

Appendix 2

Consultation Draft Harrow Asset Management Strategy 2013 - 2018

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Strategic context

This Asset Management Strategy has been developed to inform the strategic medium and long term approach to maintaining, improving and developing the Council's housing assets, in a changing environment. It sets out our vision for the housing stock and sets key priorities for the maintenance and improvement of the housing stock in the medium term and how Harrow will review the sustainability of the housing stock and other assets in the longer term to better meet changing needs and aspirations.

Making sure our properties are kept to a high standard and of an appropriate type is key to a successful business plan, as it means that we are protecting our primary source of income. It is therefore vital to have an effective asset management strategy in place to safeguard the Council's interests.

Our Vision

Our vision is to ensure we get the best from all our available assets to ensure that the housing stock meets current and future needs of residents and to support the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. Developing a first class asset management service we will contribute to sustainable communities and homes that are safe and warm.

The Asset Management Strategy contributes to the overarching objectives of the Housing Strategy 2013 in the following ways:

- **Improving neighbourhoods and the quality of existing homes:** To use the additional resources arising from HRA reform to improve the quality of our housing stock and estates beyond that of the basic Decent Homes standards and including energy efficiency measures to tackle fuel poverty and climate change;
- **Increase the supply of housing, including locally affordable housing and make best use of the existing social housing stock – using our resources proactively:**
 - To make best use of our housing assets such as underutilised garage sites and other land or buildings, to increase the supply of affordable housing for those who are most in housing need in the borough;
 - To get the best value from our housing stock by replacing uneconomic stock with improved or new assets that are better designed to meet future needs;
- **Supporting sustainable and viable communities:**

- To support the sustainability and viability of Harrow through encouraging the use of local responsive repairs and major works contractors and training and apprenticeship schemes;
- To regenerate Harrow's neighbourhoods and estates;
- **Deliver excellent services shaped and valued by our communities;**
 - To delivering high levels of resident satisfaction with repairs and major works;
 - To fully consult and involve residents in investment decisions and in performance monitoring of the repairs and major works contracts

National

The introduction of **HRA self financing** in April 2012 has brought significant benefits to Harrow, Released from the HRA subsidy system by taking on additional debt, the HRA is still some £2M per annum better off. This gives us more opportunities to invest in the stock now and develop longer term plans to ensure the stock is sustainable and fit for purpose over the next 30 years. It enables the Council to take a long term planned approach to making decisions about how, when and to what standards the Council will improve its housing stock. This will include reviewing the long term suitability of some of the housing stock and making decisions that may include more radical approaches such as disposal, demolition and replacement of existing stock with more modern housing in a variety of housing tenures to meet future housing needs.

The government has also introduced other housing reforms through the Localism Act 2011. Of relevance to the Asset Management Strategy are the following key changes:

1. **Opportunity for local authorities to introduce fixed term flexible tenancies:** Harrow Council approved a Tenancy Strategy/Policy in December 2012 and this approved the introduction of Probationary Tenancies followed by 5 year fixed term tenancies for all new Council tenants in Harrow. This policy is due to be introduced on the 1 July 2013. The impact of these will need to be monitored especially with regard to void works and costs.
2. **Introduction of the Affordable Rent model:** Under this model local authority's developing housing can now charge higher rents on new properties, up to 80% of market rent. The Council's Tenancy Strategy sets out our approach to charging Affordable Rents which allow for increased rents whilst ensuring they are still affordable to local families, especially those affected by welfare reform. This can help generate additional rental income which can be reinvested in new or existing housing stock.
3. **Right to Buy-** the government increased the cap on the Right to Buy discount to £75k from the 1st April 2012 and again to £100k effective from the 25 March 2013. Since April 2012 the Council has sold 14 properties

under the RTB, a significant increase on previous years (none were sold in 2011/12). We have entered into an agreement with the government to reinvest receipts from right to buy sales towards the development of new homes. However these can only contribute a maximum of 30% of funding for new homes and must be spent within 3 years.

- 4. Welfare Reform** – the various welfare reforms as they relate to social housing tenants will have an impact particularly in relation to tenants wanting to downsize. We will need to ensure that we have a supply of good quality smaller homes to encourage and support downsizing and other mobility schemes.

Decent Homes: The government sets minimum standards for the Council to ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to be maintained to at least this standard. Harrow Council intends to adopt a higher standard than the minimum, the detail of which is set out under proposed priority 1.

Energy Efficiency & Affordable Warmth:

There is a range of government initiatives which can be used to both generate additional income and invest in improvements to the energy efficiency of the housing stock and provide affordable warmth to residents and Harrow's commitments to these are set out in our Delivering Warmer Homes Strategy.

Harrow's Housing Stock

65% of the overall housing stock in Harrow is privately owned, with social rented stock accounting for only 10% of the total. Within the social rented stock the Council is the largest landlord with 4,813 general needs (rented) properties and 556 sheltered homes. However, the Council's housing stock is small compared to most other London boroughs. This is particularly significant because as a result fewer properties become available for letting each year contributing, along with affordability issues in the wider housing market, to huge increases in the demand for social housing. Making the best use of our housing assets is therefore an important contribution to maintaining a supply of suitable affordable housing in the long term.

The housing stock is comprised of mainly traditionally built houses and low rise flats (up to 4 storey maximum) within relatively small estates.

Housing Ambition Plan targets

The Housing Ambition Plan is the practical service plan setting out how we will achieve our vision. Within Asset Management the overarching commitment is 'to provide a first class Asset Management service that our customers value, and that protects the council's investment in the Housing Service'. This commitment is underpinned by a series of further targets, which are linked directly to this Strategy.

We will:

- Improve communication with tenants, leaseholders and stakeholders on all aspects of asset management, ensuring they are engaged in helping to shape the monitoring, management and development of the service

- Ensure the health and safety of our customers, staff and contractors is paramount in all we do
- Implement the Asset Management Strategy Action Plan
- Ensure we deliver the service to agreed standards, and meet best practice regarding customer service and value for money
- Embed robust contract management arrangements for all aspects of the service to ensure that all contracts are well managed and that where any problems arise they are dealt with swiftly and effectively
- Provide services that incorporate the 'Getting closer to the customer' ethos by working more closely with Resident Services to develop a seamless response to tenants and leaseholders

1.2 Strategy development

The Asset Management Strategy has been written following internal desktop research, as well as consultation with affected internal departments.

The draft strategy will be consulted upon with the following groups:

- Asset Management staff
- Wider Housing staff
- Resident groups (including HFTRA, LSG, TLRCF)
- Councillors
- Contractors
- Access Harrow

1.3 Structure of the Strategy and future reviews

This strategy looks in detail at key work areas in the medium term such as responsive repairs, customer service, value for money, energy efficiency, health and safety, planned investment works, and other innovative projects and proposes eight key priorities. Each priority includes a detailed action plan with clear and measurable targets against which progress can be monitored. The strategy is also supplemented by 2 further documents:

- The Harrow Better Homes Standard, which looks to detail how we invest in our stock and what our planned investment is over the 5 year life of the strategy
- Harrow Housing Services stock profile by ward, which details the level of investment needed in each ward of the borough, as well as providing a clearer picture of our stock provision to meet the level of demand

The second part of the strategy looks at the longer term objectives within our vision which includes the future of non housing assets and opportunities to ensure that all assets owned within the HRA are sustainable and whether radical change is needed. The longer term objectives are less detailed as considerable work is still required to develop options appraisals to inform future decisions.

The Strategy and action plans will be reviewed on an annual basis, or when an identified need arises.

2.0 Key priorities

2.1 Priority one: To devise and implement the Harrow Better Homes Standard and develop a wider, long term capital programme

Council Housing - Decent Homes and beyond

The Council completed its Decent Homes programme in 2010, having financed this itself without accessing any additional government funding. However each year a significant number of properties will fall out of decency standards and it is these homes that will continue to be a priority for our future capital programme.

We are working towards a longer term investment plan where we will identify and programme major works to homes several years in advance. This will enable us both to procure more effectively and plan further ahead which will enable works to our homes to be undertaken more efficiently and facilitate improved consultation with tenants and leaseholders. There could also be procurement savings from this approach as economies of scale in creating longer term programmes could be reduce costs.

