

# Lee Housing Association

Business Plan

2010-2015



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### CONTENTS

1. Introduction/Background and History
2. Business Description
3. Vision
4. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
5. Political, Economic, Social and Technological Analysis
6. Business Context
7. Partnership Working with Enfield Council
8. Growth and Development
9. Asset management
10. Efficiency and Value for Money
11. Financial Management
12. Human Resources and Organisation Development
13. Risk Management
14. Governance and Regulation
15. Action to Deliver
16. Our Service Objectives
17. Appendix 1: Five Year Financial Forecast

# Lee Housing Association

## Business Plan

2010-2015

### 1. Introduction: Background and History

Lee Housing Association is based in the London Borough of Enfield. It was established in the 1960s by officers and students from Enfield College of Technology (subsequently part of Middlesex Polytechnic/University) who were concerned to provide decent rented accommodation at affordable rents for students. Its first major scheme, Swan House, was opened in 1979.

The Association expanded steadily through the early 1980s and by 1984 it became necessary to appoint a manager and full-time staff. The client group was extended to include all young single people in the age range from 17 to 30 who had connections in the Enfield area. Later, move-on accommodation was developed that was self-contained, for older single people who were in the employment age range.

In the 1990s the Association undertook "*Living Over The Shop*" rehabilitation schemes, thereby acquiring some commercial property. Whilst income is overwhelmingly derived from residential rents, the income from commercial property does help with the funding of the Association's activities.

Lee Housing's stock has been acquired from three sources. Firstly, it has attracted grants from the Housing Corporation and the London Borough of Enfield to build and rehabilitate properties. Secondly, it has entered into agreements to manage dwellings owned by other parties and, finally, it has purchased properties directly from its own resources. For example, in 2005 six additional rooms were provided while installing a photovoltaic roof at Swan House.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 Lee Housing will own 126 dwellings providing 341 bed spaces/tenancies. In addition Lee Housing manages 10 dwellings providing 10 bed spaces/tenancies on behalf of (Riversmead Housing Association). The tenancies are mainly in shared accommodation but include 35 self-contained flats. About 50% of the units are let to students.

### 2. Business Description

Lee Housing Association is a Registered Social Landlord [RSL], an Industrial and Provident Society and is an exempt charity, operating as a provider of affordable social housing to single people in the London Borough of Enfield and surrounding areas to Eastern Enfield.

Lee Housing Association operates in an area of deprivation, and high diversity, where affordable housing is at a premium. The Association was founded by staff and students of a predecessor of Middlesex University to assist in

meeting the accommodation needs of students. Over time the organisation has broadened its scope to include meeting housing needs of a wider range of single people. As a landlord providing furnished accommodation and working on innovative schemes such as Young Builders' Scheme and the Healthy Living Initiative, Lee Housing Association has tried not only to provide social housing but additional support to enable its tenants to realise and achieve their aspirations.

The purpose of Lee Housing Association is to house and support people while they are developing their independence, as students in education or by other means. Lee helps to address and prevent the problem of 'dropout' of expensive education or from society itself. Lee Housing Association helps people into independence and achievement, and, by filtering its learning into 'the system', promotes better practice in the public sector in dealing with this client group.

Today Lee Housing Association houses mainly young single people in their transition to independence, as a student in full-time education, young people leaving care or supported housing and achieving independence from the family home.

### 3. Vision

The vision of Lee Housing Association is of a vibrant community based social housing provider of housing and a secure environment in which people can develop themselves and their opportunities through our range of effective partnerships.

#### Mission

The Association seeks to provide a high quality and accessible service to its existing tenants, and to provide accommodation for single people in Enfield and the surrounding areas.

#### Values

Lee Housing Association, like other charities and housing associations, faces the challenge of ensuring that its services and organisation values work together in an environment that is competitive, business-focused with limited resources.

Lee Housing Association has adopted the following set of values to guide the operation of the organisation:

- **Charity Ethos**

The organisation does not operate for profit. Surpluses are carefully budgeted to ensure that the organisation can maintain and enhance the level and quality of services.

- **Operating Efficiency**

Maintain efficient administration and financial prudence, ensuring the delivery and procurement of services demonstrate value for money.

