

**Affordable Housing Review 2010/11
Cabinet Response**

Cabinet considered the Affordable Housing review recommendations at its meeting on 22 March 2011.

Recommendation		Cabinet Response	Action by	Date for review
1.	That the reduction of the affordable housing threshold from 15 units to 10 units proposed by the Planning Policy Advisory Group be implemented and be reviewed after 18 months to see if it has resulted in additional affordable homes or deterred some developers from investing in Watford.	This recommendation is in line with the Core Strategy which was also discussed at Cabinet this evening. The recommendation will go ahead if the Core Strategy is agreed and once it is implemented.	Planning	18 months after adoption of the Core Strategy – date to be confirmed later.
2.	That Planning officers investigate if there is any way the council can ensure that piecemeal developments where a developer deliberately sub-divides a development into segments below the threshold level can be made subject to the same Section 106 obligations as if it was a single development subject to such obligations.	Planning colleagues are aware of this issue and it is covered within the existing policy. The issue will be considered as part of the policy emerging from the Core Strategy.	Planning	December 2012 to see if the policy has yet been changed and if there have been further instances of this happening.
3.	That, subject to the Localism Bill provisions being accepted, the status and number of band E applicants on the housing register should be reviewed to provide an accurate picture of those in most need and to reduce the administration of the register.	This issue will be considered as part of the development of the Tenancy Strategy under the Localism Bill and in the work in progress on the Housing Value for Money Review. Considerations will need to include an analysis of workload set against the impact and risks of a new policy towards Band E applicants.	Community Services	12 months – June 2012

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4.	That the council continues to invest in and develop opportunities for partnership working as exemplified by the HARI partnership. Further investigation should be made into working even more closely with neighbouring boroughs in such areas as pooling assets for joint developments.	We will continue to work with our partners through HARI. We also have good partnership arrangements with other local authorities through various officer forums. If opportunities emerge for partnership working with neighbouring local authorities, we will investigate the benefits these could bring to Watford.		12 months - June 2012
5.	That the council ensures that the resources are available to meet the anticipated increased demand for information on housing issues.	The challenge of how to meet increased demand with fewer resources is being considered as part of the Housing Value for Money Review.	Community Services	6 months - December 2011
6.	That in one year's time a scrutiny task group be commissioned to investigate the effects of the national changes in benefit payments and rents on Watford residents' housing provision. How affordable will affordable housing be? A base line created from current statistics should be used to monitor changes over the next 12 -18 months.	The changes in benefits will be phased in over the next couple of years. The impact of affordable rents may take some time to be felt as affected properties will not come on stream immediately. For this reason, one year may not be sufficient to assess the full impact. We would anticipate Housing and Revenues and Benefits will be monitoring changes and trends on an ongoing basis.	Community Services / Revenues and Benefits / Overview and Scrutiny	Task Group to be considered in 2013/14