

Scrutiny Standing Panel Agenda



Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel Monday, 23rd March, 2009

Place: Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 5.30 pm

Democratic Services Officer: M Jenkins - The Office of the Chief Executive 01992 56 4607

Members:

Councillors S Murray (Chairman), Mrs R Gadsby (Vice-Chairman), D Bateman, Mrs R Brookes, J Collier, K Chana, D Dodeja, Mrs J Lea, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs L Wagland, Mrs J H Whitehouse and J Wyatt

Epping Forest Tenants & Leaseholders Federation: Mrs M Carter

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS TO ATTEND

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

(Assistant to the Chief Executive) To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Pages 5 - 10)

To agree the notes of the last meeting of the Panel held on 8 January 2009 (attached).

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Assistant to the Chief Executive). To declare interests in any items on the agenda.

In considering whether to declare a personal or a prejudicial interest under the Code of Conduct, Overview & Scrutiny members are asked pay particular attention to paragraph 11 of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a personal and prejudicial interest in any matter before an OS Committee which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or

Sub Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a member.

Paragraph 11 does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an OS meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 11 - 16)

(Chairman/Lead Officer) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed the Terms of Reference of this Panel and associated Work Programme. This is attached. The Panel are asked at each meeting to review both documents.

6. HOUSING STRATEGY CONFERENCE 2009 - FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY PANEL REPRESENTATIVES (Pages 17 - 18)

To receive feedback from Members who had attended the one-day Housing Strategy Conference.

7. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2008-09 (KEY ACTION PLAN) - PROGRESS REPORT (Pages 19 - 28)

(Director of Housing Services). To consider the attached report.

8. HRA BUSINESS PLAN 2009/10 (Pages 29 - 152)

(Director of Housing Services). To consider the attached report.

9. CHANGES TO THE REVENUE AND CAPITAL RULES FOR NEW COUNCIL HOUSING (Pages 153 - 172)

(Director of Housing Services). To consider the attached report.

10. HOUSEMARK BENCHMARKING REPORT ON EFDC HOUSING SERVICES 2007-08 (Pages 173 - 174)

(Director of Housing Services). To consider the attached report.

11. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGIES ON UNDER-OCCUPATION, OLDER PEOPLE'S SERVICES AND HOUSING MANAGEMENT (Pages 175 - 210)

(Director of Housing Services). To consider the attached report.

12. PARKING ENFORCEMENT ON HOUSING ESTATES (Pages 211 - 216)

(Director of Housing Services). To consider the attached report.

13. TENANT PARTICIPATION PROGRESS 2008 (Pages 217 - 222)

(Director of Housing Services). To consider the attached report.

14. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

To consider which reports are ready to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

15. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next programmed meeting of the Panel will be on Thursday 30 July 2009.

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**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF HOUSING SCRUTINY STANDING PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 8 JANUARY 2009
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 5.30 - 7.50 PM**

Members Present: S Murray (Chairman), Mrs R Gadsby (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Brookes, D Dodeja, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs J H Whitehouse, J Wyatt and Mrs M Carter (Epping Forest Tenants and Leasholders Federation)

Other members present:

Apologies for Absence: D Stallan (Housing Portfolio Holder)

Officers Present A Hall (Director of Housing), C Sobey (Principal Housing Officer (Information)), L Swan (Assistant Director Private Sector & Resources) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

22. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

There were no substitute members.

23. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes of the last meeting of the Panel, held on 9 October 2009, were agreed.

24. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made pursuant to the Member's Code of Conduct.

25. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

(a) The Terms of Reference of the Panel were noted.

(b) Work Programme – The next meeting of the Panel, on 26 March 2009, would include a Housing Information Evening. The Panel members requested that the first part of the meeting should start at 5.30p.m., a sandwich break would follow, and then from 7.30p.m. the Information Evening would start.

26. TENANT'S SATISFACTION SURVEY

Ms C Sobey, the Principal Housing Officer (Strategy and Information), presented a report to the Panel regarding the Tenant Satisfaction Survey for 2008. The District Council had previously been required to carry out a detailed Tenant Satisfaction Survey every three years, however, the Government's requirement currently was to undertake a survey every two years. The last two surveys had been carried out by Feedback Services Ltd, a company part-owned by the National Housing Federation (NHF), that specialised in conducting surveys and related activities for social landlords.

New guidance was incorporated into the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2008 and, subsequently, a number of the standard questions were re-written. Significantly, local authorities were required to exclude tenants living in sheltered housing accommodation from the survey. As a result, only the Council's general needs tenants were surveyed, whilst the 2006 survey had included all tenants, including those in supported accommodation. It was felt that this would have the effect of lowering the levels of tenant satisfaction. A peer group of nine landlords had been selected by the consultants undertaking the survey, all closely resembling the District Council in terms of area of operation and the number and type of properties managed. Comparison with previous results, and with other landlords, had only been possible where questions were similar to previous surveys.

Approximately 1,500 of all the Council's tenants, 25%, were randomly selected by the National Housing Federation's Feedback Service to be surveyed. The response was 53%, a good response for a postal survey. There was a 95% certainty that the results for all the questions would have been somewhere between 3% less and 3% more than the results from the sample survey, if all tenants were surveyed.

Despite the exclusion of sheltered tenants from the survey, the National Housing Federation had concluded that overall tenant satisfaction with the landlord service the Council provided remained high, and above that reported by most other landlords. The survey had particularly identified satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service and customer service. Overall satisfaction with the landlord service remained consistently high, at 84% compared to 85% in 2006. 86% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service, which was 12% above the peer group average of 74%. In terms of quality on contact with the Council, as many as 12% more Epping Forest District Council tenants said it was easy to get hold of the right person than the peer landlords. 75% of tenants being satisfied with the final outcome of their contacts. 62% of tenants were satisfied that their views were being taken into account by the landlord. This was an improvement of 14% to the 2006 survey. One area where the statistics had come down, was that 79% of respondents, (down 5% compared to 2006), said that Epping Forest District Council was good at keeping them informed about things that affected them as tenants. Tenants felt that parking was a particular problem. Low numbers of tenants had reported anti-social behaviour.

The members commented on the dissemination of information to tenants. They suggested that the normal channels of informing tenants could be widened. It was felt that each edition of Housing News should be posted to tenants in an envelope with a covering letter instead of being simply posted, although this would lead to an additional cost.

AGREED:

That, the results of the National Housing Federation's (NHF's) report, be reported in the District Council's Members' Bulletin, Housing News, The Forester and a Press Release issued to the media.

RECOMMENDATION:

That, the National Housing Federation's (NHF's) report on the results of the Council's biennial Tenant Satisfaction Survey be passed to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing Services without material comment.

27. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGIES ON HOME OWNERSHIP AND RENT COLLECTION

The Housing Resources Manager, Mrs S Lindsay, presented the Housing Service Strategies on Home Ownership and Rent Collection and Administration to the Panel. The Housing Service Strategies gave more detail than the Council's main Housing Strategy on the various housing services provided. There were 16 Housing Service Strategies, which set out how individual housing services were delivered. The Housing Scrutiny Panel was asked to consider and endorse two updated Housing Service Strategies on Home Ownership and Rent Collection and Administration.

The Panel asked about the procedures for purchasing a Council property. The officers explained to the Panel that tenants who wished to buy had the process explained to them at the start. There was a Government handbook available to tenants on the Right to Buy which examined some of the potential drawbacks. The Chairman felt that some Council property buyers did not fully understand their responsibilities and the implications following purchase. The officers told the Panel that 24 properties were sold by the District Council last year, in the two previous years it had been 50 and 100 each. The Panel was told that a tenant had to rent for 5 years before being eligible to buy.

The Panel was advised that the District Council's IT system had been taken over by Northgate from Anite, which had recently announced that it would not be providing support beyond 2013. A new system was therefore needed to replace it before this date. Reference was also made to the current transition period of Finance staff implementing a new housing benefit system. The Panel was assured that there were no dangers of evictions taking place because the IT system had not processed new housing benefit payments.

The Panel asked the Director of Housing about the use of bailiffs for the recovery of rent from District Council properties. The Panel were advised that this was a rare occurrence; however, the District Council on occasions did serve distress warrants, with powers to seize goods, although this was usually only used for small debt up to a value of £100.00. This was invariably sufficient to achieve a result from tenants in arrears. Officers went to great lengths to avoid evictions; it was better discussing rent problems with tenants.

RECOMMENDATION:

That, the Housing Service Strategies on Home Ownership and Rent Collection and Administration, be passed to the Housing Portfolio Holder for adoption without any material comments.

28. DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY

The Director of Housing, Mr A Hall, presented the Consultation Draft Housing Strategy 2009-2012 to the Panel. The Council's Housing Strategy was last produced in May 2003 and was assessed at the time as being fully "fit for purpose," by the Government Office for the East of England. There was no current requirement for local authorities to produce their own Housing Strategies. However, in July 2008, the Government had made reference to the future of housing strategies.

A Housing Strategy set out a district's housing plans for the medium term (3-5 years). However, these plans could be formulated with regard to the housing objectives for the long term, which could span 30 years.

The London Commuter Belt (LCB) Housing Sub Region, within which the District sits, was one of the largest sub regions in the country, comprising 15 local authorities in Essex and Hertfordshire. The local authorities and Registered Social Landlords within the Sub Region had previously worked in partnership producing a sub-regional Housing Strategy, which formed part of the Regional Housing Strategy.

It was proposed that the final version of the Housing Strategy be adopted for a period of three years, with Key Action Plans produced and updated on an annual basis for approval by the Cabinet.

In view of the strategic importance of the Housing Strategy, the document had been produced as a Consultation Draft. It was proposed that a major consultation exercise be undertaken with the Council's partners, key stakeholders and the public over a three-month period in early 2009. All responses received from the consultation exercise would then be considered, and changes felt appropriate by the Housing Portfolio Holder would then be made for the final version. This would be submitted to the Cabinet for recommendation to, and adoption by, the full Council, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Having regard to best practice set out in the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for the inspection of local housing strategies, it was proposed that, during the consultation period, a one-day conference be held on the proposals within the Consultation Draft, to which all the consultees would be invited. Presentations would be given on the key issues and proposals, in order to fully brief consultees and inform their responses. Details of the Consultation Draft would also be publicised in the local press, with an invitation for interested members of the public to obtain a copy of the Consultation Draft and provide their comments. A copy of the document was being published on the Council's website.

AGREED:

That, the Housing Portfolio Holder, Chairman of the Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel, and Councillors Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs R Brookes and Mrs J Whitehouse, to attend the Housing Strategy Conference.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) That, the Panel considers the Housing Strategy 2009-2012 (Consultation Draft) and endorses it for consultation with key partners, stakeholders and the public;
- (b) That, a Consultation Exercise be undertaken on the Consultation Draft, including a one-day Housing Strategy Conference;
- (c) That, appropriate comments received through the Consultation Exercise, be incorporated within the final version of the Housing Strategy;
- (d) That, the final version of the Housing Strategy be submitted to the Cabinet, with a recommendation to the full Council, that it be formally adopted;
- (e) That, subsequent annual Key Action Plans be submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet;

(f) That, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considers progress with the Key Action Plan, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, six months following its adoption.

29. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

It was reported that there were no reports going to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

30. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Panel was noted as 26 March 2009.

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TERMS OF REFERENCE - STANDING PANEL

Title: Housing

Status: Standing Panel

Terms of Reference:

(1) To undertake reviews of public and private sector housing policies on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Housing Portfolio Holder or Head of Housing Services and to make any recommendations arising from such reviews to the Housing Portfolio Holder or Cabinet as appropriate.

(2) To undertake specific projects related to public and private sector housing issues, as directed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and to make any recommendations arising from such reviews to the Housing Portfolio Holder or Cabinet as appropriate.

(3) To consider and provide comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder on the following matters, prior to consideration by the Cabinet:

- (i) Draft Housing Strategy (to be adopted by full Council in accordance with the Council's Constitution)
- (ii) Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy
- (iii) Draft Private Sector Housing Grants Policy
- (iv) Annual Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme

(4) To consider and provide comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder on draft versions of the following documents:

- (i) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan
- (ii) Local Supporting People Strategy
- (iii) Housing Service Strategies

(5) To undertake the Annual Ethnic Monitoring Review of Housing Applicants and Housing Allocations, in accordance with the Code of Practice in Rented Housing.

(6) To monitor progress with the actions plans contained in the following documents, on a six-monthly basis:

- (i) Housing Strategy
- (ii) Local Supporting People Strategy
- (iii) Private Sector Housing Strategy
- (iv) Housing Services Development Plan

(7) To consider the Housing Portfolio Holder's draft response to any consultation papers relating to public or private sector housing that the Housing Portfolio Holder considers warrants a response from the Council.

(8) In relation to Traveller issues to consider and monitor: **(NEW)**

- (a) the position regarding tolerated sites and;
- (b) the management of travellers who enter onto land within the district with a view to unauthorised encampments, with particular reference to the legal remedies available, interactions with other agencies such as Essex Police and Essex County

Council and the provision of emergency and/or transit sites within the district;

(c) Government's guidance on the needs of travellers in the context of the Council's review of its District Local Plan and the Essex Housing Needs Assessment;

(d) the results of the Commission for Racial Equality's study on traveller issues in which this Council participated, once published;

(9) To report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council and the Cabinet with recommendations on matters allocated to the Panel as appropriate.

Chairman: Cllr Stephen Murray

Housing Scrutiny Panel
Work Programme 2008/9

WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

Item	Priority	Original Report Deadline	Current Position
(1) Annual Ethnic Monitoring Review of Housing Applicants	High	July 2009	Completed – July 2008
(2) Review of Housing Performance Indicators	High	July 2008	Completed – July 2008
(3) Implementation of Choice Based Lettings – 6 Month Review	Medium	July 2008	Completed – July 2008
(4) Review of Careline Service	Medium	July 2008	Completed – July 2008
(5) Approach to “De-designating” Properties for Older People	Low	July 2008	Completed – July 2008
(6) Annual Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme	High	October 2008	Completed – October 2008
(7) Results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey	High	January 2009	Completed – January 2008
(8) Draft Housing Strategy	High	January 2009	Completed – January 2008
(9) Housing Service Strategy on Home Ownership	Low	March 2009	Completed – January 2008
(10) Policy on Unauthorised Parking	Medium	March 2009	Report on agenda for this meeting – Previously discussed by the Scrutiny Panel in October 2008, and recommendations made to the Cabinet. However, the Housing Portfolio Holder would like more discussion before reporting to Cabinet.

(11) Housing Service Strategy on Older Peoples Housing Services	Low	March 2009	Report on agenda for this meeting
(12) Housing Service Strategy on Housing Management	Low	March 2009	Report on agenda for this meeting
(13) Six-monthly Progress Report on Housing Business Plan Action Plan	Medium	March 2009	Report on agenda for this meeting
(14) Housing Service Strategy on Under-occupation	Low	March 2009	Report on agenda for this meeting
(15) Updated draft HRA Business Plan	High	March 2009	Report on agenda for this meeting
(16) Response to CLG Consultation Paper on Incentives for Council House Building	Low	March 2009	Report on agenda for this meeting
(17) Housemark Bi-annual Benchmarking Report	Low	March 2009	Report on agenda for this meeting
(18) Tenant Participation Progress Report	Low	March 2009	Report on agenda for this meeting
Issues already identified for 2009/10 Work Programme			
(1) Annual Ethnic Monitoring Review of Housing Applicants	High	July 2009	
(2) New Homelessness Strategy	High	July 2009	
(3) Housing Service Strategy on Housing Options	Medium	July 2009	

(4) Review of Housing Performance Indicators	High	July 2009	
(5) Private Sector Housing – Resourcing the Strategy	Medium	July 2009	Proposed that report be considered at June meeting on the staffing resources required for private sector housing.
(6) Review of Housing Standards	Medium	July 2009	
(7) Annual Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme	High	October 2009	
(8) Six-monthly Progress Report on Housing Strategy Action Plan	Medium	January 2010	
(9) Six-monthly Progress Report on Housing Business Plan Action Plan	Medium	January 2010	
(10) Updated draft HRA Business Plan	High	March 2010	
(11) Tenant Participation Progress Report	Low	March 2010	

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SCRUTINY



Report to Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 23 March 2009

Subject: Housing Strategy Conference 2009 – Feedback from Scrutiny Panel Representatives

Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall, Director of Housing 01992 56 4004

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins, Office of the Chief Executive 01992 56 4607

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the representatives of the Housing Scrutiny Panel attending the One-Day Housing Strategy Conference provide feedback to the Panel on the Conference.

Report:

1. At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Panel, the Consultation Draft Housing Strategy was agreed. The consultation exercise is now underway.

2. As part of the consultation exercise, a one-day Housing Strategy Conference has been arranged for Wednesday 18th March 2009, at Jubilee Court Sheltered Housing Scheme, Waltham Abbey.

3. At its last meeting, the Scrutiny Panel also appointed three representatives to attend the Housing Strategy Conference, namely:

Cllr Rose Brookes
Cllr Ricki Gadsby
Cllr Janet Whitehouse

4. It is suggested that these three representatives provide oral feedback on the Conference to the Scrutiny Panel.

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Report to Housing Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 23 March 2009

**Subject: Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2008/09
(Key Action Plan) – Progress Report**

SCRUTINY



Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall, Director of Housing (01992 56 4004)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins, Office of the Chief Executive (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Panel considers the Progress Report for the Key Action Plan contained within the HRA Business Plan 2008/9 and provides any feedback to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing accordingly.

Report:

1. In March 2008, the Council's latest Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan (2008/9) was produced, incorporating the Repairs & Maintenance Business Plan. This document set out the Council's objectives, strategies and plans as landlord, in relation to the management and maintenance of its own housing stock.
2. An important section of the HRA Business Plan is the Key Action Plan. This sets out the proposed actions the Council would be taking, primarily, over the next year. Having included the Key Action Plan within the Business Plan, it is good practice that the progress made with the stated actions is monitored; one of the Scrutiny Panel's Terms of Reference is to review progress during the year.
3. Ordinarily, a Progress Report is produced after nine months, and reported to the January meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Panel. However, due to staff sickness at that time, this was not possible. However, a progress report as at February 2009 has been produced, for consideration at this meeting, is attached as an appendix to this report.
4. It should be noted that a number of tasks included within the Key Action Plan relating to responsive repairs have not yet been completed, since they are included as part of the project to appoint a private repairs management company to manage the response repairs service, which has been agreed in principle by the Cabinet. A separate member-level Repairs Management Contract Advisory Group (including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Housing Scrutiny Panel) has been formed to oversee the arrangements.
5. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the Progress Report and to feed back to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing any comments it considers appropriate.
6. The HRA Business Plan for 2009/10 is reported for consideration elsewhere on the Scrutiny Panel's agenda for this meeting.

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HRA Business Plan 2008/9
ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT
(As at February 2009)

Action	Corporate Housing Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Target Date	Current Position
Housing General				
Analyse the information obtained from the census of Council tenants	HO 2	Principal Housing Officer (Information/Strategy)	Sept 2008	In Progress – The Census has been completed and all the data has been input onto the integrated housing computer system. The data is now being analysed. Letters will be sent to under-occupying tenants shortly, explaining the incentives to move to smaller accommodation.
Seek re-accreditation of the ISO 9001 :2000 quality assurance award for a further three years	HO 1 / 2/ 3 / 4 / 5	Principal Housing Officer (Information/Strategy)	June 2008	Achieved – The whole of the Housing Directorate has been awarded the ISO accreditation for a further three years (with the exception of Private Sector Housing and the Building Maintenance Section, which joined the Housing Directorate on the recent restructure)
Complete the Customer Perspective Programme for the whole of the Housing Directorate, examining the all interfaces between Housing and customers	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Director of Housing	March 2009	In Progress – 17 out of the 26 subject areas have been examined, resulting in 67 actions so far. As recommended by the Charter Mark Assessor, once the Programme has been completed, a progress report on the Action Plan will be reported to the Tenants & Leaseholders Federation
Housing Management				
Introduce the Leasehold Services module of the integrated housing IT system	HO 1 / 2	Housing Resources Manager	April 2009	Postponed - This has been postponed, pending the outcome of the recent decision by Northgate, the Council's Housing IT Supplier, to discontinue support for the OHMS integrated housing system from 2013.
Introduce a pilot scheme for the provision of home ownership grants, enabling tenants to purchase their own home and vacate their Council property for occupation by a housing applicant	HO 1	Housing Resources Manager	Dec 2008	Achieved – Three home ownership grants has been provided to date, with the remaining two in progress. The Housing Portfolio Holder intends to seek approval to continue the scheme in 2009/10.

