

HARROW HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN

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[By Portfolio Holder?]

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- Contribute to reduction in use of temporary accommodation by using Council stock as effectively as possible
- Achieve Decent Homes Standard in Council stock by 2010
- Improve resident satisfaction with the environment of their homes
- Empower all residents to have a greater say in the management of their homes and community
- Reduced hate, crime, anti-social behaviour and nuisance as a result of working with other agencies
- Improve turnaround time for empty Council housing so that they are available to relet as quickly as possible
- Make sure our properties are being used effectively
- Maximise income
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INTRODUCTION, OVERVIEW AND CONSULTATION

What is the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (HRA BP)?

Harrow's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan sets out and explains the actions the Council will be taking to make sure the best possible use is made of its Council housing resources, to meet current and future needs identified in our Housing Strategy. The HRA BP is particularly concerned with services provided by the Council as a landlord.

What is the purpose of the HRA BP?

The HRA BP is meant to provide a thorough understanding of the issues affecting Council housing in Harrow, to be a basis for sound decision-making, and a convenient source of information. It will help us to respond effectively to the opportunities and challenges that face us now and in the future.

The Business Plan is designed to be updated in the light of changing circumstances, such as revised estimates of our income and expenditure, new legislation or guidance from central government, or anything else that affects the way that we manage our housing stock.

What is in the HRA BP?

In the HRA BP you will find a description of the current state of council housing in the borough and of the progress we have made so far in meeting housing objectives. It sets out our priorities, and explains how they have been decided on. We consider the difficulties and challenges that we face and show how we plan to overcome them. Most importantly, we set out clearly and in detail what we intend doing in the future.

This Business Plan includes many references to the Council's Housing Strategy. This is because the Council's stock of housing has an essential role within that strategy. The Business Plan also takes account of the Council's wider community objectives.

We recognise the benefit of consulting with all our partners. In particular, residents were very involved in the Options Appraisal process we went through in 2005, through which the Council decided how it would achieve improvements to tenants' homes. As part of this continuing process you are very welcome to make comments on this Plan. Full contact details can be found at the end of this document.

To make good decisions, it is essential that we have accurate and up-to-date information about the condition of our housing. In the Business Plan you will find the results of recent stock condition surveys. These give us important information about the state of repair of our stock and levels of maintenance required.

We must try to make available to our tenants the right sort of property in the right location. This HRA BP includes up-to-date information on local supply and demand for Council housing, and our plans for dealing with areas of less popular housing.

The Plan looks at how we currently manage our housing, including how we deal with repairs, and how we ensure that the capital funding invested in our properties will continue to be a good investment.

The HRA BP looks in detail at how we balance the income from rent and other sources, with outgoings on repairs, maintenance, management and other expenses. We look forward up to 30 years to predict the different possible financial outcomes which might arise from the actions we are taking now.

The Business Plan includes an assessment of different ways of achieving our housing aims and objectives.

To achieve our objectives, we need to understand the steps that we have to take towards them. The Action Plan included in this HRA BP sets out the tasks that must be achieved within specific timescales, and who is responsible for them.

As well as looking forward, the HRA BP looks back to measure how well we have performed against previous targets and objectives. This gives us the opportunity to learn from the past and to highlight particular areas of success on which we can build.

Who is the HRA BP for?

The HRA BP is designed to be read by everybody. Jargon has been avoided and technical terms used as little as possible. Those technical terms that are unavoidable are fully explained in the Glossary. In the interests of clarity and economy, frequently used terms are abbreviated. These are listed in the Glossary.

For readers who want fuller information, detailed statistics and some of the documents on which this Plan has been based are included in Appendices after the main text.

Consultation with Residents and Stakeholders

As described in the Housing Strategy, residents and stakeholders have been involved in the preparation of the Strategy, and particularly in setting the strategic housing objectives and priorities which inform the Business Plan objectives and priorities.

