

## CITY OF PLYMOUTH

**Subject:** Plymouth City Council's Housing Service  
**Committee:** Growth & Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel  
**Date:** 19 February 2010  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Ted Fry  
**CMT Member:** Anthony Payne, Director, Development & Regeneration  
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**Ref:**  
**Part:**

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### Executive Summary:

1. As part of the Housing Options Review prior to Stock transfer, a range of services were determined as necessary to address the housing challenges inherent in Council priorities.
  2. These tackle a range of aspirations for improvements across the healthy, wealthy and safer and stronger vision for Plymouth and the housing service leads on Corporate Improvement Priority (CIP 5), 'Providing Better and More Affordable Housing ', but also contributes to CIP's 2, 3 , 4, 7, 9, and 12
  3. The service was brought together under the Development and Regeneration Department following Stock Transfer in November 2009, and is made up from the existing services of Housing Strategy and Renewals:
    - Housing Strategy and Policy
    - Affordable Housing delivery
    - Empty Homes and House let
    - Home Energy Efficiency
    - Devonport Regeneration
    - Private Sector Housing
    - Neighbourhood Regeneration and Renewals.
- Combined with the retained housing Operations Services of:
- Homelessness, Prevention and Temporary Accommodation
  - Housing Register (Devon Home Choice)
  - Anti Social Behaviour
  - Family Intervention Project
- And added from transfer were:
- The Ride Gypsy & Traveller site
  - Monitoring the delivery of Transfer promises and developing the partnership with PCH
  - North Prospect Regeneration
4. The service has a proposed budget of £3M of which half is funded through income and external grants.
  5. Over the next year it will bring in just under £50M of inward investment in both new homes and tackling regeneration and poor standards. This is in addition to the funding for PCH to deliver its promises to tenants and North Prospect regeneration project.
  6. It is likely that an Audit Commission inspection of our services will follow the transfer within the next 12 months or less.

7. We have already started an external Peer Challenge of our Private Sector Housing Services and the panel may be interested in the outcome of this and the subsequent improvement plan which will follow. Another service (Family Intervention Project) has received two external evaluations and is considered to be 'high performing' by the government but will be reviewed as part of the Family Support Review.
8. We intend to carry out a strategic review of Homelessness and Housing Advice services during the year to ensure they are fit for purpose and geared to our existing demands and address or aim of prioritising prevention.
9. The service takes the lead for the Council in developing the relations between Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) and the Council, and also in monitoring the delivery of the transfer promises. There is a governance arrangement set out within the transfer contract (see Appendix A) which includes two presentations to all members of the council from PCH during the year to demonstrate progress to date. The Panel may consider it appropriate to host these two sessions opening them out to all councillors who may have an interest in the achievements of PCH in delivering the promises that the Council made to tenants as a result of stock transfer.

## Conclusions

This report sets out the main structure of Plymouth City Council's Housing services, and some background information on the challenges and implications for each team.

The service is broad reaching and supports both the growth and regeneration agendas, as well as many community related issues. It provides a co-ordinated and cohesive approach to tackling the specific housing related issues that Plymouth experiences, but we are carrying out reviews to ensure that it is efficient and focuses on what is needed.

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## **Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:**

1. That the panel considers the scope of the strategic housing service and considers areas that it may be particularly interested in exploring or reviewing such as the Peer Challenge outcome.
2. That the Panel considers whether it wishes to host the two presentations by Plymouth Community Homes on the delivery of the transfer promises

