

**REPORT FOR: TENANTS',
LEASEHOLDERS' AND
RESIDENTS'
CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

Date of Meeting: 11 January 2012

Subject: **INFORMATION REPORT -
Housing Changes Review**

Responsible Officer: Lynne Pennington, Divisional Director
of Housing Services

Exempt: No

Enclosures: Appendix 1: Housing Changes Review -
Cabinet report 15 December 2011

Appendix 2: Outcome of consultation

Appendix 3: Next Steps Action Plan

Section 1 – Summary

This report provides feedback to TLRCF on the Housing Changes Review report presented to Cabinet on the 15 December 2011.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

- 2.1** This report provides an update on the outcomes from the Housing Changes consultation on the housing policy changes being introduced by the government and the next steps on how these might be implemented in Harrow.
- 2.2** The attached Cabinet report was considered on the 15 December 2011 and Appendix 3 sets out a number of policy options to be taken forward over the coming months. There will be further consultation with tenants, leaseholders and residents in taking these options forward before final recommendations are made to Cabinet in May 2012.
- 2.3** HFTRA worked closely with officers in developing the Housing Changes consultation that took place over summer and autumn of 2011. The outcomes of the consultation are set out in Appendix 2. More than 200 residents participated in the initial Housing Changes consultation and over 100 have expressed an interest in being consulted on the options as they are developed. The next stage will therefore be mainly an email and web based consultation combined with meetings of key groups such as HFTRA.
- 2.4** The policy options to be considered are as follows:

1. Increase the supply of housing, including locally affordable housing:

1. Maximise the use of existing Council land resources including HRA land combined with Affordable Housing Fund (AHF) resources, HRA capital receipts etc to stimulate supply.
2. Further modelling with Registered Providers (RPs) on the level of rent increases (up to 80% of market rent) that can be sustained whilst maintaining affordability in order to maximise supply including family housing and on the basis that allocation policies will be amended to give priority to low income working households
3. Continue to make best use of available grant funding for example to bring empty homes back into use.

2. Continue to tackle homelessness by improving access to and improving standards in the private rented sector

1. Consider options for encouraging development of new private rented housing, possibly to replace affordable housing requirements on some sites, in return for longer tenancy offers etc
2. Discharge homelessness duty through offering a tenancy in the private rented sector instead of a social housing tenancy
3. Enhance Help2Let scheme to assist with above
4. Continue to use Empty Property scheme to drive up standards and promote longer tenancies

Consider options for enabling and/or enforcing improved standards in the private rented sector.

3. Enhanced housing options promoting mobility and choice

1. Facilitate moves out of Harrow/London where economic solutions do not exist in Harrow
2. Introduce fixed term tenancies (with reviews at end of term) in Council tenancies and work with other social housing landlords (housing associations) to determine the strategic framework for their introduction and ongoing management in Harrow
3. Actively promote the Pan London Mobility scheme which offers our tenants the opportunity to move to other London boroughs. This scheme has just been agreed by the London Boroughs and to participate we need to amend our existing Allocations Scheme to enable our participation in it as proposed in Appendix 5.
4. Encourage underoccupation moves
5. Continue to promote low cost home ownership schemes and consider different models to deliver locally affordable schemes

4, Supporting sustainable and viable communities

1. Change allocation policies to reduce waiting time for those who will qualify for housing by:
 - giving more priority to working households
 - giving overcrowding priority only to those households with severe overcrowding and prioritise families with school age children
 - limiting medical priority, so only households whose housing circumstances are having major adverse effects to one or more members of the household will receive priority.
 - giving priority to ex-service personnel and local people
2. Work with other social landlords to develop and promote employment, Basic Skills, and vocational schemes supporting residents into sustainable employment.
3. Support / implement financial inclusion strategies for low income households.
4. Continue to give priority to Looked After Children Leaving Care for whom the Council has a Corporate Parenting Responsibility

5. Improving neighbourhoods and the quality of existing homes

1. The options for maintaining and improving the Council's housing stock including energy efficiency and other green initiatives will be considered in developing the detailed the HRA Business Plan.
2. Continue to make best use of empty homes e.g. through reviewing current grant schemes

6. Procuring supported housing for people with additional needs

1. Develop plans for supported housing for people with lower level support needs, as part of a longer term prevention approach.
2. Support measures to develop flexible alternatives to residential care, which promote independence and are more cost effective
3. Support the development of housing options for people with learning disabilities, including the remodelling of existing schemes.

4. Support the provision of supported accommodation for people with mental health needs, where there is currently an under provision.
- 2.5 The next steps action plan (Appendix 3 attached) is being progressed to model the impact of the proposed policy options. This will be followed by further consultation.

Section 3 - Further Information

- 3.1 All information is contained within the report.

Section 4 - Financial Implications

- 4.1 This information report has no specific financial implications. The financial implications of the policy options will be considered as part of the next steps action plan.

Section 5 - Equalities Implications

- 5.1 An equalities impact assessment has been carried out on the potential impact of the proposed changes, and this has helped inform the next steps action plan. Once the next stage of the consultation and modeling have been completed we will look at all the consultation results and other relevant information to identify what, if any, potential impact the changes will have on the groups of people whose characteristics are protected by the Equalities Act 2010 (i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation) and whether mitigating measures can be put in place.

Section 6 - Corporate Priorities

- 6.1 This report incorporates the following corporate priorities by involving residents in determining future housing policies and strategies that support people in priority housing need:
 - United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads.
 - Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.

Name: Roger Hampson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 12 December 2011		

Section 7 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Alison Pegg/Jane Fernley

Housing Partnerships and Strategy Manager

Email: Alison.pegg@harrow.gov.uk or jane.fernley@harrow.gov.uk

Tel: 020 8424 1933/ 020 8424 1283

Background Papers: None