

# Housing Strategy Summary

2008-2012



# Contents

Introduction to the Housing Strategy	1
Borough Profile	2
Housing in Richmond upon Thames	3
Policy Context	4
More Affordable Homes	6
Better Quality & Greener Homes	7
Preventing Homelessness	8
Supporting Independent Living	9
Understanding & Influencing the Housing Market	
Promoting Housing Choice	
Creating Thriving Communities	

# Introduction to the Housing Strategy

## Background

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Housing Strategy sets out the borough's housing plans for the period 2008-2012. The strategy has been developed by reviewing national and regional policy as well as current thinking around best practice and improving performance. It also reflects the Council's and our partners' priorities outlined in the Corporate and Community Plans as well as the National Indicator Set and Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets. The Housing Strategy Evidence Base has also provided detailed local evidence on which the objectives and actions in this document have been based.

The Council's last Housing Strategy covered the period 2004-2007. Since this strategy was published there has been both continuity and change in the housing problems facing Richmond upon Thames. Whilst action taken so far around preventing homelessness and tackling poor house conditions has been successful they both still remain key issues facing the borough. Housing has also continued to become increasingly unaffordable.

However, there has also been increasing attention on newer issues such as greener homes and climate change, as well as a focus by the borough on 5 areas of relative deprivation, where residents experience poorer life chances compared to those living in more affluent parts of the borough. The impact on the housing market of the credit crunch and current challenging housing market conditions are also new issues.

## The strategy process

The strategy was developed via a review of national, regional, sub-regional and local policy and guidance. Best practice from sources such as the IDeA and Audit Commission were also reviewed. The Community and Corporate Plans and LAA targets also influenced the strategy objectives.

A Steering Group of Council officers, housing providers, representatives from the Private Landlords Forum and Ethnic Minority Action Group (EMAG) reviewed the evidence base, policy and best practice documents. From this starting point the group agreed the seven priorities that form the basis of the housing strategy:

- More Affordable Homes,
- Better Quality and Greener Homes,
- Preventing Homelessness,
- Supporting Independent Living,
- Understanding and Influencing the Housing Market,
- Promoting Housing Choice,
- Creating Thriving Communities.

## Cross cutting themes running through the Housing Strategy

Throughout the strategy process the Steering Group was asked to comment on any issues with regard to value for money, equalities and the impact of Self Directed Support (SDS). These 3 issues became cross cutting themes which we have tried to address throughout the strategy.

## Equalities

As part of the evidence base and key priorities we have tried to collect as much available housing data as possible, as well as views and research on potential equalities issues within the strategy. The black and minority ethnic (BME) registered social landlord (RSL) Inquilab, EMAG, the supported housing provider Hestia, Richmond's Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Forum and Race Equality Partnership were all involved in the development and consultation process for the Housing Strategy. An Equalities Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) was also developed for the Housing Strategy.

## Consultation and resident involvement

We consulted widely during the development of the Housing Strategy, seeking the views and opinions of community and voluntary organisations, departments within the council, external partners and residents via a range of methods including workshops, presentations, the Council website and a residents' version of the strategy.

# Borough Profile

## Overview

Richmond upon Thames covers an area of 5,095 hectares (14,591 acres) in South West London and is the only borough spanning both sides of the Thames. The largest town centre is Richmond, which is designated a major centre in the London Plan. The borough is characterized by large areas of open space including the Thames Landscape with 21.5 miles of river frontage and there are also 72 conservation areas and 1,100 listed buildings.

The borough has some of the highest house prices in Greater London with demand for housing far exceeding supply. The borough does however have 5 areas of relative deprivation, centred on social housing estates, where there are concentrations of less well off residents facing higher levels of unemployment, worklessness, lower skill levels and poorer physical and mental health. It should be stressed these are areas of relative disadvantage in comparison to the relative affluence that characterises the borough.

## Population and projections

Richmond has a population of 179,500 according to the revised mid-year estimates for 2006. The age profile of the borough is different to the national average, with a high proportion of people aged 30-44, a greater proportion aged 0-9 years and fewer people in the age groups 10-24 and 60-84.