We are now at our borrowing cap and therefore not able to borrow further to fund future capital investment in the housing stock. However significant levels of revenue investment are projected to accrue in the HRA and the draft Business Plan will ensure there are sufficient resources to enable delivery of the planned capital investment programme over a 30 year period. We have already committed more resources to the capital programme to meet the anticipated need for investment in the existing stock.

We now have robust stock condition information with data held on our Codeman database from surveys of the 99% of our housing stock, whereas in 2010 we were relying on cloned stock condition information. This more accurate information has identified a higher need for investment in our homes over the next few years than was previously thought which might change previously agreed levels of investment need, so this will be kept under review. This information is critical to establishing the detail of our future planned major works programmes to ensure that the homes that are most in need of improvements are awarded the highest priority for the works to be done.

The improvement programme in Harrow has attracted a budget of roughly £6.5 million per year in recent times but HRA reform means we have budgeted £8.5 million per year going forward.

It is best practice for landlords to demonstrate an appropriate balance between planned and responsive repairs. This approach should include:

- Responsive repairs
- Cyclical Repairs
- Planned Works
- Works on Empty Properties
- Adaptations
- Statutory Works – Gas / Electricity / Water / Asbestos / Lifts and Fire Safety.

- Maintaining and improving upon the Decent Homes Standard

Increased investment in planned and cyclical works is likely to reduce demand on the responsive repairs budget over time.

Harrow is now in a position to maintain its stock at a higher level than Decent Homes, and invest in other projects to improve the external environment making our homes better places to live and respond to management issues such as Anti- Social Behaviour too. Linked to this our plan to develop a capital programme over 3-5 years, rather than the single years programmes we have been working to until now will give tenants and leaseholders a clearer picture of when they can anticipate works to their homes taking place. This would improve opportunities for consultation, including the statutory s20 consultation with leaseholders, aid planning, allow for longer term procurement which would attract procurement savings, and present an opportunity to start delivering each years programme promptly from April.

To summarise our main aim in Harrow is to ensure that all of our homes meet the government decent homes standard **as a minimum**, but where resources allow to also undertake works beyond that standard to ensure all our homes are safe and warm. To facilitate this objective we will consult on a localised version of the standard, the Harrow Better Homes Standard, which will look to explain design standards and specifications, how and when we upgrade our properties, and how we will spend the money available. This standard will be developed by the Asset Management team, in partnership with tenants with clear processes and procedures for stakeholders, and the specific aim of raising standards in our planned improvement works.

It is our policy that any financial savings that we make through the procurement of these works will be either re-invested in adding additional properties to that years programme, or looking at other non-homes projects (such as estate improvements, or community led projects). This helps not only to bring our full stock up to decency quicker, but also to clear the backlog of improvement works that are apparent following full stock condition surveys. The further advantage of bringing forward homes from future years programmes is that there will be more opportunity to undertake wider investment plans as we catch up on outstanding improvements to homes.

Where we are looking to re-invest savings, we will implement a process whereby staff, residents, and other stakeholders can put forward ideas for specific projects, and develop a prioritisation and approval process for this. This is another facet of the department moving towards a more innovative, and customer focused perspective.

Action Plan:

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|--|---|--|--|---|--------------------|
| To complete a Harrow Better Homes Standard for implementation | Harrow Better Homes Standard published, agreed and implemented | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | Planned Investment Manager, Councillors, Resident stakeholders | Programme Analyst, Planned Investment Manager, Project Manager – Research & New Initiatives | July 2013 |
| To hold complete stock condition information | Full and complete stock condition information held on Codeman following stock condition surveys | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | Residents | Stock Condition Surveyor, Programme Analyst, Data Quality Officer | July 2013 |
| To target the backlog of properties requiring Better Homes works as a priority | 100% of council homes meeting the Harrow Better Homes Standard | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | Planned Investment Manager, Councillors, Resident stakeholders | Stock Condition Surveyor, Programme Analyst, Data Quality Officer | July 2018 |
| To develop a clear referral process for Better Homes works | Referral process published and implemented | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | Access Harrow, residents, Responsive Repairs Manager, IT, Communications | Programme Analyst, Data Quality Officer, Contracts Surveyors | June 2013 |
| To publish a clear 5 year programme of works | 5 year programme of works published | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | Communications, Planned Investment Manager | Programme Analyst, Data Quality Officer, Stock Condition Surveyor | August 2013 |
| To seek Cabinet approval of capital programmes for 3-5 years ahead | Programme approved | Asset, Data and Planning Manager, Finance Business Partner | Councillors, Resident stakeholders | Stock Condition Surveyor, Programme Analyst, Data Quality Officer | December 2013 |

2.2 Priority two: supporting the local economy

The Asset Management team are committed to supporting corporate objectives by taking procurement decisions that bring investment in to Harrow. Supporting the local economy is a key component of this Asset Management Strategy and every effort will be made to maximise the added value that housing investment can bring to Harrow.

So far changes to the ways major works contracts are procured and our new responsive repairs contracts have brought considerable support to the local economy. Highlights are:

1. 6 major works contractors based within the M25 area. Contract values vary from our largest single project to a number of smaller ones
2. Kitchen installations managed through a local supply chain, local storage facility created in Harrow
3. Local employment opportunities for trades people and labourers with 3 contractors
4. Apprentice opportunities created with 2 contractors
5. In responsive repairs one of the 4 main contractors is based in Harrow, whilst the other 3 are medium sized firms that maintain a local base.
6. 90% of the responsive repairs contractors' spend on supplies is with local suppliers.
7. Further advantages to the local community are the engagement of 3 apprentices planned for June 2013. Our contractors are also supporting local students at training colleges to gain experience on void repairs.

These are examples of a good start in supporting the community but there is more to do as the service develops and a number of further actions will support this.

- All major works contracts that are to be let outside existing framework agreements, will be advertised in local papers
- Advice will be available to local contractors on how to express an interest in these contracts
- We will work with colleagues in Procurement and Economic Development to further develop procurement methods that actively encourage local contractors to express an interest in all available housing contracts and support them to tender will continue. However there have been conflicts between this ideal and the existing procurement policies that will take cross department working to resolve.
- We will invest in local employment opportunities and support young people/apprentices by working with Local colleges, Harrow Skills Centre, Jobcentre, Xcite, and our partner contractors to create training and work experience opportunities
- Much of this work is already undertaken in conjunction with tenants and leaseholders and it is a further aim to increase the involvement of tenants and leaseholders in all procurement exercises.

Action Plan:

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|--|--|---|---|---|--------------------|
| Work with Procurement and Economic Development to encourage local contractors to express and interest and support them to submit tenders | Number of local contractors engaged in delivering housing Asset Management | Head of Asset Management | Planned Investment Manager, Responsive Repairs Manager, Procurement, Local colleges, Economic Development | Asset Management budgets | Ongoing |
| Invest in local employment opportunities and support young people/apprentices | Number of people supported with work/training opportunities | Head of Asset Management | Local colleges, Harrow Skills Centre, Jobcentre, Xcite, Partner Contractors | Responsive Repairs Manager/Planned Investment Manager | March 2014 |
| Ensure all contractors are regularly monitored on their contribution to the local economy | All contractors supporting the local economy | Responsive Repairs Manager/Planned Investment Manager | Contractors | Asset Management Team | September 2013 |
| To undertake benchmarking and networking opportunities to learn from best practice from other organisations | Best practice examples used to improve Harrow's success in this area | Asset Management Managers | Other Social Landlords, Housemark, West London Alliance, Partnerships and Strategy | Asset Management Team | September 2013 |
| Regularly review and report on success of this objective | Increased support for local economy | Head of Asset Management | Partnerships and Strategy, Communications | Asset Management Managers, Customer Experience Co-ordinator | October 2013 |

2.3 Priority three: to improve the energy efficiency of our stock

There have already been a number of improvements to our stock in terms of energy efficiency but 2013 is a really exciting time to embrace real change in this area as Green Deal funding has recently been secured of £6.5 million over 2 years, although full details of the offer are still awaited. This is an amazing opportunity to build on good practice, increase the pace of planned energy efficiency work by bringing forward projects from future years programmes and develop both some new, innovative carbon saving schemes. These will combine to increase the SAP rating across the stock more quickly than was previously possible.

