



HILLINGDON  
LONDON



# Cabinet

**Date:** THURSDAY, 24 JANUARY  
2013

**Time:** 7.00 PM

**Venue:** COMMITTEE ROOM 6 -  
CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH  
STREET, UXBRIDGE, UB8  
1UW

**Meeting  
Details:** Members of the Public and  
Press are welcome to attend  
this meeting

## Councillors in the Cabinet

Ray Puddifoot (Chairman)  
*Leader of the Council*

David Simmonds (Vice-Chairman)  
*Deputy Leader / Education & Children's Services*

Jonathan Bianco  
*Finance, Property & Business Services*

Keith Burrows  
*Planning, Transportation & Recycling*

Philip Corthorne  
*Social Services, Health & Housing*

Douglas Mills  
*Community, Commerce & Regeneration*

Scott Seaman-Digby  
*Central Services*

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**Published:** Friday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013

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# Notice

## **Notice of key decision**

This is formal notice under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 to confirm that 28 clear days notice of the key decision in this supplementary agenda has been given.

However, the item has been circulated less than 5 clear working days before the Cabinet meeting and it will only be considered if the Chairman agrees it to be urgent. The reason for urgency is to ensure the Council can progress its housing priorities, seek residents' and tenants' views on them and also approve the Housing Strategy (part of the policy framework) within an acceptable time scale.

# Agenda

## **Cabinet Reports - Part 1 (Public)**

- 20** Hillingdon Housing Strategy, Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy and Allocations Policy (Cllr Corthorne) 1 - 144

## HILLINGDON'S HOUSING STRATEGY 2012-15, TENANCY STRATEGY, TENANCY POLICY AND REVIEW OF THE HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

<b>Cabinet Member(s)</b>	Councillor Philip Corthorne
<b>Cabinet Portfolio(s)</b>	Social Services, Health and Housing
<b>Officer Contact(s)</b>	Neil Stubbings, Residents Services Paul Feven, Finance
<b>Papers with report</b>	Draft Housing Strategy 2012-15 (Appendix 1) Draft Tenancy Strategy (Appendix 2) Draft Tenancy Policy (Appendix 3) Draft Review of the Housing Allocation Policy (Appendix 4)

### 1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

<b>Summary</b>	<p>The <b>Housing Strategy</b> (Appendix 1) illustrates how the Council will enable residents to live in homes of all tenures which are in good condition, energy efficient and well managed. It also describes services and specialist housing for vulnerable people who require assistance to live independently in the community. The strategy takes account of the flexibilities offered by the Government's localism agenda and implications of welfare reform. These flexibilities include the opportunity to offer fixed term tenancies for new social housing tenants rather than the long term secure and assured tenancies that are currently offered.</p> <p>The <b>Tenancy Strategy</b> (Appendix 2) is the Council's guide for all registered social housing providers regarding how they should implement fixed term tenancies in Hillingdon.</p> <p>The <b>Tenancy Policy</b> (Appendix 3) explains how the Council will implement fixed term tenancies in its own stock.</p> <p>The Localism Act also gives the Council new freedoms to revise the way in which social housing is allocated to reflect local priorities. The <b>Review of the Housing Allocation Policy</b> (Appendix 4) is also considered by this report.</p> <p>Cabinet is asked to approve the draft documents subject to a further report to Cabinet detailing the outcome of consultation with stakeholders.</p>
<b>Contribution to our plans and strategies</b>	The Housing Strategy, Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy and review of the Housing Allocation Policy support the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

<b>Financial Cost</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation of this report. All associated costs will be contained within future budgets prepared within the MTFF framework.
<b>Relevant Policy Overview Committee</b>	Social Services, Health and Housing Policy Overview Committee
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	All.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

**That Cabinet:**

- a) Approves the Housing Strategy 2012-15, the Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy and the review of the Housing Allocation Policy for consultation and;**
- b) Notes that a further report to Cabinet in April 2013 will present the outcome of consultation with stakeholders and the four documents for formal approval.**

### **Reasons for recommendation**

The delivery of the Housing Strategy, Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy and Allocations Policy review is intended to result in the following benefits for Hillingdon residents:

- Timely and effective help and advice for households who approach the Council with a housing need;
- Allocation of social housing in a clear and transparent way, taking account of criteria decided locally;
- Better use made of Council housing for those who need it;
- The development of affordable homes to meet the needs of families who cannot afford market housing;
- Empty homes are brought back into use;
- Homes in the Borough have improved energy efficiency and fewer households live in fuel poverty;
- Older people and other people in vulnerable groups have the choice of living in housing especially designed for them, where care and support are provided.

### **Alternative options considered / risk management**

The alternative options available to Cabinet are not to approve the draft documents for consultation or to require amendments to the documents prior to approval.

### **Policy Overview Committee comments**

None at this time but the Committee's input will be requested as part of the consultation process should Cabinet agree the recommendations in this report.

### **3. INFORMATION**

#### **Supporting Information**

This report provides an overview of the four key housing documents which are appended. Once the drafts are agreed by Cabinet, a full consultation exercise will be undertaken, including online questionnaires and consultation meetings over a period of eight weeks. The outcome of the consultation will be reported back to Cabinet at its April meeting, along with the four documents for formal approval.

#### **Housing Strategy 2012-15 (Appendix 1)**

1 The strategy sets out the overall direction for housing services. The Council's housing mission is to enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives. Services will be developed according to three strategic priorities:

- **Managing demand** - keeping residents independent, investing in preventative services to stop or significantly delay residents becoming homeless, in housing need or requiring ongoing social care.
- **Managing supply** - commissioning private and voluntary housing services and social care, delivering support, choice and independence to vulnerable, complex and high dependency residents.
- **Managing the support** - efficient and effective in-house service provision that is focussed on reablement, delivering time-limited interventions to effect change so residents can learn or re-learn crucial skills to live independently.

2 The strategy will also need to take into account the Government's housing agenda. Meeting people's housing aspirations is one of the priorities of the Government's decentralisation and localism agenda. In particular, the Government's plans for the reform of social housing and for welfare reform will have an impact on housing in the Borough. In addition, the proposed Care and Support Bill is likely to include a new duty to ensure that adult social care and housing services work together.

#### **Evidence of need**

3 Key points from the evidence of housing need contained within the Housing Strategy are:

**Household growth** - According to Government projections (DCLG, November 2010) household numbers in Hillingdon were expected to grow from an estimated 107,000 in 2013 to 131,000 in 2033, an increase of 22%. Household numbers in Outer London overall were also expected to grow by 22%, and in London overall by 21% over the same period.

The first results of the Census 2011, published in 2012, showed that 273,936 people were normally resident in 100,214 households, indicating that the previously published projections for Hillingdon are higher than is in fact likely to be the case.

**Housing requirement** - The number of households on the Council's housing register has increased during 2011/12 by 31% to 9,800. While this is not a reliable indicator of need for social housing, as the majority of applicants will not

have a priority need within the Council's policy for allocating social housing, it is however an indication that there is an increasing number of households who cannot easily afford to buy or rent on the open market. Hillingdon's most recent Housing Market Assessment found that a net additional 2,624 homes a year over five years would be required to meet the current and newly arising need for affordable homes.

**Affordability** – Hillingdon's average house prices are seven times the average household income. The continuing squeeze on mortgage finance makes home ownership less accessible to residents of the Borough. Mortgages for buy to let property and shared ownership schemes have also been severely affected.

### **Affordable Housing – Supply and Demand in Hillingdon**

4 The supply of affordable housing available to Hillingdon's residents is a challenge. Despite the successes that Hillingdon has achieved – regularly over-delivering on affordable housing targets – many Hillingdon residents are concerned about the affordability of their own housing and the availability of good quality, affordable housing for their children when they need it.

5 In terms of people who rent accommodation in the Borough, the majority live in the social rented sector. The total number of social rented homes let during 2011/12 was 765. The demand for social housing far outweighs the supply of this scarce resource. The majority of social housing in the Borough has 2 bedrooms or fewer.

6. The greatest concentration of private sector rental property is in the south of the Borough where rent levels are generally lower. However, private rents in Hillingdon are increasing caused by a combination of the greater demand for rental property and the fact that more renters are moving to outer London as central London becomes unaffordable. Over a quarter of those households living in the private rented sector rely upon Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

7 Between 2008/9 and 2011/12 1,699 affordable homes were completed in the Borough (social rented or intermediate). These were developed by housing associations, by the Council or by private housing developers as a condition of planning permission on larger housing sites. While Hillingdon has been very successful in developing affordable housing above and beyond the targets that have been set by the Greater London Authority, supply remains a constant challenge.

### **Outline of key proposals**

8 The strategy contains a number of proposals to deliver future housing services which are aligned with the Council's strategic priorities and the national housing agenda.

#### **Homelessness prevention**

- There will be more advice and support for people needing help with their housing problems. Proactive work to prevent households becoming homeless has already commenced with a focus on Hillingdon residents whose housing benefit payments will fall as a result of planned Government changes.

#### **Homelessness duty**

- The Council is investigating how good quality private rented housing can be secured for households to whom we have accepted a housing duty. Currently, such households are

able to refuse suitable accommodation in the private rented sector that is offered as a settled home. New legislation means that the Council is able to discharge the duty with offers of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector, without requiring the applicant's agreement. The Council will retain the need to assess whether a homelessness duty is required for a two year period in the event that the private sector tenancy is ended (unless the reason is intentional homelessness). Local authority housing duties to children (as enshrined in Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989) are met by strong corporate working across Council services delivering housing and children's social care.

### **Allocation of social housing**

- The Council's allocations policy is under review in 2012/13. The review explores whether some non-priority households should be able to apply for housing. Access may be increased for some local preference groups. The aim will be to focus future effort on those in greatest housing need and ensure that residents are fully aware of the likelihood of being rehoused. The section on the review of the Allocations Policy in this report provides further details.

### **New housing provision**

- A minimum provision of 5,475 additional homes is planned until 2026, based on known sites coming forward to be developed. On sites with a capacity of ten or more homes, the Council will aim for 35% affordable homes, with a tenure mix of 70% for social rent and 30% for intermediate housing. Affordable housing should reflect the need for family sized homes. High quality design is a priority for housing in all tenures.

### **Flexible social housing tenancies**

- The Council's Tenancy Strategy sets out how the flexibilities in the Localism Act 2011 will be used in Hillingdon. It will be possible to move away from long term secure and assured tenancies and ensure that social housing is available to people for as long as this is required which may be for shorter periods. The sections of this report on the Tenancy Strategy and Hillingdon's Tenancy Policy provide further details.

### **Energy efficiency**

- The Council will continue the very successful strategy to access resources for energy efficiency work. This includes assessing how local residents and landlords can best be supported to benefit from the Green Deal when it is introduced. The Council will work with the Mayor of London to ensure the scheme's introduction is as effective as possible.

### **Council housing stock condition**

- The Council's Asset Management Strategy, determining how future investment in Council housing is made, will focus on essential work, on electrical and fire safety, maintaining the Decent Homes standard, supporting independence at home for older and vulnerable residents, energy efficiency measures and improving estates and shared spaces.

### **Mobility and choice**

- The Council will continue the successful mobility schemes enabling existing Council tenants to move to more appropriate accommodation within Council owned stock or the social rented sector. The Council will take part in the Mayor's pan London mobility scheme which prioritises under occupiers and helps social tenants to move in order to find employment.

## **Supported housing**

- The Council is currently considering plans to deliver (in partnership with registered providers) a programme of supported accommodation over the next three years to meet identified need. The Council's first two social rented extra care schemes together provide 95 extra care places for older people, including people with learning or physical disabilities.

## **Tenancy Strategy (Appendix 2)**

The Tenancy Strategy is a document that all registered providers should have regard to in setting their tenancy policy for Hillingdon. Discussions held with providers show that they will generally be following Hillingdon's expectations.

9 Before the Localism Act, social landlords were normally only able to grant long term secure and assured tenancies. Sometimes this meant that people acquired a social home at a moment of crisis in their life and continued to live there long after their need for it has passed. Meanwhile, social rented housing remains much sought after with demand far outstripping supply. The Government has introduced the freedom to grant flexible fixed term tenancies as a way of enabling local authorities to make use of this scarce and valuable public resource.

10 The security and rights of existing social housing tenants are protected, including when they move to another social rented home. However, provisions in the Localism Act allow for more flexible arrangements for people entering social housing in the future. Social landlords can grant tenancies for a fixed length of time with the expectation that five years in Hillingdon will be the norm but with a minimum period of two years in exceptional circumstances. At the end of the fixed term, the household's circumstances will be reviewed by the social landlord and if the household still needs the accommodation, the tenancy can be renewed.

11 There is no upper limit on the length of tenancy and social landlords can still offer long term secure and assured tenancies if they wish. Fixed term tenancies can however enable social landlords to manage their social homes more effectively and deliver better results for local communities. The intention within Hillingdon is for a five year period to be the norm.

12 The Localism Act requires local authorities to publish a tenancy strategy to guide registered social housing providers in developing tenancy policies for their own stock.

13 Registered social housing providers (including the Council in its landlord role) must publish a tenancy *policy* before they can use flexible tenancies and in doing so should have regard to the Council's tenancy *strategy* for the Borough covering the following points:

- the kinds of tenancies that are granted;
- the circumstances in which a tenancy of a particular kind will be granted;
- the lengths of the tenancies where fixed term tenancies have been introduced;
- the circumstances in which a further tenancy will be granted once a fixed term tenancy has come to an end.

## **Outline of key proposals for Hillingdon**

### **Fixed term tenancies**

14 The use of fixed term tenancies is recommended (following on from introductory or probationary tenancies) as they provide a clear way of making the best use of the limited

resource of social housing. Adoption of the Tenancy Strategy by all registered providers working in the Borough would ensure that new tenancies were on similar fixed terms, providing a clear and straight-forward offer to those seeking to access social housing. Existing social tenancies would be protected and remain unchanged from their current status.

### **Tenancy length**

15 A minimum of a five year fixed term tenancy is proposed for most households. It is also recommended that all fixed term tenancies should be preceded by a one year introductory tenancy. For households in specific circumstances the Council may want to express the following preferences for tenancy lengths, including those longer or shorter than five years:

#### ***Households with a disabled household member (adult or child)***

- Five year fixed term tenancies are recommended for disabled adults with health and/or care needs e.g. mental ill health or a physical or learning disability;
- For people with serious and enduring long term conditions i.e. where there is no likelihood that housing circumstances or other needs will change, living in appropriately adapted or supported accommodation, the expectation is that the fixed term tenancy would be renewed, provided the property still meets the needs of that person .

#### ***Families with children***

- Five year fixed term tenancies are recommended for all families, including those where children are of school age or younger;
- Shorter fixed term tenancies (e.g. two years) would be acceptable in circumstances where fostering or adoption is the main reason for a social tenancy being allocated.

#### ***Single person households and childless couples of working age***

- Five year fixed term tenancies are recommended for most single people or couple households;
- Five years fixed term tenancy are recommended for young people leaving care
- Shorter fixed term tenancies e.g. two years, are recommended where it is felt that this; will contribute towards enabling the individual to work towards greater independence and other positive outcomes, for example specialist housing schemes for care leavers.

#### ***Older people (over 60)***

- Five year fixed term tenancies for general needs accommodation;
- “Life-time” tenancies for extra care and sheltered accommodation.

#### ***Other circumstances***

- Secure tenants moving to an Affordable Rent property could be offered an appropriate incentive to move. This could be in the form of a “life-time” tenancy. This could be advertised through the Locata process;
- Secure tenants under-occupying their current property and who are willing to move to a smaller home could be offered an appropriate incentive to move such as a long term “life-time” tenancy;
- Supported housing tenancies require a more tailored approach, depending upon the nature of the scheme. The proposal acknowledges that it will be important to ensure that throughput is maintained in supported housing schemes by enabling tenants to move on at the appropriate time. This may be after a very short period (e.g. for a refuge), after 6 months, two years or longer.

## **Tenancy renewal**

16 The Council would expect a clear and transparent review process to be in place which would be understood by the tenant at the time of tenancy sign up. This would be to ensure that, during the 6-9 months before the tenancy is due to expire, the landlord reviews the tenant's housing needs and states before the six month date of expiry whether it intends to renew the tenancy or not, giving appropriate reasons where the latter applies.

17 The proposal is that while there should be no presumption that a tenancy would be renewed, the Council would expect a large proportion of tenancies to be renewed where tenancy conditions have been met and the tenant's (or tenants') circumstances have not substantially changed.

## **Tenancy policy (Appendix 3)**

18 The Tenancy Policy shows how Hillingdon Council, as a registered provider of social housing, will allocate and manage social housing tenancies. The Council's Tenancy Policy reflects the flexibilities included within the draft Tenancy Strategy.

## **Outline of key proposals**

### **New tenancies (after the date of publication of the Tenancy Policy)**

19 Flexible, fixed term tenancies are recommended after one year probationary tenancies. Five year tenancies are proposed as the norm, with two year and secure and assured tenancies offered for individual household and property types will in accordance with the draft Tenancy Strategy for the Borough. If the household still needs the accommodation the presumption will be that their tenancy will be renewed.

### **Tenancy reviews**

20 Formal tenancy reviews are proposed no later than seven months before the end of the tenancy. The tenant would receive six months written notice of intention to reissue a tenancy for the household's current home or not to reissue a tenancy but to assist in finding another home before the current tenancy ends.

### **Tenancy succession**

21 The Localism Act makes changes to the statutory right of succession for all secure and assured and fixed term tenancies starting after 1 April 2012. (The succession rights of existing secure and assured tenants and those living with them are unaffected.) From the date of the Tenancy Policy's introduction, in accordance with the Act it is proposed to limit succession to one succession which can only be taken up by the deceased tenant's spouse (husband, wife, common law partner or partner from a civil partnership), rather than by the broader list of family members which has been in use in Hillingdon.

### **Council tenants on higher incomes**

22 The Council could decide to increase the rent for a Council property to at least 80% of market rent in cases where the tenant's income is higher than a threshold set by Government. The reasoning behind this is that the household could afford either to rent privately or purchase on the open market. Guidance has not yet been published but Government consultation has set the possible figure at £60,000 or above. This income threshold is included in the review of the Allocations Policy. The additional rent would be used as a contribution to the cost of new affordable homes.

## **Review of the Housing Allocation Policy (Appendix 4)**

23 The Localism Act introduces new freedoms for local authorities to determine how they allocate social and affordable housing. There is opportunity to revise the Housing Allocation policy to give priority to certain groups, reflecting local need and to build more sustainable communities. The options presented for approval by Cabinet are made in light of the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, Welfare Reform Act 2012 and GLA Housing Strategy. The review takes account of new regulation, changes in housing market conditions and local priorities.

24 The review of the allocations policy supports the objectives of the Housing Strategy, Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy policy and ensures that:

- The scarce resources of social housing is used flexibly and not provided to those households who do not require it;
- Social housing is used as effectively as possible to meet housing need in the Borough
- The use of social housing reduces reliance on inappropriate and costly forms of temporary accommodation;
- Vulnerable people within social housing are provided with stability and support
- Allocation of housing tackles health inequalities.

### **Outline of key proposals**

#### **Reasonable preference**

25 In order to maintain the protection provided by the existing statutory 'reasonable preference' criteria, Councils must continue to give priority to those most in need. They are:

- Homeless households;
- Overcrowded households;
- Households living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- Households with medical and welfare need.

#### **Local flexibilities**

26 Councils are encouraged to set their own criteria and decide who is eligible to join the housing register. In addition, Councils are entitled to give priority to other categories of applicants in order to meet local needs, provided they do not dominate the scheme. The following options are recommended for Hillingdon:

- **Excluding households with no housing need (Band Ds)** - this will enable the Council to operate a more focused waiting list which better reflects local circumstances and can be understood more readily by local people. It will also help in managing unrealistic expectations by excluding people with little or no prospect of being allocated accommodation. They will be signposted and given relevant information and advice through the use of mechanisms such as 'Targeted housing option' website.
- **Ex-service personnel** – recent government guidance recommends that members of the armed forces should not be disqualified on residency grounds. In addition to this, it is recommended that further priority is given to members of the forces who have continuously resided in the Borough for 10 years before signing up for the service and have not been dishonourably discharged. In addition, the provision will be extended to family members.

- **Rewarding those who work** – Additional priority will be awarded to those in housing need and working.
- **Introducing a residency criterion** - applicants would be required to demonstrate that they have been residing in the Borough for a minimum of 10 years in order to join the housing register, regardless of their other needs. Exceptions are set out in the Allocation Policy in Appendix 4.
- **10 year continuous local residency** – Households in housing need who have lived in the Borough continuously for a minimum of ten years at the time of applying for re-housing will be awarded additional priority. This will support stable communities and reward households who have had a long term attachment to the Borough.
- **Financial circumstances** – households with sufficient income or assets would be excluded from the Housing Register. This will apply to any household which owns or has an interest in a property, has a gross income above the level required for local cost home ownership and/or has savings or assets of or above £30k. For homeless households, an affordability test will continue to be applied to ensure there is consistency of outcome.
- **Other specific local priorities** – couples over 21 years without children who are working will be awarded additional priority.
- **Encouraging personal responsibility** - it is proposed to introduce a more effective system where applicants who bid for and refuse more than 3 reasonable offers within a 6 month period are suspended from bidding for a period of 6 months. It is also proposed that where homeless households in temporary accommodation do not bid over a period of time, a direct allocation can be made by the Council.

## **Financial Implications**

27 The Housing Strategy set out in this report will be contained within resources approved by Council over the life of the strategy. The Resources Section within the Housing Strategy document provides further information. The resources outlined could be increase by further funding from additional grants which could be made available to the Council in the future. These will be submitted to Cabinet as they become available.

28 In general the Strategy, by setting out priorities, can also ensure that the approved resources are used in the most effective and efficient manner.

## **4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES**

### **What will be the effect of the recommendation?**

29 A revised housing offer will be developed for Hillingdon residents. As a result residents will find that:

- Allocation of social rented housing is conducted in a more transparent way;
- Local factors are taken into consideration when social rented housing is allocated;
- Households will receive proactive advice and support if threatened with loss of housing benefit;

- Their homes are more energy efficient as a result of funding for planned improvements;
- Well designed new homes including new affordable homes are provided to meet local housing need;
- Flexible length tenancies will help the social housing stock be better used to meet need;
- Council homes are kept safe, in good repair and up to date;
- Vulnerable residents are able to live independently at home with the care and support they need.

### **Consultation Carried Out or Required**

30 In the initial stages of the development of the Housing Strategy, Cabinet gave its approval for consultation with a range of stakeholders. The stakeholders included partner registered social landlords, local strategic partners, tenants and residents organisations and voluntary and community groups. Significant further public and tenant consultation will be carried out as indicated in this report, before any decision is made by the Cabinet / Council.

## **5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Corporate Finance**

31 Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and accompanying Appendix that lays out a proposed Housing Strategy and priorities for 2012-15. Although acceptance of the recommendation to approve the outlined strategy in principle prior to further consultation does not give rise to any immediate financial implications such programmes, once planned in detail will require resource allocation. This will be done via the Council wide MTF process and aligned to budget setting for the Council as a whole whilst recognising the ring-fenced nature of resources provided through the HRA.

The Localism Act has seen the abolition of the Subsidy system whereby rents were largely pooled nationally and redistributed. This strategy covers the first four years under the self-financing regime introduced in April 2012 and should eliminate instability caused by annual determinations of subsidy thus enabling improved long term strategic planning. In the transition from subsidy to self-financing, Hillingdon was required to undertake £191.6m of national housing settlement debt in return for retention of annual subsidy payments of approximately £15m which were due to rise to £20m over the forthcoming years. A treasury portfolio has been designed according to the principles agreed by Cabinet to finance this debt at an average weighted rate of interest of 2.5%, thus, leaving sufficient resources to make provision for the repayment of both settlement and existing principal debt over the next 30 years alongside resources for enhancement of service provision and headroom for future housing development. However, current investment plans for Phase 2 Shared Equity and 126 Supported Housing schemes will utilise some of this headroom. The treasury strategy designed for Settlement assumed an additional £24m of borrowing for these schemes. Any additional borrowing above this level will require additional ongoing revenue resources to finance.

The process of producing detailed budget plans within the MTF will also necessitate consideration of risks that self-financing may bring with it alongside changes such as Right To Buy, housing benefit reforms and additional financing costs from increased borrowing that could impact substantially on HRA future income streams. These may also lead to financial implications within the General Fund (GF) in terms of GF Housing and Council Tax benefits. However, significant elements of the proposed capital strategy is to provide sheltered housing

units that have substantial synergies across the GF for which savings are already incorporated into the MTFF.

### **Legal**

This report seeks authority for the Council to consult with stakeholders on the Housing Strategy 2012-15. There are no specific legal implications arising at this stage, but more detailed legal advice will of course be provided to Cabinet when it considers the outcome of this consultation.

### **Corporate Property and Construction**

Corporate Property and Construction are in support of the recommendations in this report. The proposals for flexible tenancies and more local flexibility in allocations would support the objectives of the Corporate Asset Management Strategy which is to optimise the use of property assets. At a time of high demand for affordable housing more flexibility is needed to make the best use of stock available to Hillingdon residents.

### **Relevant Service Groups**

None at this time

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL



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# **Homes fit for Hillingdon**

## **The London Borough of Hillingdon's Housing Strategy 2012-15**

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**Draft**

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## Foreword

This strategy looks ahead to 2015, setting out Hillingdon's housing needs and what the Council and its partners will be doing to meet them over the next three years.

Hillingdon is a good place to live – we have thriving shopping centres, varied job opportunities, excellent parks and green spaces, better leisure facilities and easy access both to the centre of London and the towns, villages and countryside outside the capital.

However, for some people their housing circumstances can make life a daily challenge – whether it's the high cost of housing, keeping on top of maintenance and repairs, needing support to be independent or just not having a decent, affordable home. Unsuitable housing affects many aspects of people's lives – health, employment, social and support networks and the education attainment of their children.

The aim of our strategy is to help as many people as possible to improve their wellbeing and quality of life by living in good quality, affordable housing, whether in the private rented sector, as an owner occupier or by renting from a social landlord such as the Council or a housing association.

Schemes to promote low cost home ownership such as the Council's First Time Buyer Initiative are excellent ways to help local families to gain a foothold on the property ladder.

The development of new homes for rent helps those who find home ownership out of their reach.

We want to help vulnerable home-owners and people renting privately to maintain and improve their homes. We want to support those with care needs and with health and mobility difficulties to remain at home as part of the community rather than move to residential care or other more institutional forms of accommodation.

We also want to make sure that the Borough has the homes it needs to attract employees to support the local economy – recognising that using the planning system and developing the market priced homes we need will itself stimulate economic growth.

Hillingdon may be on the outer edges of London but we are at the centre of working in partnership with other local authorities and housing associations across the West London sub region and in London as a whole to meet housing need and develop initiatives that deliver good quality affordable accommodation which offers value for money.

Local partnerships are essential to the delivery of quality housing. The local Hillingdon Housing Partnership between all of the main social housing providers in the Borough is particularly successful. We will be working with the Partnership and other service providers to implement this strategy.