Population projections show an increase to 185,621 by 2016 with the largest percentage increases in age groups 15-19, 65-69 and 90+. The greatest percentage decrease will be in 75-79 year olds which may reflect the current out migration of the older middle aged.

## Migration

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) estimate that during 2005-2006 12,700 people moved into the borough whilst 12,500 moved out. There are near equal flows for all age groups. Figures also suggest a slight decrease in the number of families with children and older people living in the borough during 2005-2006.

## Movement into and within the borough

It is estimated that 25% of households in the borough have moved home during the last 2 years. The majority of these were moves from existing households rather than newly formed households.

## Household composition

The largest household groups are: single non pensioners (21%), pensioner households (20%), couples with children (20%) and couples without children (18%).

## Ethnicity

The majority of residents, 79%, have a White British ethnic background. The borough has a higher proportion of non British White residents (notably White Others) compared to England and to a lesser extent, London. A further 9% of households in Richmond have a non White ethnic background which is similar to England but below the London average.

## Household income

Richmond has an average household income of £46,415 which is the second highest in Greater London with only the City of London (on £51,544) having higher average income levels. Owner occupiers have the highest income followed by private renters then housing association tenants.

## The economy in Richmond upon Thames

Analysis of the economy in Richmond has found that the borough has an above the UK average economy, but smaller than the Greater London average. The borough is also ranked number one in London and eighth nationally on the level of residents with high skills and qualifications

## Employment

Unemployment is also well below the national rate, at under 1% in September 2007. Levels of the workforce occupation groups, managers and senior officials, professional occupations and associate professionals and technicians are all above the Greater London average.

# Housing in Richmond upon Thames

The housing stock of Richmond upon Thames is largely made up of terraced houses (28%), semi-detached houses (25%) and purpose built flats (25%). Flat conversions (11%) and detached houses (9%) make up the other largest types of housing stock. There is wide variation at ward level in the type of housing stock with some wards exhibiting high levels of semi-detached, terraced or purpose built flats with some wards contrastingly having very low levels.

## The Owner Occupied Sector

Owner occupation is the dominant tenure in the borough with at least 69% of households being owner occupiers. Levels of owner occupation are higher than the Greater London average and similar to levels found in England.

### The cost of owner occupation

The average cost of housing in the borough is significantly higher than that found in England and Wales with the greatest price differentials found in 3 bed and 4 bed houses. Comparing the prices of 4 bedroom houses across Greater London, Richmond is ranked the seventh most expensive borough in the capital to buy in.

### Owner occupied households

Fordham (2007) estimate that 42% of owner occupiers in the borough have no mortgage on their property. The largest group of households who own their own home are pensioners (43%). There are significant numbers of non pensioner couples (32%) and single non pensioners (14%) who own their property without a mortgage. This reflects both the high number of pensioner households, and the relative affluence of many owner occupier households.

## The Private Rented Sector

### Distribution of private rented housing in the borough

Private rented households make up nearly 17% of households in the borough which is similar to the Greater London average. There is a

large private rented sector in many parts of the borough including Twickenham Riverside, South Richmond, Kew, St Margarets & North Twickenham and Barnes. Some of the most affordable areas to rent or buy property in the borough have the lowest levels of private renting available.

### Cost of private renting

The average monthly rental prices are £820 for a studio flat, £950 for a 1 bedroom flat, £1,190 for a 2 bedroom flat, £1,500 for a 3 bedroom flat and £2,150 for a 4 bedroom house. There are few properties available for the minimum rent levels found.

### Private rented household type

Fordham's survey (2007) estimates that the majority of households are comprised of 2 or more adults (non pensioner) at 44%, 1 person adults (non pensioner) at 26%, 22% are households with children and 8% are pensioner households.

## The Housing Association Sector

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames has the fourth smallest social rented sector in Greater London, amounting to nearly 12% of the borough's households renting their home from a housing association. The borough went through a large scale voluntary transfer of its stock in 2000 with Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) now forming the largest housing association in the borough.

The Regulatory Statistical Return (RSR) 2007 recorded 8,267 general need units owned by housing associations in Richmond. Richmond Housing Partnership and Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust (RuTCHT) own 84% of all general needs units in the borough.

There are a total of 387 housing association supported housing units in the borough and 1,059 older people's housing units.