Residents and other stakeholders were engaged in many different ways in the Options Appraisal process which forms the foundation of the HRA BP. *[Add detail of consultation events etc plus*

- *TLCF see reports on HRA annually*
- *Influence on BP:*
 - *Reviewing methodology of service charge depooling as result of tenant dissatisfaction with current methodology]*

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The strategic context for the HRA BP is described in detail in the Housing Strategy.

[Summary of strategic context section of Housing Strategy to be added here, to include links to national, regional, sub-regional and corporate priorities]

Strategic Housing Priorities

The objectives of our Housing Strategy are:

- Meeting the needs & aspirations of vulnerable people
- Continue to tackle homelessness and high demand, whilst reducing temporary accommodation
- Improving neighbourhoods and quality of life
- Increasing housing supply
- Make better use of resources to deliver quality services

OTHER INFLUENCES ON PRIORITIES

Stock condition analysis and the Options Appraisal process

Decent Homes – the Options Appraisal process

The Government requires local authorities to bring all Council stock up to Decent Homes Standard (DHS) by 2010. To assess the most effective way of achieving this in Harrow, the Council carried out a 'light touch' option appraisal in 2003. At that time, the Council decided to set up an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) as its preferred way of raising the funds necessary to pay for the work to achieve the DHS. However, during 2004 Local Authorities were given new borrowing powers, and it became clear that this 'prudential borrowing' option could deliver better value for money than the ALMO route to achieve the DHS in Harrow. A decision was taken by Cabinet in November 2004 to withdraw from the ALMO. As a result of this, the Council needed to carry out a comprehensive Housing Option Appraisal, looking not just at the best way of getting the necessary investment in the Council housing stock but also at the wishes of tenants and leaseholders about the management of their homes.

This Options Appraisal, carried out during 2005, was led by a Working Group with tenants in the majority, and was informed by a significant consultation programme, using a range of media to ensure that we reached and involved as many tenants and leaseholders across Harrow as possible. As part of the option appraisal process tenants and leaseholders identified the standard they wished all homes to achieve by 2010. Tenants and leaseholders also told us that they wanted to see improvements in security, safety and the environment.

The Council decided it could achieve the DHS 2010 if it invested additional money through prudential borrowing on the HRA. In addition to meeting Decent Homes, the Council's Cabinet in June 2005 agreed:

- That, subject to maintaining a balanced HRA and positive cashflow over 30 years, additional spending on discretionary estate improvements of up to £5m. be made available for works over and above the Decent Homes standard
- To note that the tenants on the Options Appraisal Working Group supported the stock retention option on the understanding that an additional £3.5m is found before 2010 for additional improvements works to estates

The Options Appraisal and its recommendations were approved the Government Office for London in February 2006.

Housing needs analysis

[Add summary of Fordham report + link to full report when finalised]

Research on older people's housing needs in the borough in 2004 found that:

- Harrow does not have a massive oversupply of sheltered housing, but some of our sheltered housing is now quite old, and lacks the space standards and facilities that are now accepted as normal. The average age of those living in such accommodation has moved upwards very rapidly in the last two decades, bringing higher levels of need for support that the design of these buildings does not always allow. Some sheltered schemes have seen amenities such as shops, access to doctors and pharmacy, proximity to public transport etc. disappear making independent life for their residents more difficult.
- There will be a diminishing role for rented accommodation in old age as levels of ownership rise. The amount of conventional rented sheltered housing should therefore be reduced significantly, through (for example) refurbishing some schemes to provide independent retirement living accommodation without specific services, or using sites for Extra Care or leasehold sheltered housing

Our Performance

How we measure performance

The Council has well-developed performance management structures in place. A service planning cycle has been established to ensure that all service areas have developed, and are working to, a service plan that reflects corporate priorities. Key targets and indicators are monitored by Scrutiny in the form of a strategic performance report.

For the past two years the Council has been using specialist software to develop scorecards, which managers use to monitor performance. As part of the corporate business transformation project, SAP is being introduced from September 2006, which will replace the current system for developing and monitoring against performance scorecards. SAP will enable managers to access performance information more quickly and easily, and to monitor progress against targets.

