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**Issue 7**

**Housing Partnership Newsletter**

**September 2006**

## **Affordable Housing Strategy now in place**



The Affordable Housing Strategy has now been formally agreed by the Council and the aim is to produce over 500 additional affordable properties over the next five years.

This will be achieved in a variety of ways, offering greater choice across the borough for those seeking an affordable home.

- Half of the additional affordable homes will be made available for rent
- Half will be made available for sale – through equity share, discounted sale or Homebuy
- Affordable housing will be linked to regeneration initiatives in certain areas
- Working with our partner Housing Associations to deliver affordable housing to meet specific needs
- The Property Shops to act as a point of access to a choice of affordable housing options

A key contribution to our target will come from the new requirement

on developers to ensure that 20% of new housing on larger housing developments is affordable.

Discussions with developers have started although given the nature of the planning and building process it will take time to start producing homes. It is for this reason that the overall strategy also looks at other ways of overcoming shortages such as by minimising empty homes and initiatives with private landlords.

The need for this strategy originated some time ago within the Partnership to tackle the emerging shortages of affordable housing. Following the collection of evidence and further discussion, the draft policy was presented to the June meeting.

Following feedback from the workshop sessions, changes were made to further stress the need for choice and for different approaches in different areas and the strategy was finally agreed in July.

Whilst in many ways this is just the start of the process of tackling affordability issues in Wigan, the Partnership have played a major role in identifying this problem and in devising the response.

**Well Done to the Partnership!**

## You said, we did!



Over the last twelve months the Housing Partnership has consulted you over various matters. Your feedback has been invaluable and we wanted to highlight the impact that your suggestions have made.

**You said:** Updates were needed to the Housing Strategy and those strategies sitting under it – the Homelessness Strategy and Private Sector Housing Strategy - to respond to the current housing situation.

**We did:** The Housing Strategy was updated in November 2005 and is now relevant to the affordability issues in the borough. The Private Sector Housing and Homelessness Strategies have also been updated following consultation with you.

**We will:** Monitor the actions set out in these strategies to make sure we are achieving targets. We will update the Housing Partnership and Homelessness Forum on progress made.

**You said:** Affordable Housing was a priority in the borough.

**We did:** An Affordable Housing Strategy and guidance note was put together to address the issues, together with Planning agreements. This was finalised in July 2006.

**We will:** Continue to work to address affordable housing problems in Wigan and will monitor actions and progress made.

**You said:** The Housing Partnership needed updating and a sub-group should be formed to take this forward.

**We did:** A sub-group is currently being formed to consider proposals.

**We will:** Feedback the outcome of this at the next Housing Partnership in November 2006.

**You said:** The Partnership should meet in Leigh.

**We did:** The last Housing Partnership meeting in June took place at Turnpike Centre, Leigh.

**We will:** Alternate meetings between Wigan and Leigh in the future.

**You said:** Earlier indicators of dates of the Housing Partnership would be helpful.

**We did:** The next two dates have been set and feature in this newsletter.

**We will:** Continue to set and publicise meetings dates in advance.

Thanks for your views. The message is keep on telling us – we do listen!

## Housing Partnership Review

At the last Partnership meeting in June one of the workshop sessions was about the future of the Housing Partnership. As a result of this it was agreed that a group of members be formed to look at the issue and report back with outline proposals to the next meeting. This group has now been formed from volunteers and will meet in September to start the process. The topic will be a key discussion within the workshops at the next meeting in November.

## Dates for your Diary

### The next two Housing Partnership meetings:

**3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006 – Wigan, full details will be sent out shortly**

**8<sup>th</sup> June 2007 - Leigh**

### Asylum Seekers Providers Forum:

**26<sup>th</sup> October 2006, 10am Leigh Town Hall**

### Homelessness Forum:

**23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006, 10am Committee Room B, Town Hall.**

### Older Persons Forum:

**TBC**

## Any news?



Do you have stories for this newsletter?

If so, please contact

Michelle Feeny on 01942 486789

or e-mail: [m.feeny@wiganmbc.gov.uk](mailto:m.feeny@wiganmbc.gov.uk)

## POPP Launched with a Bang



Wigan's Partnership for Older People (POPP) was officially launched at Wigan Town Hall on 19 June. The partnership draws together 12 agencies that offer a range of low level support services that can be targeted according to needs, in order to prevent or delay reliance on more intensive and expensive services, such as admission to hospital.

Wigan Council has been successful in securing £1.8m to launch the innovative partnership aimed at providing support to people aged over 50 to enable them to remain in their homes and to maintain independence even though they may be experiencing difficulties, such as illness or bereavement.

