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## SCRUTINY BOARD (NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING)

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Meeting to be held in Civic Hall, Leeds on  
Wednesday, 6th December, 2006 at 10.00 am

A pre-meeting will take place for ALL Members of the Board  
in a Committee Room at 9.30 am

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### MEMBERSHIP

#### Councillors

J Akhtar	-	Gipton and Harehills
S Armitage	-	Crossgates and Whinmoor
D Atkinson	-	Bramley and Stanningley
P Ewens	-	Hyde Park and Woodhouse
R Finnigan	-	Morley North
A Gabriel	-	Beeston and Holbeck
G Hyde	-	Killingbeck and Seacroft
M Phillips	-	Garforth and Swillington
R Pryke (Chair)	-	Burmantofts and Richmond Hill
M Rafique	-	Chapel Allerton
D Schofield	-	Temple Newsam

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*Please note: Certain or all items on this agenda may be recorded on tape*

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# A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p><b>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</b></p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 25 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded.)</p>	
2			<p><b>EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC</b></p> <p>To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public.</p>	
3			<p><b>LATE ITEMS</b></p> <p>To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.</p> <p>(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes.)</p>	
4			<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>To declare any personal / prejudicial interests for the purpose of Section 81 (3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 8 to 13 of the Members Code of Conduct.</p>	
5			<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
6			<p><b>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 8TH NOVEMBER 2006</b></p> <p>To receive and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2006.</p> <p>(Copy attached.)</p>	1 - 6

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
7			<p><b>MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 6TH NOVEMBER 2006</b></p> <p>To receive and note the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2006.</p> <p>(Copy attached.)</p>	7 - 12
8			<p><b>MINUTES - EXECUTIVE BOARD - 15TH NOVEMBER 2006</b></p> <p>To receive and note the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2006.</p> <p>(Copy attached.)</p>	13 - 20
9			<p><b>PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY</b></p> <p>To consider the report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing seeking the Board's endorsement of the Leeds Private Rented Housing Strategy.</p> <p>(Report attached.)</p>	21 - 46
10			<p><b>LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY UPDATE</b></p> <p>To consider the report of the Strategic Landlord Group updating the Board on the operation and review of Local Lettings Policies, and to consider their impact within the new ALMO structure.</p> <p>(Report attached.)</p>	47 - 50
11			<p><b>EASEL REGENERATION AREA - UPDATE</b></p> <p>To note a report by the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing giving an update on the EASEL regeneration initiative and what it is trying to achieve.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p>	51 - 54

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
12	All Wards		<p><b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LETTER</b></p> <p>To consider the report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing providing an analysis of Ombudsman complaints relating to repairs and lettings received between April 2005 and September 2006, along with proposals for future action to address any emerging issues.</p> <p>(Report attached.)</p>	55 - 60
13			<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>To consider the report of the Head of Scrutiny Support and Member Development on the Board's work programme.</p> <p>(Report attached.)</p>	61 - 66
14			<p><b>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2007 at 10:00 am (pre-meeting for Board Members at 9:30 am.)</p>	

# Agenda Item 6

## SCRUTINY BOARD (NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING)

WEDNESDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER, 2006

**PRESENT:** Councillor R Pryke in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, P Ewens, A Gabriel,  
G Hyde, M Phillips, M Rafique and  
D Schofield

### 42 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed those present to the November meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing.)

### 43 LATE ITEMS

The Board agreed to admit the minutes of the Thriving Communities Corporate Priority Board as a late item onto the agenda for consideration. Officers reported that the minutes had not been available at the time of agenda despatch but had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

### 44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members declared personal / prejudicial interests for the purpose of Section 81 (3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 8 to 13 of the Members Code of Conduct:

Councillor P Ewens – Declared a personal interest as a Member of Leeds North West ALMO Board (Minute no. 52 refers.)

Councillor A Gabriel – Declared a personal interest as the Chair of the Beeston Hill and Holbeck Regeneration Board (Minute no. 49 refers.)

Councillor D Schofield – Declared a personal interest as a Director of South East Leeds ALMO Board (Minute no. 52 refers.)

### 45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armitage and Atkinson.

### 46 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 11TH OCTOBER 2006

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2006 be approved as a correct record.

### 47 MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 9TH OCTOBER 2006

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2006 be noted.

### 48 MINUTES - EXECUTIVE BOARD - 18TH OCTOBER 2006

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2006 be noted.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting  
to be held on Wednesday, 6th December, 2006

**49 HOUSING BASED REGENERATION IN BEESTON HILL AND HOLBECK - PARTNERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUNDING ISSUES**

(Councillor Hyde joined the meeting at 10:05 am, at the commencement of consideration of this item.)

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report which provided Members with further information on the regeneration of Beeston Hill and Holbeck, with particular emphasis on partnership infrastructure and funding and resources. The report was intended to supplement the tour of the area that had been undertaken by the Board prior to the September 2006 meeting.

Mark Ireland, Service Manager, Neighbourhoods and Housing, John Bracewell, Neighbourhood Renewal Manager, Neighbourhoods and Housing and Steve Williamson, Chief Executive of *Re'new* attended the meeting to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments.

The Board heard that *Re'new* had been involved with the regeneration work in Beeston Hill and Holbeck for the past seven to eight years. This period had seen increased partnership working, new investment and examples of community engagement that were considered to be second to none in the city as a whole. Whilst considerable progress had been made, there was still much work required to take the project forward, including improving and extending partnership working and securing further private sector investment.

Members went on to discuss the following issues in relation to the scheme:

- The benefits of construction companies involved in the regeneration project employing local labour, particularly school leavers as apprentices;
- The work of *Construction Leeds* in promoting jobs, skills and training in the local area following the receipt of European funding;
- Progress made in the bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government for PFI credits and the other strategies in place should the bid prove unsuccessful;
- The financial cost of the project up to this point;
- The status of the planning application for Shaftesbury House and the view that renovation of this prominent landmark would provide further impetus to the regeneration of the area and confidence of the local community;
- The need to engage all sections of the local community in measures to tackle crime in the area;
- Recently undertaken initiatives to remove abandoned bricks and rubble from the area which had previously been used by individuals seeking to cause criminal damage;
- Progress made in conjunction with the Police towards tackling the problems of prostitution and drug dealing;
- The role that the new school in the area would play in working towards improved community cohesion;
- The long-term nature of the regeneration programme which had begun with the facelift to Tempest Road as a statement of intent.

The Chair thanked Officers for their attendance and contribution to the discussions.

**RESOLVED –**

- a.) That the contents of the report be noted;
- b.) That the focus for the next and final report will be complementary improvements to service and environmental factors and the role of the private rented and private development sectors.

(Councillor Ewens left the meeting at 10:20 am during consideration of this item. Councillor Akhtar joined the meeting at 10:20 am during consideration of this item.)

**50 THE PURPOSE AND ROLE OF THE SAFER LEEDS EXECUTIVE AND BOARD**

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing presented a report updating the Board on the work of the Safer Leeds Partnership which had been established in 1998 in response to the Crime and Disorder Act. Members heard that the Act stipulated that Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships be established by local authorities. The Safer Leeds Partnership sought to tackle crime and drug misuse and the fear of these issues throughout the Leeds area. The report summarised the work of the Partnership and its priority themes.

Supt Richard Jackson, Chief Officer, Neighbourhoods and Housing and Harvinder Saimbhi, Community Safety Development Manager, Neighbourhoods and Housing, attended the meeting to present the report and respond to Members questions and comments.

The Board went on to discuss the following points arising from the report:

- How the issue of prostitution was being tackled in the city, particularly in the areas of Holbeck and Chapeltown, with particular reference to work being undertaken to implement the recent adoption of a national strategy;
- The complexity of Home Office crime reduction measurements and the progress of the Safer Leeds Partnership in meeting these targets;
- Prevention and enforcement work in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, particularly in terms of the number of prosecutions for a breach of ASBO;
- The new practice of issuing 'bolt-on' ASBOs to some individuals who had already been convicted of a relevant criminal offence;
- The invitation for Leeds to become a 'Respect Action Area' as part of the Government's Respect Agenda and the initiatives associated with this such as parenting programmes and youth inclusion;
- Whether Designated Public Places Orders (DPPOs) were proving effective in terms of tackling consumption of alcohol on the streets;
- Steps being taken to tackle the increasing problem of robbery, particularly of takeaway delivery drivers, in the Chapeltown area;

- How the work of the Safer Leeds Partnership linked into divisional policing plans following the recent police restructure;
- Differing perspectives on the success of the merger in terms of results and resources;
- The need for improved communications from the Police to Elected Members and local residents regarding policing issues and operations in their local areas.

The Chair thanked Officers for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.

(During consideration of this item, Councillor Akhtar retrospectively declared a personal interest as a member of the West Yorkshire Police Authority.)

## 51 **PCSO REVIEW**

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report informing Members of the completion of a review into Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs.) Members heard that the report had been commissioned during the last municipal year by the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Community Safety) which had expressed an interest in the impact the new role had upon community safety and solving specific local issues.

Andy Mills, Head of Community Safety, Neighbourhoods and Housing; Supt Richard Jackson, Chief Officer, Neighbourhoods and Housing and Neil Evans, Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing, attended the meeting to present the report and respond to Members' comments.

The Board heard that the report had focussed on four wards in the city and provided a brief insight into the work undertaken by PCSOs. Officers reported that feedback from local communities as to the effectiveness of the new posts had been universally positive. Members were informed that the role and remit of PCSOs covered a wide range of issues, from offering crime prevention advice to residents to gathering intelligence. The difference between those working in the inner and outer wards was highlighted. Members heard that PCSOs in the inner city often played a more reactive role in tackling incidents on a day-to-day basis, whilst those in the outer areas had more scope to tackle crime proactively.

Members discussed the following issues in relation to the report:

- How PSCO posts were to be funded in the future;
- The level of turnover of staff (this was reported to be around 25%, the majority of which was movement of PSCOs into the regular Police force;)
- Understaffing and recruitment concerns;
- The possible extension of the powers of PCSOs, which areas they could be tasked with and how this was likely to be achieved;



- The reported differences between the experience of individuals working as PCSOs in the outer wards compared with those in the inner city areas.

The Board expressed their satisfaction with the work of PCSOs across the city. The Chair thanked Officers for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.

**52 MINUTES - THRIVING COMMUNITIES CORPORATE PRIORITY BOARD - 16TH OCTOBER 2006**

Neil Evans, Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing, was in attendance at the meeting. Members were invited to ask questions or make observations regarding the minutes or any other related issue.

The Board went on to discuss the following points:

- The progress made on the issue of tackling worklessness in certain areas of the city, particularly in terms of altering procurement practices in order to attract smaller businesses to participate in Council-led initiatives on the issue;
- The feasibility of the Authority purchasing surplus accommodation that was reported to be available in the new purpose-built student blocks in order to house those in housing need;
- What progress had been made on the accommodation needs assessment for travellers following the deputation to Full Council in September;
- Moves being made to ensure that asylum seekers coming into the city are dispersed over the whole of Leeds and not concentrated in a few small areas;
- The Education Leeds initiative to allocate one school per wedge in the city to teach English to newly arrived asylum seekers and the issues of funding and accessibility associated with the scheme;
- How the ALMO restructure was progressing, particularly in terms of the relocation of staff across the new organisations;
- Where profits from the sale of right to buy properties were invested and the reported sharp decrease in right to buy sales this year.

The Chair thanked the Director for his attendance and contribution to the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Thriving Communities Corporate Priority Board meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2006 be noted.

(Councillor Schofield left the meeting at 12:10 pm, at the conclusion of consideration of this item.)

**53 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which detailed the current work programme of the Board, including scheduled and unscheduled items.

Appended to the report for Members' information was a copy of the Forward Plan for November to February 2007.

The Board agreed to schedule a report on private rented accommodation for the December meeting. Two separate reports on District Partnerships and Supporting People would be considered at the January meeting, subject to the necessary information being available. It was also decided to circulate Members' initial suggestions regarding recommendations for the final report of the Inquiry into Regeneration in Beeston Hill and Holbeck to the Board for comment, rather than establish a working group.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report and the revisions to the work programme be noted.

**54 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006 at 10:00 am (pre-meeting for Board Members at 9:30 am.)

(The meeting concluded at 12:15 pm.)

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER, 2006

**PRESENT:** Councillor G Driver in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, P Grahame,  
B Lancaster and T Leadley

### 40 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Anderson declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 9 and 10 (Minute Nos.44 and 45 refer) – Scrutiny Inquiry – Narrowing the Gap (Lead Member on Narrowing the Gap).

