Building Homes
Building Communities

Housing Strategy 2014–2018

London Borough of Hounslow
I am very pleased to introduce the new Housing Strategy 2014-2018 for Hounslow. This strategy arrives at a time of significant financial uncertainty, and in the context of unprecedented cuts in public expenditure and tough financial settlements for the Council. However, it has also come at a crucial time where we have been able to plan and set out our strategic approach, find ways of best managing and investing in our homes and neighbourhoods.

Changing times, changing places is the running theme of this strategy. Our vision adopts a different role that is responsive to current challenges and needs focused not only on changing how we provide services but how we can best support our communities to adapt to change. This is a key aspect in this new strategy. Good quality housing does have a fundamental effect on our lives – it influences our health, the education and employment choices we make, how and where we take our leisure and, for many, housing is at the heart of the lifetime decisions we make, not just for ourselves, but for our families and friends. That is why we are taking all the opportunities available to us with our housing revenue account to better plan and deliver excellent housing services for our communities.

This strategy also outlines our vision for growth and creating opportunities for our residents, excelling in delivering high quality housing services, tackling housing inequalities, investing in new and existing homes that our residents want to live in. We want housing to be a key driver in the creation of economic prosperity and growth, not just in terms of the direct benefits of new housing developments on jobs and investments in the Borough, but also through the positive impact that improved housing will have on encouraging people to stay and live in the Borough and the boost this can have in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. We are also refreshing our approach to how we engage with our tenants, leaseholders and residents and key partners to improve the supply and choice of good quality housing through the introduction of a local agreement.

There has been much progress since 2010 but there is still much to do. The Council will continue to work with its many partners to deliver these plans and I look forward to seeing them come to fruition over the coming months and years for the benefit of the residents of the London Borough of Hounslow.

Cllr Steve Curran
Cabinet member for Housing, Planning and Regeneration
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Section 1
About this document
A new combined approach

Until now the Council has presented our housing and homelessness strategies as two separate documents. However, the housing landscape has changed significantly for local authorities and we are constantly exploring ways to join up and better align our services in order to deliver them more efficiently and effectively to our residents. Therefore, combining our housing and homelessness strategies into a single document will facilitate greater integration in the provision of our wider housing and ensure that we do not consider existing and future housing needs in isolation. A combined approach will also assist our need to influence and shape delivery of other related services which impact on housing such as health and leisure. It will also help our residents and partners to better understand our intentions and objectives in relation to addressing housing issues and preventing homelessness.

The development of this strategy has been informed by a review of national, regional and local policy and guidance. Through this process, an extensive housing and homelessness needs assessment has been carried out. This involved looking at a wide set of housing data available, including national statistics, local management information and qualitative research reports. This work is referenced throughout this document and has provided the basis for developing our priorities, outcomes and actions.

A draft strategy was then produced and was subject to wide consultation with local residents, community groups, stakeholders and service users.

The consultation period took place from 19th August 2013 until 30 September 2013. We arranged a series of workshops, engagement events, presentation materials and provided other resources to assist in capturing responses. We received responses from many colleagues, partners, tenants and residents (including associations on their behalf). All of these were carefully analysed to assess what we needed to amend or incorporate into this final version. Whilst it has not been possible to incorporate every point of view, the challenge and discussion generated by the consultation process has been invaluable and has resulted in better shaping our strategic objectives and refining the work that we need to do for the next five years.

Our strategic objectives

The strategy is to be taken forward through the pursuit of five high level housing objectives that aim to ensure that housing services are developed and delivered in ways which contribute to achieving Council and national objectives. These are;

**Objective 1**
To provide a choice of high quality housing for people at all stages of their lives at prices they can afford.

**Objective 2**
To raise housing quality and standards across tenures, enhancing local areas and supporting thriving communities.

**Objective 3**
To support our communities to live independently by promoting health and well-being

**Objective 4**
To support residents from becoming homeless and provide housing options and advice if they become homeless

**Objective 5**
To create cleaner, safer and greener living environments for our local communities
Executive Summary

The Housing Strategy for Hounslow 2014 – 2018 – Building Homes, Building Communities, sets out the council’s proposed approach to address the housing issues that we expect to affect the borough, over the next 5 years.

We recognise that we are living in changing times – housing finance and legislation are changing, and household needs and housing supply is changing. Hounslow is also changing. We know that in order to manage these changes, Hounslow Council will need to adopt a different role that is responsive to current challenges and need, and which focuses not only on changing how we provide services but also how we support communities to adapt to change.

Hounslow has great opportunities for growth driven by our bold housing and regeneration ambitions. We are identified as one of the top ten growth areas in the country and we want to use all of the opportunities that this can bring for our residents, for those who want to make it their home and for those who want to make it their business destination.

The government has set out the following responsibilities of the local authority with regard to housing and homelessness:

- Assessing housing needs and planning to meet demand across all tenures, including through new build.
- Ensuring that social housing stock is maintained to the highest standard and that those standards are monitored and enforced in the private sector.
- Planning and commissioning housing support services, to help people who have a disability or are elderly to find appropriate accommodation or remain in their homes.
- Assisting those who are homeless and those with the greatest housing needs, through effective management of available social housing and provision of housing options.
- Ensuring effective neighbourhood and housing management through partnership working.

These tasks cut across many areas of council business, but in particular affect the following themes from our Corporate Plan 2012 – 2015:

- A thriving economy with more affordable homes
- A clean, green borough
- An active, healthy borough
- Help and support for our residents who need it most
- Pressures due to the growing number of residents; the changing age structure of the population; the current difficult economic climate; and the government’s welfare reform agenda, will all affect the future demand for housing in the borough. We expect an increased demand for homes in Hounslow, particularly larger family sized homes; and greater numbers of older residents who wish to remain in their homes and requiring support. There will also be a need for changing our housing options service to respond to the greater numbers of people who will become homeless or in need of social housing, in particular, as a result of welfare reforms.

We have identified five strategic housing objectives that will enable us to achieve our long-term aims. Our strategic housing objectives for the next five years are as follows;

1. To provide a choice of high quality housing for people at all stages of their lives at prices they can afford.
2. To raise housing quality and standards across tenures, enhancing local areas and supporting thriving communities.
3. To support our communities to live independently by promoting health and well-being.
4. To support residents from becoming homeless and provide housing options and advice if they become homeless.
5. To create cleaner, safer and greener living environments for our local communities.
Objective 1
To provide a choice of high quality housing for people at all stages of their lives at prices they can afford

The population of Hounslow is growing – there are more young single people, more large family households, and more elderly people. At the same time there are major issues in Hounslow with the affordability of housing, in particular for larger size family homes. The overall effect of this is to create a demand for more family-sized homes, particularly in the social rented sector.

We propose to meet these demands by:

- Taking a leadership role for housing, being clear about the role we can play in facilitating house building, making land available, releasing sites and strengthening partnership work with our developers
- Deliver affordable housing and look to create opportunities to be more ambitious with the setting of a revised target following the completion of our current target of 2,500 to be delivered by 2015
- Seek to secure a tenure split of 60% affordable rent and 40% low cost home ownership
- Ensure where possible that a minimum of 10% of all new homes are specifically identified and suitable for people with learning disabilities
- Through our HRA business plan we will deliver 600 affordable new homes
- Consult and introduce a local agreement that will aim to reflect a strong measure of consensus and unique collaboration between the Council and house builders
- We will bring 250 empty (private) homes back into use
- We will reduce void times in council owned properties

Objective 2
To raise housing quality and standards across tenures enhancing local areas and supporting thriving communities

The council has delegated the management of its housing stock to its Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Hounslow Homes. As landlords we need to ensure that programmes of repairs, improvements and major works are administered effectively. We also have a responsibility to be responsive to the needs of our tenants and leaseholders and address their priorities. Hounslow has 12 areas that are in the 20% most deprived areas of London, most of which correspond to council housing estates. Although the private rented sector provides a much needed source of affordable accommodation in the borough, some of its properties are below acceptable conditions.

We propose to address these needs by:

- We will strengthen monitoring systems and processes to ensure that Hounslow Homes cyclical and major works programmes are delivered whilst retaining capacity to exploit new opportunities and encouraging local business development
- Carry out a review of our leaseholder service billing process and introduce a more transparent process from August 2014
- Establish a tenant, leaseholder and sheltered collective grouping that will effectively contribute and influence decisions relating to their homes and living conditions
- We will work with landlords to improve conditions and management in Private Rented Housing through licensing and monitoring of compliance with conditions under the Housing Act 2004.
- We will tackle tenancy fraud in social lettings, with a focus on illegal sub-lettings and right to buy fraud
Objective 3

To support our communities to live independently by promoting health and wellbeing

As the resident population grows old and a greater number of people survive into old age, there will be greater demand for housing that is capable of being adapted for care and mobility requirements, and suitable for occupation by the frail and disabled. In particular, there will be a large increase in the number of individuals over 65 and 85 years entering retirement and placing an increased demand on health and leisure services. Dementia is predicted to be an increasing problem in an aging population and there are other ailments, such as long-term neurological conditions that affect large numbers of the population and require ongoing support in order to enable sufferers to live successfully within the community. Obesity amongst children is a further issue that can only be addressed through a joined-up holistic approach.

We propose to tackle these issues by:

- We will complete 4 sheltered housing schemes and ensure these become hubs of community activity for older people
- We will support and encourage older and vulnerable people to make decisions to move to more suitable accommodation, when appropriate
- We will improve the quality of sheltered housing, by reducing the number of units to 750 through remodelling and decommissioning
- We will align and integrate housing services with the Health and Wellbeing board and genuinely contribute to programmes and commissioning across services and organisations in the borough
- We will support the redevelopment of Heston leisure centre
- We will promote multifunctional use of open space for the elderly, children, including upgrading existing play spaces

Objective 4

To support residents from becoming homeless and provide housing options and advice if they become homeless

The numbers of individuals identifying themselves as homeless and approaching the council for help increased over the course of the previous housing strategy. If this continues at the current rate we project that numbers will treble by 2018 – from 600 in 2008 to 1,800 in 2018. The proportion of these individuals who were accepted by the council for help also increased, and the number of rough sleepers in the borough is also growing. The main reason that people became homeless in Hounslow was due to eviction from private rented accommodation, followed by eviction by parents, friends or relatives, and then domestic violence. Amidst the acute shortage of suitable accommodation in the borough, we are having to house escalating numbers of homeless households in bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation, as interim measures. The fact is that demand for homes in the borough is greatly exceeding available supply across the full range of needed sizes and types of social and affordable housing, but in particular mobility adapted accommodation and larger family homes.

We propose to meet this challenge by:

- Reduce our temporary accommodation and bring our finances under control, reviewing what we do, and changing what we need to do
- We will focus on the transformation of housing and homeless services, to build a solid financial platform to deal with increased demand and better meet expectations of residents and those in the greatest need
- We will strengthen and integrate our housing role and presence across all services in order to maximise our focus and efforts and prevent residents from becoming homelessness
To create a cleaner, safer and greener living environment

The quality of living spaces in the borough is affected by the presence of refuse, crime and anti-social behaviour, and cold homes that lack proper energy-efficient insulation. The street environment, littering and fly tipping are key issues for residents that add to or detract from the attractiveness of an area as destination in which to live or do business. Anti-social behaviour and to a lesser extent more serious crime in the borough, causes distress to its victims and anxiety amongst the wider community. Cold homes caused by fuel poverty contribute to a range of health issues amongst the elderly and vulnerable.

We propose to improve these conditions by:

- We will expand the role of estate wardens to deal with the issues that are perceived as the biggest problems by residents, such as litter and dog fouling
- We will work to better integrate partnership working between the police, Hounslow homes and residents, in order to improve community safety on our estates
- We will target the work of the new team of Estates Police Officers, to tackle drug crime and antisocial behaviour on our estates
- We will develop programmes to help attract investment into the borough for the delivery of home energy efficiency improvements

Achieving our objectives

We are committed to delivering each of the objectives outlined in this document through the actions we have set out. Progress on actions will be monitored and regularly reviewed against key performance criteria.

We recognise that the priorities within this Strategy cannot be delivered by the Council alone. Partnership working is required at a local level and there are many players already actively involved in improving housing issues across the borough. Our committee of Tenants, Leaseholders and Sheltered group as well as the Housing Strategic Delivery Board are important forums in this regard. These meet regularly as an active collective group of individuals and agencies interested in housing issues locally. There are also many other examples of partnership working which will help us deliver the housing work across the Borough and we will seek to engage and work with them to achieve our objectives.
Section 2
Introduction
A new housing strategy

Everyone deserves a home that is appropriate to their needs and income. This is an important consideration in the development of this strategy. The borough has a strong economy built around its mixed community and investment opportunities. In order to build on this, we also need to encourage a wider mix of healthy and skilled residents and a more diverse mix of types and sizes of homes to house them. We must also address the needs of those who are homeless or vulnerable to the risk of homelessness. This document therefore describes the key housing and homelessness issues that are facing our borough, and explains how we will, working closely with our partners, address them over the next five years.

A choice of quality housing is at the heart of achieving social, economic and environmental objectives that shape a community and create a sense of place. It anchors people, services and sectors of the economy to an area which in turn influences each of the key priorities set out in our overall Hounslow Corporate Plan 2012-2015:

- A safe borough.
- Bright futures for the borough’s children and young people.
- A thriving economy with more affordable homes.
- A clean, green borough.
- An active, healthy borough.
- Help and support for our residents who need it most.
- An ambitious council which improves the lives of residents and works in a transparent and efficient way.

Hounslow housing facts

Since we published the Housing strategy in 2010 and the Homelessness strategy in 2008 there have been significant changes within housing legislation. These are coupled with the ongoing tough economic climate which has resulted in significant financial pressures and challenges for housing. The difficult economic climate has impacted the housing choices and home ownership options available to residents, in particular, first time buyers who continue to struggle to purchase their own homes. The 2011 Census also demonstrates significant changes in the demographics of our local population – by way of a snapshot, we set out below some key facts and issues that impact on housing in Hounslow and which are discussed more fully throughout this document:

- At 19.6%, Hounslow population growth is the fifth highest in the country – that means an additional 41,616 people since 2001, which is expected to increase a further 3% (6,664) in next five years.
- 8,815 (5%) residents are unemployed and looking for work, and 6,502 (3%) residents are unable to work (due to sickness or disability).
- Hounslow is 118th most deprived local authority nationally (out of 326).
- Single persons represent the highest proportion of householders in Hounslow – 25,985 (27%).
- 20,704 (22%) households are classified as overcrowded - an increase of 52% on the 2001 Census figure of 13,635 (16%).
- There are 97,274 homes in the borough, an increase of 13% since 2001 when there were 86,217 - flats account for 35%; semi detached properties account for 29%, and terrace homes are 23%.
- 2,423 homes in Hounslow do not have central heating (3%), and 110 deaths were recorded due to fuel poverty and cold homes in 2010/11.
- Approximately half of households are home owners, 21,099 (22%) rent from private landlords (almost double the 10,839 of 2001), 13,500 (15%) rent their homes from the local authority, and 7,386 (8%) rent from other social housing providers.
- Since 2008 the number of households accepted as homeless has increased from 331 in 2008/9 to 638 in 2012/13 an increase of 93% - 472 (72%) of whom had dependent children.
- There are 945 people registered as deaf or hard of hearing, 1,465 registered blind or partially blind, and 7,372 people with long term neurological conditions in Hounslow.
- Ivybridge Estate in Isleworth is the most deprived area in the borough, followed by Beavers Lane Estate in Hounslow West and Oriel Estate in Hanworth.
Our achievements

Since we published our Housing Strategy 2010-2014, we have made some significant improvements in our priority areas. We have also made considerable progress in combating homelessness through the ongoing implementation of our Homelessness Strategy (2008).

Some of our achievements in delivering new housing and high quality housing service to our residents are set out below:

- Decent home standard for our housing stock was maintained: 100%
- Empty properties brought back into use: 200
- Houses in Multiple Occupation were licensed and brought up to standard: 305
- Private sector homes were improved through the council’s interventions: 2,544
- Hostels were refurbished as part of our programme of renewing hostel provision: 8
- Affordable homes completed since 2010, towards the pledge of 2,500 by 2015: 1,140
- Households assisted into owner occupation: 307
- Under occupiers were assisted to be re-housed: 124

We also:

- Introduced a new housing allocation policy from April 2013.
- Secured 26 units at St Margaret’s Hostel for young people accommodation.
- Secured a Hospital discharge referral protocol with West Middlesex Hospital.
- This new strategy will build on these achievements and will take us further in continuing the good work that has already been done.
Welfare Reforms and impact on housing

Since the introduction of the Welfare Reform in April 2012 the Council has been proactive in supporting those impacted by the welfare reforms. From an impact analysis we know that the areas which most impacted are Syon, Brentford, Heston, Hanworth and Isleworth this information also correlates with our most deprived social housing areas. As is the case with many local authorities, the impact of welfare reform is having a different impact on different groups of people across the borough. Many of those who rely on a combination of benefits are being adversely affected. These groups include large families on low incomes; carers; disabled people; tenants in private rented accommodation, and people in social housing under-occupying their accommodation.