There are 445 shared ownership units in the borough with the largest providers being Richmond Churches Housing Trust and Thames Valley Housing Association.

# Policy Context

## Background

Many housing issues outlined by central Government and regional policy makers are also key issues for the borough. Affordability and poor house conditions are relevant issues that could be discussed at national, regional and local levels. The Government's housing policy and related statutory guidance, initiatives and funding streams all impact at a local level. Similarly the borough sits within the Greater London Authority (GLA) with their own planning and housing strategic aims, initiatives and key funding streams. The London Borough of Richmond's Housing Strategy therefore needs to be contextualised within a national and regional policy context.

The housing strategy is also influenced at a local level by the Council's and its key strategic partners' vision and objectives as set out in the Community Plan (2007-2017) and Local Area Agreement (LAA). The Corporate Plan 2008-2011 also guides the strategy in terms of setting out the Council's ambitions and goals.

## National Policy Overview

In **Sustainable Communities; Homes for All (2005)** the Government set out its plans to reduce numbers in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010 as well as promoting the prevention of homelessness. More detail regarding homelessness especially around prevention, supporting vulnerable households and promoting a housing options approach was outlined in **Sustainable Communities; Settled Homes, Changing Lives (2005)**.

The Government's **Decent Homes Agenda** focuses on improving house conditions in the social housing sector and for vulnerable people residing in the private sector. The Government set targets that all social housing meet the Decent Homes standard by 2010 and that 70% of vulnerable households living in the private sector reside in decent homes. The **Housing Act 2004** came into force in 2006 and introduced a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) as a way to assess housing conditions instead of the previous measure of 'unfitness'. Local authorities have

responsibilities to monitor house conditions in the private sector under the HHSRS. In **Building a Greener Future: Policy Statement (2007)** and again in **Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable (2007)** the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) outline their policy objectives around greener homes, such as reducing carbon emissions and increasing energy efficiency.

The **Housing Green Paper 'Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable' (2007)** recognises the need to increase the number of new homes in order to meet the rising demand for housing. This also includes a commitment to increase funding of affordable housing, with a target of 45,000 new affordable homes for rent each year by 2010/11. Other issues outlined include the need for housing and neighbourhood design to reflect the needs of society; meeting the needs of an ageing population, creating more family sized homes, ensuring adequate outdoor play spaces and ensuring housing is accessible for wheelchair users.

In the **Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' (2006)** the Government outlined its 'place shaping' agenda. This proposed strengthening the role of local authorities as strategic leaders and as place shapers. It also outlined the need for local authorities to offer services responsive to local needs via Local Area Agreements, to provide efficient services and the need to empower communities to engage in shaping local services.

The **Cave Review (2007)** made recommendations to develop a new regulator for social housing and this was implemented in the **Housing and Regeneration Act 2008** which set up the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and a new independent regulator for social housing, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

The **Hills Review (2007)** found that nearly half of all working age households in social housing were workless, twice the national rate. It also found social housing tenants were less mobile and often lived in areas dominated by social housing and with poor income mix.

The Government outlined its plans for local authorities to prioritise and address overcrowding issues and reduce severe overcrowding in **Tackling Overcrowding, An Action Plan (2007)**. CLG have also

funded all London boroughs as 'Pathfinder' authorities to tackle overcrowding; with boroughs working with a toolkit to identify potential actions to reduce overcrowding in their authority.

The **Crime and Disorder Act 2008** requires local authorities and the Police to work together to reduce crime in their areas and to carry out a strategic assessment or audit of crime in their authority.

## Regional Policy Overview

### The Mayor's housing priorities

The Mayor's priorities on affordable homes include a target of 50,000 new affordable homes to be delivered by 2011. He will also scrap the requirement that 50% of all new housing developments in London are affordable, working with boroughs to negotiate agreed delivery targets instead. The Mayor is likely to put greater emphasis on intermediate housing to help Londoners onto the property ladder, focus on empty homes with an audit of empty properties and increased targets and outline environmental issues such as protecting historic views and back gardens (from development) and ensuring all new homes meet Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes by 2010 and Level 6 by 2016.