Added advantages to this funding are to help reduce tenants fuel bills and reduce charges to leaseholders for energy efficiency works affecting their homes. The funding has just been announced as the strategy is being written, and a detailed investment plan will be developed as soon as practical.

Our commitment to energy efficiency to date is demonstrated by the fact that our specifications for major works include an obligation to procure materials that are both affordable and energy efficient, and we have previously obtained funding from CESP/CERT funding to carry out energy efficient works within our properties

In the current climate, we have an increasing responsibility to explore and provide energy efficiency measures to our residents. There are 2 main drivers for this:

- Constant energy price increases
- Commitment to reduce carbon emissions

To this end, we will seek to embed an energy efficient approach into our thinking in every facet of the Asset Management service. This will be done through raising awareness in both our staff and our residents, and continuing to work with Green Deal providers to access further funding streams to initiate projects throughout the borough. We will also look to increase the skill set within the team to carry out Energy Performance Certificates, or look to gain additional resources to assist us in gathering full SAP/EPC data for all of our housing stock and undertake design for more innovative schemes.

We have recently completed a full retrofit programme for all of our tenants and leaseholders which has ensured that all properties (where required) have had cavity wall and loft insulation work carried out.

We have also secured funding to upgrade a terrace of six houses (three council, two A2Dominion, and one private) following a Green Deal assessment. This work is being done at no cost to Harrow Council or to residents. This is a pilot and if successful will help us to both secure funding for more of this type of work and inform design and specification for future developments.

Our work with Green Deal to secure the funding included assessments on 25 randomly selected properties across the borough to help design a forward plan for energy efficiency works. New initiatives made possible by the funding will include:

- Heat pumps
- Green roofs
- Solar PV panels
- Solid wall insulation
- Glazing and door programme

Part of the funding is for energy efficiency work we have already committed to do within the Capital Programme, which means that subject to financial approval we can be able to undertake additional works from the HRA money set aside for the current programme-either bringing forward work from future years programmes or undertaking projects that would not otherwise be done. All of these initiatives will lead to a marked improvement in our performance in the thermal insulation of our homes, all at no cost to the tenant.

All the above was discussed with the Residents VFM sub group on 16th April. Members of the group welcomed all the initiatives under discussion and are particularly interested in any proposals that may have a positive impact on tenants' fuel bills. Further consultation will take place now that funding has been secured.

Action plan:

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|--|---|--|--|---|----------------|
| To complete a full programme of cavity wall and loft insulation to all tenant and leaseholder properties | All properties with cavity walls and lofts fully insulated where possible to required standards | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | External contractors, residents, Climate Change team | Project Manager – Research & New Initiatives | August 2013 |
| To work with Green Deal providers to provide a programme of solid wall insulation in Harrow | All properties with Solid Walls insulated (where funding allows) | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | Green Deal providers, residents, Climate Change team | Project Manager – Research & New Initiatives | December 2013 |
| To gather and record EPC data for all council stock in partnership with a Green Deal provider | Full EPC data held for all tenanted properties | Head of Asset Management | External partners, Asset, Data & Planning team | External partners, trained members of staff within Asset Management | April 2014 |
| To promote energy saving measures using various media (Homing In, Website, face to face) | Webpage published as part of the housing webpages, regular feature in Homing In, staff training held to improve knowledge and understanding | Head of Asset Management | Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Climate Change team | Asset Management team, Customer Experience Co-ordinator | August 2013 |
| To build in energy efficient measures in tender documents for Better Homes works | All Planned Investment staff to undertake Energy Efficiency training, Project Manager – Design & Specification to sign off on all tenders | Planned Investment Manager, Project Manager – Design & Specification | Project Managers, partner contractors, | Planned Investment Project Managers, Project Manager – Design & Specification | July 2013 |
| To appoint a 'Green Champion' as a first point of contact for energy efficient matters within the team | Green Champion appointed to promote energy efficiency throughout Asset Management | Head of Asset Management | Green deal providers, Climate Change team, Planned Investment team | Green Champion | July 2013 |
| To improve the SAP rating of council properties to at or above 65 | SAP Ratings of all council properties at 65 + | Head of Asset Management | Green deal providers | Programme Analyst, Project Manager – Research & New Initiatives | December 2014 |
| To bring forward a detailed plan to deliver energy efficiency funded by Green Deal, identifying resources required to deliver the plan | Enter into discussions with Green Deal providers to explore potential projects | Head of Asset Management | Asset Management Team, Green deal providers | Programme Analyst, Project Manager – Research & New Initiatives | September 2013 |

2.4 Priority four: to improve the customer experience

One of the key aims of the Asset Management service is to focus upon the customer experience, ensuring that we are getting the basics right, and involving the customer in all aspects of the service. To do this, we need to understand our customer needs, and their expectations of the service.

We have made a good start with this objective. The priorities in this strategy have been developed with our customers; they have been engaged in the selection of contractors and monitoring and challenging their performance.

This strategy aims to put customers at the heart of the service and our commitment to get closer to the customer is targeted to deliver a more focussed service that takes account of customer priorities for improvements. In turn this will lead to improved satisfaction levels and better value for money.

The meaningful customer engagement in the development of our services that is in place works well and tenant and leaseholder views are very important to us in helping to prioritise the improvements to the service. However there are a limited number of tenants and leaseholders engaging with us, both at the borough-wide and local level and we want to ensure we engage with more of our customers, more frequently.

We aim to improve established levels of governance and scrutiny, with our tenants and leaseholders playing a key role within this. We will also carry out surveys which will tell us what the customer wants to see from the service, what they think could be improved, and what they think we are doing well. This will allow us to form a clearer idea of our customer base, and to target our service improvements more directly.

We will look to understand our customer profile more clearly also, by gathering data in areas such as age, gender, family composition, economic status, race and religion. This will allow us to tailor our services in a more individual manner.

Improving the customer experience is an ideal that runs through each of the priorities in this strategy. We will redraft our repairs charter, in consultation with our residents, to incorporate this approach. We are striving to involve our customers more in our planned programme, developing a clear 5 year programme to improve resident information, introducing perception surveys before and after planned works and continuing an asset management presence at our various consultative forums.

Action plan:

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|---|--|---|---|--|-----------------------|
| To survey 10% of customers who have recently had repairs works carried out (monthly) | Monthly report to Senior Management Team, and monitoring on Housing Performance Scorecard | Responsive Repairs Manager & Customer Experience Co-ordinator | Access Harrow, Residents | Access Harrow staff, Customer Experience Co-ordinator | Ongoing |
| To increase tenant and resident participation in current Asset Management led engagement, challenge and scrutiny groups | Attendees at all forums representative of our customer base, and able to fully participate in the subject matter | Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Resident Involvement Manager | Residents, Resident Involvement Team, Asset Management Resident Liaison Officer | Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Resident Involvement Manager | May 2013 and on-going |
| To hold monthly contractor meetings to monitor performance | Full 6 month meetings booked in, with resident representatives involved | Responsive Repairs Manager | Residents, Contractors, Access Harrow, | Responsive Repairs Manager, Customer Experience Co-ordinator | On-going |
| To ensure that all Surveyors have received basic Project Management training, and are utilising this in their daily tasks | All Surveyors trained in Project Management principles and techniques | Responsive Repairs Manager, Planned Investment Manager, Asset Data & Planning Manager | Corporate Training | Training Providers | July 2013 |

