

**THE EXECUTIVE**

**7 OCTOBER 2003**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING & HEALTH**

<b>SELECTION OF REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORDS FOR BARKING &amp; DAGENHAM'S PREFERRED PARTNERS PANEL AND ALLOCATION TO NEW HOUSING PROJECTS</b>	<b>FOR DECISION</b>
<p><i>This report deals with forming partnerships for the delivery of affordable homes and regeneration initiatives.</i></p> <p><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>This report follows the decision of the Executive to select a number of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to be the preferred partners of the Council in developing and managing new affordable homes.</p> <p>The report confirms that following further investigations, London &amp; Quadrant Housing Trust and Presentation Housing Association have demonstrated that they meet the criteria for inclusion in the partnering panel.</p> <p>The report also refers to a submission received from Southern Housing Group requesting that the decision to exclude them be reviewed. As it was agreed by the Executive that any future RSL submissions to be preferred partners of the Council will be evaluated on the basis of the contribution that the organisation can make towards the achievement of the community priorities, the approach from Southern has been assessed in that context and presented to the Executive for consideration. This is a departure from the original recommendation of the ad hoc Member panel, which considered the applications.</p> <p>This report goes on to set the allocation of RSL partners to realise the potential of the land disposal sites as well as other new housing projects and estate regeneration programmes.</p> <p><b><u>Recommendations</u></b></p> <p>That the Executive is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Agree to admit London &amp; Quadrant Housing Trust and Presentation Housing Association to the preferred RSL partners' panel (subject to the condition in paragraph 2.1 in relation to L&amp;Q).</li><li>2. Include Southern Housing Group in the RSL panel, subject to good progress over the next 6 months with the new housing development at St. Ann's.</li><li>3. Confirm the allocation of RSLs to new housing projects as indicated in Appendix A.</li></ol> <p><b><u>Reasons</u></b></p> <p>The extension of the panel of preferred partner RSLs will strengthen the Council's ability to deliver high quality new affordable homes and to bring about successful regeneration programmes for the community.</p>	

<b>Contact:</b> Ken Jones	Interim Head of Housing Strategy	Tel: 020 8227 5703 Fax: 020 8227 5799 Minicom: 020 8227 5755 E-mail <a href="mailto:ken.jones@lbbd.gov.uk">ken.jones@lbbd.gov.uk</a>
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## 1. Background

1.1 The Executive agreed on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2003 to select the following RSLs to the Council's panel of preferred partners:

- Anglia Housing Group (Stort Valley Housing Association)
- East Thames Housing Group
- Metropolitan Housing Trust
- Ujima Housing Association

This followed recommendations from an ad hoc panel of Members.

1.2 Further to this, it was agreed that enquires were to be made of London & Quadrant Housing Trust and Presentation Housing Association with a view to adding these to the panel.

1.3 In the course of the selection process, Southern Housing Group's application for inclusion had been unsuccessful. This decision centred upon concerns with this RSL's performance in progressing the housing development at St Anns and in bringing forward regeneration plans for Gascoigne Estate.

1.4 The Executive also agreed that any future appointments to the RSL partner panel will be measured on how they contribute to achieving the community priorities.

## 2. Present Position

2.1 Following correspondence and interviews with both London & Quadrant and Presentation it is confirmed that the reservations previously indicated have been addressed and, therefore, both RSLs can be admitted to the panel.

However, in the case of London & Quadrant this is qualified in that they will not be commissioned to develop any sheltered housing/ extra care housing scheme.

Both RSLs demonstrated the capacity, responsiveness and drive to work in partnership with the Council to help realise the community priorities.

2.2 Southern Housing Group have made written representations asking for the decision to exclude them from the panel to be reviewed and have submitted further evidence. The issues raised have been assessed in the context of the contributions made towards the community priorities and in this light it is considered that these are worthy of consideration by the Executive.

2.3 The original ad hoc Member panel, which met on 21st February, agreed to the inclusion of Anglia, East Thames, Metropolitan and Ujima and that any further submissions could be considered at an annual review of the RSL panel. The

Member panel's view was taken into account by the Executive when reaching its decision on 20<sup>th</sup> May. Contrary to the view of the Member panel this report seeks to extend the RSL panel in order to maximise delivery of projects as in the view of both the Executive lead Member for Housing, Health and Social Care and officers there is an urgent need to act now. This is because these 3 additional RSLs will aid delivery of future affordable housing projects (specifically the land disposal sites and Barking Reach) as each of these has been particularly successful in attracting investment from Government funding agencies in this and recent years. Indeed, all 3 are in the top 10 nationally.

