# A strategy for excellence

## The vision for Nottingham City Homes 2008 - 2018

Nottingham City Homes




Approved by the Customer Communications Panel

Corporate member of Plain English Campaign 301
Committed to clearer communication

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

NCHBRO10

10 year strategy

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# Our vision

## Targets and outcomes

**Our ambition is to be an excellent organisation which delivers our vision of homes and places where people want to live. We aim to achieve 'Three Stars' by 2010 and at least 'Two Stars' and 'Excellent Prospects' in 2008.**

By 2013 we will have ensured all the homes we manage meet the Decent Homes Standard. We shall make a robust contribution to transforming Nottingham's neighbourhoods in line with the vision for the City developed by Nottingham City Council (NCC) and our local strategic partnership, One Nottingham. Nottingham City Homes (NCH) will play its part in the strategic management of the city since we are well placed to be one of the key delivery agents for the City's vision. We will seek to contribute to opportunities to provide Nottingham with the right housing mix to meet the needs of its residents and we will play our part in ensuring residents have a good quality of life, and access to support and the services they need.

## Our mission, vision and values

Our mission, vision and values were refreshed in 2007. We began by talking to customers, stakeholders and staff. We listened to their views, collected feedback from a range of events and used this to determine the strategic objectives at the heart of the strategy. We have also looked at the national, regional and local contexts in order to identify the key drivers for our approach over the next ten years.

Our mission statement, our vision for the organisation and the values which we want the company's culture to reflect are set out below.

**Our mission:** To deliver excellent services.

**Our vision:** Homes and places where people want to live.

**Our values:**

1. Tell the truth
2. Keep promises
3. Be fair
4. Respect the individual
5. Work as one team
6. Encourage fresh thinking
7. Strive for the best

Our mission sets out why we are here, what we do and what we want to achieve.

The vision is about working with partners to help create communities to which people feel they belong, and where they would choose to live.

Our values define what we stand for as an organisation and what is expected of those connected with the organisation as they deliver the services of the company.

# Our strategic objections

## 1. To deliver excellent, customer focused services

**The ten year vision:**

- three star services with top quartile performance
- top quartile satisfaction with quality of service, access and customer care

## 2. To engage customers in influencing the shape and quality of housing services that we provide

**The ten year vision:**

- maximised opportunities for tenant and leaseholder involvement
- support partners in their ambitions to engage residents further in shaping excellent services

## 3. To be a key partner in the delivery of safe and sustainable neighbourhoods

**The ten year vision:**

- leading provider in neighbourhood services in areas where we are the main manager of housing
- locally-based initiatives promoting community cohesion
- addressing other strategic challenges facing the city including worklessness, environmental sustainability and supporting some of the city's most vulnerable residents

## 4. To be a key partner in the transformation of Nottingham's neighbourhoods

**The ten year vision:**

- achieve and maintain the Decent Homes Standard
- to have a sustainable asset management and investment strategy for the housing stock
- delivering regeneration programmes
- securing development funding and building new homes

## 5. To be an excellent organisation

**The ten year vision:**

- an employer of choice with the values of equality and diversity at its heart
- motivated by service to our tenants, leaseholders and residents
- where value for money is fully embedded
- to be a supplier of quality services to other organisations, delivering wider public sector efficiencies
- innovative and creative in service delivery
- to be recognised through external accreditation for the full range of our services

# Our customers and the context in which we operate – the challenges we face

## The population

**An awareness of the profile of our customers and prospective customers is vital in making sure we provide services designed to meet their needs as we have a diverse customer base and many of our residents experience disadvantage and poor health and / or discrimination. The following points[1] illustrate this.**

A third of our households include dependent children (with a fifth headed by a lone parent). A significant proportion (58%) of our tenants are relatively young (aged between 16 and 44), whilst the overall Nottingham population figure for this age group is 47%; and 34% of our tenants are over 65. (Including 17% who are over 75 compared with 7% in the general Nottingham population).

At least 14%[2] of our tenants are from non white ethnic groups, and 30% of new tenancies created in the last financial year (2007/08[3]) were to non white ethnic groups, potentially reflecting the city's changing diversity. Over a quarter (26%) of the occupants of our housing have a limiting long term illness, and we know from the work we do that many residents face mental health, drug and alcohol dependency problems.

Almost two thirds (65%) of tenants obtain their income wholly from state benefits or state pensions and two thirds of tenants receive Housing Benefit to assist with their housing costs. 27% derive their income from employment[4], yet nearly a quarter (23%) are not in employment, but are of an economically active age group.

Within the broader population of the city (approximately 289,000 people), including those who are our tenants but also including those who are amongst our potential future customers, some other issues are pertinent. For example, the population has become more diverse since the last census. It is estimated that 22.7% of the City population are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups compared to 15.3% in England[5].

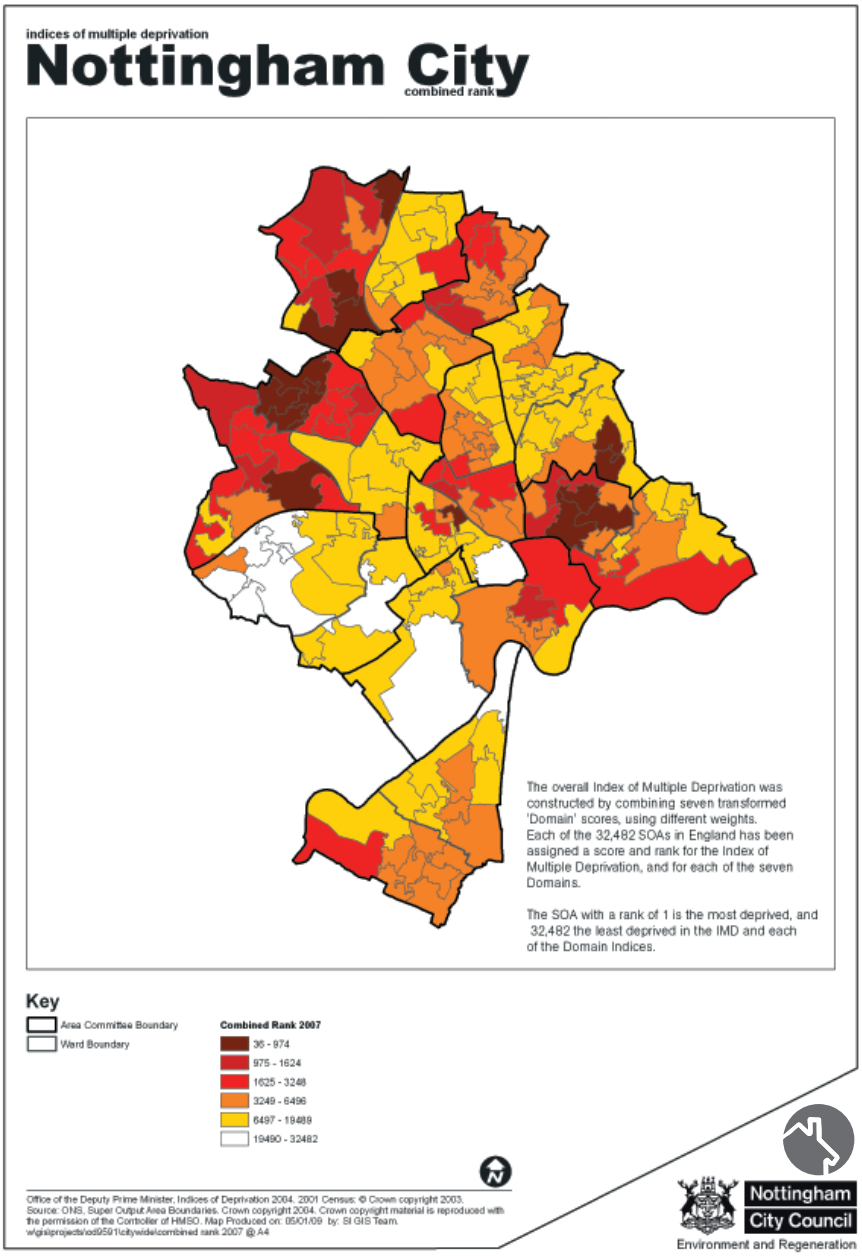
The City has the highest level of population turnover or 'churn' of the Core Cities, reflecting the popularity with students, young professionals and migrants. These facts all help to create a dynamic, multi-cultural city, but also present specific challenges for maintaining community cohesion and delivering high quality, personalised services.

