

**HART DISTRICT COUNCIL
RESPONSE TO
AFFORDABLE HOUSING INSPECTION REPORT
DATED 3RD AUGUST 2006**

Hart District Council considers affordable housing to be a priority, and it is one of the main priorities in the Corporate Plan. Over the last three years it has been actively improving the service it provides, including in January 2006 it brought back in house the housing needs services. These had been contracted out when the housing stock was transferred in 1994.

The Council found the Inspection to be challenging in a number of positive ways and Councillors were pleased that the inspectors found a significant number of strengths about the services:

- The Council has delivered a high level of affordable homes over the past three years and affordable housing options have been expanded for home seekers.
- The homelessness service has improved with a reduced level of homeless acceptances in 2005/06. In 2004/05 it was within the best 25 per cent performers in the areas of average number of weeks spent by homeless families in propriety need in temporary accommodation, and the reduction in the number of families placed in temporary accommodation.
- The service areas of planning and housing benefit have made significant performance improvements, and the Council has accessed government funding to assist this process.
- A clearer aligned framework is in place to deliver the Council's aims, through the development of the corporate plan, housing strategy and service plans.

However, the Cabinet has noted with disappointment the result of the Inspection. Members were particularly concerned that the "uncertain prospects for improvement" did not accurately reflect the investment that has recently been made both in services.

The inspection report identified four main areas for further improvement activity and an Improvement Plan as approved by Cabinet on 7 September 2006 details a series of actions under each of the areas. The Action Plan is available on Hart DC's website. The action plan will be monitored through the existing performance monitoring activity of the Scrutiny Committee.

Members and officers at Hart are clear that the steps taken over the last three years have laid the foundation for a service that has improved and will continue to improve.

The Council would wish to thank the inspection team for the way they carried out their work, and the positive way they worked with officers and members throughout the inspection.