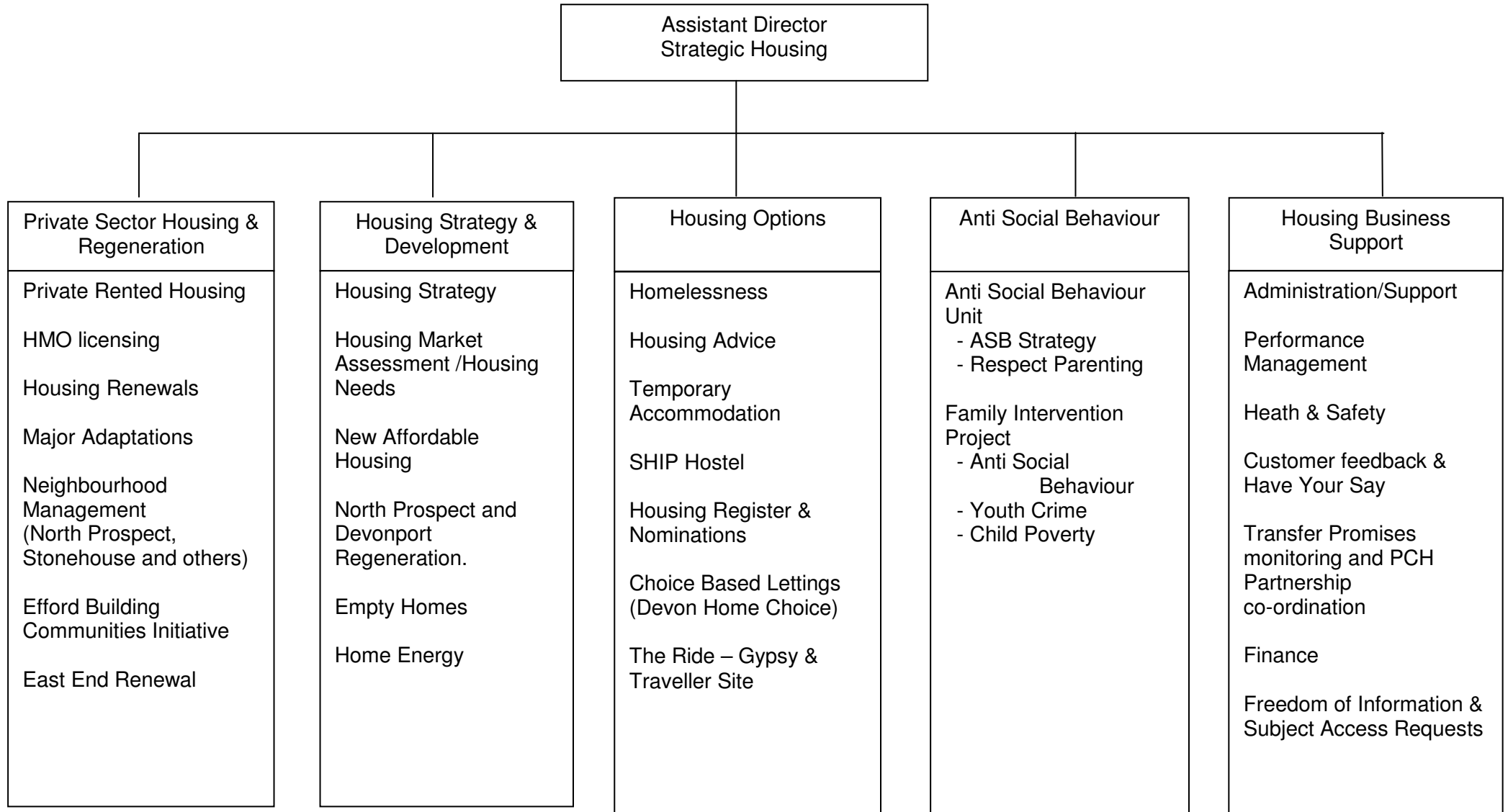
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## **1. Background**

Set out below is the broad structure of the Council's retained housing services following stock transfer and some headline information on what each part of the service is focusing on, and delivering so far.

Various parts of the service are currently being reviewed to ensure they meet our needs, and are performing effectively, these are Neighbourhood Regeneration, Private Housing services, Homelessness and the Family Intervention Project.

