

# Housing Services

## Vision and Team Commitments

# Ambition

Excellent services, shaped and valued  
by our communities



## Housing Ambition Plan 8 2017-2018

Getting closer to the customer

# Our achievements in 2016/17

## Be the housing provider/enabler of choice with a strong recognised brand both within and outside Harrow

- Successful completion of 11 procurement exercises to strengthen the repairs service and embed service improvements for next few years
- Agreed challenging but achievable savings targets of £1million, in consultation with customers across the service (HRA capital, revenue and GF) for 2017/18
- Progressed commercialisation projects including Handyperson and Kitchen pilot alongside social value initiatives, in consultation with residents that deliver services we would otherwise be unable to deliver due to budget pressures
- Five year capital programme approved with early commissioning of 2017/18 programme
- Twelve properties recovered via Housing Tenancy and RTB fraud before the end of the year target of 10 and first Unlawful profit order obtained under tenancy fraud for Harrow
- Completion and launch of new Resident Services Handbook, Service Standards and Leasehold Handbook in consultation with service users. Promotion and use of all on the Housing Portal
- Six Estate Action Events completed
- An IT health check carried out and an upgrade to the main Northgate housing IT system
- Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction surveys commissioned and using the results to inform service delivery
- Launched the housing portal, encouraging more residents to sign up and access data 24/7 and running 3 day digital workshops in sheltered blocks attended by tenants

## Have a strong pipeline of new housing development so that council stock numbers are growing annually

- Good progress on first new build council homes in a generation – 11 homes on site with first completions due Q1 2017/18, 39 with planning permission due on site in Q1 2017/18

## Deliver a mixed tenure house building programme through a range of delivery models and partnerships

- Good progress on the purchase of 150 homes – 57 completed/exchanged of which 38 are let, with a further 33 offers accepted

## Offer housing solutions for all Harrow residents with a housing need

- Significantly reduced the number of families in B&B, especially those in shared B&B longer than 6 weeks
- Vetted fewer court challenges as a proportion of the number of review cases, and generally successfully defended those cases when they do go to court
- Successfully established the Resettlement Team to assist and support families to be able to move to better accommodation outside London.

# Ambition

Excellent services, shaped and valued by our communities

## By 2020

- Be the housing provider/enabler of choice with a strong recognised brand both within and outside Harrow
- We aspire to all services within our control being comparable with the best
- Deliver an excellent housing service within financial constraints, offering value for money and demonstrating best practice
- Have a strong pipeline of new housing development and a mixed tenure house building programme delivered through a range of delivery models and partnerships
- Offer housing solutions for all Harrow residents with a housing need in spite of continuing homelessness pressures



Construction of four, four-bed affordable homes at Chenduit Way, one of our infill sites

# Ambition

## Forward look to 2017/18

We will be reviewing our housing strategy to take account of the changing housing policy and financial landscape. This will include:

- Lobbying government about the revenue and capital position of the HRA in order to continue our development, acquisition and service delivery programmes
- Looking at new delivery vehicles for housing
- Consulting residents on reviewing housing strategies to take account of supported housing priorities, Homelessness Reduction Bill, Mayor's London Housing Strategy and other changes
- Reviewing services to achieve efficiencies, make savings, increase income and ensure viability of the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund business plans

## Actions proposed

1. In 2017/18 we will have reviewed the service to achieve efficiencies; this is to ensure the viability of the HRA business plan and embed new ways of working to achieve required savings in this year
2. Complete a review of the suite of housing strategies to ensure our objectives are clear, resourced and take account of latest policy
3. Work with residents to implement the new resident involvement arrangements, supporting the Residents' Board, the task groups and capturing and using feedback to inform service decisions
4. Implement a range of IT improvements to benefit customers and staff e.g. leasehold module and Northgate enhancements
5. Develop opportunities to commercialise services, without detriment to core and critical services, alongside exploring all opportunities to deliver savings across all service budgets



# Actions proposed cont.

6. Through individual plans, support customers to take appropriate steps to find or keep a suitable home and understand that there is insufficient accommodation in Harrow
7. Deliver and promote an improved customer focused and value for money service by actively listening and including our tenants and leaseholders on our journey
8. Deliver a range of options that make best use of the housing stock across all tenures
9. Complete the first new build council homes in a generation and identify new funding opportunities to keep a rolling new build programme in place
10. Improve the quality of homes and the external environment by ensuring we deliver the service to standards agreed in partnership with our customers; support the green and prevention agendas and achieve excellence in customer service and value for money
11. Develop and deliver our digital agenda to allow our customers to access a flexible service whilst maintaining traditional methods for those unable to go digital
12. Position ourselves to tackle the impact of Universal Credit to ensure customers are aware of the impact and our tenants sustain their tenancies.

