

York Housing Partnership Agreement 2005 - 2008

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1 Foreword

“A warm, secure and affordable home is a fundamental right and, by working together, social housing providers in York are ensuring that this is achieved by as many residents as possible.

The first Agreement, established in 2001, has helped to achieve a great deal of success in the provision of decent and affordable homes in York. But there is much yet to be done. This new and broader Agreement looks to the future with the optimism that the partnership will be a living and practical tool promoting the provision of new housing opportunities and helping to achieve consistently high and transparent standards in the delivery of housing management for all the partners’ customers. It will empower customers by involving them actively in all its aspects and will also be a vehicle for the promotion and implementation of York Pride and in Transforming York.”

Sue Sunderland, Executive Member for Housing, CYC.

2 Shared vision

“CYC, in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) working in the city, is committed to providing the highest quality service for all its current and future tenants, licencees and leaseholders who live in or need affordable housing for their home and enable them to play an active role in its development and delivery .”

3 Aims of the York Housing Partnership Agreement

- To promote effective partnership working between CYC and RSLs so that our common goal of providing and improving housing and the lives of housing service users and those in housing need in York is attained.
- To achieve the best fit between RSL activity and the council’s Housing Strategy together with other strategic aims that link, and complement the provision of housing and its users in the city of York.
- To facilitate the sharing, development and implementation of best practice between RSLs and the council.
- To promote the sharing of information and it’s analysis to ensure fairness and equity amongst housing providers and their customers.
- The council’s Best Value(BV) and Comprehensive Performance Assessment(CPA) targets, together with other local and national Performance Indicators(PI) set by and with its partners, will form the framework in which the Agreement will operate.
- To assist the council in its strategic role as Housing Authority.
- To assist RSLs in carrying out their role as housing providers.

4 Basis of the Agreement

- The Agreement covers all aspects of the council’s York Housing Strategy and its reviews and the aims and vision set out above.
- Joining the partnership is open to all RSLs who agree to meet the terms of the Agreement.
- It is acknowledged that the Agreement will apply more broadly to some partners depending on their business scope, aims, extent and area of operation.
- CYC will only work with and support the RSLs who sign up to and agree to maintain this Housing Partnership Agreement, with the council as co-signatories. CYC will endeavour to ensure that being a partner is not disadvantageous to the partner’s business.
- Consideration will be given, by Housing Liaison Group, to other organisations becoming partners providing they are operating in social/affordable housing provision and management in York.
- The Agreement will be monitored on a regular basis and reviewed fundamentally not less than every three years by the Housing Liaison Group.

5 Status and operation of the Agreement

- The Agreement is not legally binding and signing it does not imply being party to a contract or impose any legal responsibilities.
- All signatories commit themselves to implementing all aspects of the Agreement. It is acknowledged that the Agreement will apply more broadly to some partners depending on their business scope, aims, extent and area of operation.
- There may be supplementary agreements and contracts with regard to specific projects. These may include the sale of council land and property and Planning Agreements under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1991.
- The Agreement is designed to achieve its partners' vision and aims set out above.
- The Housing Liaison Group will monitor achievement of the vision and aims of the Agreement.
- The Housing Liaison Group will fundamentally review the Agreement on a three yearly basis - the next review is to be completed by December 2007.
- Sections 8 and 9 of the Agreement will be used to guide specific areas of the implementation and monitoring of the Agreement.
- Partners will consult and agree on additional appendices to be added to the Agreement between the three yearly fundamental reviews.

6 A joint approach

Partners to the Agreement agree to work collaboratively. It is useful to set out in more detail some areas that are particularly relevant to all partners and to the success of the Agreement.

- Strategic objectives – to contribute to the council's Housing Strategy and to other strategies relevant to housing in York and to the implementation of these strategies.
- Local quality standards – their determination and agreement, some of which relate to items in the appendices and include: stock profile; rent levels by property type; vacant stock periods and rent loss; re-let time (turn around) for letting empty property; rent arrears; repairs completion and timescales; nominations; sales and re-sales; marketing; tackling anti-social behaviour; provision of consistently high quality customer care.
- Innovation - exploring new initiatives and developing links with other agencies and partners.
- Developing best practice in management, by having local and accessible management services enabling all tenures (tenants and home owners) to engage in influencing service and performance levels.
- Developing and promoting the principles of Best Value leading to a consistent, better quality, cost effective and efficient services across all tenures.

- Communicating and sharing, as widely as possible, information and access to information to encourage openness, trust and transparency between partners and to undertake benchmarking exercises and other appropriate projects.
- Training, developing and supporting staff to enable and empower them to provide the best possible service to all tenures by identifying training needs and co-operating in providing and promoting training.

7 Roles and responsibilities

All partners agree to:

- Provide and locally manage, directly or indirectly, housing to meet the needs of the people of York who cannot afford to rent or purchase on the open market.
- Work in partnership to ensure that housing needs are met.
- Meet with the council on a regular basis through the Housing Liaison Group and it's sub-groups.
- Ensure that co-ordination is achieved and agreed information is shared among all partners.
- Co-operate to develop and to put in place common quality standards and performance indicators including mutually agreed local ones.
- Provide the council with annual reports and all other policy documents and advise the council of proposed policy changes that will affect housing provision in York.
- Continue to support and participate in the development and use of the York Housing List and Affordable For Sale Register and, for the latter, adopt and apply the policy and practices set out in the appendices.
- Accept nominations for and report vacancies from and to the York Housing List and Affordable for Sale Register and provide feedback on activity, outcomes and customer satisfaction.
- New developments: develop and maintain a diversity of housing provision and tenures in York according to the council's Housing Strategy; ensure new housing developments meet the minimum standards as set out in the appendices; work with the council to ensure the affordable housing provision in S106 agreements and on council land is conducted in a timely, transparent and cost effective way; be committed to the highest standards of sustainability and eco-friendliness in construction and renovation.
- Aim to reach the Decent Homes standard by 2010.
- Investigate, encourage and use local labour wherever possible in all activities.
- Supported Housing: work with the council, York & Selby PCT and Supporting People to develop and provide housing with care and support that is customer-focused and driven.
- Aim to build all new housing to Lifetime Homes Standard with a portion of stock being built to full wheelchair access standard.