Councillor Philip Corthorne  
Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Housing

## Section 1 Introduction

This strategy updates the Borough's previous housing strategy which was published in 2007. In the last five years there have been many changes at a local, regional and national level. The impact of the worldwide financial difficulties makes the task of delivering decent housing that much more difficult. Our revised strategy shows how we are responding to change and how we are intensifying our efforts to improve the supply and quality of homes in the Borough.

This strategy explains how the Council, working in partnership with other housing providers and developers will :

- Deliver more quality housing to meet the needs of Hillingdon's residents
- Invest in the quality of existing housing stock in the private sector and within the Council's ownership
- Invest in new supported housing to meet the needs of vulnerable people such as those with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health problems
- Commission and deliver housing support services to help people to remain independence and in their own homes
- Ensure that there is enough land available to build the homes in all tenures which the Borough needs

The housing strategy is complementary to *Choice, Control and Independence*, Hillingdon's Personalisation and Commissioning Plan for Adult Social Care. The Plan sets how the Council's approach to the delivery of its community care responsibilities for adults will improve over the period 2011 to 2015 to maximise the independence of vulnerable residents.

## Section 2 Executive summary

### Introduction

Many of the challenges faced in developing this strategy are familiar. House prices and rents in the private sector remain high while demand for affordable housing exceeds supply. The national financial situation means that all Councils must challenge the way that resources are currently used and change the ways in which services are delivered. As expected demand increases, available funding is reducing.

To respond to these challenges, the Council's housing services will incorporate a major programme of change. Services will be developed according to three strategic priorities :

**Managing demand** – keeping residents independent, investing in preventative services to stop or significantly delay residents becoming homeless, in housing need or requiring ongoing social care.

**Managing supply** – commissioning private and voluntary housing services, and social care, delivering support, choice and independence to vulnerable, complex and high dependence residents

**Managing support** – efficient and effective in-house service provision that is focused on reablement, delivering time-limited interventions to effect change so that residents can learn or re-learn crucial skills to live independently

**Figure 1: Housing services : current position and proposed action to 2015**

Current position	Action by 2015
<p><b>Homelessness prevention</b></p> <p>The number of households with a priority need for housing has shown a 10% rise in the first quarter of 2012/13 compared with the same period in 2011/12. This reflects the trend in other Boroughs in west London. It is due to a number of factors – property prices remain high compared with average household incomes, the welfare reform programme is starting to take effect and the supply of social housing remains low</p>	<p>There will be more advice and support for people approaching the Council for help with their housing problems.</p> <p>Proactive work to prevent households becoming homeless has already begun, initially focusing on Hillingdon residents whose housing benefit payments will fall as a result of planned Government changes.</p>

<b>Current position</b>	<b>Action by 2015</b>
<p><b>Temporary accommodation</b></p> <p>We have been successful in reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation to 500 from 1,876 in 2005.</p> <p>A range of Council schemes are used to procure good quality private rented sector accommodation. However, there is increasing pressure on the availability of suitable affordable housing in the private rented sector due to market conditions.</p>	<p>The use of temporary accommodation will be reduced to 290 households by 2014.</p> <p>Use of the private rented sector will continue to be maximised.</p> <p>The available supply will be such that not all households approaching the Council for housing assistance can be accommodated within the Borough boundaries. Accommodation within Hillingdon will be prioritised for those with strong local connections. Accommodation will be procured outside Hillingdon in order to increase the Council's ability to meet housing need and place people in homes which they can afford.</p>
<p><b>Homelessness duty</b></p> <p>The Council has a strong partnership with private sector landlords and uses good quality accommodation in the private rented sector to prevent households becoming homeless.</p> <p>Some households may remain in temporary accommodation for longer periods of time, waiting for a social rented home to become available.</p>	<p>Good quality private rented housing will also be used for households where the Council has a statutory duty for housing. Changes in legislation will allow the Council to discharge its duty to rehouse in the private rented sector, retaining a duty of care for a two year period.</p>
<p><b>Allocations policy</b></p> <p>The Council last reviewed its policy for the allocation of social housing in 2011. Over 50% of the households on the waiting list will never be offered a social housing tenancy however long they wait. This is due to a combination of the demand and supply imbalance as well as the fact that all residents in the Borough are entitled to be placed on the waiting list regardless of whether there is an over-riding priority.</p>	<p>The Council has again reviewed the allocations policy in 2012/13. The review explored whether non-priority households should continue to be able to apply for social housing. Access will be increased for those with a greater need for housing in particular household groups</p>

<b>Current position</b>	<b>Action by 2015</b>
<p><b>New housing provision</b></p> <p>1,699 additional affordable homes have been completed in the Borough in the four years to 2011/12, against an effective target of 772 over the same period.</p> <p>546 completed low cost home ownership sales were made over the same period to 2011/12, an excellent achievement against a Council target of 330. Initiatives include the Hillingdon First Time Buyer, shared ownership, shared equity and Council build discounted sale schemes</p> <p>The Council has made a successful bid for Government funding toward the cost of the supported housing which it will build over the next three years.</p> <p>On sites with a capacity of ten or more homes, we aim for 35% affordable homes, with a tenure mix of 70% for social rent and 30% for intermediate housing.</p> <p>Affordable housing should reflect the need for family sized homes. High quality design is a priority for housing in all tenures.</p> <p>The Council works with developers, affordable housing providers and the planning system to ensure that the Borough has the market housing it needs to support the local economy and a supply of affordable homes.</p>	<p>A minimum provision of 5,475 additional homes is planned until 2026, based on known sites coming forward to be developed.</p> <p>The Council, in partnership with housing associations, will deliver 422 new supported homes for vulnerable people including people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.</p> <p>Use of residential care and more institutional forms of accommodation will be reduced so that Hillingdon is more in line with the national average.</p> <p>Hillingdon has an excellent record of delivery against targets and will continue to work with partners to ensure future housing supply in all tenures.</p>
<p><b>Social housing tenancies</b></p> <p>Following a probationary tenancy which is often in place for the first 12 months, social housing landlords have traditionally offered lifetime tenancies to their residents.</p>	<p>The Council's Tenancy Strategy sets out how the flexibilities in the Localism Act 2011 will be used in Hillingdon. The overall aim of the strategy is to ensure that social housing is targeted to those that need</p>

<b>Current position</b>	<b>Action by 2015</b>
<p>It is now possible to move away from lifetime tenancies for the majority of social housing tenants, to meet the Government aim of making the scarce resource of social housing available to people only while they need it.</p>	<p>it, for as long as they need it. The Council supports the use of fixed term tenancies, following on from probationary tenancies. The Council's expectation is for a minimum of a five year fixed term tenancy to be offered to most households</p>
<p><b>Private sector housing</b></p> <p>In Hillingdon, the housing which is in the poorest condition is in the private rented sector. Management standards in this sector can vary widely. We have accredited 347 landlords to the London Landlords Accreditation scheme.</p> <p>Houses in Multiple Occupation have increased in some locations. The Council has licensed 435 HMOs since the start of the current scheme in 2006.</p>	<p>The Council will have updated its information on the condition of the private sector stock.</p> <p>We will continue to encourage accreditation of private sector landlords and to promote good practice via the Private Sector Landlords Forum. We aim to accredit a further 30 landlords annually</p> <p>We will continue to operate mandatory and additional HMO licensing. We will license an additional 80 HMOs annually.</p>
<p><b>Empty homes</b></p> <p>Less than 1% of housing in Hillingdon (across all sectors) is empty for more than six months. Demand for housing, particularly affordable housing, is very high.</p> <p>Only 160 homes are empty in the very long term (five years or more). The remainder of the 700 empty properties are empty for specific reasons – the owner may have gone into residential care, a grant of probate may be awaited, they may be second homes or may be awaiting refurbishment</p>	<p>The Council's strategy for dealing with long term empty homes involves working with owners and landlords to bring them back into use as affordable homes. Grants and loans will be used by the Council to achieve this. As a last resort, empty dwelling management orders or compulsory purchase will be used if necessary.</p>
<p><b>Energy efficiency</b></p> <p>Domestic buildings produce over a quarter of the UK's carbon dioxide emissions. At the same time, one in</p>	<p>We will continue our very successful strategy to access resources for energy efficiency work. We are</p>

<b>Current position</b>	<b>Action by 2015</b>
<p>25 households—equivalent to about 4,000 in Hillingdon—are fuel poor, with over 10% of their income going on heat and other home energy.</p>	<p>currently assessing how best we can support local residents and landlords to benefit from the Green Deal when it is introduced. We will work with the Mayor of London to ensure the scheme's effective introduction. This work will help us to achieve our energy efficiency targets :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An average SAP rating of 62</li> <li>• 75% of properties with cavities to have cavity wall insulation</li> <li>• 20% of solid wall constructed properties to have walls insulated</li> <li>• 30% of properties to have 200mm or more of loft insulation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Council housing</b></p> <p>The Council is the Borough's biggest landlord. The housing stock is of good design and sound construction, meeting the Government's target for Decent Homes.</p> <p>Consideration is currently being given to how borrowing capacity within the Housing Revenue Account can be used to fund further investment in existing stock as well as developing new homes.</p>	<p>Further investment will have been made in a number of areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• essential work on electrical and fire safety</li> <li>• maintaining the Decent Homes standard</li> <li>• supporting independence at home for older and vulnerable residents</li> <li>• energy efficiency measures</li> <li>• improving estates and shared spaces</li> </ul>
<p><b>Council housing management</b></p> <p>The Council housing management service is based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring tenants and leaseholders are involved in how their homes are managed</li> <li>• Collecting the rent and service charges</li> <li>• Keeping housing estates clean and attractive</li> <li>• Tackling nuisance, crime and harassment</li> </ul>	<p>The Council's Tenancy Policy sets out how Council housing tenancies are changing to ensure that suitable affordable housing is available to those who need it most.</p> <p>For new tenants, a five year fixed term tenancy will be granted in most cases. Fixed term tenancies will be re-issued at the end of the term unless there is a significant change of household circumstances. Different</p>

<b>Current position</b>	<b>Action by 2015</b>
	<p>tenancy lengths will apply to some households in specific circumstances. Existing social tenancies will be protected and remain unchanged from their current status</p> <p>We will be developing our work with tenants and partner managing housing associations on joint inspections in areas where there are multiple social landlords.</p> <p>We will focus on equipping tenants to play a more important role in the scrutiny of the Council's landlord role.</p>
<p><b>Mobility and choice</b></p> <p>The Room2Move service helps tenants who are overcrowded or wanting to downsize.</p> <p>The Cash Incentive Scheme rewards Council tenants who downsize to smaller properties.</p> <p>We promote sheltered housing and non – sheltered bungalows to older tenants who may wish to move to this type of accommodation and free up a family sized home.</p> <p>The Seaside and Country Homes scheme allows tenants over 60 to move out of Hillingdon to a one or two bed home on the coast or inland, often downsizing from a family sized property. We also take part in the West London cross Borough lettings scheme.</p>	<p>We will take part in the Mayor's pan London mobility scheme which prioritises under occupiers and helps social tenants to move in order to find employment.</p> <p>We will continue our successful schemes which give tenants who wish to move to more appropriate accommodation within Council owned stock or the social rented sector.</p>

## **Section 3 The national and local context for the housing strategy**

### **National direction**

The Coalition Government seeks to create the economic conditions in which more people can take responsibility for meeting their own housing needs, whether they want to buy or rent. Those who want to and are in a suitable financial position to buy a property will be supported to do so. Social housing will provide support for those who need it.

The Government has a number of key actions planned as part of the decentralisation and localism agenda including:

- giving local Government greater freedoms
- providing local authorities with incentives to enable housing growth
- making the provision of social housing more flexible
- streamlining the planning system
- giving local Government a leadership role for public health

A number of the Government's plans for reform will have an impact on housing in the Borough and are described below.

### Housing supply

To encourage local communities to develop additional housing in their area, a *new homes bonus* is paid to Councils equal to the Council tax for each new home for six years. A further flat rate payment is paid for each new affordable home built.

### Social housing reform

Councils are given flexibility to decide locally who goes on the housing waiting list and to offer fixed term tenancies to new tenants. A new national scheme allows social housing tenants to move house more easily. Local people will have more say in regulating how social housing is run. Councils have a new ability to offer homeless households a home in the private rented sector rather than in social housing. The way that Council housing is financed is also changing and Councils are able to keep rental income to maintain homes.

### Welfare reform

The Government's plans to cut the cost of benefits, including housing benefit and local housing allowance, have begun to have a significant impact on tenants in the private rented sector. Local Housing Allowance rates have been set at the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of local rents; a maximum cap applies for each property size with an overall cap of £400 per week for a four bedroom property, irrespective of family size (April 2011). This national cap particularly affects central London, where rents are some of the highest in the country.

The majority of single, 25–34 year olds are now restricted to the Local Housing Allowance shared accommodation rate (January 2012).

Benefits will be restricted for households in the social rented sector occupying a property larger than they need (April 2013). Universal credit, to be introduced in October 2013 will integrate a number of benefits currently paid, including housing benefit, and will be paid direct to the individual. The amount of Universal Credit will be capped for 'working age' out of work households. Where a household's combined benefits exceed the cap, their benefit entitlement will be reduced to the cap. Until full migration to Universal Credit is complete (2017/18) local authorities will apply the cap to Housing Benefit by reducing a household's Housing Benefit by the amount over the cap. New Housing Benefit for people of pensionable age will be included in Pension Credit administered by the Pensions Service (October 2014). A localised Council Tax Support Scheme will replace Council Tax Benefit (April 2013). A localised Welfare Assistance Fund administered by Local Authorities will replace social Fund and Crisis Loans (April 2013).

### Reform of health and social care

The White Paper *Caring for our future: reforming care and support* published in July 2012 sets out the Government's proposals for the future of adult social care. There is a renewed emphasis on the commissioning of preventative and early intervention services, extending personal budgets to all social service users, working in partnership to deliver care and support and reducing spending on long term residential care. The role of supported housing, including extra care, in supporting older and disabled residents to live independently in the community is recognised and £200m has been identified by Government to assist Councils in developing in new schemes.

### **London strategic direction**

The responsibility for housing in the capital rests with the Mayor of London. From April 2012 the Mayor has been responsible for the strategic direction of housing, regeneration and economic development across London. The Localism Act 2011 devolved the powers and responsibilities of the Homes and Communities Agency in London to the Mayor. The London Housing Board oversees housing investment and delivery.

The Mayor wants to see better quality housing in all tenures in London, more affordable housing and more opportunities for social and economic mobility for Londoners. The Mayor has expressed a wish to further devolve housing delivery in the longer term to local authorities.

The Mayor has recently published his revised London Housing Strategy which updates the housing priorities for London. Hillingdon's local housing strategy is required to be in general conformity with the London Housing Strategy. The Mayor's London Plan brings together the geographic and spatial aspects of the Mayor's strategies, including the housing strategy. Hillingdon's spatial

policies for the development of housing must be in general conformity with those in the London Plan.

The Mayor's aims for housing in London are:

- Increasing the supply of new homes in all tenures across London, in particular affordable and family sized homes
- Ensuring better quality and higher standards for new and existing homes in all tenures
- Joining up housing investment with wider regeneration initiatives
- Meeting Londoners' home ownership aspirations
- Improving options for social tenants to move
- Tackling housing need, including overcrowding and rough sleeping

### **Hillingdon's priorities**

The Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 identifies the need for new homes, including affordable homes, and the need to provide support to help people live more independent and healthier lives.

The Health and Wellbeing Board now takes responsibility for the social care, health and housing agenda. The Board's Wellbeing Strategy focuses on the contribution that health, social care and housing can make to achieve the broader objective of improving the wellbeing of Hillingdon's residents. Hillingdon's partnership ambitions for improvement to 2015 include:

- Preventing ill health and promoting wellbeing will be embedded in everything we do; people will be supported to stay healthy and independent, with early interventions to prevent existing problems getting worse
- Improved wellbeing outcomes will be achieved through reducing wider inequalities present within the Borough, improving economic, social and environmental conditions which influence a person's life chances.
- More services will be provided in the community and closer to people's homes, not in hospital or in institutional settings

The Council has a range of housing related powers and responsibilities including:

- Matching housing requirements and supply
- Ensuring adequate market priced housing
- Delivering affordable homes for rent and to buy
- Bringing empty properties back into use
- Making sure that private rented homes are in good repair and well managed
- Providing property adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities Grants
- Inspecting and licensing houses in multiple occupation

- Preventing homelessness, including rough sleeping
- Maintaining Council owned homes in good repair
- Helping vulnerable homeowners to maintain their properties
- Making sure that social rented homes are well managed
- Providing advice and assistance to improve the energy efficiency of existing homers
- Administering Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance and Council Tax Benefit.

Housing services works closely with planning, property services, adult social care and health to deliver additional housing, including affordable homes, and housing related support services for Hillingdon residents.

### **Transforming adult social care**

Over the period to 2015 the Council will be seeking to make a number of important changes to the provision of social care and support including:

- Reducing the use of inappropriate residential care for vulnerable residents and increasing the opportunities for supported living within normal community settings
- Supporting carers to deliver the vital role they have in looking after vulnerable members of the community
- Developing integrated approaches to health and social care services
- Protecting existing preventative services and developing new services where the need exists
- Enabling all eligible social care service users to have a personal budget by April 2013

Historically, Hillingdon has been host to a very traditional model of care, heavily reliant on residential and nursing home provision. For example, in 2010/11 51% of net care expenditure for older people was made on this type of service, as opposed to the 40% which is more in line with best practice. The major programme of change needed is outlined in Hillingdon's Personalisation and Commissioning Plan 2011-15 - Choice, Control and Independence.

## Section 4 Housing priorities

**Our housing mission is to enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives.**

Services will be developed according to three strategic priorities:

**Managing demand** – keeping residents independent, investing in preventative services to stop or significantly delay residents becoming homeless, in housing need or requiring ongoing social care.

**Managing supply** – commissioning private and voluntary housing services, and social care, delivering support, choice and independence to vulnerable, complex and high dependence residents

**Managing support** – efficient and effective in-house service provision that is focused on reablement, delivering time-limited interventions to effect change so that residents can learn or re-learn crucial skills to live independently

Commissioning plans for housing services are developed under these three major headings in this strategy.

### Supporting principles

The Council will:

- Use up to date, evidence based approaches to services which are more efficient and effective
- Work closely with social care, health, planning and other partners to commission services that draw on existing networks and community capacity. The whole community has a role to play in keeping people safe, healthy and independent.
- Achieve sustainable change by supporting individuals and communities to help themselves and each other
- Ensure that users of services are in the driving seat, deciding how their desired outcomes will be achieved within available resources
- Shift from providing long-term institutional services to providing time-limited support which helps people regain or maintain independence in the community

## **Section 5 Key facts about Hillingdon and housing**

Some of the challenges faced in developing this strategy are familiar. House prices and rents in the private sector remain high and demand for affordable housing exceeds supply. There are also a number of new factors which present both challenges and opportunities for the Council in carrying out its strategic housing role.

Policy changes affecting social housing represent the biggest restructure of the sector in many years. The direction is for local authorities to have greater flexibility to manage social housing stock more efficiently, cutting down on empty or overcrowded properties. This will include flexible tenancies, fairer allocations, greater mobility, fairer provision for homeless people, affordable rents, more straightforward tenancy succession policies and less complex Council housing finance. The effects of changes to the benefit regime have begun to be felt but will affect some households more deeply over the life of this strategy.

### **About Hillingdon**

Hillingdon is the second largest of London's Boroughs and covers 42 square miles (11,571 hectares), over half of which is a mosaic of countryside including canals, rivers, parks and woodland. The Borough has two airports - Heathrow and RAF Northolt. Hillingdon shares its borders with Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire to the west and Hounslow, Ealing, and Harrow.

The north of the Borough is semi-rural, much of it protected by green belt regulation with Ruislip as the major town centre.

The south of Hillingdon is more densely populated and urban in character, containing the administrative centre of Uxbridge and towns of Hayes and West Drayton.

Heathrow airport is situated in the south of the Borough, and is the largest employer offering a range of relatively well-paid skilled and unskilled manual jobs.

There are a number of major manufacturing and retail organisations with headquarters and sites in Hillingdon. Stockley Park, to the north of Heathrow, is one of Europe's largest business parks. The Council, RAF Northolt, Brunel University, Harefield and Hillingdon hospitals are major public sector employers in the area.

### **Housing market**

Average house prices in the Borough have been rising since mid-2009. According to the Land Registry, at the end of 2011 the average price of a property in Hillingdon was £260,980. This reflects a broadly similar picture in London as a whole, where the average property price was £345,298. There

are wide differences in entry level (lower quartile) prices across the Borough, from £169,000 in Yiewsley to £355,000 in Ickenham.

In 2011 sales turnover of private housing stock in Hillingdon equated to 1.9% of the total, compared with 1.8% in London. Residential property in Hillingdon remains some of the least expensive to purchase in West London. At the end of 2011, properties were taking an average of 5.4 weeks to sell, compared with 4.9 weeks 12 months earlier and were achieving on average 95% of their asking price. (Hometrack Housing Market Intelligence System)

### **Household growth**

According to Government projections (CLG, November 2010), household numbers in Hillingdon were expected to grow from an estimated 107,000 in 2013 to 131,000 in 2033, an increase of 22%. Household numbers in Outer London overall were also expected to grow by 22%, and in London overall by 21% over the same period.

The first results of the Census 2011, published in 2012, showed that 273,936 people were normally resident in 100,214 households, indicating that the previously published projections for Hillingdon are higher than is in fact likely to be the case.

### **Unemployment**

The proportion of Hillingdon residents who claim Jobseekers Allowance was 1.9% of economically active residents in July 2012. The rate compared favourably with that for London (3.3%) and for England (2.2%).

### **Requirement for affordable housing**

The number of households on the Council's housing register has increased during 2010/11 by 31% to 9,800. The register is not a reliable indicator of the need for social housing, as the majority of applicants do not have any of the needs which the Council's policy for allocating social housing (backed by housing legislation) can prioritise. It is however an indication that there an increasing number of households who cannot easily afford to buy or rent on the open market.

Hillingdon's most recent Housing Market Assessment (HMA) found that a net additional 2,624 homes a year over five years would be required to meet the current and newly arising need for affordable homes.

**Figure 2**  
**Estimated size requirement for net additional affordable housing**

<b>Estimated size requirement for additional affordable housing (net)</b>		
	<b>Net annual need</b>	<b>% of annual need</b>
<b>1 bed</b>	174	6.6
<b>2 beds</b>	969	36.9

<b>3 beds</b>	913	34.8
<b>4 or more beds</b>	568	21.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,624</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source : Hillingdon HMA 2009

The assessment also showed that there was a need for larger, family sized social rented homes and that only 22% of the households who needed affordable housing could afford intermediate rather than social rented homes, if they were priced at the midpoint between market and social rented prices. (This assessment was made assuming that a household should spend no more than 35% of its income on rent). However, the current cost of new build shared ownership housing available in the Borough was closer to that of market housing and therefore accessible by few local home seekers.

Our own information systems show that homes required to accommodate households accepted as homeless should in most cases have one or two bedrooms.

### **Affordability**

The HMA estimated in 2009 that the mean gross annual household income in Hillingdon was £37,192. There is a wide range of incomes in the Borough, with more than a third of families having an income of less than £20,000 and more than a quarter having an income in excess of £50,000.

Some 26% of private rented sector households receive Local Housing Allowance (LHA). Almost three quarters of these households contain children, compared to only a quarter of non LHA private rented sector households.

Hillingdon average house prices are seven times the average household income. The continuing squeeze on mortgage finance makes home ownership less accessible to residents of the Borough. Mortgages for buy to let property and shared ownership schemes have also been restricted.

A large number of households in rented accommodation are in private sector rented homes. The greatest concentration of rental property is in the south of the Borough where rent levels are generally lower. However, since there is more demand for rental property because of a decline in home ownership and also because more renters are moving to outer London as central London, becomes unaffordable, private rents in Hillingdon are increasing. The average monthly rent for a two bed property is £994, the lower quartile rent is £875 (Source : Valuation Office). These figures represent an increase of 2.7% and 2.9% respectively on those in 2011.

Social rents have also risen. The average rent for a two bed property rented from a housing association was £112 per month in 2011/12, and rose by 6.7% from the previous year. The average rent for a Council owned two bed house was £102, a rise of 6.2%.

The Government has announced investment in new affordable housing for Affordable Rent and Affordable Home Ownership products. In future, housing associations will have the flexibility to let an Affordable Rent property at up to 80% of the market rent for a property of that size and location. The GLA's London Plan requires Councils in London to work to maximise the provision of affordable housing, including the new Affordable Rent and Home Ownership products. However, the definition of 'affordable' has a requirement that housing should be affordable to local people and the Council is working to ensure that this is the case. An important step in this work is to agree the maximum proportion of its income which any household in the Borough should spend on rent, including service charges.

In common with other Councils in West London, the Council has the option of using an income proportion of 40% to define affordability in the Borough. 86% of homeless households for which the Council accepted a duty in 2011 were dependent solely on income from benefits. They will be affected by the proposed Universal Credit cap introduced in 2013. This will restrict weekly income from all benefits to £350 for a non working single person and £500 for a non working family. The household cap has been set at a level to reflect an average household income of £35,000 before tax, and has been used in researching the effects of different income proportions to define Affordable Rents in the Borough.

If the income proportion is set at 40% our research indicates that at average private sector rent levels in the south of the Borough :

- if housing providers set rents at 80% of average market rents, then only homes with one or two bedrooms are affordable
- if housing providers set rents at 67% of average market rents, then one, two and three bed roomed homes would be affordable, but those with four or more bedrooms would not.

If the income proportion is set at 35% of the Universal Credit cap, at average private sector rent levels in the south of the Borough :

- if housing providers set rents at 80% of average market rents, no homes are affordable.
- if housing providers set rents at 67% of average market rents, then one and two bed roomed homes would be affordable, but those with three or more bedrooms would not.

Of those households accepted as homeless in Hillingdon, 76% need a one or two bed roomed home, indicating a three quarters match between need and supply. As providers generally propose to set rents at or close to 80% on smaller homes in order to subsidise lower rents on larger (four beds plus) homes, setting the income proportion to define affordability at 40% is likely to work in Hillingdon.

The section on the Affordable Rent regime in Hillingdon in section 8 of this strategy considers further the Affordable Rent model and its effect on the housing market.

## Overcrowding

Hillingdon's HMA showed that some 5.6% of households are overcrowded, compared with the national estimate from the Survey of English Housing of 2.5%. Overcrowding was measured against the national bedroom standard. The assessment suggests that overcrowded households are more likely to be living in the social rented sector – almost 45% of overcrowded households were living in social rented homes.

## Supply of social housing to rent

The total number of social rented homes let in 2011/12 was 765.

There is only a limited supply of the larger family sized homes which overcrowded households need. The majority of social housing in the Borough has 2 bedrooms or fewer. As a result they are more likely to be available to let – 76% of the total in 2011/12.

Between 2008/9 and 2011/12 1,699 affordable homes were completed in the Borough (social rented or intermediate). These were developed by housing associations, by the Council or by private housing developers as a condition of planning permission on larger housing sites. The annualised target set by the Mayor of London over this period was 183 units.

Figure 3 shows affordable housing completions in 2011/12 for Hillingdon and West London Boroughs. Hillingdon's total completed homes, including 75 open market homes, was the highest in West London.