- **Social Sector Size Criteria started in April 2013**, initially there were just under 1400 social housing tenants affected by this. To date the number of Council tenants that are affected by this, has reduced by 12.5% and with continued efforts the Council seek to reduce the number even further. This has been possible through support with moving, helping with identifying suitable properties to swap with and if tenants wish to remain in their home, assisting with identifying ways of saving money to ensure that they are able to afford to pay the rent that housing benefit will no longer pay.

- **Benefit Cap**, began in Hounslow mid-August 2013 and full implementation of the benefit cap was completed in mid-September.

In response to these changes and as the welfare reform agenda continues to develop, we have been actively engaging with key local organisations to develop an effective co-ordinated response through the development of an action plan "Welfare Reform – A local action plan for supporting our communities 2013-15" to mitigate the negative impacts of the welfare reforms. The action plan focuses on delivering mitigating measures which have been broadly placed into the following three categories;

- Direct service implications and consequences
- Direct operational and service development requirements
- Indirect and wider consequences in local communities and potential long term opportunities deriving from welfare reform

These categories are underpinned by the following key principles;

- **A preventative approach**: where possible the Council will take a proactive approach to mitigate any adverse impacts on the council, tenants, residents and other key agencies.

- **A co-ordinated service provision**: work is being undertaken to merge relevant services into multi-disciplinary teams, to ensure people can receive information, advice and support in a more accessible format.

- **Building Council/Community capacity**: This will include reshaping and redesigning of services; to ensure the council is working with or commissioning voluntary organisations/other agencies to take on some of the anticipated increase in demand for support services.

- **Protecting the Council’s financial position**: Minimising the financial risk to council income and work on areas that will prevent/mitigate these risks. Especially around minimising rental income loss and helping to sustain tenancies affected by welfare reforms.

As the welfare reforms cut across all areas, where possible we have reflected our planned mitigation measures across all of our five objectives within this strategy.
Section 3

A changing local government housing landscape
The national context

The local authority landscape has changed dramatically over the last few years. The financial crisis, decentralisation of government, rising unemployment and new austerity measures mean that more than ever before, local authorities are being expected to do more with less. Coupled with new legislation and significant new policy measures, these changes have impacted on Hounslow’s housing provision. The key changes include:

- **Localism Act 2011** (including the statutory London Housing Strategy and London Plan).
- **Welfare Reform Act 2012**.
- **Energy Act 2011**.

The policies contained within this new legislation aim to improve and create new housing arrangements and flexibilities for local authorities and therefore allow more opportunities for communities to become less dependent on welfare, own their homes and improve their liveability. Combining these policies they provide a new legislative framework for housing which include:

- **Self financing**: – enabling the council to retain rent collected and spend it on local housing priorities.

- **Right to Buy**: – discounts increased from £16,000 to £100,000. Social housing sold under this scheme will need to be replaced by affordable rent properties.

- **Flexible tenancies**: – introducing new fixed term, flexible tenancies for social landlords aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing and providing social housing only for as long as tenants need it, not for life.

- **Homelessness duties**: – allowing local housing authorities to discharge their statutory homeless duty by rehousing households in the private sector.

- **Welfare Reform**: – changing the calculation and entitlement of housing benefit for social tenants in line with the private sector, where payments are according to the size of the household and not the property rented. Increasing deductions for non dependent household members and the introduction of a cap to the household’s overall benefit of no more than the national average salary with families being entitled to £500 and £350 for singles and couples, per week. The cap is the pre phase to Universal Credit which will be implemented later this year, which will see all benefits combined into one single payment.

- **Affordable Rent**: - a new model for the delivery of affordable housing whereby social housing providers can charge up to 80% of market levels (significantly higher than social rents) and use the increased rental income to support additional borrowing to compensate for reduced grants over this period. It is expected that affordable rent will form the principal element of the new supply offer and new flexibilities will also allow a proportion of social rent properties to be re-let at an affordable rent.

- **New Homes Bonus**: - introduced in 2011/12 for every new home and empty property brought back into use, local authorities will receive the equivalent of the annual council tax raised, together with an additional £350 for affordable units, for a period of six years. The scheme is part of the government’s overall strategy to substantially increase the level of house building and is intended to incentivise and encourage new build.

- **Green Deal**: - As part of the Energy Act 2011 - the Green Deal was introduced in October 2012; this is a "Pay-as-you-save" model allowing consumers to have energy saving measures installed in their property at no up-front-cost. Green Deal repayments (loans) will be attached to the resident’s meter and repaid via the electricity bill.

- **Changes to National Planning Policy Framework**: - this replaced most of the existing national planning policy statements. Linked to this is a new Planning Policy for travellers sites – brought together by the requirement of the local authority to develop a new Local Plan.
The Mayor’s Housing Strategy and Investment in London

The Mayor of London issued a revised housing strategy in August 2012. It contains two core aims for tackling housing which are about empowering people and transforming places. Other policies include a pledge to work with foreign embassies to improve assistance for foreign nationals sleeping rough, delivering 1,800 supported homes by 2015 for elderly and vulnerable tenants while also supporting boroughs to properly address the needs of Gypsies and Traveller’s. This strategy is therefore developed to be in general conformity with the London Housing Strategy and contribute towards the housing targets set out in the London Plan and our emerging Local Plan.

Our local context and policies

There are a number of key emerging strategies that have been taken into account during the development of this strategy such as the Local Plan which aims to set out the council’s proposals for the future development of the borough over the next 15 years.

This is a new era for council housing and at the heart of the delivery of this strategy is also our 30 year HRA business plan which sets out for the first time realistic priorities and a new journey for investment for the next 5-10 years under the vision of “sustainable council housing in Hounslow”. We will be embracing the opportunity to integrate our public health service in the delivery of our services. We have also made appropriate links to other cross cutting service strategies that exist in the council and these are referred throughout the document where relevant.

Public Health

Amid the changes and challenges the council faces, from 1 April 2013, the council has also received new responsibility for public health. This service area touches almost every area of council policy – planning, licensing, transport, education, housing, public safety, leisure, economic growth, older people and much more. Our statutory Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Health and Well-being strategy are overseen by the Hounslow Health and Well-being Board, and will drive much of the integration between council and partner services. Within this context, we will build strong connections for the delivery of quality housing services that protect and promote health.
Section 4

Overarching evidence and challenges
People

The population of Hounslow is projected to increase by 3% between 2014 to 2018, from 254,000 to 260,664. This will generate additional demand for housing in Hounslow, as a proportion of these new residents will become settled and start families. Of this we expect that affordable housing for single parents and couples with dependent children will see the greatest increase in demand, creating a need for larger family homes of a more secure tenure type, i.e. owner occupier, intermediate or socially rented homes.

Age

The changing age structure of residents will generate further housing needs within the borough: an increasing number of children and middle aged adults (30-59) will create demand for...
for larger family homes; and a decreasing number of young adults (18-29) could potentially create less demand within the borough for smaller properties with highly mobile tenure types (e.g. flats in the private rented sector). We expect that the increasing numbers of older persons (60+) will create additional demand for properties with secure tenures suitable for people who may experience issues with frailty or mobility; and the increasing proportion of elderly residents (85+) are likely to increase demand for sheltered or supported housing.

Migration

Hounslow will almost certainly continue to be an attractive destination for migrants over the course of the 2014 to 2018 Housing Strategy. The 2011 census showed that there were 57,613 migrants living in Hounslow who entered the UK between 2001 and 2012 and a further 52,300 residents who were not born in the UK but entered before 2001. Even if there were considerable reduction in the levels of migration into Hounslow, our expectations is that migration will continue to have significant effects on housing needs.

Most migrants are young (49% aged 18-29) and satisfy their housing requirements through flats in the private rented sector; it is likely that demand for these types of properties will remain high. A significant proportion of migrants also bring their children (26% aged 0-17) and these will need larger family sized homes, specifically in the private rented sector as this offers the greatest degree of mobility, which is attractive to new migrants.

Migrants have also been demonstrated to be at increased risk of overcrowding and concealed households; the council will need to monitor its properties and the private rented sector to ensure that they are being let appropriately. Access to affordable housing (larger family size homes) will need to be provided for those in the greatest need.

Education and Employment

The number of people in employment in Hounslow increased between 2001 and 2011 roughly in line with the increase in population. In 2011, there were 129,052 people aged 18 to 74 in employment, 8,815 actively looking for work and 61,105 economically inactive (retired, full time students, sick
or disabled, caring for children or disabled relatives). The proportion of residents aged 16-74 in work remained roughly constant at 63%. Counter-intuitively, this leads to increased pressure on housing as greater numbers of people on higher incomes lead to increased house and rental prices, which make housing less affordable for those on benefits and with the smallest incomes. Although employment increased, compared to the overall numbers out of work, a significant proportion of residents remain dependent on benefits and numbers of people unemployed and looking for work also increased. Housing needs will arise amongst this group as they become subject to benefit cuts through the welfare reform. The majority of the increase in employment came from people not in full time work but in part time and self employment; these people are still likely to be on moderate incomes and may also need access to affordable housing.

Workers in Hounslow (residents and people who commute into the borough to work) are paid a median wage of £29,010, above the London median wage of £27,420 and the Outer London median wage of £26,311. However, when looking at residents only, people are paid below these expected levels, the median wage for Hounslow residents being £26,069. This suggests that more could be done to attract wealthier workers to relocate to Hounslow, for example building more executive and large family homes. The Socio Economic Group of Hounslow residents closely follows the income distribution: the overall average is lower than the London, Outer London and neighbouring borough averages.

Of particular note is the reduction in residents in the highest Socio Economic Group category between 2001 and 2011, managerial and higher level residents. There is a need for greater numbers of large family and executive homes in the borough, to attract and retain these sorts of resident.

Hounslow residents typically have a higher level of education than the Outer London average. Although they are less educated than the London and neighbouring borough averages, in general the population of Hounslow is highly educated, with nearly 35% having a degree or equivalent. An educated population tends to be more mobile than a less educated population: they prefer flexible tenures such as those found in the private rented sector.

Economy and business

The economic profile of Hounslow is heavily influenced by its geographic location between central London and Heathrow Airport. Around one-fifth of employment in Hounslow depends on a supply chain to Heathrow.

A survey of local businesses with fewer than 20 employees found that around 40% of those businesses trade solely within the borough. However, analysis of commuting in the borough indicates that businesses based in Hounslow are more likely to employ workers who live outside the borough, particularly in relation to higher level occupations and this is reflected in the difference in the average wages of Hounslow residents compared to non-resident workers in the borough. Hounslow residents are more likely to work in lower order occupations than the London average, reflecting the lack of qualifications compared with the rest of the capital. We know that we need to do more to not only attract and retain qualified residents such as professionals to the borough, for example, building or otherwise providing more attractive housing, executive accommodation and larger family sized properties. In support of this approach, our Local Plan sets out ambitious regeneration plans which include significant housing and employment growth and this is expected to bring new populations into the borough, both as residents and workers.

We also know that the number of children expected to enter education is increasing, this places additional demands on the existing school infrastructure. In line with our Children & Young People’s Plan 2012-15 and emerging Local Plan we will support the delivery of expanded and new schools in particular building in areas that do not currently meet demand for places.

Disability and Illness

There are currently 21,365 households in the borough with a limiting long term illness. Depending on the nature of the illness, these households may need access to specially adapted accommodation or support services to remain in their homes. There are 6,502 economically inactive residents due to long term sickness or disability, which indicates the level of need for extensively supported housing. There are over 10,000 residents in Hounslow who are currently in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, 8,500 of whom have mobility needs and 9,000 of whom have care needs.

Based on the London prevalence rates, the most common disabilities affecting claimants are, in order: learning difficulties, arthritis, psychosis (severe mental health needs), each accounting for roughly 1 in 8 cases. Together these 3 conditions account for over 50% of the total number of DLA claimants. The number of adaptations, including minor alterations, carried out to homes to allow people with disability and access needs to continue to live in their properties was 158 in 2012/13. The demand for this service is exceptionally high and current waiting times are approximately 6 months for a consultation with an occupational therapist and 12 months for an adaptation to be completed. Smoking is the single biggest cause of preventable death and illness, including through passive smoking in the home. Around 15.3% of adults in Hounslow smoke.
Properties

Rent levels

Typical median (expected) private sector rent levels in Hounslow are lower than the London and Outer London averages and those found in our neighbouring boroughs.

This makes Hounslow one of the more affordable boroughs in West London and attractive to people who are sensitive to price, such as migrants, younger adults (aged 18-29) and those on lower incomes. Based on the median income in Hounslow (taking 40% of gross as an affordable rent) and median rents for 2012, a single person in Hounslow should be able to rent a room, studio or 1 bedroom flat; couples should be able to rent up to a 3 bedroom house. Larger families and lone parents are therefore particularly likely to require access to affordable or social housing. The benefit cap of £26,000 per year will mean that private sector rents are unaffordable for the majority of households on benefits. Families in the private rented sector are therefore at an increased risk of becoming homeless unless it becomes more affordable. It is expected that incidences of homelessness in Hounslow are likely to increase.

The average house price in Hounslow in 2012 was £286,000. Allowing for a 10% deposit and the outstanding capital would require a mortgage of £257,400, five times a household salary of £51,500. As the typical household / two person salary in Hounslow is less than £40,000, home ownership will remain unaffordable for the majority of the borough’s residents. Households that would like more security of tenure than can be found in the private rented sector (typically families requiring larger homes) will need access to intermediate or affordable rent housing.
Tenure

Of the 97,274 dwellings in the borough at the time of the 2011 census, 77% were privately owned with the remaining 23% owned either by the local authority or a registered provider. The number of private rental properties increased 66% between the 2001 and 2011 censuses; conversely there was a 2% reduction in the number of owner occupied properties during this time. This illustrates the difficulty of home ownership in the borough and again underlines the need for affordable, socially rented and intermediate family sized homes in the borough.

Property lettings

In 2012/13 there were 554 lettings of council properties. This was a reduction from 695 in 2010/11 and 647 in 2011/12. In 2010/11 and 2011/12 most lettings were for 2 bedroom properties, but this picture changed in 2012/13, when most lettings were of 1 bedroom properties. This demonstrates the extremely limited availability of larger, family sized social housing properties (eg 2 bed and above). The council should therefore seek to prioritise affordable housing options with other registered social landlords and in partnership with the private sector to increase provision of these types of homes.

Property size

Most new homes created in the borough between 2001 and 2011 were in blocks of flats. These are typically one or two bedroom properties and only add to demand for larger family homes, as their residents have children and form additional households. The proportion of semi detached and terraced homes, suitable for families with young children, decreased between 2001 and 2011 and the numbers of terraced homes decreased overall.

This would also add to the need for larger family homes. There was an increase in the number and proportion of detached homes, but as their numbers remain low overall, this would not be enough to offset the reduction in other types of housing.

Housing conditions

There are two key conditions that impact on housing living conditions and these are heating of homes and smoking. Although the number and proportion of centrally heated homes in the borough improved between 2001 and 2011, there were still 2,423 homes in the borough at the time of the last census that did not have central heating. Cold homes were estimated to have contributed to the deaths of 110 residents in 2010/11. The SmokeFree homes initiative is being rolled out in 2013/14, with an initial resource for 1000 households to sign up and receive information on the health hazards of smoking indoors.

Living open spaces

Hounslow’s physical activity and sport strategy highlights that only about 20% of the population regularly participate in physical activity or sport meaning that a large number of people are not benefiting from the associated health benefits. It also highlights that there are groups and geographical areas that have significantly lower participation rates and therefore require a particular focus in order to increase participation. The strategy highlights for example that participation is lower in western areas of the borough.
There is a high correlation between areas of greatest deprivation and populations who are the least active. The borough has a total of 6 leisure centres in Brentford, Chiswick, Heston, Hanworth, Isleworth and Osterley. These receive an average of 110,000 visits every month, which increased from 60,000 visits per month as a result of the Olympic Games in London. There are 213 parks across the borough which are used by 80% of residents in any given week. Increasing the availability of community based exercise facilities and improving the environment to better enable residents to live a more active lifestyle, are important considerations for this housing strategy.

Imbalances

Empty Properties

At the time of the 2011 census 2,372 household spaces in the borough remained unoccupied. The council will need to investigate these properties and do everything in its power to bring them back into use. Many properties are left empty when the occupant dies and there is a delay in surviving relatives receiving probate or when a property is not repaired after suffering damage in a fire. Some of these may be in the process of being sold or re-let. A majority of empty properties are not suitable to be returned to use in the immediate future, for these reasons. At any one time the council has an active caseload of 150 properties that it is looking to return to active use. In 2012/13 the council was successful in restoring 59 properties.

Overcrowding

There were 20,704 overcrowded households in Hounslow at the time of the 2011 census, an increase of over 50% from the 2001 figure. Households are overcrowded if there is less than 1 bedroom for: every adult couple or single adult, every 2 children under 10 of either sex, or every pair of children over 10 of the same sex. In addition to becoming more widespread, incidences of overcrowding are also likely to become more severe, as the average household size in Hounslow has increased (to 2.7 persons). This means that where a household is overcrowded, there is a greater likelihood of it requiring more than one extra bedroom. Overcrowding is a limited problem in the owner occupied sector, but is three times more prevalent in the private sector and four times more prevalent in the socially rented sector; if current trends in tenure in the borough continue, this issue is likely to increase in the future. Overcrowding in the private sector is additionally more difficult to resolve than overcrowding in the socially rented sector, as re-housing social tenants frees up additional resource in the form of their old home, whereas housing private tenants in the social sector only adds to the housing register.