Recent Performance

[Explanations of Best Value Indicators to be added]

[Recent Best Value Performance Indicators and any local indicators to be added to table and performance trends analysed]

BVPI	Brief definition	2002/03 actual	2003/04 actual	2004/05 actual	2005/06 actual
63	Energy efficiency of housing stock– SAP rating	54	56	63	64

BVPI	Brief definition	2002/03 actual	2003/04 actual	2004/05 actual	2005/06 actual
66a	Rent collected by as a proportion of rents owned	96.79%	95.63%	98.1%	97.95%
66b	Percentage of tenants with more than 7 weeks of rent arrears	-	-	-	15.56
66c	Percentage of tenants in arrears who have had Notices Seeking Possession served	-	-	-	26.66
66d	Percentage of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	-	-	-	0.14
74a	Tenant satisfaction with Landlord – all tenants	80%	79%	-	-
74b	Tenant satisfaction with Landlord – ethnic minority tenants	74%	73%	-	-
74c	Tenant satisfaction with Landlord – non-ethnic minority tenants	81%	80%	-	-
75a	Tenant satisfaction with Landlord – all tenants	-	57%	-	-
75b	Tenant satisfaction with Landlord - ethnic minority tenants	-	57%	-	-
75c	Tenant satisfaction with Landlord – non ethnic minority tenants	-	57%	-	-
164	Equal access to social housing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
184 a	Non-Decent local authority dwellings (percentage)	-	49%	55.8%	48%
184 b	Non-decent local authority dwellings (percentage change)	-6	-4%	13.8%	8.5%
212	Average time to re-let local authority housing (days) (old BV68)	-	45.92		42.32

Audit Commission Inspection

[Last inspection was in 2004 – add summary?]

Benchmarking

The Council is a member of HouseMark and of Housing Quality Network.

[Add detail on data available through these organisations, and how it has changed what Resident Services does]

Status Survey

[Summary of STATUS survey of resident satisfaction – key issues appear to be:

- Overall satisfaction with services significantly reduced since last STATUS survey
- Repairs service
- Overall quality of home
- Recycling
- Grounds maintenance]

Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey

[Summary of survey of leaseholder satisfaction]

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Harrow's Housing Stock

Stock size and age at April 2007

The Council-owned stock as at 1st April 2007 totalled [updated figure needed] rented dwellings plus a further [updated figure needed] leasehold dwellings.

Compared to the majority of other London boroughs, the Council-owned stock is relatively small. It is also a small percentage of the total housing resources available. The number is further reduced each year as tenants exercise their Right to Buy option. Our stock is largely estate-based; around 230 homes located across the Borough are not on an estate. The majority of estates are relatively small and comprise traditionally-built family houses and low-rise flats no higher than four storeys in traditional suburban layouts. They generally benefit from both private and communal amenity space. The largest estate comprises some 700 properties with the majority being family housing with a small proportion of low-rise flats. There are no Council-owned high-rise flats in the borough. There are pockets of properties of non-traditional construction totalling some 600 units.

[Updated breakdown of stock numbers by property type and size needed]

Stock Condition

The Council has a stock condition database (Codeman), which it uses to develop the Decent Homes works programme. A stock condition survey was undertaken in 2003 during which 100% of the external areas of the council's housing stock were surveyed and 20% of the stock was surveyed internally. This information was entered onto the Codeman database and has been continually updated as works have been completed. The original survey information was reviewed by Savills in 2004/05 during the Options Appraisal process. In addition to this:

- All sheltered housing has been surveyed in the past 12 months as part of the sheltered housing review
- External consultants are carrying out a desktop review of Mill Farm stock condition data as part of the Options Appraisal for that estate

[Information on energy efficiency data to be provided by Ron Clift]

The output from these surveys is described in detail in the section on Decent Homes below

Revenue Funding

[Detailed figures and text to be added after review completed, but will be in line with Options Appraisal figures]

Capital Funding

[Add details of:

- *Commitment given to set aside proportion of RTB receipts for Housing*
- *Commitment given to set aside 100% of HRA asset sales receipts for Housing (e.g. Mepham Garden scout hut)*

