

## Appendix A - Programme Update 2012/13 – Housing Delivery and Affordable Housing

### Background

Since the sharp fall in housing delivery rates in 2009, completions of new housing has remained low in Wigan and across the country as a whole. In 2012/13 there were just 317 housing completions recorded, far short of our trajectory target of 1,000 homes a year.

Average house prices in Wigan are currently £90,553 (year to Mar 13) and have fallen by 1.4% over the year. (Land Registry), transaction rates remain low. Despite continued low house prices and interest rates, making Wigan an attractive location to buy in Greater Manchester, affordability is still an issue for many first time buyers. The current affordability ratio of lower quartile house prices to earnings being 4.54 in 2012 compared to the average GM of 4.84( DCLG)

There are some tentative signs of improvements in the housing market, with mortgage approvals increasing and more activity amongst house builders in recent months. Recent government budget announcements were aimed at increasing funding for housing and infrastructure, such as Help to Buy, in an attempt to increase build rates of new housing.

Affordable housing continues to form a significant proportion of housing delivery in the borough and there is an ongoing programme of development in place, funded both through government grant and developer contributions (section 106) with a total development value of around £30m.

Actions in 2012/13	Outcomes to March 13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of shared equity homes at College Court, Oakwood Meadows and St James Place.</li> <li>• Progressing of the HCA new build programme 2011 -15. With completion of the first 10 homes in the programme.</li> <li>• Launch of the local authority mortgage scheme, helping 52 first time buyers.</li> <li>• Seeking feedback and satisfaction information from occupiers of new affordable homes to improve the quality of homes and services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 shared equity homes sales completed</li> <li>• 34 FirstBuy sales completed</li> <li>• 10 Affordable Rent homes completed with WALH</li> <li>• 23 LAMS sales completions</li> <li>• Council Tenure Strategy and new Allocations Policy approved</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and approval of the new Tenure Strategy and Allocations Policy</li> </ul>	
<b>Priorities for 2013/14</b>	<b>Measures of success</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update our evidence base and affordable housing policy in line with the Core Strategy and to support the delivery of homes on strategic sites.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver the Affordable Homes Programme 2011-15 and securing further investment where possible.</li> <li>• Secure more affordable home ownership schemes, particularly through Section 106 contributions.</li> <li>• Explore new funding and delivery models to enable affordable homes as an enable for wider housing and economic growth.</li> <li>• Implement the new allocations policy and review nominations agreements with partners.</li> <li>• Introduce a deposit matching scheme in targeted areas of the borough linked to bringing empty homes into use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of Wigan Core Strategy and Affordable Housing SPD</li> <li>• Completion and letting of Thomas Street Affordable Rent scheme with WALH (34 units)</li> <li>• Start on site of further HCA funded schemes, with WALH and Has (82 units)</li> <li>• Completions of shared equity (24 units) , LAMS (50 mortgages) and Help to Buy sales (40 units)</li> <li>• Secure affordable housing on strategic sites such as Bickershaw South (47 units/ Ph1).</li> <li>• Secure further finding such as AHP2 to deliver further schemes</li> <li>• Launch deposit matching scheme (20 loans).</li> </ul>
<b>Wider impact of activity</b>	
<p>Through promoting a wider range of affordable options, we are helping more people access the housing market. Delivery of affordable rented homes helps meet the needs of those on the waiting list, particularly those looking to downsize into smaller accommodation. Increasing affordable home ownership options can help to reduce the number of people seeking social rented housing.</p> <p>Our success in working with Registered Providers to attract grant funding is increasing the overall number of homes built, attracting additional investment into the borough and generating new homes bonus payments. We are supporting employment and skills in the construction industry and also supporting the wider local economy. New build development is bringing vacant sites, many within the council's ownership, back into use to improve confidence in local areas.</p>	

## Programme Update 2012/13 – ALMO Plus

### Background

Following the freedoms given within the HRA from April 2012 and in response to the efficiencies agenda within the public sector, the future role of the ALMO has been reviewed. A number of options were considered and an approach, known as ALMO+ has been adopted and developed between the Council and WALH over the last year.

Following the agreement of a new contract between the council and the ALMO and within that the idea of a concordat between the two organisations, new priorities for the ALMO have been agreed by Cabinet. The idea behind ALMO+ being that WALH will develop a role, beyond management of the council stock and homelessness in delivering the council's wider strategic objectives and also assisting in streamlining of services and efficiency savings . A new action plan is being prepared and a number of other long term plans are underway, for example the New build housing Programme, Asset management plan and Low carbon plan.