Our two newest caretakers plus our apprentice with a resident at Grange Farm British Spring Clean up day



# Budget overview 2017/18

## Housing General Fund

Housing General Fund services comprise Housing Needs, Business Development and Transformation, Regeneration, Assets and New Supply, Resident Services (i.e. care staff at Watkins House), Travellers' Site and Other General Fund Services, as well as administration of Disabled Facilities Grants and the Handy person service.

The teams are responsible for providing advice to prevent homelessness, which has seen some improvement in controlling growth over the past year, and assisting individuals and families to obtain emergency and temporary accommodation in the private sector. Other areas of work include developing, co-ordinating, and implementing the Council's strategic direction for Housing, which will be a key growth area over the coming years, providing care services for the elderly tenants at Watkins House, management of the Travellers' Site at Watling Farm, and providing various administrative functions not attributable to specific service areas.

Key issues which will impact on budgets over the next few years include the disposal of Watkins House for redevelopment, programming to spend the additional DFG capital allocation, and continuing to control the cost of homelessness. With the impact of universal credit yet to be fully-felt, and the potential for there to be significant additional staffing requirements to cope with administering the growth in demand likely to arise as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Bill, this is probably the area that presents the biggest threat to Housing's ability to remain within budget.

## Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is the statutory account maintained by the Council to account for the income and expenditure relating to our role as landlord of nearly 5,000 Council-owned rented homes and over 1,100 leasehold properties. Following self-financing, the account was in an extremely healthy position, and was forecast to generate significant levels of balances over the period of the business plan.

The outlook, however, changed dramatically following the requirement of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 Medium Term Financial Strategy to reduce rents by 1% per annum for four years commencing 2016/17. The impact on the HRA was in the region of £10m less income over this 4-year period, rising to £140m reduction in HRA balances by the end of the 30-year business plan, which has resulted in a need to make savings in the HRA going forward.

In addition to a policy of restricting growth and inflation uplifts, permanent revenue savings of £165k and permanent capital savings of £500k have been identified and included in the 2017/18 budget. Over the course of the next year, it will be necessary to undertake further service reviews and investigate the extent to which commercialisation activity could potentially deliver the as-yet unidentified savings of £300k in 2018/19 and £850k in 2019/20 required to deliver a balanced HRA. Given the scale of the savings required, it is possible that there may be a need to reduce staffing levels, depending on the outcome of the further service reviews.

As part of the longer term strategy, and to assist in delivering the Grange Farm regeneration scheme, as well as secure the existing infill programme, generate capacity for additional HRA new build, and place the HRA on a more sustainable footing, discussions will shortly commence with the Government regarding seeking to obtain an exemption from the remaining rent cuts, in conjunction with freedoms around short-term and potentially longer term borrowing.

## Harrow Council's priorities

- **Build a Better Harrow**

Our £1.75bn vision for housing, jobs and growth will create the places and opportunities that all our residents deserve – a thriving, modern, inclusive and vibrant borough.

- **Be more business-like and business friendly**

We want to support local businesses and help them thrive. We want our own commercial ventures to make a strong and sustainable contribution to our success.

- **Protect the most vulnerable and support families**

We want to make sure that those least able to look after themselves are properly cared for. We want to safeguard adults and children from abuse and neglect and give them access to opportunities.

## Harrow Council's values

### Be courageous

We are ambitious about what's possible, challenging the status quo and ready to sign up and accept a challenge. We make brave decisions to achieve success, delivering on our promises and inspiring others to 'Think Big'.

### Do it together

We build strong relationships, sharing our knowledge and breaking down silos. We listen to others' opinions to inform decision making and seek opportunities to collaborate. We value diversity and treat others with empathy and respect.