- Advise the council on a mutually agreed timescale when developments of all types of scheme, including those provided by S106 agreements, are available, completed and occupied, together with other relevant details.
- Research and develop where appropriate new sources of funding for the provision of low cost, affordable housing.
- Provide the council with an up-to-date schedule of its housing stock and nomination agreements and provide an update at least every six months.
- Community leadership: actively assist the council in its community leadership role and develop services and strategies which complement this role and its objectives.
- Work to establish the principles of and demonstrate Best Value in all aspects of its housing provision including having robust mechanisms in place for actively recording, measuring and reporting performance for provision in the York area.
- Equal Opportunities / Access and Inclusion – aim to ensure that all sections of the community have equal access to housing and show that monitoring procedures are in place and work in line with the Housing Corporation's and the council's Comprehensive Equalities Policies, Black and Minority Ethnic(BME) and other strategies; provide statistics at least annually about tenures, nominations etc based on BME and other minority group monitoring; work to maximise the involvement of the BME and other minority groups in the community in housing delivery and management and share innovative ways of increasing involvement; respect the interests of other parties and deal with them in an inclusive and sensitive way.
- Tenant/leaseholder involvement: work in partnership to encourage and maximise tenant/leaseholder involvement in the management of their homes and communities; actively encourage and support residents groups to be involved in all levels of decision making.
- Rents: provide the council with agreed rent policies and actual rents for every property and provide updates, at least annually, for the council's area.
- Information sharing: provide and share as much information as possible within the constraints of the Data Protection Act, and develop appropriate protocols, with the objective of complying with the aims of the Agreement.

The council in its enabling and strategic role agrees to:

- Involve all partners in the development and the implementation of the council's Housing Strategy and other strategies for York.
- Ensure that affordable housing needs are given full consideration when council land becomes available for development.
- Establish and maintain with partners minimum design, development and management standards for all relevant tenures.
- Research, identify and develop new sources of funding for affordable housing for rent or sale.

- Ensure the planning and development processes maximise the provision of social and affordable housing in York in accordance with the Local Plan/Local Development Framework and to agreed local standards.
- Housing needs: ensure as far as possible the housing needs of York are understood and appreciated by all agencies and others in York.
- Use and update the York Housing Needs Survey (2002) to maintain a reliable, robust and up-to-date picture of housing needs across all tenures.
- Prepare and maintain databases of all existing, new and potential CYC and RSL housing stock.
- Tenant/Leaseholder/owner participation: actively encourage and support residents and groups of residents in becoming involved in all levels of decision making within all relevant organisations in York.
- Monitoring: Take a lead role in co-ordinating and monitoring the Agreement.

8 The council's Housing Strategy and other strategic objectives

The council's Housing Strategy was approved in 2002, and was subject to interim review in 2004, with a fundamental review to be carried out in 2005. The reviews must lead to the strategy achieving the government's 'fit for purpose' standard.

The Housing Strategy is a corporate document that complements other corporate plans and strategies of the council including the Community Strategy and Council Plan. Some of the council's other strategies are included in or referred to in the appendices.

9 Appendices

Appendix reference and title	Statement of intent	Page Book 2
1) Housing Liaison Group (HLG)	The Housing Liaison Group (HLG) is established to monitor and review the Agreement and will be the vehicle for consultation and liaison between CYC and RSLs working in the York area.	2
2) HLG – working groups	HLG will use working groups composed of partnership members’ officers and invitees, as appropriate to the topic, to study, consider, make recommendations, and carry out single-issue projects and in reviewing the Agreement.	3
3) Assessing the partnership	Partners commit themselves to continuously assessing the effectiveness of the partnership and their own contribution and to contributing to interim and fundamental reviews.	4
4) Supplementary agreements	All partners will seek to identify issues where a supplementary agreement will benefit the delivery of the aims and objectives set out in the Agreement, by the members of the partnership and / or groups of partners.	5
5) Residents’ ‘handbook’	Handbooks will be: made accessible to all possible users by publishing in a variety of formats; reviewed and updated at least annually and a library copy deposited with CYC; a set of common best-practice standards will be assembled by a single issue working group of the HLG; handbooks will achieve the minimum standards set out by the HC, enhanced to a level agreed from time to time by the HLG to reflect best practice and the unique nature of York. A ‘new residents’ pack will be produced for issue to all residents aimed at making the move to the property and locality as easy as possible.	6

Appendix reference and title	Statement of intent	Page
6) New home design standards	Partners will work together to produce a recognised and workable minimum standard to be applied to all new homes built under the control of the partners. An aspirational standard will also be developed to include lifetime homes, wheelchair and high eco-home standards.	7
7) Nominations to rented and sale properties, the York Housing List and the Discount For Sale Register	The List* and Register** will be the sole means CYC uses to nominate people to rented and Discount for Sale/Shared Ownership homes. The policies, criteria and rules applying to the List and Register will be adopted and used by all partners for the allocation of homes to people where the homes are let or sold under nomination by CYC. A named person will be provided by CYC as a contact point for each RSL.	8
8) Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	All partners will work towards harmonising the approach and implementation of ASB policies and practices across the CYC area with the aim of there being no discernable difference whatever the tenure or locality. This approach will respect the individuality of each RSL and its residents and be complementary to tackling ASB on a city-wide basis.	9
9) Marketing Group [and Discount for Sale (DFS) / Shared Ownership (SO) homes]	A working group set up by HLG to discuss the marketing of DFS/SO/Homebuy homes and ensure that these homes are marketed correctly. The group includes CYC, Home Housing Group, Yorkshire Community Housing, Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and Tees Valley Housing Group. CYC has a policy which has been discussed and agreed with RSLs. CYC holds and manages a database, the 'Register', of people who are interested in affordable home opportunities. The group also seeks opportunities for future promotional work.	10 - 11