# Plymouth City Council Housing Services





## **2. Private Sector Housing & Regeneration**

### **2.1. Private Sector Housing:**

- 610 Houses in Multiple Occupation licences issued since 2006 with 193 HMO's investigated & 114 inspected to date during 2009/10
- 452 complaints in private rented sector formally dealt with during 2008/09 with 438 resolved to date during 2009/10.
- 127 Disabled Facilities Grants completed during 2008/09 with total spend of £1.3 million. The target of 130 completions in 2009/10 has already been exceeded with 136 completions and 199 approvals to date and spend of over £1.2 million.
- New loans package for home improvements introduced in April 2009, with 89 new enquiries and 12 approvals to date during 2009/10.
- 81 properties occupied by vulnerable people 'made decent' in 2008/09 with 53 at quarter 3 of 2009/10.
- 151 'Category 1 hazards' removed in 2008/09 with 118 at quarter 3 of 2009/10.
- Private Sector Housing Strategy approved February 2009; Assistance Policy approved February 2009; Licensing of HMO's Policy approved April 2008; Enforcement Policy approved January 2006 (currently being updated); Stock Condition Survey October 2005 (being updated for 2010).
- Peer Challenge self assessment completed February 2010 with visit from Peer Challenge team to take place March 2010.

### **2.2. Neighbourhood Regeneration**

- Delivery of Neighbourhood Management programmes, including wardens service, in North Prospect and Stonehouse with resulting improvements in neighbourhood service delivery; resident groups enabled to become more influential with service providers; education campaigns / community events undertaken. Of those engaged in the programme:
  - 51% have not been involved in neighbourhood activity before
  - 76% now feel able to get involved in local activity
  - 61% feel people from different backgrounds get on together
  - 59 % feel local services have improved
  - 88% are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live
- Delivery of the Efford Building Communities Initiative, including development of 40 unit extra care scheme, new community library and new church with community space on Torridge Way; physical improvements to open space including Efford Valley, Yeo Close, Trefusis Gardens; work with young people to include sport and use of role models, developing skills through family learning activities and IT. Of those engaged in the programme:
  - 100% now felt able to get involved in local activity
  - 100% had worked with residents they had not worked with before
  - 88% worked with different age groups
  - 75% felt people from different backgrounds got on well together
  - 100% felt the buildings on Torridge Way had improved
  - 63% are satisfied with neighbourhood services
  - 88% are satisfied with their area as a place to live
- Establishment and/or continued support of community partnerships and residents groups, including Heart of Efford Community Partnership; East End Partnership and Development Trust; North Prospect Partnership; existing and new residents groups in Stonehouse
- Delivery of £800k East End Healthy Living Network, completed in 2009. Delivery of new healthy living activity, in partnership with the PHDU, in Efford and the East End, including fitness classes, healthy eating, weight management, health promotion. Of those engaged in the programme in Efford:
  - 82% felt their health was generally good
  - 91% feel they live a healthy lifestyle
  - 68% consider themselves to be active
  - 61% eating 5 portions of fruit and veg a day
- £14 million East End Community Village (business centre; community resource centre; 30 unit extra care scheme; 16 unit affordable housing; primary care centre; public realm

improvements; total refurbishment of Astor Park) completed during 2008/09 winning the Local Government Chronicle national regeneration award 2008

- New approach to working in neighbourhoods being developed for 2010/11 as part of corporate move to locality working

### **3. Housing Strategy & Development**

#### **3.1. Affordable Housing**

- In 2008/09 we enabled the delivery of 290 new affordable homes, exceeding our target of 215, placing us in the top quartile nationally on delivery.
- In 2009/10 we are on track to deliver 389 new affordable homes, exceeding our target of 226 and improving further our performance.
- Our LAA target over the three year period 2008/11 for new affordable homes is 678, we are on course to deliver approx 979 - a 45% increase despite the current housing market slowdown. Hence no LAA refresh.
- In 2008/09 we secured £12.1m of social housing grant to support our affordable housing programme.
- In 2009/10 we have secured over £50m of investment; made up of £20m of social housing grant, matched by an equivalent amount of RSL funding, £4m kickstart funding, £3m Home Buy Direct and £4.5 Infrastructure funding.

#### **3.2. Empty Homes**

- In 2008/09 we were directly involved in bringing 84 empty homes back into use, exceeding our target of 78
- In 2009/10 we reduced to 50 to reflect our priorities and moving resources from empties into affordable housing – but remain on track to exceed this target also.