### Make it happen

We are outcomes focussed, setting clear objectives within a framework and articulating what success looks like. We are decisive, agile and quick to act. We know what to do and have the conviction to do it. We break down barriers and enable others to be more effective.

## Our equalities vision

**A proud, fair and cohesive Harrow, a great place to live, work and visit**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>		
<b>1 An inclusive workforce that feels valued, respected and reflects our community.</b>	<b>2 An improved understanding of our communities to ensure services are fair, equitable and accessible to all.</b>	<b>3 Promote and celebrate the diversity of our Borough and foster community cohesion.</b>

# Housing **Golden Thread**

## 2017/2018

### **National and Regional Drivers**

Homelessness Reduction Act • Housing White Paper 2017 •  
Welfare reform • DCLG and GLA • Housing policies •  
London Housing Strategy and the London Plan •  
Homelessness Reduction Bill • Funding • Housing market

### **Local Harrow / Council Drivers**

Harrow Ambition Plan • Housing strategies •  
Heart of Harrow Regeneration Plan •  
Medium Term Financial Strategy • HRA Business Plan •  
Homelessness and housing need • Homes for Harrow •  
Equality objectives • Resident involvement • Better Homes  
Standard • Commercialisation • Other council strategies

### **Community Department Service Plan**

### **Housing Ambition Plan 8 (2017-2018)**

### **Divisional Commitments**

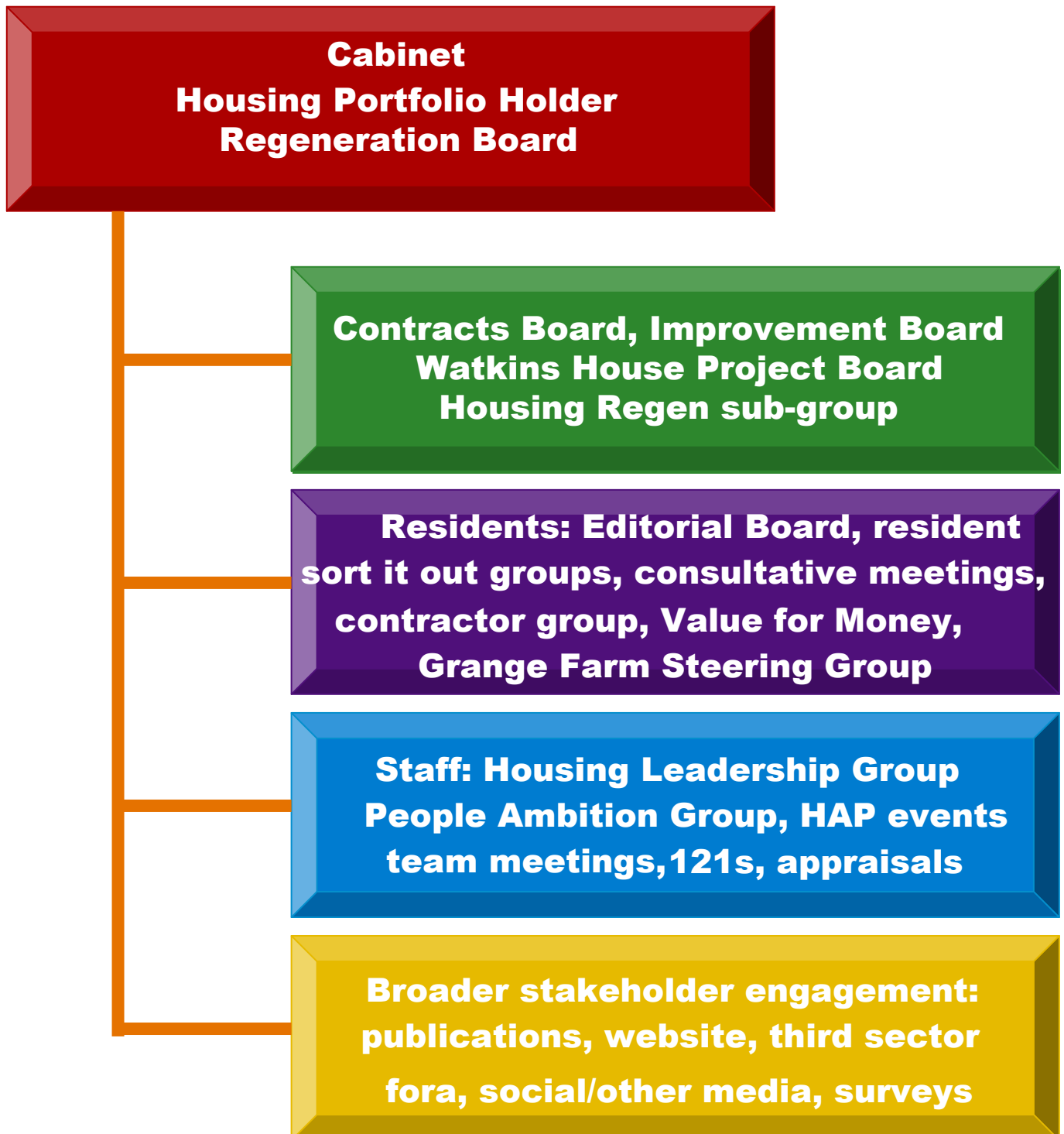
Business Development & Transformation •  
• Regeneration, Asset Planning and New Supply •  
Resident Services • Housing Needs • Asset Management

