

# Housing Ambition Plan #3 - 2012/13 **Draft**

**Excellent services, shaped and valued by our communities**

Delivered by Getting Closer to our Customers



## **Excellent services, shaped and valued by our communities**

- Delivered by an integrated Housing Service (both HRA and GF housing functions) working towards co-regulation with residents
- Encouraging an enhanced private sector housing service
- Enabling most housing solutions via the private sector & new developments
- Sharing and collaborating with other areas and organisations
- Retaining and developing the best people
- With an intelligent strategic core – influencing the housing market, a strong housing needs team, ensuring Value for Money

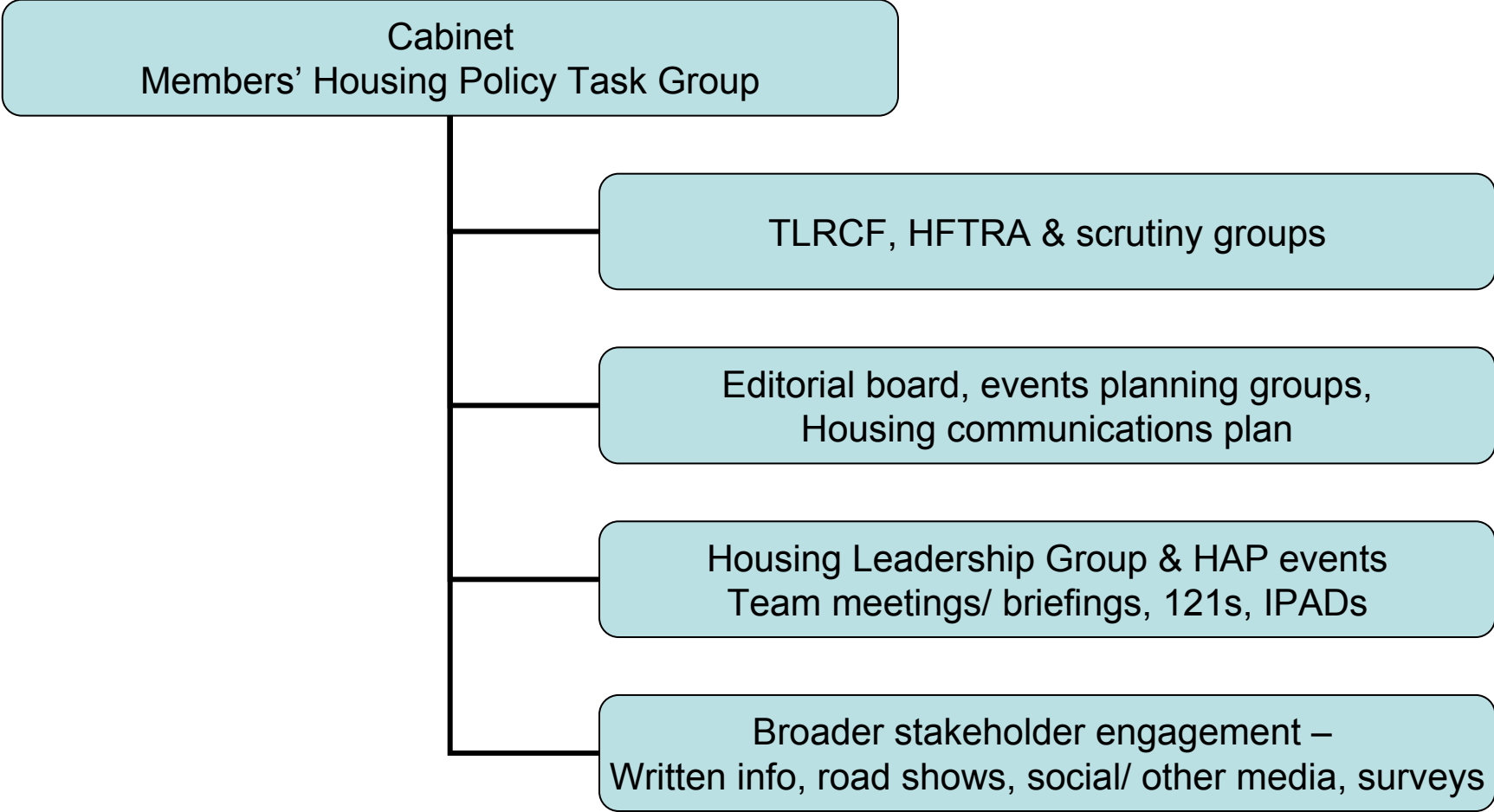
## **Getting Closer to our Customers**

- National and Regional Drivers: Localism Act, & coalition policies relating to housing & welfare reform, HRA self financing, Homes and Communities Agency and new Affordable Rent model, Greater London Authority, co- regulation/ tenant scrutiny
- Local Harrow / Council Drivers: Corporate vision & priorities, Transformation Plan, Core Strategy and 'Heart of Harrow' intensification area, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Equality Objectives, other council strategies
- Community, Health & Wellbeing vision
- Housing Changes Review 2011-2013
- Housing Ambition Plan #3 (2012-2013)
- Divisional Commitments: Resident Services, Partnerships and Strategy, Housing Needs and Asset Management
- Team Commitments
- Individual Commitments / IPAD

## Our Vision: "Working together: Our Harrow, Our Community"



- Enhancing our residents' quality of life, and offering excellent service
  - Core: basic freedom equality and justice, health and social care, work, dignity, security and safety, a place to live, literacy and numeracy, enough money to get by, basic relationships
  - Middle: some luxury/ indulgence, choice, status, development in work, amusement/ leisure, social networks, information and knowledge
  - Highest: access to beautiful things and surroundings, a positive purpose, a generous community



- Aims to engage all housing managers in
  - Developing new initiatives
  - Emerging national/ regional policy and our local response
  - Tracking performance
  - Acting on customer feedback
  - Influencing training & development needs
  - Updates on corporate/ directorate/ housing issues
- Comprises all housing line managers
- Helps to develop future leaders
- Meets twice a year

- Involve all housing staff & invited stakeholders
- Happen twice a year
- Aim to involve all housing staff in
  - Agreeing our response to national policy changes