Any other decisions on capital funding for Housing]

Short- to Medium-Term Analysis

[Detailed figures and text to be added after review completed, but will be broadly in line with Options Appraisal figures]

Long-Term Analysis: 30 years

[Detailed figures and text to be added after review completed, but will be broadly in line with Options Appraisal figures]

Partnership working

The Council is committed to working in partnership with many other agencies and organisations to deliver excellent homes and services to our residents. For Resident Services (the part of the Council that looks after Council housing), the key partners with whom we work are:

- The Antisocial Behaviour Unit
- The Crime Reduction Team
- Kier - we are currently negotiating the final details of a partnership (the Harrow Integrated Property Partnership or HIPSP) to deliver Decent Homes works, responsive repairs and works to empty properties, which will “go live” in July 2007
- Brent Housing Partnership - we have worked closely with this local high-performing ALMO to redesign our procedures for delivering services, plan services etc
- Other West London boroughs, particularly those who also participate in the LOCATA choice-based lettings scheme
- *[add details of other key partners]*

HRA BP OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

HRA BP Objectives

[To be drafted – could use same objectives as Housing Strategy but tailored to Council stock/landlord services]

HRA BP Priorities

[Table below shows a first draft of possible priorities for Harrow landlord service – this will be subject to further analysis of performance, feedback from residents etc. Explanation to be added of why the priorities have been selected i.e. analysis of performance issues, STATUS survey results etc]

Strategic Housing Objectives	HRA BP Priorities
Meeting the needs & aspirations of vulnerable people especially older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable and maintain the independence and wellbeing of older and vulnerable people who are or will be residents of Council stock
Continue to tackle homelessness and high demand, whilst reducing temporary accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to reduction in use of temporary accommodation by using Council stock as effectively as possible – see below
Improving neighbourhoods and quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve Decent Homes Standard in Council stock by 2010 • Increase resident satisfaction with the environment of their homes • Empower all residents to have a greater say in the management of their homes and community • Reduce hate crime, anti-social behaviour and nuisance perpetrated or suffered by Council tenants
Increasing housing supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve turnround time for empty Council housing so that they are available to relet as quickly as possible • Make sure all Council stock is being used as effectively as possible
Make better use of resources to deliver quality services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise income from rent and service charges • Improve information we hold about Council stock and its residents so that we can target scarce resources at individuals, properties and areas in most need • Increase resident satisfaction with access to and response from Resident Services • Increase resident satisfaction with responsive repairs service

Our Plan – Progress and Priorities

[Throughout this section, achievements to date should be “boxed” to increase visibility and cut down on repetitive text]

Enable and maintain the independence and wellbeing of older and vulnerable people who are or will be residents of Council stock
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Older Tenants

Our achievements in this service area include:

- *[Details of floating support for Council tenants]*

- Developed, with service users as well as colleagues from Supporting People and Social Care, a model for assessing whether individual sheltered housing schemes are still “fit for purpose”, or need remodelling of the fabric of the building or services to match current and future needs

We now need to plan how best to implement the recommendations of the Review

People with Disabilities

[Add text on disabled adaptations:

- *Integration into Decent Homes work*
- *Paying for 2 x OT to assess needs before Decent Homes work]*

Contribute to reduction in use of temporary accommodation by using Council stock as effectively as possible

We can best achieve this by using our existing stock and other HRA assets as effectively as possible – see *[reference to relevant section below on using stock effectively]*

Achieve Decent Homes Standard in Council stock by 2010

Progressing towards Decent Homes

[All figures used in this section to be reviewed]

As can be seen from the performance figures in *[add reference to Performance section of Plan]*, little progress has been made in reducing the overall percentage of Council homes that are non-decent. The reasons for this are as follows:

- The proportion of the capital investment programme for Decent Homes work was not increased until 2004/5, so there was little improvement in 2003/4 and 2004/5. As spend on Decent Homes was limited, more homes became non-decent during 2003/4 and 2004/5 than were brought up to Decent Homes standard
- Investment in Decent Homes increased in 2005/6 and 2006/7 after the Option Appraisal exercise, but delays in getting works on site mean that homes in these programmes are still to be completed. The proportion of homes becoming non-decent was also significant in 2006/7 and this combined with delays in progressing works during the year has led to a significant increase in non-decency at the 1 April 2007.

