

## ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 3 November 2009

**Subject:** Housing Portfolio

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor David Stallan

**Item 7(f)**

---

### **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.**

---

### **“Repairs Refresh Programme” – Responsive Repairs Performance**

At the last Council meeting, I reported on the Council’s “Repairs Refresh Programme” and that, for the first time since records began, the Building Maintenance Section achieved and exceeded its three key targets for response times for repairs in the first Quarter of 2009/10.

I am pleased to report that this good performance was carried into Quarter 2 (April 2009 – September 2009). Once again, all three response repairs targets were achieved or exceeded. It also pleasing that satisfaction with the Repairs Service remains high, with 99% of tenants having repairs undertaken being satisfied with the general standard of the service.

The proposed restructuring of the Housing Repairs Section and Building Maintenance Section into one service is currently under consultation with staff and unions, and will be reported to the November Cabinet meeting.

### **Celebration Event – Completion of Developments on Former Council Land by Estuary Housing Association**

A small number of councillors and officers joined Board members and officers from Estuary Housing Association on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009, to celebrate the completion of six small developments on land previously owned by the Council - mainly on difficult-to-let garages in Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Waltham Abbey - to provide homes for local people on the Council’s Housing Register.

The six sites have provided 29 new homes – 18 homes are for rent, at affordable rents with long term assured tenancies and 11 homes are for shared ownership (“part rent, part buy”) for first time buyers, enabling the occupiers to buy equity in the home, and increase the amount of equity in future years, up to full home ownership.

The Chairman of Council unveiled a hand painted scheme sign at Raphael Drive, Loughton Drive (one of the development sites), and I said a few words on behalf of the Council. The design of the sign was chosen by the residents, who felt it would further enhance the look of the new scheme.

All of the six developments are named after famous inventors and artists.

The Council enabled the developments to be built, by providing a capital grant to Estuary Housing Association of £1 million and transferring the land for free. The remainder of the costs has been funded by Estuary's private finance (a loan from a funding institution). All residents for the rented housing were nominated by the Council, through the Council's HomeOptions Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

A further development by Estuary Housing Association - of 12 shared ownership homes for first time buyers at Acres Avenue, Ongar – is due to commence shortly, once the legal agreements have been finalised. This scheme is being funded by the Homes and Communities Agency that has taken over the investment functions of the former Housing Corporation.

### **Springfields Improvement Scheme, Waltham Abbey**

This major £4.4m improvement scheme was practically completed on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2009. I have formally monitored progress with the scheme throughout the construction stage, and have reported progress to the Cabinet quarterly. Although the scheme has experienced delays for a number of reasons, the quality of the accommodation and environment at Springfields has been significantly improved. The water ingress problems that were experienced at the blocks for a number of years have also now been overcome.