- **Tenant Involvement**

Providing focused quality services in a timely manner to our tenants, ensuring our service provision is enhanced by robust tenant involvement and engagement in the governance structure.

- **Equal Opportunities**

In the provision of housing, personal development programmes, employment, the composition of the Board and all other services and contracts.

The organisation believes that these are the values which will assist it to focus on need, commitment, performance and accountability. These combined values are intrinsic to the objectives of this business plan.

#### **How these values will be demonstrated:**

Lee Housing Association has looked carefully at the steps that need to be taken to ensure that the objectives of the business plan can be achieved.

Lee Housing Association will consistently demonstrate to its tenants, service users, partner organisation, funders, suppliers, its staff and other stakeholders that it shows:

- respect;
- integrity;
- a strong sense of responsibility;
- a commitment to high quality services;
- commitment to consultation and participative management with staff and service users;
- a commitment to learning and development for the organisation and its staff, and its service users;
- we will engage and work with contractors who have a strong customer focus and are committed to equal opportunities and diversity.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

To achieve its mission the organisation has set itself six strategic objectives as follows:

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To provide short to medium term housing for single people who are homeless as a foundation to enable them to achieve permanent housing;</li> </ul>  | <p><i>Services</i></p>              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To ensure a viable and sustainable business which is properly accountable to its shareholders, regulators and stakeholders;</li> </ul>  | <p><i>Value for Money</i></p>       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To develop relationships with local stakeholders to identify the aspirations of current and future service users;</li> </ul>  | <p><i>Network partnership</i></p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To ensure that Lee Housing Association meets or exceeds the Decent Homes Standard with environmentally friendly and cost effective initiatives;</li> </ul>  | <p><i>Asset Management</i></p>      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To continue to consider the development of housing and additional services through partnerships and projects which will assist our service users;</li> </ul>  | <p><i>Development</i></p>           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To actively participate in the neighbourhood(s) in which Lee Housing Association operates for the purpose of contributing to the local plans for general wellbeing and to promote actively and improve the perception of social housing.</li> </ul> | <p><i>Community Development</i></p> |

### Corporate Objectives

Meeting the six objectives in our corporate plan will:

- give our customers excellent services; and
- provide housing solutions for homeless single people.

The plan has involved a wide range of contributors through dialogues and surveys as follows:

- Board members;
- Staff Meetings;
- Strategy Day;
- Business Plan Working Group;
- Surveys;
- Our tenants; and
- One to Ones with Staff.

A central feature of this corporate plan will be to deliver on the concerns of tenants drawn from the 2010 tenant satisfaction survey.

#### 4. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

The following SWOT analysis is set in the context of an operating environment which can be summarised as follows:

- reduced Government funding over the next three years;
- General Election, creating a volatile planning environment;
- new regulator bringing changes to the social housing sector; and
- income squeezed through negative inflation.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ huge demand for our shared housing;</li> <li>▪ capacity to borrow;</li> <li>▪ meeting Decent Homes;</li> <li>▪ meets the requirement of the regulatory code;</li> <li>▪ strong leadership and Governance;</li> <li>▪ robust policy framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ lack of proportionality in regulation;</li> <li>▪ limited infrastructure capacity;</li> <li>▪ operating margin under pressure;</li> <li>▪ office and meeting space limited;</li> <li>▪ lack of intensive support to tenants;</li> <li>▪ challenging client group.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ strategic partnerships;</li> <li>▪ provide move-on accommodation for leaving care;</li> <li>▪ new development to provide move-on for supported housing;</li> <li>▪ voice for single homeless people in Enfield.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ new regulator with new regulations and standards;</li> <li>▪ economic downturn;</li> <li>▪ voids, rent arrears and bad debts;</li> <li>▪ lack of growth opportunities;</li> <li>▪ external lack of understanding about what the organisation does.</li> </ul>

#### 5. Pest Analysis (PEST)

In addition to analysing Lee Housing Association's internal environment, an analysis of the Political, Economic, Social and Technological environment in which Lee Housing Association operates was carried out.