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| To produce a monthly briefing paper looking at lessons learnt to improve the service | Monthly briefing paper produced and circulated to Senior Management Team and Portfolio Holder | Customer Experience Co-ordinator | Complaints Co-ordinator | Results from contractor appraisal panels, customer satisfaction surveys, completed lessons learned forms from complaints | May 2013 and on-going |
| To ensure Asset Management functions are represented on "My Harrow" starting with Responsive Repairs and then including details of the Capital Programme and Major Works | Residents able to access Asset Management information easily on My Harrow, and that these new functions are widely publicised | Customer Experience Co-ordinator | Access Harrow, Housing Information Team, Web/GIS Team, Communications | Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Access Harrow staff and Housing Information Team staff | Responsive Repairs to go live in May 2013. Other departments to be brought in incrementally |
| Ensure all officers that have a responsibility to respond to complaints receive training on complaints answering software and best practice for answering complaints | All relevant staff trained in Corporate Complaints procedures, and complaints performance monitoring improvement | Customer Experience Co-ordinator | Head of Asset Management, Housing Information Officer, Responsive Repairs Manager, Asset, Data & Planning Manager, Planned Investment Manager | Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Complaints Co-ordinator, Housing Information Team | May 2013 |
| Work with Central Complaints Team to develop a new process for responding to complaints that is compliant with new complaints handling procedure and encompasses contract management responsibilities for responses from contractors. Introduce process training to Asset | Full complaints management system implemented within Asset Management, with all staff trained accordingly | Customer Experience Coordinator, Strategy and Performance Manager | Head of Asset Management, Housing Information Officer, Responsive Repairs Manager, Asset, Data & Planning Manager, Planned Investment Manager | Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Complaints Co-ordinator, Corporate Complaints | September 2013 |

| Management Team | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|-------------------|
| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
| Improve communications by producing a range of case studies on projects that have been completed for use in publications | Full range of case studies produced, and published on the housing webpages, and in publications | Customer Experience Co-ordinator | Responsive Repairs, Asset, Data and Planning Team, Planned Investment Team, Communications Team | Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Communications Officer | July 2013 ongoing |
| Utilise website and social media to improve communication with residents and encourage participation in consultation and engagement initiatives | Up to date webpages, and the introduction of social media/electronic means of engagement such as Limehouse | Customer Experience Coordinator | Resident Consultation Officer, Communications Team, Resident Involvement Team, Web/GIS Team | Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Housing Information & Research Officer | September 2013 |
| Review current detailed operational level agreements with Access Harrow and amend / update to reflect current priorities | To be part of the SLA review with Access Harrow | Head of Asset Management, Head of Resident Services, Head of Customer Services at Access Harrow | Customer Experience Coordinator, Access Harrow | Asset Management, Resident Services and Access Harrow staff time | September 2013 |
| Customer service training for all customer facing Asset Management staff | All Asset Management staff to have undertaken Corporate Customer Service training as a minimum standard | Head of Asset Management | Training delivery providers, Staff | Training Providers | March 2014 |

2.5 Priority five: to implement a comprehensive Health & Safety programme

The Asset Management team have made great strides in developing a Health and Safety service in the last 2 years to ensure we meet our statutory obligations as a landlord. Dedicated staffing resources are now in place to gather information on Health and Safety issues within our properties, remedying these where possible, and maintaining this information on new databases.

We have also secured a long-term agreement with an external provider to improve our IT systems. This has allowed us to begin to record accurate data for all asbestos surveys carried out, and more recently, fire risk assessments.

These two developments are enabling us to develop effective compliance programmes to meet asbestos, fire safety and other health and safety requirements

Moving forward, we are looking to complete all of these records for our housing stock (where relevant), as well as implementing a more pro-active approach to improving knowledge and understanding within our residents. This will include workshops, printed material and closer working relationships with partners.

Of particular note is the developing partnership with the London Fire Brigade, targeted at improving fire safety in our homes. This will not only provide increased safety to tenants and other residents but it could also, by preventing fires, produce savings on works to repair fire damage and by reducing insurance premiums.

Highlights of the current and planned partnership working are:

- Housing are to adopt the P1 definition (LFB's definition of those most at risk of fire) and use it to refer those tenants that are most at risk to the LFB. This will enable them to carry out home fire safety visits (HFSV's) to these households.
- LFB are going to provide information sessions for all housing staff who regularly enter tenants homes, by attending team meetings to identify how to recognise fire risk indicators and how to generate urgent referrals for HFSV's by the LFB. Tenant and Residents Associations have also been asked whether they would like to have training sessions and housing will speak to our contractors about whether tool box talks for operatives who regularly enter homes would be valuable too.
- All referrals to the LFB for HFSVs or other intervention would go through the Safeguarding Adults team to ensure that these are referred consistently and that where appropriate other safeguarding issues could be flagged up at the same time. Housing are drafting a procedure so we will be consistent **and** ensure that within the department everyone has the info needed to deal with other issues arising for vulnerable people identified

Sheltered Housing Initiative

- Sprinkler viability – Housing and Fire Officers a working together on risk assessing and identifying the most suitable premises to put forward for retro fitting of sprinkler systems.
- Residents information sessions. LFB are going to provide sessions for tenants through resident associations and offer the opportunity of a

HFSV and free smoke alarm where appropriate. This may be done at the time of the info sessions or soon after at later dates.

- Officers in Asset Management and Resident Services will be working together to identify ways to reduce the number of false alarm fire calls in Sheltered Housing

Sanctuary Premises

- These are Council properties where because the householder is at risk of domestic violence or other community safety issues extra security precautions have been installed by a partner organisation. Concern has been raised that there may be an increased fire risk from these additional measures. LFB will undertake HFSVs at these addresses once the occupier has been approached by housing and agreed to the visit. Where appropriate female firefighters will undertake the assessments

High Risk Panel

- This was a best practice example shared at a recent seminar from another local authority where the LFB are actively involved in a panel that assess the needs of the most vulnerable households and recommends areas to be addressed by all partners involved. In Harrow we have a similar panel, called on demand by any partner agency where multi agency support is needed. In future the LFB will be invited to attend panel meetings where appropriate.

Action plan:

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|---|--|---|--|---|--------------------|
| To develop a full suite of Health and Safety policies specifically for housing | Health & Safety policies produced and published | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | Fire service, Asbestos contractors | Health & Safety Compliance Manager, Project Manager – Research & New Initiatives | January 2014 |
| To carry out, and maintain, fire risk assessments in all sheltered blocks and community centres | Full and proper record of all Fire Risk Assessments held and circulated | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | Fire service, External IT provider | Health & Safety Compliance Manager, Health & Safety Compliance Officer | January 2014 |
| To produce handbooks relating to all aspects of Health & Safety for residents information | Full range of handbooks published for residents | Asset, Data and Planning Manager | Health & Safety Compliance Manager, Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Communications | Health & Safety Compliance Manager, Customer Experience Co-ordinator Communications | September 2013 |
| To complete and maintain an up to date Asbestos register | Accurate and up to date online asbestos register | Health & Safety Compliance Manager | ECMK | Asbestos Surveyor, Data & Planning Officer | January 2016 |
| Implementation of an electrical testing programme | Programme of electrical testing implemented | Health & Safety Compliance Manager, Mechanical Engineer | Partner Contractor | Mechanical Engineer, Data Quality Officer | August 2013 |
| Installation of wired smoke alarms as standard on void properties as part of the Better Homes Standard (10 year lithium batteries in the interim) | All properties to have hard wired smoke alarms, or 10 year lithium battery smoke alarms. | Health & Safety Compliance Manager | Quality Heating | Quality Heating, Gas Services Officer, Mechanical Engineer | April 2015 |
| Carry out workshops/roadshows to improve knowledge and understanding amongst our residents | Roadshows carried out on estates throughout the borough | Health & Safety Compliance Manager | Fire Service, Quality Heating, Hertel, HFTRA, Resident Involvement Team | Customer Experience Co-ordinator | August 2013 |

2.6 Priority six: to develop and deliver a first class responsive repairs service

Our responsive repairs service is our most visible in terms of customer contact. We carry out roughly 23,000 responsive jobs per year to our rented properties, and this service is delivered in partnership with a number of other agencies, including Access Harrow who currently receive and process all repairs calls. We also deliver cyclical maintenance and undertake repairs to empty properties (voids) before they are re-let.

With the changes seen in the service recently, including moving from using one large partner contractor to a number of smaller contractors have started our improvement journey there is more to do before we can reach our aim of becoming a First Class responsive repairs service. Consultation with the Tenants, Leaseholders and Residents Consultation Forum (TLRCF) has led to us developing a method of measuring our improvement journey by benchmarking with other social landlords of a similar size. Benchmarking will not only enable us to demonstrate where improvements have been made it will also enable us to learn from best practice in the repairs area.

