

Title: Sub Regional Housing Policy

What are the main issues? *What is the policy background?, how does it link to the councils corporate priorities?*

Regional and sub-regional approaches to the development of housing policy and, increasingly, delivery have grown rapidly in importance in recent years. Key changes in the last five years include:

- The establishment of Regional Housing Boards with a brief to develop regional housing strategies and advise ministers on the allocation of capital funding.
- The Housing Corporation's concurrent shift to sub-regional allocations for the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) and the consequent development of sub-regional approaches to choice-based lettings.
- A shift in capital allocations away from local authorities, effectively leaving council's with direct allocations only for the public sector decent homes programme.
- A shift towards sub-regional bidding processes for other capital expenditure, for example of private sector renewal.
- The abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant, effectively ending council-controlled allocations to housing associations for new building.

In London, another key development has been the establishment of the Greater London Authority and, in particular, the powers available to the Mayor of London. From the start, the Mayor has had responsibility for the London Plan, the statutory spatial development plan for the region, with which local plans are expected to be in conformity. Recent government announcements have confirmed that the Mayor will now take the lead on production of the London Housing Strategy, which will also be a statutory document, and will have the power to make decisions (rather than recommendations to ministers) on the allocation of the affordable housing element of the Regional Housing Pot.

At the same time, government has been emphasising the role of "localism". In particular, there is an expectation that Local Area Agreements, overseen by Local Strategic Partnerships, will become a key focus for delivery, including delivery against housing objectives.

In summary, the key policy issue here could be described as the need to establish the respective roles of local, sub-regional and regional agencies in deciding how best to meet identified needs.

Why are we looking at this area? Have there been recent legislation/policy changes? Are there any performance or budgetary issues?,

The key recent development is the announcement of new powers for the Mayor of London, as noted above, although it may also be timely to review the operation of sub-regional working in any event. The expected Local Government White Paper should clarify wider government intentions and it may be that members will wish to consider the timing of any review in light of this and the publication of the GLA Bill, which will need to be enacted in order to implement the Mayor's new powers fully.

The key budgetary issue is the extent to which spending on housing will remain within the control of the local authority and how this might affect the balance between meeting local and sub-regional/regional needs.

What should the review cover? Give brief outline of what members could focus on, which partners to engage with, how residents/public can be involved.

Key issues will include:

- The extent of the Mayor's powers and their impact at the local level;
- The relationship between strategy and policy development at the local, sub-regional and regional levels and, in particular, the extent to which the council can influence decision making at the wider levels;
- The limitations on the council's control over capital spending on housing and how the council can maximise available resources;
- Current arrangements for sub-regional working and how these can be improved;
- The sub-region's role within the region and in relation to regional bodies, e.g. GLA and ALG;
- The extent to which joint working or joint procurement could be undertaken and the potential benefits or disadvantages;
- Given the important links with planning, members may wish to consider the impact of regional planning policy on housing.

It would be advisable to consider the views of key partner organisations, especially housing associations, as well as seeking views from other councils in the sub-region.

What could the review achieve? influence policy change?, improvement to service delivery?, budget savings?, develop partnerships?.

Desirable outcomes include:

- Better understanding of the relationships between the local, sub-regional and regional tiers of policy/decision making, leading to;
- Enhanced opportunities to maximise resource allocations;
- More effective influencing of policy/decision making at the regional and sub-regional levels;
- Identifying potential for more cost-effective joint working, e.g. through joint procurement or shared services.