### **3. Southern Housing Group (SHG)**

3.1 The following summarises the additional information supplied by SHG. There are a number of initiatives taken by SHG or are planned which will have a positive impact on the borough. The specific concern mentioned in 1.3 is addressed in the final bullet point below:

- SHG regularly attend meetings of the Barking & Dagenham Partnership as observers (they have requested to become full members)
- They have employed a Social Investment Officer dedicated to working in the borough. His work programme covers a number of projects across estates.
- The Youth Development Officer employed by SHG works with young people on their estates in Barking & Dagenham – developing activities.
- Members of their staff are involved in the Crime & Disorder Working Group as well as the Borough Housing Association Group.
- SHG are in the process of setting up a Thames Gateway Regional operation for their management, maintenance and regeneration teams. Their intention had been to establish this in Barking Town Centre, initially with 25 staff. This would give a local contact and service access point their tenants in Barking & Dagenham (and neighbouring boroughs). This commitment would be dependent upon inclusion as a preferred partner.
- They are to commit £30,000 towards Active Citizenship pilots after having received support from the Housing Corporation to run 2 pilots in London. SHG had identified Barking & Dagenham for one of these and begun discussions with the Council.
- Currently SHG are developing 173 new affordable homes in the borough (social rent, shared ownership and the innovative community bonus low cost home ownership at St Anns) across 6 areas. In the last 5 years they have built 176 new affordable homes here. The new schemes are now progressing in development with evidence of involvement of local communities.

3.2 The initiatives in 3.1 demonstrate a commitment to contributing to all of the community priorities. In view of this it is suggested that SHG should be added to the Council's panel of preferred partners subject to a review in 6 months of the progress of the new development on St Anns. This will include an assessment of the engagement with the local community.

### **4. Allocation of RSL partners to housing and regeneration developments**

4.1 Appendix A sets out the proposed deployment. This has been done on the basis of the relative strengths, expertise and capacity of the organisations. A major advantage of making earlier decisions on which RSLs will be the Council's partners

for schemes is that there can be better engagement with all stakeholders. This can be seen with the land disposal sites, where RSLs are involved in the focus groups comprising local residents and Ward Members.

4.2 Given the complexity of demands and also the scale of developments in relation to Barking Town Centre and Barking Reach / Creekmouth and the eastern end of Thames View Estate the following approach is suggested:

- Undertake selection processes from the RSL panel for these two areas. This is likely to incorporate working in a partnership with the Council and community within delivery vehicles (possibly Housing Regeneration Companies) for the development of new affordable homes and estate and social regeneration initiatives.

## **5. Future Arrangements**

5.1 A forum for RSLs with Member involvement is to be set up. This will report to the Housing Group of the Barking & Dagenham Partnership and its remit will include new development, community development and safety and management issues.

5.2 Housing Strategy are in the process of appointing to a new post whose specific remit is to monitor the performance of RSLs to ensure compliance with agreements.

5.3 All future reviews of the suitability of RSLs for the partner panel will be carried out in the context of the contribution towards the community priorities.

**Appendix A**

<b>Site</b>	<b>RSL(s)</b>	<b>Affordable homes (approx. no.)</b>	<b>Dwelling size mix</b>
Blackborne Rd	Stort Valley	44	50% - 1/2 bed flats 40% - 2/3 bed houses 10% - 4/5 bed houses
Digby Gardens	Stort Valley	35	Bungalows 2 x 3 remainder 1 bed.
Gale Street	Metropolitan	89	70% - 1/2 bed flats 15% - 2/3 bed houses 15% - 4/5 bed houses
Reede Road	Metropolitan	166	70% - 1/2 bed flats 15% - 2/3 bed houses 15% - 4/5 bed houses
Lymington Fields	London & Quadrant Stort Valley Presentation	205	70% - 1/2 bed flats 15% - 2/3 bed houses 15% - 4/5 bed houses
Ibscott Close	Stort Valley	10	6 – 2 bed flats 4 – 3 bed houses
Highview House	Stort Valley	24	
Thaxted House	Stort Valley	12	12 flats
Rugby Road	Stort Valley	17	5 – 4 bed houses 3 - 3 bed houses 6 – flats – move on accommodation.
Bromhall Road	London & Quadrant	30	