**Figure 3 : Affordable housing completions in West London, 2011/12**

	Affordable Rent	Social Rent	Intermediate Rent	Affordable Home Ownership	All Affordable <sup>5</sup>	Open Market	Total
Brent	0	523	37	127	<b>687</b>	0	<b>687</b>
Ealing	7	432	68	151	<b>658</b>	0	<b>658</b>
Hammersm	0	24	45	12	<b>81</b>	0	<b>81</b>
Harrow	0	213	0	188	<b>401</b>	0	<b>401</b>
Hillingdon	0	355	0	281	<b>636</b>	75	<b>711</b>
Hounslow	0	155	35	126	<b>316</b>	0	<b>316</b>
Kensington	0	57	0	0	<b>57</b>	0	<b>57</b>
West Lond	<b>7</b>	<b>1,759</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>2,836</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>2,911</b>
London	154	10,860	787	4,375	<b>16,176</b>	1,406	<b>17,582</b>
<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>1,685</b>	<b>33,227</b>	<b>1,627</b>	<b>15,126</b>	<b>51,665</b>	<b>7,786</b>	<b>59,451</b>

<sup>5</sup> Total affordable housing is the sum of affordable rent, social rent, intermediate rent and affordable home ownership.

Source: HCA/West London Housing Partnership

## **Vulnerable groups – housing and support needs**

### Older people

Hillingdon's housing needs to be fit for purpose in order to cope with the growth of older people in the Borough. There is likely to be an increase in need for care and support as well housing suitably tailored for older people (including extra care for rent and for purchase).

There are 34,800 people over the age of 65 living in Hillingdon according to the Projecting Older People Population Information (POPPI) system from the Institute of Public Care. Of this number, 4,800 (14%) are aged 85 or over.

There are 23,423 households containing only older people, 3,695 of which contain a frail elderly person.

There are 2,552 people with dementia in Hillingdon, and this is likely to increase by 16% by 2020, and this will have an influence on the level and type of support needed.

Only 22% of older people live in social rented housing and 4% in private rented housing. The majority are owner occupiers who do not have a mortgage. Almost half (47%) of older person only households have one or two members but live in accommodation with three bedrooms or more.

### Children and young people

Research by Shelter has shown that children's life chances are affected by the standard of their housing. Growing up in poor or overcrowded housing has been found to have a lasting impact on a child's health and well-being.

Hillingdon has a significantly larger proportion of people in younger age groups (5-19) when compared with England and London. ONS mid 2008 projections indicate 65,156 children and young people aged 0 to 19 live in Hillingdon, which represents nearly 25% of the total population of the Borough.

The Council has a duty to find housing for 16 and 17 year olds who become homeless each year, for young people who have been in care since they were children and for young people who arrived at Heathrow airport as unaccompanied asylum seeking children. In total 50 to 60 care leavers require accommodation annually.

There is an increasing pressure for the Council to ensure appropriate housing for care leavers owing to the ageing unaccompanied asylum seeking children population and the Southwark Judgement, made by the Law Lords in May 2009. This piece of case law obliges children's services to provide accommodation and support to homeless 16 and 17 year olds.

Hillingdon's Placement Strategy outlines the intention to increase the number of in-Borough foster placements. Doing this will allow children to remain close to their birth parents and friends. Inappropriate housing or lack of housing can often be the barrier to fostering and adoption.

Hillingdon's Disabled Children's Strategy is to reduce the number of children with disabilities in residential care and to support their families in a more holistic way. Although parents may receive funding to adapt their housing it may be insufficient to meet the need and residential care is seen as the alternative.

As the identification of domestic violence increases, the need for more housing for women with children who are victims of domestic violence is also increasing. Currently in Hillingdon there are sheltered refuge homes available which are sufficient in the short term. However, a stable environment is required for both mother and children over a longer period.

The Institute of Public Care provides information on people with disabilities from its Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information (PANSI) system. The following information has been provided for Hillingdon.

#### Learning disabilities

There are 4,439 people aged 18 to 64 with learning disabilities in the Borough. This number is forecast to increase by 4.5% to 4,639 to 2015. 62% of net care expenditure for people with learning disabilities was on residential and nursing in 2010/11 compared to a national average of 43%.

The provision of good quality housing and support services is crucial to enabling more disabled people to have greater independence in the community. There is a need for supported housing development in the Borough where disabled people have their own tenancies and are allocated a personal budget to address their support needs. We have identified a need for 117 units with high or medium support provided on site, and further units with a lower level of support provided on a floating or visiting basis.

#### Physical disabilities and sensory impairment

The number of people of working age with a physical disability is expected to rise by 4.3% to 16,510 by 2015. For adults of working age with physical disabilities, residential and nursing care accounted for 33% of net care expenditure compared to an average of 23%.

The key issue for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities is access to adapted properties rather than the need for any housing related support. Currently we have identified a requirement for 349 general needs adapted homes required for people with physical and sensory disabilities. A further 22 units of supported housing are required by people with degenerative conditions that mean that their needs are likely to increase over time.

## Mental health

The number of people of working age in Hillingdon who have a mental health problem is forecast to increase by 3.5% to 43,144 in 2015. The number of people with serious mental illness is forecast to rise more slowly over the same period.

The Institute of Public Care provides information on people with disabilities from its Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information (PANSI) system. The following information has been provided for Hillingdon.

For adults (18 – 64) with mental health needs the proportion of the care budget spent on institutional care was 39% compared to a national average of 31%.

We have identified a need for 45 units of accommodation for people with high or medium level support needs as a result of a mental health problem.

### **Condition of the housing stock**

We have two major sources of information about the condition of the housing stock in the Borough.

The private sector stock condition survey (last conducted in 2008) is based on a survey of a sample of homes - owner occupied, privately rented and owned by housing associations. We have also commissioned a stock profile from the Building Research Establishment, based on existing data.

Council housing stock condition (last conducted in 2007) is monitored in a slightly different way. We keep the stock condition database up to date:

- By adding detail as a result of the maintenance work we carry out
- By employing surveyors to carry out rolling surveys of the stock
- By adding data from surveys of specific items such as kitchens and bathrooms

Information from these two sources provides the evidence base for much of the information in section 8 of this strategy.

### **Benefits**

Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit is paid to 25,331 (24%) of Hillingdon households. This proportion has increased by 24% since March 2008. 70% of claimants are of working age and 30% are pensioners.

There are currently 8,557 private rented sector tenants (excluding housing association tenants) receiving Housing Benefit, an increase of 88% since the introduction of Local Housing Allowance in April 2008. 85% of private rented

sector tenants are of working age. (Information as at 2012). 43% of claimants are tenants in the private sector, and 57% in the social rented sector.

## **Section 6 Resources for housing**

The housing strategy is underpinned by the approved level of resources set out in the housing budgets agreed by Cabinet for 2012/13. The budgets broadly cover two revenue areas: General Fund Housing Services and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and, capital expenditure. The HRA includes all income and expenditure related to the Councils own housing stock, which includes sheltered housing as well supported housing that are provided for people with various level of care needs.

### **General Fund Housing Services**

The current level of resources for housing within the General Fund amounts to around £197.4m in terms of expenditure. When income of around £179.1m is taken into account this leaves net expenditure of approximately £18.3m. The gross expenditure of £197.4m includes £171.5k for Housing Benefits, £12.5m for Housing Needs and £5.0m for Housing Support.

### **Housing Revenue Account**

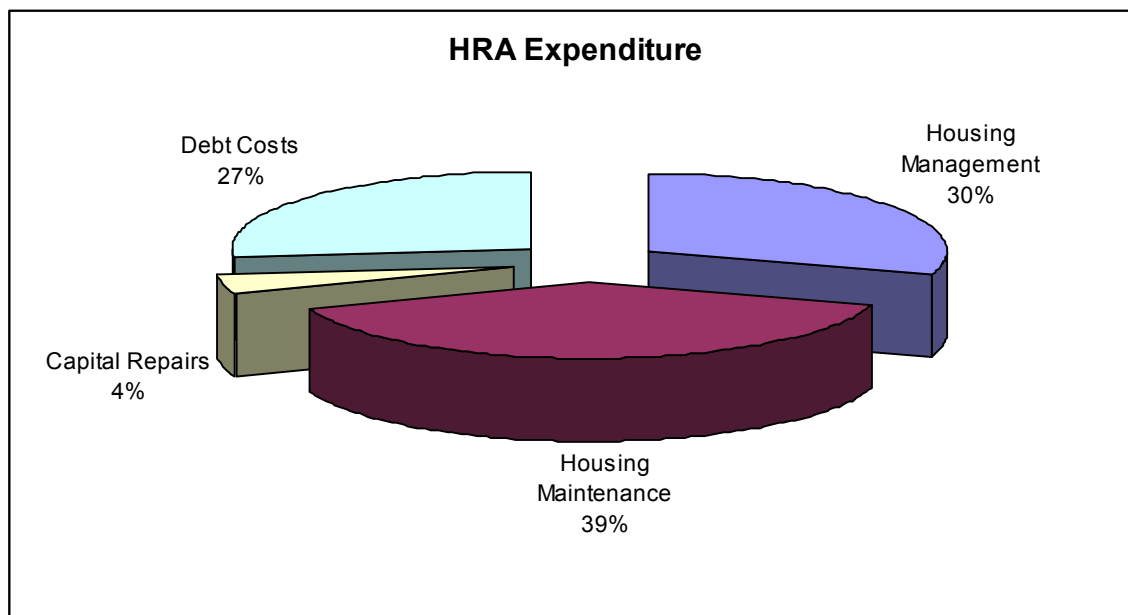
Council housing expenditure is accounted for in the HRA. From April 2012 the funding regime for the HRA has changed significantly with the introduction of self-financing. The new regime replaces the annual subsidy determination which traditionally made medium term financial planning difficult. In summary, the self-financing regime involves local housing authorities taking on new debt as the price for a “buy out” from the annual national subsidy system. The new regime will enable local housing authorities to better determine the long term financial position within the wider economic environment and be in more control over the level of investment required for Council housing.

Hillingdon’s HRA financial position has improved under the self-financing regime. This, along with a greater ability for long term planning, provides opportunities for new build properties to meet the needs of Hillingdon’s residents including vulnerable people who need help to maintain their lives in the wider community instead of institutional care.

The Council intends to lobby Government to remove the borrowing cap from the HRA so that it could, if it so wished, raise more money to provide more affordable homes.

The overall HRA budget for 2012/13 includes income from rent of £54m and other income of around £6m. The expenditure totals £58m and is mainly for the Council housing function as set out in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Housing Revenue Account Budget 2012/13**



Source : LBH statistics

### **Capital Expenditure**

Capital expenditure will be financed from future rental streams, including over £30m (around £14m in 2012/13) for supported housing as well £1.3m for other new build housing (pending approval by Cabinet of the business case for the supported housing programme).

The White Paper, *Caring for our future: reforming care and support* acknowledges the need to reduce spending on long term residential care. The role of supported housing, including extra care, in supporting older and disabled residents to live independently in the community is recognised and £200m has been identified by Government to assist Councils in developing in new schemes. The Council is likely to seek access to this fund once the details of the bidding process are released.

In addition, as part of the overall housing capital programme, the Council also spends £2.5m on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and nearly £0.5m on private sector renewal grants. DFGs are provided to households to adapt their homes to enable household members with disabilities to continue to live independent lives.

### **Key Items of Expenditure**

As a further illustration of the financial context for the Housing Strategy, some of the key individual resource items are set out in Figure 5 below:

## Figure 5 : Housing: Selected Key Items of Expenditure

### 2012/13 Housing Budgets – Key items of spend

Housing Needs	£12.5m
Private Sector Housing	£ 1.4m
Housing Related Support	£ 5.0m
Low Cost Home Ownership	£ 0.5m
Council Housing Maintenance	£22.0m

### 2012/13 Capital Budget

Council Housing - Works to Stock	£ 2.4m
Supported Housing	£14.2m
New Build – housing	£ 1.3m
Disabled Facilities Grants	£ 2.5m
Private Sector Renewal Grants	£ 0.5m

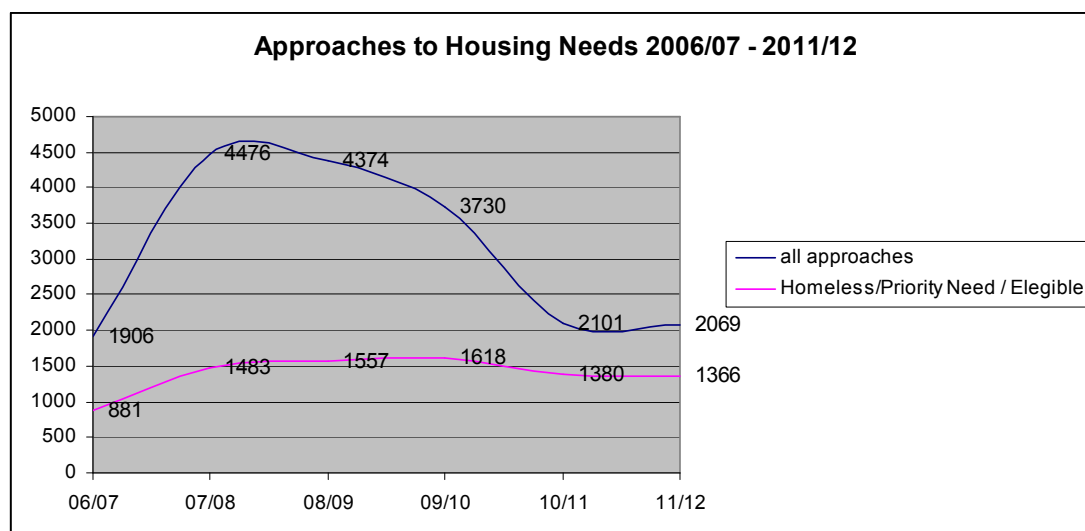
Source : LBH statistics

## Section 7 Managing demand

### Preventing homelessness

The decline in the number of non-priority households approaching the Council for help and assistance over the last five years has been followed by a 31% increase in the first quarter of 2012/13 compared with the same period in 2011/12. In these cases, our focus is to help put people to a position (perhaps via appropriate advice and signposting) where they can find their own accommodation in the private sector. This allows limited Council resources to be focused on those households who are threatened with homelessness, have a priority need and are eligible for assistance. Numbers remained relatively constant over the five years to 2011.

**Figure 6: Approaches to the housing needs service, 2006/7-2011/12**



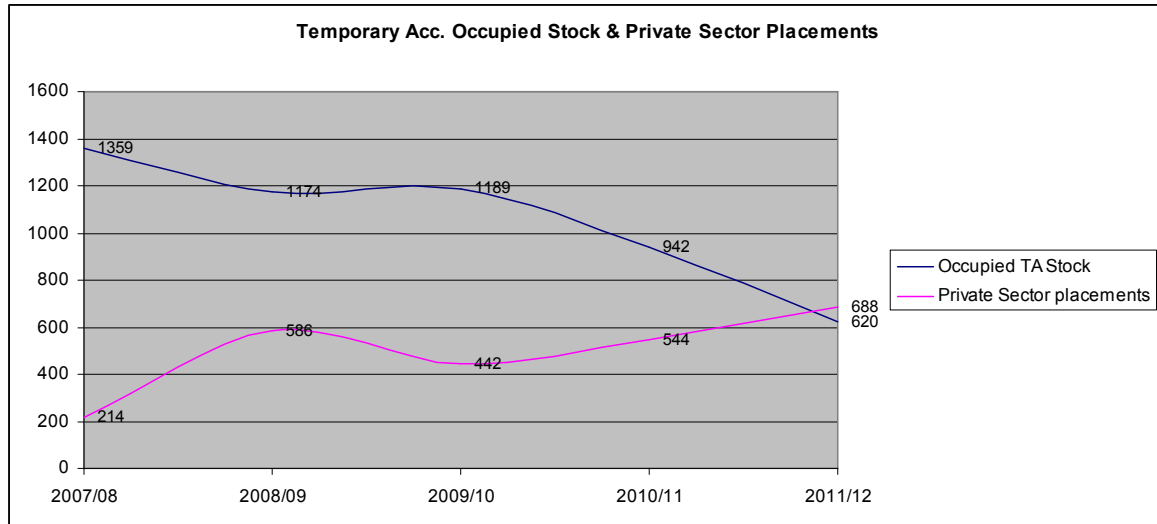
Source: LBH statistics

The number of households with a priority need for housing has shown a 10% rise in the first quarter of 2012/13 compared with the same period in 2011/12. This is due to a number of factors - property prices and market rents remaining high compared with average household incomes, the welfare reform programme taking effect so that the gap between private sector rents and local housing allowance has widened and the supply of social housing remaining at a low level.

Figure 7 shows the importance of the private rented sector in accommodation for households approaching the Council. In 2007/8 13.6% of placements in temporary accommodation or other settled housing were made within the private rented sector. By 2011/12, the proportion had risen to 52.6%. Our continued use of private rented sector housing helps the Council to avoid far more costly emergency housing such as bed and breakfast accommodation.

Mitigating the impact of the economic downturn and welfare reform in London will be central to our work to manage the demand for affordable housing in Hillingdon over the next few years. Homelessness prevention remains an essential part of our strategy.

**Figure 7: Temporary accommodation and private rented sector placements**



Source: LBH statistics

### Effect in London of benefit changes

The Government has begun to reform the welfare benefits system to simplify it and to improve incentives to work. A restriction to the Local Housing Allowance limits housing benefit to the private sector rents of the least expensive 30% of properties in an area and imposes cash limits according to property size.

Universal Credit, to be introduced in 2013, will integrate a number of benefits currently paid, including housing benefit. Universal Credit will be capped – where a household’s combined benefits exceed the cap, their benefit entitlement will be reduced to the cap. The cap is likely to be set at £500 per week for a family and £350 per week for a single claimant. The cap will not apply to working households.

The cap will be introduced irrespective of the number of children in the household or where it is located. London has relatively high levels of unemployment and housing costs are considerably higher than in the rest of the country. Research for London Councils in 2011 found that 133,000 workless households (20% of the total) will be unable to afford their current rent as a result of the caps.

The Universal Credit cap will have a significant impact on larger families with children. Less than 3% of families without children will find their home unaffordable, but 30% of families with children will be affected in this way.

7% of single people will not be able to afford their rent when subject to the lower single person Universal Credit.

Some households may be able to find work, cover modest shortfalls in rent or move to a cheaper property in the local area. For those households facing the greatest shortfalls the options will be to find higher paid work, move elsewhere in London or outside London where rents are cheaper and within the caps. This will put pressure on this type of private sector accommodation in outer London Boroughs like Hillingdon. Over 2,000 households living in Hillingdon are affected by the restrictions to the LHA and 900 households will be affected by the Universal Credit cap.

We are being proactive in contacting households renting in the private sector who are or will be affected by changes to their Local Housing Allowance (LHA). Working closely with the Benefits Team, we offer advice on expected changes and on the household's housing options and can, where appropriate, negotiate on rent levels with private sector landlords on behalf on their tenants.

We support families and individuals to break the cycle of welfare dependency and get into work. Through a number of initiatives including the Reed In Partnership Families Programme, the West London Help programme and work with JGA Group, P3 and Uxbridge College we are able to encourage workless families and individuals including young people to take practical steps to find work and training.

We will also offer payments from the Discretionary Housing Payment Fund to help in specific circumstances such as making a contribution to a rent deposit payment when a household moves in order to find cheaper accommodation or when a household loses income as a result of loss of LHA for a non-dependent .

### **Use of the private rented sector**

Hillingdon has around 500 households living in temporary accommodation, including some families in bed and breakfast. We have several private rented sector schemes which help homeless families find suitable housing.

We expect to be able to maintain or reduce our current level of temporary accommodation but only if we can continue to procure suitably priced private rented sector properties. We have already found that demand for private rented homes in Hillingdon is strong, both from local market renters and from other London Boroughs procuring private sector accommodation.

We have already been forced to seek some private rented accommodation outside the Borough and we are anticipating that this trend is likely to continue. Some households who approach the Council will find that the housing they need and can afford may be available only outside the Borough. We will keep the situation under review, and our intention will be always to place households in the Borough where suitable housing is available.

## Allocations policy revision

Hillingdon's social housing allocations policy sets out the Council's priorities for ensuring that social housing is allocated to those who have the greatest need. It is a scarce resource. There are 9,800 households on the housing register but only 700 - 800 households are re-housed into social rented housing each year.

Over 50% of the households on the waiting list will never be offered a social housing tenancy however long they wait.

We revised our allocations policy in 2011 to more closely reflect the Council's vision of putting residents first and supporting collaboration with partners to deliver decent affordable housing in both the public and private sectors. The Council is committed to preventing homelessness and the allocations policy focuses on supporting residents to actively pursue suitable alternatives to avoid becoming homeless. We currently plan social housing lettings as shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8 : Planned social housing lettings in Hillingdon 2012/13**

<b>Planned social housing lettings in Hillingdon, 2012/13</b>	
Homeless households	<b>45%</b>
Households with a medical need to move	<b>3%</b>
Overcrowded tenants	<b>20%</b>
Underoccupying tenants	<b>8%</b>
Other transferring tenants	<b>6%</b>
Households from supported or residential accommodation	<b>12%</b>
Other local priorities	<b>6%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source : LBH statistics

We have reviewed our policy again in 2012/13 in response to the Localism Act. The review has considered whether non-priority households should in future be able to apply for housing. Our aim has been to explore the opportunities given by the Act to local housing authorities to offer more support to those in greatest housing need. The policy will offer priority for social housing to adopting parents, foster carers, care leavers and couples without children.

We will publish an annual lettings plan which will show the planned proportion of homes to be let to households in particular groups during the year.

## Discharging duty into the private sector

Changes in legislation will allow the Council to discharge its duty to rehouse in the private rented sector (with a retained duty of care for a two year period).

We already use the private rented sector, but only to prevent households becoming homeless.

We intend to investigate how we can use good quality private rented housing for households who are owed the main homeless duty. Households in these circumstances would be required to consider this option as opposed to only requesting a nomination to social housing. This is a positive change which could result in households being settled more quickly and more social rented homes being made available for those on the waiting list.

### **Preventing rough sleeping**

Our experience at times of economic difficulty is that single people, who make up half of the homelessness prevention client group, are more likely to be at risk of losing their home. Younger single men in particular are more likely to fall into rough sleeping.

At the latest count (2011) there were 15 people sleeping rough on the streets in the Borough.

We work with partners to take people off the streets, find them accommodation and ensure that on-going health and any substance misuse needs are met. For six years we have opened a winter night shelter when the weather is coldest, working with partner organisations and volunteers. In 2012 the shelter, run with Trinity Homeless Projects, helped 15 men and found settled housing for 13.

### **Managing demand – what we intend to do**

- Review our policy to ensure that we allocate social housing fairly and transparently
- Publish an annual lettings plan showing the planned proportion of homes to be let to households in particular groups during the year.
- Make sure that we prioritise households in the greatest need
- Monitor the effect of changes to the housing benefit system in London including pro-actively engaging with households in Hillingdon whose housing benefit will be reduced
- Only look outside the Borough for housing where there is no other affordable option locally
- Maintain or reduce our current level of use of temporary accommodation in the face of expected increased demand
- Procure homes in the private sector for use in preventing homelessness, as follows :

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Units</b>
HA leasing direct	85
Privately managed	150
Finders Fee	150
Find your own	130
<b>Total</b>	<b>515</b>

Source: LBH statistics

## Section 8 Managing supply – New homes

### Introduction

There are several factors which have an impact on the supply of new housing - local planning policies, the availability of land suitable for housing, the availability of finance for building as well as the health of the local housing market.

As the housing market faces an uncertain future and the funding regime for social housing has been subject to change, the Council is working creatively with developers and registered providers to ensure that the various sources of available funding and subsidy are brought together to optimise the delivery of affordable housing.

The Council is putting forward its own land to provide affordable homes. In 2011/12 more than 100 homes were directly developed by the Council on its own land. Land is also transferred to housing associations to deliver more affordable or supported homes.

### Planning policy

Ensuring the delivery of sufficient housing is a key challenge for Hillingdon's Local Development Framework (LDF). Housing provision over the period covered by the LDF must meet the London Plan targets for the Borough and address identified housing need.

Planning for housing provision is currently based on an annualised target of an additional 365 homes. Taken over the planning period to 2026, this gives a minimum provision of 5,475 homes. The annualised target may change to 425 as part of a future revision of the London Plan. Hillingdon's Housing Market Assessment identifies the need for larger properties (by number of bedrooms) in the Borough in contrast to the situation London wide. The Council's policy is to meet and exceed the minimum provision where it can be done. The Council's planned housing trajectory shows that up to 2014, current and emerging London Plan targets will be exceeded. This is based on known sites coming forward to be developed. Beyond this date, the delivery of new homes is less certain.

**Figure 9 : New affordable housing starts and completions in West London, 2008/9 to 2011/12**

Affordable housing starts and completions in Hillingdon, 2008/9 to 2011/12								
	2008/9		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12	
	Starts	Completions	Starts	Completions	Starts	Completion	Starts	Completions
<b>Brent</b>	357	664	568	616	682	497	281	687

<b>Ealing</b>	575	479	356	367	663	223	127	658
<b>Hammersmith &amp; Fulham</b>	139	285	130	556	108	44	128	81
<b>Harrow</b>	251	225	370	248	331	285	44	401
<b>Hillingdon</b>	384	311	393	379	483	373	13	636
<b>Hounslow</b>	342	231	70	426	412	615	181	316
<b>Kensington &amp; Chelsea</b>	95	173	236	46	32	29	0	57

Source: HCA statistics

Hillingdon's annualised affordable housing target, set by the Mayor of London, was 183 units, representing 50% of target total housing delivery of 365 units. Since July 11, the London Plan requires Councils to maximise affordable housing delivery, but according to local conditions. Based on capacity studies, Hillingdon aims for 35%. The table in Figure 9, illustrating affordable housing starts and completions over the last four years, shows how successful the Council and partners have been in providing affordable housing in the Borough..

One of the Council's priorities is to ensure that new homes have a high quality design, reflecting housing needs identified in the Borough, particularly the need to provide more family homes with adequate garden space. Guidance is available in the Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD). Higher density development is most appropriate in sustainable locations with high levels of public transport accessibility. The majority of new housing is planned on large and small sites situated south of the A40.

On sites with a capacity of ten or more homes we want to ensure that at least 35% of all new homes are affordable, with a tenure mix of 70% housing for social rent and 30% intermediate housing. Housing for social rent includes housing at Affordable Rents. These proportions take into account the results of the HMA 2009 and of the Economic Viability Study undertaken in support of affordable housing policy. Our policy is also that the affordable housing mix reflects the need for larger family sized homes.

There is a comparatively high level of support for low cost home ownership (intermediate) housing in Hillingdon. A wide variety of schemes includes provision by the Council of 25 new homes including five two bedroom houses in Gilbert Road Harefield with more, family sized homes to be built elsewhere in the Borough. Hillingdon First Time Buyers' Scheme provides a grant toward the cost of buying a first home. Recent action by Councillors has succeeded in linking Hillingdon funding for First Time Buyers with a planned non -Council development in Hayes to aid viability and deliver a number of affordable homes.