Produce a Leaseholders Handbook and distribute it to all leaseholders	HO 2	Housing Resources Manager	May 2008	Achieved – The Handbook was produced in Summer 2008 and distributed to all leaseholders
Review the success of the implementation of the HomeOptions choice based lettings scheme, in conjunction with the five neighbouring councils.	HO 2	Asst Director of Housing (Operations) / Housing Options Manager	August 2008	Achieved – The review was undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and reported to the Cabinet. The HomeOptions Scheme has been very successful.
Introduce a computerised facility for tenants to register for a mutual exchange and to search for suitable properties for an exchange on line	HO 2	Housing Options Manager	July 2008	Achieved – The web-based "Homeswapper" Mutual Exchange System was introduced in Summer 2008, enabling tenants to register for a mutual exchange, and search for matching properties and see photos, online - free of charge
Introduce a facility for tenants to apply for the Housing Register on-line	HO 2	Housing Options Manager	Sept 2008	Not Achieved – This is proving to be difficult, but Locata (the Council's HomeOptions provider) has been asked to investigate the introduction of such a facility
Tenant Participation				
Facilitate the formation of two additional recognised tenants associations within the District	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2008	Achieved – 3 groups have been formed in 2008/9 - Romeland Residents Association, the Debden Tenants Panel and the Ninefields Residents Panel. Although the latter two are not formally recognised and constituted tenants associations, they serve the same purpose.
Develop further the Rural Tenants Forum (comprising representatives in rural locations that have no recognisable estates and where formal associations are difficult to establish) into a successful, sustainable body.	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	June 2008	Achieved – The Rural Tenants Forum continues to develop, with more representatives from rural areas joining.
Undertake a more detailed and focussed survey on tenant participation, as a follow-up to the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, ensuring that surveyed tenants are properly informed of the current arrangements	HO 4	Principal Housing Officer (Information / Strategy)	Sept 2008	Not Achieved – Due to a change in Audit Commission requirements, councils must now undertake tenants satisfaction surveys every two years (instead of every three years). Accordingly, the question was asked again this year and the results from this latest satisfaction survey suggest that this issue is no longer a problem.

Investigate the publication of a calendar for tenants, promoting the activities of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	Dec 2008	Delayed – Due to other commitments, it was not possible to progress this initiative before the New Year. It is intended to investigate the issue for this Christmas.
Introduce "Tenant Talkback Panels", providing fora to provide qualitative feedback on housing services	HO 2 / 3 / 4	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2009	In Progress - All tenants have been surveyed through Housing News on their interest in joining a Talkback Panel, and what Panels they feel should be set up. Around 100 responses were received, and the Tenant Participation Officer is currently in the process of setting up around 3-4 Panels.
Supporting People and Supported Housing				
Review the viability and future of the Council's Careline Service	HO 1 / 2	Asst Director of Housing (Operations)	Sept 2008	Achieved – The review has been undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and reported to the Cabinet. It was decided to retain the Careline Service, but investigate the possibility of Careline dealing with other issues – e.g. receipt of routine housing repair calls out of normal office hours.
Seek accreditation of the Council's Careline Service from the Association of Social Alarm Providers (ASAP)	HO 2	Housing Manager (Older People's Services)	Sept 2008	In Progress – The Housing Manager (Older People's Services) is in the process of implementing the requirements to meet the accreditation standard
Housing Repairs and Maintenance				
Implement programme for repairs and maintenance expenditure over 5 and 30 years.	HO 3	Asst Director of Housing (Property) / Housing Assets Manager	On-going	Achieved – This is undertaken on an annual basis as part of the Business Plan update.
Implement upgrade to latest version of Codeman software	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	July 2008	Postponed – Work commenced to upgrade the software. However, the IT provider (Northgate), who have recently acquired Anite, have notified the Council that they are stopping development and support of their OHMS products, including Codeman, in the foreseeable future. Therefore, this action is being deferred while alternative IT systems are reviewed.

Publish clear service standards for planned maintenance, Decent Homes, repairs, Right to Repairs and Leaseholder responsibilities, which are available in printed leaflet form and on the web site.	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager	July 2008	Partly Achieved – Housing Service Standards have been published and are due to be issued to all tenants by April 2009. Leaseholders have been issued with a handbook, incorporating service standards. Repairs standards are to be agreed as part of the current Repairs and Works Unit review.
Publish the Voids standards on the Web site and to issue a copy to all tenants in advance of them undertaking an accompanied viewing or a void offer.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	July 2008	In Progress – The voids standards have been reviewed by the officer Voids Working Party. However, they are to be grouped with the new Repairs Standards, which are to be developed as part of the Repairs and Works Unit Review and published as a combined document.
Undertake a review of the repairs responsibilities to ensure they dovetail with other service strategies ie ASBO, introductory tenancies, demoted tenancies	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Dec 2008	Achieved – This has been taken into account as part of the new Housing Service Standards.
Timetable at least one meeting each year with the Tenants & Leaseholders Federation to discuss the repairs and maintenance expenditure programme.	HO 3 / 4	Asst Director of Housing (Property) / Housing Assets Manager	On-going	Achieved – A meeting was held in 2008/9 with the Federation to discuss repairs and maintenance expenditure.
Investigate option to merge Housing Maintenance Works Unit with Housing Services	HO 1 / 3	Asst Director Of Housing (Property)	May 2008	Achieved – The Council's Cabinet agreed, as part of the Top Management Restructure, to incorporate the Building Maintenance Works Unit within the new Housing Directorate with effect from May 2008. The Cabinet also agreed on an options appraisal on the way forward, which is being developed over the next 3-years, and includes the merger of the Housing Repairs Section with the Building Maintenance Section.
Introduce Asbestos record cards in all properties, and maintain the records for contactors and tenants use.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Sept 2008	Not Achieved – It has not been possible to complete this task due to resourcing issues and other commitments in the Housing Repairs Section. The Council continues to use the computer-based Asbestos Register.

Undertake periodic reviews of the outcome of difficult to let properties and seek ways of enhancing the services provided to these dwellings.	HO 2 / 3	Housing Repairs Manager	June 2008	Achieved – This has been included as part of the work of the Voids Working Party.
Explore options whereby emphasis is put on “fix first time” for responsive repairs	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Oct 2008	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Seek through the Essex Hub a framework agreement with specialist contractors for ad-hoc repairs	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Apr 2009	Partly Achieved – The Housing Directorate has entered into around 14 different framework agreements for a variety of specialist areas of planned maintenance. There are a number of additional framework agreements planned as part of the review of the Repairs and Works Unit
Undertake a feasibility study into alternative fuel sources for properties in rural communities where mains gas is not available.	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Oct 2008	Achieved – Solar panels have been installed on one property as a trial in Toot Hill. An evaluation is on-going, in conjunction with the tenant, to see what the cost benefits are.
Through the Carbon Reduction Emissions Target (CERT), which runs from 1 April 2008, fuel switching and renewable energy projects could attract full or partial funding.	HO 1 / 3	Housing Assets Manager	Oct 2008	Not Achieved – When the CERT funding was announced in 2008, the national funding opportunities for fuel switching and renewable energy projects did not attract full, but only partial, funding, which does not make it cost effective to introduce fuel switching and renewable energy projects at this time.
Review all projects with a contract value in excess of £1m on completion to identify any lessons learnt.	HO 3	Housing Assets Manager / Housing Repairs Manager	On-going	Achieved – This is undertaken in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.
Hold training sessions at empty properties to enable officers to gain a common understanding of specification requirements. To be undertaken annually.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	On-going	Achieved – The benefits of this training have been realised during recent changes in staffing resources during 2008/9

Seek to reduce the target response times for routine non-urgent repairs from 8-weeks to 4-weeks	HO 3	Asst Director Of Housing (Property) / Building Maintenance Manager	Oct 2008	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Identify the need to run training events / DIY courses for residents on issues that fall within their own responsibility.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager / Building Maintenance Manager	Sept 2009	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Introduce generic repairs and voids officers.	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	May 2009	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Implement mobile working for the Housing Repairs Section	HO 3	Housing Repairs Manager	Apr 2009	Postponed – This has been postponed, pending the outcome of the recent decision by Northgate, the Council's Housing IT Supplier, to discontinue support for the OHMS integrated housing system from 2013. The future options of introducing mobile working will be included as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Hold site visits at blocks of flats with Tenant Representatives to monitor repairs to, and condition of, communal areas	HO 3 / 4	Housing Repairs Manager	Apr 2009	Achieved – When work is undertaken to the communal parts of a block, then residents are now invited to sign the work as being completed to an agreed standard.
Explore the benefits of gaining Chartered Construction Client Status	HO 3	Asst Director Of Housing (Property)	Oct 2008	Not Achieved – This item is being considered as part of the much larger review of the Repairs and Works Unit.
Review the Accompanied viewing process in light "Choice Based Lettings"	HO 2 / 3	Housing Repairs Manager / Housing Options Manager	April 2008	Achieved – This was undertaken through the Voids Working Party.

Key to Corporate Housing Objectives

- HO 1 - Value for Money
- HO 2 - Housing Management
- HO 3 - Repairs and Maintenance
- HO 4 - Tenant Participation
- HO 5 - Housing Finance

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SCRUTINY



Report to Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 23 March 2009

Subject: HRA Business Plan 2009/10

Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall, Director of Housing (01992 56 4004)

Committee Secretary: M Jenkins, Office of the Chief Executive (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2009/10, incorporating the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan 2009/10, attached as an Appendix to this report, be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for adoption.

Report:

1. The Government's Communities and Local Government (DCLG) requires all local authorities to produce annual Business Plans for their Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs). The CLG's intention is to ensure that local authority housing is used and maintained to maximum effect. HRA Business Plans deal with councils' plans and performance for the delivery and quality of its housing services to tenants. Detailed guidance was issued by the former ODPM (the predecessor to the CLG), which prescribes the form in which business plans must be produced, and includes the requirement for clear repair and maintenance strategies to be set out and, ideally, for detailed financial forecasts to be produced for thirty years hence.

2. In 2003, the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan was assessed by the Government Office as fully "fit for purpose". For a Business Plan to be designated as "fit for purpose", it has to meet stringent "fit for purpose" criteria laid down by the ODPM/DCLG.

HRA Business Plan 2009/10

3. The latest draft HRA Business Plan 2009/10 is attached. The Council's Audit and Governance Committee requires that all of the Council's Business Plans are completed and published by 31 March each year. Therefore, all the statistics and information within the Business Plan relating to the "last financial year", and the most up to date information, relates to 2007/8, which is the last year that full year statistics are available.

4. The main changes to the Business Plan this year are:

- Updated statistics relating to 2007/8
- Updated summary of key activities and achievements in 2008/9 (Section 3.5)
- Updated Key Housing Priorities (Section 3.6)
- Updated section on the District's Housing Needs Relevant to the Business Plan, to take account of the recently complete Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which replaces the previous Housing Needs Survey (Section 4.13)
- Updated section on Tenant Satisfaction, to take account of the most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey undertaken in 2008 (Section 5.4)
- Updated section on the Housing Value for Money Analysis (Section 6.6)
- Revised Financial Plan (Chapter 11)
- New Action Plan (Chapter 13)

- An updated Repairs & Maintenance Business Plan (Appendix 1)
- An updated Plain English Summary, incorporating the above changes and including new sections on Quality Housing Services, Value for Money, Diversity & Equality and Risk Management, not previously included in the Summary

Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan 2008/9

5. An important part of the HRA Business Plan relates to the Council's objectives, strategies and plans relating to the repair and maintenance of the Council's housing stock over the next 30 years. This includes the Council's progress with meeting the Government's decent homes standard, which sets out a criteria against which local authorities must assess whether or not each of their homes are "decent". The Government has given local authorities a target of ensuring that all their homes are decent by 2010. As in previous years, the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan forms Appendix 1 to the main HRA Business Plan.

30-Year Financial Plan

6. Another important part of the HRA Business Plan is the Financial Plan - which is provided at Chapter 11 and Appendices 6 and 7 - and considers projected income and expenditure for the HRA over a 30-year period. The Financial Plan shows that there is sufficient income to meet the necessary level of expenditure on management, repairs and maintenance for the foreseeable future. The HRA is in a slightly healthier state than last year, since the HRA is now estimated to fall into deficit in Year 20, compared to the forecast of Year 19 in last year's Financial Plan. In any event, before that time, any number of the financial assumptions could vary significantly.

Scrutiny Panel

7. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and recommend the HRA Business Plan 2009/10, incorporating the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan, to the Housing Portfolio Holder for adoption.

8. The draft HRA Business Plan is due to be discussed by the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation at their meeting on 24 March 2009.



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Housing

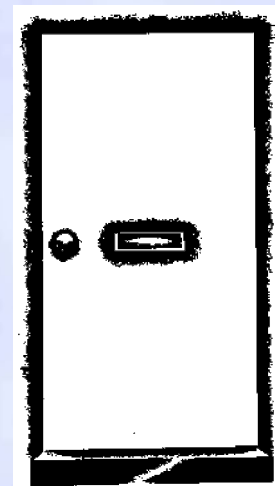


INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

2009 – 2010

Director of Housing
Alan Hall FCIH MCMI



March 2009

Copies of this Business Plan are available in Large print.

Please ring 01992 564292 for a large print copy.

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Plain English Summary

1. Introduction

This is a Plain English Summary of the ninth Housing Revenue Account Business Plan that we have produced. In very simple terms, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is the “bank account” that we keep to record income and expenditure on our Council homes. It is different from the “bank account” that we keep to record our income and expenditure on other Council services, which is called the General Fund. There are strict rules that say councils cannot pass money between the two accounts.

The main Business Plan provides a helpful “Glossary of Terms” as an appendix, which explains all of the technical words that we refer to. Another appendix gives a “Key Contact List”, to enable readers to speak to someone to get more information about specific issues referred to in the Business Plan.

In the Business Plan, we:

- cover all of the important issues relating to the way we manage and maintain the Council's homes;
- set out our aims and objectives for the housing service that we provide, and explain our priorities;
- explain the current position and our performance as landlord in previous years;
- estimate the money that we need over the next 30 years to manage our tenants' homes and ensure that they are properly maintained; and
- compare how much money we need with the amount that will probably be available.

The Government requires all councils to produce HRA Business Plans – but we find it very useful to have a Business Plan anyway, because we think it's important to plan for the future.

[To be confirmed by Federation] We have talked to the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation about the Business Plan, who have confirmed their support for the objectives and proposals

2. Who makes the decisions ?

We have a “Cabinet” of senior elected councillors who make most of the Council's important decisions. They are guided by the “Housing Portfolio Holder”, who is a member of the Cabinet with special responsibility for housing matters. He/she makes most of the decisions on housing.

Council officers are professional people who advise councillors on housing matters, carry out their decisions, and manage the Council on their behalf. The most senior officer is the Chief Executive. The Director of Housing is responsible for managing and maintaining the Council's homes. The Director of Finance/ICT is responsible for managing the Council's finances.

3. Our housing objectives

We have five main objectives for housing. Each one has a number of more detailed objectives, that are explained in the main Business Plan. The main ones can be summarised as follows:

- Manage our homes efficiently and effectively;
- Provide a high quality housing service, having due regard to the cost of providing the service.
- Ensure that all our tenants live in a decent home, and that we properly maintain our homes;
- Help tenants and leaseholders get involved with decisions about their housing. Provide them with clear information, and consult them on things that affect them;
- Manage the Council's money effectively and efficiently.

4. About the Council's housing

In April 2008, we owned around 6,525 homes, excluding our Homeless Persons Hostel and some other homes not counted. Some interesting information about these is given below:

- Around 2,175 are in Loughton, and about 1,600 are in Waltham Abbey. Around 475 Council homes are in "sheltered housing", receiving a support service and having an alarm system;
- Around 6,140 Council homes have been sold since 1977, most under the Right to Buy. We have around 940 flats and maisonettes that have been leased, again, mainly under the Right to Buy. We still have certain responsibilities for these homes, including certain repairs and housing services, which the leaseholders pay for; and
- In April 2006, we had 86 empty homes

In November 2007, we completely changed how we allocate Council homes, by giving housing applicants much more choice about which home is let to them, using an approach called "choice based lettings". We are working with our five neighbouring councils and the housing associations that work in our area to operate the scheme jointly. This reduces the costs of the scheme.

We have a computer system that covers all of the main housing services. This gives a lot of information to housing managers, to help them monitor how our housing services are being provided and see where there are problems that need to be dealt with. Many housing services can now be obtained from our housing website, including reporting repairs and paying rent.

Due to a decision by the software supplier to cease support for the current IT system in 2013, the Council needs to decide whether to purchase the supplier's replacement system, or procure a new system from the market.

5. Involving tenants and leaseholders

We have worked hard to enable tenants to become involved with decisions about their housing, and things that affect them, if they want to. We have a Tenant Participation Officer, who has set up a number of tenants associations around the District – there are currently 5 recognised tenants associations, but more are being developed. We have written "Tenant Participation Agreements" with these tenants associations, that explain the help we will give them. It also explains how we will consult the tenants in their areas about housing issues that affect them.

We have also set up a Leaseholders Association that represents all of the Council's leaseholders, a Sheltered Housing Forum comprising representatives from the Council's sheltered housing schemes, and a Rural Tenants Forum to represent the views of tenants in the villages of the District. They all meet regularly with Council officers.

A district-wide Tenants and Leaseholders Federation has been formed, that has a committee to which two representatives from each of the tenants associations, the Leaseholders Association, the Sheltered Housing Forum and the Rural Tenants Forum are invited. The Federation meets every six weeks with the Housing Portfolio Holder and senior housing officers. The Federation is asked their views on possible changes to housing policies and procedures, and tells us what they think about the housing service. We also have a Tenant Participation Agreement with the Federation.

6. Ensuring all tenants live in a "decent home"

(a) Introduction

Probably the most important part of the HRA Business Plan, is the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan. This is one of the appendices and includes a detailed section that explains how we will ensure all tenants live in a "decent home".

(b) Stock Condition Survey

We carry out a rolling stock condition survey. We look at the inside and outside of all of our homes. With the information gathered, we now have a very good idea of the condition of all our homes. We have been able to use this information to work out:

- a programme of repairs and improvements over the next 30 years; and
- the number of homes that are not “decent”, according to the Government's definition (see below).

(c) The Government's “Decent Home Standard”

The Government has set a “Decent Home Standard”. They say that tenants' homes are decent if they:

- meet the *legal* standard of condition; **and**
- are in reasonable condition. This means that it must not have:
 - any important parts of the building in an old or poor condition
 - or*
 - two or more other parts of the building that are old and need to be replaced or repaired; **and**
- have reasonably modern facilities. This means that the home must not lack more than two things you would expect to see in a modern home (e.g. modern kitchens and bathrooms); **and**
- keep people warm enough. This means it must have effective insulation and heating.

The Government has also set all councils and housing associations a target. They say we must make sure that all of our homes are decent by 2010.

(d) How many of our homes are non-decent ?

We reduced the number of non-decent Council homes to just 237 properties in April 2008 - representing only 3.6 % of our housing stock. We achieved the Government's target to reduce the number of non-decent homes by 1/3 before April 2004, one year early.

(e) Meeting the Decent Homes Standard

Knowing how many non-decent homes we have (and will have), we have worked out how much we need to spend over the next year to make sure that all of our homes are decent by 2010 (including those that will become next year).

We are confident that we will be able to meet the Government's 2010 target.

(f) How we will spend the money ?

We have made up a Maintenance Programme of work and repairs, based on the

- numbers of non decent homes;
- what our stock condition survey told us;
- the amount of money we think will be available; and
- what we think tenants would like us to spend money on (based on what the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation has told us).

We have broken this Maintenance Programme of work down into two programmes:

- a 5 Year Maintenance Programme; and
- a 30 year Maintenance Programme.