Moreover, these changes have an impact on the demand for differing types of housing stock we are able to offer. For example, the 'traditional' types of sheltered accommodation are less popular now than in the past, with a tendency for people to stay longer in their own homes, yet need more care support combined with their accommodation as they become more frail.

**1 Source: 2001 Census unless otherwise stated**
**2 Source: NCH Housing management system**
**3 Source: NCH Housing management system**
**4 Source: STATUS Survey 2008**
**5 Source: ONS Experimental ethnic group estimates 2005**

The City is also characterised by a higher level of deprivation than its neighbouring authorities, ranking 13th out of 354 districts in England and fourth out of the eight Core Cities in the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation. Nottingham City Homes manages around 25% of housing stock in the City of Nottingham and 71% of this stock is in wards which are in the 10% most deprived in the country[6]. The more deprived parts of the City are concentrated in the estates to the north and west of the City, in the inner city, and to a lesser extent in parts of Clifton, as illustrated by the map below.

This means that despite a commercially successful city centre, and generally buoyant economy, Nottingham has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England. Present national financial problems will raise issues for Nottingham and its residents. The increasingly challenging economic environment will impact on residents in a variety of ways including job security and living costs. This will impact on our business as residents find their budgets increasingly constrained, whilst a changing housing market alters the issues of supply and affordability. History teaches us that those who are in the most vulnerable position in society face the impact of these problems most severely.




So some of the key issues for us include high levels of deprivation, low skills and economic inactivity amongst the people we serve, and our objective is to deliver services that are both within this context, yet also strive to help people secure pathways out of that deprivation, and its causes.
This must be at the heart of what we do.

**6 Source: Index of deprivation, Department of Communities and local Government / Office for National Statistics 2007**

## The place

**Like all major regional cities, the population and neighbourhood profile of Nottingham has been shaped by the social and economic forces that have shaped the city itself. The consequences of this provide the context in which we work, and in which our partners work.**

Nottingham City Council, One Nottingham and its partners have produced 'The State of Nottingham'[7] report which aims to give an accurate portrayal of Nottingham today, and a shared view of Nottingham's strengths and weaknesses. The report also examines how Nottingham is changing, and what future opportunities and risks this change may present.

The State of Nottingham report outlines the historic growth of the city, its industrial history and the consequences that had for the shape and pattern of the urban area, not least its housing stock. The following extract is pertinent:

"Nottingham built council houses on a large scale up to 1939, when it had 17,000 such houses, giving Nottingham a greater proportion of council houses than most other towns. Early building tended to house those from more artisan backgrounds, but as the inter war period progressed there was an increasing focus on slum clearance and reducing overcrowding with new estates created, often in outer lying areas to house predominantly working class families displaced by such clearance.

"From the 1920s onwards the population increased, peaking at about 310,000 in the early 1960s, when the Clifton estate was being built, but before the large scale clearance of around 25,000 Victorian properties in areas such as the Meadows and St Ann's started."

At its height in the late 1970s Nottingham City Council owned almost 50% of the housing stock in the City of Nottingham.

Industrial development was founded on parts of the textile industry, complemented by coal mining and manufacturing. The City saw the growth of a number of successful industries that are still associated with Nottingham today, including the firms that became Raleigh, Players and Boots.

For much of its history, the city offered relatively high wage employment although a significant amount of employment need was for relatively low skill jobs. The consequences of this may have contributed to lower levels of educational attainment and skills since employees could earn reasonable wages and employers did not necessarily require further skills training to support their business needs. This has changed since the economic challenges of the 1980s, but aspiration and attainment have sometimes lagged behind leaving a number of communities within Nottingham where education and training is not as valued as it could be.

**Again, The State of Nottingham report states:**

"The number of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) has been historically high. Effort has been made to reduce this level in recent years. The figure was 9.8% in 2005-06, which had been reduced to 7.2% for 2006-07…15% of young people in the City progress to Higher Education, the 4th lowest rate in the country."

**7 Source: The State of Nottingham, Nottingham City Council and One Nottingham, 2008**

Tackling such skills and educational deficits is an important part of the 'early intervention' agenda prioritised by the Local Strategic Partnership, One Nottingham, as part of a comprehensive approach to talking deprivation and disadvantage in the city. It will be important that Nottingham City Homes continues to play an active role in supporting vulnerable tenants and contributes to this wider agenda.

## Homes we manage within the neighbourhood context

The city's neighbourhoods make up a network of 'housing sub-markets'[8] across the city. The characteristics of the neighbourhoods, and the profile of the resident population vary across the city. Such areas have distinct identities, with neighbourhoods like Bulwell and Clifton, for example, reflecting their respective development as a peripheral town (with its roots in the mining industry) subsumed by the city; and a large post war green field council housing estate, built to meet the immediate post war housing shortage. Inner areas of the city are different yet again, with older, denser housing refurbished or renewed with high density council housing during the 1960s and 1970s. Such inner city areas have a long tradition of providing housing for migrant communities, and that ethnic diversity continues to be reflected in these neighbourhoods today. Indeed recent migration patterns continue to impact on housing in these neighbourhoods.

