



Talking to our Choice Based Lettings customers

We received a good response to the recent survey of customers who had used the choice based lettings (CBL) scheme. The comments were generally very positive, indicating a good level of satisfaction with the CBL scheme. The results of the customer survey will be used to inform a number of upcoming pieces of work including: a review of the Allocation Policy, Participation Strategy, and application form.

Acting on other points raised in the survey in the future we will be looking at; providing more information and explaining things better. Some customers commented on “fairness of allocations” and we want to address this perception by providing more appropriate explanations. Customers also highlighted the need for more information relating to outcomes of bidding cycles and this will be addressed by the imminent upgrade of the system.

The allocations policy has recently been reviewed and a few changes were made but it will need to be re-examined shortly in the in light of the new Localism Bill and changes to Housing Benefit.

News from the Haven Gateway Partnership

The Haven Gateway is currently evaluating the impact of its three year investment plan which was mostly funded through the Growth Point Fund. As at 31 March 2011, 90% of the available budget had been spent and the last few projects are currently being completed. Achieving this high level of spend, during the three year plan period, demonstrates a strong track record of delivery by all the partners.

A new investment plan has to be prepared. Some of the needs it must seek to address may be the same however the opportunities for funding now look very different. Gone are Growth Point Funds and other sources that have helped make such an impact on the sub region in recent years and other new sources such as Regional Growth Fund (RGF) are proving much harder to access. A recent bid by the Haven Gateway Partnership for a RGF grant of £6.2 million for the development of a range of new incubators and business support in the sub region, in partnership with local enterprise agencies and similar organizations, was rejected. In fact only one bid across the entire East of England, South East and London was successful. The need to identify priorities and secure funding is a major challenge and the Haven Gateway is closely engaged with work on the Integrated County Strategy (ICS) being promoted by Essex County Council which is addressing similar concerns.

The Haven Gateway is part of two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the New Anglia LEP covering Norfolk and Suffolk and the Essex, Kent and East Sussex LEP. Both cover large areas and will be working with the Haven Gateway as a local delivery arm. The ICS and new Haven Gateway Investment Plan will provide a useful working document to help achieve this.

Useful links

(press control and click to follow link)

Babergh District Council

Braintree District Council

Colchester Borough Council

Ipswich Borough Council

Maldon District Council

Mid Suffolk District Council

Suffolk Coastal District Council

Tendring District Council

The Greater Haven Gateway

The Greater Haven Gateway (GHG) was established in 2004. It draws together the work of housing organisations in East Essex and East Suffolk. The GHG is led by the 8 councils involved but includes a much wider group of organisations, including housing associations, the Homes and Community Agency, Supporting People teams, EERA, and The Rural Community Council.

For more information about the Greater Haven Gateway contact:

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Private Rented Sector Landlord Accreditation scheme

Some twelve local authorities in Essex and Suffolk along with Essex County Council are working together to develop a pan Essex and Suffolk private sector landlord accreditation scheme. Essex County Council is supplying the contract and procurement expertise.

Accreditation is where landlords who meet certain standards relating to the management or physical condition of privately rented accommodation can join a scheme. The advantages to the landlord are the advice and support they receive to understand the complex private rented legal framework. The benefit to the tenant is they can make an informed choice knowing accredited landlords are keen to manage their properties well and provide good quality accommodation.

All the twelve local authorities attended a scoping meeting in December 2010 where, through a series of workshops, they developed a scheme outline that met participant's broad requirements. In early April a sub group carried out some soft market testing with several organisations that may be interested in supplying the service. Using insights gained in this process the full tender document is being written which will be brought back to the wider group for discussion before being tendered. We aim to have the accreditation scheme up and running by early 2012.

Shelter is involved in a campaign to encourage all local authorities to set up or review their landlord's accreditation scheme to ensure at least minimum standards are met. We have met with Shelter to discuss the development of our scheme to ensure that we achieve balanced benefits for both landlords and tenants.

Reorganisation of the HCA

The Homes and Community Agency (HCA) has recently been reorganised and as a result of this the Greater Haven Gateway sits within the 'East and South East' area, which consists of 93 local authorities. It includes some of the most affluent areas in the UK and also some of the most deprived. Within such a large area there is a wide variety of environmental diversity and economic challenges to delivering homes and places.

The HCA has local teams based on County boundaries so in GHG we work with two investment managers, most recently to prepare Local Investment Plans (LIPs) which cover all aspects of housing and regeneration. The LIP is a strategic document that sets priorities for a local area and how they will be delivered.

The HCA has responsibility for delivering several government investment programmes including; the National Affordable Housing Programme, which includes funding for delivery of new affordable housing, Decent Homes, and Gypsy and Traveller sites. They offer technical advice and support to local authorities on viability testing and value for money.

Come and find out what the GHG does

Each year we hold a half day event for each local authority's elected Members and housing board members to help keep them up-to-date with what is going on in the sub region from a housing perspective. Invitations will be going out shortly.

This year we will be holding the event at Weston Homes Stadium on Thursday, 21st July. We will be taking stock reflecting on what we have achieved in the past year; David Ralph from the Haven Gateway Partnership will be explaining the new Local Enterprise Partnerships and how we will work with them; and Alistair McKintosh the CEO from the Housing Quality Network will be talking about the impact of recent legislative changes to affordable housing.