Actions in 2012/13	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement in principle of the ALMO+ approach</li> <li>• Negotiation of new WALH contract</li> <li>• Progressing of elements of ALMO+ already in place eg. new build programme and low carbon work</li> </ul>	<p>Agreement of the new WALH/ Council contract.</p> <p>Agreement of the ALMO priorities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New development</li> <li>• Connecting housing with care</li> <li>• Welfare reform</li> <li>• Regeneration/ asset planning</li> <li>• Low carbon</li> <li>• Employment initiatives</li> <li>• Management efficiencies</li> <li>• Financial arrangements between the council and ALMO</li> <li>• Wider business opportunities for WLAH</li> </ul>
Priorities for 2013/14	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed agreement./ production of ALMO+ implementation plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation Plan in place.</li> <li>• Agreement of targets for all areas of work including</li> </ul>

- Continued implementation of existing ALMO+ priorities such as new development, connecting housing with care, welfare reform.
- Agreement of financial arrangements between the council and WALH, including efficiency agenda
- Developing the HRA Business Plan/ Asset Plan

- employment, low carbon initiatives etc.
- See other headings for existing priorities measures
- Agreement and implementation of a three year financial framework
- Asset Plan developed
- HRA Business Plan developed

**Wider impact of activity**

As the major landlord within the borough, the services provided by the ALMO can have a huge impact on residents. Through

## Programme Update 2012/13 – Welfare Reform

### Background

The government's overhaul of the welfare state is now underway. Over the past year the Council, Wigan and Leigh Housing and other partners have been working to prepare for the changes. The focus has been on ensuring that residents are aware of the changes and providing support for those affected.

Many changes affecting social sector tenants came into effect from April and this is quickly having an impact upon income management and business plans. The impact of the under-occupancy charge is anticipated to be severe in Wigan, due to our large stock of three bedroom family homes, and will result in changes in demand for both council and private rented accommodation. Both evidence from WALH and nationally indicates a deterioration in rent collecting figures, **increases?** in applications for mutual exchanges and increased tenancy terminations and void costs.

Wigan is a pilot authority for the introduction of Universal Credit, with planned introduction from July 2013.

Actions in 2012/13	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing participation in the corporate Welfare Reform Board Stakeholder events held through Landlords Forum and Homelessness Forum</li> <li>• Help with Rent team working across GM to raise awareness and assist residents</li> <li>• Impact assessments undertaken by WALH</li> <li>• Changes to the Allocations Policy to help those affected by the under-occupancy charge</li> <li>• Increased rent collection resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 114 tenants assisted by Help with Rent Team, <b>secured an additional £25,500 in benefit and prevented 12 people from presenting as homeless</b></li> <li>• 40 tenants assisted through the shared accommodation service</li> <li>• All tenants affected by benefit cap and bedroom tax identified and contacted by letter.</li> <li>• New council allocations policy approved in March 13, including reserving a third of smaller void properties for those seeking to downsize</li> <li>• <b>Further figures from WALH work?</b></li> </ul>
Priorities for 2013/14	Measures of Success

- Heightened awareness campaign for advice and assistance for those having financial difficulty
- Providing financial advice, including staff re-training in WALH
- Review of Better Neighbourhoods Fund to encourage schemes offering employment skills to tenants
- Promoting mutual exchanges
- Monitor the impact of welfare reform on demand for social and private rented homes.
- Better evidence trends in the wider market and consider additional measures, such as hardship funds, if necessary

- Increase number of affected tenants assisted through financial inclusion services.
- Minimise increases in arrears debt
- Increase number of affected tenants helped to downsize to smaller accommodation, including shared accommodation.
- Stakeholder engagement events held.
- Increase number of tenants assisted to get online and make electronic benefit claims

#### **Wider impact of activity**

Keeping landlords and organisations informed of the welfare reform changes, migration over to universal credit and advice on the support available for tenants is key in preventing crisis situations and ultimately preventing homelessness. Private landlords are expressing concern over letting to benefit claimants therefore it is vital that communication/training/support channels continue.

Prioritising a proportion of smaller properties to households affected by the bedroom tax will prevent households becoming homeless due to affordability issues and also impacts on the rental stream in the long term.

