

**REPORT FOR: PERFORMANCE AND  
FINANCE SCRUTINY  
SUB-COMMITTEE**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	11 July 2013
<b>Subject:</b>	Progress Report on Scrutiny Review of Private rented sector housing in Harrow
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Lynne Pennington, Divisional Director of Housing Services
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member area:</b>	Councillor Chris Mote, Policy Lead Member for Community, Health and Wellbeing; Councillor Stephen Wright, Policy Lead Member for Environment and Enterprise; Councillor Nana Asante, Performance Lead Member for Community, Health and Wellbeing; Councillor Phillip O'Dell, Performance Lead Member for Environment and Enterprise
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Appendix 1: Progress update on Private Sector Housing Strategy action plan

**Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report sets out a progress update against the recommendations made in the scrutiny review of private rented sector housing in Harrow in July 2012. and which were incorporated in full in the Private Sector Housing Strategy approved by Cabinet on 11 April 2013

**Recommendations:**

To note progress against the Private Sector Housing Action Plan.

## Section 2 – Report

### Background

1. The final report from the “Private rented sector housing in Harrow” Scrutiny Review was reported to Cabinet on the 13 September 2012. It acknowledged the importance of the private rented sector in increasingly meeting the housing needs of households in the borough. It set out an important aspiration to encourage the provision of additional good quality private rented accommodation as well as improve standards and tackle poor quality where it exists.
2. Officers welcomed the opportunity to work with the Scrutiny Committee which coincided with the development of a Private Sector Housing Strategy. As a result all of the recommendations made through the scrutiny review were incorporated in the final strategy approved by Cabinet on the 11 April 2013, following a formal consultation process.
3. In view of the Council’s limited resources the Private Sector Housing Strategy concentrates on what the Council can do to encourage and facilitate the continued provision of a good quality private rented housing sector working in partnership with other boroughs, landlords, developers and private tenants whilst using available enforcement resources to tackle the worst conditions.
4. The Private Sector Housing Strategy is accompanied by a detailed action plan setting out the actions the Council is undertaking with regard to maintaining a good quality private rented housing sector in Harrow. Progress against the action plan is attached at Appendix 1. The Overview and Scrutiny actions have been cross referenced within the action plan.
5. The main areas of progress are:
  - a. An initial evaluation has recently been completed on the role the Council could play in directing and delivering new affordable housing to meet housing need and demand in order to achieve a balanced housing market in the borough. At its meeting on the 20 June 2013 Cabinet considered options for increasing the delivery of affordable housing including longer term strategic delivery options where the Council could take a more direct role in using its land assets to deliver private rented housing. Business cases are to be taken forward to enable detailed assessment;
  - b. A scheme has been launched to incentivise buy to let in Harrow and increase the number of private rented properties available for rent by households in housing need;
  - c. Research is underway into the feasibility of selective licensing of private rented sector landlords. Recommendations are due to be presented to the Licensing and General Purposes Committee in August 2013 and will consider Harrow’s local context and findings from Newham Council, which implemented mandatory licensing for all private landlords in January 2013;

- d. A lead team has been formed and is proactively identifying HMO's. As at 16/4/13, 355 HMO's were licenced out of an estimated 1500 HMO's in the borough. This is a significant improvement in performance since 187 HMOs were licenced in 2011 and 2012;
- e. We continue to exceed targets for bringing empty homes back into use, will shortly be accessing additional grant funding from the GLA through a successful West London Housing Partnership bid and have also bid for further funding from the GLA for which we are awaiting a response;
- f. Performance of the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants Programme continues to be above target and average times to complete adaptation works for owner occupiers, RP and private tenants was 18 weeks in 2012/13;
- g. All properties inspected under the Housing Act 2004 are now required to supply Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and those that attract a Category 1 hazard as a result will be subject to an Improvement notice;
- h. The project to procure a GreenDeal/ECO provider for the borough is progressing.