7. Supporting People

In April 2003, the Government introduced a new “supporting people” budget. This brought together all the money that was previously spent by councils, housing associations and others on “supported housing” into one “pot” covering the whole county. Supported housing is where the tenants need help - for example, sheltered housing for the elderly or housing for physically disabled people.

Previously, most of the costs of this help was included within individual tenants' rents. However, from April 2003, tenants living in supported housing have had to pay a separate charge for this help. Tenants receiving

housing benefit do not have to pay anything, and there are safeguards to make sure that tenants in supported housing before March 2003 do not pay any more for the help they get than they did previously.

8. Working with other organisations

We work with many other organisations to properly manage and maintain our homes and provide housing services to our tenants. These include the Essex Social Care, Essex Police, health organisations and the citizens advice bureau in the District.

9. People needing housing

In early 2009, we completed a new "Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)", which helps us assess how many new homes are required in the District, including affordable homes

The SHMA found that:

- The population of our District rose by 8.5% between 2001 and 2006
- Around 7,100 households in Epping Forest are considered to be unsuitably housed
- There are around 1,300 households in housing need in Epping Forest
- There will be a projected shortfall of 5,700 affordable homes in Epping Forest between 2007 and 2021

There are around 375 new affordable homes currently with outline or detailed planning permission. 80 of these new homes are currently being built. A further 238 new affordable homes are currently being considered by developers, although it is unlikely that all of these will receive planning permission.

There were around 3,960 applicants on the Council's Housing Register in March 2008. This was an increase of around 330 households over the previous year.

Last year (2007/8), we let 620 Council properties to housing applicants. This was slightly less than the previous year. A further 88 applicants were housed by housing associations. This was around 10% less than the previous year.

10. Providing a Quality Housing Service

We do a number of things to make sure that we provide a high quality housing service. This has been recognised in a number of ways:

- The whole of our Housing Service (apart from our Private Sector Housing Service) has been awarded the important Charter Mark Award. This is a national award that confirms that we provide an excellent service to our customers. It is judged by an independent assessor.
- The whole of our Housing Service has been awarded the ISO 9001:2000 "quality assurance accreditation". This confirms that we provide a consistently high quality housing service. This is also judged by an independent assessor
- The whole Council has the Investors in People award. This confirms that our staff know what our plans are, and that we help our staff to improve themselves.

All of our housing tasks are included in our Special Projects Plan, which helps us to keep track of everything we are doing. Regular tasks are included in our Annual Events Plan

11. Tenant satisfaction

We undertook another Tenant Satisfaction Survey in 2008 to find out what tenants thought about the housing service we provide. It was done by an independent market research company. A good response was received, with over half of all tenants surveyed responding. We found that:

- 84% of tenants are generally satisfied with the overall housing service provided by the Council - this compares with 85% two years ago (although the latest survey had to exclude sheltered housing tenants, who historically have high levels of satisfaction).

- 86% of tenants are satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service (12% higher than similar councils surveyed). The Council ranked a strong first in its group of similar councils, for all 6 aspects of the repairs and maintenance service measured.
- 12% more of the Council's tenants said that it was easy to get hold of the right person to discuss a housing issue, compared to the group of similar councils.
- 75% of the Council's tenants were satisfied with the final outcome of their contact with the Housing Directorate - 10% higher than the rest of the group of similar councils.
- 62% of tenants were satisfied that their views are being taken into account by the Council as their landlord - an improvement of 14% since 2006 .

The consultants undertaking the survey concluded that overall tenant satisfaction with the landlord service provided by the Council remains high - and significantly above that reported by most other landlords. The high level of tenant satisfaction with Councils' repairs service and the customer service provided by its staff underpins the unusually high level of overall satisfaction amongst the Council's tenants.

12. Providing Value for Money

Earlier this year, the Audit Commission (the Government Agency that, amongst other things, checks the Council's finances) told us that the way we use our resources is consistently above their minimum requirements. This included the value for money that we provide. They also told us that we are performing well. This followed an assessment of the way we use our resources.

Last year we carried out a "Value for Money Review", which looked at whether or not the Council as a whole provides value for money. This found that there are examples of both good and poor performance by individual Council services. Overall, our performance and rate of improvement is average, compared to other councils.

For the future, we agreed that we should continue to try to save money by being more efficient. However, rather than simply trying to save money for the sake of it, we also agreed that we should use any savings to help us perform better..

In the Housing Directorate, a number of quarterly meetings are held between the Director of Housing and senior staff to look at our performance figures and agree ways of improving things. We also tell the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation about our performance every three months.

Over the last 4 years, the Housing Service has saved around £1.15 million by working even more efficiently.

13. Equality and Diversity

We know that we live in a diverse community and want to ensure that we provide services that do not discriminate against groups of people. As well as generally promoting equality in the way we provide our services, the Council has a number of corporate policies relating to race, disability and gender equalities

We have two particular strategies to ensure diversity and equality in the way we provide the housing service, and to deal with harassment in housing. We have also looked in detail at our policies relating to specific housing services, and produced "Equality Impact Assessments" for each housing service.

The 2001 Census told us that there are relatively few people in Epping Forest who are black or who come from another ethnic minority background. Around 95% of people living in the District are White.

We comply with the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in Rented Housing and have an Equal Opportunities Statement in the Provision of Housing Services.

14. Setting tenants' rents

The Government originally said that, by 2012, the rents for council homes and housing association homes should be almost the same. They have also said that everyone's rent should be calculated in a similar way. They should mainly be based on:

- the property's value;
- average local wages; and

- the number of bedrooms.

The Government then said that Council and housing association rents should be the same by 2017, instead of 2012.

We started calculating rents in this new way from April 2003, and produced a “target rent” for each property. This could have been much higher or lower than the previous rent. The actual rents that tenants pay were then being increased, or decreased, to this target rent up until 2016/17.

We worked out that, in April 2003, rents would need to increase, on average, by around 9% to reach these target rents. Around 70% of all tenants would have rent increases, and around 30% would have rent reductions. However, as a safeguard, rents cannot increase or decrease by more than £2 per week in any year, above inflation + ½%.

However, this year, the Government said that councils do not have to follow this policy. They have said that provided rents do not increase by 7%, we can increase our rents by however much we think appropriate. Our Council agreed that all rents should increase by 4% from April 2009.

15. The future of Council housing

The Government has said that councils must carefully consider the options open to them to select the most appropriate ownership and management of their homes, in order to get the most money to maintain them.

This could include transferring council homes to a housing association (called “large scale voluntary transfer” - LSVT), or it could involve councils setting up their own company to manage and maintain their homes (called an “arms length management organisation”) - some councils that do this can get extra money from the Government. Either of these options would need to be agreed by the majority of tenants. Or, it may be that it is best for the Council to keep its homes.

In 2002, we appointed consultants to look into this for us. This is called a “housing stock options appraisal”. We asked them to do four things:

- Look at the available options;
- Work out how much could be spent on managing and maintaining tenants’ homes for each option;
- Talk to the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation and our tenants to get their views on the options; and
- Send information to all of our tenants and leaseholders about the options, and ask them to fill in a survey form telling us what they think.

The consultants completed their work in 2004. They told us that, bearing in mind tenants’ views, the best option for the Council was to keep the housing stock and not to transfer it to a housing association, or set up an arms length management organisation. The Council’s Cabinet agreed with this view, and decided that the Council should keep its housing stock for the time being. Nothing has changed since that time to suggest that the Council should follow a different course of action.

However, we have transferred two sheltered housing schemes (Robert Daniels Court, Theydon Bois and Wickfields, Chigwell) to a housing association. This is because both schemes were in need of major improvements, and we worked out that the overall cost to the Council would be less if the housing associations carried out the improvements.

16. Risk Management

Risk management is the process of looking at risks to an organisation, and working out what bad things could happen as a result of doing things in a certain way. It also considers how likely these bad things are to occur and, if they do, what the effects would be.

The Council takes risk management very seriously. We have a group of officers that meets regularly to assess and record risks. This record is called the Risk Register. The Housing Directorate has its own Risk Register. We have identified many risks in our Risk Register. This includes 21 **Key** Housing Risks, which are the most serious. For each of these we have considered, firstly, how likely the risk is to happen and, secondly, if it does, the impact that it will have.

We have looked more carefully at those risks that are more likely and/or will have a higher impact. We have drawn up an action plan to reduce these risks as much as possible.

We also have a "Housing Business Continuity Plan" which explains what we would do if something serious happened to the Housing Service. For example, if the Civic Offices or housing offices were badly damaged, or if we lost a lot of staff, perhaps through serious sickness levels.

We also have a Housing Emergency Plan, which explains what we would do in either a routine or major emergency. For example, if lots of people lost their homes and needed somewhere to stay temporarily.

16. The overall financial picture

We have worked out how much we will get from rent and other money over the next 30 years. We have compared this with how much we need to spend on running the housing service over the same period.

This has shown us that, although there may not be enough money available over the whole of the next 30 years, there should be enough money to run the housing service for at least the next 20 years – 1 year later than predicted last year. Since this is a long time for councils, there is nothing for us to worry about at the moment.

17. Action Plan

The Business Plan has an "Action Plan" which explains what we will be doing, and when, over the next year:

- to meet our objectives;
- improve our housing services; and
- to make the changes we have to deal with because of new laws or Government policies.

18. Key housing priorities

Section 3 above says what our housing objectives are. But we can never do everything we want to. So, we have to decide which things are the most important, that will help us the most to meet our housing objectives. These are called our "Key Housing Priorities".

Our "Key Housing Priorities" for the next year (2009/10) are:

- Continue to manage and maintain our homes effectively and efficiently;
- Reduce further the number of our non-decent homes, to ensure that we reach our target of having no non-decent homes by 2010;
- Look at the way we provide our repairs service, and improve the time it takes to undertake repairs, by selecting an experienced private repairs contractor to help us;
- Complete a major £4m improvement scheme at Springfields, Waltham Abbey

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This is the ninth annual Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan that the Council has produced. It complies with the requirements of the Government's financial framework for the HRA.

This Business Plan has been produced in accordance with both the "Guidance on Business Plans" and the guidance on "Effective Housing Strategies and Plans" issued by the predecessor to the Department for Communities and Local Government in June 2000 and April 2002. The Plan has been developed by a corporate team of officers from Housing and Finance/ICT. The Plan was adopted by the Council's Housing Portfolio Holder after consultation with the Council's Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Epping Forest District Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.

An important part of this Business Plan relates to the Council's objectives, strategies, plans and standards relating to the repair and maintenance of the Council's housing stock, and how the Government's Decent Homes Standard will be met. In view of its importance, as in previous years, the Council has produced a separate Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan, that complements and is an integral part of the HRA Business Plan. The Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan is attached as Appendix 1.

It is a requirement of the Council's Audit and Governance Committee that all of the Council's Business Plans are completed and published by 31 March each year - before the start of the following the financial year.

In order to assist readers, a comprehensive Glossary of Terms is provided at Appendix 2. A Key Contact List is given at Appendix 3. A Plain English Summary, particularly aimed at tenants and staff, has been provided at the beginning of the Business Plan.

1.2 Fit for Purpose Standard

In May 2003, the Council's HRA Business Plan was assessed as being fully "fit for purpose" by the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East). For the HRA Business Plan to be designated as "fit for purpose", it has to meet stringent "fit for purpose" criteria laid down by the DCLG. There are 33 separate criteria against which HRA Business Plans are assessed. Councils must meet every criterion, in full, to be designated as fit for purpose.

Having an HRA Business Plan that is assessed as fit for purpose also brings a number of other benefits for the Council. For example, it is not necessary for the Council to submit copies of the Business Plan to the Government Office for assessment each year, just a brief annual update.

1.3 Links with the Council's Housing Strategy

The Council has recently published its *Consultation Draft Housing Strategy 2009-2012* and, following the consultation exercise, will produce the final version in Spring 2009. The Housing Strategy assesses the overall housing needs of the District, and sets out the Council's objectives and plans for meeting those needs. In addition, the Council also contributes towards the Sub-Regional Housing Strategy of the London Commuter Belt Sub-Region. Since around 14% of the District's properties are currently owned by the Council, the management and maintenance of its stock plays an important part in meeting the Council's strategic objectives for housing. In particular, there are important overlaps between the two documents in the following areas:

- Provision of affordable housing for rent
- Meeting the Decent Homes Standard and the Decent Homes Targets
- Restructuring and convergence of social housing rents
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour

1.4 Purpose of the Business Plan

The purpose of this Business Plan is to:

- Set out the Council's overall medium term aims and objectives for the housing service, as landlord
- Analyse the current position
- Plan how to achieve the objectives, through the formulation of an Action Plan
- Provide a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress in delivering the Business Plan

1.5 Development of the Business Plan in 2009

The Council has consistently developed and updated its Business Plan, since the time the first one was produced in 2001. All the statistics and information within this latest Business Plan referred to as the "last financial year" - and the most up to date information - relates to 2007/8, which is the last year that full year statistics are available.

The development of the Business Plan and the main changes this year include:

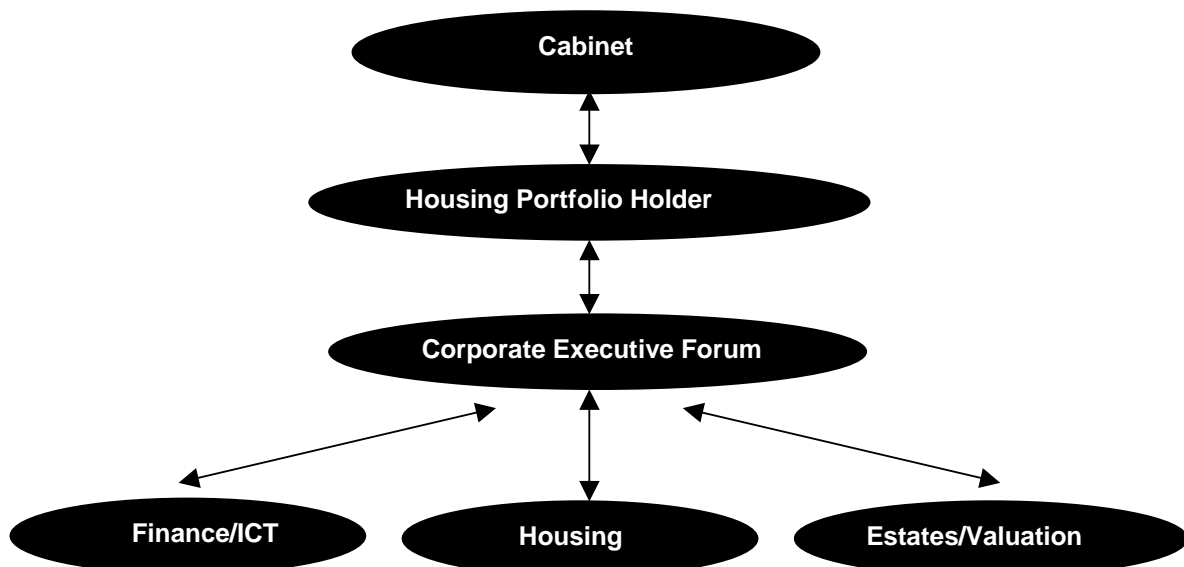
- Updated statistics for 2007/8
- Updated summary of key activities and achievements in 2008/9 (Section 3.5)
- Updated Key Housing Priorities (Section 3.6)
- Updated section on the District's Housing Needs Relevant to the Business Plan, to take account of the recently complete Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which replaces the previous Housing Needs Survey (Section 4.13)
- Updated section on Tenant Satisfaction, to take account of the most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey undertaken in 2008 (Section 5.4)
- Updated section on the Housing Value for Money Analysis (Section 6.6)
- Revised Financial Plan (Chapter 11)
- New Action Plan (Chapter 13)
- An updated Repairs & Maintenance Business Plan (Appendix 1)
- An updated Plain English Summary, incorporating the above changes and including new sections on Quality Housing Services, Value for Money, Diversity & Equality and Risk Management, not previously included in the Summary

1.6 HRA Commercial Properties

The Council owns a number of freehold commercial properties that are accounted for within the HRA, since they are held under Housing Act powers. However, since the planning and development proposals for the management and maintenance of these commercial properties are included within the Council's Asset Management Plan, which is produced separately, they have not been included within this HRA Business Plan.

1.7 Management Structure – Policy and Priority Setting

The HRA Business Plan is a corporate document, with officers from different services having responsibility for its production and ensuring its delivery. The hierarchy of responsibility can be summarised as follows:



<i>Cabinet</i>	Comprises senior councillors. Overall responsible for policy making, setting priorities and the production, review and delivery of the Business Plan
<i>Housing Portfolio Holder</i>	Responsible for detailed consideration of the Business Plan on behalf of the Cabinet and recommending to the Cabinet policy changes and priorities.
<i>Corporate Executive Forum</i>	Responsible for ensuring the Business Plan is produced and delivered
<i>Housing</i>	Lead directorate for producing the Business Plan and delivering the elements of the Plan relating to HRA residential properties, including the implementation of policy and achieving the Council's agreed priorities
<i>Finance</i>	Responsible for the production of all the Business Plan's financial forecasts
<i>Estates and Valuation</i>	Responsible for the HRA Stock Valuation and delivery of the financial aspects of the Business Plan relating to HRA commercial properties.

1.8 Comments of the Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation

Section 4.8 explains the role of the Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation. The Federation has been consulted on this latest version of the Business Plan. Having considered the Business Plan, the Federation said [Last year's comment reproduced below]:

- Once again, the Business Plan is comprehensive, well thought out, interesting and well written;
- It is clear and easy to read, especially the Plain English Summary;
- We agree with the objectives, the key housing priorities and the action plan;
- We noted that the revised Financial Plan does not identify a deficit on the Housing Revenue Account for 20 years, and accepted that this situation is likely to change based on the variety of financial assumptions;
- We are particularly pleased that the Housing Directorate has once again been awarded the Charter Mark for Customer Service Excellence;
- We are pleased to see that the Council are on target to meet the Decent Homes Standards by 2010, and recognise from the financial plan that programmes of work are focused on this target;
- We would like to recommend to that the unallocated additional £300,000 available in the Capital Programme for the next four years be spent on off-street parking.

2. Strategic Context and Linkage to Other Plans

2.1 The Epping Forest District

The Epping Forest District comprises a mix of rural and urban character, covering an area of 131 square miles, with a population of around 120,000. There is no major centre of the District. There are around 12 towns and larger villages, ranging in population size from 2,000 to 30,000. It is an attractive Metropolitan Green Belt area, with good road and rail links to London, so is popular with commuters.

The southern parts of the District border Greater London and are more populous and urbanised, including Loughton, Chigwell, Buckhurst Hill and Waltham Abbey. There was a total of 53,295 dwellings in the District as at April 2008, of which 12% were Council-owned.

The District falls within the East of England and the Secretary of State has recently published the East of England Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) 14), following lengthy consultation an Examination in Public. The Plan sets out the proposed number of additional homes that should be provided within the Region and the District. The Secretary of State has declared that an additional 3,500 homes should be provided within the District by 2021, together with an unspecified additional number of homes within the District to assist with the planned growth of neighbouring Harlow.

2.2 Housing Service Planning Matrix

The HRA Business Plan is only one of a range of complementary and inter-related strategic documents and plans produced by the Council. In producing this Business Plan, careful regard has been had to relevant corporate objectives and strategies and housing objectives and strategies. This section of the Business Plan sets out where the Plan sits in relation to other strategies and plans, and how they inter-relate.