Appendix reference and title	Statement of Intent	Page
10) Monitoring - stock profile; rent levels by property type; vacant stock periods and rent loss; rent arrears; repairs completion timescales; turn around of empty property; provision of reports and policy documents	All partners will deliver the monitoring information at the agreed intervals; it will be assessed via the HLG and additional data sets agreed via HLG before all partners are committed to collecting and delivering them to CYC. All partners will submit all agreed reports and documents within the timescales set out in the individual appendices and in the Agreement.	12
11) Tenant and owner participation	The active encouragement and support of all those making their home in partners' properties and the communities in which they live, so that they can take part at all levels and types of activity, is to be at the forefront of all partners' activities, whatever their nature.	13
12) Information sharing, electronic business transactions and e-government (CYC)	All partners will share information in the spirit and practice of encouraging openness, trust and transparency between partners. Confidentiality will be maintained between partners and the council and information will not be shared with others unless the provider of the information agrees to this. This will be undertaken in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and other related legislation.	14
13) Staff development and support	All partners agree to develop and support their staff so as to achieve the highest levels of staff education, training, personal and continuing professional development.	15
14) Local Performance Indicators and standards; Best Value	To develop and promote the principles of Best Value across all aspects of housing provision and management.	16

Appendix reference and title	Statement of intent	Page
15) Housing benefits	CYC will strive to process benefit applications and payments in a timely way and to agreed targets. The CYC Benefits Service will strive to process claims quickly and correctly in order to ensure prompt and accurate payment of benefit to the customer. They will also provide the necessary advice and information and support customers making their claims. A named contact person will be provided to RSLs to help with the service. RSLs will strive to support the benefits service and its own customers in making timely applications for benefit and providing the necessary documentation.	17 - 18
16) Equalities, inclusion and access	Partners will aim to ensure that all sections of the community have equal access to housing and all related services and processes, irrespective and regardless of race, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, colour, or political affiliation. We will consider the impact of our decisions on customers' rights, and the rights of others, under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Wherever possible decisions will be made to ensure those rights are protected.	19
17) Innovation	Exploration of new ideas and initiatives and sharing them will be a continuing theme of the partnership.	20
18) Housing Strategy	CYC's Housing Strategy is the foundation and reason for the Agreement and all partners sign up to its implementation.	21

Appendix reference and title	Statement of intent	Page
19) York Pride, Transforming York and Community Leadership	The partners all adopt the principles and policies of York Pride and Transforming York and endeavour to apply them in practical and identifiable ways. Each partner will report annually on its actions and activities and CYC will keep the partnership informed of the development of York Pride and Transforming York and their relationship with the activities of all partners.	22 – 26
20) Homelessness strategy and practice	To understand and provide for the housing needs of homeless people and to contribute to a reduction in the causes of homelessness.	27
21) Supporting People	CYC, as Administering Authority for Supporting People, and RSLs will co-operate together in identifying and providing housing needs and support.	28
22) Supported Housing	CYC and RSLs will work together in identifying options for the provision of Supported Housing and outreach support. This will include identifying funding opportunities and working in partnership to meet identified gaps in service provision.	29
23) Empty homes	Partners will work together to encourage and enable the bringing back into use of empty homes of any tenure.	30

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- (2) HLG – working groups
- (3) Assessing the partnership
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- (5) Residents' 'handbook'
- (6) New home design standards

- (7) Nominations to rented and sale properties, the York Housing List and the DFS Register
- (8) Anti-social behaviour
- (9) Marketing Group (and Discount for Sale/Shared Ownership)
- (10) Monitoring - stock profile; rent levels by property type; vacant stock periods and rent loss; rent arrears; repairs completion timescales; turn around of empty property; provision of reports and policy documents
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- (13) Staff development and support
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- (15) Housing benefits
- (16) Equalities, inclusion and access
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- (19) York Pride, Transforming York and Community Leadership
- (20) Homelessness strategy and practice
- (21) Supporting People
- (22) Supported Housing
- (23) Empty homes

Appendix (1) – Housing Liaison Group

Statement of intent

The Housing Liaison Group(HLG) is established to monitor and review the Partnership Agreement and will be the vehicle for consultation and liaison between CYC and RSLs working in the York area.

Commentary

It is essential to have an active and effective Agreement if it's aims and objectives are to be met. A forum is required to action this. The Housing Liaison Group is the forum and the driver for the Agreement.

Description and aims

The HLG is made up of representatives from all partners and it will both monitor and review the Agreement and be the vehicle for promoting and progressing the aims and objectives encompassed by/within the Agreement.

Targets and monitoring

HLG will meet at least quarterly, have an ongoing programme of targeting housing issues and developing and reviewing the subjects covered in the Agreement's appendices and to additional issues/subjects that are relevant and timely to its purpose. HLG will also be responsible for monitoring it's effectiveness and purpose as set out in the relevant appendix and in consulting on this with all partners and housing customers.

Reference documents

York Housing Partnership Agreement 2005

Appendix (2) – Housing Liaison Group - working groups**Statement of intent**

HLG will use working groups composed of partnership members' officers and invitees, as appropriate to the topic, to study, consider, make recommendations, and carry out single-issue projects and in reviewing the Agreement.