### Planning for a Better London (2008)

In June 2008 the Mayor outlined his proposals around planning issues in 'Planning for a Better London'. This suggests a more outcome focused and consensual approach to working with London boroughs, with planning policy focused on both inner and outer London. The document includes plans to work with boroughs to increase housing supply, improve standards and quality, protect back gardens from development and encourage Lifetime Homes and housing for disabled and older people.

In November 2008 the Mayor published a Draft Housing Strategy for consultation with the GLA/Statutory Bodies. A further draft version for wider consultation will be available in spring 2009 with a final strategy document available in autumn 2009.

## Sub Regional Policy Context

The South West London Housing Partnership (SWLHP) was formed in 2003 in response to the Government's new approach to the allocation of housing resources. It forms one of 5 London sub regions. Since 2003 the remit of the partnership has widened considerably with members regularly meeting on a number of housing and homelessness issues. The partnerships priorities are;

- to make the most of the supply of housing;
- to meet housing needs;
- to improve housing conditions;
- to tackle deprivation and build communities; and
- to be an effective Partnership.

## Local Policy Context

The Housing Strategy is influenced by and linked to key local policy agendas and strategies. It links to the **Community Plan 2007-2017**, **Corporate Plan 2008-2011** and a number of other plans, needs assessments and strategies such as the **Older People's Supported Accommodation Review (2008)** and the **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) (2008)**.

The Housing Strategy outlines the borough's response to the key housing issues affecting the area. It links upwards to the Community Plan but also links downwards to a number of **detailed housing plans and strategies**. In effect the Housing Strategy 2008-2012 acts as an overarching 'umbrella' to these other housing plans. To date these include the **Older People's Supported Accommodation Review (2008)**, **Homelessness Strategy 2008-2012**, **Young People's Housing Strategy 2008-2012** and **Teenage Parents' Supported Housing Strategy 2008-2012**. The forthcoming **Local Area Agreement Delivery Plan** will outline the borough's plans to deliver the affordable homes targets outlined in the LAA.

# More Affordable Homes

## Background

The need for more homes, especially affordable homes has become increasingly important as more and more households are unable to afford to buy or rent at market prices. Lack of affordable homes can increase overcrowding, lead to longer stays in temporary accommodation and impacts negatively on communities with only those with the highest incomes able to rent or buy.

## National and Regional Policy Context

The Government has recognised the need to increase the number of new homes in order to meet the rising demand for housing, including a commitment to increase funding of affordable housing. A target has been set of 45,000 new affordable homes for rent each year by 2010/11 and local authorities should also ensure that they use housing and planning powers in a co-ordinated way to maximise the delivery of affordable homes.

The new Mayor's Housing Priorities outline plans to deliver 50,000 new affordable homes in London, promotion of more intermediate housing developments, encourages more family sized homes and takes a more flexible approach to borough affordable housing targets.

## Local Policy Context

Richmond's Community Plan highlights the issue of affordability in the borough and the shortage of affordable homes. Key actions include, increasing the level of affordable homes in new developments from 40% to 50%, prioritising 2 and 3 bed properties for social housing development and more supported housing.

The Local Development Framework sets out the requirements for affordable housing including tenure mix and the need for larger family sized social rented units.

The Local Area Agreement Delivery Plan outlines the borough's plans to deliver the affordable homes targets and includes actions based around reviewing opportunities to identify land and liaison and partnership working with Registered Social Landlords.

## What We Know

The borough faces a shortfall in affordable housing, with the recent Local Housing Assessment finding higher levels of need for affordable homes than the typical levels found in inner or outer London. Richmond upon Thames also has one of the smallest social rented sectors of any London borough with which to meet housing need.

The existing housing association stock profile of predominantly smaller units, low turnover of larger social housing dwellings and the needs of homeless households and transfer applicants all drive the need for larger affordable properties.

The development of affordable housing in Richmond upon Thames also faces unique challenges due to the limited availability of large sites/reliance on small sites, protected green spaces, conservation areas and some of the highest land values in the capital.

## Key Objectives

1. To maximize the development of new affordable homes in the borough.
2. To promote more affordable family sized accommodation.
3. Reinforce and further develop existing strong links between housing and planning, to support affordable housing delivery.
4. Maximise opportunities to deliver affordable housing through partnership working with external stakeholders and maximise existing housing supply.