## Programme Update 2012/13 – Connecting Housing With Care

### Background

The connecting housing with care project was established to address the current and future pressures on services, particularly health and social care, resulting from demographic change and the ageing of the population of Wigan. The aim of the project is to develop new and cost effective housing models that will allow more efficient delivery of current services and, through enabling independence for longer, mitigate forecast future increases in care budgets. Good progress has been made over the year in establishing links with potential developers and providers of accommodation, and developing a number of accommodation projects that can be delivered in the short term to meet immediate needs, particularly in the cases of adults with high care needs such as learning disabilities, autism and out of borough placements.

In the longer term, it is recognised that a more structured, programme approach together with a long term financial model is likely to be required to deliver more homes, particularly to meet the growing needs of older people in the next five to ten years. Work has begun to evaluate potential investment models that could be adopted by the council on an invest to save basis, including the potential to redevelop our land and to re-provide existing services to achieve greater savings. Options to develop specialist housing within the capacity of ALMO+ new build programme are also being progressed as this could make a significant contribution to future delivery and budget savings.

Additional actions have begun to improve the systems employed by the council and its partners in relation to the assessment, allocation and delivery of housing, care and support services. This includes looking at how enhanced services can be delivered in existing sheltered housing schemes, improving the awareness of housing options for older people and adopting new assessment procedures for existing extra care schemes.

Actions in 2012/13	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of schemes with private sector landlords and linking with care and support providers.</li> <li>• Bids submitted in HCA Supported housing fund for 1 extra care scheme and 1 adults with care needs scheme.</li> <li>• Links made with the ALMO+ new build programme.</li> <li>• Brief developed for consultancy work to evaluate potential investment models for a long term development programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of first schemes at Cranleigh Ct and Upper Dicconson St. With further schemes progressing early in 2013/14.</li> <li>• Potential to deliver c100 new homes over the next five years through the ALMO programme.</li> <li>• Better systems in place to assess cases and allocate suitable housing to meet needs, for both adults and older people.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New extra care allocations policy and central allocations panel established.</li> <li>• Adults accommodation panel established.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Priorities for 2013/14</b></li> </ul>	<b>Measures of Success</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to explore new opportunities with private landlords, developers and providers.</li> <li>• Work up 2 HCA bid schemes, subject to funding. Consider any future funding opportunities.</li> <li>• Agree specialist schemes within the ALMO+ programme.</li> <li>• Complete consultancy work and take forward recommendations on financial model, including any approval of the availability of council resources (land, capital, borrowing).</li> <li>• Ensure systems are in place to support delivery and that people are able to chose and access suitable options.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new/ reconfigured units, adults with care needs and associated budget savings achieved.</li> <li>• Funding secured and progress made on 2 schemes.</li> <li>• No of specialist units within ALMO+ programme agreed. Removal of outdated sheltered stock.</li> <li>• Approval of long term investment model for programme.</li> <li>• Extra care allocations panel and adults panel operating effectively, housing options and advice and information reviewed and improvements made to systems.</li> </ul>
<b>Wider impact of activity</b>	
<p>The actions within the project link closely to the modernising social care agenda, in assisting in the re-modelling of services to achieve greater efficiencies. Specifically, the identification of a cohort of high need high cost cases and the focus on providing better quality accommodation, improved outcomes for individuals and savings to the authority has been recognised.</p> <p>Through developing new housing, specifically designed to meet the needs of people with care and support needs, we are helping to maintain independence and healthy lifestyles for longer. Also contributing to the personalisation agenda and building self reliance in giving individuals greater control over their lives.</p> <p>Although there is further progress to be made, our initial discussions with private developers, landlords, Registered Providers and care and support providers has been encouraging. Many partners recognise the need and opportunities available and see this as a growing market. Development of the connecting housing with care project in coming years has the potential to deliver significant investment in the borough. The benefits may be seen not only in the housing market, in terms of the development of land, delivery of a wider range of new homes to meet needs and construction activity, but wider in the economy though the creating of jobs and training within the social care market. This will have a positive effect on the local community and economy.</p>	



## Programme Update 2012/13 – Prevention of Homelessness

### Background

Despite the impact of the ongoing recession, overall homelessness figures in Wigan have remained low due to the proactive preventative approach in tackling the main causes of homelessness and the critical success factors of homeless prevention including early and timely intervention, providing choice and options and arranging housing support. However, since December we have seen an increase in numbers in temporary accommodation, 27 in March 2013.

The number of cases with multiple debts has increased and we are anticipating further increase in cases as a result of the welfare reform roll out.