Affordable housing should include provision for older people and for other groups in need of supported housing. Our aim is to maximise independence and provide self-contained accommodation with appropriate support. Our LDF policy protects existing Gypsy and Traveller site provision at Colne Park and states that targets for additional pitch provision will take into account need and the availability of suitable sites.

Housing, including affordable housing, is planned on several significant sites in the Borough. The most strategically significant regeneration site is that of RAF Uxbridge, 47 hectares, which will be developed to complement Uxbridge town centre and provide over 1,200 additional homes. The redevelopment of the site is not expected to be complete until 2019 and the housing development will take place between 2013 and 2019.

The former National Air Traffic Services (NATS) site at West Drayton is also a large regeneration site of over 13 hectares. The site provides an opportunity to create a large, mixed tenure development of some 775 new homes, to be completed by 2017.

We will deliver a programme of supported housing development over three years from 2011/12, including an initial 126 units, based on the redevelopment of Council owned sites and supported by a successful funding bid to the Homes and Communities Agency. The development of supported housing will allow the Council to reduce dependence on residential care. Supported housing will provide independent living with additional care and/or support services provided either on site or on a "floating support" basis. Development will be funded largely by borrowing which will be paid from HRA rental streams over a 40 year period.

This programme represents just over half of the 422 units required to meet the expected need for supported housing over the three year period. The remaining homes will be provided as a result of working in partnership with housing associations and at no cost to the Council.

### **Government funding for affordable housing**

The level of grant available to fund affordable housing for 2011 to 2015 has fallen substantially compared with the previous four year spending review period. In London, this means a drop from £3.7bn 2008-11 to a planned investment of £1.8bn 2011-15.

In order to maintain a level of investment in social housing, the Government has introduced a new approach as well as a new tenure, referred to as Affordable Rent which is expected to help fill the gap. Housing associations and Councils who develop new housing can charge up to 80% of market rents. They can then use the extra income to pay for additional borrowing. [No grant is available when affordable housing is built as a condition of planning permission.]

Rare amongst local authorities, Hillingdon Council has successfully bid and received funding for our supported housing programme, a condition of which is that the Affordable Rent model will apply to the homes built. Rents are therefore likely to be set at between 60% and 80% of market rents.

The Council has also received an allocation of £1.12m New Homes Bonus for 2012/13. This scheme rewards local authorities for increasing housing supply. Authorities are awarded a financial bonus equal to the national average for the Council tax band for each net additional property on the Council tax valuation list. This is paid for the following six years. An enhancement is added for additional affordable homes. We will explore the ways in which the New Homes Bonus may be used to support the delivery of further new affordable homes.

### **The Affordable Rent regime in Hillingdon**

The Council's Tenancy Strategy explains how the freedoms and flexibilities in the Localism Act 2011 will be used in Hillingdon. The impact of the new Affordable Rent model is a major consideration. The Council shares the concern of the housing sector in London about the model's affordability by those most in housing need, particularly when rents are set at or around the upper limit allowed by the Affordable Rent regime.

Housing providers have said that they will deliver fewer homes as a result of reduced funding through the Affordable Rent regime. This situation will be made worse if rent levels are lower than 80% of market rent as providers will have to reduce the number of homes they provide or require more subsidy. (The section on affordability in section 5 of the strategy has more detail on this.)

The effect is a reduction in the provision of new homes and as a consequence pressure from the increased cost of bed and breakfast accommodation. As a result, there is a balance to be found between delivering homes that are affordable and maximising the number of affordable homes built. That balance appears to be at a level where 40% of net income should be the maximum spent on rent by any household but subsidy would be required for larger homes.

Affordable Rent was introduced to generate additional borrowing capacity to support the provision of new homes. The additional borrowing capacity will come from higher rents for new build developments and from the conversion of existing properties to higher rents. Restricting the level of rents that housing providers can charge and restricting conversions of existing properties to Affordable Rent would therefore be restricting borrowing capacity and in turn the delivery of affordable housing.

In terms of generating capacity within Hillingdon's own stock, Affordable Rent is an opportunity to support more borrowing to deliver more homes. The ability to do this is controlled by the GLA in London. Only providers that have signed contracts which include conversions to Affordable Rent can do so at present, but the desire to do so in the future can be discussed with the GLA.

There is an assumption that proceeds from Affordable Rent conversions should produce further Affordable Rent properties.

Consultation to obtain views on the Affordable Rents regime will be part of the process of consultation and approval for the Housing Strategy.

### **Tenancy Strategy**

The Localism Act 2011 provides new opportunities for local authorities and registered housing providers to meet housing needs in more flexible ways and ensure that suitable affordable housing is available to those who need it most. These new opportunities include the discretion to offer 'fixed term tenancies' for new social housing tenants rather than the 'lifetime' tenancies that are currently offered. At the end of the fixed term, the household's circumstances will be reviewed by the landlord and if they still need the accommodation, their tenancy can be renewed.

The Act also requires local authorities to develop a Tenancy Strategy to guide registered social housing providers in developing tenancy policies for their own stock. Hillingdon's tenancy strategy provides guidance to shape social landlords' policies to use these new fixed term tenancies in a positive and constructive way.

The overall aim of the strategy is to ensure that social housing is targeted to those that need it, for as long as they need it. The Council supports the use of fixed term tenancies, following on from probationary tenancies. The Council's expectation is for a minimum of a five year fixed term tenancy to be offered to most households. There are some circumstances where a shorter term is acceptable, but these are exceptional. Fixed term tenancies should be reissued at the end of the term unless there is a significant change of circumstances. A clear, transparent review and appeals process should be in place and understood by tenants at the start of their tenancies.

The strategy sets out the Council's preferences for minimum tenancy periods for households in specific circumstances, including

- Households with a disabled household member (adult or child)
- Families with children
- Single households and childless couples of working age
- Older people (people over working age)

Register housing providers must have regard to these preferences when designing their tenancy policy.

#### **Managing the supply of new homes – what we intend to do**

- Work with housing associations and developers to deliver new homes, including affordable homes

- Ensure that 100% of new affordable general needs homes built by housing associations in Hillingdon are let for the first time to households on the Council's housing register
- Ensure that 75% of affordable general needs homes built by housing associations in Hillingdon are let for the second and subsequent times to households on the Council's housing register
- Ensure that all residential developments are designed to include "Lifetime Homes" principles so that they can be readily adapted to meet the needs of those with disabilities and older people. 10% of homes should be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable to wheelchair accessibility .
- On sites with a capacity of ten or more homes, ensure that at least 35% of all new homes are affordable, with an tenure mix of 70% housing for social rent and 30% intermediate housing
- Plan the redevelopment of RAF Uxbridge to include over 1,200 additional homes to be built before 2019.
- Plan the redevelopment of the NATS site to provide 775 new homes by 2017.
- Ensure that all new homes are built to high standards of design
- Continue to make planned savings in the use of residential care for people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, people with mental health problems by extending the range of supported housing options available in the Borough
- Deliver 422 units of supported housing in the Borough for older people, people with learning disabilities and people with physical disabilities
- Of these 422 units, deliver a total Council programme of 225, including an initial 126 units funded and built by the Council and based on the redevelopment of Council owned sites.
- Provide the remaining 197 units in partnership with housing associations and at no cost to the Council.

## **Section 9 Managing supply – Existing homes**

### **Introduction**

We want all homes in all tenures to be warm, in a good state of repair, safe and free from risks to the occupants.

The better insulated a home is, the more energy efficient it is. The Council's aim is to reduce the carbon footprint of housing in the Borough – about 27% of all carbon emissions on a national basis. More importantly, reduced fuel use results in lower energy bills for residents.

We will encourage professional and consistent high management standards in both public and private sector housing.

### **Private sector housing**

Our 2008 private sector stock condition survey estimated that 84% of the private-sector housing stock is owner-occupied and a further 16% is private rented. The most common type of property is the semi-detached house at 37% of the stock. Flats account for around 21% of the stock.

The stock is heavily concentrated in the 1919-1944 age band with only 4.4% being built before 1919, compared with a national figure of 25%.

Just under 1,800 private sector homes were vacant. Of these just under a third (30.6%) were vacant for over 6 months.

27% of homes in the private sector failed the Government's Decent Homes standard. This figure compares favourably with a national figure of 37.5%. The main reason for non-decency was a low level thermal comfort. Housing with high levels of 'non-decency' included private rented and vacant homes. Households more commonly living in non-decent housing were lone parents and single pensioners, special needs and vulnerable households.

We will update our information on private sector stock condition during the life of this strategy.

### **Private rented sector**

The proportion of homes in the Borough rented from a private sector landlord in Hillingdon was 8.4% in 2001 according to the Population Census and rose to an estimated 16% in 2008 (Hillingdon Private Sector Stock Condition Survey). The proportion of owner-occupied homes fell to an estimated 69% of

stock from 72.1 % in 2001, and illustrates the gradual move away from owner occupation identified in London and nationally.

The private rented sector has had an increasingly important role in providing accommodation for a range of different household groups. To help promote good practice we will encourage landlords to become members of the London Landlords Accreditation Scheme so that they can demonstrate that they manage and maintain their properties to a good standard, providing their tenants with safe and high quality accommodation. Landlords are expected to show that they have undergone suitable training and fully understand their legal obligations and responsibilities to the community.

We know that management standards can vary considerably between landlords and managing agents. We will continue to take action to promote improvement as well as ensure that we only work in partnership with landlords/agents who are able to offer high standards of management and accommodation.

### **Empty homes**

Empty properties represent neglect, financial expense and a missed opportunity. They can be an eyesore, encourage fly tipping, illegal occupation and general anti-social behaviour.

Less than 1% of residential properties in Hillingdon are vacant at any time for more than six months. Of these, some 160 have been empty for five years or more.

We aim to:

- enable empty property to be brought back into residential use
- give incentives for owners of empty property to bring it back into residential use and provide additional homes for homeless households
- retrofit empty homes with energy efficient and renewable measures to help tackle fuel poverty, reduce carbon emissions and combat climate change

Our strategy is focused on reducing long-term empty properties—vacant for more than six months—by a combination of sustained contact and advice to owners and use of appropriate enforcement powers as a last resort. We will continue to make a priority of the empty homes that have been vacant for over 3 years or are causing a nuisance to the local community.

We maintain an empty property register, liaise with owners, registered social landlords, estate agents and contractors and maintain a partnership group bringing together key stakeholders.

We have a staged approach in dealing with empty properties:

- Inspect properties after referral.
- Provide advice to identified owners on the options available.

- If there is no response, inspect and discuss with neighbours before considering enforcement
- Grants and loans are used to bring properties back into use and improve energy efficiency by reducing carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty
- Incentives to let are used including offering a fully managed tenancy for two to five years with a guaranteed rental income, through Council or housing association private leasing schemes; advance incentive payments in place of deposits are used too
- Helping housing associations and developers to buy, renovate and re-let empty private properties
- Demolition or conversion where justified
- Court action and enforced sales
- Empty dwelling management orders
- Compulsory purchase orders as a very last resort when all else fails

With partner Boroughs in West London we will receive £2.7m funding during 2012-15 for empty property work. Hillingdon's share amounts to £600,000. The funding is from the Homes and Communities Agency and its use will be monitored by the London Housing Board

### **Enforcement**

We will continue to take action on decent homes and disrepair, environmental health, fire and safety standards and planning compliance. In 2011/12 we made 277 homes decent and brought 394 HMOs up to our minimum standard over the same period.

### **Multi occupancy homes**

Most Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) cause no problems, and it is accepted that they provide housing for single people who may not be able to afford other types of accommodation. However, growth in their numbers has brought more complaints, especially about over-concentration, noise and anti-social behaviour.

Our aim is to ensure that all HMOs are :

- in satisfactory condition
- have adequate means of escape in case of fire
- are safe to live in
- have sufficient bathrooms
- have sufficient kitchens
- have sufficient space and are not overcrowded

The Council has made a direction under article 4 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Permitted Development Order)1995 to limit the growth of HMOs in Uxbridge South and Brunel wards. This means that from 2013 planning permission must be sought before a property can be converted to multiple occupancy. The aim is to limit the already high concentration of HMOs in a small area.

We will continue to operate both mandatory and additional HMO licensing schemes in order to drive up and maintain management standards.

### **Improving homes**

We will provide a range of private sector renewal grants for homes in disrepair, houses in multiple occupation, empty properties, energy efficiency and heating. We will concentrate our resources on the cross-cutting aims of making homes decent, preventing homelessness and helping the most vulnerable households.

For HMOs and empty homes, works arising from enforcement action take priority. We can give bigger grants in return for the right to nominate tenants. For home owners, the focus is essential works to help older, vulnerable, low-income households. Grants must be repaid if the property is sold within five years.

Essential repair grants are available to older owner occupiers and those in receipt of certain benefits to keep their homes in good repair. If a home has a one or more category 1 hazards, as measured by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) a grant may be available to the owner. Grants have been made for roofs, burst pipes and boiler repair and replacement. We intend to develop closer joint working with clinical commissioning groups better to target grants through joint campaigns to keep people safe and warm at home and, ultimately, prevent health and social care expenditure.

### **Energy efficiency**

Domestic buildings produce over a quarter of the UK's carbon dioxide emissions. At the same time, one in 25 households - equivalent to about 4,000 in Hillingdon - are fuel poor, with over 10% of their income going on heat and other home energy. But the typical household wastes a third of its energy, largely through poor insulation and inefficient heating.

The link between fuel poverty and ill health is well documented. Medical conditions made worse by fuel poverty include asthma and respiratory diseases. It is an important contributory factor in early winter deaths. Also, at a time of ever increasing energy costs, energy efficiency works can reduce energy bills for all residents.

One of the objectives in the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2009/12 is to reduce the emissions associated with existing housing through improving energy efficiency to contribute to the London target for residential property emissions reduction of 60% by 2025.

Our private sector research confirms that just over half of the homes in the Borough have cavity walls, but nearly two thirds of them have no cavity insulation. Most homes have at least some double glazing. Most homes have

loft insulation, but less than 5% have 200mm or more. The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the Government recommended system for home energy rating, with a scale of 1 to 100 (higher score means more energy efficient). The average SAP rating for private sector homes was 56, up from 50 in 2001 and indicating that improvements have been made. Our current target is to raise the average SAP rating to 62. Much of the improvement achieved has been attributed to our continued programme of work to insulate lofts and cavity walls and upgrade heating boilers. We aim to increase the proportion of cavity walled properties with insulation to 75% and solid wall properties with insulation to 20%. Our loft insulation target is 30% insulated with 200mm or more of insulating material. Through reduced energy costs these improvements have also helped to reduce fuel poverty.

Our strategy has been and will continue to be to seek out resources for energy efficiency work and to ensure that we secure value for money for residents by gaining maximum output from the funding available. Partnership working with housing associations, private landlords and utility companies has been key to the success of this strategy.

We have been successful over a number of years in securing funding from available sources, such as the GLA, for energy efficiency measures targeted at specific areas where the housing stock performs poorly or households which are vulnerable or on low incomes.

The Energy Act 2011 includes a new Green Deal to improve the energy efficiency of homes funded by a charge on energy bills that avoids the need for consumers to pay upfront costs. The Act also ensures that from April 2016, private landlords will not be able to refuse a tenant's reasonable request for consent to energy efficiency improvements where a finance package, such as the Green Deal or the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is available. ECO will work alongside Green Deal funding by targeting appropriate measures at those households likely to need additional support – in particular those containing vulnerable people on low incomes and in hard-to-treat housing. The Home Energy Conservation Act remains in force and local authorities may receive new obligations under this legislation in 2012.

We are currently assessing how best we can support local residents and landlords to benefit from the Green Deal when it is introduced. Action by local authorities can range from a role as a promoter and provider of information through to a more active role in supplying loans and undertaking necessary works. We will work with the GLA and other London Boroughs to ensure the successful introduction of the Green Deal in London.

The London wide **Re-NEW** scheme coordinated by the GLA aims to deliver energy and water savings improvements to some of the least energy efficient homes in all tenures in Charville and Hillingdon East wards in the Borough. The Council is working to ensure that households get the maximum benefit from the scheme by coordinating with other initiatives.

Funding associated with the **Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT)** will be available from energy suppliers to provide grants to help pay for energy efficiency measures and renewable energy technologies.

The **Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP)** provides energy company funding for energy efficiency measure in six low income areas in the Borough. The approach tackles the energy efficiency of the whole property, and the programme will close by the end of 2012.

### **Council housing**

The Council manages 10,342 rented homes plus an additional 2,924 flats sold with a long lease under the right to buy. 74% of the stock are houses, bungalows and low rise flats, with 21% mid-rise flats (over three and less than six storeys) and 5% high rise flats (over six storeys.) The stock is relatively new – 77% was built after 1945. Most of it was built using traditional construction methods, with less than 2% built using non-traditional forms. In general, the stock is of good design and sound construction.

The HRA reforms brought into force in 2012 have seen the end of negative subsidy and provided a new focus for Council housing where we are now able to use all the rent collected to invest in existing and new housing stock. This in itself brings new challenges and risks that will be managed over the coming years. The functions of Hillingdon Homes, the Council's arms length management organisation (ALMO) have been brought back under Council control and there is a focus on reducing costs in the HRA to ensure the maximum resource is available for investment in the housing stock.

The Council is the largest landlord in the Borough and we are convinced of the importance of continuing to invest in Council owned homes. We will ensure that they are well maintained and that they continue to meet the Decent Homes standard. Our HRA Asset Management Strategy is based on an objective appraisal of the stock to determine how investment should be made. The five key asset management challenges identified in the strategy have been costed over ten years. They are:

#### **Property compliance – essential work on electrical and fire safety.**

There is a continuing revenue funded programme to carry out remedial building work in flats and shared areas. We will carry out more work on flat entrance doors, fire doors in sheltered housing and periodic electrical inspections. Further work will be undertaken as funding is available to upgrade smoke alarms, accelerate the refurbishment of lifts in tower blocks and provide remote monitoring of faults. Quality assurance of servicing contracts for fire protection and independent audit of electrical work are included in this work.

#### **Maintaining the Decent Homes standard.**

We have already ensured that the social housing provided by the Council met the Government's Decent Homes Standards two years in advance of the

target. We are structuring our future investment programme to maintain decency as homes deteriorate over time owing to age or disrepair.

### **Support for independence**

We have identified the provision of extra care and other forms of supported housing for older people and other adults as critical to reducing reliance on residential care and developing independence. There is also a continuing need to adapt properties to meet the needs of household members with disabilities. We will ensure that existing Council homes are available and accessible to people with disabilities whatever their choice of care and support provision.

We are in the process of delivering a programme of supported housing using the Council's own resources.

### **Energy efficiency**

The energy efficiency of the stock in general is good, with an average SAP 2005 rating of 66 (as at March 2011). There is more that we can do to improve the energy rating and reduce the cost of home heating. This is important as a high proportion of tenants are older and a high proportion are on low incomes. Our approach is to make sure that the fabric of the building is as efficient as possible before we look at other solutions such as photovoltaic panels. We will also ensure that heating and hot water is provided as efficiently as possible. We will investigate coordinating work on Council housing and private sector homes to determine how best to access Government programme funding for some of the improvement measures we want to take.

### **A decent home in a decent place**

The shared spaces that are part of the Council housing estate and make the environment a pleasant place to live are essential to the wellbeing of tenants and the community. Estate improvements have been under funded in the past. This is a significant challenge, following on from our delivery of the decent homes programme.

We intend to take the opportunity to pilot estate improvements through investment in better lighting, fencing and security, repairing or removing sheds and garage blocks, remodelling drying areas, planting and landscaping and repair and redecoration. Our aim is to achieve *lifetime neighbourhoods*.

**A Lifetime Neighbourhood** is one in which civic and social processes – such as transport planning, information and advice provision and social networking-together with physical conditions achieve the following outcomes :

- ✓ An environment that is accessible and inclusive, aesthetically pleasing and safe in terms of both traffic and crime
- ✓ A community that offers plenty of services, facilities and open space
- ✓ A strong social and civic fabric including volunteering and informal networks
- ✓ A culture of consultation and user empowerment among decision

- makers
- ✓ A strong local identity and sense of place

### **The Glebe Estate Initiative**

In 2008, the Council successfully bid for £1,350,000 funding from the London Development Agency to improve the Glebe estate in West Drayton. The Council was also required to contribute funding, and is doing so from its housing capital programme. This project is part of the Decent Estates Initiative, to provide a “Decent Home in a Decent place” by improving the environment and quality of life for residents. Planned are better security and reduced anti-social behaviour, improved accessibility and play facilities.

The four year programme is about to enter its final year and so far has achieved:-

- Two brand new playgrounds in derelict garage areas. Butterfly Park is for children aged 7 and under, and Cool Zone is for 7 – 12 year olds. The names were chosen by children on the estate in a competition, and they also chose the type of play equipment they wanted. Both playgrounds contain very innovative and stimulating equipment, aimed at including all children, regardless of ability or disability. They were opened at Easter 2011, and have been a huge success.
- Improvement of an existing grassed area, which is now an all-weather ball court for football, basketball, and tennis. This was opened by the Mayor in July 2010. There is also a landscaped family area next to it.
- Demolition of the majority of garages on the estate, most of which were empty and derelict. Provision of three new car parks.
- New street lighting to the six former garage areas
- Improved security to the estate’s 18 blocks of flats/ maisonettes by providing locked gates and upgraded lighting, and new front and rear communal doors. 7 are completed, and the remaining 11 will have works later in 2012.
- Other works to the blocks have included the extension of bin stores and provision of recycling facilities in order to reduce refuse collections from twice weekly to once a week (residents had to pay extra for the second collection as it is not funded out of their Council tax); the renewal of fragile asbestos shed roofs in the rear garden areas; and the improvement of accessibility to the blocks – particularly for people with disabilities, the elderly, and mothers with young children.
- Reduction of carbon emissions on the estate by helping residents to lower their fuel bills. There have been two energy efficiency education projects, involving adults and children. The current one, run by Thames Valley Groundwork, is being run in co-ordination with local schools.

We have held a series of open evenings with those residents affected, to find out their views, and have also regularly attended the meetings of the Tenants and Residents' Association to discuss the scope of works, show them plans and drawings, and update them on progress. We have also enjoyed attending the estate's annual Fun Day to talk to residents.

### **Reform of Council housing finance**

The Localism Act 2011 included plans for bringing in the mandatory self-financing regime to replace the HRA subsidy system. The new regime provides opportunities but comes with significant risks including those associated with the repayment of new and existing debt. Each local authority will, in effect, be running a housing company funded by rents and charges rather than a housing service funded by Government allowances and subsidies.

The Council has acquired £191.6m of national housing debt in return for retaining all rental income, thus saving around £15m per year for 2012/13, rising to £25m in future years. In addition, a borrowing cap has been set that gives the HRA a headroom capacity of £47m for new housing development.

We will prepare a thirty year business plan to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the new regime. The capital programme within the HRA has been developed against this backdrop.

### **Council housing management**

In addition to maintaining the condition of the housing stock, we will continue to improve our delivery of the housing management service, focusing on

- Ensuring tenants and leaseholders are involved in how their homes are managed
- Collecting the rent and service charges
- Keeping housing estates clean and attractive
- Tackling nuisance, crime and harassment
- Providing extra support to help vulnerable tenants sustain their homes

We will further develop our joint inspections with tenants and local housing associations in areas where there are multiple social landlords.

### **Tenancy fraud**

Hillingdon takes social housing fraud very seriously with a number of initiatives recently introduced in order to tackle this problem further.

We have a unit based in our Corporate Fraud Team which was set up specifically to combat unauthorised occupation. We have a 24 hour fraud hotline and web page for members of the public to report their suspicions. We

are also matching our housing tenancy information with information from other organisations including housing associations and credit reference agencies. Since being established in 2010, the new fraud unit has recovered 26 properties which have since been relet to households in genuine housing need.

Each year we will carry out an audit of a third of our Council tenancies in order to make sure properties are occupied by legitimate tenants. While we are conducting so many visits, we will also take the opportunity to identify cases where tenants may need help with their tenancy or with their home and will offer to arrange appropriate help. We will also extend this work into fraud in temporary accommodation.

### **Landlord scrutiny**

Tenants and local Councillors will play an important role in scrutinising the plans and activities of social landlords. We are looking at how this will be organised in Hillingdon. The Council's Policy Overview Committee will continue its role in reviewing service delivery

From April 2013 Councillors will have a designated role under the Localism Act in receiving and considering requests to submit complaints to the Housing Ombudsman once a local tenant of either the Council or a housing association has exhausted the internal complaints process.

We will encourage tenants to play their part and equip tenants to perform the role of, for example, inspector or mystery shopper.

### **Helping tenants into work**

The profile of Council tenants is slowly changing, but the majority are aged over 60 and for the most part retired. 65% of tenants receive housing benefit.

The Training Initiative for Leaseholders and Tenants (TILT) was developed to support the Government's agenda on 'worklessness' and builds on partnership working. We have been running workplace skills training for tenants for the past three years and the courses have been popular and consistently oversubscribed.

Included are career coaching, job search skills, CV preparation, motivational and interview skills and four weeks of work placement that could lead to employment. The one-to-one support provided helps guide the candidates through the programme. The programme has been very successful. So far we have been able to offer training and work placements to 21 tenants, of whom nine have successfully secured employment. We intend to maintain and develop the service.

### **Council tenants' right to buy**

The Government has expressed its commitment to reinvigorating the Right to Buy scheme, to boost home ownership and to increase funds for new house building.

The Right to Buy scheme was introduced in 1980 and gives qualifying social housing tenants the right to buy their home at a discount. In London the discount was reduced to a maximum of £16,000 in 2003. Both nationally and locally, sales have fallen in recent years with only 13 homes sold under the Right to Buy in Hillingdon in 2010/11 with a further 7 in 2011/12. The maximum discount has been raised to £75,000 in London and nationwide from April 2012. A key element of the policy is that some of the funds from sold homes can be used by local authorities to invest in building replacement homes.

### **Hillingdon's Council housing tenancy policy**

Our tenancy policy sets out the details of how the Council (in its landlord role) will apply the principles set out in the Tenancy Strategy for the Borough to Council housing tenancies.

Our aim is to provide a high quality housing management service to prospective and current tenants. We will respond effectively to the demands placed on our limited social housing resource and make best use of our stock to ensure it meets existing and future tenants' needs. Tenants should have the right home for as long as they need it.

Our homes are let at rents that are lower than those charged by private landlords or by registered providers for Affordable Rent homes and that means that people have fewer worries about their housing costs and can focus instead on the other things that help them succeed – like training and employment, developing independent living skills and being part of the community.

As people get older they need more support to remain independent and our sheltered and extra care housing can provide it. Some of our homes have significant adaptations to enable disabled people to live independently. Adaptations are expensive and demand for them is growing so we want to ensure that every adapted home is occupied by someone who needs the special features.

Family homes are particularly in demand so we would prefer that they are always occupied by families who need the space they provide. However, stability and the right home are particularly important to children - we want to help children to have an uninterrupted education and upbringing in a decent home. Council owned housing provides those on a low income and who cannot afford other housing options in the Borough with the stability they need. Households with a combined income which indicates that they can afford a different housing tenure will be expected to move on and release the property for someone who does not have the same options.

