the Partnership include the larger RSLs, housing related voluntary sector organisations, the PCT and representatives from other Council services. In reality, the discussion is often a two way discussion between the Council and the RSLs. The Partnership has not succeeded in maintaining resident involvement.

Housing involvement in Area Assemblies

- 12.16 Housing Service involvement in Area Assemblies has been inconsistent. Involvement, such as presentations on homelessness and housing supply/new development, have taken place at the request of particular Area Assembly Chairs but not as part of a planned programme of participation.
- 12.17 It has been recognised that there is the potential for Area Housing Forums and Area Assemblies to duplicate effort and it is felt that there would be benefits to

encouraging Council tenants and leaseholders to engage with the wider issues discussed at Assemblies. Two pilot joint meetings between Area assemblies and Area Forums have been held.

The need for a new approach

- 12.18 The existing forums are not working well and need to be reviewed in light of changing circumstances.
- 12.19 Although there remains a need to consult and involve Council tenants and leaseholders in housing management matters, we also need to involve them and a much wider group of stakeholders across tenure in broader issues.
- 12.20 There also a need to engage residents at a local level (maybe at estate level or in a small neighbourhood or ward) but also at a borough wide strategic level.
- 12.21 There is a need to ensure that the structures avoid duplication and do not compete for residents and other stakeholder attendance.
- 12.22 The structures need to take account of emerging factors, including:
- the emerging corporate neighbourhood strategy, including the enhancement of the role of Neighbourhood Assemblies and the strengthening of the neighbourhood teams.
 - our increasing inter-dependence with the RSL sector, not only in relation to housing provision but also on regeneration initiatives, linked with our emerging partnering approach.
 - our emerging priority of better regulation of the private sector rented sector, ensuring consistent standards and a greater contribution to both our homelessness and our sustainable communities objectives

The way forward

- 12.23 The new structures need to include:
- arrangements for tenant and leaseholder involvement, given our role as landlord. This needs to provide a way for the Council's tenants and leaseholder to engage with matters relating to housing management and will be particularly important as we deliver the decent homes programme.
 - mechanisms for consulting on housing issues and strategies that affect residents in all tenures
 - a way of setting the strategic direction for housing in the borough with our key stakeholders, including residents

Tenant and leaseholder involvement

- 12.24 A new resident involvement structure for Homes for Haringey was agreed by the Shadow Board on 18 January 2006 and by the ALMO Transitional Members

Working Group on 7 February 2006. It was also taken to Housing Management Board on 24 October 2005.

- 12.25 The new structure, which is shown in Appendix A, has seven functional panels through which residents can closely engage with different aspects of housing management. The Residents' Consultative Forum acts as a wider and more general forum.
- 12.26 There is provision for involvement at the estate level and also for specific user groups, such as those not speaking English and disabled people.
- 12.27 Emphasis is placed on the understanding that most residents (about 99%) do not attend formal meetings, and their views will be sought through methods such as surveys, focus groups, and contact with existing community groups.
- 12.28 A new 'Learning Log' has been established to pick up informal suggestions and comments and to ensure these are looked at and, where agreed, put into action. The Log will also ensure that results are fed back to residents and others.

Consulting on cross tenure issues – strengthening the role of housing at Area Assemblies

- 12.29 Housing is an important issue for all of Haringey's residents, not only Council tenants and leaseholders. The Council has a crucial role in play in consulting on housing issues and strategies that affect residents in all tenures. The Area Assemblies, with involvement from residents across tenures and Members provide an opportunity for broader strategic housing discussion.
- 12.30 The Council Housing Service, with support from Homes for Haringey, will strengthen the links with the Area Assemblies and use them as a key consultative forum in the development of housing and related strategy. This will provide the opportunity to include some of the issues that would have been covered in Area Housing Forums and strengthen the link between housing and broader issues.
- 12.31 Some areas that need to be addressed in the strengthening of links are:
- the fact that Area Assemblies have in the past only dealt with housing issues at a basic and occasional level
 - the current attendees, although partially overlapping with Area Forums, are generally different
 - the Neighbourhood Teams may not have the expertise, nor the capacity to take on housing issues
- 12.32 The Area Assemblies will be promoted give Council tenants and leaseholders an opportunity for engagement with local non-housing issues, as well as being an appropriate place for discussion about wider housing issues, such as housing strategy, housing benefits and rehousing.

- 12.33 It is proposed that Homes for Haringey will hold surgeries before area assemblies, as has been the practice at Area Housing Forums. The surgeries allow residents to raise communal and individual issues with appropriate officers, and these are then recorded and followed up the next day.
- 12.34 Surgeries will also be held by Council Housing staff, such as the Prevention and Options team, as appropriate.
- 12.35 The resource implications and the practicalities of greater Housing Service and Homes for Haringey involvement in Area Assemblies will be assessed if this is agreed in principle.