The new HIPSP partnering contract should accelerate delivery of the Decent Homes programme, and so estimates indicate that there will be significant progress in 2007/8 as backlog works will be completed. However a significant decrease in non-decency will not be recorded until 1 April 2009 when the programme starts to tackle newly-arising non-decent homes.

Total investment requirements are analysed in more detail below.

Investment to deliver Decent Homes

FPD Savills were commissioned in January 2005 to provide 30-year forecasts of the cost of achieving the Decent Home standard and related assets in a reasonable state of repair, using the existing stock condition survey information and updated market costs and replacement cycles. Their estimated capital investment requirements are shown in the table below, and compared to actual investment for Years 1 – 4 (2004/5 – 2007/08).

Year	Decent Homes/essential works (£'000)		Disabled adaptations (£'000)		Other works (including environmental improvements) (£'000)		Total (£'000)		Difference between total estimate and actual (£'000)
	Savills estimate	Actual	Savills estimate	Actual	Savills estimate	Actual	Savills estimate	Actual	
Year 1 2004/5	£6,069	£5,414	£547	£600	£239	£1,320	£6,855	£7,334	£479
Year 2 2005/6	6,209	5,387	559	500	246	1,627	7,014	7,514	£500
Year 3 2006/7	£6,350	£6,234	£572	£500	£252	£440	£7,174	£7,174	0
Year 4 2007/8	£6,497	£6,402	£585	£500	£256	£440	£7,338	£7,342	£4
Total	£25125	£23437	£2263	£2100	£993	£3827	£28381	£29364	£983

Thus in the first four years of the Decent Homes programme, almost £1 million more was invested than was estimated.

Revised estimates of the Decent Homes requirements have been provided from the current Codeman database. The revised Decent Homes investment requirements from 2007-2010 are set out below.

	Decent Homes/essential works (£'000)	Disabled adaptations (£'000)	Other works (including environmental improvements) (£'000)	Total (£'000)	Options Appraisal estimate (£'000)	Difference from Options Appraisal estimate (£'000)
Year 5 2008/09	£7,209	£500	£450	£8,159	£7,513	+£646
Year 6 2009/10	£14,050	£500	£450	£15,000	£0	+£15000
Totals	£27,661	£1,500	£1,340	£30,501	£14,851	+£15650

This table excludes the cost of additional works over and above the simple replacement of elements at the end of their life for the Mill Farm Close estate and Grange Farm Close. These estates are being reviewed separately to identify options for their regeneration for which alternative funding solutions will be sought – more detail is given below.

The table shows that significant additional investment of over £15 million is required to meet the Decent Homes standard compared to that originally estimated for the Options Appraisal. The reasons for this are:

- The schedule of rates used to generate the estimated costs for the options appraisal was based on average industry standards. The actual costs being paid by the Council are in the main significantly higher – for example, new windows are actually costing about 44% more, and bathroom replacement is costing over 30% more. As a result fewer homes have been made decent within the agreed budgets. The revised estimates use the higher costs currently being paid by the council and therefore the investment level required to achieve the Decent Homes target has increased. Whilst the HIPSP project should deliver a reduction in costs bringing it nearer to the industry average quoted by Savills these may not be delivered in time for the majority of the remaining Decent Homes programme and it is therefore considered prudent to set the budgets on known actual costs and monitor and adjust as tender prices come in.
- The option appraisal estimates of decent home investment needs did not take full account of potentially failing properties up to 2010. The original stock condition survey did not record the age of specific components in a property and so the number of potentially failing properties up to 2010 could not be estimated. This has now been partially addressed by recording the install date of all new components and estimating and recording in Codeman the existing component install dates as far as practically possible although the database still does not capture 100% of this information. The current estimate includes the majority of potentially failing properties and so investment needs up to 2010 have increased, as shown in the table below.