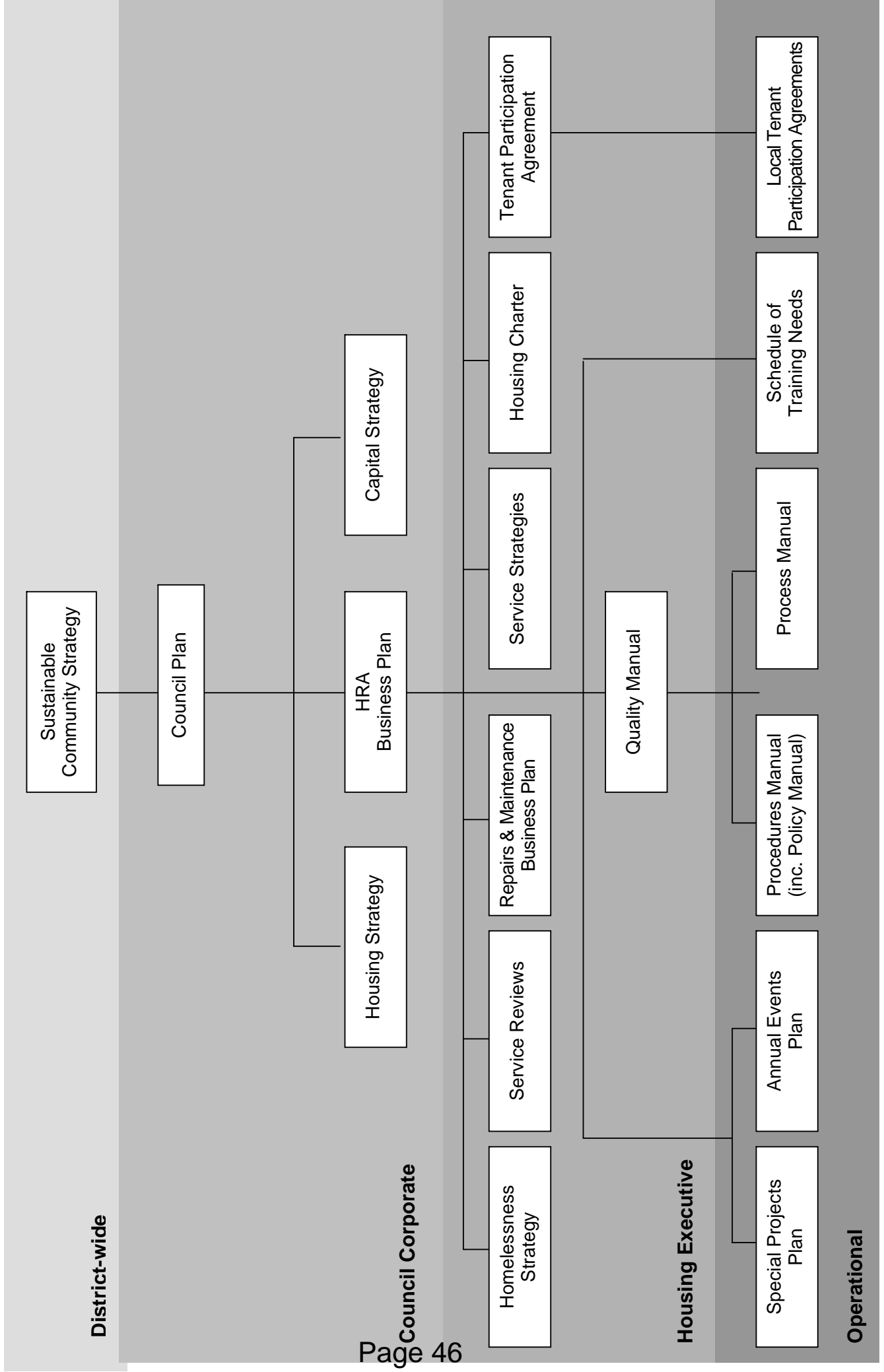
The Housing Planning Matrix reproduced on the next page illustrates, in graphical form, how the Council's housing services are planned and delivered.

A brief explanation of the main strategies and plans, including a number not shown on the matrix, is set out below.

Sustainable Community Strategy	The long term vision for the District, produced by the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership. The LSP comprises all of the statutory agencies working in the District, including the Council, together with representatives of the voluntary sector. The LSP is currently at the early stages of producing a new Sustainable Community Strategy.
Council Plan	The Council's prime strategic document, that sets out the Council's strategic direction for the planning and delivery of all its services over a four-year period (currently 2006-2010). The Council Plan follows the same thematic approach as the Sustainable Community Strategy, rather than following a traditional service structure, which enables greater flexibility to respond to the changing internal/external environment.
Housing Strategy	See Section 1.3 above.
Homelessness Strategy	The Council's statutory strategy, updated in 2006, which reviews the Council's approach to homelessness, and sets out the Council's plans for dealing with homelessness.
Housing Service Plans/Strategies	A series of separate documents, produced to a common format, that set out how individual housing services and strategies are delivered in detail (eg. rent arrears, tenant participation, empty properties). They provide detailed objectives, policies, targets, performance information and financial/staffing resource availability.
Tenant Participation Agreement	An agreement (compact) between the Council (as landlord) and the Epping Forest District Tenants and Leaseholders Federation (on behalf of the Council's tenants and leaseholders), first signed in March 2000 and updated in 2002, 2006 and, most recently, January 2010 for a three year period. It sets out the approach the Council and the Federation will take to ensure that tenants and leaseholders are able to participate in the delivery of their housing services, receive good quality information and are consulted on housing issues. The Council has also entered into six Local Tenant Participation Agreements with individual recognised tenants associations on how tenant participation will be delivered locally (see Section 4.8).
Leaseholders Participation Agreement	An agreement (compact) between the Council and the Epping Forest Leaseholders Association, which was formed through a Council initiative in March 2001.
Housing Charter	Sets out the principles by which housing services will be delivered from the clients' point of view and what clients can expect.
Capital Strategy	Provides the Council's strategies on how capital projects will be planned, funded, delivered and monitored, together with details of the Council's HRA and General Fund Capital Programmes. The Strategy is updated annually.
Fuel Poverty Strategy	Sets out the Council's plans to alleviate problems relating to fuel costs in respect of those on low incomes.
Crime & Disorder Strategy	Sets out the Council's approach to reducing crime and disorder within the District.

Housing Directorate

Service Planning Matrix



2.3 Capital Strategy 2008/11 - Housing as a Corporate Priority for Investment

The Council's Capital Strategy 2008/11, last updated in September 2008, sets out the Council's eight key strategic priorities for capital investment, in a ranked priority order. Since its introduction, "Improving the Council's housing stock" has continuously been ranked as the highest key strategic priority for investment.

3. Business Plan Objectives

3.1 The Council's Corporate Medium Term Aims

The Council has three medium term aims and priorities, which are set out in the Council Plan 2006-2010. They are:

(1) *The District is a safe, healthy and attractive place*

- (a) Maintain the special character and advantage of the District, and address local environmental issues
- (b) Address housing need
- (c) Create safe communities
- (d) Encourage sustainable economic development
- (e) Address leisure need

(2) *The Council is an organisation that listens and leads, to resolve local issues*

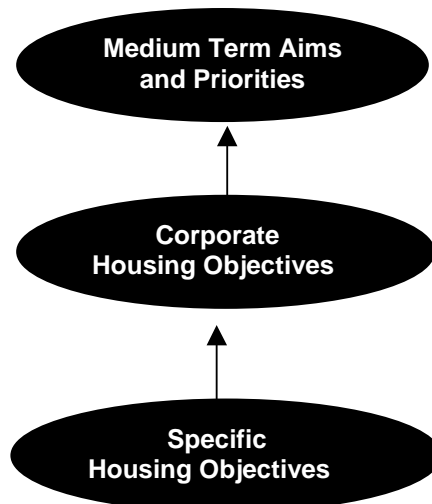
- (a) Political leaders give clear direction
- (b) Communicate with the public
- (c) Prioritise objectives and services
- (d) Co-operate and plan with partners

(3) *The Council provides affordable improving services*

- (a) Identify and target resources: realise capacity and manage performance
- (b) Procure services in the most beneficial and cost effective way
- (c) Develop services, staff and the working environment

3.2 Hierarchy of Objectives

In order to make the best use of its housing assets and deliver an effective housing service, in consultation with representatives of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation where appropriate, the Council has set Business Plan Objectives at various levels within the organisation, from the high level medium term aims and priorities to individual housing objectives. The hierarchy of objectives can be summarised as follows:



3.3 Corporate Housing Objectives

The Council's Corporate Housing Objectives set out the ultimate objectives that the Council strives to achieve on housing issues. The Corporate Housing Objectives relevant to this Business Plan are:

- HO1 – Value for Money** Provide a high quality housing service, having due regard to the cost of providing the service.
- HO2 - Housing Management** Manage the Council's housing stock efficiently and effectively, obtaining good value for money, to deliver high quality housing services.
- HO3 - Repairs and Maintenance** Ensure that all tenants live in a decent home, and that the Council maintains its properties and housing estates to a standard that protects and enhances their value, and provides a safe and satisfactory environment for tenants and leaseholders.
- HO4 - Tenant Participation** Enable the Council's tenants and leaseholders to participate in the delivery of their housing service, through the receipt of good quality information, adequate and appropriate consultation on relevant housing issues and opportunities to provide feedback to the Council, in accordance with the *Epping Forest Tenant Participation Agreement*.
- HO5 - Housing Finance** Manage the Council's financial housing resources effectively, efficiently and prudently, through the maximisation of rental and other income, Government grants and subsidies, and capital receipts, together with the formulation of effective revenue and capital spending priorities and plans and the achievement of good financial performance against targets.

3.4 Specific Housing Objectives

In pursuit of the Council's Corporate Housing Objectives, the Council has more detailed Specific Housing Objectives. The Specific Housing Objectives of this Business Plan are as follows:

(a) *Value for Money:*

- (a) Provide consistent quality housing services
- (b) Understand the relationship between housing performance and the cost of service provision
- (c) Involve representatives of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation in consideration of housing performance and new policy development.
- (d) Seek to continuously reduce costs, whilst maintaining or improving performance

(b) *Housing Management:*

- (a) Provide a decentralised housing management service through two area housing offices based in Epping and Loughton and an Estate Office at Limes Farm, Chigwell.
- (b) Ensure that the Council's housing estates provide an attractive and practical environment for local residents.
- (c) Review the Council's *Housing Allocations Scheme* annually to ensure it continues to be appropriate and gives choice to applicants, following consultation with registered social landlords, local councils and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.
- (d) Review applicants registered on the Council's Housing Register on an ongoing basis to ensure the lists are up to date.

- (e) Keep the number of empty Council properties, the period they are left empty, and the associated rental loss to a minimum.
- (f) Keep underoccupation of the Council's housing stock to a minimum.
- (g) Minimise the extent of breaches of tenancy conditions.
- (h) Take firm action against anti social behaviour, through notification, mediation or legal action as necessary.
- (i) Ensure that current rent arrears do not exceed 2.0% of the annual debit.

(c) *Repairs and Maintenance:*

These objectives are set out in detail as part of the Council's *Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan* attached as Appendix 1 to this Business Plan.

(d) *Tenant Participation:*

- (a) Consult individuals, groups and organisations on important matters relating to the provision of housing services, particularly on issues where clients have an element of choice or where decisions will have a major effect on them.
- (b) Comply with the Council's *Housing Charter* relating to the approach and philosophy towards the provision of housing services.
- (c) Comply with the commitments set out in the *Epping Forest Tenant Participation Agreement*.
- (d) Provide information to tenants that is timely, in plain English, of good quality and tailored to both the general and individual needs of tenants.
- (e) Recognise the special needs of certain tenants and respond positively to those needs.
- (f) Obtain feedback from tenants, in a variety of ways, on the Council's performance in the delivery of housing services.
- (g) Encourage, support and develop tenants associations within the District.
- (h) Keep the Council's tenant participation structure under review.
- (i) Consult tenants on major improvement schemes, housing initiatives and matters of general housing management to ensure full awareness of proposals and to obtain their views.
- (j) Encourage, support, consult and develop the District Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, and work in partnership with the Federation to maximise the benefits that can be achieved from tenant participation to improve the delivery of housing services.
- (l) Consult the Federation on the Council's housing services and policies in accordance with the District-wide Tenant Participation Agreement.
- (m) Ensure that appropriate training on tenant participation is made available for tenants and Council officers and members.
- (n) Ensure that appropriate funding is made available to support and develop tenant participation.

(f) *Housing Finance:*

- (a) Manage the Council's financial housing resources effectively, efficiently and prudently.
- (b) Maximise the Council's entitlement to Government grants and subsidies.
- (c) Keep under review housing management and maintenance expenditure to ensure that expenditure within the Housing Revenue Account does not exceed income.

- (d) Plan to ensure that the HRA remains in surplus, each year, for a period of at least 20 years.
- (e) Consider the level of fees and charges to be made for housing services on an annual basis.
- (f) Ensure that working balances for the Housing Revenue Account are not forecast to fall below £3m or to exceed £4m at the end of any five-year forecast period.

3.5 Summary of Key Activities and Achievements in 2008/9

The key housing achievements and activities in 2008/9, relating to this Business Plan, can be summarised as follows:

- The Council's Housing Directorate achieved the ISO 9001:2000 Quality Standard for a further three years
- The Housing Directorate was re-structured, including the incorporation of the Building Maintenance Section and private sector housing, resulting in financial savings and a more focused service
- A new web-based mutual exchange system called HomeSwapper was introduced, enabling Council tenants to search for other tenants throughout the country who want to mutual exchange
- The latest Tenants Satisfaction Survey established that the Council's tenants continue to be very satisfied with their housing service, especially when compared with other councils and housing associations

3.6 Key Housing Priorities and Action Plan to Meet the Objectives

The Council's Key Housing Priorities for the next year (2009/10) are set out below.

- Continue to manage and maintain our homes effectively and efficiently;
- Reduce further the number of our non-decent homes, to ensure that we reach our target of having no non-decent homes by April 2010;
- Improve the Council's repairs service and the time it takes to undertake repairs, by selecting an experienced private repairs contractor to manage and improve the service on the Council's behalf;
- Complete a major £4m improvement scheme at Springfields, Waltham Abbey

There are a number of factors and sources that have influenced the Key Housing Priorities, which were formulated in conjunction with the District-wide Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.

The Key Housing Priorities were selected by the Council having regard to:

- The views of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation
- National and regional housing policies and priorities, including the need to meet decent homes targets
- The objectives, targets and action plans within the Council's Housing Strategy
- The recommendations of the Council's Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing, based on the "Business Plan Analysis" within Chapter 4 of the Business Plan
- The principles of best value

The Action Plan to meet the Council's objectives is set out in Chapter 13.

4. Business Plan Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In formulating the objectives and plans in respect of the HRA, the Council's strengths and weaknesses relating to HRA activities have been examined. At the same time, an analysis has been undertaken of the impact that the external environment has, or will have, on the HRA, and available options have been identified and analysed, in order to formulate cohesive and achievable strategies.

4.2 Information Sources

In order to formulate this Business Plan, a number of data sources have been studied. Some of the more relevant data has been included within the Business Plan itself; other data has been used for reference. The main sources of information are as follows:

(a) Internal:

- Housing Strategy
- Property attributes database
- Stock Condition Survey
- District-wide Tenant Participation Agreement
- Historical HRA data
- EFDC Council Plan
- EFDC Risk Register
- Housing stock information
- Council house sales statistics
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009
- Local Tenant Participation Agreements
- Tenants and Leaseholders Federation
- Housing Service Plans/Strategies

(b) External:

- Government Comprehensive Spending Review
- Halifax House Price Index
- CLG Guidance on HRA Accounts
- CLG "Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future"
- CLG Guidance on Business Plans
- CLG Guidance on Stock Options Appraisals
- Housing Green Paper
- The Council's Use of Resources Assessment
- Housing & Regeneration Act 2008

4.3 The Council's housing stock

The Council owned the following HRA stock as at 31st March 2008, for which the Council's Housing Directorate is responsible for management and maintenance:

- 6,525 residential properties (*)
- 939 leasehold properties
- 2,817 garages
- 1 Homeless Persons Hostel comprising 38 rooms and 10 chalets

A number of these properties were transferred to the Council from the former Greater London Council (GLC) in 1980. The housing stock continues to decline due to the effects of the Right to Buy; 6,140 properties have been sold since 1977 (See Section 4.12 below).

An analysis of the Council's housing stock as at April 2008 (excluding the 48 rooms at the Council's Hostel, 7 residential scheme managers' properties and 17 properties "out of charge") is detailed below.

COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK BY TYPE AND YEAR (Excluding Homeless Persons Hostel)					
	April 2004	April 2005	April 2006	April 2007	April 2008
Houses	2,813	2,789	2,765	2,755	2,743
Flats	2,578	2,538	2,507	2,476	2,471
Maisonettes	530	525	521	525	520
Bungalows	789	790	789	793	791
TOTAL	6,710	6,642	6,582	6,549	6,525

COMPARISON OF PRE AND POST WAR COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK BY TYPE (As at 1st April 2008)					
	Pre-1944		Post 1945		TOTAL
	No.	%	No.	%	
Houses	356	5 %	2,387	36 %	2,743
Flats	14	< 1 %	2,457	38 %	2,471
Maisonettes	0	0	520	8 %	520
Bungalows	12	< 1 %	779	12 %	791
TOTAL	382		4,605		6,525

PROPERTY MIX OF COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK BY BEDROOM SIZE (As at 1st April 2008)		
	No.	%
Bedsits	327	5 %
1 Bedroom	2,325	36 %
2 Bedroom	1,818	28 %
3 Bedroom	1,893	29 %
4/5 Bedroom	162	2 %
TOTAL	6,525	

GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK (As at 1st April 2008)								
	Buckhurst Hill / Chigwell		Loughton		Waltham Abbey		Epping / Ongar / Rural Areas	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Houses	189	7 %	935	34 %	604	22 %	1,015	37 %
Flats	316	13 %	906	37 %	784	32 %	465	19 %
Maisonettes	254	49 %	189	36 %	65	12 %	12	2 %
Bungalows	15	2 %	146	19 %	145	18 %	485	61 %
TOTAL	774		2176		1598		1,977	
% of Total		12 %		33 %		24 %		30 %

4.4 Stock Valuation

Under CLG guidelines, the valuation of residential properties is based on Social Housing - Existing Use (SH-EH) value. In 2001, the Council first commissioned the Valuation Office to undertake a formal valuation of the Council's housing stock, as at April 2000. Following desk-top revaluations being undertaken between 2002 and 2005, in 2006, the Valuation Office undertook a full revaluation as at 1 April 2005. Further desk-top valuations have been undertaken since 2006.

The HRA Stock Valuation for residential dwellings as at 1st April 2008 was £633 million.

4.5 Overview of the Management of the Council's Housing Stock

(a) Introduction

The Council's housing stock is a major asset, and it is therefore essential that it is properly managed and maintained. This section of the Business Plan sets out how the Council's stock is managed.

(b) Housing Directorate

The lead directorate for the management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock is Housing, under the management of the Director of Housing.

The permanent Staff Establishment of the Housing Directorate comprises 211 full and part-time members of staff. Of these, only 11 private sector housing staff are involved in non-HRA activities. Appendix 4 sets out the Staffing Structure of the senior management of Housing from April 2009, together with the main responsibilities of each of the nine sections.

Most of the staff within Housing are centrally based at the Civic Offices in Epping. However, the following services are decentralised.

Area Housing Office (South) Based in the heart of The Broadway Shopping Centre, Loughton, the office provides a comprehensive housing and estate management service to tenants in the south of the District (See Section 4.6(a) below).

Limes Farm Estate Office Based on the Limes Farm Estate, Chigwell, the Estate Office provides a localised housing and estate management service to the tenants of the Estate. The office is open every morning during the week, managed by the Assistant Area Housing Manager.

Careline Control The Council provides an older peoples alarm network, Careline, which is managed from Careline Control based at Parsonage Court, Loughton. The service is managed by the Housing Manager (Older People's Services), based at Careline Control (See Section 4.6(k) below).

Sheltered Housing The Council has 13 sheltered housing schemes for older and frail older people, each managed by a Scheme Manager. In addition, 3 Area Scheme Managers provide a visiting service to older tenants on housing estates (See 4.6(m) below).

(c) Corporate Executive Forum

The Corporate Executive Forum (CEF), comprising the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, is responsible for the overall management of the Authority.

(d) Management Board

The Management Board comprises the members of CEF and five Service Directors. Its purpose is to ensure a corporate approach to the delivery of Council services. The Management Board meets on a fortnightly basis.

(e) Support Services

The Housing Directorate is supported by a number of other services within the Council to deliver its housing management and maintenance. The following lists the main support services:

Accountancy The Council's Finance & ICT Directorate provides a comprehensive accountancy service under the management of the Director of Finance & ICT, including the provision of financial advice, financial planning, budget formulation and monitoring, invoicing, payments, sundry debtors and creditors.

