

Meeting:	Sustainable Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Date:	13 June 2007
Subject:	Draft Housing Strategy
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Penny Furness-Smith, Corporate Director of Adults and Housing
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Camilla Bath, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Draft Housing Strategy 2007 Draft Housing Business Plan 2007

## **SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report sets out a draft of the council's Housing Strategy.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Committee is requested to consider the draft strategy and make comments on its content as appropriate.

## SECTION 2 - REPORT

The Housing Strategy document is designed to cover the wider enabling responsibilities of the Council beyond the landlord service. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan is used to outline the Council's plans as a landlord for its own stock. Neither document fully met the Fit for Purpose criteria when assessed by the Government Office for London (GOL) in 2002.

Work on developing the Strategy and Business Plan has been proceeding for some time. Harrow staff have been involved in project planning the production of the documents and identifying key themes for inclusion in them. Staff absence has caused some delays in progress towards the timetable for delivering the documents to GOL agreed with them, and so recently we have appointed consultants (Tribal) to help us to prepare both the Strategy and the Business Plan.

### Timetable

We have agreed with GOL that the Housing Strategy and the HRA Business Plan will be submitted to them on 23 July 2007, so that they have time to assess it before the deadline for Fit for Purpose approval of the end of August 2007. This means that both documents will be considered by Cabinet on 19 July 2007.

### Position at 31 May 2007

Various key documents and tasks that will be needed to complete the work are still underway, although they will be completed in time for Cabinet to consider the Strategy and Business Plan. For example:

- A revised Housing Needs Survey has been undertaken but has yet to be finalised as we are in discussion with the providers on a number of issues where we require some adjustment of the report
- Revenue and capital forecasts are being reviewed by our consultants to ensure that they are still a reasonable basis for the Strategy and Plan

Further consultation with stakeholders is also needed, particularly with residents in the case of the HRA Business Plan (although a number of the key building blocks of the Plan have already been the subject of significant consultation with them, including the Options Appraisal and the proposed capital programme for meeting the Decent Homes Standard).

This means that the documents available for consideration by Scrutiny members are at a draft stage and have many gaps where more detailed work is required, or text or figures need to be reviewed. This is particularly the case with the HRA Business Plan, where we have commissioned Tribal to carry out the review of financial forecasts mentioned above. In the documents, gaps and outstanding queries are indicated by *text in italics*.

However, the documents as presented give a good indication of the structure of the final version and indicative contents for each section.

Members are requested to consider the draft strategy and to make comments as appropriate, in the context of national and regional policy and best practice in this area, particularly with regard to the requirement be “fit for purpose” within the terms set out by the central government through the Government Office for London (GOL).

Legal implications

Members are being asked to comment on the report as part of wider consultation on the Housing Strategy. This statutory consultation period will last 28 days, commencing at the beginning of June. The Strategy will then be considered by Cabinet, whereupon it will be submitted to GOL for a judgment to be made on its “fitness for purpose”.

Financial implications

The Strategy is in draft form. Members are being asked to comment on its contents and as such decisions cannot be taken at the moment that would have financial implications.

**SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE**

Name: Steve Tingle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 01/06/07		
Name: Helen White	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 01/06/07		

**SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Contact:** Carol Yarde, Area Manager, 020 8420 9660

**Background Papers:** None

**IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?**

1.	Consultation	N/A
2.	Corporate Priorities	N/A
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	