Meaningful engagement with tenants, leaseholders and other residents throughout the procurement process has led to improvements in services that are most important to those residents. It has also enabled us to build a robust contract management process, that is based on mutual support through collaboration and partnership working, and in which residents are also engaged.

We also implemented a repairs charter with a reduced priorities range so that is clearer for tenants to understand when their repair should be completed and increased the range of repairs that we carry out. Both the repairs charter and the new contracts were launched in July 2012.

Since the implementation of the new contracts, there has been a marked improvement in the performance of our day to day repairs service. We are now completing 95% of jobs at 1st visit against a target of 90% (and a 2011/12 performance figure of 88%). Customer satisfaction with the repairs service is also at a high of 99.16% across the 3 service areas (East Harrow, West Harrow and Central Harrow) as at February 2013.

Our responsive repairs service also consists of gas servicing. This new 3* contract looks to improve the service that we deliver, as well as making further savings for the department that can be reinvested. We are now at a position where 99.42% of our properties have a valid CP12 certificate, and through improved partnership working with Resident Services, we have active court injunctions to gain access to the remaining properties.

Cyclical maintenance

Cyclical maintenance is the regular servicing of mechanical and electrical equipment (such as lifts) and the regular inspection and decoration of internal and external areas. Cyclical maintenance enables economies by replacing components before they fail, thus reducing responsive repairs or future requirements for planned maintenance. Regular inspection enables problems to be identified and planned for. In addition, regular decoration enhances the appearance and value of our assets contributing both to residents' satisfaction with their neighbourhoods and the potential returns the Council can obtain on rents.

During 2012/13 the cyclical maintenance programme developed and a number of regular maintenance contracts are in place. These are listed on the contracts register and include:

- Fire Alarms and emergency Lighting
- Laundry maintenance in sheltered housing
- Communal aerials
- Fire Extinguishers
- Dry risers
- Door Entry systems

Increasing the range of cyclical maintenance is both a more efficient use of the HRA and responds to the demands of residents. To this end we are currently looking at where there are still gaps on the cyclical programme and to fill these will be putting together a programme of communal electrics and residential properties.

Loft inspections are currently taking place and once these are completed we will also be looking to set up a programme for water tank inspections in our general needs blocks.

Planned improvements and service developments

A number of further improvements are planned to bring the service closer towards the definition of first class. In addition to these we will continue to listen to tenants, both through contractor appraisal panels and more formal consultation mechanisms, and from follow up to satisfaction surveys and complaints to determine where further improvement should be targeted.

Planned Improvements for 2013/14 include:

- A “House MOT” is being offered to those customers who make frequent call-outs, to pre-empt need for future call-outs and stress for vulnerable people.
- A ‘handyperson’ scheme, so that customers (including leaseholders) can access skilled, reliable workpeople
- Our domestic gas contractor Quality Heating will be taking all tenant calls for heating and gas repairs from June 2013. This will improve the speed of response to and diagnosis of problems at no extra cost to Harrow. It will also reduce call volumes in Access Harrow, particularly at peak times
- To protect the interests of the majority of tenants who look after their homes, to introduce recharging for responsive repairs caused by tenant damage or neglect.

Voids

Void properties are unoccupied dwellings. These generally occur when a property is being re-let following termination of the previous tenancy. Void works include statutory testing of gas and electrical systems, as well as the works required to make the property fit for in-coming residents.

Work to void properties is carried out in accordance with the lettable standard. This standard generally provides a new tenant with a fit for purpose “decent

home” to start their tenancy. However current thinking is that this standard is too basic as failure to address all repairs issues at the void stage leads to an increased number of repairs orders after the tenant moves in. It is intended to review this standard and this work will need to reflect the new Harrow Better Homes standard when it is completed

To ensure that we are making the best use of our stock going forward a process will be developed where a void property is considered to require major works, to undertake a feasibility study at the void stage to ascertain the scope for extending the property to increase its size, in the case of converted properties whether a de-conversion might be best option, to enable the Council to deliver larger family housing and/or to consider whether the necessary investment in the property is justifiable given the expected life of the property and any plans for re-development or re-generation of the area or estate.

Action plan:

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|---|--|--|---|--|--------------------|
| Work more closely with the Health & Safety team to ensure conformity with legislation | Consistency in compliance with statutory requirements | Responsive Repairs Manager, Health & Safety team | None | Contract surveyors | August 2013 |
| Invest in local employment opportunities and support young people/apprentices | Number of people supported with work/training opportunities | Responsive Repairs Manager | Local colleges, Harrow Skills Centre, Jobcentre, Xcite, Partner Contractors | Repairs budget | March 2014 |
| Investment in existing staff to improve knowledge and ability, and to encourage innovation | Improved service, increased customer satisfaction, fewer complaints and avoidable contacts | Responsive Repairs Manager | Corporate People Strategy, Training Providers, | Training budget | March 2014 |
| Prepare new voids policy which looks to balance void spend, and to achieve a realistic turnaround time | Cost effective void service with improved turn around times | Responsive Repairs Manager & Housing Provision Manager | Partner contractors, Resident Services | Project Manager – Research & New Initiatives | July 2013 |
| Develop Options appraisal process for voids requiring major works | Process adopted | Head of Asset Management | Partnerships and Strategy, Resident Services | | |
| Provide quarterly training and workshops for residents to be able to carry out basic and preventative repairs | Reduction in responsive repairs calls, increase in customer satisfaction | Responsive Repairs Manager | Partner contractors, Health and Safety team | Contractors, Health & Safety team, Surveyors | June 2013 |
| Implement IT systems to be able to promote increased mobile and flexible working in the department | Successful move to mobile and flexible working | Responsive Repairs Manager | IT, Contractors | IT budget | December 2013 |
| Introduce cost effective handyman schemes across the borough | Scheme introduced | Responsive Repairs Manager | Contractors | Repairs budget | October 2013 |
| Increase the level of planned maintenance across the borough | Planned maintenance increased | Responsive Repairs Manager | Contractors | Repairs Budget | March 2014 |

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|---|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Refresh the Repairs Charter and re-launch to tenants | Charter updated | Responsive Repairs Manager | HFTRA, TLRCF, Communications Team | Existing budgets | September 2013 |
| Maximise contribution to local economy through procurement, supply chain and employment opportunities for local people | Increased contribution to local economy | Responsive Repairs Manager | Procurement, Economic development | Asset Management budgets | Ongoing |
| Introduce recharges for existing tenants where responsive repairs works undertaken are due to tenant neglect or action. | Recharge policy implemented | Responsive Repairs Manager | Contractors, Resident Services | Contractors, contract surveyors, Resident Services | July 2013 |

2.7 **Priority seven: to achieve value for money in everything that we do**

In Asset Management we have an overarching commitment to achieving value for money in everything we do. This includes the procurement and delivery of all works, responsive repairs, planned and cyclical works and improvements to our housing stock.

In particular our more recent activities to undertake more cyclical works and undertake Health and Safety inspection regimes are targeted to reduce long term costs by being more proactive in undertaking regular maintenance.

We have procured 3 main area based responsive repairs contractors, and a gas contract that is borough wide. VFM anticipated from this includes 20% savings on responsive repairs costs each year (15% in 2012/13 as contracts went live in July). In 2012/13 by more effective procurement of major works we achieved the following savings and added value within existing contract prices on the capital programmes:

- Where we are upgrading bathrooms in sheltered housing tenants now get a choice between baths and level access showers with a full assessment of individual needs undertaken to determine the type of shower to install and also positioning of seats, grab rails etc. This speeds up the process for older tenants and providing these adaptations through a programme of works, rather than on a demand basis is also better value for money in the long term.
- We saved £124,000 or 44% of the cost by more effective procurement of lifts in sheltered schemes.
- We saved 25% on the window and door programme on a direct price comparison with 2011/12 prices through Kier.

In addition to “cash” savings most of our contracts have included a bonus of a community facility or other “pay back” to the community such as the installation of a new communal kitchen in a sheltered scheme at no additional cost.