#### **3.3. Home Energy**

- In 2008/09 we achieved 27,791 tonnes lifetime carbon dioxide savings as a result of Plymouth schemes, exceeding our target of 20,000, which resulted in 1894 households benefitting from energy efficiency measures in the city.
- Completion of a new energy strategy in March 2010 will evidence whether we have achieved our targets for tackling Fuel Poverty NI 187 – improving the energy efficiency rating of homes occupied by households receiving income based benefits.

#### **3.4. Strategies**

- 2009 saw the production of a new housing strategy, empty homes strategy and home energy strategy, all key in identifying our housing needs and challenges and setting out our plans for addressing these issues; copies available on PCC website

#### **3.5. Current Projects**

- We have launched a home energy pilot project to tackle hard to treat properties and promotion of renewables.
- We have secured Government Kickstart One funding to house builders of £3.9m for 3 projects to support the completion of 201 homes on sites that are presently stalled due to the current housing market slowdown. Another site is currently being approved for Kickstart Two funding.
- We have secured planning and funding to replace the SHIP Hostel with a new State of the Art facility in Millbay.
- Cabinet have approved a package of City owned sites and funding that has helped secure £44m of HCA funding for the redevelopment of North Prospect to support wider Stock Transfer across the City, and which will deliver over 200 new affordable homes by 2011
- Major future projects include supporting the development and regeneration of key strategic sites including Sherford, Devonport, Millbay and Plymstock Quarry.
- We will become increasingly reliant upon S106 opportunities to help achieve our affordable housing targets as Government funding decreases

- To progress the development of a Local Housing Company to in partnership with the private sector to bring forward higher levels of affordable housing on PCC owned sites.

## **4. Housing Options**

### **4.1. Homelessness and Housing Advice**

We achieved 430 homelessness preventions last year and on current performance we are due to do more than 500 this year. We again managed to reduce the number of households who made statutory homelessness approaches down to 627 decisions last year.

### **4.2. SHIP Hostel**

A brand new hostel is planned to replace the current ship hostel this year - one of few direct access hostels available – with 44 single and 2 double rooms. Building should start on site in late February 2010

### **4.3. Housing Register & Nominations**

- Last year 1848 households were housed from the Plymouth Housing Register, of which 1234 were accommodated by PCC and 614 by RSL's, there are currently 7100 households on the register.
- A new way of allocating homes giving people more choice has been introduced, Devon Home Choice went live in early January 2010
- Housing Advice – the team deal with around 600 contacts per week from people who need housing advice.

## **5. Anti Social Behaviour Unit**

### **5.1. Anti Social Behaviour**

ASB strategy produced this year articulating a multi agency whole systems approach to tackling anti-social behaviour. ASBU undertakes 160 + multi agency meetings per year and successfully obtained 25 various legal orders this financial year already. Reported ASB is down this year by 7.7% from last year. National Indicator 21 Plymouth is 3 % points above the national average (NI 21 is perception of how successful people feel the police and local Authority is at tackling this).

### **5.2. Family Intervention Project**

- 58 Families either have received or are receiving intensive support to address ASB and reduce the likelihood of homelessness. Estimated that such families can cost agencies £80k - £250k per year (depending upon each situation), each family costs £14k to provide FIP services with extremely good and effective outcomes. FIP staff are assisting in delivering parenting programmes and this is attracting significant Government funding to expand its criteria and capacity.
- We have successfully bid to extend the service to tackle problems in youth crime and young people with particular emphasis on tackling Child Poverty and Intergenerational worklessness – total government grant for 2010/11 is £566k.

## **6. Housing Business Support**

### **6.1. Administration/Support**

This small team provides administration and support across services but particularly for the Private Sector Housing and Strategy & Development teams, and takes a lead co-ordinating health and safety at work for housing services.

## **6.2. Finance**

The team processes payments to contractors for all private sector work, in particular Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Improvement Loans, and has responsibility for co-ordinating/monitoring budgets across services.