Under-occupation

From a social housing prospective it is estimated that a large proportion of council and registered provider properties are under-occupied. The social sector size criteria was intended as a tool to reduce the number of under-occupiers in social housing, in the borough 1,394 tenants will be affected by this.

Voids

Voids occur when a property is left empty in between tenancies or because they are undergoing renovation or repair. Managing void times is a significant issue for the council, as for as long as a home is unoccupied we do not receive rental income for the property.

Void properties cost the council £929,000 in lost rental income during 2012/13. The number of new voids received by the council remained consistent over the course of the previous strategy, averaging 700 per year.

At any one time there are around 25 void properties being worked on, with approximately half being general use accommodation and half being sheltered accommodation. This does not reflect the proportion of properties owned by the council, where sheltered accommodation accounts for a much smaller share of the overall number of homes. However, sheltered accommodation typically spends much longer undergoing repairs and modification when it becomes empty; typical void times for a non-sheltered property is around 1 month, whereas sheltered accommodation often remains void for 3 months or more, because of the greater extent of works required.

Homelessness

Homeless applications to the council are increasing, from 376 in 2010/11 (a historical low) to 941 in 2012/13.

The proportion of these households accepted as homeless are increasing also, from 53% in 2010/11 to 68% in 2012/13. The main priority need of homelessness cases is households who have dependent children, accounting for between half and two thirds of all cases each year. Pregnant women, persons vulnerable due to physical disability and persons vulnerable due to mental
illness are the next most common reasons, each accounting for somewhere in the region of 1 in 12 cases, every year.

The main reasons that these people became homeless in 2012/13 are: loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies — the standard rental contract in the private sector (267); parents no longer willing or able to accommodate (177); other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (127); violent breakdown of relationship involving a partner (67). This highlights the issues of un-affordability of private sector rents, over occupation and concealed households, which all lead to increased risk and incidence of homelessness amongst residents.

Youth Homelessness

The 16-19 age group represent a decreasing proportion of the people accepted as homeless and make up the remainder of individuals, together with a small minority of individuals who are aged over 60. The most common age range for homeless individuals is the 25-34 age bracket accounting for between a quarter and a third of cases seen each year. The next most common age ranges are the 30-44 age bracket, followed by the 20-24 age bracket, which each account for roughly 1 in 5 cases every year.

Domestic Violence

Between 2008/9 and 2010/11 the number of phone calls to police about domestic violence remained steady at roughly 4100 incidents per year. Approximately four fifths of victims who made reports to the police were female, while one fifth were male. Reports are most concentrated in the central Hounslow and Feltham areas and occur most frequently on Friday and Saturday evenings.

In 11/12 there was a significant reduction in the number of incidents, to below 2300 per year. This was mirrored by a drop in the number of incidents recorded as crimes and the number of prosecutions, so could not be explained by less serious incidents no longer being reported to the police. The number of victims of domestic violence who became homeless as a result of their situation has declined similarly. It is likely that this reduction owes much to the success of recent initiatives, undertaken by the council and its partners, to tackle domestic violence in Hounslow. In spite of these reductions, there is a danger that the domestic violence rate in Hounslow could revert to previous levels, if prevention schemes do not continue to be delivered or if there is an increase in line with the increasing stresses placed on families by the ongoing economic situation.

Temporary Accommodation

Homeless households are housed in temporary accommodation, the use of which has increased dramatically, from 741 in March 2012 to 1067 in March 2013.

This is predicted to increase further over the course of the Housing Strategy 2014-2018, potentially reaching a high of 2000 households or above by 2016. Due to the shortage of affordable in-borough temporary accommodation, 243 (23%) of clients are currently housed in out of borough accommodation, 173 of whom are in other London Boroughs. We know that there are serious social and health implications for households in temporary accommodation, particularly for children who are less likely to receive their childhood vaccinations (as temporary households often do not register with a GP) and more likely to be obese.

In particular, use of bed & breakfast accommodation to house families has increased (from 99 in March 2012 to 192 in March 2013) and strategies will need to be developed to reduce both this expensive option and the use of temporary accommodation overall.

Nationally as of March 2013, 4,500 (8%) of households in temporary accommodation were in bed & breakfast style accommodation, 14 per cent higher than March 2012. London accounts for just over half the number of households in bed & breakfast style accommodation, where the number has increased by 22 per cent since the same quarter last year (1,880 to 2,290 households). Historically, the use of bed & breakfast accommodation peaked in March 1987, when 47 per cent (England) and 59 per cent (London) of households in temporary accommodation were housed in this style of accommodation.

Rough sleeping

In Hounslow rough sleeping is a significant problem with a different profile to other types of homelessness. At any one time there are between 10 - 50 people sleeping rough across the borough. The latest official estimate puts the current (May 2013/14) total of rough sleepers in the borough at 31. Qualitative reports from outreach workers suggest that the economic downturn has led to an increase in numbers. Unofficial estimates put the current total as high as 150 individuals. This is difficult to substantiate as there has been a recent change in counting methodology, plus numbers vary seasonably and fluctuate considerably from month to month, but historical figures suggest lows of around 12 individuals. The majority of rough sleepers have no recourse to public funds. Joint working between the police, UK border agency, voluntary sector and local authority is needed to tackle this sort of homelessness.
A lack of sufficient supply of affordable and secure tenure larger family homes is the biggest housing issue affecting the borough. Families with children made up 45% of households in 2011 and this proportion is likely to increase, as the number and proportion of children in the borough are projected to increase from 58,696 aged 0-17 in 2013 (22.8% of the population) projected to rise steadily to 60,952 (23.1% of the population) in 2018. This is 2,256 additional children who may require up to 1,100 additional family sized homes (based on typical family sizes) increasing also the need for more schools to cope with demand.

The lack of family accommodation has likely contributed significantly to the reported increase in overcrowding (including concealed households). The increasing incidence of homelessness, which affects in particular families with children, could again be attributed to this issue, as households on low incomes struggle with rents in the private sector or are forced out of sharing arrangements due to interpersonal disputes. All of these issues have a severe social, health and economic impact on the families concerned and addressing their housing needs will be essential to support the council’s related strategies.

Given current trends in income, private sector rents and house prices, the private rental sector will not be able to provide sufficient affordable units of larger family homes; owner occupation, other than through intermediate schemes of shared ownership, will become an impossibility for most households requiring homes of this size. This shortage can only be addressed by building new affordable homes of this type. The private rented market will, however, continue to be effective in providing households for young, educated and mobile professionals (including migrants), who wish to live in single bed accommodation or rent a room in a larger shared property.

The second issue in relation to housing stock in the borough concerns the increasing number of older and elderly residents, estimated to be 16% of the population by 2018. As this sector of the population begins to experience frailty and mobility issues, there will be increased demand for supported or sheltered accommodation. It will likely be more economical to support these residents in their own or existing homes for as long as possible. As such, schemes to adapt properties or provide visiting support workers should be investigated and expanded. Addressing these residents’ housing needs will again be essential, to support council strategies aimed at improving health and wellbeing for this section of the population.

Most housing stock in the borough appears to be of adequate quality. However, the number of occupied homes without central heating (2,423) and the number currently unoccupied (2,372) together represents nearly 4800 households or roughly 5% of the existing stock. This could potentially rapidly be made decent through a suitable programme of works or enforcement action. The council should investigate these options accordingly. Cold homes particularly impact on the health of residents and need to be addressed urgently for this reason.

Finally, many housing needs in Hounslow are social needs that arise from:

- the vulnerabilities of residents (such as old age, a physical or mental disability, which require support for residents to remain in their home);
- issues of wider deprivation (such as unemployment or other welfare needs, which result in income deprivation and consequent issues with affordability and security of tenure);
- from residents being the victim of crime, domestic violence and anti-social behaviour (which force households to relocate due to quality of life issues); and
- the multiple and acute needs of the most vulnerable, including rough sleepers.

Mitigating and addressing these issues will require coordinated effort from across local partnerships, acknowledging that each individual case is different and incorporating a range of best practice from the strategies and services available to each organisation.
Section 5

Rising to the challenges

“We want to create stable communities of thriving neighbourhoods with good opportunities for people to work and live in, and which offer housing choices for all people at all stages of their lives at prices they can afford”
Changing times, changing places

We recognise that we are living in changing times – housing finance and legislation are changing, household needs are changing, and our housing supply is changing. Hounslow is also changing. We know that in order to manage these changes, Hounslow Council will need to adopt a different role that is responsive to current challenges and needs focused not only on changing how we provide services but also supporting communities to adapt to change. We see this as an important, integrated part of our council thinking and a key driver of success.

Growth and opportunity

Hounslow has great opportunities for growth driven by our bold housing and regeneration ambitions. We also want to change perceptions about Hounslow. We are identified as one of the top 10 growth areas in the country and we want to use all of the opportunities that this can bring for our residents, for those who want to make it their home and for those who want to make it their business destination.

We have embarked on a major programme to change perceptions of Hounslow as a place to invest and live in. We are clear about the role we can play in facilitating new house building, by making land available, releasing sites, and strengthening our partnership working with developers. Our emerging Local Plan also outlines big opportunities for mixed-use developments and new housing build. We want to maximise on opportunities that flow from our excellent transport links and accessibility to Heathrow, the M4 and central London to promote Hounslow as a destination where people will want to invest, work and live.

Our proximity to vast amount of open space and beautiful riverside areas such as those found in Brentford all provide attractive opportunities for creating, jobs, business growth and redevelopment. We are serious about investing in our communities and have stepped up our regeneration and inward investment strategy, which includes a clear vision of the kind of homes and communities we want to create. We are taking a proactive approach to helping developers deliver appropriate schemes across the borough.

Our Vision

This strategy aims to respond to the many challenges facing the borough and its communities over the next five years – we must tackle the imbalances between our housing needs and supply and make our residential areas better places to live. In addition, if we are going to realise our aims of making Hounslow a place where businesses want to invest and locate in, we must also make it a place where people desire and are able to live. This means encouraging new jobs and new homes, whilst improving the quality of those we already have. This vision is about growth, excelling in delivering high quality housing services, investing in new and existing homes that people want to live in, strengthening communities that will be sustainable into the future, and improving prospects and opportunities for people. It also seeks to support corporate objectives to seek greater transparency and efficiency, whilst not compromising on service quality and to explore all opportunities in partnership to deliver more and better housing services. Our vision encapsulates our work and our direction. It embraces the following key objectives:

Objective 1

To provide a choice of high quality housing for people at all stages of their lives at prices they can afford.

Objective 2

To raise housing quality and standards across tenures, enhancing local areas and supporting thriving communities.

Objective 3

To support our communities to live independently by promoting health and well-being.
Objective 4

To support residents from becoming homeless and provide housing options and advice if they become homeless.

Objective 5

To create cleaner, safer and greener living environments for our local communities.

In addition to seeking to support existing and future residents, our approach takes a wider view of the economic and regeneration opportunities that are available and those that can contribute to making Hounslow a place that succeeds in attracting and retaining existing and incoming residents. We want to deliver a diverse mix of housing that exemplifies high quality design and accessibility.

Our objectives for housing and housing services take into account the many issues identified through the needs analysis, including our demographic changes, need for more affordable housing, an increase in homelessness, poor condition of housing in the private rented sector as well as reductions in financial resources and new national and regional changes.

We have chosen to increase our investment in delivering new housing, improving our existing housing stock and improving services for the most vulnerable. Increasing the supply of housing including affordable housing to meet the growing needs of our population in the face of continuing constraints on public finance will, therefore, be a major challenge for our strategy. We are keen and well placed to take up a leadership role, to be bold and ambitious for our communities.
Achieving our objectives

The need for different housing services is affected by many different things. For example; fig 1 below summarises the significant changes the borough has gone through during 2001 and 2011 censuses. The increase in population and people living longer means that there will be an increase in demand for services not only for new homes or need for more retirement housing but also for services to support them to live independent lives. People working but not able to live in the borough because of the lack of the right housing supply also means that we need to respond to that need. People’s changes and preferences mean that we need to change what we do and how we do it.

To keep pace with these changes, our housing service needs to change and improve. We know that people nowadays expect services to be fast, high quality, responsive and where possible fitted around their lives. Our aim through this strategy is to put our residents at the heart of this change and better align our service and how we provide services. The ongoing pressure of meeting needs and demand demonstrates to us that these are only set to increase significantly over the next years. These estimates also demonstrate that the financial pressure on an already tightly stretched public service is likely to increase severely. The current housing service we have today which channels people into high volumes and high cost accommodation only demonstrates that our service is no longer placed to cope effectively with this.

Our vision aims to be radical whilst sustaining a shift in the way in which services are delivered – ensuring that they are more aligned and integrated within key services such as health, housing and social care. This should seek to identify opportunities to better align resources and funding streams across the council, and provide more efficient commissioning practice and common outcomes. The shift will also seek to support people live more independently in their own homes and focus much more on their well-being.

We are committed to a new housing system that promotes fairness and inclusion for all sections of our community and creating a housing environment that attracts new people and business into the borough. Our long term aim is to bring about a sustained realignment of services that will secure high-quality housing services and effective preventative services with a wide range of services designed to better meet need and support people to maintain their independence. We will seek to realise our aims through three key strands:

- **Early engagement and strengthening** our negotiations with our development partners in balancing our affordable housing requirements including new high quality homes that are genuinely affordable and that meet the needs of current and future residents in the borough. We recognise the need for a flexible approach, both in working with developers and taking account of the specific characteristics of individual sites and neighbourhoods, including development viability.

- **Shifting resources** into prevention and better joining up of services internally within the council and with our key partners. Better integrated health, social care and housing services to provide earlier prevention and intervention. Our services will seek to work much more closely with key partners and community services to ensure that there is early support for our residents and prevent homelessness.

- **Establish a strong local network** of advice and practical assistance to enable older and vulnerable people to get the information and support they need to continue to live independently. Through strong partnerships, leveraging – in new forms of funding, and through maximising the potential of land and buildings we will also work to expand the availability of good quality independent services and homes to meet the needs of our growing and increasingly diverse population.

All this adds up to an ambitious set of actions for change. If we are to succeed, we must rise to meet the challenges ahead. Our objectives are challenging, but also provide opportunities to invest, build, create and take innovative approaches to make change happen and position us in a better place to face the challenges ahead.
Section 6
Objectives
Objective 1

“To provide a choice of high quality housing for people at all stages of their lives at prices they can afford”

This section looks at how we can increase our housing supply and maximise the supply of new housing in the borough. It aims to set out what we know about the need for housing through our needs analysis and other housing data, it also takes into account changes in the policy and funding landscape, and goes on to propose actions and options that are open to us in terms of resources and approaches in order to meet need and demand. We have successfully built new homes at a rate that keeps pace with Hounslow’s increasing population, assuming the average household size of the 2011 census (fig 2), but we need to go further to address the backlog of existing demand.

Central to that focus are the housing needs and requirements of people living and working in Hounslow. We know that the right housing price or rent can be a platform for economic self sufficiency and an opportunity to plan and provide for the future. Through this strategy we also need to optimise on existing empty, void and under-occupied housing stock that exists in the borough and ensure that it is being used to best effect. These plans will contribute to our wider strategic plans of creating great places to live, places that contribute to delivering our vision for Hounslow.

Fig 2: House Building in Hounslow to 2018

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<th>Year</th>
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Households in Hounslow have been growing by an average of 1100 each year and expected to continue to grow throughout the life of this strategy.

Based on a needs assessment there is an approximate need for 48% of new homes to be larger homes across all tenure types, to deal with overcrowding. Hounslow’s greatest need is for family housing to be family sized, i.e. having 3 or more bedrooms.

The increasing numbers of people aged over 60 and elderly aged over 85+ will increase the demand for suitable supported and sheltered housing in the borough.

Welfare Reform is likely to add to housing demand, affecting the flow of migration into and out of the borough, as the benefits cap and social sector size criteria will increase the demand for suitable family accommodation within Hounslow.

There are mismatches in the rented (social, target, affordable) and market sectors with the supply of one bed homes greater than demand whilst the demand for three beds is greater than the supply.

The Regional Spatial Strategy suggests there is a 60% need of new affordable provision to be social rented and 40% shared ownership.

Our shared ownership housing remains low at 2.4%, indicating that there is potential for increasing this type of tenure for residents.

We need to ensure that high quality design and sustainability standards are maintained for all of the borough’s new housing stock, to ensure that new housing is future proof and adaptable to all potential housing needs.

Under-occupation and overcrowding remain issues across all tenure groups.

There are approximately 2,372 empty properties in the borough and bringing them back is a valuable addition to housing supply.

Why is high quality housing a priority?