  - Making sure that we consider how best to involve residents at the earliest opportunity in making decisions about services
  - Using customer survey results to target areas for improvement
  - Knowing who our customers are and valuing their individual needs
  - Knowing how much our services cost and doing our best to deliver more for less
  - Making better use of new ways to communicate – web, text and social networking
- Provide opportunities for learning, development & networking



- Provide clear and visible leadership
- Establish the vision for the service
- Establish clear priorities in line with corporate & directorate priorities
- Ensure sufficient resources available to deliver priorities
- Listen to, respect and engage all staff
- Listen to, be honest with, respect and engage all residents
- Acknowledge success and support those trying to improve
- Be your ambassador
- Communicate honestly and openly
- Improve the working environment
- Provide learning and development opportunities as part of planning for the future

- We need to maintain the Investors in People gold standard by:
  - Addressing the issues raised by the 2012 staff survey
  - Ensuring training opportunities are transparent e.g. making clear why training is / isn't being approved as, holding regular reviews by the training group
  - Making sure training meets the needs of the service going forward e.g. by carrying out a training needs analysis
  - Continuing to provide a spread of training – to meet service priorities and individual needs
  - Providing opportunities for coaching, mentoring & career management
  - Participating in the corporate learning & development programme (part of the Council's transformation project)
  - Growing Housing leaders for the future

- To maintain the Investors in People gold standard by:
  - Address the issues raised by the 2012 staff survey.
    - Ensure training opportunities are transparent e.g. making clear why training is / isn't being approved, holding regular reviews by the training group.
    - Provide opportunities for personal coaching, mentoring & career management
  - Developing and implement a People Development Strategy that enables Getting Closer to the Customer congruent with the corporate people strategy.
  - Growing Housing leaders for the future – implement a Succession Plan
  - Carry out a management led Training Needs Analysis (TNA)
  - Implement a Housing Development programme that makes best use of the TNA and the corporate learning and development programme
  - Implement a Housing Leadership Team development programme that includes self and peer assessment of behaviours and competencies.