POLITICAL	ECONOMIC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ implementation of Housing and Regeneration Act;</li> <li>▪ TSA reshaping regulation;</li> <li>▪ housing benefits reform;</li> <li>▪ environmental and sustainability agenda.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ low inflation driving rent reductions;</li> <li>▪ interest rates low, lack of return on reserves;</li> <li>▪ rising unemployment generating rent arrears</li> <li>▪ reduced grant for development and major repairs.</li> </ul>
SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ increasing housing need;</li> <li>▪ work-life balance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ changes in ways of working;</li> <li>▪ achieving efficiency.</li> </ul>

## 6. Business Context

Lee Housing Association operates almost exclusively in the London Borough of Enfield and during the lifetime of this business plan this will continue to be the case.

As at the 2001 census Enfield has a resident population of 273,539 which is distributed through 110,398 households and is a lower than average population compared with other London Boroughs.

Enfield is a distinct borough with considerable character, it has substantial green spaces and in parts its population enjoys a suburban lifestyle, while other areas reflect multiple deprivation and concentration of poverty on a par with inner London.

### Enfield's People

Enfield's 284,000 residents come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. About 50% of the borough's population is from minority ethnic communities and Enfield's state school pupils have recorded themselves under 87 different ethnic groups. We also have a large population of both 0-14s and older people in comparison to the rest of London and a child population that is large compared to the national average. The fastest growing age bands over the next 10 years are predicted to be people aged 45 to 54.

Enfield is ranked 70th most "deprived" out of the 354 local authority areas in England, a significant worsening of deprivation since 2004, when Enfield was 104th most deprived local authority in England. The borough's southern and eastern areas experience higher levels of deprivation and unemployment in comparison with the rest of Enfield and the children and young people are more likely to live in disadvantaged areas than the population as a whole. There are deficiencies in terms of local skills attainment and qualifications in Enfield, with a relatively low proportion of the working age population qualified to NVQ3+ level (approx 43%). Despite the significant industrial activity of the Upper Lee Valley corridor, unemployment is higher in Enfield than both the London and national average with marked variation between wards.

Enfield has high levels of unemployment and the second highest percentage increase in England for Income Support claimants between 2001 and 2004. While the number of Housing Benefits claimants in London has increased by 13% over the period 2003 to 2007, in Enfield the comparable figure is 36%, which is also the highest claimant increase in London. Private tenant housing benefit claims have increased by 50% between 2004 and 2007 to a level of 9,882 households. Analysis by the Greater London Authority on child poverty that measured children aged 18 and under in families claiming benefit, highlighted that 33.2% of our children lived in poverty. This ranks Enfield as the 19th worst authority in Great Britain for child poverty. Enfield's Local Area Agreement is focusing partnership activity on tackling these issues.

## About Housing in Enfield

Enfield has a wide range of housing with 84% being private sector dwellings, 16% council or housing association and 1.8% used as temporary accommodation.

The stock covers a wide range of dwelling types, including 1930's semis, Victorian terraces, council high-rise blocks and modern apartment blocks and houses.

The Borough is characterised by a strong presence of attractive pre-war family housing situated in peaceful suburbs, which is complemented by access to green belt and quality open space in the north of the Borough. The north-western area of the Borough is characterised by expensive housing country parkland and green belt land comprising approximately one third of Enfield's land.

The eastern area which was once part of the "Lee Valley manufacturing heartland" of London is characterised by a remaining industrial corridor and a legacy of low cost housing. The rest of the central and south-western area is characterised by suburban semi detached housing served by small shopping areas. The social housing stock is characterised by large numbers of "non-traditional" tower blocks, more than almost all other London boroughs.

The housing and other operation challenges for Lee Housing Association, the local authority and other registered social landlords are as follows:

- There is a shortage of 3,627 houses per year with not enough three or four bed family-sized homes.
- There is a need for more wheelchair accessible homes, about 4,000 people live in unsuitable housing, 37.5% due to mobility problems.
- 86% of vulnerable people live in mainstream housing and 13.3% want to move.
- 2,747 (September 2009) households were in temporary accommodation – the fourth highest in the country.
- There were 6,258 people on the Housing Register as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.
- Enfield is the 21<sup>st</sup> (in worst 6%) in England and Wales for housing overcrowding.
- Households from the broad ethnic categories of black, mixed, white other and other are accepted as homeless at a greater rate than their percentage of population in the Borough.
- Rough sleeping in the Borough is low and kept well below the Government targets.
- There is a significant shortage of move-on opportunities for young people leaving care and other people having no further need for supported housing.

