1. **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report provides the Housing Scrutiny Committee with an introduction to the Strategic Partnership Board which has been set up to improve partnership working between the Council and housing associations operating in our borough.

2. **BACKGROUND**

2.1 Waltham Forest Council has a history of close working relationships with the housing associations (also known as registered providers) operating in our borough.

2.2 Social housing stock in the borough totals around 26,000 properties and is divided fairly equally between the Council and housing associations.

2.3 There are around 30 housing associations operating in Waltham Forest, with stock levels varying between 3 properties and nearly 7000. Our partnerships are focussed on those providers who have a higher number of existing homes, or who have significant development plans in the borough.

2.4 In 2014 the Council procured eight preferred housing partners for 2014-18:

- CBHA / Peabody
- Circle Housing Group
- East Thames
- Lovell
- Swan Housing Group
- Family Mosaic
- Home Group
- North River Alliance
  (Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association, North London Muslim Housing Association, Christian Action Housing Association and others)
2.5 The purpose of the Preferred Housing Partner framework has been to facilitate the delivery of new homes in the borough by developing a close working relationship with the selected organisations. It replaced the previous Investment Partner Framework, which ran from 2009-2013. Regular meetings take place with individual partners to discuss development issues and management issues.

2.6 Waltham Forest Housing also coordinates two Housing Association Liaison Groups – one focusing on development issues and one on management issues – each of which have quarterly meetings which all housing associations operating locally are invited to attend. The development group is chaired by the Council and the management group is chaired by L&Q.

3. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

3.1 On 29.11.17, Cllr Coghill hosted the initial meeting of the Strategic Partnership Board, which has been set up to support the delivery of the “decent roof” priority and to ensure close collaboration between the Council and other registered housing providers, as well as looking at how partnership working can most benefit our residents.

3.2 The meeting was attended by Cllrs Coghill and Limbajee, the Chief Executive and other senior managers, as well as representatives from Peabody, Home Group, Islington and Shoreditch HA, Clarion, L&Q and the Met Police.

3.3 Areas for future collaboration are expected to include:

- Working together on community projects to promote community engagement and capacity building.
- Collaboration at a strategic and operational level on problem solving work in areas such as community cohesion, anti-social behaviour, and support for vulnerable households.
- Building community capacity through education, training and jobs
- Sharing best practice in areas of common interest.
- Agreeing joint management standards to produce improved outcomes for local residents.

3.4 The meeting heard that there are particular opportunities in the area of partnership working around education, training and jobs. This can include leveraging the training and employment opportunities arising from housing development, and engaging residents in employability training. Housing providers are encouraged to engage with the Council’s Employment and Skills team to ensure that resources are maximised and coordinated.

3.5 The Council will also be seeking input from housing associations into the consultation on the Housing Big Conversation for our renewed housing
strategy, and into achieving the aims of the action plan being developed in response to the Young People’s Housing research.

3.6 To help to achieve these objectives, it is expected that the Strategic Partnership Board will oversee and set a work programme for the existing Housing Association Liaison Groups.

3.7 The issue of fire safety was addressed at the meeting in the context of the Grenfell Tower disaster. Since this incident, all housing providers have reviewed fire safety arrangements within their stock, reported back to Government and planned remedial works where necessary. All providers present agreed to support the Inside Housing’s “Never Again” Fire Safety Campaign and pledges.

3.8 The Strategic Partnership Board will continue to meet quarterly and the next meeting has been arranged for 19.2.18.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial or legal implications arising from this report.

5 CONCLUSION

3.1 The Committee is requested to note the information contained in this report.

4 APPENDICES

4.1 The papers for the SPB meeting are attached as Appendices

Appendix A – Waltham Forest Housing SPB – presentation from Cllr Coghill
Appendix B – distribution of HA stock
Appendix C – HA stock by ward
Appendix D – Fire Safety report
Appendix E – Employment & Skills presentation
Appendix F – Regeneration Opportunities presentation

5 BACKGROUND PAPERS

5.1 None.