Our policy takes all of these considerations into account and contains the following key provisions:

- Existing social tenancies will be protected and remain unchanged from their current status
- The introduction of minimum five year fixed term tenancies for new tenants following a one year introductory tenancy
- Shorter terms in some exceptional circumstances
- Renewal of fixed term tenancies unless there has been a significant change in circumstances
- Minimum tenancy periods for households in specific circumstances, including households with a disabled household member, families with children, single households and childless couples of working age and older people
- Changes to first and discretionary second succession to a tenancy.

### **Supporting tenants to move**

We will continue to take action to reduce overcrowding and under occupation in social rented housing.

Our Home Release Reward Scheme will continue to offer incentives to tenants who give up one bedroom or more to move to a smaller sized property and release their larger home for another family in need. 85 family sized homes were made available by the scheme in 2010/11 with a further 88 during 2011/12.

Room2Move offers a range of options including prioritised mutual exchange and help with a deposit to rent in the private sector. 100 overcrowded tenants were helped in 2011/12.

We will take part in the Mayor of London's pan London mobility scheme which prioritises under occupiers and helps social tenants to move in order to find employment

### **Working in partnership with housing associations**

#### **Stock condition**

Disrepair is less of an issue in this sector than it is within the private sector. In 2008 around 8% of housing association homes were recorded as having a Category 1 Hazard, lower than the level found in the private sector. The energy efficiency profile of housing association homes is good with high levels of insulation and efficient heating systems. The average SAP rating is better than found in the private sector. 15% of housing association homes were found to be non-decent; again, noticeably lower than the finding for the private sector.

We have developed a formal partnership with all of the key housing associations providing affordable housing and housing related support in

Hillingdon. In partnership we focus on a continuous improvement of current services as well as working to address larger strategic housing issues. 22 associations have joined the partnership and agreed an area housing plan to make the best use of housing in the Borough.

Registered housing providers such as housing associations must have regard to the Council's Tenancy Strategy. It is important that all local social housing providers manage their tenancies to best meet the requirements of the area. The strategy outlines the type and length of tenancies appropriate for Hillingdon.

### **Managing the supply of existing homes – what we intend to do**

- Improve the worst housing conditions in the private rented sector
- Continue to license an additional 80 HMOs annually
- Update information on stock condition in the private sector
- Accredite 30 private sector landlords annually
- Limit the high concentration of HMOs in Uxbridge South and Brunel wards.
- Use HCA funding allocation to bring empty property back into use as affordable housing
- Continue our work to reduce fuel poverty by accessing funding for energy efficiency measures
- Reduce the carbon footprint of housing in the Borough
- Improve energy efficiency to contribute to the London target for residential property emissions reduction of 60% by 2025.
- Increase the average SAP rating of private housing to 62, the proportion of insulated cavity walls to 75%, the proportion of insulated solid walls to 20% and the proportion of properties with at least 200mm of loft insulation to 30%.
- Implement work on Council housing and estates to meet the five key challenges we have identified
- Develop a long term HRA business plan in 2012 to access the opportunities available and safeguard against risk.
- Increase mobility and reduce the level of overcrowding in social rented

housing.

- Work with housing associations to ensure that management standards are consistent
- Identify and eliminate Council housing fraud
- Identify struggling Council tenants and offer help to sustain tenancies
- Ensure tenants are fully involved in the landlord scrutiny process and the provision of their housing.

## **Section 10 Managing support**

### **Introduction**

Some people need extra support to help them retain their own home in the community. We commission or directly provide accommodation and services to help people stay independent for as long as possible.

As part of our radical programme of building new supported housing in Hillingdon, the Council is more committed than ever to provide low, medium and high level support to people as part of specialist accommodation or as floating support delivered to people wherever they live.

The financial resources available to support the purchase of these services are shrinking and are likely to shrink further over the life of this strategy but we are committed to maintaining the same level of service by finding more efficient ways to commission and contract with external providers as well as finding more efficient ways to deliver Council services.

### **Register of social housing for people with disabilities**

We provide grant funding for adaptations to properties so that people with a disability can live there more independently. It is also important that properties that have been specially adapted in this way are always occupied by households with a similar need.

With the aim of ensuring that adapted properties are always relet to a household with appropriate needs, we will work with housing associations to introduce a disabled housing register to make better use of the social housing stock and provide a better service for residents.

### **Support to stay at home**

Housing related support can help people become more independent or remain independent in their own home. It can make it possible for vulnerable people to leave, or avoid going into, residential care or hospital.

For those people with lower support needs, our emphasis is on community-based solutions - independent tenancies with support tailored to people's needs.

- **Floating support** services provide help with managing a budget and paying bills, cleaning, cooking and getting on with the neighbours.

- **Handyperson** services help older people to get minor repairs completed
- **TeleCareLine** helps hundreds of people with a variety of needs to stay in their own homes, by making sure that they can get help if they need it in an emergency
- **Support at home** in the form of a reablement service for a few weeks for older people who have just come out of hospital

## Supported housing

We provide or commission specialist housing for people who need support to live in the community but who do not need to live in residential care.

In Hillingdon we currently have a range of supported housing for different client groups with plans to dramatically increase this over the next few years. We plan to provide 422 additional units of supported accommodation over the next three years to meet identified need. The first 126 units are planned as part of a three year building programme managed by the Council with part funding from the Homes and Communities Agency.

Figure 10 shows the supported housing programme by client group and planned year of delivery.

<b>Figure 10 : Supported housing programme by client group and planned year of delivery, 2012/13 to 2014/15</b>					
	<b>Learning disabilities</b>	<b>Physical disabilities</b>	<b>Mental health</b>	<b>Older people</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2012/13</b>	23	7	5	-	<b>35</b>
<b>2013/14</b>	86	6	26	-	<b>118</b>
<b>2014/15</b>	72	37	24	136	<b>269</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>422</b>

Source : LBH statistics

The Council's first purpose built extra care schemes are Cottessmore House in Ickenham (in partnership with Paradigm Housing Association) and Triscott House in Hayes. Together they provide 95 extra care places for older people, including people with learning or physical disabilities.

The supported housing programme will provide accommodation for different client groups and different situations – meeting a range of needs in the process. Some people require longer term accommodation; others need short-medium term support as part of a process of moving onto more independent living. We also retain supported housing for women experiencing domestic violence, teenage mothers, offenders and those with substance abuse problems.

Supported housing works and offers real alternatives to institutional forms of living such as residential care. Supported housing also prevents homelessness and helps to ensure that people retain the care and support they need to live well behind their own front door. We will work to promote the

benefits of supported housing to potential tenants, including those who may transfer from residential care, providing information and support for them and their families.

### **Older people**

Over the next ten years there is a projected 27% increase in the number of residents aged 85 and over living in the Borough. We need to look at how the Borough will be equipped to meet these needs, particularly in the housing sector.

There are 21 Council owned sheltered housing schemes providing 841 homes for older people. Housing associations own and manage a further 204 units of sheltered housing.

Working in partnership with tenants, we are reviewing Council owned sheltered housing to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of older people. The review will take into account services provided to tenants with the highest needs as well as the needs of older people who are not residents of sheltered housing. We are also looking to develop more extra care sheltered accommodation with 24 hour care and support provided on site, following the provision of our first two schemes.

Increased extra care provision for people with dementia is part of the Council's supported housing programme.

We will also encourage the development of private sector extra care accommodation for sale.

Information on housing choices should be easily available for older people and we will ensure that housing information is part of the care information systems developed by the Council for older people. These will include *Careplace*, a centralised on line resource of care services information in West London. By using it residents and their families can find out about care and support services available in the area.

### **People with physical disabilities**

There are 31 flats at Grooms Court which provide a low level of support for people with physical disabilities. We currently plan to develop a further 6 homes with a high level of support as part of our supported housing programme. Our aim is to encourage the supply of adapted units which can accommodate disabled people and, if necessary, their live in carers. The programme will provide 50 supported housing units for people with physical disabilities.

People with physical disabilities, including those leaving residential care, who apply for social housing will be matched where possible with suitably adapted properties from the register of housing for people with disabilities.

## **People with learning disabilities**

There are 42 existing places in five housing schemes providing a range of provision for people who have learning disabilities. Up to 30 people who have been living in residential placements outside the Borough will have the opportunity to live in new accommodation back in Hillingdon provided as part of the supported housing programme.

There are 13 registered care homes in the Borough provided by the third sector for people with learning disabilities. The intention is that these will be deregistered to become supported housing schemes, thus ensuring far greater independence and more fulfilling lives for residents.

We currently plan to provide 181 places in eleven new supported housing developments which will be built by the Council and in another three built by partner housing associations.

## **Children and young people**

There are currently two voluntary sector organisations which provide non self-contained accommodation and floating support for 228 young people and care leavers in the Borough. As private sector rented accommodation has become more difficult to access, young people may spend longer in hostel accommodation before suitable housing is available for them to move in to.

We will examine the need for more accommodation based support for young people with complex needs, particularly for care leavers who are over 18 and young people at risk. We will review existing private housing stock to identify those landlords who might be able to meet the need of care leavers.

We are committed to increasing the number of foster parents in the Borough. People who become foster parents or those fostering who wish to increase the number of children they foster are prioritised for appropriate social housing.

We will review the service “pathway” for mothers and children who experience domestic violence and need to be rehoused in settled accommodation.

Children leaving care being housed by the Council will benefit from a range of advice and assistance from the housing service. This will help to ensure that care leavers are supported to manage the transition to independent living and that they benefit from guidance on a range of areas including bidding for properties using LOCATA, moving into a Council home, budgeting and staying independent by successfully managing their tenancy.

## **People with mental health needs**

The supply of housing services for people with a mental health related problem is being remodelled and expanded. A 24-hour long term care and support accommodation-based service is provided by Look Ahead Housing

and Care for people with complex needs. It has a capacity of 31 (increasing to 32 in 2013) self-contained units and is being remodelled to be much more personalised. In 2013 Council funding of the 'core' service is expected to reduce, when users will be able to purchase complimentary 'flexi' services through their personal budget.

Two supported housing services are being transferred to Hestia Housing Support in 2012. They have a total capacity of 32 and will be remodelled to be delivered more on a short term 'floating' basis and on different buildings where most of the units will be self-contained. Hestia also provides a Borough-wide floating support service to 66 clients.

We plan to provide an additional 55 units of supported housing over the three years to 2015.

### **Adapting existing homes**

Adaptations to existing homes can help people in a number of ways. They can help people remain independent and stay in their own home rather than be forced to consider residential care. They can make it possible for vulnerable people to leave hospital much earlier than would be the case otherwise. They can help parents ensure that their disabled child is provided with a safe and manageable environment.

Funded jointly by the Government and the Council, Disabled Facilities Grants can pay for adaptations up to £30,000 and the Council has the discretion to top them up. There were aids and adaptations for 215 private sector homes in 2011/12. Exceptionally, if adaptations are impossible, we can use our powers to help buy a more suitable home.

We have also adapted 120 Council owned homes in 2011/12 and have a target of 215 adaptations in 2012/13 reflecting an increase in funding from the HRA from £750,000 to £1.4m.

### **Housing benefit service**

In 2011/12 Hillingdon's Benefit Service paid £138m in Housing Benefit to 7,500 Council, 4,700 Housing Association and 8,400 private tenants. Just over 20% of Hillingdon households receive Housing Benefit. The service dealt with 10,644 benefit claims and 81,239 changes to claims, and had face to face interviews with 21,976 customers. In addition, the Corporate Contact Centre dealt with 63,907 telephone calls and 33,685 enquiries at the Council's main reception and One Stop in relation to Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

In early 2012 we piloted a new service in response to feedback from benefit applicants. The service provides active assistance in the form of a personal adviser to help new benefit claimants complete their claim. In short, the adviser calls the applicant and completes the form with them online. This is followed by a face to face interview where the claim is verified and signed, with the benefit calculation fully explained to the applicant. The new system has reduced the turnaround time for claims by more than half and has proved

to be popular with residents. The new system was rolled out for the majority of new claims at the end of May 2012.

Use of new information technology has been optimised to improve the Benefits service for new applicants and eliminate the completion and scanning of paper forms.

For the future we will continue to work closely with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to implement the changes to Housing Benefits and the migration to Universal Credit and Pension Credit. We will support residents and new applicants through the changes in process and benefit payments until full migration to DWP is complete in 2017/18.

The administration of the Welfare Assistance Fund will be transferred to the Council in April 2013 and we will set local criteria for eligibility for payment.

We will work closely with Council Tax colleagues to implement the new localised Council Tax Support Scheme and will administer this alongside Housing Benefit in order to support residents through the various benefit changes.

Details of the expected impact of benefit reform on local residents and of the likely migration from central to outer London Boroughs resulting from reform can be found in Section 7 : Managing Demand.

### **Managing support – what we intend to do**

- Provide 422 units of supported accommodation for vulnerable groups as follows:

Learning disabilities	181
Physical disabilities	50
Mental health	55
Older people	136
Total	422

Source: LBH statistics

- Deliver advice and support to help people live independently
- Commission services to help people stay in their own homes
- Ensure that people supported at home have maximum choice and control over the services they receive – by April 2013, everyone eligible will have a personal budget.
- Provide aids and adaptations to households in both the private sector and in Council housing via a streamlined and more efficient service
- Maintain a register of disabled adapted social housing

- Review specialist accommodation such the Council's sheltered stock to make sure that it is what people want and makes best use of the Council's resources
- Roll out the assisted housing benefit claim service to all new claims and existing claims in 2013.

## Section 11 Housing services in 2015

### Introduction

The Housing Strategy sets out the action the Council intends to take with partners over the next three years. Set out below is what residents of the Borough can expect as a result of the strategy.

#### What can residents expect?

##### Homelessness prevention

- We will contact households renting in the private sector whom we know will be affected by changes to the Local Housing Allowance. Households who are affected by welfare reform, including the effect of the Universal Credit cap on their ability to meet private sector rents in the Borough, will be able to access timely and effective advice on their housing options.
- We will procure good quality affordable private rented accommodation for households who are at risk of homelessness. As the demand for such housing is strong, some households who approach the Council may find that the homes they need and can afford are available only outside the Borough.
- Use of temporary accommodation will be maintained at 2011/12 levels, or reduced further depending on the availability of suitable private sector rented properties to prevent homelessness.
- We have reviewed our social housing allocations policy in 2012, giving consideration to whether non-priority households should be able to apply for social housing. Our aim has been to make sure that more support will be available to those households in the greatest housing need.
- The register of adapted social rented housing in the Borough will be completed. When an adapted home is let to a new tenant, we will make sure that it is matched whenever possible with a household which needs an adapted home.
- We will have the option to discharge our statutory duty to house homeless households in the private rented sector rather than providing social rented housing

## **New housing provision**

- An additional 422 units of supported accommodation will be available to support vulnerable people to live more independently in the community. Just over half will be provided by Council redevelopment of its own sites, and the remainder as a result of partnership working with housing associations.
- Over the period 2011/15, we have set a challenging target to reduce spending on institutional care from 51% of our budget in March 2011 to an average of 30% across all adult social care user groups.
- By April 2013 everyone who is eligible will receive a personal budget with which to pay for the care and support services they need. Housing support and social care services will be provided in a way that ensures choice and control for residents. This will mean choice about how services are provided and the ability to purchase independent support using personal budgets.
- Based on current plans and targets, more than 1,000 new homes will be built in the Borough to meet demand for market priced and affordable housing.
- New homes will be built to Lifetime Homes Standards and will therefore be suitable or easily adaptable to meet the current and changing needs of the families who live in them.
- Our Tenancy Strategy sets out how the flexibilities in the Localism Act 2011 will be used in Hillingdon.

## **Council housing**

- More Council tenants will be able either to buy their home, move from their home to find work or move to a home of a size more suitable for their needs as a result of new or existing national, London or local initiatives.
- The roll out of the revised tenant involvement framework will provide increased opportunities for tenants to be involved in decisions affecting their homes and their neighbourhood. These will include an active role in scrutinising and improving landlord services in the Borough.
- Our Tenancy Policy sets out how the flexibilities in the Localism Act 2011 will be applied to Council owned housing in Hillingdon.
- We will audit a third of all Council tenancies annually to ensure that

properties are occupied by legitimate tenants.

- Over the next three years we plan to spend £26m on improving Council tenants' homes. The money will be spent on new boilers and energy efficiency measures, upgraded electrical installations, new windows, roofs and doors and new kitchens and bathrooms.
- Invest £7m to adapt properties so that a household member can live more independently at home with their family.
- Quality of life in and around Council housing, especially flats, will be improved. More investment is planned for shared spaces and areas around Council homes. Parking, paths, fences, garages, play areas and security measures, plus upgrades to the lifts at a number of tower blocks will see planned expenditure of £5m.

### **Private sector housing**

- Increased partnership working will result in better standards of private rented accommodation in the Borough. We plan to accredit at least 90 more private sector landlords and licence 240 Houses in Multiple Occupation by 2015.
- Better insulation means better energy efficiency, reduced carbon emissions and reduced household expenditure on fuel. We will be working with the GLA to introduce the Government's Green Deal for householders in Hillingdon .
- The number of excess winter deaths in the Borough will be reduced in addition to a reduction in the number of low income and vulnerable households living in fuel poverty.
- Homes which have been unoccupied will be brought back into use to increase the stock of affordable housing – less than 1% of homes will remain empty for six months or more. We will be working with other West London Boroughs to invest HCA funding in this work.
- We will offer grants for essential property repairs to householders who own their own home but do not have the financial resources to maintain them, enabling them to continue to live independently at home.

### **Housing Benefit service**

- Residents will be supported by a more efficient and user friendly benefits administration service. They will receive one to one help to complete application forms and will be able to refer to an advisor in

case of queries.

- We will set local criteria for the Welfare Assistance Fund and administer it locally from April 2013.
- The Housing Benefit Service will work closely with Department of Work and Pensions to ensure a smooth transition of Housing Benefit cases to Universal Credit, and support residents through the process.

### Glossary

#### **Affordable Housing**

Housing which is subsidised so that it is affordable by households on an average income or below who are unable to afford housing at full market cost.

#### **Affordable Rent**

Affordable Rent homes are new social housing tenancies made available to tenants at up to a maximum of 80% of the gross market rent.

#### **Category 1 hazards**

This is part of the HHSRS (see HHSRS) hazard rating. Local authorities are under a duty to take action in the case of category 1 hazards. There are 29 hazards in the HHSRS and Category 1 are the most serious.

#### **Choice Based Letting Scheme (CBL)**

A scheme introduced to provide an element of choice for people who apply for Council housing or housing association properties. Homes are advertised and applicants can bid for them.

#### **Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)**

CCGs are intended to take on commissioning responsibilities as part of the Government's plans for the NHS set out in the 2012 Health and Social Care Act. The groups, made up of GPs and other medical professionals, will work together to manage their local budgets and buy health services for patients direct with other NHS colleagues and local authorities. Clinical commissioning groups will assume full responsibility for commissioning in April 2013 and will have control of approximately 80% of the NHS budget.

#### **Core Strategy**

Local Development Framework document upon which every other local development policy is based regarding development and use of land

#### **Decent Homes Standard**

A 10-year target was set with the aim of bringing all social housing up to a decent standard by 2010.

#### **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)**

A local Council grant that helps towards the cost of adapting homes for disabled people, including disabled children.

#### **Empty Property**

A long term empty property has been empty for 6 months or more and is not for sale or subject to any legal processes.

#### **Energy efficiency**

Efficient use of energy which may result in saving money

**Extra-care housing**

Housing that allows people to remain independent while having access to care and support services if this is required to meet their needs.

**Feed in Tariff**

Where energy generating technologies, such as solar panels, are installed payments are made for any energy produced and used and any additional energy returned to the National Grid.

**Finders Fee**

Landlords or agents have traditionally asked for a month's rent in advance and a month's deposit when they let their properties. Many people on benefits or on a low income cannot afford this. Hillingdon's Finders Fee scheme assists tenants by paying a variable, one-off, non-returnable incentive payment to a private sector landlord in lieu of a deposit at the beginning of a tenancy

**Find your own accommodation**

Accommodation sourced directly in the private rented sector by households at risk of homelessness. The Council can assist by paying a small incentive to the landlord for accepting the household as a tenant. .

**Flexible Tenancies**

Social housing let on fixed term rather than lifetime tenancies.

**Fuel Poverty**

A household is deemed to be in fuel poverty where it spends more than 10% of its income on energy in the home

**Green Deal**

A Government scheme allowing private companies to provide measures to boost the energy efficiency of the homes. Costs of the measures will be recovered through instalments on the energy bills for the home concerned..

**Handyperson scheme**

Minor repair service for homeowners and tenants over the age of 60 and people of any age with disabilities

**Health and Wellbeing Board**

This is a forum established under the 2012 Health and Social Care Act. Its main purpose is to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for local residents and it achieves this through the development and implementation of a health and wellbeing strategy. Its members include commissioners from health and social care, the Joint Director of Public Health, elected Councillors and a representative from Healthwatch. In Hillingdon the Board's meetings are chaired by the Leader of the Council.

**Homelessness application**

An application to the Council (by a household or individual) following which

a housing professional assesses whether the Council has a duty to re house the applicant under the homelessness law.

### **Homelessness duty**

This is a duty the Council has to re-house certain households under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 based on their meeting criteria assessed following a homelessness application.

### **Housing Association Leasing Direct (HALD)**

Housing Associations lease properties in the private sector and provide a management service on behalf of landlords. The Council nominates tenants for the properties, using them for families who are at risk of homelessness.

### **Housing Benefit**

Financial assistance for those who may be out of work or on a low income to pay their housing costs.

### **Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)**

All properties must meet certain standards to make them habitable. The HHSRS assesses housing faults and how they might affect health and safety. The HHSRS considers how likely it is that a hazard would occur and how serious the outcome would be.

### **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)**

An HMO is a house used as living accommodation by more than 2 people who are not part of the same family, where they occupy the property as their only or main residence and share amenities and pay rent

### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

Local authorities are required to maintain a separate account, the Housing Revenue Account, defined by Section 74 and Schedule 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. This account sets out the expenditure and income arising from Council housing provision.

### **Landlord Accreditation Scheme**

Hillingdon Landlord Accreditation Scheme is a scheme for landlords with properties to let in the Borough can join. The scheme encourages and promotes good standards of privately rented accommodation .

### **Lifetime Homes**

The Lifetime Homes standard is a set of 16 design criteria that provide a model for building accessible and adaptable homes.

### **Local Housing Allowance**

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) arrangements are a way of working out Housing Benefit (HB) for people who rent from a private landlord. Local authorities use LHA rates based on the size of household and the area in which the household lives to work out the amount of rent which can be met.

**New Homes Bonus**

This scheme provides local authorities with a bonus equal to the national average for the Council tax band for each additional property, and is paid for the following six years as an unringfenced grant. There is an enhancement for affordable homes.

**Owner occupier**

A person who owns or is in the process of buying the house or flat he or she lives in.

**Planning Policy Guidance**

A series of documents issued by the Government. They set out Government policy and advice on planning issues such as housing.

**Primary Care Trust (PCT)**

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) manage the provision of primary care services in a specific area. These include services provided by doctors' surgeries, dental practices, opticians and pharmacies. PCTs are abolished from April 2013 and most of their responsibilities transfer to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).

**Privately managed accommodation**

This is a scheme run jointly by West London Boroughs. 17 providers have been appointed to a framework tender for procurement and management of privately managed accommodation which can be used either to house clients for whom Councils have a statutory duty to provide accommodation or to prevent homelessness.

**Private Rented Sector**

The private rented sector (PRS) is defined as accommodation that is privately owned (not owned by a social landlord) and rented out.

**Private Sector Stock Condition Survey**

The 1985 Housing Act requirement that local housing authorities carry out regular stock condition surveys was updated in the Housing Act 2004. It states that a local housing authority must keep the housing conditions in the area under review in order to identify any action that may need to be taken.

**Registered Providers**

The definition of registered social landlord has been replaced with the concept of registered providers of social housing. A provider of social housing can now be either a non-profit or a profit-making organisation. Registered providers are regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

**RE:NEW**

RE:NEW is a London wide scheme designed to make it easier for all householders to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. The scheme applies to all types of homes across London, including owner occupied, privately rented and social housing.

**Room2Move**

The name of Hillingdon Council's service for social housing tenants to help them to move, enabling them either to downsize or to find a larger property to suit their needs.

**Social Housing**

Social housing is housing that is let at low rents and on a secure basis to people in housing need. It is generally provided by Councils and not-for-profit organisations such as housing associations.

**Southwark Judgement**

Judgement made by the Law Lords in May 2009. This piece of case law obliges children's services to provide accommodation and support to homeless 16- and 17-year-olds.

**Temporary Accommodation**

Accommodation used by a local housing authority to house people it has accepted that it owes a duty to under the homelessness law. This could be private sector leased or bed and breakfast accommodation.

**Universal Credit**

Universal Credit will replace the present benefit structure. A new law will need to be passed first, after which changes would take effect from October 2013.

**Vulnerable People**

A person who is unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests, is at risk of harm, or because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than other people.

## Appendix B

### Source documents

**Laying the Foundations : A Housing Strategy for England**  
HM Government, November 2011

**The Revised London Housing Strategy**  
Mayor of London, December 2011

**The London Plan : Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London**  
Mayor of London, July 2011

**Does the Cap Fit?**  
London Councils , 2011

**Chance of a lifetime**  
Shelter, 2011

**Caring for our Future : Reforming Care and Support**  
HM Government White Paper, July 2012

**Relevant Hillingdon plans, strategies and research**

**Hillingdon's Sustainable Community Strategy 2011**

Hillingdon Partners, 2011

**Hillingdon's Wellbeing Strategy 2010-15**

Hillingdon Partners, 2010

**Choice, Control and Independence : Transformation of Adult Social Care: Personalisation and Commissioning Plan 2011-15**

London Borough of Hillingdon, 2011

**Hillingdon's Housing Market Assessment**

Fordham Research, 2009

**Hillingdon's Private Sector Stock Condition Survey**

Fordham Research, 2008

**Hillingdon's Council Housing Stock Condition Survey**

**Hillingdon's Local Development Framework**

**Core strategy – a vision for 2026**

Hillingdon Council, 2011

**Climate Change Strategy 2009/12**

Hillingdon Council 2009

**Hillingdon Council Affordable Rent Research Report**

Chilli Projects 2011

**Disabilities Commissioning Plan 2011-15**

Hillingdon Council 2011

These documents are available at [www.hillingdon.gov.uk](http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk) or by telephoning the Commissioning Team, Central Services on 01895 277451



HILLINGDON  
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# **The London Borough of Hillingdon's Tenancy Strategy**

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**Draft**

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# **1. Introduction**

## **About Hillingdon**

Hillingdon is the second largest of London's Boroughs and covers 42 square miles (11,571 hectares), over half of which is a mixture of countryside including canals, rivers, parks and woodland. The Borough has two airports - Heathrow and RAF Northolt. Hillingdon shares its borders with Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire to the west and Hounslow, Ealing, and Harrow to the east. The north of the Borough is semi-rural, much of it protected by green belt regulation with Ruislip as the major town centre.

The south of Hillingdon is more densely populated and urban in character, containing the administrative centre of Uxbridge and towns of Hayes and West Drayton.