## **Financial Implications**

- 6. The actions detailed in Appendix 1 are being taken forward with existing staff resources and budgets. Bids for new proposals where there is no existing budget are made through the appropriate commissioning channels on the basis of invest to save.
- 7. The business cases being taken forward to examine the options for how the Council could take a long term and more direct role in delivering new housing, including private rented housing, will examine in detail the risks and benefits.
- 8. Bids for external funding continue to be made where appropriate, for example to the GLA Mayors Housing Covenant for additional Empty Homes funding. The availability of new resources is very limited and therefore utilising external funding opportunities and partnership working with the private sector will be key to delivering the objectives of the draft Private Sector Housing Strategy.

## **Performance Issues**

- 9. There are a number of Performance Indicators within the Housing Scorecard relating to housing demand and supply and the role of the private rented sector within this. Some of the actions in the Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan will positively impact on performance in key areas, for example by minimising increase in the numbers of homeless families in Bed and Breakfast.

10. Current performance set out below reflects the pressures from rising homelessness and the difficulties in finding suitable private rented housing in Harrow. These difficulties are projected to continue. The impact of new proposals such as selective licensing will need to consider the potential impact on supply in the lower quartile private rented sector and the knock on impact this may have on homelessness demand.

11. Whilst current supply of affordable housing shows good performance, future supply can only be maintained by continuing to explore a range of new supply models.

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Q4 2012/13 Performance</b>	<b>2012/13 Target</b>	<b>Red Amber Green</b>
Average number of households in B&B	69	100	Green: Numbers were well below original estimate due to effective prevention activity.
Total no of households we housed in the Private Rented Sector (incl private sector leasing/Help2Let)	248	400	Red: We could not obtain sufficient local housing, but we were able to keep B&B numbers below original estimate.
Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	278	275	Green: The number of new homes completed was above target in 2012/13.
Empty private dwellings returned into use	259	200	Green: Year end target exceeded. New Repair to Lease grant scheme (up to £5k) has been successful in maintaining interest from landlords

## **Environmental Impact**

12. The outcomes from completion of the Private Sector Housing Strategy contribute to the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Delivering Warmer Homes strategy through:

- Improving energy efficiency and reducing CO2 in all housing tenures.
- New affordable homes in London being required to achieve a minimum of level 4 of the Sustainable Building Code.
- Other environmental improvements often included in new affordable housing developments or retrofitting of existing social housing include: provision of green roofs, solar thermal hot water systems to meet the target for use of renewable resources and resulting reduction in CO2 emissions, improved biodiversity as a result of increased tree planting and landscaped communal open spaces, provision of Sustainable

Urban Drainage Systems, and green travel plans to encourage use of public transport and walking.

## **Risk Management Implications**

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

Separate risk register in place? No

13. Risk assessment will be undertaken for specific projects and risk registers maintained for major projects.

## **Equalities implications**

14. An equalities impact assessment was completed for the Private Sector Housing Strategy. None of the actions proposed discriminate either directly or indirectly under the public bodies duty of the Equality Act 2010. The majority of the actions set out within the strategy will have either a positive or neutral impact on protected groups. The equality actions are monitored and progress updates against these are included in Appendix 1.

## **Corporate Priorities**

15. This report incorporates the following corporate priorities by working to ensure private housing in Harrow is of good quality particularly for households in high priority housing need or for those who are vulnerable by way of age or disability. It also aims to tackle poor conditions in the private housing sector:

- Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe.
- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads.
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.

## **Section 3 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Alison Pegg, Housing Partnerships and Strategy Manager, 020 8424 1933, email [Alison.pegg@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Alison.pegg@harrow.gov.uk)

### **Background Papers:**

Private Rented sector housing in Harrow, Scrutiny review report presented to Cabinet 13 September 2012  
<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/documents/g61071/Public%20reports%20pack%20Thursday%2013-Sep-2012%2019.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

Response to Scrutiny Review on “ Private rented sector housing in Harrow” 11 October 2012

<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/documents/g61072/Public%20reports%20pack%20Thursday%2011-Oct-2012%2019.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

Cabinet report 11 April 2013 - Housing Changes Review: Approval of Housing Strategy 2013/18, Homelessness Strategy 2013/18, Private Sector Housing Strategy 2013/18, Housing Allocations Scheme 2013, and update on Housing Business Plan 2013 and draft Asset Management Strategy 2013

<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/documents/g61078/Public%20reports%20pack%20Thursday%2011-Apr-2013%2019.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>