Commentary

From time to time single issues arise that HLG considers need significant input that cannot be provided through its quarterly meetings. Working groups have and will continue to be the chosen vehicle for the delivery of these projects. The Marketing Group is an example of the successful application of such working groups.

Description and aims

In the main, working groups will be set up to deliver single-issue topics/projects.

Targets and monitoring

Will be set by HLG at the instigation of a working group which will report to HLG.

Reference documents

York Housing Partnership Agreement 2005

Appendix (3) – Assessing the partnership

Statement of intent

Partners will commit themselves to continuously assessing the effectiveness of the partnership and their own contribution and to contributing to interim and fundamental reviews.

Commentary

An essential part of making a partnership work is to have an assessment process in place and active throughout the life of the Agreement.

Description and aims

To check in with/by all partners to see how the partnership is working for the HLG, for individual partners and from their customers' perspective, and how well it is contributing to the achievement of the Agreements' aims and objectives.

Targets and monitoring

To fundamentally review at least every three years and also on a continuous basis.

Reference documents

Assessing Strategic Partnership – The Partnership Assessment Tool (ODPM May 2003)

Appendix (4) - Supplementary agreements

Statement of intent

All partners will seek to identify issues where a supplementary agreement will benefit the delivery of the aims and objectives set out in the agreement, by the members of the partnership and / or groups of partners.

Commentary

From time to time there will be a need to produce additional agreements that relate to specific and possibly time-limited issues and apply to all or some of the partners. It is intended that agreements between CYC and individual partners are not included here. However, agreements such as those relating to nominations, benefits and anti-social behaviour will be included.

Description and aims

Agreements that cover issues that are not already in the Agreement, that apply to all or some partners. To be set out as and when agreed.

Targets and monitoring

Will be contained in these supplementary agreements.

Reference documents

None

Appendix (5) – Residents’ information (handbook)

Statement of intent

Handbooks or their equivalents will be produced by all partners for their customers. A set of common best-practice standards will be assembled by a single-issue working group of the HLG. Handbooks will achieve the minimum standards set out by the Housing Corporation(HC) , enhanced to a level agreed from time to time by the HLG to reflect best practice and the unique nature of York.

Commentary

Handbooks form an important, and often, the only comprehensive information source that RSL’s share with their tenants and leaseholders. It is important that all customers / residents of York who have or need to have dialogue with RSL’s and CYC can do this in an informed, comprehensive, consistent and accessible way.

Description and aims

A document that sets out in plain language (and available in the four most prevalent minority languages in York and in large print, Braille, electronic and audio versions) the rights, responsibilities and necessary information and procedures, to enable all residents to take part in, understand and be informed of what it is to be a tenant/owner and about their landlord/leaseholder. This will include such information as the complaints procedures, rent/management charge reviews and how to take a full and informed part in the business of the partner. They will be made accessible to all possible users by publishing in a variety of formats, reviewed annually (and updated as necessary) and a library copy deposited with CYC. Sharing best practice can be helped by reference to this library.

Targets and monitoring

Partners will send a copy of their current handbook to CYC and inform CYC of any updates, with copies, as and when they are made. An annual statement will be made by all partners as to the status of their individual handbooks.

Reference documents

A set of handbooks for every partner; Housing Corporation (HC) – ‘A charter for housing association applicants and residents’ 01-09-2003

York Housing Partnership 2005

Appendix (6) - New home design standards

Statement of intent

Partners will work together to produce a recognised and workable minimum standard to be applied to all new homes built under the control of the partners. An aspirational standard will also be developed to include lifetime homes, wheelchair and high level eco-home standards.

Commentary

All RSL's and other developers have their own standards and specifications that are driven internally and externally by a variety of factors. These include cost, ethos and philosophy, funder's requirements, statutory requirements, negotiation outcomes and planning system conditions, and the housing market at the time, to name only a few. CYC has a number of aspirations, policies and practices that, taken together with those of the developers and the RSLs, lead to an inconsistency in the standard and specification delivered to owners and tenants across York.

Description and aims

To identify and consolidate agreed standards for the provision of new affordable rented and Discount for Sale homes and RSL/CYC funded sites for all partners. This standard is to be holistic and includes all relevant sustainability factors, not just the building itself.

Targets and monitoring

To produce, by the end of 2005, a 'specification' to cover sustainable, eco, lifetime and privately constructed affordable homes. To be able to assess all homes against the agreed standard and encourage the raising of the standard of homes. To have an agreed standard that can be applied to S106 agreements that replaces the 'good quality' standard currently stated in the Local Plan Policy and Affordable Housing Advice Note.

Reference documents

Scheme Development Standards - Housing Corp 2003; Meeting Part M and Designing Lifetime Homes – JRF 1999; Housing Quality Indicators – DETR 2000; Secure by Design; BRE Sustainability Index; SAP Index; National Housing Federation – Standards in Development 'a good practice guide'; www.HQIUK.com

Appendix (7) - Nominations to rented and sale properties

Statement of intent

The List* and Register** will be the sole means CYC uses to nominate people to rented and Discount for Sale/Shared ownership homes. The policies, criteria and rules applying to the List and Register will be adopted and used by all Partners for the allocation of homes to people where the homes are let or sold under nomination by CYC. A named person will be provided by CYC as a contact point for each RSL.

Commentary

It is essential that a standard, transparent and auditable process is used to provide nominations to all types of homes. Use of these databases and the policies and procedures relating to these processes ensure that this is achieved.

Description and aims

CYC has rights of nomination to about 3,800 rented and DFS/Re-sale DFS units of housing. This number is constantly increasing due to the additional provision from S106 Agreements and HC grant funded Approved Development Programme(ADP) developments and decreases by Right to Buy(RTB). There is a set of policies, procedures and practices that cover this area of mutual interest and service delivery, but these are sometimes complicated and open to interpretation. The aim is to establish the best, transparent and fairest process for all to apply.

