

## Housing Performance 2005/06

Last year was a challenging one for Housing Services. We completed a major options appraisal of our stock, which involved many tenants and leaseholders. We asked you to choose the option you wanted and 90% of respondents said you wanted your homes to stay with the council.

Therefore we will keep our housing stock, and we are continuing to work hard to give you a good service.

Our performance last year:

### Voids and lettings

- Last year 282 properties became empty (void).
- We reduced our void turnaround time from over 45 days to just over 42 days. We're continuing to work hard to reduce this to our target of 35 days.
- We let 299 properties in total.
- 51 tenants also transferred to more suitable homes within Harrow.

### Rents

We collected over £20 million in rent, nearly 98% of the rent owed to us. Just over 15% of tenants owed us more than seven weeks rent.

### Tenancy management

During 2005/06 we evicted seven secure tenants for rent arrears. We also served an injunction and demoted two tenancies (the tenants have lost their rights as secure tenants) for anti-social behaviour.



We had three cases of racial harassment reported to us last year, which we dealt with thoroughly and carefully. Third party reporting is being launched this year, which means you can report racial harassment at 11 different sites across Harrow if you prefer not to visit a police station.

Our tenant participation team worked with tenants over the last year to create three new tenants and residents associations (TRAs), with a further three currently in development. Nearly either formal or informal tenant groups represented 55% of tenants.

### Estate Management

Each year we have a budget to carry out minor estate improvement works. Individual residents and Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) request works and these are prioritised. During 2005/06 we completed over 35 different projects, from marking out parking bays and providing storage for buggies, to replacing walls and fencing, installing new lighting in communal areas and laying new paths.

In 2006/07 we have already completed four projects.



## Repairs

Nearly 17,000 repair orders were placed during 2005/06 – that's over 1,400 per month! Most were for plumbing, heating, electrical and carpentry. Over 71% of orders were classed as urgent, but we still completed over 96% within the time limits – better than our target of 95%. A key aim for this year is to reduce the number of urgent repairs.

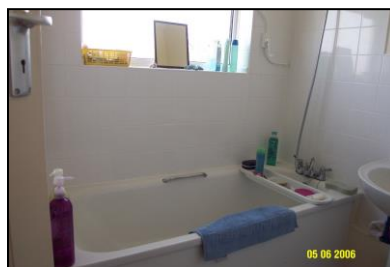
## Decent homes and planned maintenance

Last year we brought 475 homes up to the decent homes standard. We installed:

### 257 kitchens



### 266 bathrooms



### New windows to 398 homes



### 141 new heating systems

We also rewired 265 homes, and we completed adaptations to 216 homes to meet tenants' specific needs, spending nearly £650,000.

## So what's in store for 2006/07?

We're continuing to work hard to make further improvements to the services we provide to you. 'Access Harrow' and our new one-stop shop, will make it easier for you to contact us. There have been start up difficulties but we expect these to have improved by the time the formal launch takes place at the end of July. The contact number for Housing is 0208 420 5611.

## Allocations and lettings

We are reviewing the way in which we provide temporary accommodation for households who are homeless and who are waiting for their case to be assessed. We hope to be able to work closely with the YMCA in Roxeth in providing care and support for single vulnerable young people.

We will continue to work with our Local Authority and Housing association partners who use Locata to offer a choice based letting scheme for the allocation of new tenancies of rented accommodation.

Our enabling team will ensure that the 150 new homes for rent and shared ownership are well designed and accessible

## **Rents**

During the year we will be working on the structure of the rents charges to separate service charges from rent. This process is referred to as de-pooling and enables us to move towards ensuring that the service charge element of the rent reflects the services we provide. We aim to complete this exercise to ensure that the outcome of the review is included in the rental charge review effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

## **Tenancy management**

We have started work on reviewing the tenancy agreement to ensure that the agreement is in line with current legislation. The agreement was last reviewed in 1992 and recent changes in law need to be included in the new agreement. The tenancy agreement sets out the contract between the Council and its tenants. We expect to complete the review during the year.

The revisions to the tenancy agreement and the changes to the contract for delivering repairs mean that the tenant handbook will be reviewed to reflect those changes.

## **Repairs**

We have recently made changes in the way in which our repairs and improvement service is delivered and it is now being delivered as part of the property maintenance service to all building owned by the Council. This provides an improved technical assessment of property matters.

New partnering arrangements will come into effect through partnering arrangements, which should be in place by next summer... The new contract will deliver improvement to your homes and deliver the day-to-day repairs service. This should ensure that we can introduce a booking system for appointments to carry out any repairs needed, introduce diagnostic approach into access Harrow to ensure that we have a clear picture of the repair required and therefore ensure that your repairs are correctly carried out during the first visit. The new contract is also intended to reduce the costs of the service provided.

We will bring xxx homes up to decent homes standard during the year and we will work with tenants to ensure that we meet their requirements when working in your homes.

We will be working with tenants and leaseholders at Mill Farm and Grange Farm to consider the possibilities for regeneration of these two estates.

The list of properties that will receive improvement works during 2007/8 and 2008/9 will be published later this year and will be available to ensure that the detailed consultation with individual tenants starts well in advance of the next financial year.

We are carrying out a review of the care taking service to improve the services we are able to provide. We will review the use and access to the Centres by TRA's and groups active in our community.

### **Tenant and leaseholder participation**

The involvement of an independent tenant adviser will enable us to work together to consider our approach to TLCF, HFTRA and the tenants and Residents Associations, as we need to ensure that the communication we have with you is effective and provides an opportunity to influence service improvement.

We have started the review of the tenant compact and it will provide a clear framework for the way in which we work with you and keep you informed about the performance of the housing service. The compact also sets out the ways in which you can influence the service all tenant and leaseholders receive.

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### **Satisfaction survey**

In September we expect to have the results of the tenant survey that we are sending out shortly. Through the survey you can let us know what you are pleased with and you can let us know where we need to improve.

### **Communication**

A current contact list is provided so that you know whom to contact and we will re-issue this form time to time to ensure that you can reach us when you need to.

Gwyneth Allen  
Interim Head of Housing  
14<sup>th</sup> July 2006