- Households in Hounslow have been growing by an average of 1100 each year and expected to continue to grow throughout the life of this strategy.
- Based on a needs assessment there is an approximate need for 48% of new homes to be larger homes across all tenure types, to deal with overcrowding. Hounslow’s greatest need is for family housing to be family sized, i.e. having 3 or more bedrooms.
- The increasing numbers of people aged over 60 and elderly aged over 85+ will increase the demand for suitable supported and sheltered housing in the borough.
- Welfare Reform is likely to add to housing demand, affecting the flow of migration into and out of the borough, as the benefits cap and social sector size criteria will increase the demand for suitable family accommodation within Hounslow.
- There are mismatches in the rented (social, target, affordable) and market sectors with the supply of one bed homes greater than demand whilst the demand for three beds is greater than the supply.
- The Regional Spatial Strategy suggests there is a 60% need of new affordable provision to be social rented and 40% shared ownership.
- Our shared ownership housing remains low at 2.4%, indicating that there is potential for increasing this type of tenure for residents.
- We need to ensure that high quality design and sustainability standards are maintained for all of the borough’s new housing stock, to ensure that new housing is future proof and adaptable to all potential housing needs.
- Under-occupation and overcrowding remain issues across all tenure groups.
- There are approximately 2,372 empty properties in the borough and bringing them back is a valuable addition to housing supply.
What we propose to do:

- The Council is committed to delivering affordable housing and will be looking to create opportunities to be more ambitious with the setting of a revised target following the completion of our current target of 2,500 which we are on target to deliver by 2015.

- We will consult and establish a local agreement which will aim to reflect a strong measure of consensus and unique collaboration between the Council and house builders.

- We will strengthen our work and negotiations with our partners, including private developers and registered providers, in order to maximise affordable housing provision in line with our emerging local plan. The aim will be to make deliverability more certain and ensure their engagement at the earliest stage of the development process.

- We will seek to develop innovative solutions and negotiate with developers to continue to provide a range of affordable low cost housing options for borough residents.

- We will work with developers and use our planning powers to secure a minimum of 41% affordable homes on proposed developments of 10 units or more, in line with the borough target set out in the London Plan and to ensure a suitable mix of housing.

- Within this overall affordable housing target, we will seek to secure a tenure split of 60% affordable rent and 40% low cost home ownership and that new rented homes, especially larger ones, are affordable under Welfare Reform.

- We will work to ensure where possible that a minimum of 10% of all new homes are specifically identified and suitable for people with disabilities and will be working to exceed the current design standards.

- We will aim to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available that is suited to the needs of vulnerable adults, in proximity to support services, so that they are able to live independently and avoid the cost to the council of placing such individuals into care.

- We will monitor the demand for sheltered housing.

- We will also monitor the demand for smaller care homes up to 8 beds, which may be suitable for residents with learning difficulties or mental health needs, who are relocating from larger care homes to community based schemes.

- We will promote homeownership and support people who aspire to own their home and encourage them to take advantage of low cost home ownership initiatives and we will commit to working creatively with our partners to increase this.

- In line with our Local Plan proposals, we will facilitate housing growth, concentrating on the key areas such as Brentford, Hounslow, Cranford and Heston and encourage new build to meet our mixed communities ambitions and bed room size needs.

- We will seek to deliver 600 new homes on HRA sites through our HRA affordable home building programme, which we will prioritise where possible a range of affordable housing tenures.

- We will provide additional supported housing to meet commissioning needs identified with Adult and Children’s Services and Public Health.

- By 2018 we intend to bring 250 empty properties back into use and reduce the number of long-term empty properties.

- We are piloting a scheme to match under-occupied and overcrowded families through a home swap initiative and will monitor and measure its success for future.

- We will work to reduce the time council properties spend void between lets, to reduce the total (including repairs and re-letting) from the current council target of 30 days towards 23 days, which is achieved by the best 25% of local authorities.

- We will improve and maintain the existing Gypsy and Traveller site at Hartlands, allowing for improvement and providing up to 6 additional pitches funded through a combination of council capital resources and GLA funds.
Building new homes – fit for purpose and meeting needs

Balancing the mismatch between housing need and supply in the social rented sector is a major issue for this strategy (fig 3).

Fig 3

A lack of sufficient supply of affordable and secure tenure larger (3 bedroom +) family homes, is the single biggest housing issue affecting residents in the borough and also limiting the options to prospective residents who are currently only working in the borough and we will seek to bring a balance. This objective will also seek opportunities to deliver housing for people with disabilities and support needs through mainstream housing options, within sustainable communities and reserve certain proportions of housing units to meet specific needs where possible. In this regard, a range of measures will be implemented to ensure that all available housing tenures are positioned to meet needs more effectively.

Strategic consideration will be given to the council’s housing priorities for additional accommodation. This includes the provision of interim and temporary accommodation and accommodation that meets the needs of individuals with disabilities and support requirements. Demand may not be high in these latter areas but the average waiting time is very high (fig 4). We will meet all of these needs through better use of the private sector, the use of council owned land and the effective implementation of the new housing allocation policy.

The council will remain pragmatic in discussions with developers and registered providers, regarding our housing priorities, when exercising our planning powers in developments of over 10 units.

We will work to ensure that when developing new homes, there is provision of homes of different sizes and types, including accessible homeownership and provision for the growing elderly population. We will also remain sensitive to the needs of the local economy and ensure that new housing is developed proportionately alongside commercial and industrial sites, which will provide employment opportunities and services for the residents of the borough. We will also ensure that new developments have adequate access to transport links and existing health, schools and social services; this may be achieved through use of S106 powers to secure additional staffing resources, in cases where this is more effective than building additional infrastructure.

During consultation we received overwhelming support for this approach and we will use our powers to seek different opportunities in which employment and training for residents can be provided through housing initiatives. The council will make these priorities clear in negotiations with its preferred partners in the delivery of affordable housing.
Enabling and opportunities

We have outlined that our vision is about growth, excelling in delivering high quality housing services; investing in new and existing homes that people want to live in and strengthening communities that will be sustainable into the future, improving prospects and opportunities for people. The challenge for this objective is linked to the council’s wider planning policy to look to provide sufficient flexibility to allow developments to progress and to deliver levels of affordable housing that reflect current housing and construction market conditions, and to deliver higher levels of affordable housing when market conditions allow.

The successful delivery of affordable housing in our borough is highly dependent upon the relationships we have with our registered providers, developers, funding Bodies and Council colleagues through its planning, enabling and housing allocation roles. We value their individual expertise and view this close working relationship as critical to the successful delivery of affordable housing to meet local need.

Through this objective we seek to strengthen our established working relationship, knowledge and expertise through the adoption of an agreement which will reflect strong measure of consensus and unique collaboration between the Council and house builders to address the undersupply, viability of local plans and standards for the delivery of new homes. Through this agreement we hope to clarify and guide respective roles and relationships of all our partners with the objective of;

- Continuing promotion and growth of mixed tenure blind developments
- Maximising affordable housing tenures
- Highlighting funding priorities
- Clarifying the Council’s and other provider’s roles
- Enhancing build standards
- Providing suitable housing for those in housing need in Hounslow
- Identifying the council’s expectations

We will consult with our key partners in the development of this agreement to ensure commitment from all parties in working towards meeting the council’s affordable housing strategic objectives.

We are also improving our planning framework and pre-application process. We recognise the issues and risks that registered providers and developers have in trying to provide sufficient levels of affordable housing in the current market. The council will therefore consider its enabling role to make Hounslow a destination and place to do business for developers and providers. Through this strategy we will bring together all aspects of council’s ability and influence ranging from local planning policy; land and asset strategy and the 30 Year HRA Business Plan to encourage and facilitate investment in the private rented sector. We will also bring together all aspects of council’s ability to facilitate and support the private rented sector. This will involve a local offer to landlords comprising of a mixture of incentives, reduced red tape accompanied by strong enforcement measures.

Fig 4

Demand for disabled adapted social rented homes 2010-2013

Average wait in years for disabled adapted social rented homes 2010-2013
for those few who are not meeting their statutory obligations. We believe that the local offer will encourage the right mix of housing tenures across Hounslow.

We are also aware that there are a number of opportunities made by a variety of funders (eg HCA, GLA, CLG and others) which look to stimulate private sector new build, these bids have been taken up by private developers and registered providers. Hounslow has been supporting all bids to ensure that there is a multitude of tenures available to those living and those working in the borough. For example; Build to Rent, Mayor Covenant 1, 2, and 3 etc. We will continue to monitor the available housing mix and be pro-active in our requirements, to ensure a suitable mix of tenure and different sized homes are developed to meet the borough’s future housing needs.

Affordable homes

The borough places the need for affordable housing in the context of a large private sector market, with a growing population being one of the highest priorities.

We have worked hard to create and deliver affordable housing across a range of housing options and support needs and include schemes such as social, target and affordable renting and low cost home ownership. We have set ourselves ambitious targets which we will achieve by optimising every opportunity for delivery of affordable housing be it through our partners or building ourselves.

- **Affordable Renting** - The council’s policy is that we work in partnership with providers ensuring that the rent we negotiate meets an agreed affordability definition. The majority of developed social rented properties in the borough are either set at target rent which is approximately 40% of market rent or affordable rent which is set at up to 80% of market rent. The latter is the criteria rent for the 2011/15 GLA funding stream.

- **Low Cost Home Ownership** – We want to ensure that affordable homes will be made available to Hounslow residents on moderate incomes. We work in partnership with FIRST STEPS which is a free government service for London’s first time buyers looking to buy a home for less than on the open market. Home ownership options available via this service include shared ownership, rent to save and help to buy schemes.

Under-occupation and Overcrowding

Homes that are not being used to their full capacity are an issue in Hounslow, but currently the extent of households affected and tools for dealing with them are only available for the socially rented sector. Over 9000 family sized (2 bedroom+) homes are owned and let by the borough; it was estimated in March 2012...
that 37% of these are under-occupied. The problem is most widespread in larger 3 and 4 bedroom properties, which are under-occupied in nearly 50% of cases. This issue declines in 5 bedroom properties and above, which are available on a strictly limited basis.

Under-occupation is likely to become a more pressing issue over the course of this strategy, as working age households in receipt of benefits that are under-occupying their properties will be penalized financially either directly through the social sector size criteria or indirectly through the benefits cap. It is likely that many of these households will seek to be re-housed in smaller accommodation by the council. There is a pilot scheme to match these families to overcrowded households for the purposes of arranging a home swap. It is important to note that this proposed scheme is voluntary only, and the council will endeavour to help people move where additional housing resource is made available to overcrowded tenants.

As a result of the increasing aging population in Hounslow, we also expect to see a rise in the number of elderly single residents occupying larger homes in both the social and private sectors that are no longer suitable to their needs. We plan to consider available resources to assist these individuals to be relocated ideally into smaller properties in close proximity to appropriate support services.

Such moves should free up extra family homes to house those in greatest need, however the overall demand for family homes will be largely unaffected as the numbers relocated at any one time will necessarily be relatively small. Previously, we have added extensions to the homes of some of our over occupied council tenants – where this is feasible – to add to the quantity of available family sized housing and reduce statutory overcrowding. We will continue to look at a range of innovative solutions when dealing with this growing issue over the course of our strategy.

**Tenancy Strategy**

The council’s new Tenancy Strategy will work to conserve and increase the supply of affordable housing stock that is available in the borough. From April 2013 onwards, new tenants in council-let properties will no longer be granted lifetime tenancies. They will instead be granted a one year probationary tenancy, which if satisfactorily completed will be followed by a rolling, five-year fixed-term, tenancy.

This tenancy will only be renewed if the tenant continues to require assistance with their rent due to low income, is not under-occupying and continues to use any disabled adaptations that have been made. It is hoped that this approach will allow us to make efficient use of our existing social housing stock and ensure that it remains in use by those who need it most. The probationary period will have additional advantages in tackling issues such as anti-social behaviour and rent arrears, where these issues can be addressed with a package of intensive support, before the council decides if it wishes to end or continue the tenancy.

**Tackling Empty Homes and voids**

Vacant properties reduce property value in neighbourhoods and studies show that they can also significantly reduce the value of adjacent homes. In Hounslow, the 2011 census demonstrates a 2.4% of empty properties – this is above the Mayor’s Housing strategy of 1%. Our Empty Property Strategy (2011/16) outlines a bold and robust approach for tackling empty properties, which are a blight on our communities, often an eyesore and adversely affecting the neighbourhood. A range of options are employed including empty property grants and enforcement action such as forced sales, compulsory purchase orders and empty dwelling management orders. New planning rules will also allow vacant commercial buildings to be considered for residential use.

Consultation responses in this area were overwhelmingly in favour of greater enforcement action taken against landlords. A majority of respondents agreed with this proposal, but out of the people who didn’t, several expressed the need to exhaust options to ensure that tenants were not to blame. A number of people expressed the desire to use these properties to help homeless households. We will consider these issues when formulating our enforcement policy.

Since 2011 we have significantly improved our void performance; however performance is still below expected levels. During 2012/13, it is estimated that the council lost £929,000 in rent due to void properties. Needless to say, addressing this issue is a priority for the council and Hounslow Homes. We will retain this as a housing priority to assist the Council in providing decent, affordable housing need.

**Gypsy and Travellers**

The Mayor’s Strategy encourages boroughs to protect existing gypsy and traveller pitches, refurbish existing sites where needed, and address the identified requirements for the provision of new sites. Hounslow currently has one authorised gypsy and traveller site within the borough, which is the site known as “The Hartlands” located in Cranford. This is a long established site in need of further accommodation. We will increase this provision and will provide up to 20 improved pitches and 6 new pitches by March 2015.
## Objective 1 – Action Plan

To provide a choice of high quality housing for people at all stages of their lives at prices they can afford

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Key activity</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Key Performance measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 | Building new affordable homes | Fulfil the pledge to deliver 2500 extra affordable homes by May 2014  
Agree a new affordable homes target for the remainder of the strategy by the end of 2014  
Annual review of performance targets | Head of Affordable Housing Supply | Total number of extra affordable homes delivered since May 2010 (target 2500)  
Total number of extra affordable homes delivered since May 2014 (target to be determined after 2014) |
| 1.2 | Ensure equality of access to housing | Annual review of performance targets | Head of Affordable Housing Supply | Percentage of new homes constructed in the borough that are affordable (target 40%)  
Percentage of new homes constructed in the borough that are potentially adaptable for disabled residents (target 10%) |
| 1.3 | Implement HRA House Building Programme, for new council properties, in line with the HRA Business plan | Complete phased start on infill/garage sites from 2014/15 FY through to 2017/18.  
Complete construction on all infill/garage sites by 2018/19  
Complete remodelling of sheltered housing stock by 2018  
Complete work on the Heston Leisure and affordable homes project by 2018  
Complete internal modernisation of units on the Ivybridge Estate by 2014/15  
Provide 50 new HRA Temporary Accommodation/hostel units by 2018  
Prepare for phase two of construction, in line with HRA plan, from 2018 | Head of Projects and Partnerships | Number of garage sites started/completed (targets 67 starts by 2017/18 and 67 complete by 2018/19)  
Number of affordable homes delivered on infill sites (target 171 by 2018/19)  
Number of improved sheltered housing units available (target 750 by 2018 or 48 remodelled units)  
Number of new units constructed on the Heston Leisure Centre site (target 88 by 2018)  
Percentage of units modernised on the Ivybridge Estate (target 100% by 2014/15)  
Number of HRA TA/hostel units added (target 50 by 2018) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.4</th>
<th>Increase the supply of housing in the borough by bringing empty homes back into use</th>
<th>Annual review of performance target</th>
<th>Head of Private Sector Housing</th>
<th>Number of empty private homes brought back into use as residential dwellings (target 50 per year i.e. 250 by 2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Reduce the time that void (empty) council properties spend unoccupied</td>
<td>Reduce the time void properties spend undergoing repairs to within management target by 2014 Reduce the total time it takes to re-let void properties to within management targets by 2014 Work on phased reduction of target durations over the course of the strategy</td>
<td>Head of Projects and Partnerships, in partnership with Hounslow Homes and Head of Housing Options and Allocations</td>
<td>Average time void properties spend undergoing repairs (initial target time 12 days) Average time taken to re-let void properties (initial target time 30 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Support implementation and delivery of the Mayor of London’s First Steps shared ownership / rent to save / help to buy scheme</td>
<td>Annual review of performance targets</td>
<td>Head of Housing Options and Allocations</td>
<td>Number of first steps applicants Number of residents accessing shared ownership / rent to save / help to buy scheme (target 150 per year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Reduce under-occupation of social sector properties by enabling tenants to move</td>
<td>Annual review of performance targets</td>
<td>Head of Housing Options and Allocations</td>
<td>Number of under-occupying tenants in the social sector enabled to move (target TBC, increase on 2012/13 baseline of 51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Deliver improvements to the Hartlands Gypsy and Traveller site</td>
<td>Complete project to deliver agreed improvements by 2015. Increase the number of pitches on site from 20 to 26 by 2015</td>
<td>Head of Projects and Partnerships</td>
<td>Number of renovated/new pitches that have completed works (target of 26 by 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Establish an agreement with house builders to: • Promote mixed, tenure blind developments • Maximise affordable housing • Highlight funding • Clarify roles of council and providers • Enhance build standards • Meet housing needs • Set out LBH expectations</td>
<td>Obtain agreement and publish document, by Feb 2014</td>
<td>Head of Affordable Housing supply</td>
<td>Number of house builders signed up to the agreement (target TBC, expected to include all key partners)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective 2

“To raise housing quality and standards across tenures, enhancing local areas and supporting thriving communities”

This section looks at how we can maintain and improve the quality of our existing housing stock and private sector housing across the borough. Our plans are based on what we know about our housing conditions through our Asset Investment Model and the vision to deliver sustainable council housing. The new self-financing arrangements and business planning demonstrate that we are in a healthy position to invest and maintain our homes to a good standard.