Targets and monitoring

To assemble, audit and maintain a register of homes available for nomination, to set out the processes that relate to each nomination; to ensure that all partners are aware of the processes and apply them equally and transparently; to report quarterly and annually with details of activity with regard to quantity, type, size, people (their sex, ethnicity, age, family status and size, homelessness or other category) for all properties able to be nominated that become available in the CYC area both to all partners and to CYC.

Reference documents

* The List is the CYC database of households that are accepted as in housing need for rented properties. ** The Register is the CYC database of households registering as wishing to purchase an affordable home. CYC – Allocation Policy; Marketing (of DFS properties) Policy, May 2004; see also appendix (9).

Appendix (8) - Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Statement of intent

All partners will work towards harmonising the approach and implementation of ASB policies and practices across the CYC area with the aim of there being no discernable difference whatever the tenure or locality. This approach will respect the individuality of each RSL and its residents and be complementary to tackling ASB on a city-wide basis.

Commentary

Every landlord should have an ASB policy. (The ASB Act 2003 requires social landlords to publish their ASB policy and procedure by Dec 2004.)

ASB strategy should include the following five key objectives:

- Partnership working
- Taking effective enforcement action quickly
- A victim and witness centred approach
- Working with communities to prevent anti-social behaviour
- Monitoring performance
-

Description and aims

Aim to achieve a comprehensive and consistent set of policies and practices for all parties to follow.

Targets and monitoring

Targets to be those set out in the CYC ASB Strategy together with the equivalent monitoring system. An annual return to be made by every partner setting out activities/progress/future plans. A mediation service will be made available to all neighbours and groups in, or potentially in, a dispute situation within their community. Active membership of the Safer York Partnership 'RSL Forum on ASB' will be a target achievement for every RSL.

Reference documents

ASB: Policy and procedure guidance for Housing Associations (Housing Corporation Aug 2004); City of York ASB Strategy 2004-2005; Safer York Partnership Strategy and procedures.

Appendix (9) – Marketing Group (and Discount for Sale (DFS) / Shared Ownership (SO) homes)

Statement of intent

A working group to be set up by HLG to discuss the marketing of DFS/SO/Homebuy homes and ensure that these homes are marketed correctly. The group includes CYC, Home Housing Group, Yorkshire Community Housing, Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and Tees Valley Housing Group. CYC has a policy which has been discussed and agreed with RSLs. CYC holds and manages a database, the 'Register', of people who are interested in affordable home opportunities. The group also seeks opportunities for promotional work aimed at potential purchasers of affordable homes.

Commentary

Referrals

- To follow the CYC approved policy and procedures for DFS/SO customer referrals.
- To maintain a high level of customer care (handling applications/customers with consistency, fairness, efficiency, integrity, confidentiality and reasonableness).
- To liaise closely with the Housing Development team at all times and for both to respond to each other's queries within 48 hours for an urgent referral or ten working days for other matters.

- To adopt an approach to referrals which is consistent with CYC's approach.
- To assist in the monitoring of applications/referrals as and when required.

Marketing

- To abide by CYC's approved policy for the marketing of DFS/SO homes.
- To undertake appropriate marketing of DFS/SO homes in partnership with CYC, including joint marketing/publicity with other RSL partners.
- To share good practice and information with other RSL partners.
- To contribute to the future development and enhancement of CYC's marketing policy for DFS/SO homes.
- To participate, where appropriate, in strategic marketing and publicity for the Golden Triangle partnership.

Standards

- To ensure that the specification and finish of DFS/SO homes are of 'good quality'. See also appendix (6).

Other

- To provide representatives for focus group/sub groups such as the Marketing Group, as and when required.
- To encourage/permit cross-referencing of Waiting List information to prevent duplication of customers.
- To ensure that partners are accessible to our mutual customers.
- To agree a protocol not to gazump another RSL partner, in instances where (S106) developers are negotiating with more than one RSL, to the potential detriment of the standard of home provided.

Description and aims

A sub-group of the HLG which is tasked to liaise, research, monitor and report on all aspects of the marketing and sales of affordable (for sale) properties.

Targets and monitoring

Reporting to HLG. Monitoring on standards/procedures as set out in the council's Marketing Policy. Business meetings between CYC and individual RSLs will consider impact and ideas and feed these into HLG.

Reference documents

City of York Council Policy: Marketing and Referrals Policy for Discounted Sale and Shared Ownership Homes (and Annex 1, 2, & 3) 10 May 2004

Appendix (10) - Monitoring

Stock profile; stock numbers; nomination agreements and numbers; rent levels by property type; vacant stock periods and rent loss; rent arrears;

repairs completion timescales; turn around of empty property; sale volumes, prices and type; DFS; re-sale periods; provision of reports and policy documents.

Statement of intent

All partners will deliver the monitoring information at the agreed intervals; it will be assessed via the HLG and additional data sets agreed via HLG before all partners are committed to collecting and delivering them to CYC.

All partners will submit all agreed reports and documents within the timescales set out in the individual appendices and in the Agreement.

Commentary

A number of these sets of data will be also prepared and submitted to other internal and external bodies. Some will be unique to the CYC area. It is anticipated that the number of sets will not be too large and that they will be kept to the minimum required, consistent with adequate monitoring of relevant activity, to inform the partnership and to contribute to the identification and implementation of good practice.

Description and aims

To produce a comprehensive set of statistics that will inform all partners and CYC with respect to their monitoring of activity and for use in comparing performance and good practice.

Targets and monitoring

All defined statistics will be submitted to CYC quarterly in arrears by the end of the month following the end of the accounting quarter or at intervals agreed by all partners via the Housing Liaison Group.