### 41 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bale, Cleasby and Pryke.

### 42 Minutes - 9th October 2006

The Chair reported that there had been an amendment to the version of the minutes that had been submitted to Council on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006 in that the word 'casinos' had been replaced with 'gambling' in paragraph 6 of Minute No.37 – Council's Statement of Gambling Policy.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October be confirmed as a correct record.

### 43 Scrutiny Inquiry - Safety, Wellbeing and Attendance - IDeA Review

The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report regarding the Committee's inquiry into Safety, Well Being and Attendance. Attached to the report was an executive summary and headline recommendations of the Improvement and Development Agency's (IDeA) review of sickness absence within Leeds City Council.

The Chair welcomed Lorraine Hallam, Chief Officer, Human Resources and Chris Ingham, Human Resources Manager to the meeting.

It was reported that in addition to the scrutiny inquiry, the IDeA had been commissioned to carry out an independent review of attendance management. The review had been followed with a range of positive comments, however it was noted that there was still some room for improvement. The Council was commended for its holistic approach, innovative practice and the leadership from Corporate Human Resources.

Members attention was brought to the IDeA's recommendations and the Council's progress made. Issues highlighted included training, trade union involvement, occupational health provision and performance management.

In summary, it was explained that the IDeA review had complemented the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the recommendations had reflected the findings of the Committee's inquiry and the review. Levels of sickness were still reducing and it was hoped that these would be on target by the end of 2006.

In response to comments on how future arrangements would be monitored, it was reported that it would be a long term concern and there was a need to address cultural issues within the Council. There was also a need for accountability and strong leadership.

The Chair thanked Lorraine Hallam and Chris Ingham for their attendance and contributions, who in turn thanked the Committee for their work on the inquiry and gave a reassurance that the findings would be used to shape their work.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Scrutiny Inquiry for Safety, Wellbeing and Attendance be formally concluded.

#### **44 Scrutiny Inquiry - Narrowing the Gap**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the Narrowing the Gap Scrutiny Inquiry. Attached to the report was a summary of the discussion held at the Committee's October meeting.

**RESOLVED –** That the summary of the discussion held at the Committee's October meeting be received and noted.

#### **45 Scrutiny Inquiry - Narrowing the Gap - Leeds Local Area Agreement**

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report which provided Members with information about the Leeds Local Area Agreement and how it contributed to the Narrowing the Gap agenda. Members were reminded that Local Area Agreements were still a relatively new approach to relationships between local authorities, their key partners and Central Government.

The Chair welcomed Jane Stageman, Senior Project Manager and Maggie Gjessing, Neighbourhood Renewal Manager to the meeting.

A presentation of the contribution of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) to Narrowing the Gap was given. The presentation focussed on the following:-

- Key Areas

- Narrowing the Gap Measures
- Good practice Examples
- Added Value of LAA
- Local Government White Paper Considerations
  
- Narrowing the Gap Focus
  - The Vision for Leeds and the Regeneration Plan provided the consultation base for the 3 year LAA.
  - Local Enterprise Growth Initiative bids and how these could meet some of the Narrowing the Gap target priorities.
  - Delivery of key priorities and change programmes.
  - Super Output Areas
  
- Narrowing the Gap Measures
  - The Board was informed of a range of floor targets and performance indicators with a detailed mid year review on the LAA mandatory outcomes.
  
- Good Practice Examples
  - Children and Young People – project to improve attendance, reduce exclusion and improve standards.
  - Healthier Communities and Older People – Employability project – health and voluntary sector involvement.
  - Safe and Stronger Communities – Intensive Neighbourhood Management Programmes – a good example of multi-agency working
  - Economic Development and Enterprise – financial inclusion, reducing debt, providing financial advice and affordable credit.
  
- Employability Project – working with key partners such as Job Centre Plus, NHS and the voluntary sector this will assist people from targeted groups into employment and reduce the numbers of incapacity benefit claimants to meet a Narrowing the Gap objective.
  
- Local Government White Paper –
  - New duties for partners to co-operate – on consultation and achieving targets
  - A greater emphasis on community cohesion.
  - Wider role for scrutiny – a wider range of service providers could be called in, community able to call in items for scrutiny, more dialogue with Executive Board.

Further issues discussed included the establishment of working groups to investigate different parts of the inquiry, the suggestion of co-opted members to assist with the inquiry and contributions from the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector.

The Chair thanked Jane Stageman and Maggie Gjessing for their attendance.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

#### **46 Performance Management and Financial Health Monitoring**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the performance management and scrutiny of the budget. The report outlined proposals to strengthen the existing performance management and financial health monitoring undertaken by Scrutiny Boards.

Members were reminded that under current arrangements the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received performance management information twice yearly and budgetary information once a year. It was proposed to increase this to quarterly reporting with departmental performance being made available to the relevant Scrutiny Boards.

**RESOLVED** –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reaffirms its support for proposed arrangements for monitoring the performance and financial health of the Council.

#### **47 Request for Scrutiny**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development had prepared a report following a request for scrutiny from Councillor Illingworth regarding Council Policy on Access to Information.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Illingworth to the meeting to outline his request.

Councillor Illingworth informed the Committee about a request he had made for information that had been refused and subsequently overturned on appeal by the Independent Commissioner. He felt that Leeds City Council had not correctly implemented Freedom of Information (FOI) rules and that information had been held back without good reason. He also had a number of other cases that were due to be decided on appeal. He further mentioned that he had been refused access to information that had already been in the public domain although this had been through external bodies to the Council.

In summary, Councillor Illingworth wished the Committee to scrutinise the following :-

- Whether or not the Council is operating within the FOI Rules;
- Whether documents are held back without good cause;
- Whether there is a conflict between the FOI Rules and the Access to Information Rules;
- Whether or not the Council publishes records on its web pages.

The Chair thanked Councillor Illingworth for his attendance.

**RESOLVED** – That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development prepares a report to address the key points raised by Councillor Illingworth.

#### **48 Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which contained a copy of the Committee's current Work Programme, the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and minutes of the Executive Board held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2006. In addition to the Work Programme, it was suggested that the Committee also consider the Local Government White Paper.

**RESOLVED** –

- (a) That the report be noted and the Work Programme accepted.
- (b) That the Forward Plan be noted.
- (c) That the minutes of the Executive Board held on 18<sup>th</sup> October be noted.

#### **49 Dates and Times of Future Meetings**

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2007

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007

All at 10.00 a.m. (pre-meetings at 9.30 a.m.)

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## EXECUTIVE BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER, 2006

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Harris in the Chair

Councillors A Carter, D Blackburn, R Brett,  
J L Carter, R Harker, P Harrand, J Procter,  
S Smith, K Wakefield and J Blake

Councillor J Blake – Non Voting Advisory Member

### 97 Exclusion of Public

**RESOLVED** – That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as exempt on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of the exempt information so designated as follows:

- (a) The appendix to the report referred to in minute 102 under the terms of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3) and on the grounds that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information by reason of the fact that it contains commercially sensitive information which, if disclosed, could be prejudicial to contract negotiations.
- (b) The appendix to the report referred to in minute 107 under the terms of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3) on the grounds that the information on the Council's approach to commercial issues outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.
- (c) Appendix 1 to the report referred to in minute 114 on the grounds that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information by reason of the fact that the information is commercially sensitive and its release could jeopardise the current transaction under consideration.

### 98 Declaration of Interests

- (a) Councillor Brett declared a personal interest in the items relating to Local Employment and Training Initiatives relating to ALMO expenditure (minute 105) and a plan for delivering affordable housing in Leeds (minute 106) as a board member of South East Leeds ALMO.
- (b) Further interests declared during the course of the meeting are referred to in minute 105 (Councillor J L Carter) and minute 114 (Councillor A Carter).

### 99 Minutes

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2006 be approved.

## **CENTRAL AND CORPORATE**

### **100 Approval of a Statement of Gambling Policy**

Further to minute 55 of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006 the Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report presenting an updated revised draft policy on the licensing of gambling premises under the Gambling Act 2005 following Scrutiny consideration and responses to consultation. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended the meeting and presented the comments of the Committee.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That having considered the responses to the consultation carried out, including the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Appendix 1 and the table of responses at Appendix 2, the proposed responses to the consultation exercise be endorsed, and that Council be recommended to approve them as the response to matters raised in consultation.
- (b) That the revised draft Statement of Gambling Policy as set out at Appendix 3 to the report be noted and that Council be recommended to approve it as the final Policy under the Gambling Act 2005.

(Under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.5 Councillor Brett required it to be recorded that he voted against this decision).

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### **101 Advertising Design Guide**

The Director of Development submitted a report on progress on the preparation of an Advertising Design Guide proposed for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document. An updated version of the guide, containing different illustrations from the version circulated with the agenda, had been provided to members of the Board and the Director of Development indicated that illustrations which offered best examples in relation to the guide would be sought up to the date of publication.

**RESOLVED –** That the Advertising Design Guide, as attached to the submitted report, be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

## **CITY SERVICES**

### **102 Advertising on Lamp Posts**

The Director of City Services submitted a report on the lamp post advertising trial and its findings, reviewing other issues pertinent to advertising on lamp posts and presenting a proposed future strategy for such advertising as a means to generate income to support service provision.

An appendix to the report was designated exempt under Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3).

Following consideration of the exempt appendix in private at the conclusion of the meeting it was

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the principle of advertising on lamp posts in Leeds be approved.
- (b) That the Director of City Services be authorised to vary the trial contract arrangement with the service provider to enable up to 10 trial sites to be installed in the city centre.
- (c) That the Director of City Services be authorised to commence procurement of an advertising contract to include supply, installation and maintenance of advertising panels.
- (d) That the content of the Advertising Content Guidance document be noted.

**NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING**

**103 Housing (Market) Renewal Investment Programme**

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report on funding recently secured by Leeds City Council and its partners from a Single Regeneration Housing Pot and Housing Market Renewal Investment Fund to enable issues of low demand and poor quality housing in a number of inner city neighbourhoods to be addressed. The report described conditions attached to the two funding streams, how the money had been allocated to individual projects that comprise the overall programme, and what needed to be done to ensure that the projects were delivered to programme.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing be authorised to make changes to individual schemes which have been approved by this Board.
- (b) That the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing and Director of Development be authorised to make and promote any necessary Compulsory Purchase Orders which may be required in the event that agreement cannot be reached with any property owner within the target area(s) of any approved scheme.

**104 Empty Property Strategy 2006 - 2010**

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report on the proposed revised Corporate Empty Property Strategy and the updated targets set for the strategy for 2006-2010.

**RESOLVED –** That the Empty Property Strategy be approved.

**105 Local Employment and Training Initiatives Relating to ALMO Expenditure**

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report on work with the construction industry in Leeds with regard to Local Employment and Training Initiatives since the launch of the Leeds Home Construction Partnership in November 2005 to deliver decent homes and on current

proposed future developments on responsive repairs and maintenance contracts.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

(Councillor J L Carter declared a personal interest during the discussion on this item as Chair of Re'new).

**106 A Plan for Delivering Affordable Housing in Leeds**

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report describing the key components of the plan for the delivery of affordable housing in Leeds "Making the Housing Ladder Work" developed by the Corporate Affordable Housing Task Group.

**RESOLVED** –

- (a) That the report be noted and that the principles of the Plan for Deliverable Affordable Housing in Leeds and the key actions for delivery be supported.
- (b) That the proposed development of a 'Special Purpose Vehicle' in respect of cleared Council land be noted as one of the key mechanisms to deliver affordable housing solutions on the scale required.
- (c) That progress on the delivery of the Plan be reported back to this Board in early 2007.

**107 Little London Housing PFI - Outline Business Case**

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing submitted a report on progress in seeking approval to the outline business case for the Little London project and the likely timetable for its completion, on a proposed updated affordability position and management of scenarios which might impact on affordability.

Appendix 1 to the report was designated exempt under Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3).

Following consideration of the exempt report in private at the conclusion of the meeting it was

**RESOLVED** –

- (a) That progress made in seeking approval for the Little London outline business case and the current timetable for completion be noted.
- (b) That the updated affordability position for the project as set out in paragraph 1 of the exempt Appendix to the report be approved.
- (c) That the Board notes the financial implications of a number of scenarios which might impact on the affordability of the project and confirms support for the way in which these might be managed as set out in paragraph 2 of the exempt Appendix.
- (d) That the commitment of the Council to the Little London PFI Project be reconfirmed.
- (e) That the increased Council contribution of £149,000 in year one, giving a total of £570,000 be approved and that the updated financial

summary table for the 20 year contract as set out in the appendix be noted.

- (f) That in view of the sensitivities outlined in the exempt appendix, a further contingency sum of £150,000 per annum be committed, such sum to be sought in the first instance from the Housing Revenue Account.
- (g) That, should any affordability gap arise beyond this level, the project be supported through other mechanisms including capital receipts from the area or through reviewing the project scope without impacting on value for money.