We also know that conditions in the private rented sector can be poor. In some cases better standards can be realised by supporting landlords to improve them, and in other cases rigorous enforcement will be necessary to bring about improvements and to remove rogue landlords in extreme cases. We will step up and strengthen our working arrangements with homeowners and landlords by providing information, encouragement and support, and by financial assistance in the form of grants and loans where appropriate to assist in improving quality conditions. As a local authority we are responsible for enforcing housing standards, licensing houses in multiple occupation and we will also use this role to improve housing conditions and where necessary will use enforcement actions to resolve serious problems.
Our priorities:

- Hounslow has 12 of the most deprived areas in London most of which correspond with housing estates managed by Hounslow Homes.
- We know that we need to improve the standards of repairs, improvement and major works contracts that are managed by Hounslow Homes and ensure these are effectively delivered and to a quality standard.
- We will carry out a housing stock modelling assessment to capture a better picture of private sector housing conditions to assist us in effectively targeting and prioritising our energy efficiency and home improvement programme.
- We recognise that the private rented sector provides a much needed source of affordable accommodation in the borough – yet some of it is below acceptable housing standards.
- We have a duty to protect our finances and tackle fraud where this is occurring.
- We are aware that we need to improve our leaseholder service billing charge services.
- We know we need to balance the support we provide to our tenants, leaseholders and sheltered residents ensuring all groups have a fair share of our support and opportunities to influence and shape service delivery.

What we propose to do:

- We will strengthen our client monitoring systems and processes to ensure that our council assets managed by Hounslow Homes, including its cyclical improvement programme and its 10 year major works improvement programme, are effectively delivered and that these also exploit opportunities for local business and apprenticeships where possible.
- Carry out a review of our leaseholder billing process and introduce a more transparent process from August 2014.
- We will work with our tenants, leaseholders and sheltered resident groups to establish a collective grouping that will effectively contribute and influence decisions relating to their homes and living conditions.
- We will work with landlords to improve conditions and management in Private Rented Housing through licensing and monitoring of compliance with conditions under the Housing Act 2004.
- We will use Stock Modelling data to focus resources on the worst private sector accommodation – those with poor energy efficiency that are excessively cold and damp, where households prone to fuel poverty and overcrowding live.
- We will tackle anti-fraud and corruption with key focus on illegal sub-lettings and Right to Buy fraud through additional funding awarded to us by the government.

Housing management – Hounslow Homes

The Council is moving to a more strategic and integrated approach to housing service provision. We have commenced this process through the Shared Services Co-location project in order to gain greater efficiency and maximum value from decreasing resources. On the basis of our performance monitoring, where it is more efficient and cost effective for us to share services between Hounslow Homes and the council, in order to deliver improved services to residents, we will co-locate these services or bring them back in-house. If these changes affect any service that is front-facing, we will communicate the implications and any new contact arrangements to residents, in advance of any changes taking place.

We therefore remain clear about the Council’s needs and the role that Hounslow Homes has as the Council’s ALMO in helping us to deliver our ambitions. These remain focused on maintaining its operational role around delivering best-in-class housing and tenant management services with a workforce structure that is fit for purpose.

In adopting this approach, we have revised the performance management measures, which will assist in better managing, maintaining and measuring outcomes for our residents. We will regularly monitor and compare performance against our
objectives and ensure that we achieve positive outcomes for all our tenants. Through Hounslow Homes we are members of Housemark (a benchmarking organisation for social housing) and will also benchmark our housing services against other similar arms length management organisations. We will strengthen our reporting structures to make this process more transparent and accessible to various groups including our committee, which involves tenants, leaseholders, sheltered groups, Hounslow Homes and Council representatives in the planning and assessing of housing services. This arrangement will also assist us in supporting the role and activities of the tenants’ independent scrutiny more effectively.

Protecting and improving our housing stock

Hounslow Homes has operational responsibility for the day-to-day conduct of council properties, estate and tenancy services. Through this, we are committed to ensuring that our tenants live in decent homes and that these are managed effectively. In addition to satisfying housing needs, this objective is important to support other council priorities, such as ensuring that we invest in maintaining and improving our housing stock over the long-term.

We have also made solid plans for improving our council assets. Our new HRA self financing business plan sets out plans for, investing in maintaining the quality of our housing stock over the next 30 years. Through a two phase programme we will deliver a range of schemes that will directly improve the social housing stock, including:

- plans to modernise our sheltered and supported housing for the elderly; and
- develop new investment in existing homes (Brentford Towers & Iveybridge)

The model also provides us with information, which can be used to support further decisions and options for improving our assets and track performance over time. We will regularly review the HRA business plan to help us inform and make decisions about future improvements for our housing stock.

Regeneration of our existing stock is a priority and we believe that this will contribute to create a more mixed community which will better provide for the needs of the residents and also help us tackle some of the wider community issues such as deprivation.

Leaseholder Services

Leaseholder Services was part of the Corporate Shared Services co-location programme which integrated from Hounslow Homes back into the Council in June 2013. The Council now holds overall responsibility for:

- Leaseholder Billing
- Major Works
- Consultations (s20/s20b)
- Right to Buy Services and Assignments

Since the transfer, we have embarked on a robust service improvement framework with the engagement of our leaseholders through the leaseholder forum. This work seeks to create arrangements that are simple and as transparent as possible through the introduction and development of more efficient and effective processes. Within this, we seek to:

- Carry out a review of our billing process and introduce a more transparent process from August 2014
- Introduce a more effective and influencing model approach to enable leaseholders to have a greater say in the shape and delivery of services they receive
- Develop and establish a more robust Right to Buy information system which will enhance data quality and better prevent fraud activity
- Continue to deliver the six capital works programme from 2013/14 to 2018/19 (Major Works)

In line with our ambitions for Hounslow Homes, operational day-to-day service delivery for leaseholders will be retained as part of its tenant services operations; this will include the delivery of major works programmes, repairs, and management of the estates.

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction and meeting resident’s expectations will remain a priority for this strategy. We have optimised these resources to make them more efficient and allow all tenant complaints to be dealt with appropriately. The council has acknowledged that previously, people making complaints have waited too long to reach a formal outcome, which takes up to 18 months if the complaint is appealed and brought before members.

The new complaints handling process emphasises a “get it right first time” approach to handling complaints, which should reduce the number of appeals and therefore the overall response time for complaints. Complaints from tenants made to Hounslow Homes will be monitored to ensure that all are replied to within 10 days and the number of appeals is reduced from the current 20% of cases to 1%, the council’s rate for housing complaints.
Resident scrutiny

Over the past year, we have supported the development of an independent tenant scrutiny panel through the provision of support and training. We have established a strong independent scrutiny panel, currently with 12 members although there are provisions to recruit up to 15. Members are all tenants and leaseholders of council properties who must undergo a competency based selection process, followed by a sixth month probation period, before being permanently accepted onto the panel. The panel’s role is to scrutinise the performance of their landlord and make appropriate suggestions as to how the current service may be improved. Customer access into the business was selected as the first area for review and a document review commenced in December 2012. Interviews with staff, telephone surveys, job shadowing and mystery shopping are all planned to inform the work delivered by Hounslow Homes and related groups.

Engagement and involvement

Effective engagement and involvement was a re-occurring theme throughout the consultation period. A mapping exercise carried out in October 2013 demonstrated that the Council has a complex set of housing partnership structures, consultative forums as well as an imbalanced funding and support mechanism for various groups. The Council is committed to reviewing this approach and is working with all three key housing groups (tenants, leaseholders and sheltered residents) with a view to establish a fair and transparent model which will enable them to have real opportunities both individually and collectively as a group, contribute and influence decisions relating to their homes and living conditions.

Within this context, we will aim to;

- Facilitate a forum where the key housing groups will adopt their own model for effectively engaging and working with the Council and key partners
- Provide fair and balanced support and resources which will enable the groups to fully engage in the participation process and be involved in decisions that affects them
- Encourage borough wide involvement of tenants, leaseholders and sheltered residents in particular ensure that hard to reach groups such as the elderly, disabled, young people and tenants of ethnic minorities have an opportunity to be involved

This reviewed approach aims to reflect the Council’s commitment to effectively engage with residents providing them with a “real seat at the table” and recognising this as an integral aspect of our housing service delivery. This approach also aims to build upon and strengthen previous frameworks and structures acting on the lessons learnt from the past, building on our successes, and emphasising the need to broaden our engagement activities to include as many residents as possible.
Estate Management

Estate inspections are a good way for us to see what is happening in our estates and listen to our tenants’ concerns and points of view about the area they live in and the services they receive. We have developed an estate action programme and will look to implement this across the borough and find positive solutions to issues that may arise. This is organised through the quarterly estate inspections with councillors, officers, tenants and caretakers.

Private Sector Housing

The council wants to see all private sector housing providing healthy, secure, good standard homes. This objective underpins family stability, educational attainment, employment opportunity, crime reduction and overall health and well-being. 73% of housing in Hounslow is in the private sector (53% owner occupier and 23% private rented) and a significant proportion is in poor condition, contains serious hazards and fails to meet a decent standard. Contributing factors include the age of the stock, inadequate maintenance over time, poor management and illegal conversions.

The role of the private rented sector in housing provision is increasing in prominence (fig 5). Attention has become focused on the capacity of the sector to meet a range of housing needs. At the same time there is an acknowledgement that it presents a number of policy challenges relating to issues such as property standards, management standards and security of tenure.

We aim to pursue policies that will encourage a shift in the perception of private renting away from a marginal, poorly regarded housing option behind the preferred tenures of owner-occupation and social housing. We aim to maximize the full potential of the private rented sector as a flexible, well-functioning element of the housing market in Hounslow. We want to develop a healthy private rented sector that contributes significantly to meeting housing need, reducing homelessness and reversing the increase in demand for temporary accommodation.

A common concern about the private rented sector relates to the quality of landlord management. Many landlords operate professionally and require no regulatory intervention. A second, larger group do not regard letting to be a professional vocation but operate as amateurs. This group often lacks the knowledge, skills and support to operate within the law as an effective...
business. Finally, a much smaller group behave illegally and with wilful intent; the rogue landlord element. It is not possible to determine the relative sizes of these three main groupings or to estimate the incidence of poor or illegal practices. However, a survey carried out by the University of York in 2008 concluded that three-quarters of private tenants were either very or fairly satisfied with their landlord.

We will pursue policies to professionalise the private rented sector and drive rogue elements from the market. We will engage with professional bodies such as the UK Landlord Accreditation Partnership and Landlord Associations and coordinate efforts through our own private sector housing advisor, to provide training and accreditation for landlords.

As the private rented sector grows within Hounslow, we will continue to advise both landlords and tenants of the private rented sector on their respective rights and responsibilities. We will also monitor developments to see if any additional support services are required, as households who have traditionally found homes within the social sector are increasingly housed in private rented accommodation. It is hoped that this will improve relations between landlords and tenants in the borough and remove the reluctance on the part of some landlords to house tenants who are in receipt of local housing allowance. There may additionally be income generation opportunities within this sector, for example in assisting private landlords with establishing the immigration status of their tenants or providing a letting agency style service within the borough.

**Direction of travel**

Our direction of travel is outlined above (figure 6). This seeks to engage with professional landlords to maximise supply of good standard, properly managed housing to meet wider housing needs.

We will do this through:

- Increasing the use of the private rented sector to discharge the Council’s homelessness duty and reduce the need for temporary accommodation.
- Incentivising landlords to work with the borough through the Let-Start Scheme and the Private Sector Leasing scheme.
- Working with institutional developers and registered providers to encourage the right mix of housing including large-scale private market rent schemes.
- Using grants and legislative powers to bring empty dwellings back into use to meet housing needs.

We will encourage and support amateur landlords in order to give them the knowledge and skills they need to operate effectively and move increasing numbers of them into the professional group.

We will do this through:

- Landlord/tenant mediation services.
- Fully funded membership of the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme.
- The annual Hounslow Landlords’ Conference.
- Housing management services.
- Grants and funding assistance for landlords who work with the borough to improve property standards and to meet their obligations.
- Promoting energy efficiency to provide warmer homes and reduce homelessness.

We will work ceaselessly to change rogue landlord behaviour and move them in the direction of the professional sector but drive those who do not respond out of the rental market.

We will do this through:
Building Homes, Building Communities

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), licensing and regulation

HMO numbers are rising in the borough as a result of welfare reform and there is a recognised need for this type of accommodation as this is the most affordable form of housing for the younger generation. During consultation we asked respondents to prioritise the issues that they considered the most pressing affecting unlicensed HMOs in the borough. Overcrowding, poor upkeep and noise were the three issues most often mentioned by respondents. We will be proposing to extend Additional Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing to cover the whole of the borough as a means of tackling poor quality housing. This information will also be shared internally more effectively, to develop more efficient services, for example to assist in the assignment and collection of council tax for such properties. We will use all powers under the Housing Act 2004 to deal with poor quality housing, including enforcement measures, prosecution and works in default.

Improving Housing conditions in Owner Occupier Sector

A shift from renting to home ownership among low-income groups since the 1960s and an ageing population have increased the number of households unable to afford home repairs, maintenance and adaptations.

A large proportion of vulnerable residents in Hounslow live in homes that are cold and in a poor state of repair. There is strong evidence that poor housing conditions have a major impact on people’s health and wellbeing.

We will use the housing stock data over the next 3 years to work more closely with health and professionals to provide a targeted programme of advice on repair and adaptation linked to a low cost handyperson service to reduce calls on the health service. The housing stock data (figure 7) will help identify priority areas for delivery of energy efficiency related programmes to reduce fuel poverty and other support schemes.

Our older and disabled client groups are amongst the most vulnerable in the community and many of them will not be able to remain in their own homes without assistance. By helping them to adapt, repair or improve their property, they may not need to depend on a comprehensive care package or risk hospitalization in the future.

Our approach will be centred on preventing ill health and accident from poor housing conditions. We will promote and enable independent living, control and choice of housing options, to ensure that we have the necessary support services in place. We will ensure timely assessments and delivery of support and...
adaptations in order to improve the health and wellbeing of residents (figure 7).

We will do this through:

- Delivery of Minor and Major Adaptations
- Delivery of ECO and Affordable Warmth Programme
- Practical help and support by our Handyperson Service
- Practical help and support through our Care & Repair Trusted Assessor

Anti-Fraud and Corruption

The council issued its Anti-Fraud and Corruption strategy in April 2013. This demonstrates our commitment to protecting the public purse, by dealing with people who are illegally subletting their homes and or using deception to obtain properties. In addition, we have provided additional resources to our ALMO Hounslow Homes, to appoint two dedicated posts to help tackle this issue.

Equally we are aware that since the introduction of the Right to Buy £100,000 discount in April 2012 Right to Buy frauds have increased nationally. To help mitigate fraud risk within our housing services we will strengthen our relations between the Counter Fraud Team and the Right to Buy Team. The Right to Buy team was also part of the shared services co-location programme that was transferred back in house from Hounslow Homes in July 2013. Since then, we have made improvements to how we process our work strengthening the relationship with other interfacing services such as property and legal services.

We will also seek to tackle other areas of social housing fraud risk such as applications for the housing register, allocations of social housing, and temporary accommodation. We will work with social housing providers within the borough in order to tackle illegal subletting, with a view to recovering illegal sublets or abandoned properties for which the council can nominate to new tenants from the housing register.
## Objective 2 – Action Plan

To raise housing quality and standards across tenures enhancing local areas and supporting thriving communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Key activity</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Maintain 100% of council (HRA) stock at the decent homes standard</td>
<td>Annual review of performance target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Carry out a review of the billing process</td>
<td>Introduce a new transparent, itemised bill to be issued to all leaseholders from August 2014. Issue all annual bills within statutory timescales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Establish a representative tenant / leaseholder / sheltered residents’ association group</td>
<td>Formally constitute new group by 2014 Embed processes to ensure a high degree of probity and transparency in operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Tackle tenancy fraud in council (HRA) properties</td>
<td>Annual review of performance target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Increase the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensed as standards compliant.</td>
<td>Annual review of performance target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Improve the standards in private rented dwellings to those set out in the Housing Act 2004, through information advice and loans</td>
<td>Annual review of performance target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Encourage landlords to access professional development, so they are aware of their rights and responsibilities</td>
<td>Annual review of performance target</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Objective 2 – Action Plan**

To raise housing quality and standards across tenures enhancing local areas and supporting thriving communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Key Performance measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of Projects and Partnerships – through Hounslow Homes</td>
<td>Percentage of occupied HRA properties that meet the decent homes standard (target 100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Corporate Services</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Projects and Partnerships</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Projects and Partnerships – through Hounslow Homes</td>
<td>Number households fraudulently claiming tenancies of HRA properties evicted (target 75 per year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Private Sector Housing</td>
<td>Number of properties licensed (target 1100 by 2018, from 2013 baseline of 500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Private Sector Housing</td>
<td>Number of private rented properties improved in line with standards (target of 3000 by 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Private Sector Housing</td>
<td>Number of landlords accredited under the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (target 500 by 2018)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Head of Projects and Partnerships | Proportion of dashboard performance indicators RAG rated Green (target 90%, measured quarterly)  
Number of dashboard indicators RAG rated Red (target 0, measured quarterly) |
Objective 3

“To support our communities to live independently by promoting health and well-being”

This section looks at how we can support our communities to live independently through better housing support. It proposes a number of improvements that can result in improving people’s health through directing activities and resources and strengthen our joint working between housing, social care and health professionals. Where available, we will seek to bid for joint funding in order to deliver fully joined-up services to residents, enhance our cooperation with partners and support their commissioning strategies, in order to deliver value across the local service partnership. Our proposals aim to support people to become and stay independent enabling them to manage everyday activities and to participate in their community and pursue social or leisure interests.