## 7. Partnership Working with Enfield Council

Many organisations work in partnership with Enfield Council to provide homes to tackle homelessness and provide opportunities for sustainability and improved neighbourhoods. These include Communities and Local Government, the Homes and Communities Agency, the Tenant Services Authority, registered social landlords, private sector landlords, Enfield Homes, and many other voluntary and community sector organisations.

Over recent years Lee Housing Association, as one of the many partners working with Enfield Council, has been the mainstay in providing accommodation for single homeless people. Lee Housing Association has provided over 400 tenancies for single people between 2007 and 2010. Demand for Lee Housing Association's accommodation continues to be high with a one year waiting list for males and three months for females. Lee Housing Association values its partnership with Enfield Council, and during the lifetime of the business plan Lee Housing Association will continue to be the mainstay in providing housing solutions for single homeless people in Enfield.

Enfield's Youth Strategy 2009-12 and its homeless strategy 2008 acknowledges the lack of suitable accommodation for young people leaving care and the lack of move-on opportunity for people leaving supported housing generally.

Lee Housing Association has commenced a partnership with Enfield Council to provide move-on accommodation for some of its care leavers and is planning to develop new accommodation to provide move-on accommodation for people leaving supported housing generally.

Lee Housing Association's experience of providing (basic) accommodation for homeless people has been on the whole positive, however turnover is very high in relation to the total size of its population and the satisfaction level of those leaving could be improved. Over the lifetime of this business plan, Lee Housing Association will prioritise accessing funding to enhance its engagement with its tenants and achieve a greater level of sustainability and "positive move on".

## 8. Growth and Development

Lee Housing Association's ability to develop new accommodation is limited because of its size, its non-statutory client group not attracting social housing grant and operating margin. However the organisation provides niche accommodation which is in high demand and the Local Authority has indicated the need and its support for additional stock. Over the lifespan of the business plan, Lee Housing Association will focus development on its primary client group, eg single homeless. The organisation will however adopt a pragmatic approach and develop family accommodation where support is forthcoming from the Local Authority, or it will enable schemes to achieve viability.

The organisation has a long history of providing accommodation for students and will explore opportunities and different accommodation models, eg intermediate rent to respond to ongoing needs. Lee Housing Association's target in relation to development is to develop 38 two bedroom flats.

Over the lifespan of this plan we will increase the organisation's profile to provide an appropriate reference to our development strategy.

## 9. Asset Management

Lee Housing Association has a well maintained stock which is in high demand and the organisation is on target to achieve Decent Homes by March 2010.

The aims of the organisation's Asset Management Strategy is to:

- i) keep dwellings in good condition;
- ii) bring properties up to date and in line with current and projected customer expectation and demand;
- iii) ensure works and properties comply with current and perspective regulations;
- iv) achieve an appropriate balance between responsive and cyclical repairs and capital investment;
- v) meet the decent standard criteria and maintain the same;
- vi) achieve a high standard of energy efficiency; and
- vii) achieve value for money.

Over the next five years investment will focus and ensure that Lee Housing Association continues to achieve Decent Homes, we will upgrade communal TV aerial systems to be capable of receiving digital transmission, improve the landscaping of estates and significantly improve the external communal areas of 40% of our stock.

We will seek grant fund to support our asset management ambitions and, subject to the same, we anticipate an investment of about £2m over the lifespan of the business plan. A detailed asset management plan will be generated arising from a stock condition survey which will be undertaken in 2011:2012.