Reference documents

None

Appendix (11) – Tenant, leaseholder and owner participation

Statement of intent

The active encouragement and support of all those making their home in partners' properties and the communities in which they live, so that they can take part at all levels and types of activity, is to be at the forefront of all partners' activities, whatever their nature.

Commentary

An underlying principle of the housing management of all tenures, activities and properties is the participation of all of those involved and affected by these activities. Successful participation allows and enhances the achievement of high standards, continued improvement, transparent policies and practices and sustainable communities.

Description and aims

All partners will adopt policies and practices that have been and can be demonstrated to have been assembled and activated with the positive involvement, endorsement and taking into account the views of residents of all tenures. The aim is to ensure that all members of the community are empowered and enabled to take part in the decisions affecting them.

Targets and monitoring

All partners agree to set targets through the HLG that are reported on annually together with mutual and appropriate monitoring mechanisms. One target could be the achievement of the 'Investor in Communities' status.

Reference documents

NHF 'In Business for Neighbourhoods'; Housing Corporation: A Charter for housing association applicants and residents;
www.bankofgoodpractice.org/involvingresidents

Appendix (12) – Information sharing, electronic business transactions and e-government (CYC)

Statement of intent

All partners will share information in the spirit and practice of encouraging openness, trust and transparency between partners. Confidentiality will be maintained between partners and the council and information will not be shared with others unless the provider of the information agrees to this. The requirements of the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and other related legislation will be uppermost in this activity.

Commentary

A fundamental theme of the Agreement is that of working together to improve services and increasing the delivery of housing to those in housing need in York. Sharing information on all aspects of housing provision enables all partners to understand the detailed picture of housing in York and to develop and deliver best practice.

Description and aims

The production and sharing of a variety of data is set out in this agreement and its appendices. The aim is to assemble and share this data in a usable and informative way so as to enable the improvement of all aspects of the aims and objectives of the Agreement.

Targets and monitoring

Partners will submit data as set out in the Agreement to the agreed timescales. HLG will monitor, via CYC's reports, the delivery of these targets on an annual basis. All aspects will be governed by the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act and associated regulations.

Reference documents

See also appendix (10) and Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act.

Appendix (13) – Staff development and support

Statement of intent

All partners agree to develop and support their staff so as to achieve the highest levels of staff education, training, personal and continuing professional development.

Commentary

It is acknowledged that training, development and support are prerequisites to delivering a high quality, best practice service. Partners may share and draw on resources of others to promote this objective.

Description and aims

To train, develop and support staff to enable and empower them to provide the best possible service to all tenures by identifying training needs and co-operating in providing and promoting training.

Targets and monitoring

These will be developed by a single-issue working group via HLG.

Reference documents

None

Appendix (14) – Local Performance Indicators (LPI) and standards (eg Best Value)

Statement of intent

To develop and promote the principles of Best Value(BV) across all aspects of housing provision and management.

Commentary

In order to improve and demonstrate the improvement of service delivery it is essential to work to agreed, clear and measurable targets. LPIs, and Best Value Indicators (BVIs) will form the basis of this. Some of this work will inevitably overlap with appendix (10) – Monitoring and appendix (17) – Innovation.

Description and aims

The development, sharing, consultation and reporting of LPIs and other PIs/BVIs together will lead to a consistent, better quality, cost effective and efficient service across all tenures across the CYC area.

Targets and monitoring

Targets will be set via HLG and other co-working/partnerships and will be monitored by the same groups at agreed intervals.

Reference documents

www.odpm.gov.uk/docs/returns/HC; City of York Council Plan and Strategies.

Appendix (15) – Housing benefits

Statement of intent

CYC will strive to process benefit applications and payments in a timely way and to agreed targets. The CYC Benefits Service will strive to process claims quickly and correctly in order to ensure prompt and accurate payment of benefits to the customer. They will also provide the necessary advice and information and support customers making their claims. A named contact person will be provided to RSLs to help with the service. RSLs will strive to support the benefits service and its own customers in making timely applications for benefit and providing the necessary documentation.

Commentary

The processing and payment of housing and council tax benefit are essential to the effective and efficient management of housing providers, as they ensure that money is directed to those in need and thus promote the financial health and wellbeing of the customer.

An understanding of the process and an up-to-date picture of it are essential to the effectiveness and efficiency of the housing management process to enable them to support their customers and promote their health and wellbeing.

Description and aims

The Benefits Service receives and processes applications for people on low incomes who require financial support in paying their rent and council tax. The scheme is operated in accordance with statutory regulations.

It is the aim of the Benefits Service to process benefit applications quickly, correctly and efficiently to ensure monies are paid to those who are eligible. The service also aims to provide advice, information and support to those customers wishing to claim benefit. It aims to work with partners to ensure that the needs and aspirations of the customers are met and to understand customer requirements.

It will strive to promote benefit take up, but will ensure that its processes and procedures are secure and reduce the risk of fraud.

Targets and monitoring

The targets for the Benefits Service will be published in the council's annual Benefits Business Plan.

Performance against these targets is reported to the government on a quarterly basis, and the information on performance on key business areas will likewise be provided to the group on a quarterly basis.

CYC will provide a named person to RSLs to assist with their enquiries and hold quarterly meetings to inform and assist the process.

Reference documents

Council Plan; Benefits Business Plan; Minutes of the regular Benefits Service/RSL liaison meetings;. Published BVPI figures.

Appendix (16) – Equalities (inclusion and access)

Statement of intent

Partners will aim to ensure that all sections of the community have equal access to housing and all related services and processes irrespective and regardless of race, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, colour, or political affiliation. We will consider the impact of our decisions on customers' rights, and the rights of others, under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Wherever possible, decisions will be made to ensure those rights are protected.

Commentary

Protecting and promoting people's rights are an essential part of providing an effective, transparent and open housing service, especially one that aims to deliver the housing needs of some of the most vulnerable members of society. This also applies to the treatment of employees and in employment practices.