Dwellings falling into Non Decency

Year	No. of New Non-Decent Dwellings	Estimated cost for new Non-Decency (£'000)
Year 1 2004/05	189	£4,928
Year 2 2005/06	291	£7,587
Total	480	£12,515

The numbers of new non-decent properties should dramatically reduce from years 3 to 6. We therefore estimate that there is an additional investment requirement for the non-decent dwellings not captured in the Savills estimates will be £12.5 million as shown in the table above.

Taking into account all of the above changes in investment requirements means that the following levels of investment are required for the remaining two years to achieve the 2010 Decent Homes target:

2008/2009 £11,580k including £500k for adaptations

2009/2010 £11,580k including £500k for adaptations

In addition, during the option appraisal process tenants were very keen to ensure that wider improvements than just those relating to the Decent Homes standard were achieved. Very specifically they wanted to see estate wide environmental improvements and only supported the prudential borrowing option if an additional £3.5M was provided for this purpose. An element of these improvements is already budgeted for with £450k per annum identified in the investment table above. The balance not funded is therefore £2.2M. Adding this requirement would increase the investment level needed as follows:

2008/2009 £12,680 including £500k for adaptations and £1,100k for environmental improvements

2009/2010 £12,680 including £500k for adaptations and £1,100k for environmental improvements

Delivering Decent Homes by 2010

The housing capital investment programme was significantly increased in January 2007 to match the requirements set out above. The confirmed 3 year capital investment programme is as follows (the detailed programme is given in *Appendix ?*):

Programme	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10
	£000	£000	£000
Decent Homes programme	10,400	10,600	9,100
Other planned work including environmental improvements	1,400	1,400	900
Disabled Adaptations	500	500	500
Total	12,300	12,500	10,500

A 3 year programme detailing all the Decent Homes works required by individual property up to 2010 has been developed using the Codeman stock condition database. It was widely consulted on with residents in January and February 2007. This programme has now been issued to the Property Services team for delivery.

The Council has set up the HIPSP project to improve radically both responsive and planned works to housing and all corporate property. The Council has now selected its preferred contractor and Kier have been appointed. The contract with Kier is now in the mobilisation stage and is due to officially commence in July 2007. Early

meetings have already taken place with Kier to plan delivery of the 3 year Decent Homes programme and officers responsible for the contract are confident that this new partnering arrangement will ensure delivery of the 3 year Decent Homes works programme by March 2010.

The Mill Farm estate and Grange Farm estate are subject to further option appraisal to select the best solution for their improvement taking into account wider social and economic issues as well as the condition of the housing. The Mill Farm appraisal is due to complete in summer 2007 with Grange Farm following shortly after. These may complete post 2010 depending on the recommended solution and extent to which they interface with other neighbourhood renewal or regeneration programmes.

Increase resident satisfaction with the environment of their homes

Addressing Unpopular Housing

We have:

- transferred the Rayners Lane Estate to Home Group, with almost 75% “Yes” votes from residents. Complete regeneration of the estate is now underway including the demolition and rebuilding of most of the housing including some housing for sale, as well as other initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life, particularly for young people, on the estate

[other achievements under this heading?]

The Options Appraisal highlighted some further estates for which further work was needed to determine the best solution for their future because Decent Homes works alone will not improve their long-term sustainability and/or the physical construction type means that there are difficulties carrying out the Decent Homes works, including Mill Farm Close and Grange Farm Close.

Mill Farm Close is a small estate consisting of 7 four-storey Easiform system-built blocks of flats providing 112 homes in a mix of bedsit and 1 bed flats and 2 and 3 bedroom maisonettes. 21 are leasehold with one block being mainly leaseholders. Included within the appraisal area is Miller Close comprising 26 houses and 62 Rickmansworth Road comprising 9 flats and several garage sites (some already demolished).