The launch included display stands offering information and advice on all services and was well attended by over 250 older people, carers, health professionals and volunteers. Individual projects include:

- Time limited contact and support service – providing short term support

during a period of change, for example on leaving hospital or moving home

- Gardening and handyman scheme – offering help with basic tasks in the home and garden
- Crime prevention awareness and support – including a “Lock and Stop” campaign providing assessments, fitting door and window locks and providing advice on bogus callers and distraction burglary
- Sheltered housing improvements – Improving access to the schemes and provision of a unit of respite accommodation and a community resource facility at The Rowans, Tyldesley

Starting Point, at Age Concern, act as a central contact point for POPP and can be contacted on 01942 825594/ 826079. POPP has also launched its own web site [www.wiganpopp.org](http://www.wiganpopp.org) where there are details of all projects included in the partnership.

For further information please contact Angela Durkin on 01942 486641 or [a.durkin@wiganmbc.gov.uk](mailto:a.durkin@wiganmbc.gov.uk)



## Abram Renewal Area Environmental Improvement

The Private Sector Housing Section have recently completed a major Environmental Improvement Scheme in the Abram Renewal Area.

The works included resurfacing the back alleyway and installing alleygates to the block of houses making up 499-519 Warrington Road, Abram.

The residents of the block have also contributed by volunteering their time and materials to plant flowers and shrubs along both sides of the alleyway.



**Before**

The end result is a much cleaner, greener and safer alleyway for all the residents to enjoy. Similar works are currently in progress further along Warrington Road with a view to completing the whole of the Renewal Area by the end of this financial year.



**After**

For more information contact Anees Mank on 01942 733338 or e mail: [a.mank@wiganmbc.gov.uk](mailto:a.mank@wiganmbc.gov.uk)

## Contract closes

Wigan Council has ended its housing contract with the government's National Asylum Support Service (NASS) making over 120 council houses available to people currently on the waiting list.

The borough's asylum seekers – currently numbering around 400 out of a population of over 300 000 residents in Wigan – are housed and being supported by three private sector agencies who won contracts with the National Asylum Support Service:

- Happy Homes
- Priority Properties North West (PPNW)
- United Property Management (UPM)

The Council and its partners are working closely with the new support providers, each of whom have good experience of working with asylum seekers. We will continue to ensure that asylum seekers are dispersed appropriately within the borough but are also looking at how we can work together more effectively. One of these areas is how to delay the eviction of new refugees from NASS accommodation until a planned move can be made.

For more information contact Steve Sargent on 01942 827702

## Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF)

The fund will support faith and inter faith organisations to strengthen their capacity (capacity building) in order to play a fuller part in civil society/community cohesion. It will also support inter faith activities which bring together people from different faith groups to talk, network and learn from one another. Organisations are invited to apply for small grants (up to £5,000) or large grants (over £5,000 and up to £30,000) which are available between April 2007 and March 2008. An Information Session is to take place in Wigan on the 16th September - but you need to book by the 4th September - more information can be found at [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk)

## An Executive Decision



**Ashley Crumbley**, former Deputy Director of Community Protection Department was appointed as the new WALH Chief Executive. Peter Gee, the former Chief Executive of WALH retired in June, after 42 years in local government housing

For most of his 30-year local government career Ashley has been involved in housing. Ashley said "I am absolutely delighted to be able to serve the borough in this role. In its first four years WALH has transformed the quality of the council's housing, and Peter will be a hard act to follow."



**Peter Gee** first worked in Wigan during the 1970's and oversaw the slum clearance programmes in Scholes and Wallgate, followed by a large programme of new council house building in Scholes and Worsley Mesnes. After a spell with Bolton Council he returned to Wigan in 1987 as Deputy Director of Housing, taking over as Director in 1994. Peter was appointed as first Chief Executive of the ALMO, WALH in 2001, and pioneered its establishment.

John Roe, joint chair of WALH said: "We are losing a highly experienced chief executive. Over the past few years council housing in our borough has been transformed and a good deal of the credit for that must go to Peter and his team."

"However in Ashley Crumbley we have an equally talented successor who knows the Borough well and has a huge amount of experience in housing. "

"The future is looking bright for our tenants under such a seamless transition".

For further information contact Steve Sargent on 01942 872702 or e mail; [s.sargent@wiganmbc.gov.uk](mailto:s.sargent@wiganmbc.gov.uk)

## A Road Travelled Together

The 2004 Housing Act introduced a statutory duty for Local Authorities to undertake an accommodation needs assessment of Gypsies and Travellers residing in or resorting to their district (sections 225-6).

In February 2006 the Government published awaited guidance on how to complete assessments, which recommended a partnership approach between authorities and working with Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Rather than a single community, Gypsy and Travellers are diverse with varying degrees of settlement and movement across different groups and areas.

A range of research approaches is required to develop a detailed and accurate view of housing needs. As travelling patterns cross over borough boundaries it is important for neighbouring authorities to work together.

Wigan Housing Strategy is part of a 'sub-regional' research group involving all 10 Greater Manchester Local Authorities. We are looking at options for developing shared measures and approaches for assessing housing needs to ensure an accurate view and avoid gaps in findings.

Wigan has a local 'Travellers Strategy Working Group' involving representatives from planning, education, health, legal and enforcement services that shares information about services and housing needs. This group will lead on local research and develop partnership contacts within Travelling communities to inform the needs assessment.