Tenants and Leaseholders are a very important part of all our efforts to achieve value for money and monitor how well we are delivering on our overarching commitment in a number of ways. These include:

- Through the HFTRA Challenge and Scrutiny panel that reviews progress against all objectives in the Housing Ambition Plan
- Monthly meetings of the residents Value for Money sub group, that looks at specific areas of high spend to judge how well we are delivering our objectives
- Regular reports to TLRCF that include Value for Money initiatives and detail savings that have been achieved through procurement. In addition recent reports to TLRCF have been targeted to seek residents’ views on how we should seek to re-invest savings from procurement in future year’s capital programmes.
- Through involvement in the Contractor Appraisal Panels held bi-monthly to monitor each of the 4 main contractors’ overall performance including value for money.

We are working to involve leaseholders more effectively in the procurement of major works that affect them to help with the particular challenges to ensure we deliver VFM in all projects, at the early stages of specifying such works.

We are developing a LBH Design guide which will incorporate Value Engineering and help us to Design schemes that deliver VFM, are sustainable and easily maintained. In addition we are exploring VFM for tenants and leaseholders that will decrease their living costs through putting more effort in to delivering energy efficiency in terms of maximizing access to grant funding for energy efficiency measures.

Operationally a key area of our VFM initiative is to ensure a higher proportion of responsive repairs meet the “right first time” objective and that we improve the balance between emergency and routine jobs. This work sits hand in hand with the development of a Service Level Agreement with Access Harrow that will detail responsibilities and produce more qualitative performance information.

Voids are a priority to us as we strive to reduce re-let times whilst increasing customer satisfaction with the condition of the property at the start of their tenancy. To facilitate this we are currently reviewing processes and procedures with colleagues in Housing Needs and Resident Services whilst undertaking as much work as possible, within budgets to improve the condition of the property on letting. This work sits alongside our work to educate tenants to take better care of their homes which is being underpinned by the implementation of the recharge policy and house MOT's.

Finally none of this can be achieved in isolation so we are doing more to improve joint working with colleagues in Resident Services. More effective joint working will help us recognise problems that need to be addressed early and take appropriate action. Examples of work in progress include improvements to the s20 process for leaseholders and consultation generally on major works and the identification of projects to come forward to future capital programmes that improve the quality of life for tenants and leaseholders, help to address management problems such as anti-social behaviour and may reduce on-going costs.

Action Plan:

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|--|---|---|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Develop SLA with Access Harrow | Full SLA developed, and implemented | Head of Asset Management | Head of Resident Services, Access Harrow | Customer Experience Co-ordinator | July 2013 |
| Improve balance between emergency and routine jobs | More appropriate balance achieved | Responsive Repairs Manager | Access Harrow | | Target to be set |
| Reduce re-let times | Re-let times reduced to within target, consistently achieved | Responsive Repairs Manager | Housing Needs, Resident Services, contractors | VOIDS Team | Target to be set for both 2013/14 and 2014/15 |
| Involve tenants and leaseholders more effectively in the monitoring and management of the delivery of capital projects once they have been procured. | Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with opportunities for involvement increased | Planned Investment Manager | LSG, HFTRA | Asset Management Budgets | July 2013 |
| Seek Cabinet approval for 3-5 year capital programme to facilitate more effective procurement and generate cost savings | Approval given, 3-5 year programme developed and launched | Head of Asset Management/Finance Business Partner | | | December 2013 |
| Devise a more effective system for monitoring warranties and guarantees on all improvements to homes so that any failures are appropriately dealt with | Reduction in calls of this nature put through to responsive repairs-at added cost | Planned Investment Manager | Responsive Repairs Manager, Access Harrow | Asset Management Budgets | |

2.8 Priority eight: to make best use of the housing stock, to meet future needs

The emphasis on achieving the decent homes standard in recent years has led to a significant improvement in the stock condition data we hold on existing homes- and we now have 99% data on the internal and external investment needs in individual homes. It is this data that has determined which homes are featuring on the next few years capital programme for improvement so that our homes will be safe to live in and warm.

Whilst this information provides a far better picture of investment needs in individual homes, the next phase is to gather stock condition information that gives us the wider picture in relation to the longer term viability of our stock. This will allow us to more effectively review the stock holistically to form a view on whether the short term investment in individual homes to meet the Harrow Better Homes standard we aim to develop, is appropriate for all homes. For example if there are structural problems in a block of flats, if they are difficult to let or there are serious management problems such as Anti-social behaviour we need to consider the cost and viability of rectifying these problems before we undertake replacement of internal components such as kitchens and bathrooms.

In addition to this the very significant changes in related strategies badged under the Housing Changes agenda have led to a change in tenancy policy and allocations policy that could make a significant difference over the next few years to the tenant profile-i.e. who will be living in our homes in future. At this stage it is not clear how the needs and wants of these future tenants may differ from current tenants

Welfare benefit reform is also going to impact on the future tenants, although it is by no means certain how or when, and we anticipate that more tenants may choose to live in smaller homes in the future. However if a number of tenants are interested in undertaking moves to smaller homes do we need to consider the availability of smaller properties in locations that will be attractive to households wishing to downsize.

There are some existing concerns about the suitability of some of our stock for it's current purpose. Examples would be sheltered housing schemes that were either built many years ago, or converted from a residential care home that no longer meet the standards expected in sheltered housing. It may be appropriate to consider changing the use of one or more such schemes, or disposing of the stock altogether.

All of these issues feed into the need to make strategic decisions on whether we have the right housing stock to meet future need, and if we do not what steps we can realistically take to address this. In the longer term we aim to ensure we get the best value from our stock by replacing obsolete or uneconomic stock with improved or new assets that are better designed to meet future needs and maintain a balanced portfolio. This work would be undertaken in tandem with, and to compliment work underway to explore new opportunities to develop new affordable housing in Harrow.

It is therefore proposed to develop a process that will enable us to undertake options appraisals on our stock to consider the long term viability of individual blocks and homes. As a minimum these appraisals will determine:

- Are we taking the right investment decisions to optimise the life of our stock?

What condition are the homes in-not just in relation to Decent Homes standards but are they appropriate, sustainable homes in sustainable neighbourhoods

- What do we need to radically change-for example dispose of, demolish, build or acquire?
- Do the properties meet the current and future needs of the Council in terms of size, type and location of property?
- Are there any management issues in the area that could be resolved by some additional works-for example de-conversion of houses converted to flats, ASB etc

Appraisals would need to consider a series of tests before options for the future of a property or properties can be presented for discussion and decision. These tests need to be developed, and could vary for different properties but would need to include:

- The net present value of the property versus the investment costs
- The total cost versus the average cost of investment for the property type
- Suitability of the property to meet future needs in terms of size, type and location of property.
- Whether the property is being put to best use, and if not alternative uses to be considered
- Whether it is on an estate where other changes are taking place-i.e. garages being demolished and or new affordable housing being developed or planned.
- General property and neighbourhood sustainability, such as level of social housing in the area (for example) or the tenancy turnover on the property (indicating its popularity) and any management issues in the area

Action Plan:

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|---|--------------------|
| To develop an options appraisal model for the housing stock | Options appraisal process published and implemented | Asset, Data and Planning Manager, Enabling Manager | None | Asset, Data & Planning Manager, Stock Condition Surveyor, Enabling Manager, Programme Analyst | September 2013 |
| Prioritise housing stock for applying options appraisal process. This is likely to ensure first priority will be homes that feature on next years capital programme to determine whether short term investment is appropriate | Prioritised | Asset, Data and Planning Manager, Enabling Manager | Corporate Estates, Finance | Asset, Data & Planning Manager, Stock Condition Surveyor, Enabling Manager, Programme Analyst, Head of Housing Needs, Head of Resident Services | October 2013 |
| Implement options appraisal model for the housing stock on an agreed programme | Programme agreed | Asset, Data and Planning Manager, Enabling Manager | | Enabling Manager, Stock Condition Surveyor, Enabling Manager, Programme Analyst, Head of Housing Needs, Head of Resident Services | January 2014 |

2.9 Priority Nine: develop and implement strategies for assets other than homes

There are a number of assets held within the Housing Revenue Account other than our housing stock. These assets includes 8 community centres, 900 garages, 5 car parks, 58 commercial properties and other lease arrangements , as well as communal areas in 18 sheltered schemes, the Travellers site at Watling Farm and open spaces on housing estates and areas surrounding our homes.