Heathrow airport is situated in the south of the Borough, and is the largest employer offering a range of relatively well-paid skilled and lower paid unskilled manual jobs.

There are a number of major manufacturing and retail organisations with headquarters and sites in Hillingdon. Stockley Park, to the north of Heathrow, is one of Europe's largest business parks. The Council, RAF Northolt, Brunel University, Harefield and Hillingdon hospitals are major public sector employers in the area.

Hillingdon is a good place to live. There are thriving shopping centres, a variety of job opportunities, excellent parks and green spaces, modern leisure facilities and easy access both to the centre of London and the towns, villages and countryside outside the capital. The supply of affordable housing available to Hillingdon's residents is however a challenge. Despite the successes that Hillingdon has achieved – regularly over-delivering on affordable housing targets – many Hillingdon residents are concerned about the affordability of their own housing and the availability of good quality, affordable housing for their children when they need it.

## **Hillingdon's Housing Market**

Average house prices in the Borough have been rising since mid-2009. According to the Land Registry, at the end of 2011 the average price of a property in Hillingdon was £260,980. This reflects a broadly similar picture in London as a whole, where the average property price was £345,298. There are wide differences in entry level (lower quartile) prices across the Borough, from £169,000 in Yiewsley to £355,000 in Ickenham.

These average house prices are *seven times* the average household income in Hillingdon. The continuing squeeze on mortgage finance makes home ownership less accessible to residents of the Borough. Mortgages for buy to let property and shared ownership schemes have also been severely affected.

In terms of the people who rent accommodation in the Borough, the majority live in the social rented sector. The greatest concentration of private sector rental property is in the south of the Borough where rent levels are generally lower. However, since there is more demand for rental property because of a decline in home ownership and also because more renters are moving to outer London as central London, becomes unaffordable, private rents in Hillingdon are increasing. The average monthly rent for a two bed property is £994, the lower quartile rent is £875 (Source : Valuation Office). These figures represent an increase of 2.7% and 2.9% respectively on those in 2011. Over a quarter of those households living in the private rented sector rely upon Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

Household numbers in Hillingdon are projected to grow from an estimated 103,000 in 2011 to 118,000 in 2031, an increase of 14.6%. Similarly, the number of households on the Council's housing register has increased during 2010/11 by 31% to 9,800. While many applicants will not have a need for social housing (as defined by the Council's policy), the growth of the housing register is an indication of the increasing number of households who cannot easily afford to buy or rent on the open market.

With this context, it is clear that the need for accessible social housing remains a strong factor in shaping the Council's objectives and actions.

#### The Need for Affordable Housing

Hillingdon's most recent Housing Market Assessment (HMA) found that a net additional 2,624 homes a year over five years would be required to meet the current and newly arising need for affordable homes.

<b>Estimated size requirement for additional affordable housing (net)</b>		
	<b>Net annual need</b>	<b>% of annual need</b>
<b>1 bed</b>	174	6.6
<b>2 beds</b>	969	36.9
<b>3 beds</b>	913	34.8
<b>4 or more beds</b>	568	21.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,624</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source : Hillingdon HMA 2009

The assessment also showed that there was a need for larger, family sized social rented homes. It also showed that only 22% of the households who needed affordable housing could afford low cost home ownership options rather than social rented homes assuming these options were priced at the midpoint between market and social rented prices. However, the current cost of new build low cost home ownership products available in the Borough is closer to that of market housing and therefore only accessible by few local home seekers.

Analysis of local housing need shows that homes required to accommodate most households accepted as homeless need to have one or two bedrooms.

Hillingdon's HMA also showed that some 5.6% of households are overcrowded, compared with the national estimate from the Survey of English Housing of 2.5%. Overcrowding was measured against the national bedroom standard. The assessment suggests that overcrowded households are more likely to be living in the social rented sector – almost 45% of overcrowded households were living in social rented homes.

### The Supply of Social Rented Housing

The total number of social rented homes let in 2011/12 was 765. When compared with the table on page 4 it is easy to see how far the demand for social housing outweighs the supply of this clearly very scarce resource.

There is only a limited supply of the larger family sized homes which overcrowded households need. The majority of social housing in the Borough has 2 bedrooms or fewer. As a result they are more likely to be available to let – 76% of the total in 2011/12.

Between 2008/9 and 2011/12 1,699 affordable homes were completed in the Borough (social rented or intermediate). These were developed by housing associations, by the Council or by private housing developers as a condition of planning permission on larger housing sites. While Hillingdon has been very successful in developing affordable housing above and beyond the targets that have been set for the Borough by the Greater London Authority, supply remains a constant challenge.

In future, most new affordable homes will be financed by charging an Affordable Rent (at up to 80% of market rent) for the property. Government grant funding will be much reduced.

## **2. The Purpose of Tenancy Strategies**

The Localism Act 2011 provides new opportunities for local authorities and registered housing providers to meet housing needs in more flexible ways and together ensure that suitable affordable housing is available to those who need it most.

These new opportunities include the discretion to offer 'fixed term tenancies' for new social housing tenants rather than the 'lifetime' tenancies that are currently offered. At the end of the fixed term, the household's circumstances will be reviewed by the landlord and if they still need the accommodation, their tenancy can be renewed.

The Act also requires local authorities to develop a Tenancy Strategy to guide registered social housing providers in developing tenancy policies for their own stock.

Registered social housing providers must publish a tenancy policy before they can use flexible tenancies and in doing so should have regard to this tenancy strategy in respect of:

- the kinds of tenancies they grant;
- the circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind
- where they grant tenancies for a certain term, the lengths of the terms; and
- the circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.

### **3. Hillingdon's Tenancy Strategy**

The London Borough of Hillingdon is committed to putting residents first. Good quality, suitable and affordable housing is needed to support Hillingdon's residents to live independent, healthy lives, improve access to training and employment opportunities to tackle worklessness, provide stability for families, support the education attainment of children and allow residents to build social and support networks.

With this in mind, Hillingdon's tenancy strategy provides guidance to shape social landlords' policies to use these new fixed term tenancies in a positive and constructive way.

This tenancy strategy has been developed working closely with registered providers, care and support providers, voluntary sector organisations and Council social care and housing staff. The strategy has been designed to support Hillingdon's local housing priorities set out within Hillingdon's Housing Strategy and has regard to the London Housing Strategy. Hillingdon's Housing Strategy makes it clear that social and Affordable Rented housing has an important role to play in:

- Enabling people to live productive lives; learning, working and contributing to the community. This includes supporting residents to access work and / or take up training
- Improving health and wellbeing, including people who have care needs, health or mobility issues

The tenancy strategy also presents the Council's position on the use of Affordable Rents as this is an important consideration for housing providers when deciding to introduce Affordable Rents alongside fixed-term tenancies.

It is expected that registered providers will engage and consult with Hillingdon Council to ensure their policies are in line with the principles set out here.

Hillingdon Council's own tenancy policy accompanies this document and sets out the details of how the Council will apply the principles set out in this Strategy to the management of Council tenancies.

While the primary audience for this document is registered providers, it will be of interest to members of the public and other stakeholders in the Borough with an interest in social and affordable rented housing. Each social landlord will have their own tenancy policy and affordable rent policy which will be available from the landlord on request.

Hillingdon's tenancy strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated as required working with partners.

### Objectives of the Tenancy Strategy

Hillingdon's Tenancy Strategy aims to ensure that social housing is targeted to those that need it, for as long as they need it.

It also aims to ensure that:

- Social and affordable housing is used as effectively as possible to meet housing need in the Borough
- The use of social housing reduces reliance on inappropriate and costly forms of temporary accommodation
- Vulnerable people within social housing are provided with stability and support
- The scarce resource of social housing is used flexibly and not provided to those households who do not require it.

Overall, the Tenancy Strategy is designed to influence local decisions so that they contribute to the ambitions for housing described in Hillingdon's housing strategy, particularly our ambition that residents are enabled to live safe, healthy and independent lives.

This document establishes a framework for the use of all social housing in the Borough, helping to ensure that more people can benefit from the affordable, social housing that is available.

## **4. Guidance on Fixed-Term Tenancies**

### **4.1 Considerations in developing the guidance**

In establishing Hillingdon's preferences for the use of flexible tenancies, consideration has been given to the benefits of fixed-term tenancies for households in different housing circumstances. A range of different perspectives have influenced this preference, including that of housing providers, the voluntary sector and other partners.

Consideration has been given to:

- The available supply of social rent and Affordable Rent homes compared with demand
- The health and wellbeing of Hillingdon's residents as well as their economic circumstances
- The role of social and Affordable Rent housing in enabling people to become independent, and the length of time this may take bearing in mind the household may have experienced crisis e.g., homelessness, or have support and/or care needs
- The cost of administering fixed term tenancies to registered providers and to other agencies who may need to be involved in the review process e.g. advocates from the voluntary sector or care workers if the household involves someone with support or care needs
- The need to develop or enable alternative housing options should a fixed term tenancy not be reissued at the end of the term e.g., alternative adapted accommodation should there be a disabled household member, or access to the private rented sector

Hillingdon's tenancy strategy seeks to balance the interests of different needs and consider how these will be met by different housing types. This includes general needs family and non-family housing, accessible and adapted housing and long term specialist housing such as sheltered housing and extra care.

### **4.2 Using Fixed-Term Tenancies**

Hillingdon Council supports the use of fixed term tenancies (following on from introductory or probationary tenancies) as they provide a clear way of making the best use of the limited resource of social housing. It would be preferable if all new social tenancies across the Borough were on similar fixed terms in order to provide a clear and straight-forward offer to those seeking to access social housing.

Existing social tenancies will be protected and remain unchanged from their current status.

Registered providers may choose to introduce different types of tenancy agreement for new tenants that last for fixed periods of time, for example five

years. The provider can choose for these to be longer, or shorter in exceptional circumstances.

However, if registered providers decide to use fixed term tenancies, the Council would expect the following guidance to be followed:

- A minimum of a five year fixed term tenancy should be offered for most households (1). There are some exceptional (2) circumstances where the Council would be prepared to accept a shorter term (these are described later). Where a term of less than five years is proposed in the tenancy policy registered housing providers need to give the Council an opportunity to comment. Ultimately the decision on tenancy lengths should be based on making the best use of available housing, although we recognise that fixed term tenancies provide registered providers with an opportunity to rebase Affordable Rents (these can go up or down).
- Fixed term tenancies may be re-issued at the end of the term, following a full review, unless there is a significant change of circumstance. We want to work with providers to establish the criteria they use to inform this decision. Registered providers should take the opportunity to consider all of the tenant's housing options at the review at the end of the tenancy. For most household groups changes in circumstances are likely to include:
  - Financial i.e., the household can afford to live in another tenure
  - Household composition i.e., the household size no longer matches the number of bedrooms in the home
  - Housing need related to health and wellbeing needs e.g., the home does not provide the right level of accessibility, or additional support/care is needed that can be better provided elsewhere
- In designing the tenancy policy and fixed term tenancy review process the registered housing provider should give consideration to how the tenant's quality of life can be improved, and the role of agencies that can enable this e.g. employment, health, care and support.
- Registered providers will continue to use housing need criteria (as defined by the Priority need categories and Reasonable Preference criteria established within the Council's Allocations Policy) when assessing whether to re-issue a tenancy at the end of a fixed term period
- The use of fixed-term tenancies as a management tool is inappropriate particularly in relation to addressing concerns about housing management tenancy issues or neighbourhood issues. Existing tools are available to social landlords (e.g. probationary tenancies) to manage risk. Social landlords are expected to clearly indicate whether they intend to use

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<sup>1</sup> This is in line with the government's preferred minimum tenancy length

<sup>2</sup> Exceptional is defined as not typical or usual. Therefore issuing a shorter tenancy in order to deliver the provider's asset management strategy, for example, is not considered to be exceptional as asset disposal and management is usual practice.

probationary or starter tenancies in their tenancy policy and the circumstances in which these would be extended, as required by the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) regulatory framework.

- "Lifetime" tenancies should be considered for households whose circumstances are unlikely to change over time e.g. people with serious long term health conditions. The use of the term "lifetime" relates to the length of an individual's social housing tenancy rather a specific property.
- All fixed term tenancies should be preceded by a one year introductory tenancy in the case of a secure flexible tenancy, or starter tenancy in the case of a housing association assured flexible tenancy (i.e. an assured short-hold tenancy)
- Registered providers will continue to use the nomination agreement with the Council
- Registered housing providers will need to consider the impact of their tenancy policies and keep their policies under review.

#### 4.3 Managing Fixed Term Tenancies

There are a number of factors which are critical in managing fixed term tenancies as well as the Affordable Rent product. Registered providers are asked to bear the following factors in mind:

- A higher level of awareness is needed amongst the public and existing tenants in social housing of the range of housing options available in Hillingdon and what these have to offer. Social and Affordable Rent homes should not be seen as the default solution. For example, options in the private rented sector may offer a better opportunity for a household to access schools and employment.
- Timely information and advice services will help people to understand their options which should include, where appropriate, opportunities to move within and outside the social and Affordable Rent sectors e.g. into market rent or low cost home ownership where these are affordable.
- Advice and follow up action should be provided by registered providers to enable new tenants to access education, training and employment
- There should be clear criteria against which the decision to re-issue a tenancy is made
- A clear and transparent review process should be in place which is understood by the tenant at the time of tenancy sign up. This should ensure that, during the 6-9 month period before the tenancy is due to expire, the landlord reviews the tenant's housing needs and states before the six month date of expiry whether it intends to renew the

tenancy or not, giving appropriate reasons where the latter applies. The review policy should be accessible and easily available i.e. published on websites and available in local offices.

- An appeals process for tenants must be clearly communicated in the event that the tenants disagree with the decision or the way in which it has been made. Again this should be published and as available as the review process referred to above.
- Information sharing will be required between registered providers and the Council when the decision not to re-issue a tenancy has been taken – 6 months prior to the end of a tenancy in order to avoid homelessness
- While there should not be a presumption that a tenancy will be renewed, the Council expects a large proportion of tenancies to be renewed where tenancy conditions have been met and the tenant's (or tenants') circumstances have not substantially changed.

#### 4.4 Preferences for Minimum Tenancy Periods

This section of the tenancy strategy recommends the Council's preferences for households in specific circumstances. The following four groups account for all the different household types accessing social housing.

- Households with a disabled household member (adult or child)
- Families with children
- Single person households and childless couples of working age
- Older people (people over working age)

Register housing providers must have regard to these preferences when designing their tenancy policy.

##### **a) Households with a disabled household member (adult or child)**

In establishing our preferences, consideration has been given to:

- The health, care and support needs that a disabled person may have (e.g. mental ill health or learning disabilities) in addition to their housing need
- The likelihood that the disabled person will progress towards greater independent living over time, for example a disabled child may eventually leave the family home
- The very limited supply of accessible or adapted homes, and the cost associated with adaptations
- The length of time needed to establish good support mechanisms around the disabled person when they become a tenant
- The risk of vulnerable people 'falling through the net' if they become disconnected from their support networks as a result of a tenancy not being re-issued

- The involvement of health, care and support providers and advocates in the process of reviewing fixed tenancies bearing in mind limited resources for these organisations

**The Council's preferred minimum tenancy lengths are:**

- Five year fixed term tenancies for disabled adults with health and/or care needs e.g. mental ill health or a physical or learning disability.
- For people with serious and enduring long term conditions i.e. where there is no likelihood that housing circumstances or other needs will change, living in appropriately adapted or supported accommodation, the expectation is that the fixed term tenancy would be renewed, provided the property still meets the needs of that person

It would be reasonable for fixed term tenancies to not be re-issued where:

- The disabled person's needs are no longer being met by the accommodation or the support provided in this accommodation (specialist schemes)
- The disabled person no longer lives in the property
- The household's income has increased and other housing options are now accessible e.g. home ownership

It is important that the following things are in place in order for fixed term tenancies to be used:

- A person-centred approach to the review process, involving agencies that are working with the disabled person and the individual's family, carer and/or advocate as appropriate
- Suitable move-on accommodation, with and without support

**b) Families with children**

In establishing our preferences, consideration has been given to:

- The housing needs typically presented by families with children, and the circumstances that have contributed to these needs e.g. homelessness and experience of living in hostel accommodation
- The health, care and support needs that the family may have
- The importance of a stable education to children who have experienced instability in the past
- The time needed for a household to establish links in the community

**The Council's preferred minimum tenancy lengths are:**

- Five year fixed term tenancies for all families, including those where children are of school age or younger

- Shorter fixed term tenancies (e.g. two years) would be acceptable in circumstances where fostering or adoption is the main reason for a social tenancy being allocated

It would be reasonable for fixed term tenancies to not be re-issued where:

- The home is under-occupied because a member of the household has left
- The household's income has increased and they can afford alternative options

It is important that the following things are in place in order for fixed term tenancies to be used:

- Alternative housing options for households to move into should the tenancy not be re-issued
- Support to families to enable them to progress towards different housing options in the future, for example by enabling access to education and employment opportunities, supporting families to manage their household budget
- Good quality information and advice about housing options
- Opportunities for customers – existing and prospective – to have a voice, particularly to shape policies, plans and procedures that may have an impact on their tenancy agreement and how this is managed

### **c) Single person households and childless couples of working age**

In establishing our preferences, consideration has been given to:

- The health, care and support needs that an individual or couple household may have
- The local authority's role as a parent to young people in care, and the possibility that the current duty may be extended to over the age of 25
- High rates of unemployment, particularly for people over the age of 55
- High demand for accommodation from this household group but limited alternative and affordable options

#### **The Council's preferred minimum tenancy lengths are:**

- Five year fixed term tenancies for most single people (including young people leaving care) or couple households
- Shorter fixed term tenancies e.g. two years, are recommended where it is felt that this will contribute towards enabling the individual to work towards greater independence and other positive outcomes, for example specialist housing schemes for young people

It is important that the following things are in place in order for fixed term tenancies to be used:

- Sufficient supply of floating support as needed (and the tenant's engagement with this)
- The review process must be holistic, taking all relevant needs into consideration and involving appropriate agencies where necessary (including, for care leavers, the Leaving Care 16+ Team)
- Where a tenancy will not be re-issued the registered provider should make appropriate referrals to organisations that can assist the household to progress to another housing option
- Alternative housing options for households to move on to, for example accommodation in the private rented sector facilitated by a rent deposit scheme, or shared ownership

#### **d) Older people (over working age)**

In establishing our preferences, consideration has been given to:

- The health, care and support needs that an individual may have, and how these may change over time
- The need to prevent further under-occupation of family homes by people over working age in the future
- The need to attract appropriate older people to sheltered and extra care accommodation, freeing up much needed family size social housing
- The cost implications that could arise from not re-issuing a tenancy where the home has been adapted to meet specific needs

#### **The Council's preferred minimum tenancy lengths are:**

- Five year fixed term tenancies for general needs accommodation
- "Lifetime" tenancies for sheltered and extra care accommodation

It would be reasonable for fixed term tenancies to not be re-issued where the health and care needs of a member of the household have changed (increased or decreased) and these would be better met in different accommodation, for example a household in general needs housing may benefit from a move to sheltered or extra care accommodation.

It is important that the following things are in place in order for fixed term tenancies to be used:

- A person-centred approach to the review process, involving agencies that are working with the older person and the individual's family, carer and/or advocate as appropriate

#### **e) Other circumstances**

- Secure tenants moving to an Affordable Rent property could be offered an appropriate incentive to move. This could be in the form of a "life-time" tenancy. This should be advertised through the Locata process

- Secure tenants under-occupying their property and who are willing to moving to a smaller property could be offered an appropriate incentive to move such as a long term “lifetime” tenancy.
- Supported housing tenancies will require a more tailored approach, depending upon the nature of the scheme. It will remain important to ensure that throughput is enabled within supported housing schemes by enabling tenants to move on at the appropriate time. This may be after a very short period (e.g. for a refuge), after 6 months, two years or longer.

## **5. Affordable Rent**

86% of homeless households for which the Council accepted a duty in 2011 were dependent solely on income from benefits. They will be affected by the proposed Universal Credit cap introduced in 2013. This will restrict weekly income from all benefits to £350 for a non working single person and £500 for a non working family. The household cap has been set at a level to reflect an average household income of £35, 000 before tax, and has been used in researching the effects of different income proportions to define Affordable Rents in the Borough.

In future, most new affordable homes will be financed by charging an Affordable Rent (at up to 80% of market rent) for the property. Government grant funding will be much reduced. Boroughs in west London, including Hillingdon, have assumed that it is reasonable to expect a household to spend up to 40% of income on rent<sup>3</sup> based on available evidence.

With the income proportion set at 40% our research indicates that at average private sector rent levels in the south of the Borough:

- if housing providers set rents at 80% of average market rents (or below), then only homes with one or two bedrooms are affordable
- if housing providers set rents at 67% of average market rents (or below), then one, two and three bedroom homes would be affordable, but those with four or more bedrooms would not.

Accommodation at an Affordable Rent may therefore not address the needs of those at the top of the Council's waiting list unless rents are reduced sufficiently to reflect their incomes.

With this in mind, the Council is working to ensure that all forms of "affordable" housing remain truly affordable to local people. In relation to Affordable Rent homes the Council expects:

- Affordable Rent levels to be within affordable levels for local people. This means that no more than 40% of income should be spent on housing costs – that is rent and service charges.
- Larger homes (three beds or more) at near<sup>4</sup> social rent levels continue to be developed in Hillingdon.

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<sup>3</sup> Most West London authorities have adopted a 40% net income threshold; this is the maximum that a household should spend on rent. The Council has been advised that if the threshold was set below this it would make viability of affordable housing development too difficult to achieve.

<sup>4</sup> Near social rent levels are defined as 55 – 60% of market rent, compared to social rent levels at 45 – 50% market rent

- Only one and two bed social rent homes to be converted to Affordable Rent, where this is required by the provider's business plan
- Revenue generated from converting existing social rent properties to Affordable Rent levels to be used only for development in Hillingdon;
- All new affordable general needs (including Affordable Rent) homes built by providers in Hillingdon to be let for the first time to households on the Council's housing register, and that 75% of subsequent lets are undertaken in this manner

To support the development of homes that are affordable for local people the Council will:

- Explore through HRA business plan modelling the potential to generate capacity for developing additional homes at rent levels that are affordable in Hillingdon
- Explore the potential to set aside a proportion of relets for intermediate renting at full Affordable Rent levels (80% of market rent), to generate capacity for additional homes to be developed.
- On sites with a capacity of ten or more homes, ensure that at least 35% of all new homes are affordable, with a tenure mix of 70% housing for social rent and 30% intermediate housing
- Include sites in Hillingdon's Site Allocations Development Plan Document from which a percentage of affordable housing will be delivered

## **Appendix 1**

### **Changes to how affordable housing is accessed and managed**

The government, through the Localism Act 2011, has enabled the Council and registered providers to make choices about how they manage social and affordable housing. Changes have been introduced because it would like affordable housing to:

- Be targeted at those in greatest housing need
- Offer value for money and not cost the public purse more than it needs to
- Not be seen as somewhere where only people without work are able to live
- Be used fairly, for those people who need it most, when they need it.

In summary:

1. Registered providers may choose to introduce different types of tenancy agreement for new tenants that last for fixed periods of time, for example five years (existing tenancies are protected).
2. New 'Affordable Rent' housing is likely to be more expensive than existing social rent housing. Social rents have historically been between 45 and 50% of a market rent whereas the new 'Affordable Rent' can be up to 80% of market rent. For example a new two bed affordable home could cost £184 per week, compared to £113 per week for an existing two bed social rented home managed by the same registered provider in the same area. New 'Affordable Rent' homes must be let through the same mechanism as social rent homes<sup>5</sup>.
3. Registered providers who are developing new Affordable Rent homes can 'convert' a number of their existing social rented homes to a higher 'Affordable Rent' when they become available to let. The number of these conversions to Affordable Rent is critical to the financial viability of providing new Affordable Rent homes. Conversions to Affordable Rent may take place in local authority areas other than those where the new Affordable Rent homes will be built but this is how new homes have been funded in the past.
4. Registered providers operate as not-for-profit organisations. Many of them are charitable organisations. To build new homes and/or so they can focus their resources on managing the rest of their homes to a high standard, providers may now need to sell some of their homes. They may also decide to 'swap' homes with other providers, where it makes more sense for them to manage these.
5. The Council could change who can access social and Affordable Rent homes – they can decide to limit access to the housing register to those

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<sup>5</sup> This is stipulated by the Government in its revised Planning Policy Statement 3 definitions of Affordable Rent

who have a defined housing need<sup>6</sup>, and/or reflect that there are local priorities such as enabling under-occupiers to move home. The Council will also be able to use the private rented sector more to meet housing needs.

There are other things that are also likely to affect the supply of affordable housing in the Borough in the future, and the need and demand for these homes:

6. The Council has been able to decide how to spend all the rent from their homes from April 2012. The 30 year business plan (drafted for Members approval) centres on maintaining existing homes to an acceptable standard expected from a responsible landlord and the development of supported housing units to improve the lives of people who would otherwise have to be placed in more costly residential care accommodation.
7. Registered providers may be planning to offer an alternative to social rent and Affordable Rent homes. Low cost home ownership may meet some household needs, whilst market rent might generate income for more affordable homes.
8. There is a greater Right-to-Buy discount for people wishing to buy their social rented home. This might reduce the number of social rent homes available to others in housing need.
9. People who have a low or no income and receive benefits may receive less money in the future as a result of changes to the welfare system. People living in the private rented sector may have less to spend on their housing costs and may need to move to more affordable housing.
10. Welfare reform will also affect existing, working age, tenants in social housing who are under-occupying their home by one bedroom or more; demand for smaller homes may rise, as might rent arrears from those who can't move.

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<sup>6</sup> The Council must enable people who meet the Government's reasonable preference criteria to register.

## **Appendix 2** **Equality and comprehensive impact assessments**

It is important that local authorities, as public bodies, pay real attention to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, and are able to demonstrate that the process of developing the tenancy strategy has paid due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

The HCA's 'Regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012' also reminds providers that it is essential to understand tenants' needs, including those within the equality strands<sup>7</sup>.

The process of developing this strategy has considered equality in relation to our expressed preferences, and what the Council knows about housing need. This will not be sufficient to inform tenancy policies; registered providers need to undertake equality impact assessments with consideration to local London Borough of Hillingdon characteristics, including of those in housing need (prospective tenants).

It will be important to consider the impact of the Affordable Rent and fixed term tenancies on communities if introduced 'en-masse' in an area.

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<sup>7</sup> The Equality Act 2010 gives public bodies responsibilities in relation to: race, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, disability and marriage and civil partnership; in policy making, delivery of services and public sector employment.

**Appendix 3**  
**Housing Tenancy and Ownership Definitions**

This section briefly describes the different types of home ownership and tenancy types that exist and the new ones that are being created.