# Better Quality & Greener Homes

## Background

Poor living conditions can greatly impact on the physical and mental health and well-being of residents, with cold housing and damp and mould in the home being linked to coughs, wheezing and respiratory diseases. Housing quality also has a wider impact on communities; with good sustainable design having many positive benefits including reduction in fuel bills through improving the energy efficiency of homes and possible reductions in opportunities for crime and the fear of crime in an area.

## National and Regional Policy Context

The Government seeks to improve housing conditions by a number of means, including the Decent Homes programme for social rented housing and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to assess housing conditions and potential hazards. The Government has also outlined the need to apply the Lifetime Homes standard which incorporates design features to make homes functional for everyone.

Government housing policy has a strong emphasis on securing a reduction in emissions via energy efficiency and new building regulations and from October 2008 private landlords will be required to provide energy efficiency certificates to all new tenants letting their properties. Guidance on Housing Design comes from a range of sources such as the Building for Life standard, The London Plan and Secure by Design principles.

## Local Policy Context

Sustainability and a greener Richmond are key priorities of the Council with development of a Climate Change Strategy in 2008 and the 'Community Plan 2007 to 2017' including the priority to "be the greenest borough in London". Actions include improving the energy performance of existing buildings, tackling climate change and ensuring new housing development is to a high environmental standard. There are several Planning documents which all promote

'Better Quality and Greener Homes' the key document being the 'Design Quality: Supplementary Planning Document' (2006) which highlights the importance of good quality design. The 'Local Development Framework Core Strategy' is currently in development.

## What We Know

With a large owner occupied and private rented sector poor house conditions are a key housing issue affecting the borough. The local authority is responsible for enforcing the HHSRS in the borough and in 2006 it was reported that 26% of properties in the borough failed due to 'thermal comfort', which can mean excess cold.

The Residential Services Team and Home Improvement Agency assisted 108 vulnerable households in making their homes decent in 2006/07. The 2 largest RSLs in the borough have significantly reduced non decent properties in the borough and are in general meeting the Decent Homes standard.

The 2006 Building Research Establishment (BRE) report estimated that households living in 6% of the borough's properties suffer from fuel poverty. However, there has been an estimated 16% improvement in energy efficiency across all tenures in the borough between 1996 and 2007.

## Key Objectives

1. Improve the quality of existing homes, especially amongst the most vulnerable.
2. Support landlords to improve quality.
3. Target intervention to tackle the worst circumstances in the private sector.
4. Improve energy efficiency and sustainability within existing homes.
5. Promote good quality sustainable design which is inclusive, helps lower crime and promotes greener homes.
6. Maintain strong partnership working on public and private sector housing issues

# Preventing Homelessness

## Background

Homelessness is the most acute aspect of housing shortage and affects many people. It compounds social exclusion, affects the life chances of families and individuals and can make it difficult to access health services, education and training. Richmond upon Thames' main Homelessness Strategy 2008-2012 should also be referred to for full details of objectives and actions to tackle homelessness.

## National and Regional Policy Context

The Government has sought to reduce homelessness in a number of ways including prevention measures such as mediation services, promotion of housing options, partnership working, tackling wider causes and providing more settled homes. There is also a commitment to reduce levels of rough sleeping to as close to zero as possible.

Local authorities are required to carry out a review of homelessness in their locality and publish a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness. Registered Social Landlords should also work closely with local authorities to address homelessness.

Measures to tackle youth homelessness include improved mediation services and a commitment to end the use of bed and breakfast for 16 and 17 year olds. Changes in the Homelessness Act 2002 mean that 16 and 17 year old homeless young people and 18-21 year old 'relevant' care leavers come under priority need categories.

## Local Policy Context

The Community Plan's priority of "tackling disadvantage" outlines key housing and homelessness issues facing the borough. The Corporate Plan 2008-2011 priority of "Promoting the health, housing and wellbeing of all residents" contains key actions around reducing numbers in temporary accommodation and ensuring service users are supported to maintain independent living.

## What We Know

In the year to March 2004 316 households were deemed unintentionally homeless and in priority need this dropped to 152 cases by 2006/07.