Audit The Council's audit function is undertaken by the Chief Internal Auditor in accordance with the Council's Audit Plan.

Estates and Valuation The Estates and Valuations Division manages and co-ordinates the maintenance of HRA commercial properties.

Grounds Maintenance The Council's grounds maintenance is undertaken by the Environment and Street Scene Directorate. The arboricultural contract is undertaken by a private contractor.

Housing Benefits Housing Benefits is administered within Finance under the management of the Asst Director of Finance & ICT (Benefits).

Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Although the integrated housing system is supported by Housing Services, the network is managed by the Finance and ICT Directorate.

Legal The Corporate Support Directorate provides a comprehensive legal service to Housing including conveyancing, litigation, advocacy, contract administration and legal advice.

Human Resources	The Corporate Support Services Directorate is responsible for strategic HR issues, industrial relations, recruitment and other HR operations.
Performance Management	The Performance Improvement Unit, within the Office of the Deputy Chief Executive, is responsible for the co-ordination of performance management data.
Public Relations & Marketing	Although the Housing Directorate has an in-house housing information service, a corporate public relations service is provided by the Public Relations and Marketing Section within the Office of the Deputy Chief Executive.

4.6 Delivery of Housing Services

(a) Estate Management

Estate management is undertaken by the two Area Housing Offices under the direction of the Area Housing Managers. The Area Housing Office (North), based at the Civic Offices, Epping, manages around 3,580 properties in the north of the District, including the towns of Epping, Waltham Abbey and Ongar. Most of the properties in the rural part of the District are also managed by the Area Housing Office (North). As outlined above, the Area Housing Office (South) is based in The Broadway Shopping Centre, Loughton and manages around 2,970 properties in Loughton, Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and the immediately surrounding areas. The office also provides a cash office facility, managed by Finance, for the payment of all Council charges, including rents.

Within the Area Housing Offices, Housing Officers (Management) manage around 800 properties each. They are responsible for dealing with breaches of tenancy conditions, including rent arrears recovery and estate management. In addition to ad-hoc estate inspections, staff in the Area Housing Offices undertake an annual programme of planned estate inspections covering the whole of the District.

The Council undertakes the cleaning/cleansing of estate and sheltered housing schemes in-house, and employs three full time caretakers for two large estates in the District and 14 full and part-time cleaners.

(b) Rent Collection

The collectable rent debit in 2007/8 was £25.9m (an increase of 6.2% from 2006/7). Rent is collected through a variety of methods. Due to the rural nature of the District, Post Office Giro is extensively used to enable tenants to pay their rent at local post offices. In addition, the Council's rent collection administrator, Allpay, provides a number of rent payment points in convenient locations (e.g. supermarkets, garages etc.) throughout the District. The Council also provides three cash desks based in Epping, Waltham Abbey and Loughton. Direct debit and standing orders are also offered to tenants, as well as a facility for rent payments to be made by debit card, or through the internet, or by text.

The rent collection rate in 2007/8 was increased to 99.14%, 0.31% higher than the collection rate of 98.83% in 2006/7.

(c) Current and Former Rent Arrears

The Council's approach towards rent arrears recovery is set out in the Housing Service Strategy on Rent Arrears. The Council has a historically good record of rent arrears recovery, especially when compared to the national trend of rent arrears increases. The level of current rent arrears amounted to £387,852 as at 6 April 2008, representing 1.52% of the annual debit – a decrease on the 1.69% rent arrears in 2006/7.

Technically, former tenant arrears amounted to £396,019 as at 6 April 2008, of which £259,675 were due to former dwellings arrears (the rest due to former garage, housing benefit, court costs and tolerated trespasser arrears).

During 2007/8, £109,094 of former tenant arrears was written off. Former tenant arrears of £85,240 were collected in 2007/8, a decrease of 28.6 % on the amount collected in 2006/7.

d) Anti-Social Behaviour

Although serious anti-social behaviour amongst the Council's tenants is uncommon, there has been a marked increase in the number of anti-social behaviour cases in recent years. The Council therefore takes seriously its responsibility to minimise such behaviour, through the enforcement of its tenancy conditions and other available remedies. Often, such behaviour can be curtailed simply by a housing officer visiting or writing to the alleged perpetrators. Alternatively, the Council facilitates mediation by an independent third party. However, if the anti-social behaviour is serious or continues, the Council uses one or more of the following remedies:

- Repossession – Under the Housing Act 1996, the Council can seek to repossess a property if a tenant, resident or visitor causes (or is likely to cause) a nuisance to other residents in the locality, or if they are convicted of using their property for illegal purposes, or convicted of an arrestable offence in or near the property.
- Demoted Tenancy Orders (DTOs) – The Council can seek from the court a DTO if a tenant is causing anti-social behaviour. If granted, a DTO removes the tenant's security of tenure for a period of one year. If there are further incidences of anti-social behaviour within that period, the Council can obtain return to court and obtain a possession order without having to give any grounds. The Council has resolved to seek DTOs in appropriate cases.
- Introductory Tenancies (ITs) – The Council started to use ITs in 2006, following an extensive consultation exercise with all tenants and partners in 2005. All new tenants are now given an IT (instead of a secure tenancy) for the first year of their tenancy. If the new tenant causes anti-social behaviour, or breaches any other tenancy conditions within that period, the Council can obtain a possession order, without having to give any grounds. If there are no breaches within that year, the tenancy automatically converts to a secure tenancy.
- Injunctions - Also under the Housing Act 1996, the Council can seek an injunction from the courts to prohibit a person from causing a nuisance to other residents in the area, or using premises for illegal purposes. However, these can only be granted if violence is used or threatened, and if there would be a significant risk of harm if an injunction was not granted.
- Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBO's) – Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, the Council or the Police, in consultation with each other, can seek an ASBO from the courts if there is ongoing criminal type behaviour. The person must be over 10 years of age and be acting anti-socially towards others, causing harassment, alarm or distress. The ASBO prohibits the person from continuing with the anti social behaviour. A breach of the order is a criminal offence, with a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment.

(e) Empty Properties

In order to maximise rental income and effectively meet housing need, it is essential that the number of empty properties, and the associated re-let period, is kept to a minimum. There were 86 empty properties as at 6th April 2008, representing a decrease of 6 properties (6.5%) over the previous year's number of 92. The rental loss from empty properties in 2007/8 amounted to 1.06% of the annual debit, a small increase on the 1.01% rent loss in 2006/7.

(f) Difficult to Let Properties – Low Demand

Generally, the Council does not experience any of the problems faced by many northern authorities of "low demand" and has a high demand for most of its properties. However, some difficulties are experienced in letting certain types of properties in sheltered housing and schemes for frail older people ("Part 2.5"). As at 1st April 2008, there were only 2 vacant properties meeting the "difficult to let" criteria (both bedsits in sheltered housing schemes).

(g) Review of the Housing Register

In order to ensure that the Housing Register is up to date, a rolling programme of annual reviews of applicants is undertaken on a monthly basis.

(h) Choice Based Lettings (HomeOptions Scheme)

The Government, through the Homelessness Act 2002 and its Five-year Housing Plan, "Homes for All", is encouraging local authorities to introduce "choice based lettings" by 2010, whereby housing applicants are able to choose the property that is let to them, rather than being "allocated" properties. Offers of accommodation are made to applicants who have expressed in specific vacant properties who are in the highest priority band, in date order.

In November 2007, the Council successfully introduced its HomeOptions Scheme, a choice based lettings scheme operated in partnership with five neighbouring councils (Brentwood, Uttlesford, Chelmsford, East Herts and Broxbourne). The scheme is operated by Locata, a choice based lettings agency. The six councils were successful in obtaining £96,000 funding from the former ODPM in 2005 to jointly commission the scheme.

(i) Homeless Persons Hostel

The Council's Homeless Persons Hostel in North Weald comprises 38 rooms and 10 "chalets" with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. Managed by a Hostel Manager, who is supported by two Assistant Hostel Managers, it provides an invaluable facility to provide temporary accommodation to homeless families, to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. In 2004, a two-phase improvement scheme for the Hostel was completed, at a cost of around £1.5m.

(j) Leasehold Services and Service Charges

The Council had 929 properties leased under the Right to Buy as at 31 March 2008, compared to 914 properties the previous year. 32 properties were leased between 1st April 2007 and 1st April 2008. Leaseholders are charged two main types of service charges; annual charges are made for the provision of ongoing communal services (eg cleaning, grounds maintenance, responsive repairs etc); charges are also made for larger planned repairs and improvements following consultation in accordance with the Housing Act 1985.

(k) Careline Service

The Council operates an alarm network for older people (Careline Service) to the following categories of older people in the District (as at 1 April 2008):

Council tenants	1,255
Private occupiers	1,286
RSL tenants	84
Total	2,625

The number of users receiving the service increased by around 2.5% during 2007/8. The monitoring and response service is provided by Careline to private occupiers on a permanent basis, and to other residents when their Scheme Manager goes off duty. The Careline Service is available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year and is based at Parsonage Court, Loughton. Response times are monitored and, in 2007/8, 98.6% of all calls were responded to within 30 seconds (compared to a slightly faster 98.9% in 2006/7). The average time to respond to calls was 7.2 seconds (compared to a slightly faster average of 6.3 seconds in 2006/7).

Charges to Council tenants for the service are included within the "support charge" applied through the Supporting People programme (See Section 4.9. Charges are also made to private occupiers to meet the costs of the initial alarm purchase and to contribute towards the running costs of the Careline Service.

One of the outcomes of the Best Value Service Review of Housing Services undertaken in 2004 was that the Council should seek to provide the service to other landlords, especially when tenders are invited, in order to increase the viability of the Careline Service.

(l) Telecare

Telecare is an initiative being pursued by Essex County Council's Adult Social Care Service and a number of service providers, including Epping Forest DC, in order to keep the costs of 24-hour care provided to older people to a minimum. It utilises technology to monitor the well-being of older people in their own homes.

The County Council provides significant funding for the initiative. This Council's Careline Service has trained assessors who are able to provide a wide range of telecare sensors to assist people to live independently.

(m) Sheltered Housing & "Very Sheltered" Housing

The Council has 475 sheltered housing properties within 12 sheltered and grouped housing schemes throughout the District, with each one managed by a Scheme Manager. From April 2003, sheltered housing tenants have paid a "support charge" that represents the costs of providing them with the sheltered housing service.

The Council also owns and maintains a "Part 2½" scheme for frail older people in Waltham Abbey, which is managed by Essex Adult Social Care under a partnership arrangement.

In addition, three "Area Scheme Managers" visit 331 older people in properties situated within general needs housing estates that have been designated as especially suitable for older people. Visits are made on a "call category" basis, dependent on the assessed level of risk, as follows:

BREAKDOWN OF CALL CATEGORIES FOR PROPERTIES DESIGNATED AS SPECIALLY SUITABLE FOR THE ELDERLY (As at 1st April 2008)		
Category	Frequency of Visits	No.
A	Once every week	27
B	Once every fortnight	35
C	Once every month	269

In August 2004 and October 2006, the Council transferred sheltered housing schemes at Robert Daniels Court, Theydon Bois and Wickfields, Chigwell respectively to Home Housing, along with the sitting tenants, to facilitate major improvement schemes. (See Section 9.7(b)&(d) for more details).

(n) Housing ICT Strategy and Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) for Housing Services

The Housing Directorate has a Housing ICT Strategy that is reviewed bi-annually, and sets out the vision and objectives for implementing electronic government (IEG) and improving housing services, which complements the Council's corporate IEG Strategy.

In 1999, following an analysis of available systems on the market, the Council purchased the Open Housing Management System (OHMS), an integrated housing computer system, from Anite Housing. The system integrates seven separate modules (e.g. rents, allocations, repairs etc), enabling staff users to access different areas of information and to provide a one-stop approach to the provision of information to tenants and applicants. The system also gives essential management and performance indicator information.

In late 2008, Northgate, the new supplier of the OHMS system, advised all councils using OHMS that it would be withdrawing its support from 2013. Therefore, during 2009/10, the Council needs to decide whether to purchase Northgate's replacement housing system before 2013, or procure a system from another IT supplier.

The Council has provided an interactive housing service on the Council's website for many years, in order to increase the accessibility to housing services for tenants via the internet. This includes the following sections:

- HomeOptions – the Council's choice based lettings system, enabling housing applicants to express interests in up to three vacant properties every fortnight
- HomeSwapper – the Council's web-based mutual exchange system, enabling tenants to provide details of their property and to both attract and seek mutual exchanges
- "Repairs Reporter" – an on-line repairs reporting facility, enabling tenants to report repairs 24 hours per day, with user friendly graphics of property components.
- "A-Z of Housing Services" – providing a description of each housing service provided (eg "Abandoned Vehicles"), the ability to send an e-mail to the appropriate person dealing with that service and the ability to request any leaflets relating to the service.

- "Contact Us" - listing the main sections and offering the ability to send an e-mail by launching the users' e-mail software with a pre-addressed e-mail.
- "Housing Publications" - enabling users to download certain publications and to request any housing leaflets through the completion of an on-line form.
- "Latest News" - providing regularly updated housing-related press releases and information.
- "Feedback" – enabling tenants and other housing clients to provide feedback on housing services and the housing website.
- "Consultation" - where consultation documents and plans can be viewed and downloaded.
- "Payments" – enabling tenants to pay rent and other housing charges via the internet.

4.7 Partnership Working

The Council cannot deliver its Business Plan alone, in many cases it must work in partnership with other organisations. Examples of effective partnership are as follows:

Citizens Advice Bureau The CAB in the District provides an invaluable additional advice service for the Council's tenants. Good working relationships have been built up over a number of years. Quarterly Liaison Meetings are held between senior CAB staff and senior housing officers.

Older People's Joint Management Team The OPJMT comprises representatives of statutory and voluntary organisations involved with elderly people at the local level, including the Council. Meeting on a regular basis, the OPJMT oversees the co-ordination of joint care provided to elderly people and identifies and develops new initiatives.

Essex County Council The Council works closely with Essex Adult Social Care and Children and Young Peoples Services in respect of all client groups. Particularly intense co-operation is undertaken in respect of anti-social behaviour and allocations of accommodation to vulnerable people. The Council works in partnership with the County Council's Supporting People Commissioning Team on the development of the supporting people programme at both the strategic and operational level.

Essex Police The Council works closely with Essex Police on a number of issues. These are mainly in relation to dealing with anti social behaviour, crime prevention, the management of dangerous offenders, responding to "hate incidents" and the removal of abandoned vehicles. The Council and Essex Police have agreed a joint protocol for the use of anti social behaviour orders, and jointly fund a number of police community support officers.

London Commuter Belt Group In view of the growing importance of working sub-regionally on housing issues, the Council, together with 4 other Essex authorities, all the Hertfordshire authorities and the RSLs that operate within the London Commuter Belt Sub Region have formed a Sub-Regional Housing Group. The Sub-Regional Group has produced its own Sub-Regional Housing Strategy, which includes a detailed Action Plan. The Council also works with local authorities in the eastern area of the Sub-Region on a number of specific initiatives, including choice based lettings and the strategic housing market assessment.

Maintenance Partnering Agreement Appendix 1 gives details of the Partnering Agreement the Council has introduced with consultants and contractors to deliver housing maintenance and improvement projects, embracing the "Egan Principles".

Tenants and Leaseholders Federation The Federation comprises representatives of the five recognised tenants associations within the District, the district-wide Leaseholders Association, Sheltered Forum and Rural Tenants Forum, that meets every six weeks. It is consulted on, and provides feedback on housing issues, and monitors the Council's housing performance (see Section 4.8 below).

4.8 Tenant and Leaseholder Participation and Consultation

The Council is committed to involving tenants with the delivery of their housing services and has made good progress with developing tenant participation. The Council has a detailed Tenant Participation Strategy (which is regularly reviewed) and has a dedicated Tenant Participation Officer to deliver the commitments set out in the Tenant Participation Agreement (see below) and to further develop tenant participation in the District.

The Council has facilitated the formation of seven recognised tenants association and one tenants panel throughout the District, although one association has subsequently been disbanded and another was for a sheltered housing scheme that was transferred under a small-scale stock transfer, leaving five associations and one panel currently in existence. In addition, the Council has established the district-wide Leaseholders Association, which represents the views of the Council's leaseholders and with whom the Council can consult on leasehold issues, including service charges. In 2004, the Council also established the Epping Forest Sheltered Forum, comprising representatives from most of the Council's sheltered housing schemes across the District.

In 2006/7, it established the Rural Tenants Forum to represent the tenants of the more rural parts of the District, not large enough to sustain their own residents organisations. Representatives from 12 different rural villages/parishes have joined the Forum, which meets four times each year. The Forum also has representation on the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.

A number of years ago, the Council established the Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, which represents all the Council's tenants and leaseholders, with whom the Council consults and briefs on matters of interest. The Federation has an Executive Committee, comprising two representatives from each of the five recognised tenants associations, and two representatives from the Tenants Panel, Leaseholders Association, the Sheltered Forum and the Rural Tenants Forum. The Federation meets with the Housing Portfolio Holder and senior housing officers every six weeks, and is chaired by one of the Federation's representatives.

The Federation is consulted by the Housing Portfolio Holder and senior housing officers on all proposed changes to housing policy or procedures that affect all (or the majority of) tenants, before decisions are made. The Federation's comments on such proposals are included in reports to Portfolio Holders and the Cabinet. The Chairman of the Federation is also a member of the Council's Housing Scrutiny Panel.

The Council's first District-wide Tenant Participation Agreement (Compact) between the Council and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation was signed in March 2000. Following regular reviews and consultation with all tenants, the Agreement has been updated and signed in November 2003, January 2006 and January 2009. The Agreement is a statement of commitment by both the Council and the Federation, which sets out in writing the intentions of the Council and the Federation in the approach they will take for;

- the provision of information to tenants
- consultation with tenants on housing policy issues
- the operation of the Federation.

The Agreement has been drafted in accordance with the guidelines set out in the "*National Framework for Tenant Participation Compacts*" produced by the former ODPM.

In addition, *Local* Tenant Participation Agreements have been signed with each of the recognised tenants associations. A unique Leaseholders Participation Agreement has also been signed between the Council and the Leaseholders Association, which sets out how leaseholders will be informed of, and consulted on, relevant issues.

The Council has a good record of consulting tenants and others on housing issues that affect them, both at the District level and at the local level. Elsewhere in this Business Plan, details are given of the consultation undertaken on:

- Tenant satisfaction
- New housing policies
- "Consultation" Section of Housing Website
- Tenants & Leaseholders Federation
- Tenant Participation Agreement
- Stock Options Appraisal
- This Business Plan

4.9 Supporting People

The Government's "Supporting People" programme has been in place since April 2003. Under this regime, the costs of support services in respect of Council tenants have not been met by the HRA, but from the Supporting People Budget, managed by the county-wide Supporting People Commissioning Body.

The main effects on the HRA have been as follows:

- The Council receives Supporting People Grant from the Commissioning Body for most of its support costs, except for tenants of sheltered housing schemes who took up occupation after 1 March 2003 who are not in receipt of housing benefit, who have to pay the charge themselves.
- The Council must meet the cost of "transitional supporting people protection". This is an allowance given to tenants of sheltered housing schemes who are not in receipt of housing benefit, and is equivalent to the difference between their (higher) support charge and the previous "scheme manager charge" that they paid. This transitional protection is applied until the tenant vacated the property.

Decisions on inflationary increases in grant are made by the Commissioning Body each year. Some years, there has been no increase; any increases are usually lower than the cost of inflation.

4.10 Fees and Charges

In addition to rents, the Council makes a number of other charges for housing services, which are reviewed annually in November by members in order to feed into the budget making process. Generally, fees and charges are increased annually in line with inflation. The general increase applied for 2009/10 is 5%. However, each charge is considered on its own merits and variations are made to this approach for strategic reasons.

4.11 Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements

Probably the most important elements of this Business Plan are the:

- analysis of the condition of the Council's housing stock
- assessment of the number of the homes that do not meet the Government's "Decent Home Standard"
- assessment of the likely availability of funding for repairs, maintenance and improvements
- assessment of priorities for repairs, maintenance and improvements to meet the Government's Decent Home Targets
- formulation of standards and policies for repairs, maintenance and improvements

In view of this importance, the Council has developed a Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan which, although a free standing document, forms an integral part of the overall HRA Business Plan. The Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan is attached as Appendix 1.

