



Welcome to our new Chairperson

Paul Gayler, Strategic Housing Manager of Maldon DC, took over the Chair of the Greater Haven Gateway (GHG) Housing Steering Group from Mike Eaton in January this year. Everyone would like to extend their thanks to Mike for a job well done and welcome Paul to the role. Paul takes over at a very interesting and challenging time for sub-regional working. With housing delivery at record lows, demand increasing and an imminent squeeze on public sector expenditure it will not be a quiet year ahead for Paul.

More interestingly though when Paul was asked to provide a little known fact about himself he revealed that he had 'visited' nearly every prison in East Anglia!!

The GHG Partnership also welcomes Joy Magna, the new sub regional housing co-ordinator who started in October 2009. Joy can be contacted on Joy.Magna@colchester.gov.uk, ☎ 01206 508964.

Successful launch for Gateway to HomeChoice

Gateway to Homechoice, the sub-region's choice based lettings scheme launched at the end of April 2009. Seven of the eight Greater Haven Gateway authorities participate. In its first 8 months 2,546 homes have been successfully let through the system with over 125,000 bids on properties from customers.

Customers only have to apply once to the scheme, but are then eligible for housing in any of the participating seven local authorities. Checks have been built into the system to ensure that movement around the sub-region is balanced between authorities.

Currently the GHG Equality and Diversity group is reviewing monitoring information from the Choice Based Lettings scheme to ensure that all communities are able to access the system and secure housing. A full Equalities Impact Assessment is being carried out and is due to be published shortly.

By law the scheme has to have an Allocation's policy which sets out the rules about who can join the Housing Needs Register, what priority they will be given and who homes can be given to. This Policy is currently being reviewed after the schemes first year in operation. The scheme is also looking at capturing customer satisfaction and how customers can get involved in reviewing and developing the scheme.

Unfortunately, not all customers on the housing register will be able to secure social housing. It is planned to offer other housing options on the system, for example private rented homes so that customers can see their options in one place.

For further information joanne.webb@colchester.gov.uk ☎ 01206 506575

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, The Rural Community Council, and Government Office East of England.

For more information about the Greater Haven Gateway contact:

Joy Magna, Greater Haven Gateway Co-ordinator

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Mob: 0794 755 2144

Stop Press

The Greater Haven Gateway is in the process of putting together a new housing strategy for the sub-region. Stakeholders are being given the chance to develop the strategy at the GHG Strategy Stakeholder Event which will take place at Weston Homes Community Stadium in Colchester on 31st March. Please contact Joy Magna: joy.magna@colchester.gov.uk if you haven't received your invitation and would like to share your ideas and thought with us.

The Enhanced Housing Options programme

The Enhanced Housing Options programme, also known as 'Trailblazer', has just successfully secured funding from Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Department of Works and Pensions to continue the project for a second year. The trailblazer will be run in seven local authorities across the sub-region.

This innovative programme aims to improve the way services are 'joined up' for people in housing need. It is seeking to link advice on housing options with employment, training opportunities and advice on finance, debt, health and childcare.

The project team with SWAN Housing the Floating Support provider for Essex and SNAP for Suffolk are working with people who use housing and other services. They are developing and shaping a computerised toolkit, which will provide a range of Housing Options tailored to the person using it, when it goes live this April.

Highlights of what is currently going on:

- We are developing the computerised toolkit, which is based on a short series of questions, which interpret customer's needs and problems and offers them tailored advice and individual action plans. It has links to other information, advice and services such as a job search facilities.
- Under the Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer we are facilitating employment preparation training sessions in various locations within the Greater Haven Gateway via Nextstep. Nextstep is commissioned through Adult Community Services and offers face-to-face help and advice on training, learning and the world of work for people over 18 years old and is available throughout The East of England.
- Suffolk Coastal is leading on an initiative to improve 'lifeskills' for younger people. This includes improving their access to good education, work opportunities, domestic and financial budgeting advice giving them the skills to maintain their tenancies. The aim is to rollout or join with existing schemes across the sub-region.
- Mid Suffolk are leading on providing flexible workshop training for new tenants to help them manage and maintain their tenancies. This has already generated interest from council and Housing Association partners across the sub region that see this as an opportunity to further support people entering into new tenancies.

Enhanced Housing Options will be producing a regular newsletter which will give more detailed information about who is involved, the progress of the project, who to contact and what activities are being planned around the sub region. For more information contact Tim Carr on Tim.carr@babergh.gov.uk or ☎07731473958