These proposals also include adaptations and other services that help older or disabled people to stay healthy and mobile. These aim to contribute to reducing admissions to hospital, the need for residential care, reducing the duration of hospital stays and prevent delayed discharges from hospital. We believe that the proposals outlined below are valuable to enabling Hounslow residents to maintain healthy surroundings providing a safe, secure place for people to maintain their independence, health and well-being.
Why is this a priority?

- A growth in the population aged 85+ is likely to place additional demands on services for older people, including specialist accommodation.
- The ageing population is likely to create an increased demand for health and leisure services, with a large number of people entering retirement age.
- The level of people with dementia is expected to increase with the aging population. There are an estimated 1,324 residents living in the community with dementia in Hounslow, with a further 384 expected in residential care. This is projected to increase 20% by 2021, equivalent to 1,471 cases in the community and 426 cases in residential homes in Hounslow by 2018.
- We need to take a proactive approach in securing supported housing provision and identify funding opportunities and appropriate sites for people with debilitating long term illness who may need access to specially adapted accommodation, to assist people to readjust to life after discharge and to recover from mental health issues.
- There are 7,372 people with long term neurological conditions in Hounslow and we need to ensure that we are able to provide them with transitional housing support in order for them to settle back into the community.
- We need to strengthen and better co-ordinate our occupational therapy services to better assist children and adults with disabilities who find it difficult to do everyday tasks and want to remain independent in their own homes.
- We need to complete our sheltered home modernisation programme and bring all sheltered homes across the borough to a fully self-contained standard to enable healthy and modern living.
- We need to improve access to health services for our residents in four priority areas – Hounslow central, Heston, Brentford and Bedfont.
- In 2011/12 – 15.3% of adults in Hounslow were smokers and we want to encourage and support those who wish to stop and promote healthier lifestyles.
- We need to better align up our work with Adult Social Care services to increase remote care of elderly and physically less able people, providing the care and reassurance needed to allow them to remain living in their own homes.
- We also need to respond to the Adult Social Care reform agenda, which will seek to transition large numbers of individuals from sheltered accommodation into community based settings such as Extra Care Homes (which need to be created). Cuts to social care may create additional housing needs and burdens on housing and homelessness services within the borough.
- We need to increase the low levels of participation in physical activity that exists across the borough, particularly in the West of the borough and in certain population groups.
- The child population of Hounslow is increasing and projected to increase still further. The proportion of children who are obese and overweight is increasing, also. In 2012, 23.3% of pupils in Hounslow were obese by the end of primary school (year 6) and a further 15.6% of pupils overweight.

What we propose to do:

- We will integrate and better co-ordinate our work with Children’s and Adult Social Care and Regeneration, Economic Development and Environment to plan strategically for future supported housing provision and identify funding opportunities and appropriate sites to better meet the needs of our vulnerable communities.
- This includes identifying innovative new ways of working together, to pool our resources and secure greater efficiencies. Developing community resilience, in line with the new model of community social work, will be key to integrate into housing services.
- We will also consider housing’s potential input into a package of telecare, (distributed via phone, internet and community television) which is being developed by Adult Social Care and what synergies this will have with the council’s popular Linkline service.
- We will complete construction of 4 sheltered housing activity cores and ensure these become hubs of community activity for older people regardless of tenure.
- We will use floating support and assistive technology to support vulnerable residents to maintain independence and stay in their homes.
Remodelling our sheltered housing

The Council remains committed to improving sheltered housing and support services. We know that the expected increasing numbers of older persons (60+) will continue to create additional demand for accommodation suitable and designed for the elderly including sheltered or supported housing.

We have been undertaking a detailed review of the housing provision needed for the growing elderly population in the borough and adopted a Hounslow Sheltered Homes Standard as part of the Older Persons Housing Care and Support Strategy 2012. This includes the council’s commitment to eliminate all sheltered bedsit flats (i.e flats without a separate bedroom and sharing bathing facilities) by the end of 2016. This is aligned with our corporate priority to helping our elderly residents continue to live independently. We have also identified opportunities through our HRA business plan to re-use sheltered housing for different purposes, or dispose of to raise a capital receipt for reinvestment into modernising the remaining sheltered stock.

We are also committed to improving the quality of life for older people and will work jointly with other departments not only looking at improving quality of housing but to promote healthy behaviours amongst older people and provide the necessary opportunities for regular physical activity, healthy diets, fulfilling social relations, participation in meaningful activities and feeling safe in the areas where they live.

This will also include exploring current facilities at schemes, such as safe storage for mobility scooters and ensuring that as part of the re-investment in sheltered housing, all schemes are assessed against the Sheltered Housing Standard. Through this we are also committed to establishing community hubs – termed cores – into four sheltered housing schemes that will act as activity, information and social points for the whole community of older people regardless of tenure. We will strengthen our monitoring processes for those services that we commission to ensure the health and safety of our residents including services delivered by our providers eg; linkline through Hounslow Homes are effectively delivered.

We are very clear that the best services are developed together with the active involvement of those who use them. Involvement and consultation are vital components of sheltered housing, both in the delivery and development of these services. Within this, we are also taking a refreshed approach to how we engage with our sheltered residents, strengthen their voice and provide more opportunities for influencing and shaping services they receive.
Adapting and repairing homes

In Hounslow, the greatest proportion of our vulnerable residents live on low incomes and in the oldest and poorest conditions of private sector housing. Both National and local policy has moved towards greater integration between housing, health and social care services. This is evidenced in the development of an Integrated Care Pathway in Hounslow which gives increased focus on the need to provide “care at home.” It has been widely accepted that providing a home environment that is suitable and meets the needs of a disabled person will significantly reduce their reliance on care services, and reduce the risk of hospital admissions.

To further illustrate the cost benefit of providing Disabled Facilities Grants to enable disabled people to live independently in their homes, we have made the comparison between the one-off cost of a DFG and the annual cost of providing residential care. An average cost of DFG is approximately £10k whilst the annual cost of providing residential care is over £30k per annum.

Through consultation the majority of respondents agreed that the Council could and should do more to support the elderly or disabled residents to remain in their homes. As well as improving communications with target residents. The aim for this objective is therefore to maintain sufficient housing support services within constrained resources (fig 8).

In line with the transformation of social care agenda, we will provide practical help and assistance to elderly homeowners, people with disabilities or severe health problems, single parent families with a disabled child and carry out repairs, improvements or adaptations to their homes to enable them to remain independent for longer by staying in their own homes. Through this strategy we will step-up our efforts, activity and resources to better integrate and co-ordinate

Fig 8: Home improvements carried out using Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and minor adaptations
services internally and with our partners. Our approach will be centred around prevention, promotion and enabling independent living, through control and choice of housing options and ensuring that we have the necessary support services in place. We will ensure timely assessments of grants so that those in need of financial support and in need of adaptations can receive the support they require.

Reablement and Hospital discharge

We have implemented a successful hospital discharge service and have supported our residents by providing free or low cost practical help, mobility aid and carried out minor repairs and improvements in their homes following hospital discharge.

We will continue to align and better co-ordinate our work with health, commissioners and procurement services including the Integrated Community Response Team to assist and support in the drawing up of plans to facilitate a seamless service in the release of patients from hospital back into their own homes. This will include work undertaken as part of the Northwest London Shaping a Healthier future and council Out of Hospital and Closer to Home strategies. We believe the provision of better integrated and co-ordinated preventative measures are a crucial part of the council’s work with colleagues in the health service to prevent delayed discharges from hospital and readmission to hospital.

Smokefree Homes

Smoking is the single most preventable cause of premature death and illness. Passive smoking is particularly harmful for children, placing them at risk of respiratory problems and other serious health outcomes. Approximately 30,000 (15.3%) adults in Hounslow in 2011/12 were smokers. A SmokeFree Homes campaign rolled out across the borough encourages people not to smoke in their homes, and asks them to sign up to a pledge not to do so and signposting to the Stop Smoking service.

We will monitor the number of people who have signed up to the pledge, and the proportion of those who have successfully quit, or quit in the home. We will work innovatively with our partners to aim to implement SmokeFree policies in care homes, supported accommodation, and local authority housing (including communal areas, e.g. gardens), and provide support to tenants who wish to quit. This will help also to deliver our Joint Health and Well-being Strategy 2013-17, “to help those who wish to give up smoking to be successful”.

Leisure – balancing the energy imbalance

The use of our land and how we reuse it - is key to our local area’s health. The health of our residents can also be reflected through the quality of the environment in which they live and work. We know from the Sport England Active people survey that participation in physical activity and sport varies greatly across the borough with very low levels in the west contrasting with relatively high levels in the east.

The implementation of our Hounslow Physical activity and sports strategy 2012-2022 is a corporate strategic aim and we will support this work through the redevelopment of Heston Leisure centre and encouraging the co-location of leisure and cultural services with other community facilities as also laid out in our local plan.

In line with our population growth predictions, also reiterated in our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA 2012/13), we expect that this will also have significant implications for health and social care services. In response we will seek to ensure that programmes that encourage and support positive healthy lifestyle behaviours with key health infrastructure requirements being an integral part of social housing providers’ activities. We will consider the physical and mental health requirements of all age groups, when considering the provision of amenities such as exercise facilities and social areas on estates and new developments. We are currently upgrading our play areas within the borough which will be designed to encourage use by young people, giving them a wider range of play opportunities and physical activities. These will be delivered through the Cultural and Parks Strategy.

Encouraging outdoor activities

Through open spaces - Our vast amount of open spaces provide wide benefits to the community, they encourage physical activity in the outdoors promoting health and wellbeing, they also provide a local supply of fresh, affordable and healthy produce and an opportunity for education and intergenerational exchange of skills and knowledge. These provide a space for the community to come together to grow and to celebrate. Alongside our existing 36 allotment sites within the borough, we aim to promote and support
community growing of fruit and vegetables through community gardens. We aim to achieve this by utilizing any derelict or un-used open spaces for the provision of community growing programs where local support is identified. We will also promote the multifunctional use of open space land on our estates.

**Through our libraries** - libraries also play a role in supporting the ability of older people to live independently and remain actively engaged in the world of learning and the wider community. Older people’s needs are often complex and require a holistic approach to make a positive difference. We know our residents use our libraries in different ways according to their age and socio demographic group. With this in mind, our library provision will be varied across the borough. We envisage that these will be in the form of ‘Community Hubs’ where other council services are co-located within library premises. This offers residents the opportunity to access a multitude of council services under one roof.

**Through culture and arts** - we will work to create a supportive environment in order to maintain and improve health and wellbeing through participation in community engaged arts practices and aim to demonstrate the positive impact that participation in culture and arts has on our older population. London is one of the most important cultural cities in the world, with more opportunities for its population than most. Many people in Hounslow live less than an hour and a half from some of the most important cultural facilities in Europe: galleries, theatres, concert halls, opera houses, popular music venues, festivals and a vibrant street life. We will seek to work to promote these and encourage more out door opportunities for our communities across the borough.

### Objective 3 – Action Plan

To support our communities to live independently by promoting health and wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Key activity</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Key Performance measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Develop a communications strategy to promote the adaptation and Handyperson services and encourage access amongst hard to reach groups</td>
<td>Implement communications strategy by 2014 Annual review of performance target</td>
<td>Head of Private Sector Housing</td>
<td>Number of people accessing DFG (expected to increase year on year, from 2012/13 baseline of 92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Deliver adaptations to disabled residents’ homes through our Home Improvement service</td>
<td>Annual review of performance target</td>
<td>Head of Private Sector Housing</td>
<td>Number of home adaptations carried out (target 900 by 2018, baseline 182 total major and minor alterations carried out 2012/13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Assist residents who require help with home repairs provided through our Handy Scheme and improvement service</td>
<td>Annual review of performance target</td>
<td>Head of Private Sector Housing</td>
<td>Number of home repairs carried out (target 2500 per year by 2018, from baseline of 1506 handyperson jobs and 641, total 2147, during 2012/13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Housing and public health to deliver an assisted discharge service, helping hospital patients to be cared for in their own homes (reablement) or a care home</td>
<td>Annual review of performance target</td>
<td>Lead Consultant Public Health</td>
<td>Number of people accessing assisted discharge service (target TBC, expected to increase year on year, baseline established after roll-out during 2013/14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Improvement of the Linkline service and integration into Adult Social Care’s Telecare package</td>
<td>Formulate offer, to ensure a joined up approach between housing and ASC to meet the care needs of elderly and disabled residents in supported and extended care accommodation, by 2014 Roll out provision, across supported, sheltered and extra care housing.</td>
<td>Joint Commissioning Manager – Supporting people and Head of Housing Options and Allocations</td>
<td>Percentage of residents in supported and extra care homes who have access to Linkline/Telecare services. (target 100%, may be phased depending on the roll out phase of the project) Percentage of residents using Linkline/Telecare that are satisfied with the level of service provided. (target – benchmark and set stretch targets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Encourage outdoor leisure activities</td>
<td>Implement policies in Leisure and Health and Wellbeing Strategies, by 2014.</td>
<td>Head of Leisure and Preventative Health</td>
<td>Percentage of outdoor play facilities upgraded/renovated during the year (target 5%, based on 20 year average lifespan) Number of council housing estates with multifunctional open space. (analysis to take place 2013/14, target all major estates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Develop community hubs to support residents in sheltered and extra care</td>
<td>Roll out community hubs programme in line with older persons housing strategy and HRA business plan.</td>
<td>Joint Commissioning Manager – Supporting people</td>
<td>Number of community hubs built (target 4) Proportion of sheltered, supported and extra care homes with immediate access to a community hub (target 100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Smoke free homes</td>
<td>Hounslow Stop Smoking Service to roll out Smoke Free Homes campaign, by 2014</td>
<td>Lead Consultant Public Health</td>
<td>Number of people assisted to stop smoking for at least 4 weeks (target 1400 per year, baseline 1956 in 2012/13 – but focus has changed to vulnerable groups: manual workers, mental health, young people, and pregnant women) Number of households assisted to stop smoking indoors (target 50 per year, baseline to be established in 2013/14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective 4

“To support residents from becoming homeless, and provide housing options and advice if they become homeless”

For the first time we are including our Homelessness Strategy within our broader Housing Strategy rather than presenting as a separate document. This approach means that the Homelessness Strategy can be read as ‘part of the bigger picture’ within Hounslow’s wider Housing Strategy and is not seen in isolation from the range of other housing factors that influence homelessness.

It is of key importance both in terms of service delivery and in terms of council expenditure that we have a robust strategy that works to develop services that prevent homelessness and assist those who are in need of housing. The council has legal duties towards certain groups of homeless households and many of these are covered throughout this strategy. We have responsibilities to provide advice and assistance to all homeless households, but responsibilities to provide accommodation, directly or indirectly, applies only to those for whom we have a statutory homeless duty under the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

The specific purpose of this objective is to drive change in the way that housing services can effectively respond to preventing and managing homelessness issues. Providing the right advice and support at the right time is crucial in helping households to maintain their independence, preventing them from losing their homes, and reducing pressure on the use of temporary accommodation, social housing and on the public purse.
The challenge for achieving this objective will be to provide an integrated and coherent response, delivered in partnership and tailored to the local needs and circumstances of those in the following two groups:

- those who are at risk of becoming homeless; and
- those who have become homeless and who we have a statutory duty to assist.

This will mean reviewing what we do and redesigning our internal systems and processes to better align our responses and actions, and to develop a service model that is sustainable and fit to meet the increasing demand and changing needs in particular those arising as a result of welfare reforms.

We cannot provide social housing for all of those who come to us with a threat of homelessness. The private rented sector now has a much bigger role to play both in helping to ensure that households do not become homeless and in helping to accommodate homeless households. Council’s have been given new powers under the Localism Act to discharge their homelessness duties into the private rented sector. In order to make effective use of these powers we will need to work with the private sector to ensure that private rented housing is of good condition and able to provide quality homes which can contribute in meeting housing needs. In some cases we will need to utilise private rented housing outside of the borough if this provides good quality accommodation which is cost effective for both households and the council.

In August 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government, following a Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness, produced a report entitled – ‘Making Every Contact Count’ a Joint approach to preventing homelessness”. The vision for the report is simple but bold – there is no place for homelessness in the 21st Century.

We agree with this vision and the Housing Strategy shows how we will work towards this in Hounslow.

Our previous homelessness strategy focused on preventing homelessness, accommodating and supporting homeless people and tackling the wider causes of homelessness. We remain committed to these objectives. In recent years we have been successful in preventing homelessness, through advice, mediation and intervention to enable people to remain in their accommodation. However, homeless applications to the council are increasing year on year linked to the economic recession and more recently welfare reform. We have not been able to re-house homeless households in council housing stock and as a result we have had to resort to short-term accommodation which has left households in uncertain housing situations and placed great pressures on council finances. We will seek to address these issues through a number of initiatives and service redesign, whilst also acknowledging the challenges and setting out a set of priorities shaped by our understanding and realisation that we need to bring a balance between our housing service options and costs.

