

**Committee:** COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** September 14, 2006

**15**

**Title:** HOUSING CONFERENCE – HARROGATE  
2006

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Item for decision

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## Summary

1. This report provides the Committee with a brief summary of the Housing Conference held in the early summer.

## Recommendations

2. That the report be noted.

## Delegates

3. Cllr Ann Marchant, Jill Bolvig-Hanson (Tenant Forum Representative) and Elizabeth Petrie (Housing Representative).

## Situation

4. Throughout the conference, the key themes related to Decent Housing, sustainability, mixed communities and the environment.
5. This was my first Harrogate conference and I was surprised about the scale of the exhibition centre. It was a great opportunity to meet with colleagues and be able to have the exchange of professional views, share ideas and examples of good practice. I found it encouraging that the drive for a more balanced housing market appears to be further up the political agenda.
6. The CIH President, Barrington Billings, in his opening speech outlined the theme of the conference and stated that there needs to be a radical rethink about tenure for both private home owners and tenants. He pointed out the tradition of the housing sector has been accustomed to thinking first about tenure or provider rather than about customer or place. He feels housing should be developing our policies and services to what people need, not based upon the tenure at their homes and to ensure that tenants can challenge the services they get and make service providers more accountable.
7. Real accountability means asking people what they want, not just how satisfied they are with what they receive. Enabling tenants to shape the services we provide and empowering them to set the standards against which we are judged.

8. The Department for Communities and Local Government, Secretary of State, Ruth Kelly MP, set out her vision of achieving sustainable communities. The Minister highlighted that:
  - She has commissioned London School of Economics Social Policy Professor, John Hills to scrutinise how well social housing spending was meeting her department's objectives; his results will be announced by the end of the year in time for the 2007 comprehensive spending review.
  - Social housing is to be at the heart of mixed communities; therefore local authorities working in partnership with others need to achieve a greater variety of housing type, size and tenure. Environmental sustainability is vital in housing. Building with quality not just quantity and taking extra efforts to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.
  - She wants every local authority and housing association, not currently involved in Social Homebuy (tenants able to buy a share of their home), to question whether taking part would be good for their tenants.
9. A lot of information of key speeches etc can be found on the Chartered Institute of Housing website [www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)
10. The programme and related documents have been place in the Members' Room for information.