## **CENTRAL AND CORPORATE**

### **108 Lord Mayors Earthquake Appeal**

The Chief Officer (Executive Support) submitted a report on a proposal that the Council support the rebuilding of a hospital in Muzaffarabad.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That this Board endorses the proposal of the Elected Member Advisory Group to support the project to build and equip a hospital in Muzaffarabad.
- (b) That funding toward this capital scheme of £43,871.06 be approved and authority be given to spend the full £50,000 of grant payments from the capital programme to be funded from fund raising (£6,128.94) and an allocation of Leeds capital resources (£43,871.06).
- (c) That the Chief Officer (Executive Support) be authorised to agree the terms of, and to complete the grant agreement and the payment of funds.

### **109 Capital Programme - 2006/07 Mid Year Financial Update**

The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report giving a summary of financial details of the 2006/07 month 6 Capital Programme position.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the latest position of the Capital Programme 2006/07 and the projections for 2007/08 and 2008/09 be noted.
- (b) That the injection into the Capital Programme of £5.521m General Sure Start grant for children's centres and extended schools be approved.
- (c) That the injection of £500k of Leeds resources in 2007/08 into the Northern Ballet and Phoenix Dance Company scheme be approved.
- (d) That the approval for the injection of £44k of Leeds resources in 2006/07 in respect of the funding granted to the Pakistan Earthquake Appeal, as referred to in minute 108 above, be noted.
- (e) That the Board notes the pressures on the approved funding for the South Leeds Swimming and Diving Centre and the City Museum schemes and the intention of the Director of Learning and Leisure to report on these schemes to the December 2006 and January 2007 meetings of this Board respectively.

- (f) That the injection of £125k of Leeds resources in 2006/07, to enable the Director of Development to conclude the tenant compensation arrangements at the Otley Ashfield works site, be approved.
- (g) That the injection of £100k of Leeds resources in 2006/07, to enable the Director of City Services to conclude a negotiated settlement of the Council's refurbishment liability in respect of Belgrave House, be approved.
- (h) That the injection of £5.005m of funding, met from unsupported borrowing for the additional and replacement wheeled bin programme, be approved and that the approval of subsequent expenditure within this programme to be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services in line with the management of the equipment purchases scheme.

(Under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.5 Councillor Wakefield required it to be recorded that he abstained from voting on this decision).

#### **110 Financial Health Monitoring - Half Year Report**

The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report on the financial health of the authority after six months of the financial year, in respect of the revenue budget for general funds services, the housing revenue account and presenting the mid year update of the Annual Efficiency Statement.

**RESOLVED** – That the projected financial position of the Authority be noted, together with the decision of the Leader, Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services to approve the Annual Efficiency Statement – Mid Year update 2006/07 for submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government by the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

(Under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.5 Councillor Wakefield required it to be recorded that he abstained from voting on this decision).

#### **111 Financial Plan Annual Review**

The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report providing an update of the current approved Financial Plan covering the years 2005-2008.

**RESOLVED** –

- (a) That the update to the Council's Financial Plan 2005-2008 be approved and that departments be requested to prepare detailed budgets for 2007/08 in accordance with the principles included within the submitted report.
- (b) That the report be forwarded to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of their review of the Executive's initial budget proposals in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
- (c) That the Board notes the intention to produce a new financial plan once the details of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 have been announced and the expected move towards three year budgeting.

#### **112 Treasury Management Strategy Update 2006/2007**

The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report reviewing and updating the treasury management borrowing and investment strategy for 2006/07.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting  
to be held on Wednesday, 13th December, 2006

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**113 Children's Services Annual Performance Assessment**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report summarising the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment process for Leeds and presenting the letter advising of the outcome of the assessment.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

### **DEVELOPMENT**

**114 Site 1, Quarry Hill - Northern Ballet Theatre Company and Phoenix Dance Theatre**

The Director of Development submitted a report on proposed terms for the disposal of Site 1 Quarry Hill to Rushbond Plc, the making of a capital grant to the Northern Ballet Theatre Company and the Phoenix Dance Company Theatre for the construction of their dance headquarters on the site, and the use of the Council's prudential borrowing powers in order to assist the two companies in funding the scheme, the cost of which would be met by reducing the grants that the Council makes to them.

Appendix 1 to the report was designated exempt under Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3). A revised version of this appendix was circulated at the meeting.

Following consideration of the exempt appendix 1 to the report in private at the conclusion of the meeting it was

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That approval be given to the disposal of part of site 1 (site A), Quarry Hill to Rushbond plc on the terms reported to facilitate the construction of the new dance headquarters for Northern Ballet Theatre Company / Phoenix Dance Company, and that further decisions relating to the terms of the transaction be delegated to the Directors of Development and Learning and Leisure.
- (b) That approval be given to the disposal of part of site 1 (site B), Quarry Hill to Northern Ballet Theatre Company/Phoenix Dance Company on the terms reported in the confidential appendix to the report, and that any further decisions relating to the terms of the transaction be delegated to the Directors of Development and Learning and Leisure.
- (c) That approval be given to a fully funded injection into the Capital Programme of a sum equivalent to the premiums as reported in the confidential appendix to the report, representing the net site values of sites A and B Quarry Hill, towards the construction of the dance headquarters to grant fund Northern Ballet Theatre Company and Phoenix Dance Company for the construction of dance headquarters on Site B.

- (d) That approval be given to the incurring of expenditure up to the premiums representing the net site values of sites A and B Quarry Hill for the capital grants to Northern Ballet Theatre Company and Phoenix Dance Company to construct the dance headquarters.
- (e) That approval be given to capital grants of £750,000 to Northern Ballet Theatre Company and £200,000 to the Phoenix Dance Company to fund the gap to construct the dance headquarters, the borrowing costs of these grants to be funded by reductions in the annual grants that the Council currently makes to the two organisations in accordance with the arrangements set out in the report.
- (f) That approval be given to an injection into the Capital Programme of £500,000, this being the Yorkshire Forward grant monies the Council transferred to the City Museum project in 2005/06.

(Councillor A Carter declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as a director of a company which may tender for works in the construction project and left the meeting).

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2006  
LAST DATE FOR CALL IN: 24<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2006 (5.00 PM)

(Scrutiny Support will notify relevant Directors of any items Called In by 12.00 noon on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2006)





## Report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing

### Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing)

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006

### Subject: Leeds Private Rented Housing Strategy

**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

## SCRUTINY SUMMARY

- 1 This report summarises the contents of the Leeds Private Rented Housing Strategy (hard copies can also be found in the Group Offices).
- 2 The strategy has been compiled by a multi-agency private rented sector strategy group sitting within the structure of the Leeds Housing Partnership and provides a partnership framework of how the Council and private landlords can work together to improve the supply and condition of private rented housing in Leeds.
- 3 At the heart of the strategy is a complementary balance of the two key roles of the Council in it's relationship with the private rented sector namely the Council's 'enabling role' to assist good landlords to provide the essential private letting service that many Leeds citizens need and the Council's statutory duties as the enforcement agency for health, safety and welfare in the private rented sector.
- 4 The strategy includes a commitment on the part of private landlords to work in partnership with the Council in order to provide quality housing provision and standards of management and to contribute to good neighbourhood management.

### 1.0 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend that the Scrutiny Board endorse the Leeds Private Rented Housing Strategy.

### 2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Using the private rented strategy group as a consultative forum, the key elements of

how the Council and the private rented sector can be mutually supportive have been explored, a partnership framework agreed and an action plan produced to put the aims and objectives of the strategy into practice.

### **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 The private rented sector is the fastest growing tenure in the Leeds housing market. Its growth has been driven by the growing buy-to-let market, the student housing market, demand from young professionals and households relocating to Leeds.
- 3.2 The strategy recognizes that the private rented sector provides a valuable part of the overall structure of housing provision in Leeds providing flexibility and ease of access for many households. However, it is also the case that where private rented housing becomes the majority tenure in a neighbourhood then problems with instability and high levels of household mobility can arise.
- 3.3 The Housing Act 2004 brought into effect an number of measures to regulate the private rented sector and deal with rogue landlords. HMO licensing and other forms of licensing along with application of the Home Health and Safety Rating System are having an impact on private landlords while the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme is continuing to be promoted as the main mechanism for driving up standards while providing support for landlords.
- 3.4 The Local Housing Allowance pathfinder in Leeds lay the basis for the roll out of the Local Housing Allowance for private rented housing nationally. This will have implications for landlords letting to households claiming housing benefit.
- 3.5 The strategy seeks to strike a balance between enabling the provision of private rented housing and the enforcement of appropriate standards of housing condition and management.
- 3.6 It seeks to set out the roles and responsibilities of the range of organisations and agencies involved in the provision, management and regulation of private rented housing along with advice agencies, the Leeds Benefits Service and the Rent Officer service.
- 3.7 The Vision for the strategy is

“To enable good quality, well managed private rented housing to be an essential part of sustainable and balanced housing provision across Leeds and in individual neighbourhoods”.

The Vision of this Strategy will be achieved through three priority themes:

- 2.4.1 Promoting and supporting the private rented sector to meet needs and provide choice: involving the Council using its enabling role to promote the private rented housing and ensure that the Council and all relevant departments support a healthy private rented sector; and landlords contributing to agreed strategic objectives such as meeting housing needs and contributing to regeneration programmes and sustainable and balanced housing provision
- 2.4.2 Ensuring good standards of housing and management: involving the Council using its regulatory role to encourage responsible landlords and its enforcement role to tackle bad conditions and standards of management and

landlords using self regulation through support to accreditation schemes to provide good quality housing.

- 2.4.3 Effective advice and information and encouraging the positive engagement of private tenants and communities hosting private rented housing: Involving the Council providing or supporting provision of accurate and timely advice and information to private tenants and working with the Leeds Tenants Federation and other community engagement groups to encourage the inclusion of private tenants in tenant and resident groups, community associations and other forms of community engagement
- 2.5 The strategy identifies a series of key actions that are needed to put those principles into place and realize the Vision of the strategy and operationalises those through an integral action plan.
- 2.6.1 The strategy sets out actions that the Council can take to enable better private housing provision and support to landlords.
- 2.6.2 It also sets out the ways in which the Council will undertake its private rented sector health and safety enforcement role in a fair and equitable way. Firm enforcement action taken against the minority of private landlords who provide substandard services in order to force them to improve or leave the market, Indirectly provides support for the majority of good landlords by maintaining their good reputation.
- 2.6.3 Conversely the strategy places an obligation on private landlords to undertake a complementary set of actions that use and build on the Council's support in order to enable quality services to be provided in a way that is commercially supportive for landlords.
- 2.7 This strategy when implemented will ensure that all of those involved in private rented housing will work together to achieve or contribute to:
- The recognition of private rented housing as a valued component of balanced and sustainable housing provision and communities in Leeds
  - A recognition of the role of private rented housing in not only meeting demand and choice but also meeting needs of specific groups including students, homeless and vulnerable people and asylum seekers and refugees so long as it is economic to do so
  - More privately rented homes of a good standard through encouragement of landlords to improve their service
  - Fewer private rented homes of a poor standard of condition and amenity through effective enforcement action being taken against poor landlords
  - Increased membership of the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme, the UNIPOL Code of Standards and other accreditation schemes
  - Increasing numbers of bedspaces in the private rented sector provided by accredited landlords
  - Provision of accurate and timely advice and information to private tenants
  - Inclusion of private tenants in tenant and resident involvement and community engagement structures
  - Efficient operation of housing benefit/local housing allowance processes for the benefit of private tenants and landlords

- Efficient and timely application of planning policies relating to private rented housing

### **3 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

- 3.1 An Scrutiny Board decision to endorse the strategy will obligate those Council departments named in the action plan to undertake their respective actions as listed in the action plan.
- 3.2 The endorsement would provide a strong message to private landlords of the Council's sincerity and commitment to partnership working and private landlords will in turn will be encouraged to trust and use the Council's support to provide and maintain quality accommodation services.

### **4 Legal And Resource Implications**

- 4.1 Endorsement of the strategy does not place the Council or representatives of the private rented sector under any legal contractual obligations. The strategy is aspirational in its aims and not legally binding.
- 4.2 The strategy does not place the Council Departments named in the action plan under any additional resource pressure as the action points are either a confirmation of existing services or a commitment to good practice.

### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Endorsement of the Leeds Private Rented Housing Strategy will provide valuable strategic guidance to those Council service providers who are involved with private landlords and will in turn provide confidence to private landlords that the Council is committed to supporting them to provide the quality private rented housing accommodation services that Leeds citizens need.

### **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Members of the Scrutiny Board are recommended to give their endorsement to the Leeds Private Rented Housing Strategy.