### Why is tackling homelessness a priority?

- In 2012/13, 941 households approached the council for help because they were homeless, 638 were accepted as homeless. If the increase in acceptances continues at the present rate, this number will grow at a rate of 290 households a year, to nearly treble by 2018 as a consequence of Welfare Reform.

- Termination of assured short-hold tenancy was the main reason for people losing their home at year end 2012/13 – these included households who have dependent children. We project that evictions are likely to increase due to the social sector size criteria, benefit cap and universal credit as a result of many households remaining in accommodation that is unaffordable to them.

- During 2012/13 the numbers of households in temporary accommodation rose by 44% and the use of bed & breakfast accommodation by 94% from 2011/12. There has been a significant increase in the use of temporary accommodation and bed & breakfast during 2011/12 and 2012/13 and the use of temporary accommodation could, increase 2000 households or above by 2016 without preventative action.

- We need to work with all relevant services and partners to ensure that we provide a more co-ordinated and joined-up service so we can prevent homelessness.

- We need to reduce rough sleeping which fluctuates seasonally but it has increased from a recent low of 12 in November 2012 to current estimates of 31 in May 2013.

- Welfare reform has a significant impact on households across all tenures. Many of those with children affected by the benefit cap.

- Changes to homelessness legislation requirements means that private rented sector homes will now be the main housing option for most homeless households.

- There are not enough social rented homes for everyone who wants one. We estimate that just over 600 council and registered provider homes will become available for letting in 2013/14 and probably even less in future years.

- There is a severe shortage of council and registered provider homes with 3 or more bedrooms as well as a shortage of mobility adapted homes.
What we propose to do:

- We will create a smarter and more timely homeless service through a service redesign which will deliver homeless decisions faster.

- We will strengthen and integrate our housing role and presence across all services in order to maximise our focus and efforts and prevent residents from becoming homeless, we will continue to work with Community Safety Partnerships and other key partners to assist survivors of domestic violence to remain in their homes, via the sanctuary scheme where possible.

- We will continue to support the work with Hounslow Safer Homes Sanctuary scheme in supporting homeless victims of Domestic Violence.

- We will be more proactive in moving on households from temporary accommodation to reduce the average stay in temporary accommodation, by exploring alternative housing options under new powers of the Localism Act.

- We will develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, providing advice and support to both clients and landlords.

- We will continue to review private rented sector access schemes to provide an attractive package of options to both landlords and eligible tenants. This will provide homeless households with greater options, choice and opportunities to secure alternative accommodation in the private sector and prevent homelessness.

- We will reduce placements of all households and particularly families with children in bed & breakfast accommodation and ensure children are not in bed & breakfast accommodation for longer than six weeks.

- Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions through the use of available mortgage rescue schemes.

- We will seek to work more closely with West London and Pan London partner boroughs to explore procurement options for accommodation outside the borough for relevant homeless households by using our placement protocol in order to meet our housing obligations.

- We will continue to strengthen our partnership work with landlords and temporary accommodation providers to sustain our supply and standards of temporary accommodation.

- We will seek to continually monitor the impacts of the various changes to the welfare system as they come into force. We will offer a range of advice and establish support services to assist residents affected by the housing benefit caps and introduction of Universal Credit through greater access to benefit support services.

- We will widen our work with landlords with a view to promoting awareness on preventative advice measures so they are better able to support their tenants that could be at risk of becoming homeless.

- We will ensure that residents are aware of their rights and responsibilities, to prevent a breakdown in the relationship between tenants and landlords, so fewer residents are evicted.

- We will better align and strengthen our work by early intervention to identify specific housing needs as early as possible and ensuring that housing is part of any support plan for individuals and households with special needs or vulnerabilities.

- Work with children’s services to broker enhanced home visits to prevent homelessness with a view to provide direct assistance to those households in financial difficulty as a result of welfare reform or overcrowding.

- We will proactively integrate our work with Adults and Children’s services to ensure that housing advice and options are effectively integrated within services in order to better support chaotic adults and troubled families.

- Reduce homelessness amongst young people by working with supporting people programme and Children Services to support young people to stay at home and support Troubled Families.

- Effectively apply our new housing allocation policy that takes into account the needs of homeless households and other vulnerable equalities groups such as those with severe medical conditions and disabled people as a reasonable preference category.
Preventing Homelessness

We want to ensure that we provide an effective decisive homeless service which concentrates on preventing homelessness and provide a timely response to homelessness applications and provide good quality well managed private rented housing inside and outside of the borough for those we have a statutory duty to assist.

The key to delivering that vision is through preventative initiatives – agencies working together to support those at risk of homelessness – helping them to help themselves. In Hounslow the top 3 categories of households who became homeless in 2012/13 were termination of assured shorthold tenancies; parents, relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate; and breakdown of a relationship most commonly due to domestic violence (figure 9). These causes accounted for a total of 667 out of 941 cases and our data shows that these are projected to increase over the next years.

For the last 30 years our housing stock has decreased under the ”Right to Buy” scheme and our demand has greatly exceeded the supply of social housing properties we have available to let, consequently most people cannot be helped through this route. Through this objective we will outline how we will identify and provide solutions to these issues. We will redesign our services whilst ensuring that we take into account the changing needs, building on the work we do well and changing where we need to improve.

Better, smarter homelessness preventative services

Since 2012 we have embarked on a service redesign process of our Housing Options and Allocations team, providing a more seamless and person centred approach. This service is at the heart of our housing service provision and our preventative and support services play a vital role in reducing demand. During consultation we were reassured with the responses we received on our proposals to redesign our housing services to better increase and maximise our homeless prevention efforts. We asked what levels of support would be most effective in preventing residents from becoming homeless. The majority of respondents identified that better co-ordination of multi-agency working would strengthen the level of advice, information and support that is currently provided. This in turn, would assist those at risk of becoming homeless with the right support and helping them to make better and more informed decisions for their future. We noted that respondents also indicated that there was a lack of internal communication.

Our work therefore needs to be efficient, smart and fit for purpose ensuring that it helps and effectively supports those who are homeless, or about to become homeless and ensures that households have a clear understanding of what we can and cannot provide. Our work so far has highlighted that we need to address issues of quality and access to the private rented sector,
we need to improve on our knowledge and communication in order to deliver a more holistic response to homelessness issues, a better co-ordinated multi-agency approach to understanding homelessness needs. Our aim through this approach is that it will play a substantial role in reducing the hidden and often unforeseen additional effects associated with homelessness (e.g. ill health, worklessness, benefit dependency, addiction and social exclusion) by working with them to establish and maintain better settled home circumstances. We will develop implementation plans to support priority projects in the coming months, and focus on the transformation of those services and prepare a more sound financial platform to deal with increase demand and better meet the housing need for those most in need of our services.

Putting our residents needs at the centre

Central to our service redesign vision will be the need to respond to the diverse and changing homeless needs, and tailoring the most appropriate responses. As stated above in the majority of cases this will not be by providing accommodation ourselves but will focus on responding early to prevent homelessness from happening in the first instance. This should enable better preventative support and services to residents needs rather than just “housing” led options and residents accessing better support before they become homeless or after they leave a crisis situation.

Responding promptly with alternative housing solutions

Our redesign approach will also place emphasis on identifying homeless people as soon as they become under threat of homelessness and working quickly to stabilise their housing arrangements. This will include helping residents to identify affordable private rental accommodation, or other suitable housing and restricting use of bed & breakfast as a last resort. A rapid response service will be aimed at stabilising and sustaining any housing arrangement in place. We know that this approach will rely heavily on the availability of affordable, private rental or other affordable and safe housing options, which is why we will establish new ways of working with our private sector landlords to extend their supply and support them in providing good housing

Fig 9: Homelessness reasons 2010/11 to 2012/13
quality standards. We will also take an active part in Pan London initiatives that will seek to expand our housing availability to better meet our needs.

Intensive Services

The redesign approach will aim to improve how we respond to homeless residents requiring intensive services both in terms of the number of services that they will need and the duration of the intervention. Some of these services may be treatment and support for mental health, alcohol or drug problems, support to deal with domestic and family violence.

This is where we will also seek to strengthen and better co-ordinate our work and response as these will certainly be best provided through a multi-disciplinary and integrated case management approach.

Welfare Reform

The impact of welfare reform is affecting household income which we know from emerging data results will impact and increase homeless cases and needs. Funding pressures affecting each housing tenure means that meeting and planning for housing need is becoming more difficult for residents, reducing household’s income and their ability to meet housing costs. The housing related reforms that may have a direct impact on homelessness include:

- Changes to Local Housing Allowance.
- Introduction of size criteria for working age social tenants who require Housing Benefit to meet the costs of their rent.
- Introduction of the benefits cap will mean that households benefit will be restricted to £500pw for families and £350pw for single adults.
- The introduction of Universal Credit.

We have developed a mitigation programme aimed at reducing impact on our residents, these include action plans which detail proposals for financial inclusion, increasing the supply of private sector housing, including outside borough placements whilst stabilising the use of temporary accommodation and bed & breakfast. We are also considering affordability and greater access to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), which will contribute to reducing rent shortfalls to a level that is more affordable, but this is only a temporary solution. Discretionary Local Crisis Payments (DLCP) are also available to those that may be in urgent need at a time of crisis; as part of our emerging Welfare Reform Strategy, we are devising the most effective plan to use these funds, we are providing training to staff and communicating to tenants and residents, particularly those affected by the social sector size criteria and benefit cap, on how and when to claim. We have prepared a comprehensive package of advice for residents and training for officers that will focus on the impact of welfare reform on household finances and the steps that people can take to mitigate these effects. Through this we hope to better support those impacted by Welfare Reform and reduce the number of homeless and accepted homeless cases, as well as helping existing tenants sustain their tenancies.

Vulnerable Households

The homelessness legislation sets out the criteria and categories of households whom the council are likely to offer housing assistance. The council are likely to assist families with dependent children, expectant women and households vulnerable to mental, physical or sensory disability. Groups who are likely to be assisted by the Council in resolving homelessness through preventative measures and housing options are considered below.

- **Young people** – there are many services within the borough supporting the holistic approach to homelessness amongst young people. These include Connexions, children’s centres with many other internal services within the council supporting these initiatives. We work closely with Children’s social care teams to prevent homelessness amongst 16 and 17 year olds and where possible enabling young people to return home or find alternative housing in a planned way. In cases where this is not possible we will be prioritising and developing more floating support for young people in temporary accommodation. We will strengthen and embed our housing support and better align our services within children’s and adult social care and ensure on-going support for young people leaving care, in their own tenancy.

- **Domestic Violence** – Homeless due to ‘domestic violence or threats of violence’ has been the third most recorded reason for homelessness in Hounslow. Housing proactively responds to the housing needs of survivors of domestic violence by giving advice and assistance, the option to remain at home with additional safety measures under the council’s sanctuary scheme where in 2012/13 we prevented 20 homeless cases, and exploring alternative housing options to relocate to other areas. We will continue to ensure that our policies and practices surrounding domestic violence are safe and that housing officers are regularly trained in best practice in this area. The council works in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership, the local Police and other statutory and non-statutory agencies to safeguard adults and children affected by domestic violence, in line with our Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy. However, we know we need to better align and strengthen these arrangements and we will seek to do this through our proposed service redesign.

We introduced our support advice service for victims of domestic violence and mediation service for teenagers whose relationship has
broken down with their family group. We noted from consultation responses that the majority of respondents were not aware of this service and we will therefore seek to increase our communication to better advertise the support services available.

**Rough sleepers** – Hounslow has experienced a dramatic increase in rough sleeping over the past 3-4 years. The latest anecdotal data from outreach workers suggests an acute increase in rough sleeping, with figures increasing fivefold to roughly 150 in a matter of months. Provisional September 2013 figures suggest there may be 44 entrenched rough sleepers in the borough, who have been sleeping outside for over 3 months; homelessness services are now receiving an average of around 4 new referrals a week. It is unlikely that this increase will continue, as we believe that most of these individuals have been displaced from other boroughs (and were not newly created homeless). However this spike has resulted in increased demands being placed on the homelessness services in Hounslow. In response, we have been able to effectively co-ordinate multi-agency initiatives such as “no second night out” in order to end rough sleeping and find alternative housing options. Most rough sleepers in the borough are British or Irish and therefore have recourse to public funds, housing and public health teams work together in outreach services to engage with these individuals and bring them off the street. We will continue our work and develop a policy to sustain the borough’s work to contain and reduce rough sleeping. We will also target support at individuals who may not currently be rough sleeping, but who may be squatting or living in empty buildings, so they are not counted in official figures but are at an increased risk of having to sleep outside. Our aim is not only to provide a roof, but to allow a sense of identity, a feeling of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing.

People who sleep rough experience stark health inequalities and will also be less well-equipped to access the healthcare they need. The integration of Public Health into the council presents opportunities to work cohesively to reduce the inequalities faced by our rough sleepers. Public Health is contributing to our work to establish ways of linking our rough sleepers with the healthcare they need, to prevent their health from deteriorating. We will seek ways of improving hospital discharge arrangements for our rough sleepers to ensure that they are adequately supported, working with our partners to apply for national grants in this area. Tuberculosis, in particular, is an issue amongst rough sleepers, as evidence suggests that 10% of TB patients have a history of homelessness and 4% were sleeping rough. As this condition is on the increase, we therefore need to link our holistic services for homeless people into TB services within the borough. We expect that these initiatives will contribute to reducing the significant health inequalities faced by the borough’s rough sleepers.
The Council agreed in September 2013 to commission and fund a dedicated outreach team for rough sleepers that is integrated with existing local services. The dedicated team will consist of four outreach workers and a part-time nurse. It is expected that the outreach team will be provided by a voluntary sector homelessness organisation, subject to tender processes. The service will be commissioned for a 3 year period with aims of reducing the number of people sleeping rough in the borough and tackling health inequalities amongst this group.

**Single homeless and support needs** – our homeless service supports housing schemes for people with a range of needs including learning disabilities, mental health, alcohol and drug dependence. We will continue to work on these areas and concentrate our efforts on support and resettlement. Part this work will also involve working closer with families and focusing on prevention through effective and good quality advice and option services.

**Meeting Demand**

We cannot provide permanent social housing for all those who approach us and we need therefore to develop a supply of good quality private sector accommodation that reduces the need for temporary accommodation. We will also look to maximise funding opportunities through our GLA Investment Partner Status to explore funding streams which will help with developing long term solutions to our temporary accommodation housing deficit, through the possibility of building a hostel and temporary accommodation.

**Temporary Accommodation:** Managing the use and supply of temporary accommodation is a priority for this strategy - we cannot continue to meet housing needs by placing all households threatened with homelessness into Council provided temporary accommodation.

The Council will use its new powers under the Localism Act to discharge duty to homeless households in the private sector by making ‘one’ suitable offer of accommodation, to resolve their homelessness. This will result in reductions in the numbers of households waiting in temporary accommodation for a number years for a social let that is in limited supply across the borough.

The increase in homelessness resulting from welfare reform changes has placed extra demand on temporary accommodation supply. The introduction of Universal Credit will have the effect of reducing landlord confidence and exacerbating the affordability of temporary accommodation in London. We are aware that placing households in temporary accommodation can be unsettling for homeless applicants and their families. We know there are great benefits in ensuring timely move on from temporary accommodation into settled accommodation in particular, from bed & breakfast accommodation as this can have a detrimental effect on family life and the well-being of households. Specifically, the use of long term bed & breakfast accommodation can have a negative impact on children’s schooling, mental health, employment/training opportunities, social wellbeing and the ability of households to get on with their lives.

Hounslow has received an increasing number of homeless placements in private rented accommodation from inner and neighbouring London boroughs. This competition from other London boroughs has caused a reduction in supply of private sector properties and has resulted in price competition and extra pressure on other local services.

To meet the increase demand we will, therefore, aim to provide the most efficient and rapid assessment reducing the need for temporary accommodation through an improved approach to preventing homelessness whilst also aiming to better manage cost pressures. We will look at a range of innovative new strategies for procuring temporary accommodation. This will include using existing council properties and vacant council units where appropriate, in order to maximise the use of our resources and secure the greatest efficiency savings. We may also need to consider placing households in Temporary Accommodation outside of the borough, due to the lack of affordable TA within Hounslow, if this is deemed suitable to the household’s needs, on a case by case basis. The Council will consider the affordability of the accommodation; travel time, costs and the effect of a move on the applicant’s employment, education, welfare, health and child-care arrangements.

We introduced the Homeless Placements Protocol in July 2013 and assessment criteria which sets out how households approaching the borough will be dealt with in a clear and transparent way. In addition, through the use of private rented sector offers we will be able to provide assistance to more households in their engagements with accredited landlords and avoid placements and costs of bed & breakfast accommodation. The council will ensure that standards of accommodation made under the Private Rented sector is of good standards and in-line with the Suitability Order 2012.

We envisage that the proposed measures such as discharge through private rented sector, introduction of our new housing allocation policy and West London private managed accommodation initiative – these will all contribute to our overall objective of complying with our homeless statutory duties as well as bringing our temporary accommodation budget in line and to a reasonable level. The use of bed & breakfast accommodation has also risen as a result of recent welfare changes. This accommodation will be assessed under the much improved Setting the Standard criteria to ensure safety and suitability for the most vulnerable.
Voluntary sector services: The borough has a vibrant voluntary service which provides much support to homeless service. We want to exploit our partnership work to better tackle homelessness in all its dimensions and we know that this will require the collaboration of a wide range of partners from all sectors.