# Housing team commitments

We will:

- Actively involve residents & partners in developing plans that will:
  - ensure affordable, good quality housing continues to be available across Harrow
  - Support customers who are disproportionately affected by the challenging external environment
  - Influence the housing market
- Lead development of new housing models
- Proactively support operational teams, members & residents by providing:
  - Information, analysis, benchmarking, communications & complaints co-ordination
  - Monitoring impact of new policies
  - Systems (IT), procedures /policies designed to put the customer first and ensure value for money
  - Developing staff to be the best - via Learning & development, liP, staff engagement, cultural change

## We will:

- Ensure that partners and the community are central to the service we deliver
- Complete at least 139 affordable housing units by March 2013, with a target of 42% family and 10% wheelchair homes
- Work to maximise the available grant to bring 200 empty properties back into use, including 10 long term empties
- Develop new initiatives to reflect and meet the demands of the changing market and government policies
- Work collaboratively with colleagues to enhance private sector housing services and to promote low cost home ownership in Harrow

We will support getting closer to the customer by:

- Continuing to improve our understanding of our customers by improving information on economic and equality characteristics
- Maintaining a robust performance management framework which reflects service priorities and supports service delivery
- Work collaboratively with colleagues to use information and research into best practice to steer policy / strategy development
- Develop, monitor and review revised suite of housing strategies to ensure achievement of objectives
- Lead, analyse and respond to consultations and emerging national policy initiatives
- Continue to develop the complaints system to support complaints improvements, and achieve co-regulation

## We will:

- Ensure the most up to date systems are available to support excellent service delivery & efficiency
- Provide accurate and timely management information to service teams
- Complete projects on time and on budget
- Ensure all staff are trained and supported in the use of technology
- Ensure information (data) is accurate, meaningful and secure
- Ensure information support is provided for the Housing Ambition Plan



### **Actively involve residents in helping to shape services to meet their needs and aspirations**

We will:

- Implement the modernisation of the sheltered housing service by October 2012
- Hold 4 Financial Inclusion/Awareness Roadshows by March 2013
- Restructure the Leasehold Team in order that the roles and responsibilities support the delivery of an excellent service to leaseholders.
- Reduce former tenant arrears by 10% by March 2013
- Support the development of an effective scrutiny panel working on its first project by March 2013
- Prioritise 40 unattended gardens and support tenants to meet the obligations of their tenancies by March 2013

## We will:

- Listen; be helpful, honest and transparent when engaging with leaseholders.
- Ensure all prospective right to buy applicants are offered a face to face interview, where the rights and responsibilities of becoming a leaseholder are thoroughly explained.
- Increase the ways in which leaseholders are able to communicate with us by introducing web access.
- Produce a Leasehold Handbook to enable leaseholders and staff to be aware of Lessee rights and responsibilities and, have a consistent reference point.
- Increase the annual service charge collection rate to 80% by March 2013.
- Introduce an effective S20 process to provide leaseholders with transparency and improve the Council's ability to collect monies lawfully due.
- Scan a copy of all Leases onto CIVICA to improve the quality of information provided to staff so that they can deal with leaseholder enquiries effectively.
- Restructure the Leasehold Team in order that the roles and responsibilities support the delivery of an excellent service to leaseholders.