Description and aims

York has, as examples, a relatively small and sometimes unnoticed black and ethnic population and also a relatively high proportion of older people. Other 'minority' and 'majority' groups that make up the population all deserve and require to be treated equally and with respect at all times. All partners will work to the statement of intent and will monitor activity and progress and analyse this to seek ways of improving their services.

Targets and monitoring

HLG will set targets based on CYC's strategies and policies and those of the Housing Corporation and government. Performance against these targets will be monitored and reported on at least annually.

Reference documents

City of York Council Equalities Strategy and Comprehensive Equalities Policy; City of York Council Equality Impact Assessment process 2004; Housing Corporation Policies, Requirements and Good Practice Notes 4 & 8; CIH Good practice briefing – Equality and Diversity, June 2003.

Appendix (17) – Innovation

Statement of intent

The exploration of new ideas and initiatives and the sharing of them will be a continuing theme of the partnership.

Commentary

Innovation is an important way of developing and improving the delivery of services.

Description and aims

Whilst innovation is not a requirement of the partnership it is recommended as a way of helping to achieve its aims.

Targets and monitoring

None

Reference documents

None

Appendix (18) – Housing Strategy**Statement of intent**

The council's Housing Strategy provides the strategic overview and a series of action plans aimed at addressing housing need in the city.

Commentary

A clear understanding of the housing issues facing York across all tenures is essential in order to establish priorities for action and investment. Historically, the Housing Strategy has focused on the council's own role as a landlord, but in recent years wider consideration of housing in the private sector has also been incorporated into the strategy. Actions and priorities agreed by the Housing Liaison Group should further the aims of the Housing Strategy.

Description and aims

As the strategic Housing Authority for York, the council will consult widely with housing association partners in preparing the new 2005-2010 Housing Strategy. The Housing Liaison Group will be an important vehicle for the consultation and liaison in this role. There will also be other opportunities for consultation to which partners are invited.

Targets and monitoring

The Housing Strategy will include a number of action plans and targets and those relevant to the work of the group will be monitored and copied to members of the Housing Liaison Group..

Reference documents

City of York Council Housing Strategy 2003-2008; City of York Council Housing Strategy Review (pending) 2004 and 2005.

Appendix (19) – York Pride and community leadership

Statement of intent

The partners all adopt the principles and policies of York Pride and Transforming York and endeavour to apply them in practical and identifiable ways. Each partner will report annually on its actions and activities and the council will keep the partnership informed of the development of York Pride and Transforming York and their relationship with the activities of all partners. RSLs will consider becoming York Business Pride organisations.

Commentary

As can be seen from below, there is a wide range of issues and actions that can be used to ensure that the York Pride campaign is carried out and embedded in the policies, practices and ethos of all partners. Some of these will be mutually acceptable and identifiable whereas others will be singular and negotiable with each partner.

Description and aims

York Pride is the title of City of York Council's comprehensive range of programmes and initiatives to enhance the physical appearance and condition of the city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces generally - in the suburbs, in the villages and in the city centre. Its objective is to tackle the everyday, physical issues which affect the sense of a shared pride in a place which should be a delight to live, work and relax in.

As an immediate first step, York Pride will tackle litter; the cleanliness and condition of roads, paths and squares; the condition of grass verges and planted public spaces; graffiti; gullies; street furniture; and the appearance and condition of council housing estates. As part of this first step, York Pride will also tackle the effectiveness of customer contact with the council to report problems in these areas.

As York Pride gets under way it will be extended to cover the external appearance and signage of council buildings and vehicles; the internal appearance and functioning of reception areas and publicly accessible parts of council buildings; reinvigoration of the council's customer care culture and the ambassadorial role council staff can play on behalf of the council and city; the participation of other parts of the public sector **and providers of social housing**; the engagement of transport operators and taxi operators; and the engagement of all businesses and the whole community in maintaining and

improving the physical standards of public spaces and those private spaces which are visible to, or accessible by, the public.

York Pride rests on the conviction that the physical environment can uplift or diminish the sense of how 'liveable in' a place feels, and can generate a willingness on the part of local people and businesses to play a part in preserving and enhancing the physical surroundings of which they are proud. York Pride recognises that its success depends on the **wider participation of the whole city** and that that wider participation in turn depends on clear leadership by the council and a determination by the council to take a lead in improving those services for which it is primarily responsible. York Pride is inextricably linked with its companion priority, tackling anti-social behavior – see also appendix (8). Anti-social behavior is not only a contributory cause of a decline in the physical environment, but can itself be caused by living in surroundings which no one seems to take pride in or care strongly about. Anti-social behavior also has a powerful effect on the experience of York as a place to live, work and relax in. Tackling anti-social behavior will be the subject of a separate report to the Executive, based on a proposed anti-social behavior strategy to be entered into by the Safer York Partnership, the council and the police.

The city's overall wellbeing will depend on much more than York Pride and tackling anti-social behavior, for example, it will also depend on tackling transport issues and **the provision of affordable housing**, on providing expanded opportunities for culture and recreation for people of all ages, and on tackling environmental sustainability and social inclusion. The twin priorities of York Pride and tackling anti-social behavior are not sufficient on their own to bring about a transformation of the city to one which is even more of a delight to live, work, and relax in, but they are essential to that transformation.

Transforming York is a programme² of change that aims to help the council deliver 'excellent' services for its customers; generate a sense of pride in its employees ; and form a reputation for excellence for its service delivery and local leadership from **partners** and stakeholders. This is a process that will affect all aspects of the Agreement over time and will be a consideration in assessing its effectiveness.