### **People Commitments**

### **Individual Commitments / Appraisals**

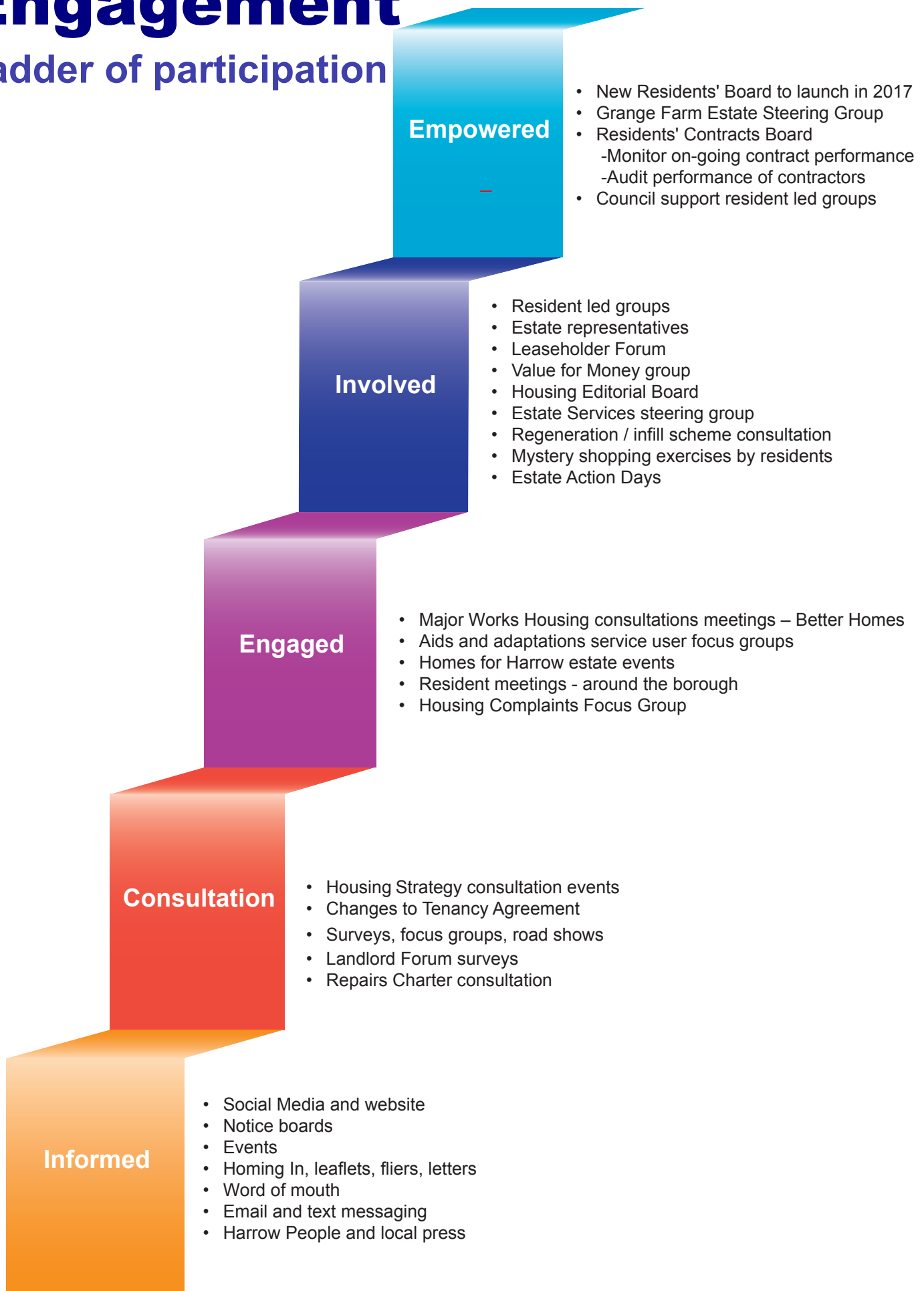


# Housing Governance Structure 2017/2018



# Consultation and Engagement

## Ladder of participation



# Equality Impact Assessment Programme

The Community Directorate Equalities Task Group (DETG) is chaired by Dave Corby with representation from all parts of the Community Directorate including Housing. The group meets regularly to discuss key equality and diversity issues, including reviewing, approving and monitoring Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs). The DETGs support the work of the Corporate Equalities Group (CEG).

In Housing, EQIAs are most often completed when changes are made to services and for new projects. Once EQIAs are signed off the action plans agreed to mitigate any impacts are implemented and monitored. We will be reviewing our suite of housing strategies and some housing policies during 2017/2018 which will make up a large part of our EQIA programme. Other key EQIAs for this year relate to budgets, Watkins House and housing regeneration.

## People Ambition Commitments

### Aims of Plan

The People Ambition Plan (PAP) brings together the areas of staff development, engagement, evaluation and performance.

It's objective is to help all staff have purpose in their work, mastery of their role and to be self-directing in their daily activities, enabling Housing to be an employer of choice open to change, smarter working and commercialisation.



### Achievements 2016 - 17

In 2016-17 the People Ambition Group set out in the People Ambition Plan to complete the following:

- Induction programme
- Well-being programme
- Electronic badges for personal learning
- Staff survey
- Better appraisals - help the move to SAP
- Staff kept well informed
- Deliver the Hemingway Challenge
- Deal openly with claims of bullying by offering sofa sessions and suggestion cards



En route to  
LGBT  
