

York **Housing** **Partnership** **Agreement 2005 - 2008**

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1 Foreword

“A warm, secure and affordable home is a fundamental right and, by working together, social housing providers in York are ensuring that this is achieved by as many residents as possible.

The first Agreement, established in 2001, has helped to achieve a great deal of success in the provision of decent and affordable homes in York. But there is much yet to be done. This new and broader Agreement looks to the future with the optimism that the partnership will be a living and practical tool promoting the provision of new housing opportunities and helping to achieve consistently high and transparent standards in the delivery of housing management for all the partners’ customers. It will empower customers by involving them actively in all its aspects and will also be a vehicle for the promotion and implementation of York Pride and in Transforming York.”
Sue Sunderland, Executive Member for Housing, CYC.

2 Shared vision

“CYC, in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) working in the city, is committed to providing the highest quality service for all its current and future tenants, licencees and leaseholders who live in or need affordable housing for their home and enable them to play an active role in its development and delivery .”

3 Aims of the York Housing Partnership Agreement (the Agreement)

- To promote effective partnership working between CYC and RSLs so that our common goal of providing and improving housing and the lives of housing service users and those in housing need in York is attained.
- To achieve the best fit between RSL activity and the council’s Housing Strategy together with other strategic aims that link, and complement the provision of housing and its users in the city of York.
- To facilitate the sharing, development and implementation of best practice between RSLs and the council.
- To promote the sharing of information and its analysis to ensure fairness and equity amongst housing providers and their customers.
- The council’s Best Value(BV) and Comprehensive Performance Assessment(CPA) targets, together with other local and national Performance Indicators(PI) set by and with its partners, will form the framework in which the Agreement will operate.
- To assist the council in its strategic role as Housing Authority.
- To assist RSLs in carrying out their role as housing providers.

4 Basis of the Agreement

- The Agreement covers all aspects of the council’s York Housing Strategy and its reviews and the aims and vision set out above.
- Joining the partnership is open to all RSLs who agree to meet the terms of the Agreement.
- It is acknowledged that the Agreement will apply more broadly to some partners depending on their business scope, aims, extent and area of operation.
- CYC will only work with and support the RSLs who sign up to and agree to maintain this Housing Partnership Agreement, with the council as co-signatories. CYC will endeavour to ensure that being a partner is not disadvantageous to the partner’s business.
- Consideration will be given, by Housing Liaison Group, to other organisations becoming partners providing they are operating in social/affordable housing provision and management in York.
- The Agreement will be monitored on a regular basis and reviewed fundamentally not less than every three years by the Housing Liaison Group.

5 Status and operation of the Agreement

- The Agreement is not legally binding and signing it does not imply being party to a contract or impose any legal responsibilities.
- All signatories commit themselves to implementing all aspects of the Agreement. It is acknowledged that the Agreement will apply more broadly to some partners depending on their business scope, aims, extent and area of operation.
- There may be supplementary agreements and contracts with regard to specific projects. These may include the sale of council land and property and Planning Agreements under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1991.
- The Agreement is designed to achieve its partners' vision and aims set out above.
- The Housing Liaison Group will monitor achievement of the vision and aims of the Agreement.
- The Housing Liaison Group will fundamentally review the Agreement on a three yearly basis - the next review is to be completed by December 2007.
- Sections 8 and 9 of the Agreement will be used to guide specific areas of the implementation and monitoring of the Agreement.
- Partners will consult and agree on additional appendices to be added to the Agreement between the three yearly fundamental reviews.

6 A joint approach

Partners to the Agreement agree to work collaboratively. It is useful to set out in more detail some areas that are particularly relevant to all partners and to the success of the Agreement.

- Strategic objectives – to contribute to the council's Housing Strategy and to other strategies relevant to housing in York and to the implementation of these strategies.
- Local quality standards – their determination and agreement, some of which relate to items in the appendices and include: stock profile; rent levels by property type; vacant stock periods and rent loss; re-let time (turn around) for letting empty property; rent arrears; repairs completion and timescales; nominations; sales and re-sales; marketing; tackling anti-social behaviour; provision of consistently high quality customer care.
- Innovation - exploring new initiatives and developing links with other agencies and partners.
- Developing best practice in management, by having local and accessible management services enabling all tenures (tenants and home owners) to engage in influencing service and performance levels.

- Developing and promoting the principles of Best Value leading to a consistent, better quality, cost effective and efficient services across all tenures.
- Communicating and sharing, as widely as possible, information and access to information to encourage openness, trust and transparency between partners and to undertake benchmarking exercises and other appropriate projects.
- Training, developing and supporting staff to enable and empower them to provide the best possible service to all tenures by identifying training needs and co-operating in providing and promoting training.