For more information contact Matt McNulty (01942) 486787 or e mail; [m.mculty@wiganmbc.gov.uk](mailto:m.mculty@wiganmbc.gov.uk)

## **Housing Services delivering on diversity**

Wigan Council has achieved Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG). All departments presented evidence files to a panel of diversity representatives and external assessors.

The Community Protection Department evidence presentation consisted of three main parts: Environmental Health and Trading Standards, Community Safety, and Housing.

The Housing Strategy Service Needs Assessment (SNA) was a key part of our evidence for meeting ESG Level 2. We completed a 'root and branch' review of all policies, strategies, and procedures, to see where we meet equality and diversity needs and what gaps there are to be addressed.

The SNA involved three stages:

- 'Initial View' - a detailed review of all evidence
- 'Consultation and feedback' – consultation with all Housing Partnership members
- 'Action Plan' – key timetabled tasks to address gaps

The comments and feedback from Housing Partnership members is an important part of meeting our equality and diversity responsibilities. A copy of the Action Plan has been circulated to all partners and can also be viewed online at [www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/housing)

Meeting Equality and Diversity is an ongoing process and the Action Plan is a 'live' document that will be reviewed and updated regularly through the Housing Partnership.

If you have any comments or suggestions or for more information contact Matt McNulty (01942) 486787.

## Supporting People Update



supportingpeople

supporting independence

Supporting People will now be including news, updates and case studies in the housing partnership newsletter. If you have ideas or suggestions that you would like the Supporting People Team to include please contact Michelle Kemp on 01942 777047 or email: [m.kemp@wiganmbc.gov.uk](mailto:m.kemp@wiganmbc.gov.uk).

### What is Supporting People?

In April 2003, the Government introduced a new way of paying for housing related support services for vulnerable people. It is a national Programme, but is managed locally by each Council. The Supporting People program in Wigan is managed by a partnership made up of Wigan Council, The Primary Care Trust (Health) and The Probation Service.

Housing related support can include help with things like:

- Help with setting up and maintaining a home.
- Helping people to develop domestic/life skills.
- Helping people develop social skills.
- Helping people budget finances and claim benefits
- Helping with access to other services.
- Helping people establish social contacts/to take part in community activities.
- Help with personal safety and security.
- Help to find other accommodation.
- Helping people access employment, education and training.

Housing related support **cannot** include help with things such as health care services like getting washed and dressed, giving you medication and meals on wheels. Individuals can get support in a variety of accommodation situations including:

- Supported housing projects.
- Refuges for women at risk of domestic violence.
- Sheltered accommodation with a warden or scheme manager.
- In their own accommodation by visits from a support worker (floating support).
- Alarm response services for elderly people.

More information regarding Supporting People funded services may be obtained by contacting the Supporting People Team on 01942 777053.



"Samsara" - Artwork by Bee Operanto, a service user

## Supporting People: A case study

Nineteen year old Anna (not her real name) was sentenced to 18 months in prison in February 2004 for assault. It wasn't her first time inside. She was a prolific offender with a history of heavy alcohol use.

As she came up to release in August 2005 a keyworker from Rainer Wigan made regular visits to help identify her support needs. They also kept in contact through letters. Accommodation was sought as a priority.

While inside Anna had been self-harming; her support worker ensured she got the help she needed both in prison and when she came out.

On release Anna was housed in a hostel for eight weeks until suitable accommodation was allocated. Her key worker put an intensive support package in place to tackle her alcohol problems and her offending behaviour and together they drew up a personal development plan that would allow Anna to successfully resettle into the community.

She was referred to specialist agencies for help with her drinking and her key worker ensured she got to appointments; she was also given counselling.

Anna's key worker acted as a strong role model, something she had never had in her life before, which made it much easier to get her the support she needed. Rainer helped Anna to live independently, giving her essential life skills such as budgeting, cooking and cleaning. She was shown how to maintain a healthy diet and was registered with a dentist who she sees every six months.

Her level of support has tailored off significantly now as she has shown herself to be a mature and responsible young adult. She is happy in her house and feels she has moved on considerably from her troubled past. She has not offended since leaving prison.

Anna has been involved in drama classes and is keen to use her experiences to help others. She recently visited her old probation and youth offending team workers to speak about the positive influence she can have to stop other young people going to prison.

**If you want to find out more about the services offered by Rainer please contact Paul Weaver on 01942 239871.**

## Supporting People Funding

The budget for the Supporting People Programme in Wigan for 2006/07 is £7.1m. In 2007/08 the Supporting People Programme will receive an extra £529k.

This is great news for Wigan as the last few years have been challenging for service providers and the Supporting People Team as funding has been reduced.

Wigan has received the fourth highest rise in the country for forthcoming funding which indicates the need for housing related support services in the borough.

The Supporting People Commissioning Body (the decision making group which derives and monitors the programme at a strategic level) will be meeting to discuss how the funding will be allocated.

We will keep you informed of updates as they arise.