flag raising

# People Ambition commitments

## 2017 People Commitments

1. Encourage learning and development that is personally owned, promotes aspiration and business-like attitudes
2. Value our similarities and differences and engage, communicate and provide opportunity for all
3. Support outcome-based working from many locations, making us innovative and agile in our work
4. Support people to face increasingly difficult conditions posed by the external environment, offering them tools and techniques to stay strong and well, while making our priorities happen.

## The People Ambition Group will focus on...

### Supporting, Promoting, Monitoring and Championing

- Respond to and act on the outputs of a Staff Survey in 2017-18
- Champion timely appraisal completion and best practice, and monitor the same
- Promote and oversee the refresh and use of the Learning Pod and other learning tools

### Implementing and Introducing

- Continue the Well-being programme to improve the resilience and health of our staff, by introducing new subjects and continuing those that have been successful, using the well-being staff survey results (Jan 2017) and evaluation feedback
- Promote the use of suggestion cards for Good News, Environment, Well-being, Innovation, Learning and Development and Staff Challenges. Follow up on feedback received
- Oversee Learning and Development priorities and budgetary spend and promote in newsletters
- Develop activities to support Housing Ambition Plan objectives by providing development in areas such as: commercialisation, presentation skills, writing business cases; developing return on investment and process improvement
- Prepare staff to 'work smarter' and flexibly in the new civic centre – oversee housing staff engagement in the preparatory workshops and comment on emerging proposals for working differently. And lead on activities to develop staff's ability to manage, cope and face change with confidence.