## **6.3. Performance Management**

The team assists with performance management and co-ordinates the performance monitoring, statutory data requests and housing balanced scorecard, and maintains records, coordinates responses to complaints etc through customer feedback & Have Your Say. They also manage any Freedom of Information & Subject Access Requests

## **6.4. Transfer promises monitoring and PCH Partnership co-ordination**

We have the lead responsibility to co-ordinate the council's partnership arrangements with Plymouth Community Homes, and also monitor the transfer promises which should be delivered by Plymouth Community Homes. There will also be a corporate group of officers to co-ordinate around service level agreements both from and to Plymouth Community Homes.



# PLYMOUTH HOUSING STOCK TRANSFER

## POST TRANSFER GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE



### Joint Project Aims

- To develop a successful and collaborative partnership.
- To ensure the delivery of decent homes for the city.
- To ensure that the ongoing operation of both organisations are not compromised by the transfer terms

### Post Transfer Objectives

- To ensure that where possible, Plymouth City Council and Plymouth Community Homes work in partnership to achieve common aims.
- To effectively manage the impact on those services and staff retained by Plymouth City Council affected by the Housing Stock Transfer.
- To ensure that communications with key stakeholders will be maintained effectively throughout the transfer process

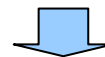
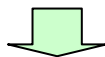
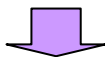
This document is intended to explain the governance structure. It is based on the terms of reference for the different meeting groups.

# Post Stock Transfer Meeting Structure

Plymouth Community Homes

Joint

Plymouth City Council



**PCH Formal Presentation of Progress Report to Council**  
(twice annually)

Consultation with PCH Board as required

**Quarterly Partnership Meetings**  
These will follow the internal liaison meetings & will deal with any issues arising which cannot be dealt with at an operational level.

Consultation with PCC Board and Councillors as required

**PCH Quarterly Core Meetings / management meetings**  
Any issues to be brought forward from the joint operational meetings

**CIG Quarterly Core Meetings**  
Any issues to be brought forward from the joint operational meetings

**Formal – Officer level: PCC / PCH Joint Operational Meetings.**  
(min monthly on day to today issues) e.g:

<p><b><u>New Initiatives / Joint Ventures</u></b> Formal between service providers to discuss day to day operational issues</p>	<p><b><u>SLA's / protocols</u></b> Formal between service providers to discuss day to day operational issues</p>	<p><b><u>Operational Issues</u></b> Formal between service providers to discuss day to day operational issues</p>
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**Internal PCH operational meetings**  
(informal and as required)

**Internal PCC operational meetings**  
(informal and as required)

## **Formal: PCH Presentation of Progress Report to Council (twice annually)**

While the Association will covenant to deliver the promises to tenants, the Council made the commitments to tenants in the Consultation Document.

The Chief Executive of the Association (or his nominee) will present a twice yearly progress report to the Council, hosted either by the Cabinet Member(s) with responsibility for housing or by the appropriate Chair of Scrutiny.

This presentation will be open to all Council Members to attend. Board members of the Association and tenant representatives will also be invited.

## Formal Joint: Plymouth City Council and Plymouth Community Homes Quarterly Partnership Meetings

**Purpose** - To discuss:

- Progress on the 'promises' to tenants (format to be agreed)
- Each Party's relevant strategic direction and objectives and how the Parties can work together to achieve these objectives, where appropriate
- Financial issues as a result of transfer and the robustness of financial plans.  
**Note. Financial issues to remain objective regarding the transfer agreement and terms stated, not to revisit the deal and the subsequent financial position.**
- Monitoring and reviewing the Service Level Agreements
- Monitoring the use of proceeds in the event of the Association's disposal of any part of the Property
- Issues raised by the Council's Post Transfer Core Officer Group that cannot be addressed at an operational level. This will include Core Officer Group recommendations on decisions that need to be made at a corporate level and at the formal Partnership Meeting.
- Progress of the North Prospect Project as set out in Schedule 24.

**Frequency** – quarterly, starting January 2010

**Membership:** To be agreed but suggested from the following:

**Association**

- Chief Executive
- Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods
- Finance Director

**Council**

- Director of Corporate Support
- Assistant Director Strategic Housing
- Monitoring Officer

**Reporting Mechanism** – Minutes of quarterly meeting circulated to Post Transfer Core Group (Council), Management Team (Association) and Operational meetings and for them to cascade as appropriate.