# **Leeds** Housing

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## **LEEDS PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING STRATEGY**

**2005 – 2010**

*OCTOBER 2006*

# 1. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

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Private rented housing provides an important component of the structure of housing provision in Leeds. In particular it provides housing for young mobile people, those on lower incomes and those relocating or moving to Leeds for employment or to study. The strength of the private rented sector in Leeds lies in its flexibility and adaptability to changing housing demand and choice and changing housing market conditions.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out the strategic direction for private rented housing in Leeds for the next five years. It aims to enable the creation and maintenance of a prosperous private rented sector that provides choice and offers good quality and well-managed rented accommodation which contributes to sustainability of the communities in which it is located..

This strategy seeks to set out the roles and responsibilities of the range of organisations and agencies involved in the provision, management and regulation of private rented housing along with advice agencies, the Leeds Benefits Service and the Rent Officer service. It also includes an action plan with targets and milestones to deliver the strategy over the next five years.

## 2. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

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The development of this strategy is taking place against a backdrop of changing housing market conditions, the emergence of choice and aspiration as the most powerful driver of use of housing and a large increase in the number and proportion of households renting privately.

- Scale of the Private rented housing sector in Leeds

Census statistics show that for the last 40 years approximately 40% of households in Leeds rent their homes either from the Council through its six Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs); through Registered Social Landlords or from private landlords. Over the last three years however, expansion of the private rented sector has compensated for contraction of the social sector.

It is estimated that there are now over 45,000 households renting their homes from private landlords, around 14% of households compared to 7% in 1981. Private rented housing provides a home for students, nurses and young professionals, low income households, benefit claimants as well as for households relocating from other parts of the country, migrating from outside the UK or seeking asylum

The increasingly attractive return that housing provides as a form of investment have led to increasing levels of 'buy-to-let' purchasing either for commercial return or to provide pension income for those without long-term occupational provision. Lower than average house price inflation in certain parts of the city have also made housing in those areas attractive to investors. This has led in some parts of the city, for private rented housing to be the dominant tenure. In Headingley ward where the proportion is around 60% and in Beeston Hill, the proportion of housing privately rented is between 40 and 50%. The % of housing privately rented in Beeston Hill has increased by three times over the last three years. In both areas the increase has led to problems of instability and 'churning'.

In the city centre 'city living' boom, on the other hand, it is estimated that buoyant prices and attractive returns have led to approximately 40% of apartments developed being purchased by investors for letting and this is shown by the flourishing lettings market in the city centre.

Continuing increases in house prices, the flexibility increasingly required in the labour market and changing preferences are all likely to drive further expansion of the private rented sector in Leeds.

- Markets

The private rented housing market has diversified and extended greatly over the last 20 years. In the past the majority of private rented housing has been concentrated in inner urban areas of older terraced housing and in 'Leeds 6' catering for students. Over the last 5 years however, private rented housing has become attractive to a wide range of people. Markets for private rented housing have developed amongst people relocating to work in Leeds, visiting academics and medical practitioners taking up time limited contracts at the Leeds Teaching Hospitals, young professionals working in the legal, financial, ICT and retail/leisure businesses in Leeds City Centre as well as to students, benefit claimants and those in work on low incomes.

Analysis of the rental market by Allsopp's shows that private rented markets exist in all Leeds postal areas and offers a range of property types including apartments, detached and semi detached houses as well as in older terraced housing. However, it remains the case that concentrations of private rented housing are evident in areas such as Headingley and some other inner urban areas such as Beeston Hill, Cross Green and Harehills.

The city living market has developed through significant buy-to-let investment from local and national investors and caters for a range of people working in the financial, legal and service businesses in the city centre.

- Stakeholders and relationships

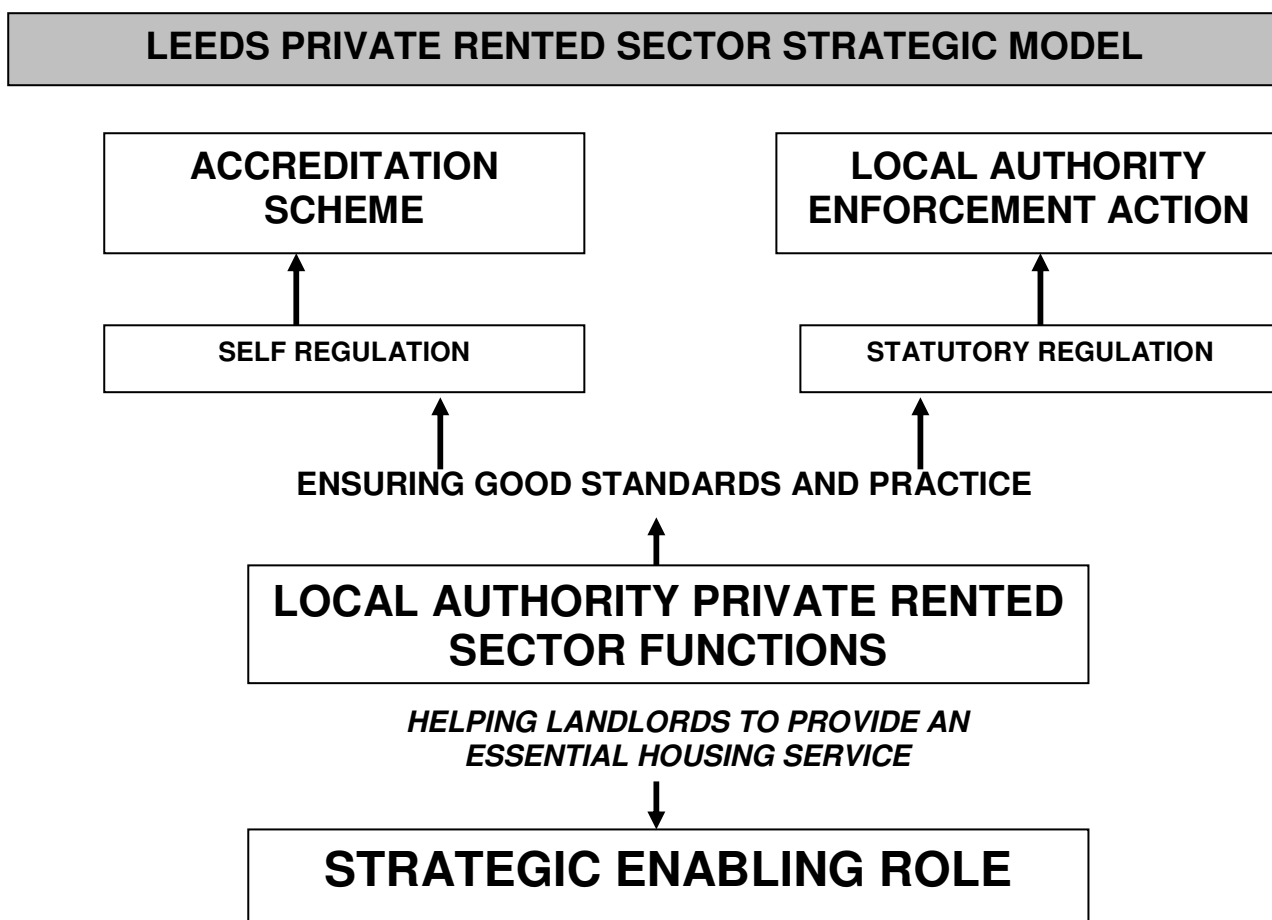
There are a range of stakeholders involved in the delivery of this strategy, including a range of Council Departments and services, landlords and their associations, estate and managing agents, UNIPOL, community associations representing areas containing private rented housing, tenants and residents associations, the Leeds Benefits Service, the Rent Officer service and a range of advice agencies and their associations dealing in landlord and tenant issues. These also include funders and mortgage lenders.

Formulating and implementing a strategy for private rented housing therefore will require a constructive relationship between those stakeholders. The Council has been working to develop a strategic and partnership based approach involving working closely with private landlords and other agencies and using a mix of enabling, regulatory and enforcement functions to ensure a healthy and good quality private rented sector. The diagram below represents this.

The development of the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme and the UNIPOL Code of Standards in conjunction with UNIPOL and Landlords has provided a good example of the mixed approach of enabling and enforcement being taken by the Council. The operation of a pilot Local Housing Allowance (to potentially replace housing benefit) in Leeds has also required a cooperative response from the range of stakeholders involved.

The Leeds Property Forum has been established to coordinate and represent the interests of private landlords and managing agents and to provide a voice in discussions with the Council and other key actors.

The challenges posed by the Housing Act 2004 and current or future potential changes in market conditions along with the results of changing policy on higher education will require a cooperative working to enable the range of stakeholders to meet those challenges.





### 3. STRATEGIC DRIVERS AND KEY ISSUES

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There are a number of key issues that are driving the formation and implementation of this strategy and issues that need to be addressed by its formulation and implementation:

#### Economic Growth and well being

The economy of Leeds is growing fast and is expected to grow even further. The need for a skilled, flexible and mobile workforce is a key part of ensuring that growth while attracting and retaining students and graduates to support the skills base of that economic growth is crucial. The private rented sector provides flexibility and assists labour mobility including providing a 'first port of call' for those relocating and unaware of local housing market conditions, opportunities and costs and for visiting academics, medical staff on time limited contracts with the Leeds Universities and teaching Hospitals. Economic analysis suggests that much job growth in the Leeds City Region over the coming years will be as much in short-term, limited hours and non-secure employment. A range of rented housing will be needed to meet the housing needs of those taking up lower paid and non secure jobs.

#### Choice

Enabling the extension of choice for individuals and households over a range of parts of their lives has become the policy of all the main political parties. The private rented housing sector provides choice and adds to choice in terms of location, type and size of housing. The private rented sector provides options for households to live in areas who are unable to access social rented housing or unable to buy on the open market. It also enables households to express lifestyle choice.

#### Meeting housing needs

Increasing use is being made of private rented housing to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households, vulnerable people and people seeking asylum and refugees. The flexibility and instant access of private rented housing offers a flexible response that hostel type accommodation cannot offer. In addition Supporting People strategy is seeking to shift funding from buildings based provision towards support to independent living and in particular is seeking to offer support funding to those living in private rented housing or owner occupation. In this context it is essential for private rented housing to be of a good quality and be well managed.

#### Student Housing

Private rented housing has traditionally provided the majority of housing for students with most returning students seeking to live in shared housing in communities. The Government's drive towards increasing student numbers led to huge expansions in shared privately rented housing in cities with large student populations such as Leeds which has been very difficult to manage posing challenges to the Council, landlords and community groups. However, the development of substantial numbers of purpose-built accommodation blocks for students and the potential impact of HMO licensing and the Home Health and Safety Rating may raise issues for the size of the student focused private rented sector.

#### Anti Social Behaviour

The private rented sector can however, provide a 'bolthole' for those households evicted from or prevented from living in certain areas. Action to tackle anti-social behaviour in one area can lead to influx of 'problem households' into those areas with a high proportion of private rented housing as it is that which is most immediately accessible. This can lead to labelling of an area and the injection of permanent instability of population.

#### Stability and Community Cohesion

The private rented sector tends to have significantly higher turnover than other tenures. With tenancy conditions different and with less onus on private landlords to maintain tenants in those tenancies, areas with high concentrations of private rented housing also tend to have high rates of turnover where the population of those areas changes rapidly, bringing permanent instability of population and hindering the achievement of community cohesion and community pride and the active involvement of local households in their communities.

### Quality and Condition

The quality and condition of private rented housing is variable. In some areas it is of a very high quality offering standards of housing far better than elsewhere in the rented sector or through home ownership. In those areas accommodating students, the higher expectations of some students and their parents have driven up standards, but in other often inner urban and deprived areas, quality of private rented housing is poor with ownership often by small scale landlords unconnected to the accreditation schemes, absentee or speculative landlords.

### Standards of Management

In the past, standards of housing and tenancy management have been traditionally poor, with Landlords doing little housing or tenancy management. However, the success and expansion of the Accreditation Schemes have brought signs of improvement and far better management. The necessity to have effective housing and tenancy management is crucial if areas with high stocks of private rented housing are to be managed well and turnover of housing is not to bring problems and a lack of cohesion.

### Housing Legislation

The Housing Act 2004 holds significant implications for private landlords not least the costs associated with its provisions. The Housing Health and Safety Rating system, HMO licensing and selective licensing, if implemented within the City, will all have significant implications for landlords and for the Council. An important element of the successful implementation of the act will be for all stakeholders involved with private rented housing to work together to achieve compliance with the minimum of disruption for all concerned. The Leeds Property Forum drawn from the two landlords associations has been supportive of the Council in the introduction of HMO licensing although it has expressed its opposition to the introduction of selective licensing.