7 Roles and responsibilities –

All partners agree to:

- Provide and locally manage, directly or indirectly, housing to meet the needs of the people of York who cannot afford to rent or purchase on the open market.
- Work in partnership to ensure that housing needs are met.
- Meet with the council on a regular basis through the Housing Liaison Group and its sub-groups.
- Ensure that co-ordination is achieved and agreed information is shared among all partners.
- Co-operate to develop and to put in place common quality standards and performance indicators including mutually agreed local ones.
- Provide the council with annual reports and all other policy documents and advise the council of proposed policy changes that will affect housing provision in York.
- Continue to support and participate in the development and use of the York Housing List and Affordable For Sale Register and, for the latter, adopt and apply the policy and practices set out in the appendices.
- Accept nominations for and report vacancies from and to the York Housing List and Affordable for Sale Register and provide feedback on activity, outcomes and customer satisfaction.
- New developments: develop and maintain a diversity of housing provision and tenures in York according to the council's Housing Strategy; ensure new housing developments meet the minimum standards as set out in the appendices; work with the council to ensure the affordable housing provision in S106 agreements and on council land is conducted in a timely, transparent and cost effective way; be committed to the highest standards of sustainability and eco-friendliness in construction and renovation.
- Aim to reach the Decent Homes standard by 2010.
- Investigate, encourage and use local labour wherever possible in all activities.
- Supported Housing: work with the council, York & Selby PCT and Supporting People to develop and provide housing with care and support that is customer-focused and driven.

- Aim to build all new housing to Lifetime Homes Standard with a portion of stock being built to full wheelchair access standard.
- Advise the council on a mutually agreed timescale when developments of all types of scheme, including those provided by S106 agreements, are available, completed and occupied, together with other relevant details.
- Research and develop where appropriate new sources of funding for the provision of low cost, affordable housing.
- Provide the council with an up-to-date schedule of its housing stock and nomination agreements and provide an update at least every six months.
- Community leadership: actively assist the council in its community leadership role and develop services and strategies which complement this role and its objectives.
- Work to establish the principles of and demonstrate Best Value in all aspects of its housing provision including having robust mechanisms in place for actively recording, measuring and reporting performance for provision in the York area.
- Equal Opportunities / Access and Inclusion – aim to ensure that all sections of the community have equal access to housing and show that monitoring procedures are in place and work in line with the Housing Corporation’s and the council’s Comprehensive Equalities Policies, Black and Minority Ethnic(BME) and other strategies; provide statistics at least annually about tenures, nominations etc based on BME and other minority group monitoring; work to maximise the involvement of the BME and other minority groups in the community in housing delivery and management and share innovative ways of increasing involvement; respect the interests of other parties and deal with them in an inclusive and sensitive way.
- Tenant/Leaseholder involvement: work in partnership to encourage and maximise tenant/leaseholder involvement in the management of their homes and communities; actively encourage and support residents groups to be involved in all levels of decision making.
- Rents: provide the council with agreed rent policies and actual rents for every property and provide updates, at least annually, for the council’s area.
- Information sharing: provide and share as much information as possible within the constraints of the Data Protection Act, and develop appropriate protocols, with the objective of complying with the aims of the Agreement.

The council in its enabling and strategic role agrees to:

- Involve all partners in the development and the implementation of the council’s Housing Strategy and other strategies for York.
- Ensure that affordable housing needs are given full consideration when council land becomes available for development.
- Establish and maintain with partners minimum design, development and management standards for all relevant tenures.

- Research, identify and develop new sources of funding for affordable housing for rent or sale.
- Ensure the planning and development processes maximise the provision of social and affordable housing in York in accordance with the Local Plan/Local Development Framework and to agreed local standards.
- Housing needs: ensure as far as possible the housing needs of York are understood and appreciated by all agencies and others in York.
- Use and update the York Housing Needs Survey (2002) to maintain a reliable, robust and up-to-date picture of housing needs across all tenures.
- Prepare and maintain databases of all existing, new and potential CYC and RSL housing stock.
- Tenant/Leaseholder/owner participation: actively encourage and support residents and groups of residents in becoming involved in all levels of decision making within all relevant organisations in York.
- Monitoring: Take a lead role in co-ordinating and monitoring the Agreement.

8 The council's Housing Strategy and other strategic objectives

The council's Housing Strategy was approved in 2002, and was subject to interim review in 2004, with a fundamental review to be carried out in 2005. The reviews must lead to the strategy achieving the government's 'fit for purpose' standard.

The Housing Strategy is a corporate document that complements other corporate plans and strategies of the council including the Community Strategy and Council Plan. Some of the council's other strategies are included in or referred to in the appendices.

9 Appendices

Appendix reference and title	Statement of intent	Page Book 2
1) Housing Liaison Group (HLG)	The Housing Liaison Group (HLG) is established to monitor and review the Agreement and will be the vehicle for consultation and liaison between CYC and RSLs working in the York area.	2
2) HLG – working groups	HLG will use working groups composed of partnership members' officers and invitees, as appropriate to the topic, to study, consider, make recommendations, and carry out single-issue projects and in reviewing the Agreement.	3
3) Assessing the partnership	Partners commit themselves to continuously assessing the effectiveness of the partnership and their own contribution and to contributing to interim and fundamental reviews.	4
4) Supplementary agreements	All partners will seek to identify issues where a supplementary agreement will benefit the delivery of the aims and objectives set out in the Agreement, by the members of the partnership and / or groups of partners.	5
5) Residents' 'handbook'	Handbooks will be: made accessible to all possible users by publishing in a variety of formats; reviewed and updated at least annually and a library copy deposited with CYC; a set of common best-practice standards will be assembled by a single issue working group of the HLG; handbooks will achieve the minimum standards set out by the HC, enhanced to a level agreed from time to time by the HLG to reflect best practice and the unique nature of York. A 'new residents' pack will be produced for issue to all residents aimed at making the move to the property and locality as easy as possible.	6