## 10. Efficiency and Value for Money

Over the lifespan of this plan, Lee Housing Association will continue to review its working practices in order to improve services to tenants and achieve greater effectiveness. This will be achieved by the review and implementation of our continuous improvement plan. Key features will however include the following:

- implement the value for money strategy and embed a value for money culture throughout the organisation;
- fully engage with our Procurement for Housing (PfH) in order to secure the benefits of joint procurement and volume purchase;

- benchmarking costs through BMG20 and associated membership of House Mark. By using benchmarking information, assess areas of operational activities where effectiveness and efficiencies can be obtained.
- Reduce void losses and arrears in line with targets. This will be achieved by improvements in performance management, internal re-organisation, better use of information technology, tenant allocation risk assessment and better levels of support provided to our tenants on debt management, budgeting and accessing benefits;
- Aim to ensure that the level of management cost is no greater than the level of inflation;
- Respond in a timely manner to recommendations from our internal auditor following reviews of our services.

## 11. Financial Management

We recognise that the next five years will present a challenging financial environment. Financial viability is a cornerstone of our operating plan of achieving our business objectives. Our operating margin will be limited over the business plan cycle and focused risk management will be undertaken in recognition of the volatility of the economy.

Despite the challenging economic environment Lee Housing Association is well equipped to meet the challenge ahead and to this end we will over the lifespan of the business plan:

- ensure that all financial covenants with the lender are achieved with sufficient headroom to provide for contingency;
- procure sufficient and appropriate private finance to fund new development;
- review existing financial staffing structure to determine best fit for the business;
- consider the organisation's reserve position to ensure that we are making best use of them.

## 12. Human Resources and Organisation Development

We recognise that people are the greatest resource we have and that well-motivated and trained staff are crucial to achieve our organisation's aims. We are committed to the principles of Investors in People (IiP) and will aim to improve our performance in relation to the standard.

Over the last two years the organisation has developed and/or reviewed its human resource policies. During the lifespan of the business plan careful monitoring will be undertaken to ensure robust implementation. In addition to the above the organisation will focus attention on the following:

- We will review our reward strategy to determine its contribution to our ability to recruit and retain our people.
- We will continuously explore ways in which communication in the organisation can improve, eg team briefings;

- We will undertake joint Board and staff diversity training to ensure a corporate approach;
- We will review our staffing structure to ensure it is right for our current business activities and roles and skills are aligned to the same;
- We will continue to undertake our Staff Satisfaction survey and respond positively to areas of concern.

### 13. Risk Management

Lee Housing Association has a robust approach to risk management. The Board will continue to have an active engagement in the process and both internal and external auditors have a brief to explore risk in the business generally and specifically to report on compliance and controls.

Our risk management goals are:

- to take a proactive approach in anticipating and influencing events before they happen;
- to facilitate better informed decision-making; and
- to improve contingency planning.

We will continue to approach risk management as a process that does not stand on its own, rather it is the balancing of a number of interwoven demands with each other. We will ensure that our risk management process is intertwined with other operating activities and is a dominant feature in the management of the organisation.

### 14. Governance and Regulation

Lee Housing Association has been the focus of intensive Housing Corporation (now Tenant Services Authority – TSA) over the past few years. Lee Housing Association enters this planning cycle with a regulatory judgement from the TSA confirming that it meets all the requirements of the “regulatory code”.

Lee Housing Association welcomes the proposed regulatory standards by the TSA. We are particularly pleased with the Standard’s focus on tenant involvement as this reflects our operating strategy.

During the lifespan of this business plan we will continue to meet all the requirements of the regulatory code.

We will continue to review our governance arrangements to ensure effectiveness and accountability. The rules, terms of reference, and structure underlying our governance arrangements will be regularly evaluated in the light of environmental changes and emerging good practice.

We have adopted the good practice enshrined in the National Housing Federation’s (NHF) revised 2009 “Code of Governance – Excellence in Governance”. We will ensure that our Board sub committees and formal working groups have sufficient representation in terms of skills balance,

diversity and stakeholder. We will particularly ensure that customers continue to have a strong voice in our governance structure. Individual Board members are appraised and the effectiveness of the Board as a whole evaluated on an ongoing basis in keeping with good practice and the NHF's Code of Governance. Appropriate learning and development opportunities will be provided for Board members to update their skills and knowledge. During the lifespan of the business plan we will explore updating our website to facilitate a dedicated board member area to facilitate easier access to policies and governance information generally.

We will review our delegated authority framework to ensure appropriate controls but achieve flexibility over continued high standard of customer service and improve performance on a continual basis.