Setting the strategic housing direction

- 12.36 It is proposed to replace both the Housing Strategic Housing Partnership and the Housing Management Board with one Strategic Housing Forum. The terms of reference and membership of the current Housing Strategic Partnership would be reviewed and amended as necessary to ensure the delivery of an effective and inclusive partnership arrangements.
- 12.37 The remit of the group would include setting strategic direction and co-ordinating the activities of all sectors and agencies involved in the housing field in the borough.
- 12.38 If the principle of an 'Integrated Housing Board' is agreed, consultation would be carried out with key stakeholders and proposals on the Board structure, membership etc would be produced.
- 12.39 The cost of supporting the HMB and the AHFs currently falls on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) This was justified on the basis that both were exclusively targeted at users of the council housing service (tenants and leaseholders).
- 12.40 The approach advocated in this report involves a much wider target audience. As a result, consideration would need to be given to sharing the cost between the HRA and Council's General Fund (GF), possibly with further financial or in-kind contributions from other agencies.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 There is a need to change of existing housing involvement/consultative structures to meet a changing environment and to make them more effective.
- 13.2 The report proposes the following mechanisms:
- New involvement structures for Council tenants and leaseholders, which will be delivered by Homes for Haringey. These structures have already been agreed.

- A strengthening of the link between housing and the Area Assemblies to ensure that cross tenure housing issues are addressed and the links with other Council objectives are made.
- The development of a new strategic 'Integrated Housing Board' that will give a strategic lead across tenure and reflect the significant contribution that housing makes to the success of wider objectives.

13.3 In the context of these changes it is recommended that the following groups are disbanded and aspects of their work taken into the new forums.

- Housing Management Board
- Area Housing Forums

13.4 If the principles recommended in the report are agreed, further detailed work and consultation will be carried out on the greater integration with Area Assemblies and the development of the new 'Integrated Housing Board'. This will include a full analysis of resourcing implications.

14. Use of Appendices / Tables / Photographs

14.1 Appendix 1: Housing Strategic Partnership terms of reference.



Housing Strategic Partnership

Terms of Reference

Aim of the partnership

The partnership will work to promote the development of shared strategic housing objectives and to encourage joint working between housing partners and stakeholders in Haringey to deliver improved housing services and choices for our residents.

Functions and remit of the partnership:

- To make recommendations and to take decisions on areas of housing and related strategy for the relevant Haringey Strategic Partnership theme boards
- To oversee the implementation of Haringey Strategic Partnership theme board decisions
- To ensure the effective delivery of housing strategic action plans
- To act as a consultative body for and to commission appropriate consultation around strategic housing issues
- To co-ordinate Haringey consultation on North London and London housing strategies and plans

- To oversee, approve and agree joint funding bids and programmes aimed at achieving our housing strategy objectives
- To aid in the development of shared understanding & best practice across sectors
- To provide a forum for cross sector performance monitoring, analysis and information sharing around housing

Meeting arrangements

- The partnership shall be chaired by the Executive Member for Housing or the Head of Housing .
- There shall be a vice-chair elected from the membership at the first meeting of a calendar year who shall chair in the event of the Chair's absence
- The partnership will meet four times a year and meeting dates will be set and published at the start of each year.
- Quorum will be 50% of members
- If an organisational representative is unable to attend each shall have a named deputy who shall attend in his/her place
- Should a representative of an organisation on the partnership not attend 3 meetings in a rolling 12 month period then that organisation's place shall be offered to another from the same sector
- The London Borough of Haringey shall provide all administrative support required by the partnership and shall service the meetings.

Membership

Haringey Housing	Executive Member for Housing
	Head of Housing
	Housing Partnerships Manager
ALMO	Housing Management
	Decent Homes delivery
Health	Head of Health Inequalities
	St Anns / Mental Health
Social Services	AD adult services
	Supporting People
Voluntary Sector	HAVCO
	St Mungos
	Shelter
Elected Members	
Environmental Services	Enforcement
	Planning policy
	Strategic Sites
Safer Communities	

Economic Regeneration	
Neighbourhoods	
Children's service	
Private Landlords	Nom from L/L forum
Private Developer	Nom from Private Sector Group
RSLs	To be selected and agreed.
Residents (to include)	Private Owner Occupier
	ALMO tenants
	RSL tenant
	Supported Housing Resident
	TA resident
	Private Tenant
	Residents' Association reps