Richmond has made significant progress towards the Government's target to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010. In December 2004 508 households were in temporary accommodation and by December 2007 the figure was 290, a 43% reduction.

For the period 2004/05 to 2006/07 the main reasons for homelessness were parents no longer willing to accommodate followed by termination of an assured shorthold tenancy and breakdown of a violent relationship, with 44% of accepted households having dependent children. In 2006/07 111 households in Richmond were assisted via the Rent Deposit Schemes run by the Council and SPEAR.

## Key Objectives

1. Prevent homelessness.
2. Promote greater housing opportunities in the private rented sector.
3. Provide good quality and suitable temporary accommodation.
4. Reduce homelessness amongst young people.
5. Ensure that support services are available to enable people where possible to live independently.
6. Secure access to permanent housing for homeless households.
7. Promote effective partnership working.

# Supporting Independent Living

## Background

The provision of support has a great impact on people's lives and the choices they can make about where they live. It can help an older person remain in their own home or maintain their independence within sheltered housing, it can help young people learn the life skills necessary to maintain a tenancy or provide accommodation choice (with support when required) for people with learning disabilities.

The Homelessness Strategy, Young People's Housing Strategy and Teenage Parents' Supported Housing Strategy should also be referred to for further objectives and actions.

## National and Regional Policy Context

The Supporting People (SP) programme was launched in 2003 to provide long or short term housing related support, to a wide range of clients, allowing them to live independently in their accommodation. SP funding will be de-ring fenced from April 2009 and therefore better working between all agencies involved in supported living will be required.

The Government has highlighted that today's homes and communities are not designed to meet people needs as they grow older. Housing policies that cater for active ageing and independence are needed, whilst the housing market should cater for older people's needs and aspirations.

Outcomes for children in care should be transformed by ensuring young people leaving care have planned access to a range of options to provide them with future accommodation and support and people with learning disabilities should have more choice around supported housing, improved information on housing options and a person centred approach to care.

## Local Policy Context

There are a wide range of council plans, strategies and policies which address the future needs of client groups who require support. This strategy will seek to support these documents and deliver the housing and housing related actions they include.

## Key Findings from the Evidence Base

Fordham's survey (2007) estimates that there are 8,228 households in the borough with support needs. Of this, 50% contain older people within them. The largest groups of households with support needs are those with a physical disability, or mental health problem, or are frail elderly.

The introduction of Self Directed Support and individual budgets may see an increased need in floating support and short term housing support services and the borough will need to consider the impact on supported and sheltered housing and their providers.

Domestic abuse caused 14% of all homeless cases in 2004/05 to 2006/07 and support can include refuge accommodation or floating support. Although Richmond has low reported cases it is believed that there is significant under reporting.

The borough has seen increased numbers of young people receiving a leaving care service as a result of the Hillingdon judgement – with an increasing proportion of leaving care clients who are asylum seekers.

## Key Objectives

1. Support older people to live independently.
2. Support young people to live independently.
3. Increasing housing opportunities for people with learning disabilities.
4. Understanding and addressing the needs of supported housing client groups.

# Understanding & Influencing the Housing Market

## Background

A local authority's Housing Strategy needs to be able to understand the local housing market, identify problems that exist in the housing market and take steps to address these problems. In Richmond the evidence base highlights the major issue of affordability as well as overcrowding, long term empty properties, and management issues in the private rented sector.

## National and Regional Policy Context

The Government expects local authorities to assess and plan for the housing needs of the population and tackle housing issues in the area. Housing Strategies act as levers for social and economic change; ensuring local housing markets meet local demands.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) sets out the Government's policy framework for planning and the need for a robust evidence base and development of a strategic housing market assessment.

House price increases have led to some key workers being unable to live where they work, with possible recruitment and retention difficulties which may affect delivery of key public services. First time buyers have found it increasingly difficult to enter the housing market and the ability to move to a larger property, such as when starting a family, has also been affected.

Overcrowding can impact on physical and mental health and educational outcomes and is linked to under occupation. The issue of long term empty properties must also be addressed and the new Mayor of London intends to increase funding in this area.