### Local Housing Allowance

Leeds is a pathfinder for the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), which has replaced Housing Benefit to assist tenants living in private rented housing to meet their housing costs. The introduction of LHA commenced in February 2004 and has required co-operative working between the Council's Benefits and Enforcement services, Landlords and managing agents, the rent officer service and advice agencies. The Council believes that the LHA to date has met its objectives which are to promote fairness, choice, transparency, personal responsibility, financial inclusion, improved administration and reduced barriers to work.

The number of tenants receiving benefit in the private rented sector in Leeds has increased by 12% in the last 2 years and the majority of tenants are receiving their allowance and paying the rent to the landlord. Relationships and responsibilities of tenants and landlords are now clearer under LHA. The Government are currently considering how Local Housing Allowance will roll-out nationally in the Private Rented Sector and how the pathfinders will incorporate any changes.

### Public health and narrowing health inequalities

With private rented housing providing homes for vulnerable people, improving and maintaining good housing standards in this market is a very effective way of reducing some of the causes of poor health. By ensuring properties in the private rented sector are compliant with the Housing Health and Safety Rating some important public health issues such as asthma, excess winter mortality, coronary heart disease, strokes, accidents in the home can be tackled..

### Leeds Homes

Leeds City Council are currently inviting accredited private landlords to advertise their available properties through Leeds Homes Choice-Based Lettings scheme. This will enable applicants to bid for private lets with landlords. Landlords will be given a list of applicants for each vacancy from which they may make a letting. This will provide both greater choice and widen the housing options for applicants, especially those in high demand areas.

## 4. OBJECTIVES, PRIORITIES AND ROLES

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The strategy seeks to set out the roles and responsibilities of the range of organisations and agencies involved in the provision, management and regulation of private rented housing along with advice agencies, the Leeds Benefits Service and the Rent Officer service.

### ***Vision***

***To enable good quality, well managed private rented housing to be an essential part of sustainable and balanced housing provision across Leeds and in individual neighbourhoods.***

The Vision of this Strategy will be achieved through three priority themes:

- A. *Promoting and supporting the private rented sector to meet needs and provide choice:***  
involving the Council using its enabling role to promote the private rented housing and ensure that the Council and all relevant departments support a healthy private rented sector; and landlords contributing to agreed strategic objectives such as meeting housing needs and contributing to regeneration programmes and sustainable and balanced housing provision
- B. *Ensuring good standards of housing and management:***  
involving the Council using its regulatory role to encourage responsible landlords and its enforcement role to tackle bad conditions and standards of management and landlords using self regulation through support to accreditation schemes to provide good quality housing.
- C. *Effective advice and information and encouraging the positive engagement of private tenants and communities hosting private rented housing:***  
Involving the Council providing or supporting provision of accurate and timely advice and information to private tenants and working with the Leeds Tenants Federation and other community engagement groups to encourage the inclusion of private tenants in tenant and resident groups, community associations and other forms of community engagement

### **A. PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR TO MEET NEEDS AND PROVIDE CHOICE**

#### **Objectives**

1. **To ensure that there is a healthy and prosperous private rented sector that forms part of a balanced and sustainable structure of housing provision across the city and within neighbourhoods**

#### **Role of the Leeds Housing Partnership and the Council (*Neighbourhoods and Housing*)**

- To respect and recognise the contribution of responsible landlords and promote the role of private rented housing in meeting needs, demand and choice
- To establish agreement on the level of private rented housing that enables a balance of housing from different tenures within neighbourhoods to help create and maintain mixed, sustainable communities
- To recognise the right of private landlords to operate a profitable business while having responsibility for the safety, health and well-being of their tenants and contributing to maintaining the neighbourhoods in which they operate.
- To understand changes and trends in supply, demand and cost in the private rented sector and where private rented housing is located.

### Role of Private Landlords

- To support the strategic aim of the Leeds Housing Partnership and the Council to create and maintain mixed, sustainable communities
- To participate a dialogue with the Council with a view to agreeing strategies for the private rented sector, including the most appropriate levels of private rented housing across the city and within various neighbourhoods
- To consider advertising their available properties through Leeds Homes

### Role of Community Groups

- To contribute to a dialogue with the Council and Landlords over optimum levels of private rented housing within neighbourhoods and impacts on local residents

### Outputs/Outcomes

- a) Regularly updated strategy for private rented housing
- b) An agreed approach between the Council, Landlords and community representatives on issues of balance in neighbourhoods

## 2. **To enable those private landlords who wish to do so to help meet the needs of specific groups such as students, homeless and vulnerable people and asylum seekers or refugees**

### Role of the Council (*Neighbourhoods and Housing Supporting People Team, Housing Needs Group, Environmental Health*)

- To agree the level and type of provision needed from private landlords to house homeless and vulnerable people
- To work with NASS to establish levels of provision needed to accommodate asylum seekers
- To establish and operate appropriate and efficient contracting arrangements for use of private rented housing from accredited landlords only.
- To ensure that health and safety standards in private rented housing contracted are met.
- To work with the Council, UNIPOL, Students Unions and community associations to develop and implement a student housing strategy for Leeds
- To seek to provide private landlords with a long-term as well as there being a longer term commitment to arrangements for the provision of such accommodation and to recognise that landlords will only provide such accommodation if it is economic and profitable to do so
- To seek to maximise available funding to ensure provision of effective floating support provision to vulnerable people housed in private rented housing.

### Role of Private Landlords

- To provide well managed and good quality housing for a range of housing needs including homeless and vulnerable people, students and asylum seekers and refugees, professional people and those suffering relationship breakdowns
- To provide good quality, well-managed and affordable housing for students that fully complies with the UNIPOL Accreditation Scheme or the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme

### Role of UNIPOL

- To work with the Council, the Universities, Students Unions and landlords/private sector providers to ensure that housing for students is of a good standard
- To provide good quality, well-managed and affordable housing for students

### Outputs/Outcomes

- ✓ *More homeless households temporarily and permanently housed in private rented housing*
- ✓ *More privately rented properties to be made available to settle asylum seekers pending decision of their cases*

✓ *Providing opportunities for more students to live outside traditional areas*

3. **To ensure that effective, accurate and timely payment of local housing allowance takes place to meet the needs of tenants and enable tenants to make rent payments to landlords in a timely fashion.**

**Objectives**

Role of the Council (Leeds Benefits Service)

- To ensure the efficient, accurate and timely processing of Housing benefit/Local Housing Allowance applications and payments in line with national performance standards and local targets
- To ensure that payment is made to the landlords where the circumstances justify this action  
To provide information to landlords as to progress in respect of claims where tenants direct Leeds Benefits Service to do so.
- To ensure that landlords are involved in discussions on the implementation of the Local Housing Allowance and are kept informed on its implementation

Role of Landlords

- To work constructively with the Leeds Benefits Service to ensure the efficiency of the benefits system
- To provide accurate information required by the Leeds benefits service in a timely manner.

Role of the Rent Officer Service

- To provide accurate information on rent levels to the local housing allowance process
- To consult with landlords and collect information on the rental market as part of any review of rent levels set for the local housing allowance

**Outputs/Outcomes**

✓ *Accurate and timely payment of Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance*

✓ *Performance standards set for Local Housing Allowance /Housing Benefit processing met*

4. **To ensure that appropriate planning policies are in place to support sustainable and appropriate private rented housing**

Role of the Council

- To ensure that planning policies relating to private rented housing are operated fairly, accurately and in a timely manner
- To ensure that planning applications are fairly transparently and properly determined without bias towards other interested groups.
- To consider how planning policies can be best used to manage the distribution of private rented housing

**Outputs/Outcomes**

✓ *Performance standards for planning applications met*

**B. ENSURING GOOD STANDARDS OF HOUSING AND MANAGEMENT**

**Objectives**

1. **To ensure that the highest possible standards of housing provision, amenity and management in private rented housing.**

Role of the Council (Environmental Health and Housing Needs Group)

- To utilise the **regulatory role** to improve standards of provision and management through
  - encouraging landlords to join or maintain membership of the Leeds Landlords or UNIPOL Accreditation Schemes
  - developing and promoting an accreditation scheme for Managing Agents
  - implementing local accreditation schemes such as that in Beeston Hill and Holbeck

- promoting and endorsing other suitable accreditation schemes
- To utilise its **enabling** role to
  - provide support and training for private landlords and advice on quality and health and safety issues to assist them in meeting the terms of legislation and accreditation scheme codes of standards
  - support accredited landlords through corporate initiatives such as supporting parking concessions for members of LLAS working on their properties or the refuse disposal concession.
  - hold regular landlords forums to raise awareness of the implications legislative or policy change or changes in codes of standards and to enable consultation on housing strategy and policy development
  - provide a Bond Guarantee Scheme
  - consult regularly with representatives of landlords and management agents in the formulation of policy and pay proper heed to their views and concerns.
- To exert its **health, safety enforcement role** to ensure compliance of private landlords with the key legislation providing for the safety, health and well-being of tenants
- To use its **enforcement role** to
  - take action against any landlord found to be operating their business in a substandard manner, within the terms of the Government's Enforcement Concordat methodology as detailed in the QMS system for Environmental Health and in particular to ensure that:
    - i. Enforcement action is proportional to risk and enforcement procedures are transparent
    - ii. Standards are clear
    - iii. Landlords' representatives are consulted on all standards and enforcement procedures and proper regard is had to their views and concerns. Informal non-statutory action will be employed initially unless there is good reason not to do so as detailed in the Enforcement Methodology
  - introduce and operate the Licensing of HMOs and undertake enforcement of advisory standards in non licensable HMOs and enforcement of action in singly occupied properties and consider the need for additional HMO licensing powers to regulate the management of lower risk HMOs.
  - to consider the need for additional HMO licensing powers after April 2007 to regulate the management of lower risk HMOs (i.e. those not covered by mandatory HMO licensing)
  - notwithstanding the concerns and opposition of the Landlords Associations, , to consider the use of selective licensing to regulate the management of all privately rented houses in any designated areas of low demand or high anti social behaviour
  - seek to introduce targeted enforcement action by a range of agencies including Environmental Health, the Fire Service, Building Control, Planning, the Tenancy Relations service, Trading Standards and the Health and Safety Executive to address exceptional cases where a landlord providing a very substandard service who will not improve despite help and support from the Council and other agencies

### Role of Private landlords

- To support the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme, the UNIPOL Accreditation Scheme or other endorsed schemes and maintain their membership
- To ensure that the quality of their housing and standards of management comply with reasonable standards as defined through the Accreditation Schemes
- To support and attend landlords forums and ensure they have good awareness of current legislation and good practice and undertake appropriate training in their roles as landlords
- To co-operate as far as practicable and reasonable with the Council to address anti-social behaviour by their tenants with account is to be taken of the costs and practical differences of enforcement action.
- To adopt and promote the Leeds Landlord's Accreditation Scheme in its existing or future format

### Outputs/Outcomes

- *For 20,000 bedspaces in the private rented sector to be covered by a recognised Accreditation Scheme by 2010*
- *For 10,000 bedspaces to be covered by the proposed Managing Agents Accreditation scheme in the first year of operation and a 25% year on year increase upto 2010.*

## **C. EFFECTIVE ADVICE, INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT OF PRIVATE TENANTS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS**

### Objectives

- 1. To ensure that private tenants receive appropriate advice and assistance in relation to health and safety, landlord/tenant and rent payment/housing benefit issues**

#### Role of the Council (*Neighbourhoods and Housing Needs Group, Leeds Benefits Service and Environmental Health*),

- To provide effective, accurate and timely advice and support to private tenants on health and safety, landlord/tenant, rent payment and housing benefit matters through its Housing Advice centre
- To support other advice agencies (CAB, Harehills Housing Aid etc) to provide effective, accurate and timely advice and support to private tenants on health and safety, landlord/tenant, rent payment and housing benefit matters
- To ensure effective, accurate and timely advice on housing benefits matters

#### Role of Landlords

- To support and uphold tenants welfare rights and other legal rights
- To support and work constructively with advice agencies and the Leeds City Council Housing Advice Centre
- To provide effective, accurate and timely advice and support on health and safety matters
- To consider advertising available properties through Leeds Homes

#### Role of the Advice Agencies

- To provide effective, accurate and timely advice and support to private tenants on landlord/tenant, rent payment and housing benefit matters
- To refer tenants with health and safety matters to Leeds City Council Environmental Health
- To work constructively with Landlords, Advice agencies and the Council to ensure that private tenants receive the best possible advice services

## **Outputs/Outcomes**

✓ *Provision of effective advice to tenants*

## **2. To ensure that private tenants take advantage of community engagement processes to represent and promote their interests**

### **Role of the Council**

- To promote the inclusion of private tenants in community engagement structures
- To work with the Leeds Tenants Federation to explore how to include private tenants in tenants and residents groups
- To encourage registered tenants groups and community associations to include promote membership to private tenants

### **Role of Tenants and Residents and Community Organisations**

- To explore how to include private tenants in registered tenants and residents groups
- To promote membership to private tenants

### **Role of Landlords**

- To encourage tenants to join local tenants and residents groups or community associations

## **Outputs/Outcomes**

- ✓ *Private tenants invited to join tenants/residents groups or community associations*
- ✓ *Increasing number of private tenants with membership of join tenants/residents groups or community associations*
- ✓ *Systematic consultation with private tenants*



## 5. OUTCOMES

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This strategy when implemented will ensure that all of those involved in private rented housing will work together to achieve or contribute to:

- The recognition of private rented housing as a valued component of balanced and sustainable housing provision and communities in Leeds
- A recognition of the role of private rented housing in not only meeting demand and choice but also meeting needs of specific groups including students, homeless and vulnerable people and asylum seekers and refugees so long as it is economic to do so
- More privately rented homes of a good standard through encouragement of landlords to improve their service
- Fewer private rented homes of a poor standard of condition and amenity through effective enforcement action being taken against poor landlords
- Increased membership of the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme, the UNIPOL Code of Standards and other accreditation schemes
- Increasing numbers of bedspaces in the private rented sector provided by accredited landlords
- Provision of accurate and timely advice and information to private tenants
- Inclusion of private tenants in tenant and resident involvement and community engagement structures
- Efficient operation of housing benefit/local housing allowance processes for the benefit of private tenants and landlords
- Efficient and timely application of planning policies relating to private rented housing

This will result in a private rented sector that provides good quality and well managed housing that offers an essential component of sustainable and balanced housing provision in Leeds.