**The State of Nottingham report makes this point:**

"The City's enthusiasm for the inter-war 'homes for heroes' programme and a strong municipal commitment to eradicate poor quality and 'slum' housing has contributed to a legacy of high proportions of social housing…Market trends and aspects of national policy over the last quarter of a century have served to reinforce spatial concentrations of deprived households in parts of the City. Problems including financial poverty, health and educational attainment are noticeably more prevalent in such areas, and it is considered that these concentrations serve to limit routes out of disadvantage."

Whilst opportunities were always sought to seek investment funding for council housing improvement (and major schemes like the Woodlands high rise renovations were carried out), the constrained funding regime of the 1980s and 1990s made large scale stock investment and modernisation impossible to undertake.

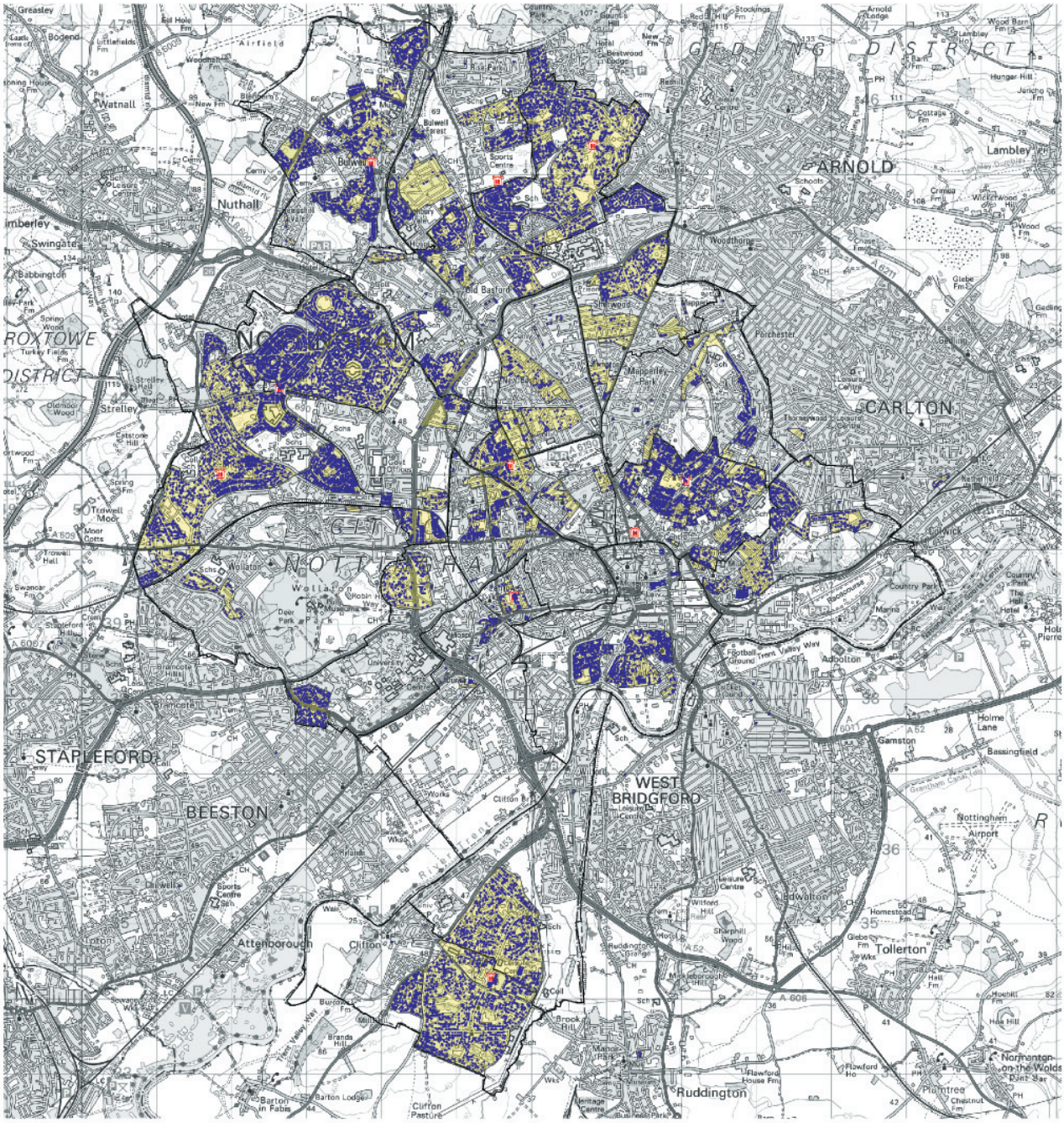
**8 Source: Nottingham Core Strategic Housing Market Assesment, 2007. B-Line Housing Information and Three Dragons, for Nottingham City Council**

# Nottingham City Homes managed stock and build date - September 2008

| Property type | Beds | Pre 1919 | 1920 - 1939 | 1940 - 1959 | 1960 - 1979 | 1980 - 2008 | Grand total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bedsit | | 36 | 22 | | 33 | | **91** |
| Bedsit total | | 36 | 22 | | 33 | | **91** |
| Bungalow | 1<br>2<br>3 | 4<br>1<br>1 | <br>76<br>82 | 360<br>62 | 506<br>200<br>17 | 119<br>862<br>2 | **989**<br>**1201**<br>**102** |
| Bungalow total | | 6 | 158 | 422 | 723 | 983 | **2292** |
| Flat | 0<br>1<br>2<br>3<br>4 | <br>91<br>19<br>4 | 1<br>374<br>1 | <br>234<br>165<br>7 | <br>5797<br>2161<br>41<br>3 | <br>423<br>146<br>1 | **1**<br>**6919**<br>**2492**<br>**53**<br>**3** |
| Flat total | | 114 | 376 | 406 | 8002 | 570 | **9468** |
| House | 1<br>2<br>3<br>4<br>5+ | 12<br>395<br>405<br>75<br>16 | 2<br>2215<br>4625<br>184<br>1 | 1<br>179<br>2848<br>79 | <br>1579<br>2558<br>219<br>6 | <br>362<br>443<br>16<br>2 | **15**<br>**4730**<br>**10879**<br>**573**<br>**25** |
| House total | | 903 | 7027 | 3107 | 4362 | 823 | **16222** |
| Maisonette | 1<br>2<br>3<br>4 | 2<br>3<br>9<br>1 | <br><br>42<br>4 | <br><br>2 | 1<br>726<br>113<br>91 | <br>65<br>8 | **3**<br>**794**<br>**174**<br>**96** |
| Maisonette total | | 15 | 46 | 2 | 931 | 73 | **1067** |
| **Grand total** | | 1074 | 7629 | 3937 | 14051 | 2449 | **29140** |