4.12 Right to Buy and Rent to Mortgage Sales

Under the Housing Act 1985, the Council is required to sell Council properties to eligible sitting tenants at a discount. Local authorities also have discretion to sell properties on a voluntary basis outside the right to buy provisions. A number of years ago, the Council operated such a voluntary sales policy, but no longer does so. Between 1st April 1977 and 31st March 2008 (31 years), the Council has received 11,526 applications to purchase, resulting in 6,140 sales (53%), of which 4,584 were under the right to buy.

In 2007/8, 67 applications to purchase under the right to buy were received (43 less than in 2006/7), which resulted in 28 sales (compared to 46 sales in 2006/7 and 36 in 2005/6). The average open market valuation in 2007/8 was £155,090 per property, compared to £149,675 in 2006/7. The current maximum right to buy discount for the Council's region is £34,000, which was the actual discount provided in 2007/8, with the exception of 1 reduced discount (due to a previous discount being provided). The average purchase price was £121,411 per property (compared with £114,655 per property in 2006/7).

4.13 The District's Housing Needs Relevant to the HRA Business Plan

(a) Introduction

It is important that the HRA Business Plan reflects the known housing need in the area and the predictions of how this might be expected to change in the future. In particular, if the projected housing need is low or diminishing, it could affect future rental income streams. However, the District does have a high level of housing need, that cannot be met by the current and projected supply of affordable accommodation. Unlike other areas of the country, it is predicted that this position will not change in either the short or longer term.

(b) Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs)

The Government has issued guidance to all local authorities that they should undertake strategic housing market assessments, in collaboration with other local authorities that operate within the same housing market.

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing defines housing need as 'the quantity of housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance' and housing demand as 'the quantity of housing that households are willing and able to buy or rent'. Housing market areas are 'geographical areas defined by household demand and preferences for housing. They reflect the key functional linkages between places where people live and work'.

Strategic Housing Market Assessments help local authorities and regional bodies to develop a shared evidence base to inform the development of spatial housing policies. In addition, they help to inform decisions about the policies required in housing strategies.

Strategic housing market assessments do not provide definitive estimates of housing need, demand and market conditions. However, they do provide valuable insights into how housing markets operate, both now and in the future.

The Epping Forest District Council is within the London Commuter Belt (LCB) Sub Region for housing purposes. Six districts of the Sub Region, including Epping Forest, joined to form the London Commuter Belt (East)/M11 SHMA Area and commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a comprehensive and integrated SHMA. The other five districts in the SHMA area are Brentwood, Broxbourne, East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford. The research used secondary data from sources such as the UK Census, the former Housing Corporation, HM Land Registry and the Office for National Statistics, along with a qualitative consultation programme with a wide range of stakeholders.

The Key Findings of the (SHMA), relevant to this Business Plan are that:

- The key factors that characterise the SHMA area are:
 - Its proximity to London;
 - Its house prices;
 - The diversity of the area that appeals to both residents and migrant households.
- Between 2001 and 2006, the population of the area rose by 8.5% and the 2001 Census states that 5.5% of households in the SHMA area are overcrowded. It is estimated that around 7,100 households in Epping Forest are considered to be unsuitably housed
- There are 1,300 households in housing need in Epping Forest
- Epping Forest has the largest mis-match between the 2004-based household growth projections to 2026 (8,200 households) and the East of England dwelling allocation (3,500 dwellings)
- There will be a projected shortfall of 5,700 affordable homes in Epping Forest between 2007 and 2021

(c) New Affordable Housing Provision

At the time of writing, the Council's monitoring arrangements for new affordable housing provision identify the following:

- 80 properties on two development sites are currently on site
- 129 properties on 6 development sites have detailed planning permission, but have not yet started on site
- An estimated 167 properties on 3 development sites have outline planning permission
- Developers are giving active consideration to the development of a further 238 properties on 11 sites in the District, although it is unlikely that all these developments will receive planning permission

(d) Housing Register Data

The numbers of applicants on the Housing Register confirm the levels of households seeking social housing in the District. The following table illustrates the levels of need over the past two years, based on the numbers registered on the Housing Register.

COMPARISON OF HOUSING NEED (2007 – 2008)				
	March 2007	March 2008	Difference (2007 – 2008)	
			(Nos.)	%
1 Bed	2,336	2,464	+ 128	+ 5.5 %
2 bed	817	942	+ 125	+ 15.3 %
3 bed	403	500	+ 97	+ 24.1 %
4 Bed	77	55	- 22	- 28.6 %
TOTAL	3,633	3,961	+ 328	+ 9.0 %

(e) Social Housing Turnover

Social housing turnover (in both the Council's own stock and that of registered social landlords) has also been taken into account in the preparation of this Business Plan. The following table compares turnover of Housing Register, homeless and other applicants for vacancies in the Council's housing stock over the last two years. As can be seen, turnover reduced by 1.9% in 2007/8, compared to the previous year.

HRA HOUSING STOCK TURNOVER		
	2007/8	2006/7
Housing Register (inc homeless)	502	547
Mobility Scheme	0	0
Mutual exchanges	118	85
TOTAL	620	632

In addition, 88 applicants were nominated and accepted in 2007/8 for vacancies in stock owned by registered social landlords, compared with 97 in 2006/7.

(f) Local Housing Market

Local market factors can have a significant bearing on future housing demand and/or the sustainability of current rent structures. Indeed, the Council's future rent levels under the Government's proposed rent reforms are affected by property values.

The recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) established that the average property price in Epping Forest in 2008 (Quarter 1) was around £365,000. The average property price rose by 133% between 2000 and 2008 (Quarter 1) – the highest increase in the SHMA Area.

In 2002, the average property price in Epping Forest was 9 times the median full-time earnings of someone working in the District. This rose to 11 times the median earnings by 2007 which is, by far, the highest ratio in the SHMA Area.

4.14 Staff Training and Development

The Council operates a comprehensive Performance Development Review (PDR) process. Formal, structured PDR interviews are held between line managers and all their staff on an annual basis. The PDR process covers:

- Performance over the previous year (including achievements, progress on meeting targets, obstacles encountered and areas of weakness)
- Personal development, and training received, over the previous year
- Assessment of areas for development over the forthcoming year, including training needs, with targets
- Formulation of a Personal Action Plan for the forthcoming year, with targets.

The training needs of all housing staff are then collated annually into a Schedule of Identified Training Needs, which is then monitored by line managers throughout the year. As training needs are met, a record is kept for each member of staff in the Schedule of Completed Training Needs.

The Council also has a Corporate Training Programme and a Member Training Programme, which is formulated each year following an assessment of the most common identified training needs. The Programme comprises a range of training courses, from one day courses to twelve day supervisor/management development programmes held over the period of a year.

4.15 The External Environment

In order to ensure a robust Business Plan, in addition to analysing the “internal environment” within which the Council operates, it is essential to also analyse the “external environment” which, although outside the Council’s control, has an effect on the Council. The following external issues have been identified as having an effect on the Council and have been taken into account in the formulation of this HRA Business Plan:

Comprehensive Spending Review In 2007, the Government announced its latest Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) for the period 2007/8 – 2009/10. This sets out the Government’s detailed spending plans on housing nationally. Clearly, these levels have an effect on the amount of Government support the Council receives.

Housing Green Paper – “Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable” Outlines the Government’s plans for delivering more homes, including social housing, backed by ambitious building targets, increased investment, and new ways of identifying and using land for development.

“Ends & Means: The future Roles of Social Housing in England” Commissioned by the Government, which reported in February 2007. Undertaken by Professor John Hills, it establishes the context and assesses the current state of social housing against criteria such as quality, affordability, social inclusion and opportunities for social and economic mobility.

The “Credit Crunch” This has a major effect on the Council, both in terms of the Council’s finances (e.g. lower interest rates) and the Council’s tenants and housing applicants

Rent Restructuring This Government regime has an effect on the level of rents that the Council can charge and the amount of subsidy that is paid to the Government, due to the Council being in “negative subsidy”

5. Provision of Quality Housing Services

5.1 Charter Mark – Housing Directorate

In November 2004, the whole of the Council’s Housing Service was awarded the Cabinet Office’s prestigious Charter Mark Award for a three year period. The Charter Mark was awarded to the Housing Service for a further three years in 2007. The Charter Mark is the national standard for customer service for organisations delivering public services. It is independently and rigorously evaluated and assessed. To meet the standard, organisations must demonstrate that they: listen to their customers; learn what aspects of their service are most important to them; deliver a service that is tailored to customers’ needs; and continuously

improve. Very few local authority housing departments nationally have achieved the Charter Mark for the whole of their Housing Service. Having a Charter Mark gives confidence to the Council's tenants, applicants and other clients that the Housing Directorate provides a customer-focused service to them that also strives to continuously improve.

5.2 ISO 9001:2000 Quality Accreditation – Housing Directorate

It is essential that the Council has processes and procedures in place to ensure that quality housing services are provided to its clients on a consistent basis. Therefore, the Housing Directorate has invested a lot of time and effort to ensure that a robust and properly audited system is in place to ensure that quality services are provided.

ISO 9001:2000 is an internationally recognised quality assurance accreditation that confirms that, following a rigorous assessment by a licensed external assessor, the service provided is of a consistently high quality. Since 2002, the whole of the Housing Directorate has been accredited with the ISO 9001:2000 Quality Award. The accreditation includes the following specific areas of the Housing Directorate's work:

- Housing Repairs
- Housing Assets
- Housing Management
- Housing Needs
- Older Peoples Housing (incorporating Careline and Sheltered Housing)
- Housing Resources (incorporating House Sales, Leasehold Services, Housing Information & Strategy, Rents Administration and Support Services)

The external assessments of the Housing Directorate were carried out by Lloyds Register Quality Assurance, who undertook a number of visits, audits, inspections and site visits as part of their overall initial assessment. The award lasts for three years, during which time regular audits/inspections are undertaken by Lloyds Register Quality Assurance to ensure that the standards and quality are maintained. The Council was re-accredited with the status for a further three years in May 2008.

The Housing Directorate's Quality Management System comprises:

- A **Process Manual**, that sets out the main processes carried out by the Housing Directorate
- A **Quality Manual**, that sets out the approach taken to ensure consistent quality
- A **Policy Manual** that provides a record of all the agreed Council policies relating to housing
- A **Procedures Manual**, documenting every individual task undertaken by Housing Directorate staff (totalling almost 800 tasks)
- **Regular internal audits** by Council staff, formally trained and certificated to undertake ISO 9001:2000 internal audits.

Epping Forest was one of the first local authorities in the country to receive the award for *all* of its public sector housing services.

5.3 Tenant Satisfaction

The Council is encouraged by the Government to undertake a detailed Tenants Satisfaction Survey every two years (previously every three years). The Council's first survey was undertaken in 2001, with the latest undertaken in 2008. The next survey will be undertaken during in 2010.

The findings of the last survey were analysed by the independent consultancy that undertook the survey, the National Housing Federation (NHF), who produced both a detailed report on the findings, as well as an Executive Summary. The main headline results from last survey are set out below.

A standard questionnaire and survey process called "STATUS" was used. STATUS is a standardised tenant satisfaction postal survey that was developed by the National Housing Federation (NHF). The STATUS questionnaire is endorsed by the Government's Communities and Local Government (CLG).

The STATUS questionnaire is designed to be used by social landlords to survey tenants in general needs housing. It is designed to be a baseline survey, which can be repeated over a number of years. It allows for comparison of data between different social landlords and provides a valuable tool to help social landlords achieve best value and continuous improvement in service delivery.

Around 1,500 tenants (25% of all the Council's tenants) were randomly selected by the NHF to be surveyed. An exceptionally high response for a postal survey of 53% was received, giving a 3% margin of error at the 95% confidence level. This means that if the Council surveyed all 100% of its tenants, there is a 95% certainty that the results for all the questions would be somewhere between 3% less and 3% more than the results from the sample survey.

Based on their findings, the NHF concluded that:

"The Council and its staff have every right to be pleased to learn that overall tenant satisfaction with the landlord service that the Council provides remains high and significantly above that reported by most other landlords. Key driver analysis showed that satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service and satisfaction with the outcome of their contacts with staff have the greatest impact on overall tenant satisfaction. Importantly, the survey identified that the Councils' repairs service and the customer service provided by its staff are both particularly strong aspects of the Council's overall service. The high level of tenant satisfaction with these two key services underpins the unusually high level of overall satisfaction amongst Epping Forest District Council's tenants."

Overall satisfaction with the housing service remains consistently high, decreasing very slightly from 85% in 2006 to 84% being satisfied in 2008, resulting in top quartile performance. It is considered that satisfaction levels would be even higher, if sheltered housing tenants had not, for the first time, been excluded from the survey, since such tenants are historically known to have high satisfaction levels.

At a more detailed level, 86% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service (12% above the peer group average of 74%). Impressively, the Council ranked a strong first in its peer group for all 6 aspects of the repairs and maintenance service measured.

In terms of quality of contact with the Council, as many as 12% more of the Council's tenants said that it was easy to get hold of the right person (compared to the peer group averages). Overall, 75% of the Council's tenants were satisfied with the final outcome of their contacts - 10% higher than the rest of the peer group.

In relation to tenant participation and consultation, 62% were satisfied that their views are being taken into account by the Council as their landlord. This is considered to be a very positive response, showing an improvement of 14% compared to responses to the 2006 survey.

5.4 Customer Perspective Programme

As a front line service, the provision of a high quality housing service to our customers that meets their needs, properly informs them of the service being received and provides them with sufficient information to make appropriate choices is essential.

In continuous pursuit of customer excellence, in 2007, the Housing Directorate initiated a "Customer Perspective Programme". The purpose of the Programme is to look at how the housing service is provided to customers (tenants, housing applicants and others) *from their perspective*.

A group has been set up, chaired by the Director of Housing, comprising staff from each of the sections in the Housing Directorate and the Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation. Over the period of 18 months, the group is considering and analysing all aspects of "interfaces" that individual sections of the Housing Directorate have with customers, and consider where and how the service can be improved further. This may be in relation to leaflets, forms and other information given to customers, procedures that they are expected to follow and policies that the Council operates.

Each meeting of the Customer Perspective Group concentrates on a specific aspect of front line Housing Services. In advance of the meeting, the Housing Manager responsible for the function being challenged is asked to circulate to the Group copies of documents given to customers. The Housing Manager then attends the meeting and explains all the various customer interfaces in relation to the Section's work.

The Group then discusses with the representative any suggestions for improving the experience of

customers. Agreed suggestions are then incorporated within a Customer Perspective Action Plan, the progress of which is regularly monitored.

5.5 Investors in People

Investors in People is a nationally recognised standard for employers, whereby an external assessor analyses the organisation's:

- Approach to planning, ensuring that there are clear aims and objectives which are understood by everyone
- Commitment to developing its people, in order to achieve its aims and objectives
- Development of its staff
- Understanding of the impact its investment in people has on its performance

In 2002/3, the whole of the Council was first awarded "Investors in People" status, including the Housing Directorate. In 2005 and 2008, the "Investors in People" status was awarded for further three-year periods. The Council is seeking re-accreditation in 2008.

5.6 Project Management

All special (i.e. non routine) housing projects are detailed in the Housing Directorate's Special Projects Plan. This is a project management tool (using Microsoft Project software) that, for each project, sets out:

- The task
- The officer responsible
- The baseline period for commencement and completion of the task
- The latest anticipated completion date of the task
- The percentage of the task completed to date
- Critical paths and linkage with other task

Housing Managers provide information on progress with each project for which they are responsible on a quarterly basis. The Project Plan is then updated and reviewed at a quarterly meeting of housing managers, chaired by the Director of Housing.

A similar plan, the Annual Events Plan, details all activities that must be undertaken by the Housing Directorate on a periodic basis (eg annually, quarterly etc) and is also updated and monitored quarterly at the same meeting.

5.7 Performance Indicator Targets – 2009/10

The Council uses a range of performance indicators to monitor its housing performance. There are three main types:

National Indicators	Defined by the Government - There are 3 related to the Council's HRA landlord services (and replaced the former best value performance indicators (BVPIs) from April 2008
Local Indicators	Defined and monitored by the Council, as being key indicators related to the Council's business – There are 6 related to the Council's HRA landlord services
Management Indicators	Defined and monitored by the Director of Housing, as being indicators that provide important management information on the service, that are used to identify problem areas and the need for improvement – There are over 100 management indicators related to the Council's HRA landlord services

Appendix 5 sets out the Council's National and Local Indicators targets related to the Council's HRA landlord services for 2009/10, as well the associated targets and performance (up to Quarter 3) for 2008/9.

6. Value for Money

6.1 Corporate Approach to Value for Money and Use of Resources

Since early 2006, the Council has adopted a corporate approach to ensuring value for money in the delivery of its services.

The Audit Commission undertakes an annual Use of Resources (UoR) Assessment, which evaluates how well councils manage and use their financial resources. The assessment focuses on the importance of having sound and strategic financial management, to ensure that resources are available to support the Council's priorities and improve services, covering five themes. One of the five themes is "Value for Money" (VFM).

The Council has set up a Use of Resources (officer) Working Party to oversee improvements in the Council's use of resources, through reference to the latest Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) and the Council's latest Audit Score Feedback.

In February 2009, the Audit Commission reported on its latest UoR Assessment for the Council. Overall, out of a possible score of 1-4, it once again gave the Council a score of "3 – Consistently above minimum requirements – performing well".

6.2 Value for Money Strategy and Value for Money Review

In 2006, the Council's Cabinet adopted a corporate Value for Money Strategy. The Strategy's Policy Statement recognises the Council's responsibilities as a custodian of public funds to strive for value for money in the delivery of services.

It explains that the Council seeks to achieve, and where possible improve, value for money by ensuring that:

- Costs compare well with other local authorities, and where appropriate other sectors, allowing for external factors
- Costs are commensurate with service delivery, performance and outcomes achieved
- Costs reflect policy decisions
- Performance in relation to value for money is monitored and reviewed
- Improved value for money and efficiency gains are achieved
- Full long term costs are taken into account when making procurement and other spending decisions.

The strategy sets out the Council's approach to achieving these aims, together with the responsibilities of members and officers for the delivery of value for money.

In July 2008, the Council undertook a detailed Value for Money Review. The purpose of the VFM Review was to:

- Examine and comment on the Council's costs, as stated in the Audit Commission's Value for Money (VFM) Profile Tool, and how they compare with other local authorities in comparator groups;
- Examine and comment on the Council's performance in respect of the performance data within the Audit Commission's VFM Profile Tool;
- Reach conclusions on the Audit Commission's value for money assessment of the Council
- Consider the nature and limitations of the comparative data, particularly issues that could significantly affect the data and the Council's ranking;
- Assess EFDC's Council Tax levels; consider how they compare with other councils; and consider the value for money provided by the Council from the "citizen's perspective"; and
- Consider the most cost effective future strategy to continuously improve value for money in terms of reduced costs, higher performance, or both.

The VFM Review concluded – for the Council as a whole - that:

“ Although there are examples of both good and poor performance at individual service level, overall, both EFDC’s performance and rate of performance - compared with other local authorities - is average.”

In terms of its focus for VFM in the future, the Council concluded that:

- Although the Council's net costs are comparatively high (using the Audit Commission's VFM Profiles Tool) there is no need to reduce the Council's overall costs, but
- There is a need to improve the Council's overall performance and the performance in specific areas.

Therefore, the Council concluded that although it will continue to seek and implement efficiency gains - and reduce costs at service levels where possible - rather than reduce costs, it will then continue to re-invest the savings, in a targeted way, to help improve performance further.

6.3 Performance Management

In order to ensure that clients are receiving good levels of service, and to identify any deteriorating performance at an early stage so that actions can be put in place to remedy emerging problems, it is essential to have effective systems to monitor performance. The Council therefore has a corporate Performance Management Framework.

The Housing Directorate also has its own Performance Management System, that complements the corporate framework, to monitor key areas of performance throughout the year. Under the regime, performance indicators are collected and collated on a quarterly basis (sometimes more frequently),

Formal performance management meetings are held at the end of each quarter, between the Director of Housing, the relevant Asst Director of Housing and the Housing Manager responsible for the area of activity. Actual quarterly performance is then compared with the targets for the year and areas of under-performance are identified and discussed with the Housing Manager, with an action plan agreed to improve performance in the following quarter.