Most of these assets generate an income to the HRA, from rent and charges and whilst this income could be greater if more investment was made in the non housing assets this has to be balanced against the cost of making the improvements. Nevertheless the income is substantial and it's loss would impact on the HRA business plan. For example the annual income from our commercial properties is approximately £271K and £74k from community centres.

Our commercial portfolio includes shops, public houses and community facilities many of which are on long term leases. However in the last 2-3 years when premises have become vacant it has become more difficult to let them quickly, meaning a reduction in income. 3 of these properties are currently vacant.

The majority of these commercial properties are located on or adjacent to housing estates and the cost to the Council is relatively low as the leases place the responsibility for repair and maintenance of the premises on the tenant. Costs incurred by the HRA are a fee charged by Corporate Estates for managing the properties on housing's behalf and ad hoc costs such as advertising properties as they become available to let. In addition in some of the properties there is an obligation on the responsive repairs service to undertake certain repairs and improvements mainly in relation to the exterior of the buildings and surrounding land.

As well as the leased properties there are a number of less lucrative commercial arrangements with a relatively low annual income ranging from £35-£75 that include advertising hoardings, lease of small patches of land and sub stations. A number of Wayleaves also generate a small income.

No strategic decision has been taken in recent years about the future of this portfolio and whether it is still relevant for housing to own such a portfolio. Given the drive to provide more affordable homes now is a good time to consider whether retaining this portfolio is in the interests of our tenants and leaseholders and supports the viability of the HRA going forward.

The aim is to develop an options appraisal process for the future of these assets. This will include a consideration of whether retaining these assets is financially viable and whether increasing investment in the assets could generate more income.

Alternatively options for disposal or regeneration with possible change of use should be considered. For example some shops may be suitable for conversion to homes, whilst others could be demolished to provide development sites or sold as a commercial venture. Consideration would need to be given to the

remaining period of any lease agreements and the costs that would be involved in early termination of leases.

Action Plan:

| Action | Measure of success | Lead/s | Partners | Resources | Target date |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Develop a programme and timetable for reviewing non housing HRA assets | Programme developed | Asset, Data and Planning Manager, | Head of Resident Services, Corporate Estates, Finance | Enabling Manager, Stock Condition Surveyor, Enabling Manager, Programme Analyst, Head of Housing Needs, Head of Resident Services | March 2014 |
| Undertake stock condition surveys of non housing HRA Assets | Stock condition information gathered | Asset, Data and Planning Manager, | | Stock Condition Surveyor, Enabling Manager, Programme Analyst, | To be determined from programme |
| Develop Options Appraisals for all non homes assets | Options Appraisals developed | Head of Asset Management | Head of Resident Services, Corporate Estates, Finance, TLRCF, HFTRA | Asset, Data and Planning Manager, Enabling Manager, Stock Condition Surveyor, Enabling Manager, Programme Analyst, Head of Housing Needs, Head of Resident Services | To be determined from programme |
| Consult local tenants and leaseholders on the options for each asset or group of assets | Consultation complete | Head of Asset Management | Resident Involvement team, HFTRA | Resident Involvement team, Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Research and new initiatives manager | To be determined from programme |
| Bring forward proposals for the future of these assets for decision | Way forward agreed | Head of Asset Management | Housing Direct Reports | Customer Experience Co-ordinator, Research and new initiatives manager | To be determined from programme |
| Implement proposals | | Director of Housing | Will be dependent on option chosen | Will be dependent on option chosen | To be determined from programme |

3. Appendices

3.1: Initial Equalities Impact Assessment

TEMPLATE 1

Initial Equality Implications Assessment Template

NOTE: This is NOT a screening template but to highlight and give you an indication of any potential equality implications at the project proposal stage. By completing this template, it is your responsibility to evidence why a FULL EqIA is NOT required.

If you have insufficient evidence, data and research or need to undertake further consultation to assess the potential impact of your proposals, then a full EqIA will be required.

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Directorate / Service: | Housing Services/Asset Management |
| What are the proposals being assessed? (Note: 'proposal' includes a policy, service, function, strategy, project, procedure, restructure) | Asset Management Strategy |
| Manager Responsible for Area: | Kulwinder Singh-Rai |
| Officer(s) completing the screening: | Paul O'Callaghan |
| Date screening completed: | 1 st January 2013 |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. What are the aims, objectives, and desired outcomes of your proposals?</p> <p>(Also explain proposals e.g. reduction / removal of service, deletion of posts, changing criteria etc)</p> | <p>To develop an Asset Management Strategy for Harrow Council. This strategy will be developed in partnership with other staff, partners and residents, and will be informed using a range of internal data and external information used to shape the picture of the borough over the next 5 year period.</p> <p>The strategy will look to give us a clear understanding of how to maximise our assets to generate an income, including carrying out improvement works to maintain decency, implementing energy efficient measures and disposals. The income that will be generated by these changes will be reinvested to improve the services to all residents that the housing service provides.</p> <p>The strategy will also take into account elements of community cohesion, need and demand and future estimated trends.</p> |
| <p>2. Who are the main people / groups who may be affected by your proposals? For example who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, the workforce etc.</p> | <p>The groups that are affected by this strategy include staff, residents and contractors. The wider population of the borough will also be affected to some degree where there are a mixture of landlords in any one area.</p> <p>The internal departments that have an interest in this change include: Housing Services, Finance, Property Services, Planning and Access Harrow.</p> |
| <p>3. What data, information, evidence, research, statistics, surveys, and consultation(s) have you considered to undertake this assessment?</p> <p><i>(include the actual data, statistics and evidence)</i></p> | <p>Current best practice across the sector will be studied to inform this project.</p> <p>Internal data will be used to understand the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Condition of our stock ● Value of our stock ● Geographical location of our stock ● Budgets/spend ● Housing need and demand <p>External data will be used to understand the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Population projections |

| | | | |
|---|---|----|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing need and demand ● Trends ● Developments <p>Consultation will be undertaken with affected staff, partner contractors, and also residents of the borough. This will be done through focus groups and surveys.</p> | | |
| 4. Could your proposals proportionately affect more people of one group than another? | Yes | No | If yes, please explain how? |
| | X | | Should we identify any stock where it would be more beneficial to dispose than improve, this may have an unintentional impact upon any groups present. This could also be said of community centres, where these are key to maintaining community cohesion. Unfortunately, we do not have data which highlights exactly who and where these groups are located, therefore making it difficult to state whether any outcomes of the strategy would impact positively or negatively upon any group. |

4. A - Assessment Relevance

How relevant are your proposals to each protected characteristic?

Example: Reviewing the criteria of freedom passes will be of 'High' relevance for Age and Disability and of 'Low' relevance to the other protected characteristics.

B - Assessment of potential impact

When you consider the impact on people in relation to each protected characteristic, it should be defined as positive, neutral or negative:

- **Positive:** where the impact is expected to have a particular benefit for this protected characteristic or improve equality of opportunity and / or foster good relations.
- **Neutral:** where there will be a neutral impact, neither positive nor negative
- **Negative:** where there is a risk that impact could disadvantage one or more of the people described in relation to a protected characteristic. This disadvantage may be differential, where the negative impact on one particular group of individuals or protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.

C - Assessing Negative impact – what are the risks?

When you have considered the likelihood and impact on people in relation to the protected characteristics, use the tables and matrix below and enter a score against each protected characteristic in the end column C.