# Nottingham City

**housing stock, estates and housing offices**




## Key

- Ward Boundaries
- NCC Stock
- Housing Offices
- Estates 2008

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

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Map Produced on: 05/01/09 by: SI GIS Team. w\gis\projects\od9591\citywide\housing stock @ A4

Nottingham City Council

Environment and Regeneration

## Local policy context

**As one of the major public service providers in the city, Nottingham City Homes operates within a far-reaching and sometimes changing policy environment. Central to this is the role of NCH within the Local Strategic Partnership, One Nottingham, which seeks to identify and progress the collective ambitions and priorities of partners across Nottingham. These shared priorities are expressed in the Local Area Agreement, Nottingham's 'contract' with central government to improve life for our residents.**

Together with Nottingham City Council, One Nottingham and its partners have recently developed the new Local Area Agreement for 2008 - 11. The priorities are grouped under five themes, taken from the current partnership Community Plan (One Nottingham, One Plan).

**These core themes are:**

- Choose Nottingham
- Respect for Nottingham
- Young Nottingham
- Active and Healthy Nottingham
- Transforming Nottingham's Neighbourhoods

The new LAA priorities are now fully embedded in Nottingham City Council's refreshed Council Plan.

Transforming Neighbourhoods seeks to raise people's satisfaction with their local area, and enable them to access good quality housing and support. To help drive this, there is radical ambition to transform local neighbourhoods through physical, economic and social regeneration, driven through three Strategic Regeneration Frameworks. Nottingham City Homes is actively engaged as a key strategic and operational partner in the development of these frameworks.

Improved housing and access to housing also cuts across other themes. Choose Nottingham embraces a package of measures aimed at attracting and retaining families in the City. Respect for Nottingham includes the aims of maintaining community cohesion and ensuring people feel safe in their homes.

Going forward, Nottingham City Council and its One Nottingham partners, including Nottingham City Homes, will be developing a new 2030 vision for the city and a Sustainable Community Strategy. This will set the direction and objectives for Nottingham over the next ten years, and so demonstrates a commitment by partners to take a long term, strategic approach to addressing our challenges. Nottingham has also launched itself as an 'Early Intervention City', and partners will be seeking to give a greater focus to causes, not symptoms, and to tackling the inter-generational nature of many of the issues we all face. This is, therefore, a timely opportunity for Nottingham City Homes to move beyond its core business and build on its strategic role as one of the city's major partners, as set out in this strategy.

## The strategic housing agenda in Nottingham

**The wider housing strategic agenda is developed via the Housing Strategic Partnership, the housing work stream of One Nottingham. Its objectives are set out in the 2008 - 2011 Housing Strategy[9]. This has the following mission statement:**

'…to transform neighbourhoods and secure a wider availability of quality, affordable decent homes in mixed communities of choice'

Nottingham City Homes has a critical contribution to make to ensure the city's Housing Strategy is progressed successfully through the Housing Strategic Partnership and through the delivery of our services.

For example, some of our estates are relatively stable, having a low turnover and a healthy demand for properties. The turnover of tenancies across the City in 2007 - 2008 was 11%. However some lettings areas experienced a turnover of nearly 24% (with individual blocks of flats in some cases reaching almost 30% turnover). This would suggest that we are managing some unstable, transient communities, and the high turnover could have a detrimental effect on the viability and sustainability of these neighbourhoods. Levels of abandonment and possession for rent arrears are high in areas of high turnover, being both cause and effect of the instability of these areas.

This is one example of where NCH can actively work to help build more sustainable neighbourhoods, by intervening where possible to reduce turnover and increase residential stability.

## The local dynamic

**NCH provides housing services to a quarter of the City's population and as a social housing provider we must ensure that we strike a positive balance between two potentially opposing pressures:**

- providing services that are sensitive to both community and individual needs
- whilst at the same time delivering services effectively in an increasingly constrained financial environment.

We can expect the changing demographics in Nottingham to change the nature of housing demand which in turn will have implications for the type of affordable supply which will be required.

We have already worked closely with the city on the review of its Older Peoples Housing Strategy and on a review of high rise accommodation. Our plans over the next 10 years will need to anticipate and project future trends in demand so that we can develop our service delivery and provision to meet those new and changing requirements.

**9 Source: The Housing Strategy for Nottingham City Homes, 2008 - 2011, Nottingham Housing Strategic Partnership, 2008**

On a daily operational level we can also have an influence over the well being and quality of life for individuals, communities and the places in which they live. For instance:

- Letting of in the region of 3,000 homes a year provides an opportunity through a range of different and tailored packages to support and help those individuals who may be experiencing disadvantage.
- Similarly, with our rent collection and rent arrears process, we can support and help those tenants who have difficulty with their finances, of which rent is but one demand.
- We can use our position as a major employer in the City, not only to ensure that our workforce reflects the demographic make up of our communities, but also to ensure that our recruitment offers maximum opportunity to local residents. We have recently reshaped our three apprenticeship schemes to focus on local recruitment and we will be developing this and similar initiatives over the next 10 years.
- We have already engaged with a range of very successful partnerships across the City such as the Crime and Drugs Partnership. We work with the Police and the voluntary sector through a number of our key services such as those dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB), racial harassment and domestic violence.
- Our Allocations and Lettings services also work closely with a wide range of voluntary and quasi public sector agencies in offering support and advice to vulnerable applicants. We recognise that by working closely with other specialist providers and support services we can better meet the diverse needs and demands of our customers.

Over the next 10 years we will seek to strengthen this approach and will examine and explore new initiatives that will extend and improve access to our services.

## National and regional context

A series of major reviews commissioned by the Government has signalled a significant shift in the national housing agenda. Since the Barker Review[10] there is a much more broadly recognised need to achieve a greatly increased supply of affordable housing.

The Hills[11] and Lyons[12] reports have brought particular emphasis on the impact which large concentrations of social housing can have on communities and individual tenants and the need for broader intervention to shape places. The new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) now carries a much broader responsibility for regeneration and new build that will focus on growth, renewal, affordability and sustainability. The creation of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) following the Cave review[13] marks an extremely important step change in the ability of tenants, leaseholders and residents to engage with and challenge the providers of social housing services.