The Performance Management Reports are provided to members of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, and discussed at the scheduled meetings quarterly.

Progress on the achievement of key performance indicators are then monitored quarterly by the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel.

6.4 Comparing the Council's Performance with Previous Years

It is important for the Council to compare its housing performance with previous years to establish trends. Until April 2008, in addition to the statutory Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) that were prescribed nationally, the Council had a further 12 local performance indicators on housing, that it published and monitored.

However, from April 2008, new National Indicators have been set and, as a result, a new suite of local housing performance indicators have been introduced. It will take some time before comparisons can be made of National Indicators between local authorities.

6.5 Value for Money Analysis - Corporate

It is important that the Council has information on its costs, and knows how these compare to other organisations and how they relate to the quality of the Council's services. Stated linkages of performance and associated costs with the Council's overall objectives, contained within the Council Plan, are also important.

In order to better understand the Council's unit costs for services and how they relate to the Council's performance and compare with other organisations, since 2006, the Council has developed a unique Value for Money (VFM) Analysis, which in the past the Audit Commission has recommended to other organisations as good practice. The purpose of the VFM Analysis is to provide an initial “indicator” of the relationship

between performance and costs for services, to prompt discussion, and to identify areas where further - more detailed and targeted analysis - may be required, which may then lead to a need for some form of corrective action or additional resource allocation.

The VFM Analysis is separated into the nine Council Services that have NIs, BVPIs and LPIs. Most Services are then broken down into distinct areas of activity within the Service, for which BVPIs, NIs and LPIs are available. When looking at the information for each service, there are three distinct groupings of data, relating to each service area activity, as follows:

- Clutches of NIs, BVPIs and LPIs
- Clutches of cost information
- A short commentary on the relationship between performance and cost

In accordance with the Council's Value for Money Strategy, the VFM Analysis is considered annually by a member-level scrutiny panel, who then identify if a more detailed service review is required of particular service areas, through a member-level task and finish group or other means.

6.6 Value for Money Analysis – Housing

The Value for Money Analysis of the housing service is based on a comparison of housing performance indicators and costs, the latter of which is obtained using both the Audit Commission's VFM Profile Tool and a national housing benchmarking organisation called "Housemark", which enables housing organisations to submit detailed information on their performance and costs, and then to compare these with other housing organisations nationally.

Housemark enables member organisations to compare themselves with user-defined data sets. For example, the Council can compare itself with all housing organisations nationally; all district councils; all local authorities; or all housing associations. Housemark can also define the locations (by regions) of those organisations to be included within the comparison, and can restrict the comparison to housing organisations of more or less than a defined number of properties.

The last benchmark exercise of housing costs was undertaken in 2009, when all the required performance and cost data for the Housing Directorate relating to 2007/8 was uploaded to the Housemark website. This data was then verified by Housemark. The Housing Directorate then produced a report on the benchmarking exercise, which was considered in detail by both the member-level Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.

The Benchmarking Report sets out the benchmarking results with all 40 housing organisations (councils, housing associations and ALMOs) in the Eastern, South Eastern and London Regions who provided Housemark data returns for 2007/8.

The report gives information on the benchmarking process, summarises which quartile of organisations EFDC is placed for each benchmarked data set, and provides all the detailed tables (including the Council's rankings) for each data set from Housemark's webpages.

The table below summarises the Council's quartile placings for all 48 benchmark results:

Quartile	Explanation	No. of EFDC Placements in Quartile
Top	EFDC is within the top 25% of housing organisations for this activity (i.e the costs are low or the performance is high)	21 (44%)
2 nd	EFDC is within the range between the top 25% and the top 50% of housing organisations for this activity	12 (25%)
3 rd	EFDC is within the range between the bottom 50% and bottom 25% of housing organisations for this activity	10 (21%)
Bottom	EFDC is within the bottom 25% of housing organisations for this activity (i.e. the costs are high or the performance is low)	5 (10%)

6.7 Annual Efficiency Savings

In 2004, Sir Peter Gershon CBE produced his Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency for HM Treasury, called "Releasing Resources to the Front Line". The "Gershon Review" considered the scope for efficiency savings across all public expenditure, including local government, and made recommendations to Ministers for stretching efficiency targets for the period 2005/6 to 2007/8, to feed into the Government's Spending Review 2004. The Review concentrated on improving productivity – getting more from the same resource, or achieving the same results for less resource. Cuts in service do not count as efficiency gains.

As part of the Government's Spending Review 2004, local government was required to achieve efficiency gains totalling at least £6.45 billion by 2007/8. Over the three-year period 2005/6-2007/8, each local authority was expected to achieve 2.5% per annum efficiency gains compared to their 2004/5 baseline. For this Council, the 2.5% per annum efficiency savings amount to the following targets:

2005/6	£435,000
2006/7	£850,000
2007/8	£1,200,000

Local authorities were given full flexibility on how and where to achieve those gains. However, at least half of the efficiency gains made were required to be "cashable", which means that they must release funding for use elsewhere, either for reinvestment in frontline services or holding down Council Tax.

Local authorities had to report the gains that they made through an Annual Efficiency Statement. The Statement included a "forward-looking" part, where authorities outline their expected efficiency gains and the strategy for achieving them, and a "backward-looking" part on the efficiency gains achieved in the previous year.

Although the calculation of the Council's overall required savings target does not take into account HRA expenditure, efficiency gains from the HRA could be included within the savings claimed by the Council.

For the 4-year period 2004/5-2007/8, the Housing Directorate made cumulative efficiency savings of around £1.15m.

7. Diversity & Equality in the Provision of Housing Services

7.1 Corporate Approach to Diversity and Equality

The Council is sensitive to the needs of the diverse communities that it serves, and is committed to provide facilities and services that are free from unlawful discrimination. The Council recognises its position as a large provider of services and employer in the District and its particular role in the community. It is committed to providing services to the community that reflect the needs and diversity of all its customers and service users. The Council recognises that discrimination in society exists and seek to provide services fairly to all.

The Council promotes equality of provision in council services, provided either directly by the Council, its contractors, partners or related agencies

Additionally, many individual services produce their own service equality statements, giving details of how their services comply with equal opportunities best practice.

The Council has therefore adopted the following corporate policies relating to equality and diversity:

- Race Equality Scheme
- Disability Equality Scheme
- Gender Equality Scheme

7.2 The Housing Directorate's Approach to Diversity and Equality

In pursuance of this corporate commitment, the Council has formulated and adopted two relevant housing service strategies relating to diversity and equality:

- Housing Service Strategy on Diversity and Equality
- Housing Service Strategy on Harassment

The Service Strategy on Diversity and Equality sets out the Housing Directorate's approach to promoting equality and diversity in line with the Council's corporate equality schemes and its statutory duties as a public authority to promote equality. This includes actions designed to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity
- Recognise and value the needs and contributions of individuals and identifiable groups within the wider community served by the Council
- Ensure that everyone who needs housing advice and services is fully able to access them
- Promote understanding and tolerance of different cultures and good relations within the communities served by the Council.

Progress with the action plan is regularly monitored. In addition, Equality Impact Assessments have been produced in respect of the following housing-related services, which also include action plans:

- Housing Strategy and Development
- Housing Information and Tenant Participation
- Housing Needs
- Housing Management
- Housing Repairs and Maintenance
- Older People's Housing Services

Equality Impact Assessments are also produced as part of any proposed major policy changes considered by the Cabinet.

The Council has introduced a "Hate Management Panel" comprising representatives of the Police, Social Care and the Council, which oversees and develops policy relating to the management of hate incidents (eg racial and homophobic harassment), and meets on a regular basis to discuss reported hate incidents, and to agree and monitor an action plan for each case.

7.3 Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

The 2001 Census established that the ethnic make-up of the District, compared to Essex and England and Wales, is as follows:

Ethnic Population			
Ethnic Group	Epping Forest	Essex	England/Wales
White	95.1%	97.1%	92.1%
Mixed	1.1%	0.9%	1.2%
Asian / Asian British	2.4%	1.0%	4.0%
Black / Black British	0.8%	0.5%	2.0%
Other	0.6%	0.5%	0.8%

Although BME groups only comprise around 4.9%% of the District's population (compared to 2.4% in 1991), there is a need for greater understanding of their requirements. This is the situation throughout Essex.

The Council has complied with the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in Rented Housing since it was introduced in the 1990's, and has an Equal Opportunities Statement in the Provision of Housing Services. This includes ongoing monitoring of the ethnicity of applicants on the Housing Register and of applicants allocated Council accommodation or nominated to RSLs. An annual review is undertaken to ensure that there is not a significant mismatch between the ethnicity of those applicants registered and those housed. There has never been a mismatch of more than 5%.

The Council has previously worked closely with the other Essex housing authorities and RSLs to undertake and fund an Equality and Diversity Study by the University of Salford, called “Facing Facts”, on the needs of BME communities in Essex. The Project was completed in 2003 and assessed the best ways of ensuring that equal access is given to all housing services for people from BME groups, and that a culture exists that will empower BME communities, and integrate their needs and aspirations into everyday housing provider activities. The research was jointly-funded by Essex local authorities and RSLs (who provided £20,000) and the Housing Corporation, following a successful bid for an Innovation and Good Practice Grant of £30,000. Following completion of the study, the Essex Housing Officers Group (EHOG) formed an Equality and Diversity Project Team to formulate an Essex-wide Action Plan and subsequently appointed and funded a Housing Equalities and Diversity Development Officer for a two-year period to take forward the Action Plan.

Although the two-year appointment has now ended, the Council is still continuing to take forward the key findings of the Project.

8. Rents Strategy

8.1 Background

The Government has previously determined that rent setting by local authorities and RSLs be based on a common system based on relative property values and local earnings; rents should move towards comparable rents using an approach which could be readily and easily understood. In March 2001 the Government issued the *Guide to Social Rent Reforms* which set out how the reforms would be achieved and detailing a standard methodology (or formula) for use by both RSL's and local authorities for the calculation of rents.

The basis of the formula is as follows:

- 30% of a property's rent should be based on relative property values compared to national property values;
- 70% of a property's rent should be based on relative local earnings compared to national earnings;
- a bedroom factor so that, all other things being equal, smaller properties have lower rents.

The formula also takes account of national average Council and RSL rent levels and produces a target rent which the local authority originally had to seek to achieve by 2012. By 2012, a property's rent should normally be no more than 5% higher or lower than the target level.

However, during 2007, the Government determined that the date by which local authority rent levels have to generally equate to RSL levels would be put back 5 years, until April 2017.

Under the rent reforms, the Government has also stated that local authority rent guidelines should rise by no more than 1% per annum in real terms, meaning that the target rent for each property will increase in line with the average for the local authority sector. However, no tenant should be subject to a change in their rent as a result of the combined influence of restructuring and convergence of more, or less, than £2 a week in any year above the normal increase for inflation.

8.2 Valuation

The relative property values are based on 'existing use value'. The valuation base was set at January 1999. The Valuation Office, on behalf of the Council, valued 198 separate “beacon properties” (many of which were used for the resource account valuation) for this rent restructuring exercise. Each beacon property is an example of a main property type owned by the Council in each of the main towns and villages and are representative of the total housing stock. These valuations were then used for all the other similar properties sharing the same characteristics and location.

These valuations are not revisited, unless an individual property's characteristics have considerably changed.

8.3 Implementation

The Council introduced its Rents Strategy, to implement the rent restructuring requirements, from April 2003, at the same time as introducing separate service charges and support charges (see below).

8.4 Strategic Approach

When the Council first introduced its Rents Strategy, there were various options open to the Council in terms of achieving the implementation of target rents. However, the Council was mindful that rent restructuring would increase rents for the majority of tenants in real terms. Therefore, it was considered that the fairest way forward would be to implement rent changes by equal amounts over the remaining 9 year period. This applies to both rent increases and rent reductions.

Moreover, when the Government gave local authorities the choice in January 2008 to restructure rents either before April 2012 or April 2017, the Council decided to pursue its original policy of endeavouring to ensure that all Council rents met target levels by 2012, rather than 2017. This resulted in additional rental income being received in the short term.

8.5 Calculation of Target Rents and Effects of Rent Restructuring

In 2002, the Council analysed the pattern of rent changes from April 2003 over the following 9 years, from which the information below emerged.

- The average real terms rent increase across all properties in order to reach target rents would be 8.72%. This average included properties that would have a rent reduction.
- 71% of properties would have a real terms rent increase. Generally the properties where rents would have to rise were the larger properties, particularly houses.
- 29% of properties would have a real terms rent decrease. These properties were predominantly smaller properties and in particular flats.
- 8% of properties would not reach the target rent over the nine-year period.

8.6 Service Charges

Target rents (and therefore the actual restructured rents) can only take into account all property related services and those services that may relate to a group of dwellings. Examples of services covered by target rents include:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Management of properties
- Publicity and consultation
- Administration of rents

Examples of services not covered include:

- Grounds maintenance
- Cleaning of communal areas
- Lighting of communal areas
- Supporting people costs

The other services not covered by rent restructuring are subject to further Government guidance on their treatment. This guidance advocates the separation of service charges from rents, to enable a more transparent charging regime for tenants. Although not compulsory, the Council has followed the guidance and has separated out the costs of services relating to non-property related services for all its blocks of flats, and applied separate service charges to tenants. Under the Government's guidance, service charges cannot be increased by more than RPI + ½%.

8.7 Support Charges

From April 2003, following the introduction of the Government's Supporting People programme, the Council has separated out from its rents the revenue costs of providing supported housing (e.g. sheltered housing) and made a separate support charge. Under the Supporting People arrangements, the Council receives reimbursement for these charges, for all tenants in receipt of housing benefit, from Essex County Council as the Supporting People Administering Authority. Tenants not in receipt of housing benefit must pay the charge themselves, although the Council will meet the cost of "transitional protection" in perpetuity for

tenants in occupation prior to 1 March 2003, which amounts to the difference between the former “scheme manager charge” tenants were paying prior to introduction of supporting people and the new support charge.

Due to real term reductions in the amount of grant that the Essex Supporting People Team has received from the Government for a number of years, the amount of supporting people grant provided to supported housing providers in Essex (including this Council) has, generally, been less than the actual cost of the service.

9. Housing Stock Option Appraisals

9.1 Introduction

The Government has previously required all stock-holding local authorities to carefully consider the options open to them for increasing investment in, and improving the quality of, their housing stock, including the possibility of a large scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) of their stock to an RSL, or the formation of an arms length management organisation (ALMO). Such a transfer would have to be with the consent of the majority of tenants.

9.2 Housing Stock Options Appraisal 2002/4

In 2002, the Council appointed Beha Williams Norman Ltd (BWNL), specialist housing consultants, to undertake a detailed Housing Stock Options Appraisal. The Options Appraisal was undertaken in two initial stages, as set out below, followed by a third stage of further tenant consultation.

The Housing Stock Options Appraisal 2002/4 considered five main options:

- Large scale stock transfer (LSVT)
- The formation of an arms length management company
- Use of the private finance initiative
- Securitisation (a private sector financing technique which involves the sale of the future rental income in return for finance)
- Retention of the stock

The Council was committed to ensuring that tenants were involved with the appraisal process. Therefore, the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation were fully involved from the outset (including the appointment of consultant). In the first instance, BWNL were asked to undertake a two-stage approach to the Options Appraisal, as set out below, in an attempt to enable a clear picture to emerge not only of the financial effects, but also of the attitudes of tenants and members to the alternative options:

Stage 1 A detailed financial appraisal of the options, which included an indicative valuation of the stock based on cash flow forecasts, stock condition and “catch up repairs”, and an analysis of each of the options.

Stage 2 (a) Postal surveys of all the Council’s tenants and leaseholders, seeking their views on whether they would be interested in considering (without commitment) any of the alternative options to stock retention. This included examples of what benefits could result, and balanced information on the main issues to consider; and

(b) A survey of members to gauge their informal views on the issues.

9.3 Findings and Conclusions of the Initial Stock Options Report (Stages 1 and 2)

BWNL's Initial Report was completed at the end of 2002 and provided a detailed financial appraisal of the options (Stage 1), together with the results of the Stage 2 Tenants and Leaseholders Attitudes Survey. The report also provided detailed conclusions and findings. In summary, at that time, BWNL concluded that although the Council could meet the decent homes standard, it was unlikely to have sufficient resources to be able to bring all of its housing stock into a fully maintained condition in the foreseeable future, and that stock transfer was probably the best financial option. However, the results of the Stage 2 Tenants and Leaseholders Attitude Survey showed a clear preference for the Council to retain its housing stock.

Therefore, BWNL recommended that a further in depth consultation exercise should be undertaken with a selection of tenants to explain the issues relating to stock retention and stock transfer in more detail, and to gauge their subsequent views, through the appointment of an Independent Tenant Adviser (ITA) familiar with this type of exercise. This was agreed by both the Council and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation,

Insights were therefore appointed as Independent Tenant Adviser, in consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, and undertook the further consultation during 2003 in a number of different ways.

9.4 Summary of the Findings of the Further Tenant Consultation by Insights

The report from Insights on their further consultation was received in February 2004. Their main findings were as follows:

- The most important issue for tenants was keeping rents affordable
- The majority of tenants rated the services as "good" and expressed satisfaction with the Council
- Many tenants expressed a view that they were strongly against any change of landlord.
- Tenants wished the Council to follow the stock retention option.
- Tenants felt they had already told the Council their views and wished the Council to stop asking the same questions

9.5 Update Report by BWNL

In view of the Council's decision to undertake the further consultation of tenants before reaching a decision on the preferred option, BWNL were re-appointed to undertake a further appraisal of the options and produce an "Update Report", taking into account the developments that had occurred over the previous year, both at the national and local level. In particular, BWNL appraised the following developments that had occurred since their Initial Report.

- The Government's policy document, "Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future"
- The effects of the Government changes to the local authority housing capital finance regime.
- The implications of the Government's changes to the housing subsidy system and, in particular, the effect of the new way in which management and maintenance allowances are calculated.
- The effects of the Council's debt free status.

BWNL's main conclusions were as follows:

- The Council, under current arrangements, can meet the Government's Decent Homes Target .
- With the additional resources through the new management & maintenance allowances for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Subsidy (£1.7m per annum), the HRA can sustain itself for the short to medium term future and allow contributions of some £15 million to be made towards capital programmes over the next 20 years.
- The level of resources available for investment in the housing stock has also changed as a result of the Council becoming debt-free (an additional £8.6m over the next three years). Nevertheless, a shortfall of some £12 million remains in the level of resources needed to meet the full investment programme over the next 10 years.
- Since the Council has resources to achieve investment levels well above the basic Decent Homes Standard, it is doubtful whether bids for either the ALMO or PFI programmes could be justified.
- Stock transfer continues to offer some very real benefits
- However, the case from the existing tenants perspective is less convincing and, based on the consultation carried out so far, it is very doubtful that tenants would support a stock transfer proposal.

BWNL therefore recommended that the Council should continue with the existing arrangements for management and ownership of the housing stock, at least for the time being, but review the situation in the light of any further developments in Government housing policy or local circumstances, and in any event in five years time.

9.6 Council Decision on the Preferred Option

The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation considered the findings and recommendations of the two consultants' reports and recommended to the Council that the housing stock should be retained. The Options Appraisal and the views of the Federation were considered by one of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the 4 March 2004, when the Committee agreed to recommend the stock retention option to the Cabinet in April 2004. The Cabinet agreed with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's recommendation

The Council's Stock Options Appraisal was signed-off in September 2004.

9.7 Small Scale Voluntary Transfers

(a) Introduction

It is clearly important that the Major Repairs Allowance and other available resources are invested to produce optimum benefit. The ODPM's Guidance on Business Plans therefore emphasises the importance of local authorities carrying out detailed investment appraisals looking at strategic options for a particular group of properties, or in a selected estate or area, for incorporation within the overall Business Plan.