## Local Policy Context

The Community Plan 2007-2017 highlights the issue of affordability affecting residents and the Corporate Plan includes a priority to

promote the "Health, Housing and Wellbeing of All Residents" and provide more affordable local housing and supported housing options.

The Council has a legal responsibility to licence and monitor Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the borough and is also working to promote good practice to landlords.

## What We Know

The average cost of housing in the borough is significantly higher than that found in England and Wales and affordability in the private rented sector is also a key housing issue facing the borough.

The housing register records 'needing more room' as the number one reason for requesting re-housing, lone parent households have the highest rates of overcrowding and the majority of overcrowded households are in the social rented sector. Black and minority ethnic households are disproportionately affected by overcrowding.

HMOs are pepper-potted throughout the borough and those needing licences will be targeted by the council

## Key Objectives

1. Developing our strategic understanding of the housing market.
2. Tackling affordability issues in the private rented sector.
3. Enabling households to get on the property ladder and improving their position within the housing market.
4. Reducing the number of long term empty properties.
5. Monitor conditions and management in HMOs and promote good practice.
6. Reduce overcrowding and tackle under occupation in the housing association sector.

# Promoting Housing Choice

## Background

Information about housing options can allow key workers to get a foot on the property ladder, older people to find out about opportunities to move, and assistance to move within the private rented sector. Choices available to housing association tenants, such as the Seaside and Country Homes Scheme, also provide positive benefits for both individuals and wider communities.

## National and Regional Policy Context

Government policy for increasing choice to social housing tenants proposes that by 2010 all local authorities and housing associations participate in choice based lettings.

The Government has outlined plans for local authorities to offer a housing options approach promoting options such as shared ownership, low cost home ownership and private renting as potential solutions to housing need. Following this has been the 'enhanced housing options' approach looking at wider issues such as worklessness alongside housing need.

As people become older information and advice on housing and support issues, such as home maintenance, adaptations or care within the home are important to maintain independence and find housing solutions.

Key housing issues for people with learning disabilities (PLD) are to offer better information about housing options, improved housing choice and greater choice around support options.

## Local Policy Context

The Community Plan highlights the issue of key worker affordability and the need to ensure this does not impact on local services.

Richmond has set out proposals to improve the range of accommodation options for people with learning disabilities, improve

information and promote shared ownership opportunities in the Housing and Support Plan for People with Learning Disabilities 2007-2010.

## Key Findings from the Housing Strategy Evidence Base

There are a large number of applicants on the Housing Register, limited amounts of re-lets of housing association properties and small amounts of new affordable housing developed each year so there is a clear mismatch between demand and supply. Due to the Council's legal obligations to re-house certain homeless households and provide housing for vulnerable groups only households in the most pressing housing need gain housing association properties.

Enabling access into, and mobility within, the private rented sector can provide an immediate housing solution and offer a greater choice of location to applicants. In 2006/07 80 households were helped to move or renew their tenancy via rent deposit schemes.

There were 22 Sponsored Moves in 2007/08 which provided incentives for under occupying housing association tenants to move to smaller accommodation and free up larger properties.

Intermediate housing is an important housing option for those who cannot afford to buy or rent at market levels. In Richmond upon Thames the majority of applications are from individuals and many applicants have previously been renting privately.

## Key Objectives

1. Deliver the Housing Register in conjunction with our housing association partners.
2. Promote and enable housing options in the borough.
3. Promote intermediate housing to borough residents.
4. Enable greater mobility within the housing association sector.
5. Increase choice for Housing Register applicants.

# Creating Thriving Communities

## Background

Places where people want to live and work are characterised by good quality housing and amenities, access to green spaces, good transport links, free from anti social behaviour and crime. Richmond upon Thames is a borough which benefits from large green open spaces, low crime, high levels of amenities and affluent communities. However, there are also 5 small areas of the borough where households are relatively deprived in comparison.

## National and Regional Policy Context

The Government 'place shaping' agenda looks to local authorities to be strategic leaders of the community, offering services which are efficient and responsive to local needs, as well as empowering communities to engage in shaping local services. This builds on Government policy objectives to create 'sustainable communities' which are cleaner, safer and greener and health priorities aimed at tackling inequalities and engaging people in looking after their own health. Key issues that affect exclusion in the community also need to be addressed including financial inclusion and worklessness.