Tenure	Key Features
Leasehold Home Ownership	The occupier owns a lease of a flat or maisonette for a fixed term with the freehold owned by another party. The fixed terms for a lease granted by a local authority in a right to buy context is normally 125 years. In this instance, the tenant effectively buys the use of the property concerned with associated access rights to and from the property through the freeholder's common and environmental areas, for which will be expected to pay a service charge for. In addition, contributions will be expected from time to time for works required to elements of the building such as the roof, windows, communal heating, lift systems, etc. These same rules generally apply to home owners who purchase leasehold homes in the market sector.
Shared Ownership & Shared Equity	Created as a response to a gap in the market where potential purchasers were unable to afford a home to buy on the open market, but were not eligible for social housing. Purchasers in tandem pay both a mortgage to a financial institution and a below market rent and service charge to a private registered provider. This will be based on the 'tranche' that the purchaser has bought which will normally start at 25%-40%. Purchasers generally have the opportunity to 'staircase up' which enables them to purchase the property outright on a leasehold ownership basis as described above. Shared Equity is where another party, usually through a Government sponsored scheme, offers a discounted interest loan to buy part of the property in addition to that finance raised by the purchaser.
Secure Tenancy	These are tenancies granted by local authority registered providers. Created under the 1985 Housing Act, consolidating previous legislation on public sector tenancies these are 'periodic tenancies' by which is meant they are self renewing provided that the rent and service charges are paid and no conditions of tenancy are breached. Eligible tenants have the right buy.

Tenure	Key Features
Flexible Tenancy	The new flexible tenancies for local authorities will be to all intents and purposes the same as secure tenancies as described above, but will have fixed terms. Eligible tenants have the right to buy.
Assured Tenancy	Similar to secure tenancies, these are also periodic tenancies granted by housing association private registered providers. Created under the 1988 Housing Act, consolidating legislation on (what were then) generally called housing associations, but for the purposes of the legislation called registered social landlords. Eligible tenants often have the right to acquire, but the charitable status of some private registered providers does not allow for this right.
Probationary Tenancy	In Hillingdon, these are granted by the Council to new tenants for one year before a 'secure tenancy' is granted.
Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Created under the 1989 Housing Act, to all intents and purposes these tenancies are similar to Assured Tenancies, but are for fixed terms of a minimum of six months but are often granted for one year; rents are not controlled by government regulations; and there are no rights to buy or tenancy succession. These are used by Private Registered Providers for intermediate housing purposes (e.g. sub market rented housing) and extensively by private landlords.
Licensee	Licences have been used for 'short life' housing purposes. This is where homes that are planned for demolition or major refurbishment but the timeframes are either long or uncertain. There can be a case using a 'short life' approach to such homes although this approach is less used presently. A licence gives very few rights to licensees which can be summarised as a 'bare permission to occupy'.

For Private Registered Providers, flexible tenancies will be Assured Shorthold Tenancies instead of Assured Tenancies.



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

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# **The London Borough of Hillingdon's Tenancy Policy**

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**Draft**

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## 1. Scope of this policy

This policy is designed to show the Council's approach, as a registered provider of social housing, to allocating and managing social housing tenancies. It should enable our customers to clearly see what they can expect of us in relation to:

- Deciding who will be offered a tenancy of one of our homes
- The sorts of tenancies we will offer and the different types of tenancy we will use in different circumstances
- Decisions about reissuing a tenancy for the same or for a different property
- How prospective and current tenants can appeal against any decisions we make regarding (a) the tenancy offered or (b) not reissuing a tenancy on their current home, and how we will deal with those appeals
- Offering advice and assistance to those whose tenancy will not be reissued to find another suitable home
- Tenancy succession
- Arrangements for more vulnerable customers
- Helping our customers to sustain their tenancy
- Ensuring that our homes are occupied by their legal tenant and how we deal with tenancy fraud

In developing this policy we have given due regard to the direction provided by London Borough of Hillingdon's Tenancy Strategy, which can be found at [*web address*], or provided on request.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Hillingdon's review and appeals procedure which can be found at [*web address*] or can be provided on request.

## 2. The aims of this policy

We aim to:

- Provide a high quality housing management service to prospective and current tenants, in accordance with legislation, regulation, and best practice.
- Respond effectively to the demands placed on our limited social housing resource
- Make best use of our stock and ensure it meets existing and future customers' needs
- Ensure customers have the right home for as long as they need it
- Support our customers to enable them to achieve their housing aspirations

### 3. Our commitments to our tenants

We will:

- Let homes in accordance with Hillingdon Council's Allocations Policy so that we contribute to its aims of:
  - Putting our residents first
  - Creating and maintaining mixed and sustainable communities
  - Helping and supporting some of the most vulnerable groups in the Borough
  - Providing some realistic options for working households
  - Supporting and rewarding those that make a positive contribution to their community
  - Actively discouraging households from perpetrating negative behaviour that could have a detrimental impact on the community in which they live
- Provide clear and accessible information in formats our customers can understand about the tenancies that we will offer on different properties, and the circumstances under which a fixed tenancy would not be reissued.
- State the tenancy terms and rent level with each available property and ensure the new tenant understands them before they sign-up to the tenancy.
- Work to prevent homelessness and increase the availability of homes by:
  - Telling all our customers about how we can help them to maintain their tenancy successfully
  - Acting promptly where we identify problems that could threaten someone's tenancy
  - Helping customers to find another home if their tenancy isn't suitable for their household
  - Providing or enabling advice and assistance to help our customers find a suitable home if their tenancy isn't to be reissued
  - Ensuring that all our homes are occupied by people who are entitled to do so
  - Making sure homes are relet as quickly as possible

## **4. Offering and Reissuing Tenancies**

### **4.1 *Preserved rights for secure and assured tenants with tenancy start dates prior to XX/XX/XX (date of this policy)***

Existing secure tenants (or assured tenants of a housing association) with a tenancy start date prior to the date of this policy have their tenancy terms and conditions preserved by law. Therefore, if they transfer to a different home in either Council or housing association stock, they will automatically be offered another secure or assured tenancy.

### **4.2 *Our approach to tenancies***

We understand the importance of a stable and secure home: It offers the platform that people need to be able to get on with their lives, improve their circumstances and achieve their aspirations. Our homes are let at rents that are lower than those charged by private landlords or by registered providers for 'Affordable Rent' homes and that means that people have fewer worries about their housing costs and can focus instead on the other things that help them succeed – like training and employment, developing independent living skills and being part of the community. As they achieve their aspirations they may need or want to move on into other homes, perhaps in other areas.

We have duties under the Equality Act 2010 to help those that are most vulnerable, including older people, disabled people and children. Our approach helps us to fulfil our duties by enabling more vulnerable people to access and sustain a suitable home.

As people get older they need more support so they can retain their independence and health, and enjoy their lives. This is offered within our sheltered and extra care housing schemes for older people, and we hope that customers who need the support we provide can stay in these homes for the rest of their lives.

Some of our homes have significant adaptations to enable disabled people to live independently and with a good quality of life. Adaptations are expensive and demand for them is growing so we want to ensure that every adapted home is occupied by someone who needs the special features.

Our family homes are particularly in demand so we would prefer that they are always occupied by families who need the space they provide. However, stability and the right home are particularly important to children so that they can grow up healthily and achieve well. We want to help children to have an uninterrupted education and upbringing in a decent home.

We want to provide those who have insufficient income to afford other housing options in the Borough with the stability they need to achieve their aspirations for employment and an improved lifestyle. Households with a combined income that indicates they can afford a different housing tenure<sup>1</sup> will be expected to move on and release the property for someone who does not have the same options.

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<sup>1</sup> This is included in the Council's Allocations Policy and updated regularly through review of the income required to afford other tenures.

### **4.3 New tenancies after [date of this policy]**

We offer a probationary tenancy to any new tenant that doesn't currently hold a secure or assured tenancy. Probationary tenancies last for one year. Tenants who are not in breach of their tenancy at the end of that term and who have not been found to be in breach of their tenancy over the course of its term will automatically move to whichever tenancy is appropriate for their home and household.

We use flexible (fixed term) tenancies in certain circumstances to help to deliver the aims of this policy. Each fixed term tenancy will be formally reviewed before its end date. The review will take place no later than seven months before that date so that the tenant receives at least six months written notice of whether we intend to either:

- Reissue another tenancy for their current home
- Or
- Not reissue a tenancy but help them to find another home before their current tenancy ends

Tenants and prospective tenants have a right to appeal decisions to offer a fixed term tenancy or not re-issue a tenancy at the end of the term – this is discussed in Section 14 of this policy.

Our processes for reviewing tenancies and for appeals are clearly laid out in our *Tenancy Review Procedure* and *Tenancy Appeals Procedure*, copies of which will be provided to every fixed term tenant as part of their tenancy pack, and at the start of each review.

#### 4.4 Tenure terms for different types of properties and households

Property type	Household type	Tenancy length	Basis for decision on reissuing tenancy
All general needs properties with significant adaptations <sup>2</sup>	Any with a disabled household member	5 years	<p>Tenancy will be renewed at the current home if the household includes someone who requires the adaptation.</p> <p>Tenancy will not be reissued if household members no longer require the adaptation. In this case, additional housing assistance will be offered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the combined household income is below that deemed to enable a move to another tenure, additional priority will be offered for a move to non-adapted home</li> <li>• If the combined household income is above that deemed to enable a move to another tenure, advice and assistance will be offered to locate a suitable home</li> </ul>
		Use 'exceptional' 2 years where the disability is temporary	
General needs homes at social rent with no major adaptations	Families with children	5 years	<p>Tenancy will be renewed at the current home if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The household contains any children who are school age or younger</li> </ul> <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The household still meets the property size criteria <u>or</u> their income is below that deemed as required to enable a move to another tenure</li> </ul> <p>The tenancy will not be renewed at the current home if children are no longer in full time education <u>and</u> the household is under-occupying by 1 room or more.</p> <p>The tenancy will not be renewed at the current home if children are no longer in full time education <u>and</u> the combined household income is above that deemed to enable a move to another tenure</p>
		Use 'exceptional' shorter fixed term tenancies (e.g. two years) in circumstances where fostering or adoption is the main reason for a social tenancy being allocated	
		Tenancy Strategy states a minimum of 5 years	

<sup>2</sup> 'Significant' means any feature that would cost over £1,000 to replace and which makes the home particularly suitable for disabled people. **(Note : Hillingdon definition being checked)**

Property type	Household type	Tenancy length	Basis for decision on reissuing tenancy
			<p>Where the tenancy will not be renewed at the current home, additional housing assistance will be offered. There may be circumstances where alternative social housing is offered. There may also be circumstances where only advice and assistance is offered to the household in order to obtain alternative private sector housing.</p>
	Single people and couples with no children.	5 years	<p>The tenancy will be renewed at the current home if the combined household income is below that deemed to enable a move to another tenure <u>and</u> the property still meets the needs of the tenant/s.</p> <p>The tenancy will not be renewed if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The combined household income is above that deemed to enable a move to another tenure or</li> <li>• The property no longer meets the needs of the tenant/s (including where the property is under-occupied by one or more bedroom)</li> </ul> <p>Where the tenancy will not be renewed at the current home, additional housing assistance will be offered. There may be circumstances where alternative social housing is offered. There may also be circumstances where only advice and assistance is offered to the household in order to obtain alternative private sector housing.</p>
Sheltered housing and Extra Care schemes		People who are 60 years old or above	

Property type	Household type	Tenancy length	Basis for decision on reissuing tenancy
Other supported housing schemes	Any assessed as requiring specialist accommodation supported	Will vary depending on the nature of the scheme.  Most supported housing schemes will offer secure tenancies, where the property is intended to be a home for life, and there is no likelihood that housing circumstances or other needs will change	No reviews required
		Some supported housing schemes will offer 2 year tenancies or longer. Some will only require shorter periods of stay as the scheme is designed to provide supported housing during a short term crisis and the expectation is that the tenants will be able to move to more independent accommodation once they have completed a programme of support.	<p>Tenancies will be reissued (to varying lengths depending on the nature of the scheme) if the tenant has not achieved a sufficient level of independence and they are still engaging with the support programme.</p> <p>Tenancies will not be renewed if the tenant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is no longer in need of supported housing or</li> <li>• Is not engaging with the programme of support offered</li> </ul> <p>Where the tenancy will not be renewed, additional priority for be offered to move to a property that will meet the tenant's assessed needs.</p>
Affordable rent properties	Any	5 years	The tenancy will be renewed at the current home once rent has been re-based, provided other occupation criteria are met (as above)
		<i>Tenancy Strategy states a minimum of 5 years</i>	
'Asset management'	Any	2 years	The tenancy will be renewed with a new 2 year fixed

Property type	Household type	Tenancy length	Basis for decision on reissuing tenancy
properties, i.e., where an in-principle decision has been made to dispose of or otherwise refurbish, requiring eventual vacant possession		<i>Tenancy Strategy states that 2 year tenancies are acceptable</i>	term tenancy if planned work is more than two years away.

## **5. Probationary (introductory) tenancies**

We offer a probationary tenancy to any new tenant that doesn't currently hold a secure or assured tenancy. Probationary tenancies last for one year. Tenants who are have not been found to be in breach of their tenancy at any point over the course of its term will automatically move to whichever tenancy is appropriate for their home and household (see 4.4 above) in line with what they will have been offered before they signed up for the probationary tenancy.

Tenants that are in serious and persistent breach of their tenancy conditions can be given a notice of proceedings for possession, which will include the right to a review of our decision. If no request to review the decision is received, or the decision is upheld following a review, the Council will start proceedings in the county court to end the probationary tenancy as soon as the notice ends.

As long as the Council follows the correct procedures for repossessing a property held on a probationary tenancy, the Court must grant an order for repossession.

### *Extensions to probationary tenancies*

Where we have reason to be concerned about a probationary tenant's ability or readiness to comply with their tenancy conditions, we can extend the probationary tenancy up to a further 6 months. In these cases we will issue a "notice of extension" at least eight weeks before the original probationary tenancy is due to end. This is likely to be applied where tenants:

- Are in rent arrears and have not kept to arrangements to repay arrears, or
- Have caused nuisance to their neighbours and any justifiable complaints are within the last three months, or
- Otherwise have not kept to the tenancy conditions and these occurrences are within the last three months

The notice will set out the reasons for the extension and include information about the tenant's right to ask us to review this decision. If no request to review is received, or if the review has been dealt with and the decision to extend the tenancy upheld, we will formally tell the tenant before the end of the original probationary tenancy that we have extended the tenancy for 6 months.

Provided breaches of tenancy are satisfactorily rectified, the tenant will proceed to their full tenancy entitlement at the end of the extension. Otherwise we will serve notice on the tenancy and proceed to court for a possession order (as set out above).

## **6. Tenancy Reviews**

Where tenants are placed on a flexible (fixed term) tenancy, these must be formally reviewed according to our Policy stated above, so that tenants are given at least six months notice in writing of our intentions as to whether we will reissue a tenancy on their existing home at the end of the term.

We will therefore start the formal tenancy review *at least* seven months prior to the tenancy end date by writing to the tenant/s to give notice of the review. The letter will include a copy of section 5 of our Tenancy Policy, and a copy of our Tenancy Review procedure.

The review will be conducted according to our detailed Tenancy Review procedure, and will include a home visit that will seek to establish whether the tenant/s and their household still fulfil the criteria we have agreed for occupancy of their home.

Tenancies will only be reissued where:

- The tenant/s cooperate with the review by agreeing and keeping an appointment for a home visit

and

- The tenant/s and their household still fulfil the criteria agreed for occupancy of their home.
- The Council is satisfied that the tenant/s neither withhold information or provide false information in order to influence the outcome of the review.

*'Household' in this regard means the persons that usually occupy the home with the tenant/s. Where these are adults that are not in full time education, they should have been residing in that home as their usual and sole residence since a date that is at least 18 months prior to the end of the tenancy term.*

The term of any new tenancy offered will comply with our policy laid out in section 4, which may be different to the term of the previous tenancy.

Where the review identifies that the tenant/s with their household no longer fulfils the criteria for occupancy of their current home, at least six months notice in writing will be given of our intention not to reissue the tenancy.

Where the household's combined income is below that considered sufficient to enable access to a home in another tenure, additional assistance will be offered to improve the household's opportunity to move to another property in either our or another social landlord's stock that meets their needs.

Where the tenancy will not be reissued because the household has a combined income above that deemed to enable them to secure a home in another tenure, they will be given advice and assistance to assist them to locate an alternative home.

The Council will reserve the right to consider increasing the rent in some exceptional circumstances (e.g. tenant does not fulfil criteria for remaining but is willing to accept sub-market or market rent in order to remain in the current home). This would increase Council income and also contribute to the creation and maintenance of sustainable and mixed communities.

Where a tenant/s fail to cooperate with the review, for example by not agreeing or keeping an appointment for a home visit, or failing to provide any evidence requested about the composition or income of their household, the tenancy will not be reissued, and they will not be entitled to the additional assistance offered within this Policy and our Allocations Policy.

Where we do not intend to reissue a tenancy, or we intend to reissue but on a shorter fixed term tenancy, we will include in our decision letter:

- Information on how to appeal against our decision and the procedure that any appeal will follow
- Information on the advice and assistance we can offer to the household to find another suitable home.

## 7. Tenancy Succession

The Localism Act 2011 made changes to the *statutory* right of succession for all secure and fixed term tenants whose tenancy start date was on or after 1 April 2012. In Hillingdon the Council's tenancy agreement has traditionally offered contractual rights of succession that are unaffected by this change in statute.

Hillingdon Council tenancies issued after the **date of this policy** will change the succession rights that members of a tenant's family have as detailed below.

### 7.1 **Succession rights where the tenancy start date was prior to the date of this policy**

#### **a) First succession**

All secure tenants whose tenancy start date was prior to [*the date of this policy*] have the right of one succession to their current tenancy on their death. Under Section 89 of the Housing Act 1985, a person is qualified to succeed to a secure tenancy if he or she occupies the dwelling as their only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death and either:

- He/she is the tenant's spouse (i.e. husband, wife, common law partner or partner by way of a civil partnership).
- He/she is another member of the tenant's family and has resided with the tenant continuously throughout the previous 12 months ending with the tenant's death.

The definition of a family member is set out in Section 113 of the Housing Act 1985, as follows:

- A spouse or persons living together as a husband or wife, or
- A person's parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece
- In addition:
  - A relationship by marriage is treated as a relationship by blood,
  - A relationship by half blood is a relationship by whole blood;
  - A step child is treated as a child;
  - An illegitimate child is treated as a legitimate child.

The family member will need to provide evidence of occupancy.

A minor (i.e. a person under the age of 18) can succeed to a tenancy but since they cannot legally hold a tenancy, an adult Trustee must hold the legal tenancy for the minor on Trust until they attain the age of 18. The Trustee will also act as the

Guarantor for rent. The person who is appointed as the Trustee/Guarantor must be an individual such as a relative, social worker or support worker. The Trustee/Guarantor must execute a Deed of Trust and Deed of Guarantee and also sign the Tenancy Agreement.

If the family member would succeed to a property which is especially suited or adapted for either a disabled person or an elderly person and the survivor has no such need, then we may take proceedings to recover possession, as allowed for in the following grounds set out in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985:

- Ground 13 – where the dwelling house has features which are substantially different from an ordinary dwelling house and which is designed to make it suitable for occupation by a physically disabled person, there is no longer such a person in occupation and the landlord requires the property for a physically disabled person.
- Ground 15 – the dwelling house is one of a group of houses which it is the landlord's practice to let to persons which special needs, a social service or special facility is provided in close proximity to the group of dwellings in order to assist persons with special needs, there is no longer such a person in occupation of the dwelling house and the landlord requires it for such a person.

In these instances, we will offer the successor suitable alternative accommodation.

#### ***b) Discretionary second succession***

A discretionary second succession policy applies where a potential second successor is agreed to be vulnerable **and**:

- Has a clear housing need **and**
- Is aged 65 years and over *or* 50 years and over with learning difficulties **and**
- Has lived in the property for the last ten years *or* for as long as the property has been available.

All three criteria must be met. If a discretionary succession is agreed, the person concerned may still be asked to move to an alternative property if he or she under occupies the former family home.

#### ***7.2 Succession rights where the tenancy start date was on or after [date of this policy]***

In line with the Localism Act 2011 only one succession is allowed and only to the spouse (i.e. husband, wife, common law partner or partner by way of a civil partnership). No other family member has the right to succeed to the tenancy.

The Council has no provision for a discretionary second successions to tenancies where the start date is after the date of this policy. Where the remaining occupiers would be in priority need under homelessness legislation and the combined resources of the household are lower than that assessed as being sufficient to enable access to a home in another tenure, the Council will seek to provide

sufficient assistance to enable the offer of a home that meets their needs. This may include an offer of a tenancy of the current property where the household includes a disabled person and major adaptations have been completed to meet their needs. However, this will not be classified as a succession.

## **8. Tenancy assignment**

In some circumstances a tenant may assign their tenancy to another person who complies with certain criteria as laid out in their tenancy agreement and within this Policy.

Applications for assignment are only permitted by statute in the following limited circumstances:

- By way of mutual exchange
- Where a court has made an order to transfer the tenancy under either:
  - a. Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, Section 24;
  - b. Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, Section 17(1);
  - c. Paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the Children Act 1989;
  - d. Part 2 of Schedule 5 or Paragraph 9(2) or (3) of Schedule 7 to the Civil Partnership Act 2004
- To a potential qualifying successor if the tenancy agreement gives this right.

## **9. Changing names on the tenancy**

### **9.1 *Tenants that change their name***

The Council will agree to amend the tenancy following a name change as long as the tenant provides sufficient legal evidence of the change. This will usually be evidenced by a Deed Poll, marriage certificate or civil partnership documentation.

### **9.2 *Sole to Joint Tenancies***

Generally we will agree to the creation of a joint tenancy between spouse/partner although each case will be considered on its own merits. Permission will normally be granted unless:

- There has been a breach of the tenancy agreement especially if this is due to rent arrears or anti social behaviour, where a Notice of Seeking Possession has been served, where proceedings have been commenced or where a Court has made an order for possession whether this be outright, suspended or postponed.
- Where the Council has served a Notice before Proceedings for a demotion order or where the Court has made an order for demotion of the tenancy.
- The spouse/partner is under 18 years of age.
- The partner has lived in the property for less than 12 months.

The tenant's partner/spouse must be able to provide sufficient evidence of occupancy.

### **9.3 Joint to Sole Tenancies**

If we receive a valid Notice to Quit this will end a tenancy when the four weeks notice period expires. In the case of a joint tenancy this will end the tenancy for both parties.

Where a joint tenancy is due to be terminated, but the partner of the outgoing tenant wishes to remain in the property, we can consider whether or not to grant a fresh sole tenancy. The circumstances that may indicate that a sole tenancy may be granted are:

- a) The property is suitable for the remaining occupant/s within the terms of the Council's Allocation Policy and it is likely that the Council would have a duty to rehouse the occupant/s left in the property.

And

- b) There is evidence that removing the household from the property would cause a significant impact on the health & wellbeing of one or more occupants.

If the property is not suitable for the remaining occupants within the terms of the Council's Allocation Policy we (with the exception of point b above) will allow the occupants to remain *temporarily* in the property until one suitable offer of accommodation can be made within the terms of the Allocations Policy. Whilst the occupant/s remain they will be charged for their use and occupation of the property at the same rate as the current rent charge. Non-payment will result in possession proceedings been taken.

If the remaining occupant declines an offer of accommodation that is suitable for their needs, the Council will not consider a further offer and will start proceedings to regain possession of the property.

## **10. Tenants' rights to terminate their tenancy**

### **10.1 Secure tenants**

Secure tenants are able to terminate their tenancy by providing us with four weeks notice in writing. If it is a joint tenancy, all joint tenants must sign the written notice.

We will complete a property inspection during the notice period to ensure that:

- The condition of the property is such that conditions of tenancy have not been breached
- Any rent arrears are brought to the attention of the tenant and the tenant has an opportunity to pay up to the notice expiry date
- We are able to re-let the property as quickly as possible

The tenant must return all the property keys at latest on the date the notice expires.

### **10.2 Flexible (fixed term) tenants**

If a tenant in a flexible (fixed term) tenancy wishes to end their tenancy prior to the fixed term end date, they may do so by giving a formal written offer of surrender

providing four weeks notice. If it is a joint tenancy, all joint tenants must sign the written offer of surrender.

We will agree that the tenancy can be surrendered providing:

- It is in our best interests and the best interests of the customer or their neighbourhood (we will not usually refuse on this basis)
- Access is given to undertake a property inspection during the notice period and the property condition is found not to breach tenancy conditions
- The rent account is clear or any monies owing are repaid at the date of surrender
- The property keys are returned on expiry of the notice period

Where the tenant does not comply with these conditions, the request to surrender may not be accepted and the tenant will remain responsible for the tenancy and the rent.

Where a property is, or appears to be, abandoned, a Forfeiture Notice will be served on the property, giving the tenant four weeks to respond. If there has been no response at the end of the 4-week period then we will take possession of the property. In these circumstances a Court Order is not required.

## **11. Rent levels and other charges**

### **11.1 Social rents**

Our current Council homes will usually be charged at ordinary social rent levels. This is calculated using the value of the property and the average earnings in the area. The Council agrees rent increases each year that usually follow the Government's rental policy statement.

Some homes also attract service charges in relation to various services that occupiers would usually have to provide or pay for themselves, e.g. heating, caretaking, communal area cleaning and window cleaning. These service charges will be set annually, based on actual costs. Tenants of homes that have applicable service charges will be consulted about the service standards before the charge is agreed.

### **11.2 Affordable Rent**

The Council intends to develop new homes either to replace homes that are no longer sustainable, or to increase opportunities to help more people in housing need. In line with the new national "Affordable Rent" model, these homes may be charged at rents (including any service charges) that are up to 80% of the open market rent in the area, but will not be above the maximum level applicable for housing benefit.

In practice, affordable rents will be set at a level affordable to local people, where 'affordable' means that no more than 40% of income should be spent on housing costs.

### **11.3 Council tenants on higher incomes**

Where tenants' income is well above the local average earnings, the Council is considering whether it should increase the rents to at least 80% market rent or potentially to full market rent (depending on government guidelines, which are yet to be issued). This proposal is for existing tenants. (An income threshold is included in the allocations policy for allnew applicants.)

The Government has issued a consultation paper that suggests that households with incomes of (a choice of):

- £60,000 per annum
- £80,000 per annum
- £100,000 per annum

should be charged higher rents, as they could, if they chose, afford to buy a home or rent in private sector. This additional rent would contribute towards the costs of any new homes. The Government has not yet decided whether the assessment of income should apply only to those whose names are on the tenancy agreement, or to the two highest earners in the household.

## **12. Allocating our homes and helping people live in homes that suit their requirements**

### **12.1 Allocations to homes that will become vacant**

We will ensure that our approach to letting homes achieves:

- Greater choice, housing options, homelessness prevention and mobility
- Mixed, cohesive and sustainable communities
- Best use of stock
- An open, transparent and equitable service
- Value for money through customer satisfaction and tenancy sustainment

We will therefore advertise most homes, including any homes let at affordable rents, on the Council's choice-based lettings system (Locata) and will offer homes using the Council's Allocations Policy. Advertisements for homes will always include the rent (and any service charges).