There has also been an increase in the number of cases with multiple needs and numbers of rough sleepers have increased. Targeted actions are being introduced to tackle rough sleeping in Wigan through offering more support to the most complex cases.

Actions in 2012/13	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help with Rent team helped 114 cases</li> <li>• Housing Support Access Point introduced to allocate housing support services to the most vulnerable clients</li> <li>• Bed and breakfast budget reduced through prevention through use of private rented sector</li> </ul>	<p>1404 homelessness cases prevented overall, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 233 homeless preventions through using the private rented sector</li> <li>• 341 through discretionary housing payments</li> </ul>
Priorities for 2013/14	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a full review of the Prevention of Homelessness Strategy</li> <li>• Expand Housing Support Access Point to include floating support services</li> <li>• Introduced enhanced housing options website</li> <li>• Explore potential to discharge homeless duty into private rented sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Prevention of Homelessness Strategy in place</li> <li>• Increase numbers of prevention cases/ minimise the likely increase in homelessness</li> <li>• Reduction in B&amp;B budget</li> <li>• Increased use of private rented sector</li> <li>• 10 -15 complex cases supported by Multiple needs co-ordinator</li> <li>• Increased partnership working and referrals through hospital</li> </ul>

- Multiple needs co-ordinator appointed
- Specialist Domestic Violence housing worker in post
- Review of Hospital discharge protocol and bid for additional post/ capital projects

discharge protocol.

### Wider impact of activity

Improvements to the hospital discharge protocol for those with no fixed abode links in with the Council's health and well being priorities including planned discharge at the point of admission and will also assist NHS to achieve targets around reducing emergency readmissions and reducing length of stay on acute wards.

The complex needs worker will embed the principles of the "Making Every Adult Matter" in the Borough and develop integrated working across housing, health and social care. Expected outcomes include improvements in standard of health and wellbeing, ability to manage tenancies, ability to tackle problems such as substance misuse and offending behaviour.

## Programme Update 2012/13 – Private Rented Sector

### Background

The private rented sector provides an important role in meeting housing needs in the borough and the growth has helped to provide an alternative to social housing as evidenced by the 40% increase in Local Housing Allowance claims from the sector over the last three years.

There is a high probability that our demand pressures have been contained at their current levels because of this private rented option being available. However, the impact of welfare reforms could start to reduce the numbers of properties available as landlords feel the risks are too high and therefore move away from applicants reliant upon benefits. We could therefore see an increase once again in the demand for Council and Registered Provider / or social rented accommodation as a result.

Actions in 2012/13	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success of Wigan Housing Solutions in offering a range of services to landlords and tenants, for example the launch of the home share service and bond scheme.</li> <li>• Increased number of properties in our private sector leasing scheme, now 80 homes.</li> <li>• Continued partnership working to improve standards with private landlords through the forum, training courses and regular newsletters.</li> <li>• Improved energy efficiency through a range of initiatives with partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80 properties let though the PSL scheme through WHS helping people on the waiting list in need of accommodation</li> <li>• 46 accredited landlords, with 80 to 100 landlords attending</li> <li>• 2 landlord forums held</li> <li>• Weekly email bulletins to 750 landlords providing advice, good practice and updates on welfare reform changes</li> <li>• 11 landlords attended training sessions</li> <li>• Warm homes healthily people resources</li> <li>• Green Deal and ECO schemes launched</li> </ul>
Priorities for 2013/14	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver new accommodation projects in the private rented sector.</li> <li>• Hold further Landlord Forums, training courses and give advice and information to support landlords.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target of 100 properties in PSL scheme</li> <li>• Number of accredited landlords</li> <li>• Bi-annual landlord forum held</li> <li>• Delivery of HCA empty homes funding – 35 homes (25 residential and 5 commercial)</li> </ul>

- Increase action to tackle empty homes, including delivery of the HCA Empty homes programme and further CPO action.
- Promote GM ECO scheme
- Introduce a deposit matching scheme in targeted areas linked to empty homes
- Continued enforcement activity

- Reduction in empty homes via pro-active work
- Launch deposit matching scheme
- Visit between 500 -600 homes to assess poor housing conditions and agree improvement plans

### **Wider impact of activity**

Empty homes are a blight to neighbourhoods, the targeted approach to bring long term empty properties is improving neighbourhoods and increasing the supply of affordable housing.

There continues to be opportunities within the private rented sector to provide exempt supported accommodation for adults with high care needs such as learning disabilities, autism and out of borough placements to help achieve reductions in the cost of health and social care.