Appendix reference and title	Statement of intent	Page
6) New home design standards	Partners will work together to produce a recognised and workable minimum standard to be applied to all new homes built under the control of the partners. An aspirational standard will also be developed to include lifetime homes, wheelchair and high eco-home standards.	7
7) Nominations to rented and sale properties, the York Housing List and the Discount For Sale Register	The List* and Register** will be the sole means CYC uses to nominate people to rented and Discount for Sale/Shared Ownership homes. The policies, criteria and rules applying to the List and Register will be adopted and used by all partners for the allocation of homes to people where the homes are let or sold under nomination by CYC. A named person will be provided by CYC as a contact point for each RSL.	8
8) Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	All partners will work towards harmonising the approach and implementation of ASB policies and practices across the CYC area with the aim of there being no discernable difference whatever the tenure or locality. This approach will respect the individuality of each RSL and its residents and be complementary to tackling ASB on a city-wide basis.	9
9) Marketing Group [and Discount for Sale (DFS) / Shared Ownership (SO) homes]	A working group set up by HLG to discuss the marketing of DFS/SO/Homebuy homes and ensure that these homes are marketed correctly. The group includes CYC, Home Housing Group, Yorkshire Community Housing, Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and Tees Valley Housing Group. CYC has a policy which has been discussed and agreed with RSLs. CYC holds and manages a database, the 'Register', of people who are interested in affordable home opportunities. The group also seeks opportunities for future promotional work.	10 - 11

Appendix reference and title	Statement of Intent	Page
10) Monitoring - stock profile; rent levels by property type; vacant stock periods and rent loss; rent arrears; repairs completion timescales; turn around of empty property; provision of reports and policy documents	All partners will deliver the monitoring information at the agreed intervals; it will be assessed via the HLG and additional data sets agreed via HLG before all partners are committed to collecting and delivering them to CYC. All partners will submit all agreed reports and documents within the timescales set out in the individual appendices and in the Agreement.	12
11) Tenant and owner participation	The active encouragement and support of all those making their home in partners' properties and the communities in which they live, so that they can take part at all levels and types of activity, is to be at the forefront of all partners' activities, whatever their nature.	13
12) Information sharing, electronic business transactions and e-government (CYC)	All partners will share information in the spirit and practice of encouraging openness, trust and transparency between partners. Confidentiality will be maintained between partners and the council and information will not be shared with others unless the provider of the information agrees to this. This will be undertaken in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and other related legislation.	14
13) Staff development and support	All partners agree to develop and support their staff so as to achieve the highest levels of staff education, training, personal and continuing professional development.	15
14) Local Performance Indicators and standards; Best Value	To develop and promote the principles of Best Value across all aspects of housing provision and management.	16

Appendix reference and title	Statement of intent	Page
15) Housing benefits	CYC will strive to process benefit applications and payments in a timely way and to agreed targets. The CYC Benefits Service will strive to process claims quickly and correctly in order to ensure prompt and accurate payment of benefit to the customer. They will also provide the necessary advice and information and support customers making their claims. A named contact person will be provided to RSLs to help with the service. RSLs will strive to support the benefits service and its own customers in making timely applications for benefit and providing the necessary documentation.	17 - 18
16) Equalities, inclusion and access	Partners will aim to ensure that all sections of the community have equal access to housing and all related services and processes, irrespective and regardless of race, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, colour, or political affiliation. We will consider the impact of our decisions on customers' rights, and the rights of others, under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Wherever possible decisions will be made to ensure those rights are protected.	19
17) Innovation	Exploration of new ideas and initiatives and sharing them will be a continuing theme of the partnership.	20
18) Housing Strategy	CYC's Housing Strategy is the foundation and reason for the Agreement and all partners sign up to its implementation.	21

Appendix reference and title	Statement of intent	Page
19) York Pride, Transforming York and Community Leadership	The partners all adopt the principles and policies of York Pride and Transforming York and endeavour to apply them in practical and identifiable ways. Each partner will report annually on its actions and activities and CYC will keep the partnership informed of the development of York Pride and Transforming York and their relationship with the activities of all partners.	22 – 26
20) Homelessness strategy and practice	To understand and provide for the housing needs of homeless people and to contribute to a reduction in the causes of homelessness.	27
21) Supporting People	CYC, as Administering Authority for Supporting People, and RSLs will co-operate together in identifying and providing housing needs and support.	28
22) Supported Housing	CYC and RSLs will work together in identifying options for the provision of Supported Housing and outreach support. This will include identifying funding opportunities and working in partnership to meet identified gaps in service provision.	29
23) Empty homes	Partners will work together to encourage and enable the bringing back into use of empty homes of any tenure.	30