In order to make best use of homes and maximise rental income, we will advertise and offer homes as soon as possible after the occupying tenant gives notice that they intend to vacate. This will mean that sometimes an offer will be made while the home is still tenanted, or while post-tenancy repairs are being completed. We will therefore:

- Negotiate with occupying tenants to give access for viewing to prospective tenants
- Agree with repairs contractors how the property will be made available to prospective tenants for safe viewing
- Always accompany prospective tenants as they view the home, and
  - Explain features and facilities
  - Be clear what standard they can expect of a ready to let home

- Tell those who have been offered a property:
  - The anticipated date the property should be available for them to move in, promptly informing them of any variation to this date and
  - What work they can expect to be completed prior to their occupation

## **12.2 Mobility within and across the Council's boundary**

We will help to maximise opportunities for tenants who need to move home, either because their household circumstances have changed or because they need to move area for employment or other reasons. As part of this we will proactively support:

- Valid mutual exchanges between tenants of our stock or between our tenants and those of other registered providers.
- Transfers of our tenants where their home no longer meets the household's needs, for example they:
  - Under-occupy by at least one bedroom
  - Are overcrowded
  - No longer need adaptations
  - Require adaptations
  - Would benefit from more specialist accommodation, e.g. sheltered housing

## **12.3 Mutual Exchanges**

All secure and fixed term tenants (this does not include those on licence agreements) have the right to exchange, as laid out in Section 92 of the Housing Act 1985. Consent to an exchange will be withheld if the following grounds (laid out in Section 3 of the Housing Act 1985) apply:

- A tenant is under Notice of Seeking Possession and / or legal proceedings have begun following Notice and / or a Possession Order has already been obtained
- Any of the parties has a starter, probationary (introductory) or demoted tenancy
- A property is specifically designed or adapted to help a disabled person or has other special features not required by the new tenant
- A property is too large or small for an exchanging tenant's household. When considering under-occupation the Council will take account of the property currently occupied by the applicants. In judging whether a property is too small or too large for the tenant the Council will use the same eligibility criteria used in the Allocations Policy.
- There is evidence that the mutual exchange is not genuine e.g. if one tenant suggested that they would not be occupying the property after the exchange, or if money or goods have changed hands to facilitate the exchange.

- Any other reason contained within schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985.

Consent to an exchange can be withdrawn if any of the above grounds become relevant during the course of the proposed exchange.

Where a secure tenant is exchanging with another secure or assured tenant, the tenancies will be assigned on completion of the exchange. Where a secure tenant is exchanging with a tenant on a fixed term tenancy, the tenancies will be brought to an end and each tenancy will be reissued so that each tenant keeps their pre-existing tenancy type and term. Where an exchanging tenant was on a fixed term tenancy, and they are exchanging to a home which would usually be let on a fixed term tenancy, the period of tenancy offered on the home to which they have exchanged will usually be no more than the remaining portion of their previous fixed term tenancy.

Where a mutual exchange takes place by way of assignment, all obligations and entitlements attached to the existing tenancy are assigned with it. The exception is the right to succession. Any rights to succeed to a tenancy remain with the tenant, so that if one of the parties succeeded to their tenancy, there will be no further right of succession to the tenancy of their new home.

#### **12.4 Other help for customers**

The Council's Housing Options team will identify opportunities for rehousing where a tenant:

- On a fixed term tenancy has been advised that their tenancy will not be reissued because they no longer have need of all the features in their current home (e.g. they are under-occupying, or are living in an adapted property and nobody in the household has need of the adaptations)
- Is under-occupying and unable to afford the deficit in Housing Benefit
- Has other housing needs that are not being met in their current home

Fixed term tenants whose tenancy will not be renewed may be given additional priority under the Allocations Policy to enable them to move to another social tenancy. If no suitable home is available to them, or they fail to bid on suitable homes, by one month prior to the end of their tenancy, they will be referred to Housing Options for help to locate a home in the private rented sector.

Someone left in occupation of a home by the death or departure of a tenant, who:

- Is unable to succeed to the tenancy after the death of the tenant, but it has been agreed that they will be offered a tenancy on a discretionary basis, or
- Was a joint tenant but the tenancy has been terminated on the departure of the other joint tenant

and

• Is occupying a home that they would not normally be allocated to will be accorded additional priority in the Allocations Policy for a move to a suitable social rented home. Only one offer of suitable housing will be made.

### **13. Preventing and addressing tenancy fraud**

Tenancy fraud includes obtaining a Council home by deception (for example, by someone claiming to be homeless when they already own a property), or continuing to claim to be living in a property having already moved out and sublet it.

The Council takes fraud very seriously. Anyone caught defrauding the Council is likely to lose their tenancy and could lose their right to Council housing in the future. We will make necessary checks at the start of a tenancy and will take appropriate opportunities during a tenancy to verify household membership and that the tenant is genuine. Checks can take place at any time during a tenancy, without warning.

The Council will check the identify of tenants at the point of tenancy sign-up (including taking photos of new tenants) and will undertake regular tenancy audits (including visiting homes without warning).

### **14. Provisions for appeals on or reviews of tenancy matters**

All tenants or prospective tenants have the right to appeal any decision made by the Council relating to:

- The tenancy they have been offered
- Non-reissue of a tenancy at the end of a fixed term
- Who is allowed to be on the tenancy agreement
- Matters relating to succession to a tenancy

The right to appeal will be included in all letters to tenants concerning these matters and will include the following process and timescales.

- Tenants or prospective tenants have 14 days from receipt of the tenancy-related decision to request a review of, or appeal, the decision
- Requests for an appeal or a review can be made verbally or in writing or on the tenant's behalf by a nominated representative - if the request is made verbally it is the tenant's responsibility to ensure the request is written down on their behalf.
- Reviews and appeals will not require the tenant's or prospective tenant's presence unless they specifically request an oral hearing.
- The person who determines the review or appeal or who conducts an oral hearing will be senior to, and separate from, any person who participated in making the original decision
- Tenants or prospective tenants will be given 5 working days notice of the date of the review (counted from the day after a letter is delivered by hand to their address, or from the date after the letter is posted to their address in the first class mail).
- If the person has requested an oral hearing, they can be present at the hearing and make representations on their own behalf, or can nominate

someone to act as their representative and make representations on their behalf.

- Decisions following an appeal or review will be notified to the person within 5 working days of the date of the review or hearing.

## **15. Helping our customers to sustain their tenancies**

We would like all our tenants to be successful householders and settle into their local community but we know that this isn't always easy. We will therefore take a supportive approach to helping tenants to:

- Settle into their home
- Pay their rent on time and keep a clear rent account from the beginning of their tenancy
- Abide by their tenancy agreement, and keep their home in good order
- Be a good neighbour

Our work will start when prospective tenants view a property. Where the customer has identified that they already have a support worker, we will suggest that they accompany the customer to the viewing and also to the sign-up. We will encourage the customer to tell us if they feel they need support, and if they do we will refer them to a housing-related support service. We will tell the customer about the features of their prospective neighbourhood including local shops, schools and public transport.

We will complete a benefits entitlement check as part of the sign-up procedure and refer the customer to our welfare benefits adviser if they have debt they are struggling to manage or it appears they may be entitled to benefits that they are not currently receiving. We will also offer to help the customer to complete a Housing Benefits application form.

We will provide a welcome pack that advises the customer on the things they need to do when they move into their new home and will refer them to the furniture store if they need household goods and don't have the resources to buy these.

We will complete a new tenant visit within four weeks of the tenancy start date and will check that the customer is settling into their home, that they are paying their rent (and / or that Housing Benefit is in payment) and that they fully understand the main features of their home (for example, the location of the water stopcock, the operation of the heating system, the fuse box etc). We will check that the customer feels they are managing in their home and will, if this is indicated and the customer agrees, refer them for housing-related support.

We will take an early prevention approach to rent debt and nuisance, so that customers are quickly informed if they are in breach of their tenancy agreement and are given help to rectify this. If they need help to tackle nuisance that is adversely affecting them we will support them and take prompt action to address the issues.



Summary of main changes in Hillingdon’s tenancy policy

Provision in previous policy	Provision in this policy
<b>Tenancy length – general</b>	
<p>A probationary tenancy followed by a secure tenancy for all tenants.</p>	<p>For tenancies with a start date on or after the date of this policy, a probationary tenancy followed by a flexible length tenancy.</p> <p>The terms and conditions of tenancies with a start date before the date of this policy are preserved by law.</p>
<b>Tenancy length – household groups</b>	
<p><b>1 Households with a disabled household member (adult or child) in a property with significant adaptations</b></p> <p>Secure tenancy</p> <p><b>2 Families with children in general needs homes with no major adaptations, where any child is school age or younger</b></p> <p>Secure tenancy</p> <p><b>3 Families with children who are all 18 years or above in general needs homes with no major adaptations</b></p> <p>Secure tenancy</p> <p><b>4 Single people and couples of working age with no children in general needs homes with no major adaptations</b></p> <p>Secure tenancy</p> <p><b>5 People who are 60 years old or above in sheltered housing schemes</b></p> <p>Secure tenancy</p>	<p>Five year tenancy or exceptional two year tenancy where the disability is temporary</p> <p>Five year tenancy</p> <p>Five year tenancy</p> <p>Five year tenancy</p> <p>“Lifetime” Secure tenancy</p>

Provision in previous policy	Provision in this policy
<p><b>6 People who are 60 years old or above in extra care schemes</b></p> <p>Secure tenancy</p> <p><b>7 Any person assessed as requiring specialist supported accommodation in other supported housing schemes</b></p> <p>Secure tenancy</p> <p><b>8 Any household in an affordable rent property</b></p> <p>Not applicable before date of adoption of new policy</p> <p><b>9 Any household in an asset management property (decision to dispose of/refurbish)</b></p> <p>Secure tenancy</p>	<p>Five year tenancy</p> <p>Tenancy length will vary depending on the nature of the scheme.</p> <p>Five year tenancy</p> <p>Two year tenancy</p>
<b>Flexible (fixed term) tenancy reviews</b>	
<p>Not applicable before date of new policy</p>	<p>Formal review of tenancy followed by notice of intentions in writing at least six months before the tenancy ends</p>
<b>Household income level taken into account at review</b>	
<p>Not applicable before date of new policy</p>	<p>a) After formal review at the end of a tenancy, the tenancy may not be reissued if a household has a combined income which could enable them to secure a home in another tenure</p> <p>b) After review rent of current home may be increased to market or sub market level if household is willing to accept this option</p>
<b>Tenancy succession</b>	
<p><b>Tenancy start date prior to the date of this policy -</b></p>	<p><b>Tenancy start date on or after the date of this policy -</b></p>

Provision in previous policy	Provision in this policy
<p><b>First succession</b> – right of one succession by spouse - including common law partner or civil partnership - or other family member (defined) who occupies the property.</p> <p><b>Discretionary second succession</b> – granted where a potential second successor is vulnerable and meets three criteria – housing need, age and occupancy</p>	<p><b>First succession</b> – right of one succession to spouse – including common law partner or civil partnership - only.</p> <p><b>Discretionary second succession</b> – no provision.</p>
Rents	
<p><b>Social rents</b> – current Council homes are usually charged at ordinary social rent levels, based on property value and average local earnings</p> <p><b>Affordable rents</b> – not applicable before the date of this policy</p>	<p><b>Social rents</b> – most Council homes will be charged at ordinary social rent levels, based on property value and average local earnings</p> <p><b>Affordable rents</b> – new Council homes developed by the Council may be charged at rents at up to 80% of local market rent but will not be above the maximum level applicable for housing benefit</p>



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

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**Review of the London  
Borough of Hillingdon's  
Housing  
Allocations Policy**

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**Draft**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Localism Act introduces new freedoms for local authorities to determine how they allocate social and affordable housing. There is opportunity to revise the Housing Allocation policy to give priority to certain groups reflecting local need and to build more sustainable communities.

The Council will work with partners to review the housing allocations policy in light of the Localism Act 2011, Welfare Reform Act 2012 and GLA Housing Strategy. The review will take account of new regulation, changes in housing market conditions and local priorities.

## **2. Objectives of the Housing Allocation policy**

Factors relating to homelessness, allocations of social and affordable housing and the use of private sector housing will all be taken into account as part of a strategic review of 'access to housing' in order to help people in need find housing solutions of different tenure.

The policy will support the objectives of the Housing Strategy, Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy policy. It aims to ensure that:

- The scarce resources of social housing is used flexibly and not provided to those households who do not require it.
- Social and affordable housing is used as effectively as possible to meet housing need in the Borough
- The use of social housing reduces reliance on inappropriate and costly forms of temporary accommodation.
- Vulnerable people within social housing are provided with stability and support
- Allocation of housing tackles health inequalities

## **3. Maintaining a basic safety net**

In order to maintain the protection provided by the existing statutory 'reasonable preference' criteria, Councils must continue to give priority to those most in need. Those groups are:

### **3.1 Homeless household**

A key concern in regard to safety nets is around homeless people. Currently, those who are found to be homeless under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 can expect to be offered a long-term home, usually a social tenancy. Although some 55% of potentially homeless households in Hillingdon accept a private sector tenancy, it can only be offered as an option to a homeless household but full duty is not discharged if it is refused.

The Localism Act 2011 allows Councils to discharge duties into the private sector where possible and outside of local boundaries (without consent of the applicant). Placing someone into good quality private accommodation may be a much better solution than staying in temporary accommodation. However, in order to be considered, the property must be suitable and affordable. In

addition, should the applicant lose the accommodation within 2 years through no fault of their own, the full housing duty will be owed if they re-present as homeless.

### 3.2 Overcrowded households

The government is encouraging Councils to adopt the “bedroom standard” as the measure for overcrowding and recommend that Councils move away from statutory over-crowding. Under the “bedroom standard”, a bedroom is allowed for each married or cohabiting couple, adult aged 21+, pair of adolescents aged 10 to 20 years of the same sex, or pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex. It is proposed to adopt the bedroom standard in Hillingdon.

### 3.3 Households living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.

There is provision in the current policy to award the relevant priority to affected households. No change is proposed as this is already the case in Hillingdon.

### 3.4 Households with medical and welfare need

Councils are reminded to look at alternatives to moving, such as adaptation and to work with social care specialists to consider welfare grounds including care leavers and people with learning difficulties. Households are given priority based on extent of need on medical and welfare grounds. No change is proposed as this is already the case in Hillingdon.

## **4. Local flexibilities**

Councils are encouraged to set their own criteria and decide who is eligible to join the housing register. In addition, Councils are entitled to give priority to other categories of applicants in order to meet local needs, provided they do not dominate the scheme. The Council can take advantage of this opportunity in the following areas as set out in government guidance:

### 4.1 Excluding households with no housing need (Band Ds)

This will enable the Council to operate a more focused waiting list which better reflects local circumstances and can be understood more readily by local people. It will also help in managing unrealistic expectations by excluding people with little or no prospect of being allocated accommodation. It is recommended this is adopted. They will be signposted and given relevant information and advice through the use of mechanisms such as ‘Targeted housing option’ website.

### 4.2 Ex-service personnel

Although this is in the current policy, priority is given to those households who have some connection with Hillingdon. However, recent government guidance recommends that members of the armed forces shouldn’t be disqualified on residency grounds, as follows:-

- a) Members of the Armed Forces and former service personnel where the application for housing is made within 5 years of discharge
- b) Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their

spouse or partner and the death was wholly or partially attributable to their service.

- c) Serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of serious injury, medical conditions or disability which is wholly or partially attributable to their service.

It is further recommended that additional priority is given to members of the forces who have continuously resided in the Borough for 10 years before signing up for the service and have not been dishonourably discharged.

#### 4.3 Rewarding those who work.

Priority is currently awarded to those who meet this criteria. Although households who were awarded priority were in line with the original estimate, the number of those housed was negligible. In order to reward working households and encourage non-working households to work, the new policy will be based giving extra priority to households in housing need if they are in work. The policy will apply to households where:

- At least one adult household member is in employment.
- The employment is a permanent contract, self-employment or part-time for a minimum of 24 hours per week.
- The worker should have been in employment for 9 out of the last 12 months.

Additional priority will be awarded as follows:

- Band A – If the household's housing need is 'Band B' + working
- Band B - If the household's housing need is 'Band C' + working

#### 4.4 Introducing a residency criteria

Applicants would be required to demonstrate that they have been residing in the Borough for a minimum of 10 years in order to join the housing register, regardless of their other needs.

However, there are potential risks to some groups who are recommended to be exempt from this requirement. They include:-

- People who have served in HM Forces in the last 5 years.
- People over 60 who would benefit from sheltered housing. They will be considered for sheltered housing after other households who meet the residency criteria.
- People who are under-occupying their current social housing.
- Emergency cases where homes are damaged by fire, flood or other disaster if it is not possible to repair the existing home, or if any work to repair is to take such a long period of time that there will be serious disruption to family life.
- Cases nominated under the Police Witness Protection Scheme or other similar schemes that the Council has agreed to be part of.
- Households who need to move to the Borough to avoid hardship.  
Hardship grounds include:

- The need to move to take up a confirmed offer of permanent employment
- The need to move to specialist facilities where they receive care but live outside the Borough
- The need to move to receive or give care/support (meaning higher care costs or even the use of residential care for those who cannot move)
- People fleeing violence or harassment
- Children spending time away from home due to periods of study such as at university
- People who have moved away for up to 3 years due to the requirements of their job

Potential unintended consequence that the review will try to mitigate could be that the households resort to 'homelessness' as a route into housing.

People placed in Hillingdon in temporary, residential or supported accommodation by another local authority or have family members in the Borough will not meet the residency criteria.

#### 4.5 10 year continuous local residency

Currently households who are in housing need and have lived in the Borough continuously for a minimum of ten years are awarded 'Band C' priority but the full benefits of the original policy has not been realised because any household in housing need automatically gets 'Band C'.

Households in housing need who have lived in the Borough continuously for a minimum of ten years at the time of applying for re-housing will be awarded additional priority. This will support stable communities and reward households who have had a long term attachment to the Borough.

- Band A – If the household's housing need is 'Band B' + 10 year residence
- Band B - If the household's housing need is 'Band C' + 10 year residence

#### 4.6 Financial circumstances

Currently households with a joint income of more than £30k, own a property or have savings/assets of more than £30k (subject to affordability test) are able to go on the housing register, although they are awarded 'Band D'.

It is recommended that in future people with sufficient income or assets are excluded. This will apply to:

- Any household who owns or have an interest in a property.
- Any households with a gross income above the level required for local cost home ownership which will be reviewed on an annual basis to reflect market conditions. Current income level for 1 and 2 bedroom properties is £64k and £77k for 3+ bedrooms.
- Any household with savings or assets of £30k.

For homeless households, an affordability test will continue to be applied to ensure there is consistency of outcome.

In addition, it is recommended that Hillingdon include the following as specific local priority:

#### 4.7 Couples aged over 21 without children

This group is currently awarded priority but the additional requirement for the household to be in housing need has adversely impacted on the full benefits of the original policy intention as fewer households have been housed. It is proposed to retain the housing need criteria but to award a higher priority band in order to increase access to local people. Additional priority will be awarded to those who are also working but are on low income making it difficult for them to access low cost or outright home ownership.

#### 4.8 Enabling fostering and adoption

There is provision in the current policy to award priority 'Band A' to those households where agreement has been reached to provide accommodation on recommendation of Social Services. No change is proposed

The Council's preferred minimum tenancy length for families with children is 5 years. Shorter fixed term tenancies (e.g. two years) would be acceptable in circumstances where fostering or adoption is the main reason for a social tenancy being allocated

#### 4.9 Encouraging personal responsibility - suspension of applicants

- Under current policy, 1 month's priority time is removed from households who fail to attend viewing of properties they have successfully bid for. This has proven difficult to administer. As applicants can bid and refuse as many properties as they want, some applicants place bids on a property even though they have no intention of accepting an offer. This can increase the amount of time a property is left empty. It is proposed to introduce a more effective system where applicants who bid for and refuse more than 3 reasonable offers within a 6 month period are suspended from bidding for a period of 6 months.
- There is also provision to make one direct allocation to homeless households who do not bid and have been in temporary accommodation for longer when compared to others in the same priority and bedsize need. Again this has been difficult to administer and it is proposed that where homeless households in temporary accommodation do not bid over a period of time, a direct allocation can be made by the Council.

### **5. Balancing the needs of new and existing tenants - making the best use of housing stock**

Under the Localism Act, transfers at the tenant's request can be dealt with outside of the main allocation scheme unless the tenant has reasonable preference. As many tenants wanting to move are in a 'reasonable preference' category – overcrowded, sick or needing to move on welfare grounds – they would be on the main allocation scheme.

There are some tenants who are moved in order for the Council to make the best use of stock. This includes transfer due to under-occupation and those

initiated by the authority for management purposes, decants, release of adapted properties and rehousing of ex-service tenants. There is provision allowing Councils to use a single allocation system if they identify the tenants they want to prioritise for moves or to use a separate register. No change is proposed to the tenant groups above. However, unauthorised occupants who are not statutory successors will no longer be offered a transfer into a social tenancy.

It is also recommended that provision is made to deal with hard to let properties by allowing applicants for specific type of properties like sheltered housing to join the housing register even if they do not meet the other eligibility criteria.

## **6. Determining priorities**

There is no guidance as to how much priority should go to the groups with 'reasonable preference' compared to tenants wanting to move or other local priorities. This is likely to lead to challenges to Allocation schemes that seek to give a large percentage of allocations to people who are not 'in reasonable preference'.

It is recommended that this is managed through an annual lettings plan which will enable the Council to set out the proportion of available lettings that will go to each group. The targets will be reviewed annually in order to take account of changes in demand and supply.

## **7. Choice**

There is no longer any commitment to Choice based lettings (CBL) and Councils may choose to allocate social housing in any other way, so long as there is regard to legislation and guidance and publish a statement on choice.

However, the advantages of the CBL system should be considered before deciding to adopt an alternative. There were significant costs associated with moving to CBL and Hillingdon is a co-founder (owner) of Locata Housing Services. There continues to be advantages of transparency with the scheme and there is an opportunity now to give much clearer advice to those who do not have any realistic chance of being housed through CBL (Band Ds) as they will not be eligible to apply on the housing register and therefore given alternative personalised advice through the use of mechanisms such as 'Targeted housing option' website.

However a Council chooses to allocate properties, it will require the use of a computer system to administer those allocations. The current recommendation from officers is to continue with a choice based system at present, but to review this on an annual basis including the outcomes of the current policy. An annual report will be provided to the Portfolio Holder for Social Care, Health & Housing and the Leader with the impact of the policy and a review of how a choice based system is working.

## **8. Key implications**

Under these proposals the Council will continue to meet its statutory obligations and local priorities. In addition, provisions in the Localism Act mean that there will no longer be an automatic link between a homeless application and a social housing tenancy as the Council can use the new power to discharge homelessness duty by an offer of a property in the private sector.

A consequence of the changes is likely to be a balance in allocations going to homeless households, transferring tenants and other local priority groups for example working households, childless couples and ex-service personnel.

## Summary of proposals

	<b>Household group</b>	<b>Current policy</b>	<b>Proposed policy</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Households who meet statutory 'reasonable preference' criteria. Includes those who:</b>	Prioritised as follows:	
	a) Are homeless	Band A – End of lease. Band B – Placed in B&B or hostel. Band C – Placed in other forms of temporary accommodation.	Discharge duty into the private sector where possible (without consent of the applicant)
	a) Are overcrowded	Band B – Statutory/severe overcrowding Band C – Other forms of overcrowding	Adopt the bedroom standard
	b) Live in unsatisfactory housing conditions	Band A – Statutory e.g. closing order, CPO Band B – Children in unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing. Band B – Children in Colley House which was purpose built for single people. Band C – other unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing.	No change
	c) Need to move on medical or welfare grounds	Bands A, B & C – Medical grounds Band B – Welfare grounds agreed in liaison with Social services, police, welfare agencies (care leavers, child protection, releasing supported housing, give/receive care, ex-tenant discharged from an institution) Band C- Welfare grounds - to assist Social services in delivery of a care plan.	No change

<b>2</b>	<b>Households who meet additional local priority. Includes:</b>	Prioritised as follows:	
	a) Ex-service personnel	Band B	Extend provision to bereaved spouses and members of the Reserve Forces and award higher 'Band A'.
	b) Couples aged over 21 without children	Band C – those with housing need	Retain housing need criteria but award higher 'Band B' to those who are also working.
	c) Working households	Band C – those with housing need	Retain housing need criteria but move up one priority band as follows: Band A – if already in 'Band B' and working. Band B – if already in 'Band C' and working.
	d) Those with local connection of 10+ years	Band C – those with housing need	Retain housing need criteria but move up one priority band as follows: Band A – if already in 'Band B' and 10 year residence. Band B – if already in 'Band C' and 10 year residence.
	e) Enable fostering & adoption	Band A - Where agreement has been reached to provide accommodation on recommendation of Social Services and the current accommodation is not suitable.	No change to priority but shorter fixed term tenancies (e.g. two years) may be offered where fostering or adoption is the main reason for a social tenancy being allocated.
<b>3</b>	<b>Qualification for joining the housing register</b>	Anyone can join the housing register.	Apply some exclusions
	a) Households considered not to be in housing need (Band D)	Can join but have no prospects of getting social housing	Exclude from the housing register
	b) Residency restriction	Not in place.	Apply a 10 year residency restriction to join the

		housing register. This would prioritise established local families.
c) Income & asset restriction	Households with a joint income of more than £30k (subject to affordability test) are awarded 'Band D' on the housing register  Households who own a property or have savings/assets of more than £30k (subject to affordability test) are awarded 'Band D' on the housing register	Exclude the following households: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who own or have an interest in a property.</li> <li>• Those with a gross income above the level required for local cost home ownership which will be reviewed on an annual basis to reflect market conditions. Current income level for 1 and 2 bedroom properties is £64k and £77k for 3+ bedrooms.</li> <li>• Those with savings or assets of £30k.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Making best use of housing stock - existing tenants</b>	Prioritised as follows:
a) Under-occupation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving up 2+ bedroom</li> <li>• Giving up 1 bedroom</li> <li>• Support those who will suffer hardship as a result of housing benefit reductions (Welfare reforms)</li> </ul>	Band A Band B Not in place	No change No change Review options for assistance.
b) Management transfers	Band A – Imminent personal risk	No change
c) Decants	Band A – Permanent Band B – Lease expiry or essential repairs	No change No change
d) Releasing adapted property	Band A	No change
e) Ex-service tenants	Band A – Caretakers/Sheltered wardens	No change

	f) Older residents eligible for sheltered accommodation	Band C – Those aged 60+ who apply for sheltered only (even if they do not meet other eligibility criteria)	No change in order to be able to let 'hard to let' sheltered properties.
	g) Unauthorised occupants (non statutory successor)	Bands A & B	Not to be offered a transfer into a social tenancy.
<b>5</b>	<b>Encouraging personal responsibility</b>	Remove 1 month's priority time from households who fail to attend viewing or refuse a property	Households who successfully bid and unreasonably refuse 3 or more properties to be suspended from bidding for 6 months.
		Make one direct allocation to homeless households who <i>do not bid</i> and have been in temporary accommodation for longer when compared to others with the same priority and bedsize need	Make one direct allocation to be homeless households who have been in temporary accommodation for longer when compared with others with the same priority and bedsize need.
<b>6</b>	<b>Travellers site pitches</b>	Households apply on the housing register and pitches are allocated through choice based lettings	No change

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