## 6. ACTION PLAN

Action	Agency	Lead	Timescale	Outcome	Risk (if not achieved)
<b>A. PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR TO MEET NEEDS AND PROVIDE CHOICE</b>					
<b><i>Promotion/Enabling of Private Rented Housing</i></b>					
<b>Promote the value, benefit and function of private rented housing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promotion plan</li> <li>- monitoring</li> </ul>	re'new LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Environmental Health LHP Private Rented Strategic Working Group	NM/HJ NM/PW	Nov 06 Ongoing	Wider recognition of value and role of private rented housing	High
<b>Development and implementation of a private rented housing strategy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategy signed off</li> <li>- Action plan developed</li> <li>- Monitoring of implementation of strategy</li> </ul>	LHP Private Rented Strategic Working Group	AB HJ/NM/PW NM/PW	June 06 Oct 06 Ongoing	A structured and strategic approach to private rented housing	Moderate
<b>Agree an optimum level of private rented housing within neighbourhoods</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussions with Leeds Property Forum</li> <li>- Discussions with Community groups and LCC Area Management</li> <li>- Develop agreed approach</li> </ul>	Development Agency/ Landlords/ re'new	AC//HJ HJ AC/HJ	Nov-Dec 06 Jan-Feb 07 April 07	Agreement over the balance of tenures in neighbourhoods that can support sustainable communities	High
<b>Provide support and training for private landlords</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide training on changing housing and other legislation</li> <li>- Provide advice to landlords on quality and health and safety issues</li> <li>- Hold quarterly landlords forums</li> </ul>	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Environmental Health LCC Housing Advice Centre	NM BE NM	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	Assistance to landlords to meet obligations and terms of Accreditation scheme Provides a 'voice for Landlords'	Moderate

Action	Agency	Lead	Timescale	Outcome	Risk (if not achieved)
<b>Meeting Needs</b>					
<b>Provide well managed and good quality housing for homeless and vulnerable people</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish level and type of provision needed from private landlords to house homeless and vulnerable people</li> <li>- Establish levels of provision needed to accommodate asylum seekers</li> <li>- Establish and operate appropriate and efficient contracting arrangements for use of private rented housing</li> <li>- Report to meetings of Private Rented Housing Strategic Working Group</li> </ul>	LCC Housing Needs Group/ Supporting people team  LCC Asylum team  Landlords	BE	Sept 06	Effective use of private rented housing to for homeless and vulnerable people, asylum seekers/migrants	Moderate
		BE	Sept 06	No. of units of accommodation contracted	Moderate
		BE	Ongoing		High
		BE/RJ	Ongoing		
<b>Ensure provision of well managed and good quality private rented housing for Students</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and implement a student housing strategy for Leeds</li> <li>- Monitor impact of new purpose built housing and other factors on supply of private rented housing for students</li> <li>- Establish likely requirements from students for housing in private rented sector</li> <li>- Monitor provision in terms of extent, quality and cost</li> </ul>	Student Housing Group re'new  Neighbourhoods and Housing Environmental Health Services	HJ	Oct 06	Strategic approach to housing students	Moderate
		HJ/MB	Ongoing		Moderate
		HJ/MB	Nov 07		Low
		AC/RC	Ongoing		

<b>Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance</b>					
<b>Housing benefit/Local Housing Allowance applications and payments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensuring efficient, accurate and timely processing of applications and payments</li> </ul>	Leeds Benefits Service	JM	Ongoing	Prompt payments to claimants xx% of LHA applications processed within xx days ( xx% of payments made within xx days Reports to Private Rented Housing Strategy Working Group on progress	High
<b>Ensure accurate provision of information to enable efficient operation of the LHA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide accurate information required by the Leeds Benefits service in a timely manner</li> <li>- Provide accurate information on rent levels to the local housing allowance process</li> <li>- Consult with landlords on any review of rent levels set for the local housing allowance</li> </ul>	Landlords Leeds Benefits Service Rent Officer Service	LPF LPF LRS	Ongoing Ongoing Annual	LHA based on robust and accurate data and information	Moderate
<b>Planning Policies</b>					
<b>Operate planning policies relating to private rented housing in a fair, accurate and timely manner</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish policies impacting on private rented sector</li> <li>- Establish process for incorporating views of landlords in planning policy review</li> <li>- Establish process for incorporating views of residents of areas with large private rented housing provision</li> </ul>	LCC Development Department Building Control	RC RC RC	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	Improving confidence of landlords and residents in planning system	Moderate

Action	Agency	Lead	Timescale	Outcome	Risk (if not achieved)
<b>B. ENSURING GOOD STANDARDS OF HOUSING AND MANAGEMENT</b>					
<b>Accreditation</b>					
<p><b>Encourage landlords to join or maintain membership of the LLAS or UNIPOL Accreditation Schemes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote membership of LLAS</li> <li>- Develop and promote an accreditation scheme for Managing Agents</li> <li>- Implement the Beeston Hill and Holbeck accreditation scheme</li> <li>- Identify scope for other accreditation schemes</li> </ul>	Leeds Housing Partnership/ LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Dept (All actions)	NM/PW NM/PW MI/PW NM	Ongoing April 06 Ongoing April 07	14,577 bed-spaces covered by the LLAS by 2008 20,000 bed-spaces covered by the LLAS by 2010  Regular reports from LPF to Private Rented Housing Strategic Working Group	High
<p><b>Ensuring continuing Landlord support for the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme, the UNIPOL Accreditation Scheme or other endorsed schemes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain membership levels</li> <li>- Provide housing and standards of management compliant with reasonable standards as defined through the Accreditation Schemes</li> <li>- Support and attend landlords forums</li> <li>- addressing anti-social behaviour</li> <li>- Adoption and promotion of the Accredited Tenants Scheme</li> </ul>	Leeds Property Forum Individual Landlords (All Actions)	LPF/RJ LPF/RJ LPF/RJ LPF/RJ LPF/RJ	Ongoing Ongoing Quarterly Ongoing October 06?	Regular reports from LPF (RJ) to Private Rented Housing Strategic Working Group  Increasing membership of accreditation schemes Continually improving service from Landlords	High
<p><b>Establish a Bond Guarantee Scheme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish business case</li> <li>- Identify funding and logistical arrangements</li> <li>- Scheme Operational</li> </ul>	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Dept Housing Advice Centre	BE BE BE	December 06 April 07?	Bond Guarantee scheme established	Moderate

Action	Agency	Lead	Timescale	Outcome	Risk (if not achieved)
<b>Enforcement</b>					
<p><b>Ensure effective enforcement of relevant legislation relating to private rented housing to continually improve standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seek to take action against any landlord found to be operating their business in a substandard manner, within the terms of the Government's Enforcement Concordat</li> <li>- Consultation with Landlords on all standards and enforcement procedures and proper regard is had to their views and concerns</li> <li>- Undertake enforcement of standards in non-licensable HMOs</li> <li>- Undertake enforcement action in singly occupied properties</li> <li>- Ensure compliance of private landlords with the key legislation providing for the safety, health and welfare of tenants</li> </ul>	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Dept Environmental Health	PW/ Area Teams  PW/NM  PW/ Area Teams  PW/ Area Teams PW/ Area teams	Ongoing  Ongoing  Ongoing  Ongoing  Ongoing	Reduced no. of landlords operating in a sub-standard manner  Reduction in number of landlords not complying with relevant legislation	High
<p><b>Introduce and operate the Licensing of HMOs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensure licensing system is operational</li> <li>- achieve licensing of xx% of eligible HMOs</li> <li>- Consider the need for additional HMO licensing powers to regulate the management of lower risk HMOs</li> </ul>	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Dept Environmental Health	PW PW AB	April 06 April 07 April 07	HMO Licensing operational Increasing no. of licences issued	High

Action	Agency	Lead	Timescale	Outcome	Risk (if not achieved)
<b>C. EFFECTIVE ADVICE, INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT OF PRIVATE TENANTS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS</b>					
<b>Advice to Tenants</b>					
<b>Provide effective, accurate and timely advice and support to private tenants</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on health and safety matters,</li> <li>- on landlord/tenant issues</li> <li>- on rent payment and housing benefit matters</li> </ul>	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Dept Environmental Health  Housing Advice Centre Leeds Benefits Service Other Advice Agencies	  BE TW JM	  Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	Resolution of problems for tenants Reduction of risk of unplanned loss of accommodation Reduction in rent arrears	High
<b>Tenant Involvement</b>					
<b>Increasing opportunities for participation and involvement of private tenants in Tenants and Residents Associations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote the inclusion of private tenants in community engagement structures</li> <li>- Explore how to include private tenants in tenants and residents groups</li> <li>- Encourage private tenants to join local tenants and residents groups or community associations</li> <li>- Encourage registered tenants groups and community associations to promote membership to private tenants</li> <li>- Production of Involvement and Participation strategy for private tenants</li> </ul>	LCC Regeneration Division LCC Strategic Landlord Leeds Tenants Federation	  MS QB/HJ SP/QB QB/LTF HJ	  Dec 06 Dec 06 Ongoing Ongoing Apr 07	Improved cohesion in neighbourhoods with high private renting Improved community pride and spirit in areas with high private renting	Moderate

## LEAD RESPONSIBILITY HOLDERS

AB	Andy Beattie	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Environmental Health
AC	Andrew Crates	Development Agency
HJ	Huw Jones	re'new
NM	Neil Marsden	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Environmental Health
PW	Peter Warneford	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Environmental Health
MI	Mark Ireland	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Environmental Health
BE	Bridget Emery	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Strategic Housing Services
JM	Jane McManus	Leeds Benefits Service
MB	Martin Blakey	UNIPOL
MS	Martyn Stenton	LCC Neighbourhoods and Housing Regeneration Division
QB	Quintin Bradley	Leeds Tenants Federation
RJ	Richard Jones	Leeds Property Forum, Leeds Property Association, Residential Landlords Association
LPF	Leeds Property Forum	
LTF	Leeds Tenants Federation	
LRS	Leeds Rent Service	
RC	Robin Coghlan	LCC Development Department, Planning



## Appendix A PARTNERSHIP WORKING MODEL

THE COUNCIL'S OBLIGATIONS	LANDLORDS' OBLIGATIONS
<p>Agree partnership working arrangements                      Agree a private rented sector strategy                      Agree reasonable housing standards                      Provide accreditation scheme                      Endorse other bona fide accreditation schemes                      Publicise clear standards                      Provide landlord training                      Hold landlord forums                      Consult landlords on housing strategies                      Operate an Enforcement Concordat                      Provide housing markets advice                      Promote membership of landlord associations                      Work with landlord associations                      Provide quality advice for landlords                      Hold annual landlord event                      Provide bond guarantee schemes</p>	<p>Support the partnership agreement                      Support the Authority's PRS strategy                      Comply with reasonable standards                      Support accreditation schemes                      Promote self regulatory Codes of Practice                      Attend landlord training events                      Support landlord forums                      Sit on the Authority's working committees                      Assist the Authority with area regeneration                      Co-operation so far as is practicable to reduce anti social behaviour                      Assist the Authority to house the homeless                      Invite Authority officers to attend landlord association meetings                      Support tenants welfare rights</p>

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## Report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing

### Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing)

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006

### Subject: Local Lettings Policy

**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

### Executive Summary

Local Lettings Policies (LLPs) were approved in principle in the lettings policy review in January 2005. Responsibility for the approval of specific LLPs was delegated to the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing. This enabled existing lettings practice to be formalised to minimise the risk of a legal challenge to the lettings policy. It was agreed that LLPs would be reviewed. The first review of LLPs was completed in Autumn 2006.