If we are to realise our vision of “preventing homelessness” it will be necessary for us to strengthen and embed our work further with relevant organisations and work together to deliver better housing support to those who experience homelessness. We will work to achieve and strengthen this area of work through our service review.

Procuring private sector housing: The private rented accommodation sector is a valuable resource in meeting the demand for housing. One of the biggest challenges facing this housing strategy is to procure sufficient good quality private rented accommodation for people in housing need, as this is likely to be more of a realistic option for households faced with homelessness. The challenge for this objective is therefore to strengthen our relationship with the private sector and improve our “offer” in order to procure sufficient good quality supply to meet growing housing need.

The Council has revised its incentive payments and packages to landlords to further expand our access to the Private Rented Sector (PRS). In addition to this, the Council will promote PRS schemes through annual Landlord Conferences, to attract new landlords and property developers to increase PRS supply. We expect that by incentivising landlords this will support them in improving their stock, engaging with the Green Deal agenda, improve energy efficiency and occupying void buildings whilst working with and educating borough landlords. We will use grant funding where possible to encourage landlords to fulfil the local need for accommodation which is adapted for households with special needs. Where landlords are unwilling to meet their legal obligations in terms of stock and management standards, we will use all available enforcement powers to ensure compliance. Additional work is needed to encourage larger institutional landlords who will provide more confidence and a professional service to residents in housing need. These actions are covered in more details in Objectives 2 & 3.
## Objective 4 – Action Plan

To support residents from becoming homeless and provide housing options and advice if they become homeless

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Key activity</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Key Performance measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Implement strategy to reduce homelessness arising from changes in service redesign</td>
<td>Improve communication within the council and between council and tenants and landlords  Support landlord / tenant liaison  Sustain the tenancies of vulnerable tenants or assist them to move  Increase access to move-on accommodation for supported housing residents  Annual review of performance targets</td>
<td>Head of Housing Options and Allocations</td>
<td>Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation (target TBC, expected to reduce year on year from baseline of 1067 in March 2013)  Number of households that approach the council for help and are successfully supported to avoid becoming homeless to be measured by homelessness preventions through:  - No. of households assisted to obtain alternative accommodation (either through direct lets/deposit schemes)  - Number of households that have obtained Discretionary Housing Payments in order to avoid eviction from their existing tenancies (target TBC, expected to increase year on year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Increase access to private accommodation for homeless and potentially homeless households</td>
<td>Develop a local lettings agency (subject to options appraisal)  Explore a range of innovative methods of procuring or developing additional accommodation supply  Establish a voluntary out of borough options scheme  Increase our supply of temporary housing  Annual review of performance target</td>
<td>Head of Private Sector Housing  Head of Temporary Accommodation</td>
<td>Number of homeless households who are found accommodation in the private sector (target TBC, expected to increase year on year, baseline established during 2013/14)  Number of private landlords that are registered with the council to provide suitable properties at affordable rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Revise housing allocations scheme</td>
<td>Review the 2013 Allocations Policy and implement any revisions before 2015  Annual review of performance targets</td>
<td>Head of Housing Options and Allocations</td>
<td>Number of households on the housing waiting list (target TBC, expected to reduce year on year from baseline of 2554 in October 2013)  Average length of time households spend on the housing waiting list before being found accommodation (target TBC, baseline to be established during 2014/15 and reduce year on year, counted from October 2013 when waiting list was reset)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.4 Reduce the number of households in B&B accommodation

**Implement a review of this service to:**
- Reduce the average time taken to arrive at a homelessness decision, by 2014
- Reduce the time taken to find alternatives to B&B accommodation, by 2014

Annual review of performance targets

**Head of Housing Options and Allocations; Head of Temporary Accommodation Unit**

**Numbers of households in B&B accommodation (target TBC, expected to reduce year on year from 2013 baseline of 370)**

Average time to arrive at a homeless decision for families on waiting list in shared B&B accommodation (target within 3 weeks, from October 2013 baseline of 9 weeks)

Average time taken to find an approved homeless family on waiting list in shared B&B alternative accommodation (target within 3 weeks, from October 2013 baseline of 12 weeks)

Total council spend on B&B accommodation (target TBC, expected to reduce year on year from 2013 baseline of £3.3m)

Number of families or pregnant women in B&B accommodation over six weeks. (target 0)

### 4.5 Support survivors of Domestic Violence

**Annual review of performance target**

**Head of Housing Options and Allocations**

**Number of women assisted through the Sanctuary scheme for domestic violence (target 15 per year)**

### 4.6 Commission a 3 year rough sleepers outreach service

**Commission Service by March 2014**

**Supporting Independence Service Manager**

**Baseline number of rough sleepers and the extent of their health needs.**

**Number of rough sleepers produced on an annual basis**

Number of antisocial incidents in rough sleeper ‘hotspots’.

**Number of rough sleepers registered with a GP and monitored by the service’s nurse.**

**Number of rough sleepers discharged from hospital are supported upon discharge**

**Number of rough sleepers actively reconnected with the home authority**
Why is this a priority?

- Fuel poverty is a concern with both the economic downturn and rising fuel costs resulting in cold homes. Pensioners aged 65+ are particularly vulnerable to health risks associated with fuel poverty and cold homes.
- People in Hounslow consider community safety as much more than just crime and disorder reduction but as an issue which impacts upon their quality life.
- With 2,304 incidents recorded in 2011/12 we know that the largest issues faced by our residents are drugs and youth nuisance.
- Convent Way, Brentford Towers and Ivybridge estates are the most affected by anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Approximately 16.1% of Hounslow residents are classified as “high risk” drinkers. This proportion is more than double the England average of 7.1%.

Objective 5

"To create a cleaner, safer and greener living environment for our communities”

This objective looks at how we can help shape and sustain great places to live for Hounslow residents. We see housing as the bedrock of our society and we need these to be designed for community life with much greater emphasis on cleaner streets, healthier housing living conditions, shared spaces, safer communal areas for play and relaxation. We believe that housing and the environment around it is at the core of building a cleaner, safer and greener living environment for our residents.
What we will do :-

- We aim to expand our estate warden’s role and the scheme
- We will work innovatively with existing and new partners to tackle the causes and effects of fuel poverty, including making residents aware of sources of help, such as Winter Fuel Payments and potential access to Energy Company Obligation and Green Deal funding
- We will work to improve joint working corporately with residents, police and Hounslow Homes to tackle issues of community safety on our estates and in our neighbourhoods
- Ensure the responsible use of land and natural resources and management of waste to mitigate and adapt to climate change
- We will develop programmes to help attract investment into the borough for the delivery of home energy efficiency improvements

Living places – Cleaner, Safer and Greener

Every resident should expect to enjoy places that are clean, safe and green. Poor quality homes and spaces are visible indicators of decline and disadvantage in some of our neighbourhoods and reduce quality of life. We have outlined in other objectives that form part of this strategy that poor housing can directly affect the quality and attractiveness of the surrounding public spaces. Run down or abandoned housing contributes to fear of crime and can reduce property value. It can affect the confidence and esteem of the local community.

As a council we are committed to taking a leading role in ensuring that our homes and public spaces are fit-for-purpose, enhancing the quality of people’s lives and strengthening our communities. We are aware that we cannot achieve this on our own however, effective co-ordination of different players from the private sector and the voluntary sector will aid this as they are increasingly taking action to improve the quality of the spaces and places across the borough. We also need the support and co-operation of our residents. This objective therefore will sit along wider council strategic plans, however for the purpose of this strategy its focus is as follows;

- **Cleaner** – contribute and promote the work of Hounslow Highways amongst residents
- **Safer** – work and integrate the work of new Estates Police Officer initiative with the Community Safety Partnership to enhance and create a greater impact across our Communities
- **Greener** – creating healthier, more energy efficient homes by optimising take-up of Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding for, in particular, low income, vulnerable households at risk of fuel poverty in Council and private sector housing.

As a local authority we are constantly faced with making difficult decisions about where to make savings. However, we need to take into account that we have a growing population, the number of older people is rising and our child population is also increasing. With this population increase, it is important that as many as possible remain active and are able to contribute to the local community and that a lack of good-quality support and infrastructure within their homes and neighbourhoods do not act as barriers to being active locally. For example; run down play areas, cold homes, poor pavements or street lighting in an area as these can stop people feeling confident enough to go out at all.

**Cleaner places**

Through Hounslow Highways the Council has embarked in a major programme to change the face of Hounslow. This work will see major improvement in all of the borough’s streets, footpaths and street lighting. In improving our borough streets and street features, we will also include street cleansing, cleaning away graffiti and removing rubbish left by fly-tippers. Hounslow Highways will maintain the trees and verges across public spaces within the borough and gritting the roads during the winter months. Over the first two years of this strategy Hounslow Highways will replace the borough’s 16,000 street lights with energy-saving, carbon-efficient LED lamps. At the same time and extending over five years, repairs and improvements to the borough’s worst roads and footpaths with surfaces of a much higher standard. Street cleansing and tackling litter will also be a major priority for Hounslow Highways to help improve the overall appearance of the borough. The appearance and cleanliness of Hounslow’s streets is one of the most important parts of the new highways service. We want our borough to be the one where businesses choose to operate from and where people want to live, visit and relax.

Our surroundings are very important and with our renewed approach to regeneration, we will look to also engage with
our local neighbourhoods and communities to keep our streets and public places as clean as possible. We will therefore take opportunities through this strategy to promote and build on the work carried out by Hounslow Highways, by encouraging residents and tenants across our estates to build a renewed sense of pride and to look after and contribute to making our borough a cleaner place to live. Maintaining the cleanliness of the borough is a partnership between the council and local people. We will educate tenants and residents about the various options for disposing of different types of refuse, to encourage recycling, make people aware of their responsibilities and discourage fly tipping.

Safer places

Neighbourhoods plagued by vandalism, anti-social behaviour and harassment destabilise feelings of safety and security leaving residents, helpless, distressed and nervous. Any type of anti-social behaviour or crime affects all types of tenures. These points are highlighted in survey results carried out by the Community Safety Partnership team where 66% of respondents said that they felt safe during the day and 39% said they felt very unsafe after dark. Tackling crime and fear of crime is therefore essential for giving people the confidence to live safely within their neighbourhoods and make full use of their local public space. Through this strategy we will work with our Community Safety Partnership and integrate our newly established Estate Police Officers initiative to make a greater impact in making not just our estates safe places to live, but to enhance and contribute to making the borough a safe place to live.

Keeping our estates safe and secure will remain a priority for this strategy. We have 110 estates that cover the five wards across Hounslow. We expect that the work of our new Estate Police Officers will compliment and strengthen the role and activities of the Neighbourhood Wardens.

Together they act as our eyes and ears and work closely with our residents to keep our estates clean, safe and secure. We will explore expanding the role of our neighbourhood wardens to enable us to take more action on key issues such as dog fouling and litter.

Greener and healthier homes

Cold homes have been consistently linked to ill-health and excess winter mortality. Data from the Department of Energy and Climate Change indicate that in 2010 9,206 households in Hounslow were fuel poor, an increase of 24% since 2006. The higher rate of death during the winter months can, in many cases, be attributed to cold housing, often caused by fuel poverty. Cold housing can impact on children’s development, respiratory conditions, mental health, general physical health and mortality risk, with the greatest impact amongst the elderly and vulnerable people. The Council is committed to tackling fuel poverty and cold related illnesses, which affect our most vulnerable residents. An overwhelming majority of responses to the consultation supported the Council’s plans to take advantage of available funding to improve the energy efficiency of homes. We will develop an energy efficiency programme through the government’s Green Deal and ECO schemes that will secure investment to improve some of the more difficult and costly to treat homes for, in particular, low income, vulnerable households at risk of fuel poverty.

Our programme will have a two-pronged approach. In the next 12-18 months we will work with partners, including energy companies, to secure ECO funding to improve the energy efficiency of hard-to-treat Council homes with an eventual aim to deliver wider area based ECO retrofit projects in mixed tenure communities. Our housing stock modelling assessment will identify areas in the borough where there are significant opportunities for retrofitting based on how much households could benefit from energy-saving measures and their eligibility for ECO funding.

As the Green Deal market matures over the next years we will explore the possibility of working with one or more Green Deal Providers to best benefit Hounslow residents. The Council successfully secured funding from the Department of Energy and Climate Change to establish early demand for the Green Deal by delivering free Green Deal home energy assessments and whole house retrofits. The project has been used to trial area based promotion of the Green Deal and will inform our long-term approach to delivering Green Deal in Hounslow.

We will ensure that all private sector landlords in the borough are aware of their obligations under the Energy Act 2011, to ensure that they approve all reasonable requests from their tenants for energy efficiency improvements after April 2016 and that all private rented homes meet the minimum energy efficiency standard of EPC rating E by April 2018. This will be achieved through encouraging them to take advantage of the maximum package of measures afforded by Green Deal and ECO funding.

In addition, we will use our grant fund from the Department of Health for a Warm Homes, Healthy People Initiative to provide funding for heating to vulnerable households; through community groups, promote behaviour change (e.g. dressing warm) to reduce risk; and train those who work with vulnerable groups (e.g. voluntary organisations, West Middlesex Hospital, Community Health, Adults and Children’s services) to recognise fuel poverty and to alert residents to available support.

We will continue to ensure that fuel poverty initiatives are effectively targeted to those households in most need by developing links and working closely with a range of health professionals, particularly NHS staff, who visit residents in their
homes. Part of the partnership work will be to raise awareness of fuel poverty issues and develop referral networks so that those residents most at risk are identified early and are referred for help. For two consecutive winters we have received Department of Heath funding to lead a winter warmth campaign. Through this we have delivered energy efficiency training for voluntary groups and frontline staff, a winter outreach fund for community groups and a winter handyperson scheme. These schemes benefited over 300 vulnerable residents during the winters of 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Objective 5 – Action Plan
To create a cleaner, safer and greener living environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Key activity</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Key Performance measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Increase the energy efficiency of council homes, through use of Green Deal and ECO schemes</td>
<td>Annual review of performance targets</td>
<td>Head of Private Sector Housing</td>
<td>Average Energy Performance Certificate rating of council homes (rated A to G, A is best and D average. 2013 benchmark for a sample of council properties is EPC band C) Number of council homes improved through government schemes (options paper submitted to CLT November 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Reduce crime and antisocial behaviour on council housing estates</td>
<td>Annual review of performance targets</td>
<td>Head of Projects and Partnerships</td>
<td>Percentage reduction in antisocial behaviour incidents on council estates (target 10% per year, from 2012/13 baseline of 1649) Percentage reduction in drug incidents on council estates (target 10% per year, from 2012/13 baseline of 962) Percentage reduction in environmental incidents on council estates (target 10% per year, from 2012/13 baseline of 727) Increase the percentage of residents who believe ASB and crime has been dealt with effectively on their estate over the previous 12 months (2014 benchmark to be established, expected to reduce year on year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Ensure that private sector landlords are aware of their obligations and improve their properties as per the Energy Act 2011</td>
<td>Landlords must approve all reasonable requests for energy efficiency improvements by their tenants, by 2016 All private rented sector accommodation must meet the minimum energy efficiency standard of EPC rating E, by 2018</td>
<td>Head of Private Sector Housing</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementing our housing strategy

This housing strategy has been developed in consultation with our residents and partner organisations. We have presented and discussed our proposals and approach with a range of different groups including:

- Ward Area Forums
- The General Public, through workshops
- Residents and tenants associations (including sheltered)
- Registered Providers
- Developers
- The Local Service Partnership
- Voluntary Sector Organisations that work with Hounslow residents
- Internal council stakeholders that will support cross cutting themes

An active and responsive document

The final draft of this strategy was approved by the Council’s cabinet on 3 December, 2013. We want this strategy to be an active and responsive document that keeps up with national and local changes in policy and demand for services. To this end, we will continue to work and engage with our key partners on the implementation of our strategy action plan.

Monitoring our Strategy

We will develop an annual update review of our strategy from January 2014. Progress updates will be presented to key forums such as the Tenants, Leaseholders and Sheltered resident groups as well as our members and internal senior management teams. This will set out the progress made in implementing the action plans under each objective also ensuring that we keep up to date with changes in housing policy and demand.

Resourcing the Strategy

The Council’s Housing Strategy 2014-2018 has been developed in a very challenging financial context for the local authority. We continue to work in difficult circumstances implementing a range of measures to reduce overall expenditure and improve value for money, including re-evaluating priorities, restructuring services, and sharing some services with other authorities.

This Strategy aims to set realistic objectives and priorities which will be delivered within available resources and in conjunction with a range of partners. Implementation will be funded through a combination of revenue resources allocated to housing-related issues from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Council’s General fund, Supporting People grant fund, Greater London Authority (GLA), national funding streams aimed at facilitating growth, including New Homes Bonus. We will also take up opportunities to bid for other relevant grant opportunities as these become available and that will help us further our objectives.

Feedback and Comments

All our efforts have been focused in developing a housing strategy that is informative and clearly sets out our plans for delivering new homes, meet housing need, prevent homelessness and provide excellent housing services going forward to 2018. However, if you have any queries concerning this strategy, or wish to discuss any of the issues it raises please contact the Housing Projects and Partnerships Team.

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