Nottingham is at the forefront of the opportunities which these changes will bring and NCH is a key partner working closely with the City Council to deliver a visionary transformational agenda. The housing activity is set within the new Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (SRFs) for the City. These are intended to provide an overarching strategy for Nottingham's corporate approach to neighbourhood transformation over the next 10-15 years. Each SRF will be supported by Neighbourhood Plans that will translate the SRF into local action plans and detailed interventions to facilitate the transformation of our neighbourhoods. Nottingham City Homes has a significant contribution to make both in the development and implementation of these SRF's.

**10 Source: Kate Barker; Review of Housing Supply: Delivering Stability: Securing our Future Housing Needs 2004, London: HM Treasury**
**11 Source: Professor John Hills, Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE); Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England, 2007, London School of Economics**
**12 Source: Sir Michael Lyons; Lyons Inquiry into Local Government - Place-shaping: a shared ambition for the future of local government, 2007. London: The Stationery Office4 Source: STATUS Survey 2008**
**13 Source: Professor Martin Cave; Every Tenant Matters: A Review of Social Housing Regulation, 2007 Department for Communities and Local Government**

As a consequence of this approach Nottingham has become one of four 'first wave' authorities that will pilot new and replacement housing provision through a Local Housing Company (LHC). These companies bring together the local authority and private sector partners to deliver new homes, at least 50% of which will be affordable, for council tenants and shared ownership. The local housing company initiative unlocks the potential for newly constructed, council owned, housing in Nottingham. This permits a facility to tackle changing housing need and to regenerate housing stock managed by NCH. The local authority intends to invite Nottingham City Homes to have a place on the board of the LHC.

The City has also determined that it will explore alternative funding opportunities that may present themselves over the coming years where this fits within the SRF's. For example, central government offers funding for housing work through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) where outcomes can contribute to transforming neighbourhoods and creating more sustainable communities. There continue to be opportunities of this nature.

NCH has been a key partner in developing these initiatives and the City has indicated that NCH is its 'preferred partner' for the delivery of housing services as it is already integrated into the local community and service delivery infrastructure. This will depend on NCH demonstrating its continued ability to deliver effective services that offer real value for money. Whilst this is a strong position from which NCH can move forward it will be important over the coming years that we demonstrate our commitment and ability to support and deliver the City's regeneration ambition.

Already at the national level 22 ALMO's have "pre-qualified" to access social housing grant from the HCA. NCH would expect, following a successful inspection, to seek similar access for funding to build new and replacement homes. Initially we would wish to focus on the small estate infill projects which will contribute significantly to local community and regeneration ambition as well as providing new homes. This will play to our strength as a local service provider, whilst ensuring that our core business of delivering excellent housing services remains central to what we do.

The new TSA is strongly supported by the ALMO sector and we welcome the fact that local authority and ALMO services will come under the TSA umbrella in 2010. We have been working closely with the City Council on its broader neighbourhood empowerment agenda and have established a tenant engagement strategy and structure which will both complement the City's agenda, whilst at the same time maintaining an independent voice for tenants and leaseholders in the scope, nature and standards of service that NCH delivers. This will be at the heart of our service delivery over the next 10 years and we will strive to become an exemplar in the East Midlands region. This, we hope, will give us the opportunity to provide services for other housing providers, where this would offer a sensible fit with our existing core services.

Regions are important within the strategic planning of services such as housing. Nottingham, as the recognised capital of the East Midlands, and the regional 'Core City', must be at the forefront of the regional agenda and within this, Nottingham City Homes' activities should relate to the Regional Housing Strategy , with NCH seeking to influence regional thinking where appropriate. Amongst other things the Regional Housing Strategy identifies the challenges of changing levels of demand and affordability issues across the region, which reflect issues to be addressed within Nottingham City itself.

**14 Source: Managing Growth: Managing Change. Revised East Midlands Housing Strategy 2008 – 2016, Consultation Draft. East Midlands Regional Housing Group, 2008.**

## Introduction

**NCH was established in April 2005 and Inspected in November that year. Since then both the organisation and service delivery have undergone significant improvements that have created a solid foundation upon which we can build our key strategic objectives.**

## Getting the structure in place

**Key changes have been made over the last 2 years to put the structure in place to provide clear leadership and deliver our strategic objectives. In broad terms these are:**

### Governance

The structure of our Board arrangement was changed in the first half of 2007 following extensive consultation. Previously there had been a Strategic Board comprising 20 members with three Area Boards with membership drawn from different constituent parts of the city. This had proved unwieldy with a lack of clarity on roles, responsibility and accountability between different bodies.

The new structure established in 2007 abolished the three Area Boards and created a new Board which comprised 12 members. This was designed to give greater focus to strategic direction and policy development. Most importantly the profile of the 12 members was changed to give greater involvement from tenants and residents so that the constituent parts are now made up of five tenants / leaseholders, four independents and three Council nominees. The committee structure, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were overhauled at the same time.

### Tenant engagement

A fundamental review of tenant engagement, and the formal structures of engagement was carried out in early 2007. This culminated in the launch of a tripartite Tenant Compact between NCH, NCC and its tenants and leaseholders. The Tenants and Leaseholders Congress (TLC) was established as the leading body representing tenants and leaseholders across the city. The TLC itself has a number of forums and working groups covering key areas of activity across the full scope of our service delivery.

Nine Area Panels were also established to focus on service delivery in the local area. The Area Panels are co-terminus with the City Council's Area Committees. Their membership comprises of tenants and leaseholders only who also select the Chair and Vice Chair from amongst their number. This is a significant departure from previous arrangements. The Area Panels also have responsibility for considering and recommending environmental projects against a predetermined budget allocated by the Council's Area Committees. The first 12 months of operation has been a valuable learning experience and has exceeded expectations for this stage of development. We would expect that over the next 10 years the Area Panels will become the primary body reviewing, monitoring, scrutinising and determining local service delivery.

### Organisational changes

The managerial capacity and competence of the organisation has been substantially changed. A new Chief Executive was appointed in February 2007 and a new organisational structure with new directors and managers has since been introduced. This has enabled NCH to achieve a blend of internal and external knowledge and experience.

### Strategic direction

Reinvigorating these three constituent parts of the broader Governance structure also enabled us to review and reconsider our strategic direction. The first part of this was to refresh our mission, vision and values which are included at the beginning of this document. This document adds detail to those objectives following discussion with key stakeholders and early outcomes from the City Council's review of its vision and strategic direction for the future.

### Organisational strength

The 2005 Housing Inspection identified managerial capacity and our relationship with the City Council as areas for concern. Since then there have been major and significant step changes which will ensure that NCH is not only an organisation fit for purpose but one which will have a secure long term future in provision of housing services in Nottingham.