Current LLPs in Leeds operate either on a local street / block level or within a distinct housing management area, which means they can continue to operate within the new ALMO structure.

#### 1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Neighbourhoods and Housing Scrutiny Board on the operation and review of Local Lettings Policies, and to consider the impact on LLPs within the new ALMO structure

#### 2.0 Background information

2.1 Local Lettings Policies are permitted under the Homelessness Act 2002 for specific property types and particular customer groups as long as:

- The Council continues to ensure that customers in housing need (as defined in law) are rehoused and that these customer groups are placed in the priority bands in the Lettings policy.
- There is no direct or indirect discrimination arising from Local Lettings Policies.
- Local Lettings Policies are based upon evidence that has resulted in improved housing management of the area.
- Lettings are made consistently throughout the city.

Local Lettings Policies are not treated as absolute rules.

- 2.2 The Department Of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) produces detailed Guidance to accompany the legislation. This guidance provides examples of local lettings policies. These are for “essential workers such as teachers, nurses, police officers [who] could be allocated accommodation within reasonable traveling distance from their working areas where high housing costs might otherwise price them out of communities they serve.....Similarly the child to adult ratio could be lowered on an estate where there is high child density or, conversely, young people could be integrated into an estate via this route.”<sup>1</sup> These examples are not prescriptive, but illustrative of the DCLGs views on the application of local lettings policies.
- 2.3 It is recognised that due to the diverse range of sub housing markets within the city, that a single city wide lettings policy cannot cover every market. Therefore, there is a need in certain circumstances for Local Lettings Polices to be implemented. Local lettings polices allow allocations within a specified area or to specified groups of people to be made outside of the general lettings policy. This means that customers who comply with the terms of the Local Lettings policy may be given preference for a property based upon their housing need.
- 2.4 In January 2005 Executive Board:
- approved the principals for the creation of Local Lettings Polices where there is evidence:
    - a) that there was a clash of lifestyle as a result of the building type
    - b) in areas where there is high demand for rehousing, low supply, and a lack of affordable housing alternatives.
  - Delegated responsibility for the approval of Local Lettings Policies using the approval criteria, to the Director of Neighborhoods and Housing.
- 3.0 **Main issues**
- 3.1 In January 2005, 5 ALMOs stated that they would prefer to have some Local Lettings polices. Leeds North West Homes and the Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation do not operate any LLPs. The number proposed differs within each ALMO. In total, nearly 16% of all non-sheltered council stock is subject to a LLP  
Table 1 provides the number of properties covered by a LLP by ALMO.
- 3.2 The most prevalent type of LLP is an age preference. Such LLPs recognize that that certain construction types have poor sound insulation. These properties have been unable to accommodate the lifestyle of some young people and this has been illustrated through anti social behavior complaints and subsequent legal action taken by the Department. This type of LLP covers 6805 properties, equating to 12.3% of council stock across the city
- 3.3 The other type of LLP adopted is to ensure that local people can get rehoused in very high demand areas. In high demand and low stock housing estates where there is no affordable housing alternative, local lettings policies have been introduced to enable a customer, with a proven local connection, to be offered the property in preference to a customer with equivalent housing needs. Local connection may include taking into account factors such as current residence, employment in the area, or having family that will provide support in the area. Three housing office areas, Wetherby, Garforth and Kippax, have LLPs with a local connection criteria covering 2042 properties, equating to 3.6% total council stock.

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Deputy Prime Minister, (2002) Allocation of Accommodation Code of guidance for local housing authorities HMSO

Table 1. Proportion of stock included by a Local Lettings Policy

<b>ALMO</b>	<b>LEH</b>	<b>LSEH</b>	<b>LSH</b>	<b>LWH</b>	<b>LNEH</b>	<b>Total LCC<sup>2</sup></b>
Total stock <sup>3</sup>	10732	6214	10949	10535	5460	<b>55457</b>
No. units - local connection preference	0	1294	0	0	748	<b>2042</b>
% stock - local connection preference	0	21	0	0	14	<b>3.6</b>
No. units - age preference	2114	400	300	3303	688	<b>6805</b>
% stock - age preference	19.7	6.4	2.7	31.4	12.6	<b>12.3</b>
<b>% stock subject to LLP</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>15.9</b>

- 3.4 From Spring 2006, Strategic Landlord undertook a review of the LLPs. Strategic Landlord set out detailed guidance for the ALMOs and supported them in the Review with the provision of performance information. The Guidance asked ALMOs to state:
- The objective of the Local Lettings policy, in particular how this linked into the ALMO Business Plan
  - The percentage of the stock types to be let through a Local Lettings Policy.
  - The evidence used to support the Local Lettings Policy, including profiles of the existing tenant base, potential customers, property turnover and whether there is a local tenants compact.
  - A risk analysis of any adverse affects of the Local Lettings Policy. In particular, how the ALMO proposed to provide housing for customer groups that could be displaced as a result of the Local Letting Policy.
  - Evidence of consultation undertaken by the ALMO with other stakeholders, such as Housing Associations or Voluntary Sector groups, or other forms of consultation, such as at now Area Forums etc.
  - How the Local Lettings Policy will be promoted to ensure that all existing, potential and stakeholder groups are aware of the new policy.
  - How the Local Lettings policy will be monitored to measure its success, and the review process.
  - Approval from the ALMO Management Board

3.5 The following ALMOs submitted LLP reviews:

- Leeds East
- Leeds South East
- Leeds South
- Leeds West
- Leeds North East

3.6 LLPs will continue to operate after the ALMO Review. Lettings performance will be used to measure how effective LLPs have been in meeting their stated aims and objectives, and LLPs amended accordingly. For example, if performance information shows demand is too low to sustain a high age preference, the age could be reduced by 5 or 10 years.

3.7 The review of LLPs showed consultation with existing tenants was well evidenced, and in all cases the tenants supported the continuation of the LLP. Evidence of

<sup>2</sup> All non-sheltered stock including Belle Isle TMO and Leeds North West Homes-managed properties

<sup>3</sup> None of the LLPs apply to sheltered housing, which is excluded from the totals.

consultation with customers on the Leeds Homes Register, or other key stakeholders, such as Registered Social Landlords or Supported housing providers either was not undertaken, or was not sufficiently comprehensive to enable definite conclusions to be drawn.

- 3.8 This review has been a useful exercise in providing feedback on how to conduct future reviews. For example ALMOs need to provide more detailed and comprehensive performance data to support their request for a LLP. Furthermore, ALMOs need to consider the long term sustainability of operating LLPs. For example, one LLP property attracted only 8 expressions of interest when it was advertised through the choice based lettings scheme, compared with an average of 47.6 for similar property types (multi-storey flats) in the same ALMO area .

#### **4.0 Implications for Council policy and governance**

- 4.1 LLPs enable ALMOs to make lettings to prescribed groups based upon their housing need. Strategic Landlord recognises the value of ALMOs being able to respond to local circumstances by using LLPs. However, the use of LLPs must be proportional and balanced against the council's legal duty to give preference to customers in housing need. LLPs must not dominate the main lettings policy.
- 4.2 Strategic Landlord must regularly review LLPs. The next review is due in Autumn 2007.
- 4.3 Prior to the next review Strategic Landlord will research other types of LLPs, such as LLPs based upon enabling giving preference for a proportion of lettings to be made to customers in employment, as has been done by North British Housing Association (Places for People) and Camden council.<sup>4</sup> This will be assisted by a forthcoming Good Practice guide from the Department of Communities and Local Government in January 2007.

#### **5.0 Legal and resource implications**

- 5.1 In 2004, before the Council recommended the implementation of LLPs it sought counsel opinion to ensure that the ALMOs meet legislative requirements and reduce the possibility of legal challenge.

#### **6.0 Conclusions**

- 6.1 Strategic Landlord recognises the need for LLPs to used in specific circumstances
- 6.2 Strategic Landlord will commence a further review in autumn 2007. This will allow a bedding in time for the new ALMOs to bring together their LLP polices as well as enable Strategic Landlord to revise its guidance to take into account in the forthcoming DCLG Good Practice,

#### **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 That Neighborhoods and Housing Scrutiny Board note the content of this report.
- 7.21 That Neighborhoods and Housing Scrutiny Board receive a further report in 12 months time to inform them of outcome of the 2007 Review of LLPs

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<sup>4</sup> Jobs and Enterprise in Deprived Areas, Social Exclusion Unit, September 2004  
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**Report of: DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING**

**Report to: SCRUTINY BOARD**

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2006**

**Subject: EASEL REGENERATION AREA - UPDATE**

**Electoral Wards Affected:**

Killingbeck and Seacroft  
Gipton and Harehills  
Temple Newsam  
Burmantofts and Richmond Hill  
City & Hunslet

**Specific Implications For:**

Ethnic minorities	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Women	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Disabled people	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Narrowing the Gap	<input type="checkbox"/> Y

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- In 2004 the Council with its ALMO partners set out to attract a development partner or partners to assist in producing and delivering a strategic vision for East and South East Leeds that would bring about transformational and beneficial change to this part of the city and help address a number of deep –seated social –economic and environmental problems. Housing market renewal is being used as a central platform to help drive this change with a view to creating mixed sustainable communities.
- A competitive procurement process has been undertaken and detailed negotiations are ongoing with Bellway plc who have been appointed as Preferred Bidder. Since the procurement process has not yet ended there are limitations on what information can be released and shared at this point in time.

- If all goes well with the negotiations with Bellway over the next 2 -3 months the expectation is that during 2007 a start will be made on the initial housing sites in Gipton and Seacroft and the joint venture will be set up and become operational.
- As part of the process of setting up the joint venture a Regeneration Investment Plan will need to be prepared. This will set out what the Council and Bellway will be particularly committed to delivering within the EASEL regeneration area over the first 5 years.

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Board members what the EASEL regeneration initiative is trying to achieve, what we should be concentrating on, where we have got to, what next and issues that need to be considered by the Council

## **2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The project has been underway since Executive Board gave approval to procure a partner to regenerate this area of the city in January 2004. Following a competitive process Bellway plc were granted Preferred Bidder status by the Council in December 2005. Since January of this year a period of detailed clarifications and negotiations with Bellway have taken place. The procurement process has not yet finished.
- 2.2 The project has been designed in two interconnected phases and the procurement process has been designed and executed in evaluating proposals for the project as a whole. Phase 1 of the project consists of 8 sites (Gipton and Seacroft) that would be contracted through a Strategic Development Agreement with the private sector partner with subsequent phases (85% of the project) subject to a commercial agreement as part of setting up a joint venture between the Council and the private sector partner. The outcome of the Phase 1 Strategic Development Agreement negotiations with Bellway plc were reported to Executive Board in July 2006.



## What are we trying to achieve?

2.3 The key objectives of the EASEL regeneration project is to create sustainable mixed communities with all that this entails including mixed tenure and people with mixed incomes. It is also about increasing aspirations and choice for people who already live in the area as well as attracting new people to live, work and invest in the area. A central theme of what the project is seeking to achieve is uplifting quality for example in housing and the public realm as well as the design of buildings and spaces. A fundamental aim is to create identity and distinctiveness – place making which helps to build a strong and positive image of the area.

## What should we be concentrating on?

2.4 It is essential that we concentrate on just a few but absolutely critical elements that will not only produce tangible and lasting benefits but also help underpin and contribute to achieving the key regeneration objectives for the area such as creating a new and sustainable housing market

2.5 The aspects in particular to focus upon are – **Education** - attainment and provision of new schools; **Employment** - training and skills – construction jobs and other job opportunities – supporting (social) enterprises and entrepreneurs – providing access and links to jobs being created as part of the regeneration of Aire Valley Leeds; **Environment** – improving the quality of the public realm including Greenspace – enhancing the Wykebeck Valley.

## Where have we got to in finding a suitable private sector partner?

2.6 In September 2006 Executive Board granted an Additional Negotiation Period of 16 weeks (end of February 2007) to deal with matters that remain outstanding from the Preferred Bidder letter – conclude negotiations on the Strategic Development Agreement regarding the 8no. Phase 1 sites and conclude negotiations on the Joint Venture in terms of financial and legal matters.

## What next?

2.6 Work now needs to progress on producing a Regeneration Investment Plan. This will set out in broad terms what commitments the Council intends to make (which will include financial implications) in terms of supporting and helping to achieve its

regeneration programme aims and objectives for the EASEL area initially for the first 5 years and more generally in the longer term.