A number of major issues have been identified including spalling concrete, defective wall ties, excessive sound transmission between flats, limited insulation and poor energy efficiency, balcony repairs, need for rewiring, new windows, kitchen and bathroom replacement. Achieving the Decent Homes standard will be at a substantially higher cost than the average for the rest of the stock.

Mill Farm is relatively unpopular compared to the council stock as a whole leading to higher turnover and low demand. It is unattractive and has suffered from a range of anti social behaviour including joy riding, fly tipping, car abandonment and a general breakdown of security. It is difficult to improve security due to the design of the housing and the number of pedestrian routes leading into and out of the estate. There is wasted land and the communal areas are largely unused. The estate contains some bedsit accommodation that is unpopular.

The estate lies within the Pinner ward. Although Pinner is a prosperous and relatively affluent neighbourhood with a high level of home ownership and characterised by above average house prices, at the super output area Mill Farm demonstrates a high level of deprivation compared to Harrow as a whole.

External consultants have been appointed to help us to review options for the regeneration of Mill Farm Close. Tenants and leaseholders will be closely involved in looking at these options, with assistance from an Independent Tenant Advisor.

[Text on Grange Farm here]

Improving Estate Environments

Since the last Business Plan, we have:

- Retendered the Grounds maintenance contract with tenant input to an enhanced specification **[but satisfaction is not high?]**
- Begun a programme of twice-yearly estate inspections, attended by residents and housing staff (including Area Managers)
- Reviewed the procedure for dealing with abandoned cars

To meet resident priorities expressed in the STATUS survey (and leaseholder survey?), we will focus on:

- Developing a programme to increase recycling opportunities in Council properties
- Consulting residents on providing a cleaning service for communal areas funded through service charges

[Other key actions?]

<p>Reduced hate crime, anti-social behaviour and nuisance as a result of working with other agencies</p>

We have:

- put in place new Domestic Violence and Racial Harassment policies
- contributed to a directory of independent advice for victims of Domestic Violence
- trained all new housing officers to enable them to help victims of Domestic Violence
- agreed a reciprocal rehousing process with 7 West London boroughs to allow victims of hate crimes to be rehoused away from perpetrators in appropriate cases
- adopted a new casework system for dealing with antisocial behaviour, and trained staff in its use

With our colleagues in the ASB Unit, we have helped to:

- Arrange with Ealing Mediation Service to refer mediation cases to them
- Finalise an ASB Protocol (an agreement between the Council, Police and other agencies that explains the procedures taken by the ASB Unit in Harrow and sets out clearly the expectations that the ASB Unit has of its partners)

With our colleagues in the Crime Reduction Unit, we have helped to:

- Establish 11 trained Hate Crime Third Party Reporting sites in the community
- Plan a high profile publicity campaign across the borough to encourage people to report hate crimes
- Prepare a Victim Support Pack for victims of race and faith crimes
- Provide a Freephone multi-lingual helpline

We will now focus on:

- Finalising the introduction of new Tenancy Agreement that will enable us to repossess properties from perpetrators of domestic violence (this is currently out for consultation with tenants)
- restructuring to create specialist nuisance and antisocial behaviour management roles

[Other actions:

- *Introductory tenancies?*
- *demoted tenancies?*
- *policy and procedure on implementation of CCTV?]*

<p>Empower all residents to have a greater say in the management of their homes and community</p>
--

Harrow tenants made it clear in the Options Appraisal process that they want to look at options for taking on more control of their own housing and community. We want to help them to do that, while ensuring that tenant organisations within the borough represent all sections of the community and that everyone who lives in Council stock has the opportunity to have their say, even if they don't want to come to meetings.

Our achievements include:

- A new Tenant Compact, negotiated with residents, is in place
- The appointment of FIRST Call as independent tenant advisers to:
 - Explore the potential for applying for the Right To Manage across the borough (this was a specific tenant requirement for approving the change from the ALMO to the prudential borrowing option)

- Help to increase the representativeness of the formal resident involvement structure
- Providing a Resource Centre for Harrow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations
- Helping leaseholders to set up a Leaseholder Support Group
- Involving residents in selecting our partner for repairs and maintenance

We will focus on:

- Progressing and implementing the FIRST Call work

[Other action on resident involvement?]