Targets and monitoring

An example of the issues and actions that could form part of the partners' commitment to York Pride within the Agreement is shown below:

Ryedale Housing Association – York Pride

York Pride is an initiative which aims to encourage all residents to take a pride in the city and their locality by;

- making a better environment
- improving the quality of life for all
- creating safer communities.

Ryedale Housing Association (RHA), part of the Yorkshire Housing Group, subscribes to York Pride by meeting the following ten objectives in the management of its homes and estates.

Objectives	How RHA meets the objective
1. Work with recognised tenants'/residents' groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ryedale Southern Area Tenants' Association represents all RHA tenants in York
2. Undertake regular communication with tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Outlook', a seasonal tenants magazine, is sent to all households • Three yearly customer survey across the Yorkshire Housing Group • Customer satisfaction forms issued following non-emergency repairs, ASB cases, money & benefits advice, sign-up and tenancy termination
3. Promote tenant involvement in estate improvement schemes and pride in the neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual 'Good Neighbour' competition – won in 2004 by a resident of Clifton. • Tenants' Association has direct involvement in prioritising annual environmental improvement funds – schemes for 2004 in York are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) construction of mobility scooter store at sheltered housing scheme in Haxby 2) fencing and surface treatment to create a safe play area at a general needs block of flats in Hull Road 3) provision of cycle racks at three sheltered housing schemes. • Garden maintenance scheme for elderly/disabled tenants with private gardens. Tenants can opt to pay for the service with

	<p>their rent, thus spreading the cost over the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants have direct involvement with home and external improvement schemes.
<p>4. Issue an up-to-date Tenants' Handbook to all tenants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive handbook produced and issued in 2004

Objectives	How RHA meets the objective
5. Ensure that void properties are well maintained and re-let quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum void standards introduced in 2004. • Average re-let time of two and a half weeks for 2003/04 in York.
6. Operate service standards for communal areas and state services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service standards are published in the Tenants' Handbook. • Grounds maintenance is undertaken to all communal gardens. • Cleaning is undertaken to communal parts of blocks containing more than four flats.
7. Operate an estate based handyman service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A handyman is employed for the York area, provided with a uniform and a van with RHA signage. • The service provides a visible presence on estates and a quick response to rubbish dumping, graffiti removal and minor repairs.
8. Operate a repairs-by-appointment system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be introduced in 2004.
9. Maintain an up-to-date Anti-Social Behaviour strategy, policy and procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed in 2004. • The Tenancy Agreement, reviewed in 2004, gives emphasis to anti-social behaviour issues.
10. Undertake regular checks/visits to customers before and after the start of tenancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-tenancy checks and visits. • Home visit four weeks after tenancy commencement. • Home visit during notice period before end of tenancy. • Minimum of fortnightly visit by warden to over 400 elderly persons' dwellings.

RHA requests the cooperation of its residents in maintaining these objectives. RHA promotes its involvement in York Pride by:

- displaying the logo on its documents and publications where appropriate
- displaying the ten York Pride objectives in its office reception area and the communal areas of its sheltered schemes and blocks of flats
- displaying the logo on the exterior of its blocks of flats
- an article in '*Outlook* magazine

Reference documents

City of York Council - York Pride ...various reports to councillors ;
Transforming York ... various reports to councillors

Appendix (20) – Homelessness strategy, policy and procedures

Statement of intent

To understand and provide for the housing needs of homeless people and to contribute to a reduction in the causes of homelessness.

Commentary

Addressing the causes and results of homelessness, thus meeting the housing need for a small but significant part of York's residents, is a high priority for all social housing providers working together and with other agencies.

Description and aims

Homelessness affects a significant number of households in York and the prevention of homelessness and housing of homeless people impinges on a range of operations carried out by partners.

Targets and monitoring

These are set and carried out by CYC including such items as the outcome of nominations.

Reference documents

City of York Council Rough Sleepers Strategy; City of York Council Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003-2008; York Homeless Forum.

Appendix (21) – Supporting People

Statement of intent

CYC, as Administering Authority for Supporting People, and RSLs will co-operate together in identifying and providing housing needs and support.

Commentary

The aim of the Supporting People programme is to establish a strategic, integrated policy and funding framework through local partnerships in response to identified local need.

Description and aims

The role of the partnership in the Supporting People Programme is to assist with the liaison, information sharing, needs analysis and the service delivery objectives of the programme. A number of other activities that are identified in this agreement also form part of the Supporting People programme and activities (e. g. housing benefits).

Targets and monitoring

These are set by the Supporting People programme.

Reference documents

None

Appendix (22) – Supported Housing

Statement of intent

CYC and RSLs will work together in identifying options for the provision of Supported Housing and outreach support. This will include identifying funding opportunities and working in partnership to meet identified gaps in service provision.

Commentary

There is a significant number of households in York that do or would benefit from support to enable them to choose their housing options

Description and aims

To deliver supported living options to meet the housing needs of vulnerable customer groups in York.

Targets and monitoring

Services may be monitored by the Commissioning section of Community Services (CYC) and the Supporting People Programme.

Reference documents

None

Appendix (23) – Empty homes

Statement of intent

Partners will work together to encourage and enable the bringing back into use of empty homes of any tenure.

Commentary

There are always a number of homes which are empty for a range of reasons. Most are being actively marketed for sale or letting, but a small number are left empty for long periods because they need repairs, refurbishment or for other reasons that mean the owner is unwilling or unable to dispose of them. It is possible to bring back into use a small proportion of these homes including short-term leasing agreements and (if available) the use of the York Landlord Grant.

Description and aims

CYC, working with partners, will aim to maximise the number of long-term empty homes brought back into use consistent with available resources.

Targets and monitoring

A Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI64) currently reports on the number of empty homes brought back into use. The targets are set and monitored by CYC in consultation with partners.

Reference documents

City of York Council Empty Homes Policy Statement (2004)