## 15. Action to Deliver

Delivery of this Business Plan will rely on active management with a focus on what really matters to tenants and other stakeholders.

This plan is a high level framework, to ensure we deliver, it is supported by SMART objectives in the annual plan for the life span of the corporate plan.

Sitting alongside this corporate plan will be a tenant customer service plan which will address the 2010 tenant satisfaction survey issues. Progress and performance will be continually monitored and managed by the Chief Executive Management Team. The Board will set the performance standards and receives regular progress reports.

Tenants contribute through Board participation, the tenant panel, joining in estate inspections and Equality and Diversity Working Group (E&DWG) and the tenant reception.

## 16. Our Service Objectives

Lee Housing Association will aim to deliver these objectives to provide excellent services to our customers and deliver housing solutions to homeless single people.

### 16.1 Housing Services and Customer Care

We will provide short to medium term housing for single people who are homeless as a foundation to enable them to achieve permanent housing:

- we will review access to our services, looking at allocations opening hours, method of contact and written information on them;
- we will consult customers on and establish a revised customer care charter by April 2012;
- we will review and publish all our customer services pamphlets by March 2012;

- we will undertake an informal customer satisfaction service each year on key aspects of our customer services;
- with our customers, we will develop local housing services standards by April 2011;
- we will consult with our tenants and improve transparency in reporting performance to tenants and local authorities in the areas in which we operate;
- we will publish a tenant customer service plan by July 2010 which will outline responses to tenant concerns in the 2010 tenant satisfaction survey;
- we will achieve a tenant satisfaction level of 85% by April 2012;
- we will enhance our tenancy support services and achieve a 75% positive move-on.

## 16.2 Value for Money and Good Governance

We will ensure a viable, sustainable business, which is properly accountable to its shareholders, regulator and stakeholders:

- we will establish a value for money register to facilitate tracking and reporting of cash savings and efficiency gains;
- we will systematically review our approach to arrears and voids management;
- we will review our options for procurement of our responsive maintenance services;
- we will consult tenants on the value for money strategy;
- we will review our governance arrangement to ensure effectiveness and accountability.

## 16.3 Networks and Partnerships

We will develop relationships with local stakeholders to identify the aspirations of current and future service users:

- we will develop, in consultation with Enfield Council, a homelessness strategy;
- we will secure a development partner to assist us in developing more homes;
- we will work with partner agencies to improve neighbourhood management;
- we will explore strategic partnerships (including mergers) that can contribute to enhancing our programme of tenant sustainability;
- we will identify grants and partner opportunities to encourage community projects.

## 16.4 Asset Management/Investment

We will meet and continue to exceed the decent homes standards with environmentally friendly and cost effective initiatives:

- we will secure funding (approximately £750,000) to replace the heating system in 50% of our stock;
- we will seek funding (approximately £500,000) to substantially improve the external communal areas of 40% of our stock;
- we will undertake a full stock condition survey and use the outcome as a basis for assessment/stock investment;
- we will make provision for stock investment (major repairs/Decent Homes) of £2m for the lifespan of the business plan;
- we will develop and deliver an active plan arising from our comprehensive energy performance assessment.

### 16.5 Providing More Housing Solutions and Support Services

We will consider the development of housing and additional services through partnership, which will assist our service users/tenants:

- we will develop 76 units of accommodation over the lifespan of this business plan;
- we will establish a formal development partnership with another Registered Social Landlord;
- we will ensure that our development is a direct response to Enfield Borough's homelessness strategy;
- we will seek support from Enfield Council (and others) to enhance and widen the services provided to tenants to achieve sustainability;
- we will continue to develop our partnership with Enfield Borough Council to be the mainstay in the provision of move-on accommodation for young people leaving care.

### 16.6 Community Engagement

We will actively participate in the neighbourhoods in which Lee Housing Association operates for the purpose of contributing to the local plans for general wellbeing and to promote activity and improve the perception of social housing:

- we will ensure active engagement in Enfield Council's Housing Strategy Group(s);
- we will participate in the voluntary sector forum, eg Enfield Community Empowerment Network (ECEM);
- we will engage in community activities designed to improve neighbourhoods, eg place shaping;
- we will pay an active role in neighbourhood groups to address Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

Updated 6.4.10