Local Authorities must take account of Section 225 of the Housing Act 2004 which requires local authorities to carry out assessments of the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers in their area.

Measures that should be taken to address crime and anti social behaviour include designing out crime, reducing re-offending and early intervention and use of the Respect standard by Registered Social Landlords.

## Local Policy Context

The borough is committed to addressing disadvantage in the 5 areas of relative deprivation with both the Community Plan 2007-2017 and Corporate Plan 2007-2010 including priorities which work towards this aim and this work is continued by the Local Strategic

Partnership and Richmond Housing Partnership's Community Development Strategy.

Many of the Local Development Framework's (LDF) policies are about creating thriving communities and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Plan 2008-2011 outlines its vision that "Richmond is the safest borough in the capital and that people feel that this is the safest borough".

## What We Know

As highlighted in Richmond's 'The State of the Borough Report' (2007) the economy in the borough is about average for London, underpinned by knowledge driven jobs, with below average unemployment and a working age population with high skills and qualifications.

Crime levels in Richmond upon Thames are lower than that found in Greater London. The CSP Strategic Assessment (2007) highlights the top 4 problems identified by residents; people being drunk and rowdy in public places, teenagers hanging around on streets, vandalism/graffiti and deliberate damage to property/vehicles, and rubbish and litter.

Health outcomes are generally good in comparison to Greater London with low levels of incapacity benefit. Richmond also has higher levels of healthy eating, lower levels of obese adults, and lower rates of smoking in comparison to English averages. The Health Profile of the borough (2008) does however raise the issue of health inequalities by area, deprivation, gender and ethnicity. The borough also has the lowest proportion of households claiming housing benefit in London but worklessness remains a key issue affecting social housing tenants.

## Key Objectives

1. Creating thriving communities.
2. Addressing anti social behaviour.
3. Promoting financial inclusion and tackling worklessness.

## Albanian

Nese keni veshtersi per te kuptuar kete botim, ju lutemi ejani ne receptionin ne adresen e shenuar me poshte ku ne mund te organizojme perkthime nepermjet telefonit.

## Arabic

إذا كانت لديك صعوبة في فهم هذا المنشور، فنرجو زيارة الإستقبال في العنوان المعطى أدناه حيث بإمكاننا أن نرتب لخدمة ترجمة شفوية هاتفية.

## Bengali

এই প্রকাশনার অর্থ বুঝতে পারায় যদি আপনার কোন সমস্যা হয়, নিচে দেওয়া ঠিকানায় রিসেপশন-এ চলে আসুন যেখানে আমরা আপনাকে টেলিফোনে দোভাষীর সেবা প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা করতে পারবো।

## Farsi

اگر در فهمیدن این نشریه مشکلی دارید لطفاً به میز پذیرش در آدرس قید شده در زیر مراجعه نمایید تا ترتیب ترجمه تلفنی برایتان فراهم آورده شود:

## Gujurati

જો તમને આ પુસ્તિકાની વિગતો સમજવામાં મુશ્કેલી પડતી હોય તો, કૃપયા નીચે જણાવેલ સ્થળના રિસેપ્શન પર આવો, જ્યાં અમે ટેલિફોન પર ગુજરાતીમાં ઈન્ટરપ્રિટીંગ સેવાની ગોઠવણ કરી આપીશું.

## Polish

Jeżeli masz trudności ze zrozumieniem tej publikacji, proszę pójść do recepcji (adres jest podany poniżej), gdzie możemy zorganizować tłumaczenie przez telefon.

## Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਪਰਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਪੇਸ਼ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਪਤੇ ਉੱਪਰ ਰਿਸੈਪਸ਼ਨ 'ਤੇ ਆਓ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਤੇ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰਿਟਰ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

## Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس اشاعت کو سمجھنے میں کوئی مشکل ہے تو، براہ کرم نیچے دیے ہوئے ایڈریس کے استقبال پر جا کر ملیئے، جہاں ہم آپ کیلئے ٹیلیفون انٹریٹنگ سروس (ٹیلیفون پر ترجمانی کی سروس) کا انتظام کر سکتے ہیں۔

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