The changes we have made at managerial level and to the structure of the organisation have been underpinned by a comprehensive review of all key strategies and operational practices and procedures so that we now have in place robust regulations and Standing Orders, a comprehensive management framework linked with strong performance, budgetary and financial management. We have a set of supporting strategies and plans as illustrated in the diagram in section 5, all of which combine to provide a clear 'golden thread' through the organisation.

Immediately following the 2005 inspection NCH and NCC set up a joint Accountability Body to review service delivery and arrangements between the two organisations, this later became a Partnership Board which has commissioned a number of pieces of work which examine the practical arrangements between the two organisations within the context of the longer term opportunities and challenges for NCH. This has acted as a catalyst for change within the two organisations.

The trust and confidence that NCC has in NCH has been immeasurably strengthened and we can be confident of a longer term future.

## Strategic intervention in key service areas

### Choice based letting

In June 2006 we introduced Choice Based Letting (CBL) as the mechanism for allocating homes to potential tenants. This new system replaced a points based arrangement which had been inherited from the City Council (and had been the subject of criticism at the 2005 inspection) CBL gives choice to the customer and provides openness and transparency of operation. The scheme also includes a number of key registered social landlords (RSLs) in Nottingham, delivering choice across the affordable housing sector. We are in discussion with other potential users of the scheme which has the scope to bring together improvements across the greater Nottingham conurbation and beyond. The operation of the scheme has been the subject of a wide ranging review following its first 12 months of operation. As a result, we have improved customer focus by extending the support mechanism that we offer to potential applicants.

## Asset management strategy

**In June 2007, we embarked on a major review of the Asset Management Strategy for the Council's housing stock. This embraced all current and future maintenance requirements. Tenant representatives were a key part of the review and have helped us shape the priorities for our decent homes programme into three investment streams: secure, warm and modern. The new strategy was adopted by both the NCH Board and the City Council at the end of 2007 and implementation is now well advanced.**

The strategy compliments and supports the City's 30 year transformation agenda and will make sure that we have a strong investment and maintenance plan over the next 10 years. We have already published the five year decent homes programme (which is subject to release of government funding following a successful inspection in November 2008). The new procurement and value for money arrangements have delivered substantial cash and productivity savings identified in our annual financial statement. We are confident that the new arrangement set out in the Asset Management Strategy will enable us to deliver a 'Decent Homes Plus' package to tenants and residents over the next five years within the resources available.

## Tendering the repair services

**External audit over a number of years, and the housing inspection in 2005, had urged both the Council and subsequently NCH to market test the repairs service. During 2007 the City Council and NCH undertook a major tendering exercise for the whole of the repair and maintenance service which NCH provides to the City Council's housing stock.**

NCH undertook a comprehensive examination of its own cost structure and service delivery and was able to submit a winning tender for the services. The new repairs contract started on 1st July 2008 with a contract period of five years, with a potential further two years extension. This has secured the services within NCH and will provide the spring board for further customer service improvements and cost savings. It will also provide the basis for offering repairs services to other housing providers within greater Nottingham which will help to safeguard the service into the future whilst continuing to deliver cost and productivity gains.

## Foundation Plan – Improving customer experience and performance

**In early 2007 we undertook an appraisal of our key service deliverables and re-focused services to improve performance and customer experience. This became our Foundation Plan. Amongst key outcomes that are apparent 12 months later:**

- Customer satisfaction has increased from 60% to 69% (a 15% increase).
- empty property turn round has been reduced from 74 days to 41 days on average and the number of properties empty at any one time has been reduced. We were thus able to increase income by in excess of £1/2 m in the financial year 2007/08.
- Management costs per property has been driven down from £695 in the 2006/07 financial year to £446 in 2007/08.
- the rent service was brought together into one organisation to focus on improving service to tenants and generate additional income. Rent collection for the first six months of 2008 is over £500,000 more than the same period last year.
- The Repairs Tender Submission contained a range of improvements that will further enhance customer experience. This, linked with the Vision Management System (VMS) and customer feedback arrangements will ensure that we continue to deliver customer focussed improvements in service. Again this provides building blocks for strong service delivery into the future.

- In June 2007 we introduced a star rating system backed up by tenant inspection of estate services. As a consequence we have improved the quality of service on all of the patch managed 'estates'. 35 of the 39 areas are now (July 2008) deemed to be of a two or three star standard or above compared to 14 in June 2007.

- We have advanced our Customer Access Strategy and we will be opening a consolidated Customer Service Centre and Property Shop in October 2008 which will improve direct access for current and prospective tenants and leaseholders. This will also pave the way for an enhanced network of support and outreach surgery based services.

- Every member of the workforce has now benefited from the Cultural Change Programme launched in 2007, designed to put customers at the heart of our service delivery.

## Achieving excellence

The foundations which we have put in place over the last two years have delivered strong improvements across all of the areas of service delivery we provide. We are confident that these improvements will secure a two star rating at our next inspection which in turn will release the additional £165 million funding required to deliver our Decent Homes programme.

It is, however, our ambition to deliver Excellent Services to our tenants and leaseholders. This is not a one – off ambition but a commitment for the future which will require continuous improvement, innovation and development. We will achieve this by working closely with our partners, with the City Council, but above all with our tenants and leaseholders.

# Plans for the future

**This document shows that we are determined to move into the future with a set of objectives that will improve the quality of life of the people we seek to serve. The document illustrates the complex range of challenges that we must address to achieve this, and shows that we have already put in place the structure to deliver. That structure has already provided service improvements that are tangible and measurable.**

We have had to recognise the point from which we are starting this journey, and that this is a credible journey. This is why the strategy is a ten year one: we recognised that a lot of work was needed in order to achieve our first goal of becoming a two-star service with promising or excellent prospects for improvement. We have done that work and our customers have seen it bear fruit. Both our current and future tenants and leaseholders can expect to see the plans we have in place continue to deliver improved services, and as we develop our working relationships with other partners it will provide improved services that are fit for the purpose of addressing the challenges that we, and our customers face. Our customers have a right to expect nothing less than this.

The most important thing we have recognised in this strategy is that we will make Nottingham City Homes an excellent ALMO by working in partnership and the most important partnership we have is with our residents. NCH's tenants and leaseholders will be the key people in the realisation of our key objectives over the next ten years.

Supporting our Strategic Objectives are a range of documents that set out the detail of delivery, the process involved, and the outcomes that are sought. The chart below illustrates these. The documents, along with this Strategy will be refreshed and updated to take into account the changing environment we will find ourselves in.