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Unlawful discrimination | 5 |
| Disproportionate disadvantage | 4 |
| Moderate disadvantage | 3 |
| Minor adjustments required | 2 |
| Minimal considerations necessary | 1 |
| SEVERITY OF IMPACT | |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Certain to occur | 5 |
| Very likely to occur | 4 |
| Likely to occur | 3 |
| Possible to occur | 2 |
| Very unlikely to occur | 1 |
| LIKLIHOOD | |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------|---------------|---|----|----|----|----|
| LIKLIHOOD | 5 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 |
| | 4 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 20 |
| | 3 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 15 |
| | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | IMPACT | | | | | |

Calculating the score - Severity of Impact X Likelihood = Score

| Protected Characteristic | A Relevance | B Impact | Describe the impact(s) (adverse or positive) your proposals may have on this protected characteristic | Reason for the Assessment of Potential Impact (What evidence, data, and information did you use to assess this?) | C Assessing Negative Impact Score |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| | Low/ Medium/ High | Positive/ Negative/ Neutral | | | |
| Age (including carers of young/older people) | High | Positive | We do know that Harrow is following the national trend of having an ageing population. This will be reflected in the strategy as many of our properties will need to be adapted to accommodate this group. | The service that we offer is impartial to any of these characteristics, and will continue to be so. Major improvement work will continue to be allocated dependent upon the condition of the property, and responsive repairs will follow the policies and procedures that currently exist. Where there are residents who are classified as vulnerable, and require adaptations to their property, they will still be able to access the services offered prior to these changes. | 4 |

| | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|---|---|---|
| Disability (including carers of disabled people) | High | Neutral | Where there are groups who are disabled, they will still be able to access our aids and adaptations scheme should they require improvements to their stock. | The service that we offer is impartial to any of these characteristics, and will continue to be so. Major improvement work will continue to be allocated dependent upon the condition of the property, and responsive repairs will follow the policies and procedures that currently exist. Where there are residents who are classified as vulnerable, and require adaptations to their property, they will still be able to access the services offered prior to these changes. | 4 |
| Gender Reassignment | High | Neutral | Residents in this category will still have access to the service as standard. | The service that we offer is impartial to any of these characteristics, and will continue to be so. Major improvement work will continue to be allocated dependent upon the condition of the property, and responsive repairs will follow the policies and procedures that currently exist. Where there are residents who are classified as vulnerable, and require adaptations to their property, they will still be able to access the services offered prior to these changes. | 4 |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership | High | Neutral | Residents in this category will still have access to the service as standard. | The service that we offer is impartial to any of these characteristics, and will continue to be so. Major improvement work will continue to be allocated dependent upon the condition of the property, and responsive repairs will follow the policies and procedures that currently exist. Where there are residents who are classified as | 4 |

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| | | | | vulnerable, and require adaptations to their property, they will still be able to access the services offered prior to these changes. | |
| Pregnancy and Maternity | High | Neutral | Residents in this category will still have access to the service as standard. | The service that we offer is impartial to any of these characteristics, and will continue to be so. Major improvement work will continue to be allocated dependent upon the condition of the property, and responsive repairs will follow the policies and procedures that currently exist. Where there are residents who are classified as vulnerable, and require adaptations to their property, they will still be able to access the services offered prior to these changes. | 4 |
| Race | High | Neutral | We will need to gain a greater understanding of the location of this group before stating whether there will be any impact as this could be dependent upon where these communities have settled. | The service that we offer is impartial to any of these characteristics, and will continue to be so. Major improvement work will continue to be allocated dependent upon the condition of the property, and responsive repairs will follow the policies and procedures that currently exist. Where there are residents who are classified as vulnerable, and require adaptations to their property, they will still be able to access the services offered prior to these changes. | 4 |
| | High | Neutral | We will need to gain a greater understanding of the location of this group before stating whether there will be any impact as this could be dependent upon where these | The service that we offer is impartial to any of these characteristics, and will continue to be so. Major improvement work will continue to be allocated dependent upon the condition of the | 4 |

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|--------------------|------|---------|--|---|---|
| Religion or Belief | | | communities have settled. | property, and responsive repairs will follow the policies and procedures that currently exist. Where there are residents who are classified as vulnerable, and require adaptations to their property, they will still be able to access the services offered prior to these changes. | |
| Sex | High | Neutral | We will need to gain a greater understanding of the location of this group before stating whether there will be any impact as this could be dependent upon where these communities have settled. | The service that we offer is impartial to any of these characteristics, and will continue to be so. Major improvement work will continue to be allocated dependent upon the condition of the property, and responsive repairs will follow the policies and procedures that currently exist. Where there are residents who are classified as vulnerable, and require adaptations to their property, they will still be able to access the services offered prior to these changes. | 4 |
| Sexual orientation | High | Neutral | We will need to gain a greater understanding of the location of this group before stating whether there will be any impact as this could be dependent upon where these communities have settled. | The service that we offer is impartial to any of these characteristics, and will continue to be so. Major improvement work will continue to be allocated dependent upon the condition of the property, and responsive repairs will follow the policies and procedures that currently exist. Where there are residents who are classified as vulnerable, and require adaptations to their property, they will still be able to access the services offered prior to these changes. | 4 |

| Score | Action |
|-----------------|--|
| 1-5 Low | Minor considerations needed e.g. style and method of communication, timing of activity, venue suitability, and minor cultural or social considerations. |
| 6-10 Medium | Amendments will be needed to the proposals/activity to take account of any issues identified. Further actions maybe necessary as well as internal/external expert advice/consultation could be required. |
| 11-15 High | The proposals/initiative cannot be rolled out until detailed internal/external consultation has taken place with those the activity affects. Legal advice may also be required. |
| 16-25 Very High | If unlawful discrimination is identified then the proposals cannot be implemented without fundamental change and you are also strongly advised to take legal advice. |

| Summary and Recommendations (this section must be included in Cabinet reports and your project proposal reports for the Commissioning Panel) | | | | |
|--|--|---|----|--|
| Summary / Conclusion of assessment: (include the key findings and equality implications. | <p>By implementing this strategy, there will be no intended negative impact upon any of the equality groups listed above. It will always be a service that we have to deliver, and the service change is in response to a resident desire to improve the service. Access to the services will remain the same, and the allocation of improvement works will be based upon the same information as used previously. Where there are vulnerable clients (for example, the elderly or disabled), they will still be able to access existing services, and we are looking to improve our data holdings to inform us of where these community groups are located.</p> <p>Where there are instances of disposal, or large scale improvement works, residents will be fully consulted upon these and an informed decision made taking into account any equality impact which has been identified.</p> | | | |
| On the basis of your conclusion, do you suggest a full Equality Impact Assessment should be undertaken? | Yes | X | No | |
| If no, please explain why not? | | | | |

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| <p>Do you think that your proposals will have a cumulative effect upon a particular protected group in light of other council proposals that you are aware of? If yes, please explain the cumulative impact and on which groups.</p> | <p>The age profile of the borough could dictate that the type of stock we are retaining or developing could change over time.</p> |
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|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| <p>Signature - Lead Officer</p> | <p>Paul O'Callaghan</p> | <p>Date</p> | <p>1st January 2013</p> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|

| <p>Project Proposals being submitted to the Commissioning Panel</p> | <p>All other proposals including policy/service reviews, developing new policies, services and projects, restructure etc</p> |
|--|---|
| <p>On completion, your (signed) Initial Equality Implications Assessment template needs to be submitted with your project proposals by the set deadline.</p> <p>As part of the Commissioning Panel process, all completed templates will be Quality Assured taking into account your recommendation whether a full EqIA is required or not. If the Quality Assurance Group disagrees with a recommendation that a full EqIA is not required, this will be fed back to the project leads with the group's comments and reason for their decision.</p> | <p>On completion, the (signed) Initial Equality Implications Assessment template needs to be forwarded to the Chair of your Directorate Equalities Task Group (ETG) to be reviewed and signed off.</p> <p>After reviewing the template, your ETG may suggest you undertake a full EqIA; therefore it is important that you wait for this decision before submitting your report.</p> <p>DETG Chairs – once you have reviewed and signed off the section above, please return this template to the Lead Officer with your comments and decision.</p> <p>Lead officers must then email their completed (signed) templates to equalities@harrow.gov.uk to be published</p> |

Quality Assurance and Sign Off
(to be used by ETG's and the Quality Assurance Group)

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|--|-----|------|----|--|
| Are the outcomes of the proposals clear? | Yes | | No | |
| Comments: | | | | |
| Is it clear who will be affected by what is being proposed? | Yes | | No | |
| Comments: | | | | |
| Are you satisfied with the level of data/evidence used to undertake this assessment? | Yes | | No | |
| If no, explain why not? | | | | |
| If a full EqlA is not required, are you satisfied with this outcome? | Yes | | No | |
| If no, explain why not? | | | | |
| Signature - Chair of Equality Task Group | | Date | | |