Make sure all Council stock is being used as effectively as possible

We can contribute to making sure that affordable housing in the borough is maximised by using Council stock and other assets owned by the Housing Revenue Account effectively. This means reducing the length of time that properties are empty between lettings as much as possible, although we need to balance this against the need to bring properties to a reasonable standard of repair and decoration before reletting them.

We have already:

- Introduced a choice-based lettings system with neighbouring Councils and local housing associations to reduce the number of properties refused by new tenants and existing tenants wanting to transfer
- Reviewed our procedures for mutual exchange, succession and abandoned properties with the aim of making sure that all available Council stock is being used to best effect

[Garage sites?

Mephram Gardens Scout hut?]

We will focus on:

- Improving turnaround time for empty Council properties so that they are available to relet as quickly as possible
- Finalising the introduction of new Tenancy Agreements which will include a digital photo of the new tenant so that it is easier to check that they are actually living in the property – this will reduce unauthorised occupancy and mean that our properties are being lived in by people with most need for them

[Other relevant actions, particularly plans for looking at non-housing assets e.g. garages etc?]

<p>Maximise income from rent and service charges</p>

Balancing the HRA in order to achieve Decent Homes by 2010 means that we must make every effort to increase our income and get value for money for our spending.

We have:

- Implemented a new computer system for Right to Buy purchases which means that we can keep a better track of what leaseholders are liable to pay towards the services they receive
- Increased garage rents to move towards market rents
- “Depooled” service charges from rents so that tenants can see what they are paying for the services they get

[Garage vacancy rate?]

Our priorities are to:

- Improve arrears collection performance, partly through a restructuring of Resident Services to create specialist income management roles
- Strengthen management of the service to further improve performance
- Explore the potential for a “Reward” scheme to encourage tenants to pay rent on time
- Apportion service charges (including all relevant costs e.g. staffing) appropriately to leaseholders so that they are happy to pay (*consultation on this?*)
- Help leaseholders to access debt counselling
- Review the use of and charges for community halls to ensure that income to the HRA is maximised.

<p>Improve information we hold about Council stock and its residents so that we can target scarce resources at individuals, properties and areas in most need</p>
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We currently do not have enough accurate, up-to-date information about our residents to enable us to identify their needs and target our limited resources on those who need them most. Although we believe that our stock condition information is reasonably comprehensive, we need to make sure that it is kept up to date so that we can plan future improvements. We also need to improve the way that we collect information about our performance, so that it focuses on measuring what is important to our stakeholders, including residents.

[Any achievements in this area that we can highlight?]

Our priorities are to:

- Develop an Information Strategy for Resident Services
- Establish an Integrated performance management system for Resident Services
- *[Carry out a tenant census to improve our understanding of residents needs]*
- Establish a rolling programme of property surveys with Kier

Increase resident satisfaction with access to and response from Resident Services

Residents have indicated to us through the most recent STATUS survey that they are unhappy with aspects of the services we provide, in particular access to the services and the outcome of queries. We want to make sure that staff are able to communicate in a clear and helpful way with residents, and to have clear service standards that we have agreed with residents.

We have:

- Prepared a new Tenant Handbook (with the active involvement of tenants) so that all tenants have a clear picture of what they can expect from us
- Provided Plain English training for all staff

Our priorities are to:

- Consult residents on standards for all services, and publish the resulting standards to all residents
- Review all standard letters to make sure that are understandable
- Train residents to undertake “mystery shopping” so that they can help to monitor our performance in this area
- Provide customer care training for all staff
- Improve Leasehold Services performance *[more detail needed on this]*

Increase resident satisfaction with responsive repairs service

[Achievements to date?]

We are currently negotiating the details of the new partnering contract with Kier. This will deliver:

[summary of benefits]

Action Plan

Appendices:

Glossary/abbreviations