This will be subject to a report to Executive Board in January 2007 which will seek approval to the Plan.

### **3.0 ISSUES FOR THE COUNCIL**

3.1 There are some immediate issues that the Council faces. These are:

- Finalising the negotiations which is an intense and extremely demanding phase of the procurement process;
- The preparation of the Regeneration Investment Plan from across the Council;
- Ensuring that local communities are given an adequate opportunity to influence and shape the regeneration initiative
- Raising awareness of the project and actively promoting it at a local, regional and national level and also developing good communication throughout the authority regarding the challenges and unique opportunities presented by this innovative initiative.

### **4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 Members of the Board are asked to note the contents of the report.



**Originator:** Debra Scott /  
David Reid

Tel:24-75951/24-76255

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## Report of the Director of Neighborhoods and Housing

### Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing)

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006

**Subject:** Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter

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**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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## Executive Summary

1. Following the receipt of the Local Government Ombudsman's annual letter for 2006, the Board noted the significant increase in the last three years in Ombudsman complaints relating to housing particularly, repairs and lettings. The Board therefore, requested a further report from the Department exploring the reasons behind the increase in reported cases, and also to consider any future learning.
2. This report provides an analysis of 38 Ombudsman complaints relating to repairs and lettings between April 2005 and September 2006, and proposals for future action to address any emerging issues.

## **1.0 Purpose Of This Report**

- 1.1 To provide Members with analysis of 38 Ombudsman complaints relating to repairs and lettings between April 2005 and September 2006, and proposals for future action to address any emerging issues.

## **2.0 Background Information**

### Ombudsman Cases – April 2005 – September 2006

- 2.1 Between April 2005 to September 2006 there were a total 119 Ombudsman cases received by the Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). Appendix A provides a breakdown by ALMO and service area. Just over 50% (63) of the complaints received for this period were either about repairs or lettings. The remainder of cases were spread over several other categories, namely adaptations, modernisation, estate management, ASB and other. This report concentrates on figures for lettings and repairs as this was highlighted by Ombudsman and is of concern to the Board. In order to get behind the numbers, the Department reviewed the correspondence of a sample of reported cases; as a result, 27 (49%) repairs cases and 11 (38%) lettings of the total number of cases were reviewed.
- 2.2 The Ombudsman when investigating cases has a number of outcomes which they can determine, they are:
- Maladministration (causing injustice)
  - Maladministration (no injustice)
  - Local settlement
  - Ombudsman discretion
  - Outside jurisdiction
- 2.3 It is worth noting that no cases covered in this reporting period did not resulted in the Ombudsman finding 'maladministration', however, there will still be points of learning that the Department and ALMOs may need to address.

### Results of Repairs Cases Reviewed

- 2.4 The range and nature of the repairs cases included complaints about the failure and delay to provide a service or adequately put a problem right for example, heating appliances or leaks in kitchens and bathrooms. There were very few cases which involved complaints about the attitude of staff. Each case reviewed had its own set of unique circumstances; therefore, in those ALMO areas which had a high proportion of repairs cases there were no discernable common themes. Over 40% of repairs cases were settled locally, a number of which were settled before the Ombudsman was able to begin an investigation. There were however a small number of cases where the Ombudsman's involvement helped to 'mediate' an acceptable outcome for all parties. Often where the complainant has either access to the courts or has begun legal action the Ombudsman will normally deem the case to be out of their jurisdiction, there were 14% of cases that fell in to this category.

### Results of Lettings Cases Reviewed

- 2.5 In this service area, the complaints received from individuals and families were mainly about the time it was taking to be re-housed, the appropriateness of their priority rating, the lack of choice of properties in their preferred location, and the

quality of advice given to them. Whilst each case has its own story to tell, a key theme is the time it takes to be rehoused. Members will no doubt be aware of the enormous pressures providers of social housing face in a society wishing to have their own personal accommodation, coupled with a lack of affordable housing whether for rent or to buy in the city and throughout the country. As for the outcomes of cases there was a more of a split between local settlement, no maladministration and out of jurisdiction. One statistic which stands out is the number of complaints 9 (82%) which questioned the quality or existence of advice provided to them.

### **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 It would appear that many of the complainants approached the Ombudsman because they lacked confidence in the ALMO or Council giving them a fair hearing or they felt frustrated with how long it was taking to resolve their issue/complaint. Consequently, the Ombudsman is sometimes seen as someone who can get things done when there seems to be little progress. It should also be recognised that people will go to the Ombudsman, in the hope that this in itself will help hasten a more favorable response in cases where the ALMOs or Council is unable to meet the customers expectations.
- 3.2 Several of the cases reviewed pointed to a need for better case management which could have avoided some of the problems encountered. There were occasions when notes of meetings, visits or telephone calls were not made or recorded. There were delays in responding to letters, undue delays in carrying out repairs and undertakings to carry out work that were not met. These were some of the general issues and were also observations of the Ombudsman. The wider use of customer relations management systems such as Siebel (Contact Leeds) can play a part in addressing these concerns.
- 3.3 Services managers need to ensure that due attention is paid to who responds to complaints and the level of authority they have to 'get things done', as this can sometimes be the stumbling block to achieving a successful outcome.

### **4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

- 4.1 Strategic Landlord is responsible for the monitoring and governance of the ALMOs. As part of that role it monitors the number of complaints, in particular Ombudsman complaints that ALMOs receive. Recently a more robust monitoring system has been put in place involving detailed statistical monitoring of the number and type of Ombudsman enquiries. From this data, it then analyses trends and will challenge ALMOs through quarterly performance meetings on why certain services are receiving a lot of Ombudsman investigations, and the actions necessary to address the causes of the complaints. Furthermore, Strategic Landlord Group require ALMOs to inform them, when it appears that there may be a judgement of maladministration found, so that the Council can assist the ALMO in resolving the case.
- 4.2 For services that Strategic Landlord is responsible for, such as the Lettings policy, it has taken appropriate action such as amending the policy and undertaking training to address the causes of the complaint. Following this review it is taking a more proactive role in governing Ombudsman cases.

### **5.0 Legal And Resource Implications**

5.1 This report is not considered to have any specific legal implications. Whilst none of the cases in this review period resulted in maladministration, addressing a number of the issues contain in 3.0 and 4.0 may have some resource implications, for example staff training and increasing staff time to handle complaints. The consequences of not addressing issues that are subsequently brought to the Ombudsman's attention may also result in financial penalties and the need to provide compensation.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

6.1 On reflection many of the Ombudsman complaints were about managing customers expectations regarding what was or was not possible from the Department or ALMOs. This could be addressed by providing better and timely communication to the customer enabling them to make a more informed decision. This report has also highlights the need to ensure that officers dealing with complaints have the 'authority' or the quick access to others to make things happen. Members are asked to note the intention of the Department to strengthen current governance arrangements with the ALMOs.

6.2 The review of the 38 cases revealed some basic and avoidable failings such as, the lack of record keeping and general good case management, however, this should be balanced against the thousands of transactions and interactions the Department and ALMOs have with customers which attract no complaints.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

7.1 Members are asked to consider the information contained in this report.

## APPENDIX A

Ombudsman cases received between April 05 - March 06

ALMO	Service Area							TOTALS
	Repairs	Lettings	Adaptations	Modernisation	Estate Management	ASB	Other	
LEH (10946)	4	4	1	2	1	0	0	12
LNEH (5938)	3	2	0	1	1	0	1	8
LNWH (10748)	2	3	0	3	6	0	3	17
LSEH (7280)	2	1	0	0	2	0	1	6
LSH (11873)	2	6	1	3	1	1	2	16
LWH (11217)	8	1	0	1	1	0	4	15
Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>75</b>

( ) = Numbers of Council housing in ALMO areas as 02 Oct. 2006

Of closed cases:

Local Settlement	33
No maladministration	21
Ombudsman Discretion	3
Outside Jurisdiction	4
Not known	4

Others:

Right to Buy	3
Property Mgmt	4
Planning	1
Access Channel	1
Cust Relations	1
Bins	1

Ombudsman cases received between April 06 - Sept 06

ALMO	Service Area							TOTALS
	Repairs	Lettings	Adaptations	Modernisation	Estate Management	ASB	Other	
LEH (10946)	0	0	0		2	0	0	2
LNEH (5938)	1	1	1	2	0	2	2	9
LNWH (10748)	2	6	0	0	1	0	2	11
LSEH (7280)	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
LSH (11873)	3	2	0	1	2	1	2	11
LWH (11217)	5	1	1	0	1	0	0	8
Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>44</b>

( ) = Numbers of Council housing in ALMO areas as at 02 Oct. 2006

Of closed cases:

Local Settlement	17
No maladministration	8
Ombudsman Discretion	4
Outside Jurisdiction	2
Not known	

Others:

Property Mgmt	1
Cust Relations	1
Disposal of goods	1
Access Channel	1
Council Tax	1
Bins	1

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Originator: S Winfield

Tel: 24 74707

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**Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development**

**Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods and Housing)**

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

**Subject: Work Programme**

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**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Specific Implications For:**

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the Gap

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Attached at appendix 1 is the current work programme of the Board which includes scheduled and unscheduled items.

1.2 The Forward Plan for December to March 2007 is at appendix 2.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 The Board is requested to receive and make any changes to the attached work programme following discussions at today's meeting.

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**LEEDS CITY COUNCIL**

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

For the period 1 December 2006 to 31 March 2007

<b>Key Decisions</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Expected Date of Decision</b>	<b>Proposed Consultation</b>	<b>Documents to be Considered by Decision Maker</b>	<b>Lead Officer (To whom representations should be made)</b>
Homebuy Plus Scheme To accept the contract for the Homebuy Plus Scheme and approve the expenditure	Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing	1/12/06	City of York Council and Harrogate Borough Council	A report explaining the scheme was approved by Exedcutive Board on the 16th August 2006	Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing
10th Home Energy Conservation Act Report For information only. Report identifies the improvements in energy, heating and insulation to all areas of the City in the 2005/06 period.	Executive Board (Portfolio:Neighbourhoods and Housing)	13/12/06	None.	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing
Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy To approve the plan to deliver services to assist low income households to keep warm affordably.	Executive Board (Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Housing)	9/2/07	Two workshops in September and October. Draft plan to public comment in late October.	The report to be issued to the decision maker with the agenda for the meeting	Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing

## **NOTES**

Key decisions are those executive decisions:

- which result in the authority incurring expenditure or making savings over £500,000 per annum, or
- are likely to have a significant effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards

### **Executive Board Portfolios**

### **Executive Member**

Central and Corporate

Councillor Mark Harris

Development

Councillor Andrew Carter

City Services

Councillor Steve Smith

Neighbourhoods and Housing

Councillor John Leslie Carter

Leisure

Councillor John Procter

Children's Services (Lead)

Councillor Richard Brett

Children's Services (Support)

Councillor Richard Harker

Adult Health and Social Care

Councillor Peter Harrand

Customer Services

Councillor David Blackburn

Leader of the Labour Group

Councillor Keith Wakefield

Advisory Member

Councillor Judith Blake

In cases where Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive Board are not included in the Plan, 5 days notice of the intention to take such decisions will be given by way of the agenda for the Executive Board meeting.

**SCRUTINY BOARD (NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING) - WORK PROGRAMME - LAST REVISED NOVEMBER 2006**

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	DATE ENTERED INTO WORK PROGRAMME
<b>Suggested Areas for Scrutiny Currently Unscheduled</b>			
<b>Partnership working – District Partnerships and Area Delivery Plans</b>			
<b>Meeting date: 10<sup>th</sup> January 2007</b>			
<b>Inquiry into Regeneration in Beeston Hill and Holbeck</b>	To receive information on the final session of the inquiry and to discuss the Board's recommendations .		
<b>Asylum Seekers update</b>	To receive an update on Asylum Seeker provision in Leeds		
<b>Area Management Review</b>	To receive an update on the Area Management Review		
<b>Social Enterprise Framework</b>	To receive information on the Social Enterprise Framework		
<b>Meeting date: 7<sup>th</sup> February 2007</b>			
<b>Monitoring report</b>			
<b>Supporting People</b>			
<b>Wardens briefing</b>			
<b>Meeting date: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2007</b>			
<b>Inquiry into Regeneration in Beeston Hill and</b>	To agree the Board's final report		

**SCRUTINY BOARD (NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING) - WORK PROGRAMME - LAST REVISED NOVEMBER 2006**

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	DATE ENTERED INTO WORK PROGRAMME
Holbeck			
<b>Meeting date: 11<sup>th</sup> April 2007</b>			
<b>Annual Report</b>	To agree the Board's contribution to the Scrutiny Annual report		June 2006