# Nottingham City Homes – Hierarchy of strategies and plans

## NCH ten year strategy 2008 to 2018

**Medium term strategies and business plans:**

- Asset Management 2008
- Customer Focus 2008 to 2012
- Equality and Diversity 2006 to 2008
- Value for Money
- Rents Business Plan 2008/09
- Tenant & Leaseholder Involvement Business Plan 2008/09-2011/12
- Tenancy & Estate Management Business Plans – six in total , each 2008/09 to 2011/12 (Aspley and Bilborough, Bestwood, Bulwell, Clifton, Hyson Green and St Anns)
- Caretaking Business Plan 2008/09 to 2011/12
- Voids, Allocations & Letting Services Business Plan 2008/09 to 2011/12
- Sheltered Housing Business Plan 2008/09 to 2011/12
- Leaseholder & Rechargeable Repairs Business Plan 2008/09 to 2011/12

**Supporting strategies and plans:**

- Medium Term Financial Plan
- ICT strategy
- Marketing and Communications Strategy
- Risk Management Plan
- Accommodation Plan
- Procurement Strategy
- Worklessness Strategy
- Recruitment Strategy
- Financial Inclusion Strategy
- Customer Focus Strategy 2008 to 2012
- Inclusion Strategy for Nottingham Homelink
- Repairs & Maintenance Strategy 2009 to 2013
- Low Demand Strategy 2008 to 2009
- High rise Strategy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2008 to 2010
- Older Persons Strategy 2008 to 2010

**Annual delivery plan**

**Self-improvement plans**

## Key outcomes

### Customer focus

Create an excellent organisation, with the highest levels of customer satisfaction and customer experience.

Comprehensively change our customer access routes through the new Customer Contact Centre supported by home visits and dispersed surgeries.

Engagement – continue to find new and helpful ways to engage with all our customers to make sure they can play their full part in shaping our services.

### Communities and neighbourhoods

Manage and deliver our services in a manner which improves and enhances our customers' quality of life and helps them tackle issues they face, contributing to community cohesion and neighbourhood sustainability

Work to deliver critical neighbourhood services with partner organisations.

Tackling disadvantage, such as worklessness and the need for early intervention to support households in the city find pathways out of deprivation. We will use our allocations polices, rent collection processes, employment capacity and corporate 'buying power' to contribute to this agenda.

### Regeneration

Actively engage in neighbourhood regeneration across the city.

Move from delivering Decent Homes to a level of 'Decent Homes Plus' that meets our objective of 'Secure, Warm, Modern'.

### Delivering new housing supply

Build new homes that meet the needs of our current and future residents.

### Long term future

Expand the capacity of our business to secure the long term future for the organisation and create the ability to deliver additional income through the provision of services to other organisations that have a natural synergy with our core business.

Provide an access route for other public services to engage with our tenants and leaseholders where this can contribute to improving the quality of life of those we serve.

## Resources – Financial

**In delivering Nottingham's housing services NCH's turnover (income matched by expenditure) in 2008/09 will exceed £67m. This comprises both revenue and capital expenditure and will increase significantly to bring the stock up to the decent homes standard over the next five years. The Company will invest £309m to achieve this, alongside its other investment programme which includes such things as environmental improvements to the housing areas we manage.**

Spending on management and repairs and maintenance undertaken by the Company is a little over £50m. This is carried out through a management fee provided by the Council from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

We anticipate that in the next few years there is likely to be considerable pressure on both capital and revenue budgets as a result of scarce resources from both central government and the Council. Our response to this, which is dealt with in detail within the Value for Money Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Plan, is firstly to undertake a continuous programme of Value for Money Reviews each of which will be led by a senior manager responsible for delivery of the service being reviewed and supported by the finance team. Secondly, the seeking out of efficiency, economy and effectiveness is embedded within our processes through a series of actions and annual efficiency statements that are now a company requirement. This serves to embed the value for money culture within our procedures and with our staff.

The Government is currently undertaking a review of Council Housing Finance including the Housing Revenue Account system, the purpose of which is to develop a sustainable, long term system for financing council housing. This is intended to be consistent with wider housing policy, including the creation of the Tenants Services Authority mentioned elsewhere. The review is due to report to Ministers in the spring of 2009, setting out options for the subsidy system, including proposals for changes to rent policy and to inform the next spending review. We will of course react to any changes appropriately, but we can be clear that the regular scrutiny of financial performance by our management team will continue to be at the heart of our procedures.

So, although there are not expected to be changes to the current system in 2009/10, potentially the subsidy mechanism may be different from 2010/11. It is, of course, impossible to predict the effect of this on Nottingham's HRA. Our medium term planning assumes that there will be no significant changes to our position although we will review this as more information comes to light. Our objective will be to ensure we are in a position to respond to any changes that are introduced in the future in a manner which does not detract from the quality of service we seek to provide.

Whilst our primary focus in the early part of the ten year period will be to continuously improve the quality of our core services, we will be seeking opportunities to bring in additional income and spread the cost of our overheads. This has yet to be fully explored, but activities that are ancillary to our core business will be appraised and developed. This could potentially include managing stock for other landlords, providing consultancy services to social housing providers and developing new housing.

## Resources – People

**Our most important resource is our employees. The skills, knowledge and commitment of our employees will make the aspirations of this document a reality.**

Employee development is critical to the success of the business. To this end the Company will continue to develop an annual workforce development plan which will encompass the strategic and operational training needs of the organisation. Our approach is demonstrated by our commitment to Investors In People accreditation (we retained inherited accreditation when NCH was set up, and received full accreditation for the whole company in February 2008). We will undertake an annual audit to ensure continuing full compliance. We will ensure that staff learning and development is aligned to our Business Plan objectives.

Every one of us is unique and NCH is committed to supporting every individual in gaining equal access to job opportunities and once employed by the company, equal access to promotion, training and other opportunities.

We also pledge a commitment that our employment policies and procedures will undergo an Equality Impact Assessment and where any disproportion is highlighted a positive action plan to address the issues will be put in place. We will take a zero tolerance stance on all forms of harassment, discrimination and bullying.

Our aim is to be an employer of choice, recognised as a highly desirable organisation to work for. Everyone will be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, disability, gender, religious beliefs, age or sexual orientation.

As an organisation with a large workforce, we can seek to address some of the issues the communities we serve face through our own actions. Alongside our commitment to training and employee skills development we will seek to employ local people where possible, providing the necessary support and training to positively support this initiative. We will continue to 'grow' our own, whether that be through our construction or office apprenticeship schemes as ways of helping people into skilled and secure employment.

## Delivering in partnership

To achieve the customer-focused, excellent service we aspire to and to deliver it to such a diverse customer base we cannot work in isolation and we need to work in partnership.
But what do we mean by it, and who are Nottingham City Homes' partners?