# 2016/17 people highlights



**Housing Fair, July 2016**



**Learning Pod**



**Helen Spillane**

**Staff awards**



**Jennifer Dack**

**Farewell to Lynne**



**Welcome Nick, our new Director**



# Business Development &

# Transformation

Overarching Commitment 2017/18

# Ambition

## We will:

- Support teams in both the transformation of services and their day to day work, to achieve efficiencies and better customer service
- Engage with stakeholders internally and externally to build reputation, develop communities and influence decision makers
- Support housing staff engagement, well-being and people development
- Be proactive in anticipating and analysing policy developments and facilitating changes arising from these
- Lead in setting standards for equalities, consultation, and communications in housing

# Regeneration, Assets Planning & New Supply

Overarching Commitment 2017/18

# Ambition

## We will:

- Actively involve residents and partners in:
  - Providing affordable, good quality housing across Harrow which support our residents' aspirations and provide choice
  - Delivering a range of options that make best use of the housing stock across all tenures
  - Taking forward plans to comprehensively improve the council's housing stock, tackling the worst stock first and maximising utilisation and value of our housing assets
  - Complete the regeneration plans for Grange Farm and start the first phase of building
- Complete the first new council homes in a generation and identify new funding opportunities to keep a rolling new build programme in place
- Make our homes as sustainable and energy efficient as possible
- Ensure the health and safety of our customers, staff and contractors is paramount in all we do by embedding awareness and compliance within the service
- Explore innovative ways of increasing both permanent and temporary housing supply
- Explore all opportunities for developing income generating services e.g. offering Fire Risk Assessment service to local housing associations

# Resident Services

Overarching Commitment 2017/18

# Ambition

## We will:

- Deliver and promote an improved customer focused and value for money service by actively listening and including our service users on our journey
- Continue to explore and evaluate commercial ideas to generate income
- Develop and deliver our digital agenda to allow our customers to access a flexible service whilst maintaining traditional methods for those unable to go digital
- Position ourselves to tackle the impact of welfare reform, in particular Universal Credit, to ensure our tenants sustain their tenancies
- Continue to increase the profile of our Leasehold Service
- Communicate and deliver a seamless decanting process for our vulnerable Watkins House tenants.
- Develop joint working with Harrow colleagues and multi agencies to safeguard our vulnerable tenants

# Asset Management

Overarching Commitment 2017/18

# Ambition

## We will:

- Improve the quality of homes and the external environment by ensuring we deliver the service to standards agreed in partnership with our customers; support the green and prevention agendas and achieve excellence in customer service and value for money
- Work closely with colleagues in Adults and Health to improve existing timescales for assessment of need for adaptations and develop new initiatives that make best use of increasing Disabled Facilities Grant funding
- Ensure the health and safety of our customers, staff and contractors is paramount in all we do
- Develop opportunities to commercialise asset management services, without detriment to core and critical services alongside exploring all opportunities to deliver savings across all service budgets
- Procure services effectively aiming to support local economy, involve residents and develop increasing flexibility to enable us to deliver commercial and non-commercial services side by side

# Housing Needs

Overarching Commitment 2017/18

# Ambition

## We will:

- Through individual plans, support customers to take appropriate steps to find or keep a suitable home and understand that there is insufficient accommodation in Harrow
- Inform customers how the welfare benefits changes affect them
- Help customers move into work, or get training to help get employment
- Inform and encourage customers to consider the advantages of moving areas with less expensive housing with greater choice
- Work with landlords, lenders and families to find new solutions to prevent them losing their home
- Review our services to single homeless people in light of the new duties associated with the Homelessness Reduction Bill
- Advise on housing options such as private rented sector, low cost home ownership and other Government schemes
- Through Help2let, work with private landlords to increase the supply of private rented housing
- Work with landlords to improve management of Private Rented Sector accommodation and tackle disrepair



# Finance

## Team Commitment 2017/18

# Ambition

### We will:

- Help all housing staff to understand the purpose and significance of a positive business plan and support its delivery
- Use the Business Plan potential to help unlock new housing options
- Broaden the involvement of housing finance to support the Council's wider regeneration objectives
- Help to develop new ways of delivering new forms of housing
- Improve financial awareness and responsibilities in all housing staff
- Embed the concept of value of money in all housing services and transactions
- Improve financial awareness and understanding amongst housing customers and key partners
- Maintain a healthy Housing Business Plan that enables the housing service to be delivered and provides opportunities to increase the Council's stock and access to new housing
- Support budget holders in supplying robust financial forecasts which can be used to update the Business Plan



# Harrow Housing