## We will:

- Reduce current rent arrears to £360k by March 2013
- Reduce former tenancy arrears by 10% by March 2013
- Have repayment agreements on 20% of Recharge cases
- Hold 4 Financial Inclusion/Awareness Roadshows by March 2013

## We will:

- Reply to 85% of complaints on time (Average for the year)
- Conduct Tenancy Audits on 35% of our stock by March 2013
- Successfully tackle tenancy fraud by retrieving 15 properties by March 2013
- Visit all new tenants within 6 weeks of their sign up
- Prioritise 40 unattended gardens and support tenants to meet the obligations of their tenancies by March 2013

## We will:

- Influence the allocation process to sheltered housing so that it meets the needs of older people
- Provide housing-related support to enable and empower our Tenants to achieve positive outcomes and live as independently as possible for as long as possible
- Co-ordinate services to ensure that tenants' needs are met: promoting independence, dignity and choice
- Make better use of our communal facilities by extending our range of activities and include the wider community
- Modernise the service to meet the needs of older people, and continue to attract funding and make efficiency savings

## We will:

- Refresh the resident involvement strategy to take account of the Localism Act and the introduction of tenant scrutiny and co-regulation, by November 2012
- Produce, with HFTRA, an annual training programme for TRAs and involved residents, and create a skills database, by the end of July 2012
- Implement a recruitment campaign to recruit at least 4 extra estate representatives, by February 2013
- Support the development of an effective scrutiny panel working on its first project, by March 2013
- Develop a mechanism for assessing outcomes of engagement, by December 2012

## We will:

- Work in partnership with our residents to improve the appearance of our estates
- Maximise the time spent on our estates by reducing traveling time around the Borough, by September 2012
- Work together with residents to reduce fly tipping by pursuing and prosecuting offenders
- Introduce ourselves to all new tenants and be more approachable to all our residents, to improve communication with all community groups by March 2013
- Improve the appearance and cleanliness of our internal communal areas by using wet cleaning methods by, November 2012

**To provide a first class asset management service that our customers value,  
and that protects the councils investment in the Housing Service**

We will:

- Introduce a new repairs service from July 2012 that will focus on the customer experience by getting the basics right
- Engage tenants, leaseholders and residents in the monitoring, management and development of the service
- Ensure the health and safety of our customers, staff and contractors is paramount in all we do
- Develop an Asset Management Strategy that is deliverable via the 30 year HRA investment plan
- Ensure we deliver the service to agreed standards, and meet best practice regarding customer service and value for money



## **Our over-riding aim is to help you stay in your current home or help you find a suitable, economically-realistic alternative home**

To do this we will:

- Help you to understand how the welfare benefit changes affect your housing options
- Encourage and help you to move into work, or get training to help you get a job, because increasing your household income widens your housing choices
- Advise and help you to understand our housing allocations scheme and to be realistic about the likelihood of being offered social housing in Harrow
- Inform and encourage you to consider the advantages of moving out of London
- Use “Bed & Breakfast” only as a last resort
- Work with lenders, landlords and families to find new solutions to prevent you losing your home.
- Through discussion with you, help you to overcome all the problems you face in finding and keeping a suitable home
- Bring low cost home ownership to your notice, when appropriate, and help you decide if home ownership is right for you

## We will:

- Work with our customers to let social housing quickly to those with the greatest housing need
- Encourage those tenants who are under-occupying social housing to move, to make room for larger families and to avoid risking rent arrears because of housing benefit cuts
- Work to improve standards in private rented housing through advice, assistance and support
- Treat you fairly, keep you waiting for as short a time as possible, and do our best to make sure that you understand what advice and assistance we can offer and who to contact for help

## We will:

- Establish a structure to ensure housing's finance needs are fully delivered
- Develop closer working relationships with key housing officers
- Provide effective and responsive support to meet the changing demands of the service going forward
- Work with officers and residents to increase capacity in respect of financial matters
- Develop and maintain a fit-for-purpose Housing Business Plan that underpins housing's service delivery plans and informs future decision making