**Essentially, our partnerships operate at three levels:**

- Our formal or contractual partnerships, particularly that with Nottingham City Council
- Our involvement in strategic partnerships such as One Nottingham and the Crime and Drugs Partnership
- Partnerships at a local, operational level

## Contractual partnerships

**One of our most important relationships is with the City Council. The Council is the sole shareholder of NCH and we deliver a housing management service on its behalf.**

For this we receive a management fee, the conditions of which are set out in a Management Agreement between the two parties. For certain services however (for example payroll, or CCTV security monitoring in blocks of flats) services are 'bought back in' from the City Council, so it is more than a simple 'one-way' client / contractor relationship.

The other major contractual agreement we have is with the contractor partner delivering our decent homes programme.

## Strategic Partnerships

**Our role in partnerships that seek to develop and improve Nottingham's neighbourhoods cannot be overestimated. We are members of the Boards of One Nottingham (the local strategic partnership) and the Crime and Drugs Partnership (Nottingham's Crime and Drugs Reduction Partnership).**

We use this influence in order to achieve the strategic objectives to deliver our customers' aspirations. The Housing Strategic Partnership, for us the key work stream of One Nottingham, has a significant NCH presence and input.

## Operational Partnerships

The other, but by no means less important, way in which we work in partnership is when our frontline officers join with colleagues from external agencies in order to deal with specific issues in neighbourhoods or to support individual residents. The most notable of these is the Police, but we also work with Nottingham City Council Adult Services Housing and Health, Children's Services, the health service, voluntary groups and others. We have signed up to the Respect Standard for Housing Management, and this commits us to working in partnership with other agencies with roles in the challenge to eradicate antisocial behaviour.

We will continue to develop new working arrangements at the local level, and to build on existing partnerships that can help improve the quality of life of our residents. Established protocols have been set up (for example the Victim Support Protocol and the Neighbourhood Policing Joint Working Protocol) in certain areas and we will continue to use these, and develop others in the future, where it will serve to improve the delivery of services.

There have been some noticeable successes when we have worked in partnership, for example with the Police on antisocial behaviour and with the City and registered social landlords on the HomeLink choice based lettings scheme.

## Partnership in the future

The level of partnership working by Nottingham City Homes will increase in the future. Most of our strategic objectives will require some kind of partnership. For example, there will be new partners such as neighbouring local authorities and ALMOs as we seek to deliver services more efficiently and maximise economies of scale. The neighbourhood regeneration and transformation programme will be delivered through partnership, and the Local Housing Company will be a partnership body, with the intention of NCH being represented on its Board.

## Managing Performance

**The performance management framework designed to ensure the organisation can deliver on its commitments is set out in detail in the Nottingham City Homes Delivery Plan. It seeks to drive continuous improvement towards our objective of becoming one of the leading housing organisations in the country.**

The framework involves customers in setting performance standards and monitoring performance, then uses a structure that links individual outcomes through to improving overall organisation performance. Performance is then made available to customers and stakeholders in a clear fashion. This aims to achieve a 'golden thread' of performance from Nottingham City Council's housing strategy to our business objectives right through to every service area and individual employee member's targets and objectives for the year.

We also need to be able to measure how well we are doing and to take corrective action if we are not making the progress we want. This means having a robust, thorough performance management framework that gives us information which is relevant, accurate and informative.

Behind the scenes of any successful organisation there has to be a solid infrastructure to support the front-line delivery of services. This includes many areas of our work: financial management, ICT, quality assurance, performance management, administration, marketing and communications, equality and diversity, health and safety, and risk management. All the people who work in these support services have a role to play if we are to be successful, they are delivering a service and they too have customers. Nevertheless we will seek to continue to deliver our services efficiently and in a way which gives value for money. The Gershon review of public sector efficiency is applicable to ALMOs and we will be driven by its agenda for 2.5% back office efficiency gains to release resources for the "front line". These efficiency savings are of course designed to improve service delivery and the levels of service received by our customers.

Communication is an essential activity which underpins much of what we do. We need to inform, advise and consult with customers regularly – all of which requires effective communication. Making the best use of ICT – implementing 'e-government' - will ensure that we are using the quickest, most accessible and cost effective way of communicating with our customers. The use and development of ICT to support many of our systems – rents, repairs, allocations – means that we must continue to have a robust ICT strategy in place and be innovative in the ways we apply its uses.

NCH works closely with our tenant representatives to ensure that tenant scrutiny of services helps inform improved delivery. This will continue to drive our improvement agenda in to the future. We have a range of methods to seek customer feedback and these include the regular STATUS surveys, the Vision Management System (VMS), and our Compliments, Comments and Complaints (3Cs) procedure. This means we are well placed to engage with the Government's agenda as set out in the recent White Paper on community empowerment (which it builds on the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) and proposals in the Governance of Britain Green Paper to enhance empowerment, extend citizen's rights and make public services more accountable.

**These resources, and the mechanisms outlined in the supporting plans and documentation, will provide the process by which we deliver the outcomes of this ten year strategy.**

**15 Source: Sir Peter Gershon was commissioned in 2003 by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to undertake an independent review to assess how the public sector could exploit opportunities for efficiency savings, so that resources could be released for front-line public service delivery: Sir Peter Gershon CBE; Releasing Resources to the Front Line – Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency, 2004, London: TSO**

# Glossary

## ALMO
**An ALMO is an arms' length management organisation, which is a company set up by a local authority to manage and improve some or all of its housing stock. The ALMO is owned by the local authority and operates under a management agreement between the company and the local authority. High performing ALMOs are eligible for additional Government funding to achieve Decent Homes Standards in Council housing stock.**

## Audit Commission
**The Government agency which assesses local authority and other public bodies' performance. The Audit Commission carries out inspections of housing management bodies including ALMOs, making an assessment of how good a service is and what the prospects are for improvement.**

## Department of Communities and Local Government
**The government department which oversees social housing. Communities and Local Government sets policy on local government, housing, urban regeneration, planning and fire and rescue.**

## Corporate Plan – The Council Plan
**The plan containing the City Council's overarching objectives.**

## Decent Homes
**The standard of residential properties which must be achieved by all social housing providers. This essentially means warm, weatherproof and having reasonably modern facilities.**

## Housing Revenue Account
**The account which shows the income of a local authority landlord and its expenditure excluding capital**

## Strategic Regeneration Frameworks
**Strategic Regeneration Frameworks are areas identified to tackle neighbourhood transformation over the next ten to fifteen years. Each SRF is made up of three City Council Area Committees areas and together they cover the whole City.**

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