Separate from LSVT, the Council has successfully undertaken four small scale transfers over the years. The first at Green Close, Epping Green and Pancroft / The Mead, Abridge in the 1990's, enabling two former sites of PRC properties to be redeveloped by RSLs. The most recent stock transfers have been of sheltered housing schemes:

(b) Small Scale Voluntary Transfer - Robert Daniels Court, Theydon Bois

In January 2001, following a detailed Options Appraisal, the Council agreed to undertake an extension/conversion scheme at Robert Daniels Court, Theydon Bois (one of the Council's sheltered housing schemes for the elderly) through a small scale voluntary transfer to an RSL.

Robert Daniels Court comprises predominantly bedsits, which had become difficult to let (with vacancies in some cases in excess of a year) since they no longer met the needs and aspirations of the latest generation of elderly people. Moreover, since the elderly residents had combined bedrooms/lounges and had to share communal bathroom facilities, the quality of accommodation was not as high as that provided at other Council sheltered schemes.

A Detailed Feasibility Study was completed in March 2000 to undertake a major improvement scheme, predominantly providing an extension of nine flats and the conversion of the 28 bedsits into 19 self contained flats

A detailed Options Appraisal concluded that the cost to the Council overall of undertaking the scheme through a stock transfer would be around £400,000 less than if the Council undertook the scheme itself. This is because, although the HRA would lose rental income of around £350,000 over the next 30 years through transfer (at net present value), there would be a saving of around £750,000 in the capital cost. As part of the Options Appraisal, the tenants were consulted on the options which established support from the tenants for such an approach.

In view of the significant financial saving to the Council, it was agreed to undertake a small scale voluntary stock transfer. Following a competitive exercise involving three RSLs, a Selection Panel selected Home Housing to work with the Council and tenants to effect the transfer. A formal consultation exercise was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Act 1985, which resulted in a positive ballot. The transfer successfully took place in August 2004.

(c) Small Scale Voluntary Transfer – Wickfields, Chigwell

Following the success of the stock transfer of Robert Daniels Court, in 2005, the Council undertook an options appraisal to assess the most cost effective way of improving another sheltered housing scheme at Wickfields, Chigwell, which comprises 16 bedsits, 8 self contained flats and the former Scheme Manager's house. The options appraisal estimated the costs of the improvement/conversion scheme at £1.67m, excluding professional fees and revenue costs. The options appraisal concluded that the cost to the Council would be far less if the improvement scheme was undertaken through a stock transfer to a housing association, than if the Council undertook the improvement scheme itself. Not only would the total capital

cost to the Council (including fees etc) of £1.1m be £800,000 less, the overall cost to the Council over a 30 year period (expressed as the net present value (NPV)), would also be around £1.4m less.

As a result, all the residents were formally balloted on a stock transfer, again to Home Housing, in order to facilitate the improvements. The majority of tenants were in favour and, accordingly, the stock transfer took place in October 2006. The improvement scheme was completed in late 2007.

10. Risk Management

10.1 Introduction

Risk management can be defined as the consideration of the social, economic, political and other factors involved in risk analysis, to determine both the acceptability of damage that could result from an event or exposure and what action, if any, should be taken to minimise the risk of that damage.

10.2 Corporate Risk Register

A corporate Risk Management & Assurance Group has been established, made up of officers from each Council Service, to produce and regularly review a Corporate Risk Register, and to collate service based risk assessments. The Asst Director of Housing (Private Sector & Resources) is the representative of the Housing Directorate on the Group. The Corporate Risk Register is also periodically reviewed by the Council's Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee.

10.3 Housing Risk Register

In 2005, the Housing Directorate produced its first Housing Risk Register, which is updated annually and identifies the strategic and operational risks affecting the Housing Directorate. Strategic risks are those that have an effect on the Council as a whole, where individuals, sections or even the whole of the Housing Directorate have no total control over the outcome of risk management. Operational risks are those that affect individuals or sections of the Housing Directorate, or the Housing Directorate as a whole, and will have little or no impact on other services of the Council. The Housing Risk Register is reviewed and updated annually.

Within the Housing Directorate, all managers have responsibility and accountability for identifying, assessing and managing the risks that threaten their own area of activity.

Information is provided in the Housing Risk Register on the following for each risk:

<i>Vulnerability</i>	A description of why and how the Housing Directorate is vulnerable to the risk
<i>Trigger</i>	The identification of what occurrence(s) may set off the risk. There may be more than one trigger for each risk.
<i>Consequence</i>	An assessment of the consequences if the risk is triggered, which may include multiple consequences. Some consequences may be local or operational, some may be strategic.
<i>Action Plan</i>	Details of what actions are, or need to be, taken in order to minimise the risk.

Risk management is applied to each of the identified risks, through exploring the best options to reduce either likelihood or impact or both. Not all risks can be reduced, but they can be managed. Any new actions than need to be taken are included within the Housing Special Projects Plan. Periodic actions are included within the Housing Annual Events Plan (See Section 8.4)

The main risks within the Housing Risk Register are included within the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

10.4 Key Housing Operational Risks and Housing Risk Matrix

The Housing Risk Register identifies 21 **Key** Housing Operational Risks” and a further 26 other housing operational risks. For each risk, the entry in the Risk Register provides information on:

- A description of the risk (vulnerability)
- Identification of the trigger(s) that are the most likely to result in the risk arising
- The consequence of the risk
- The actions taken / to be taken to minimise the risk
- The responsible officer
- The assessment of the degree of risk, in terms of likelihood and impact

The risk assessment makes the following judgements in terms of likelihood and impact:

Likelihood:

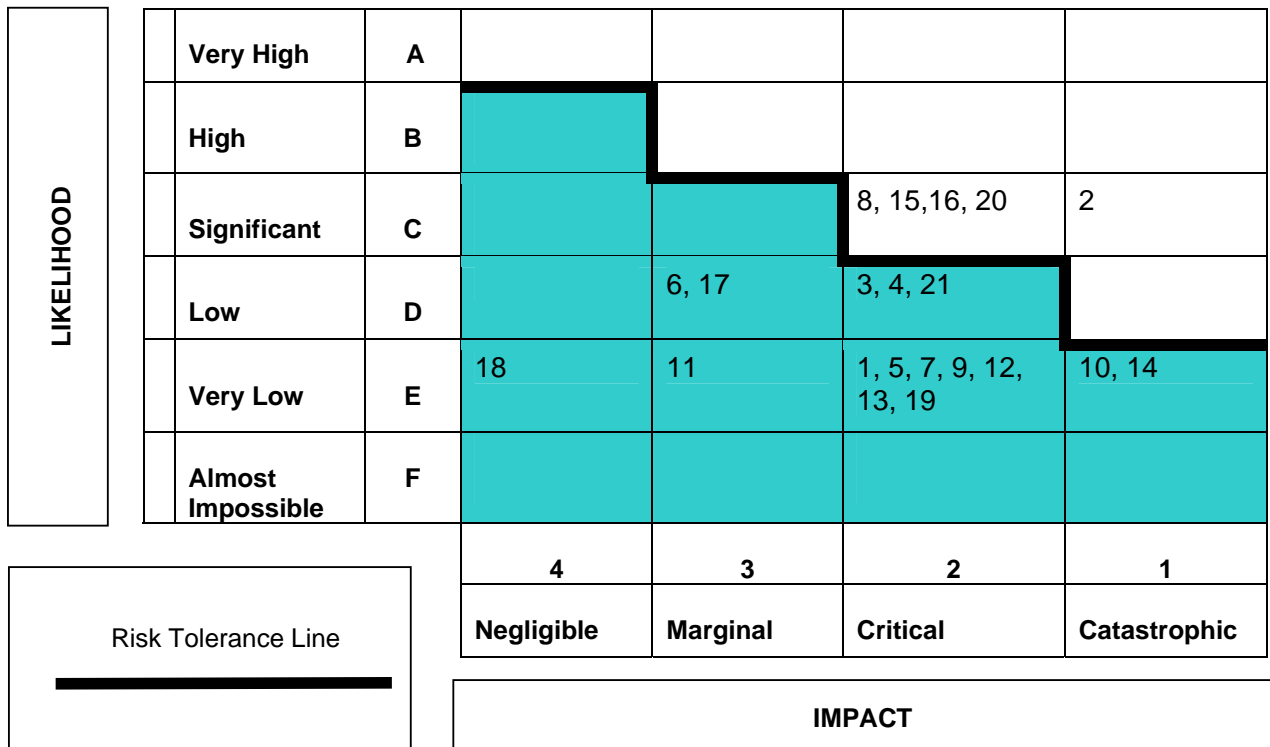
- A - Very High
- B - High
- C - Significant

Impact

- D - Low
- E - Very Low
- F - Almost Impossible
- 1 - Catastrophic
- 2 - Critical
- 3 - Marginal
- 4 - Negligible

A summary of the Key Housing Operational Risks is given on the next page, showing both the *current* risk assessment and, where action is required to reduce the likelihood or impact, the *target* risk score.

These assessments have been plotted within a Risk Matrix as shown below, to set a “tolerance line”. Those risks in the white boxes above the tolerance line require further scrutiny and action, whereas those in the shaded boxes below the line can be considered to have sufficient controls in place.



Summary of Key Housing Operational Risks – 2008/9

Risk No.	Current Risk Score	Target Risk Score	Risk
1	2E		That the Council does not meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
2	1C	2D	That the HRA goes into deficit.
3	2D		The Council has a large number of properties in Sheltered Schemes and Homeless Hostel at Norway House. In cases of emergency / major incident, the Council has limited properties that could be used to accommodate elderly residents.
4	2D		Broadway and Limes Farm Decentralised Housing Offices delivering local service
5	2E		All day-to-day management of the Housing Service is recorded and monitored on the OHMS database, which is provided through one supplier (Anite).
6	3D		Non-performance of contractors and consultants working on our behalf.
7	2E		The Careline Service is provided via the Piper Network Controller (PNC), which is provided by one supplier – Tunstall Telecom
8	2C	3C	Alarm systems are located in residents property, where the council has no control over the security and integrity of the parts
9	2E		The Council has a duty care to the health and safety & welfare of its staff, tenants and contractors.
10	1E		With around 30 planned maintenance contracts undertaken each year with varying complexity and value, there is a risk of a significant overspend either singularly or globally if not managed.
11	3E		The Council enters into numerous contracts each year, and uses a variety of different forms of contract. Often non-standard bespoke conditions are inserted.
12	2E		With thousands of orders being placed for works or goods annually, cash handling, collection of energy charges, service charges etc amounting to an income of around £ per annum and an expenditure of around £ per annum, there is a risk that fraud, corruption or theft could occur.
13	2E		Financial Services operate a cash desk taking rent, council tax payments etc in Broadway Housing Office
14	1E		The Housing Directorate hold a number of different hard copy files for different purposes, such as house files, former tenant files, sold property files, structural files, Homeless applications etc. These are all stored at different locations and not easily accessible to all.
15	2C	2D	The Council can no longer use B&B accommodation for the provision of interim accommodation for homeless families. The Council only has its hostel at Norway House as an alternative to B&B.
16	2C	2D	With the demise of CCT, the DSO, who provide the repairs service, are no longer regarded as a contractor. We must ensure this service continues to be cost effective and provides value for money
17	3D		The Council actively promotes and supports individual recognised Tenant Associations and the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation. These organisations are essential when consulting on the service we provide and identifying ways to improve our service to them.
18	4E		The service that is provided to tenants relies on good relations and communications between residents and the Council
19	2E		That Officers continue to meet with the public, both in interview rooms and at tenants homes.
20	2C	3D	The Council currently does not insure its housing stock for structural movement, subsidence, heave or landslip. All repairs associated with this type of damage are funded through the Capital Programme
21	2D		The Council has to give 4 weeks notice of its intension to increase rents each year. This notification is normally given so that increased rent is collected from the beginning of the new financial year.

10.5 Housing Business Continuity Plan

As part of the Housing Directorate' approach to risk management, a Housing Business Continuity Plan has been produced, which complements the Council's Corporate Business Continuity Plan. This sets out in detail:

- Roles and responsibilities of senior staff with corporate management responsibility, and individual service areas
- Working practices by individual service area
- Anticipated threats to service delivery, including the full or partial loss of staff, accommodation, ICT facilities and paper records for each of the sections within the Housing Directorate
- The approach to be taken in the event of a flu pandemic
- Ways of minimising the threat/risk
- Disaster recovery and priorities - service-wide and for each section
- Initial actions to be taken within the first week following a disaster

10.6 Housing Emergency Plan

Separate from the Housing Business Continuity Plan (which considers the way the Housing Directorate will respond to a disaster affecting the Council as an organisation), a Housing Emergency Plan has been produced, which complements the Council's main Emergency Plan, and prescribes the Housing Directorate's arrangements for preparing for, and dealing with, housing-related emergencies that affect the local community. The Housing Emergency Plan also provides essential information that is likely to be required by housing staff in the event of emergencies.

The Housing Emergency Plan covers both minor emergencies out of office hours and major emergencies in or out of office hours. A major emergency is defined as any circumstance where the lives or safety of the public, or their property, may be considered to be endangered by any incident of such magnitude as to be beyond the normal resources of the emergency services, and requires the additional manpower of the District Council. An out of hours minor emergency is defined as an event that cannot wait to be dealt with until the following working day.

The main types of emergencies that may occur and needing a response by the Housing Directorate are:

- Major Emergencies
- Careline faults
- Evacuation / Re-housing
- Homelessness
- Minor housing maintenance
- Severe weather and associated repairs

In the event of a major emergency, the Council's Emergency Response Team (ERT) will be activated. The Director and two Assistant Directors of Housing are the representatives for the Housing Directorate on the ERT. They will provide the link between the ERT and housing staff dealing with the emergency and will normally be based at the Emergency Control Centre in the Civic Offices. The Asst Director of Housing (Operations) will normally lead on the establishment and operation of a rest centre.

11. Financial Plan

11.1 Introduction

The Council's consultants Accra Consulting have prepared the Financial Plan on behalf of the Council, which has been based on the revised budgets for the HRA for 2008/9, and the proposed budgets for 2009/10. Where appropriate, updated financial data has been used to ensure that the model is as accurate as possible, including final subsidy determinations and budgets for 2009/10.

11.2 The 30-Year Financial Plan – Whole of the HRA

The Council's 30-Year Financial Plan for the whole of the HRA (both as an Operating Account and a Cash Flow) is shown at Appendix 6.

11.3 The 30-Year Financial Plan – Disaggregated HRA Asset Groups

In accordance with CLG Guidance, disaggregated financial forecasts for three HRA asset groups have been formulated. These are for:

- Sheltered housing
- Homeless Hostel (Norway House)
- General needs accommodation

The 30-Year Financial Plans (Cashflows) for these three asset groups are shown at Appendix 7.

11.4 Executive Summary of the Plan

The latest review of the Financial Plan has identified that the HRA should remain in surplus until 2027/28 (Year 20).

Projections for future rent increases and subsidy payments are within existing CLG guidance. However, this has become uncertain as the subsidy system and the HRA is currently subject to a thorough review, with consultation identifying the outcomes due in Spring 2009. This could detail the basis for the ability to withdraw from the subsidy system, potentially for an initial one-off payment, or other options - including taking on an assessed apportionment on the national housing debt. It may also result in additional resources being made available, by increasing existing allowances within the subsidy system.

Therefore, a review of these projections will be required once the consultation is released. In addition, consideration could be given to externally updating the stock condition survey, given that the base data could be potentially eight years old at the time of consultation and an accurate view as to the required minimum levels of investment will be needed.

11.5 Underlying Assumptions

The figures within the Financial Plan have been based on the revised out-turn for the HRA for the financial year 2008/09. Where appropriate, updated financial data has been used to ensure that the Financial Plan is as accurate as possible, including final subsidy determinations and budgets for 2009/10.

Interest Rates

The recommended rate for RPI of 2.5% has been used throughout the Plan, with the exception of formula rental increases for 2009/10 (5%; RPI for September 2007). The consolidated interest rates have been provided by the Council's Finance and ICT Directorate, at 6.64% and 3.97% for the two years respectively. The rates are predicted at 4% and are constant throughout the remainder of the Plan to form a basis of consistency, corresponding with RPI.

Interest on HRA balances is estimated at 4%, again constant throughout the Plan.

Average Rents and Increases

The average rent of £72.65 is net of current service charges as at 1st April 2008, based on a 52 week rent year, although 53 weeks are accounted for, where appropriate.

There is little in the way of firm guidance from the Government with regard to the treatment of future rent increases. Existing guidance is that actual rents are to converge with formula rents by 2011/12.

The latest subsidy determination has thrown further doubt on this, since guideline rents have been modelled to converge by 2023/24, later than last year's date of 2016/17. As the determination is for one year only, pending the conclusion of the ongoing review, this is very much subject to reassessment. However, the Government has indicated that, whatever the September 2009 RPI should be, the guideline rent will still increase by an average 5%.

Therefore, authorities have effectively the choice again to model their 2009/10 rent increases on the basis of convergence between 2011/12 and 2023/24, although caution should be taken to ensure that the limit rent, for rent rebate purposes, are not exceeded.

Even with convergence set at 2023/24, rent increases would rise at a rate well above current inflation of 6.24%. The Government has limited average rent increases to 7%. The Council has expressed concern at such high levels of increases to rents, bearing in mind the current economic climate and expressed a wish that rents increase by 4% only.

Therefore, the Plan has been modelled, based on a 4% increase across the board. This, however, comes at the expense to the HRA's short to medium cash balances. It is estimated that, by not increasing rents by 6.24%, the impact on the HRA would be £547,000. Whilst, eventually, rents will converge with the formula rent, there will be a residual reducing impact over this period. Over a 10 year period, based on 2011/12 convergence, it is estimated that it will reduce HRA balances by £3.363 million.

Future rent increases are protected by RPI + 0.5% + £2.00, in accordance with Government guidance.

From the latest subsidy determination, the average formula rent for 2009/10 is £84.57, some £9.53 difference from the projected average actual rent. The limit rent of £79.46 is not exceeded.

Rent increases have been modelled in the Financial Plan, within the above constraints, from 2010/11 to converge with formula rents by 2011/12, which increase by 0.5% above RPI.

Voids and Bad Debts

The figures relate to those in the 2007/8 budget, which translate to:

Type	%	
Voids	0.96 %	then 1% from Year 3
Bad Debts	0.44 %	

These percentages remain consistent throughout the plan.

Miscellaneous Income

The following are additional sources of income for the HRA:

Source of Income	Amount (2008/9)	Assumed Increases (Future Years)
Business Premises	1,662,000	RPI less 1%
Garages	855,000	RPI Only
Miscellaneous income	1,300,520	RPI Only
Rent/Wayleaves	35,000	RPI Only
Mortgage Interest	7,000	Reducing to Nil in 10 years
Sheltered charges	489,480	Cash limited
Contributions from General Fund	317,000	RPI Only

Due to leap years and calendar timings, the Plan accounts for the additional week's rental income within this section, that will be generated every six years, the first being 2012/13.

Right To Buy

The following levels of Right to Buy per annum have been projected:

Year/s	Sales / annum
2 – 10	10
11 – 15	8
16 – 20	6
21 – 25	4
26 - 30	2

This will leave the Council with 97% of its existing stock at the conclusion of the Plan.

Other Stock Changes

There are no further stock reductions in the Plan.

Subsidy

Management and Maintenance Allowances

With the review of management and maintenance allowances concluded and identified in the latest determinations, the 2009/10 final allowances have been included. The position is as follows:

Allowance	Actual Allowance (p/property)	Target Allowance (p/property)
Management & Maintenance - Repairs	£1,091.56	£1,099.71
Management & Maintenance - Management	£528.61	£533.78

Both allowances are now lower than target, and convergence has been modelled over the next 8 years.

Target allowances have been forecast to increase by RPI only.

Rent Restructuring

The formula rent real increase has been included at 0.5%, in accordance with Government guidance. Both the limit rent and the guideline rent have been modelled to converge with the formula rent by 2011/12, with exception of the guideline rent increasing by 5% in 2010/11, in accordance with Government guidance.

The subsidy determination has re-introduced the "Caps and Limits" adjustment to the guideline rent. In effect, this looks to address the restrictions that have been placed on the Council, such that it was not able to increase rents to achieve formula rent convergence.

A reduction of £1.57 against guideline rent has been modelled, reducing up to 2011/12. Future calculations will not provide for an adjustment based on the lower 4% rent increase, as the Government will assume that the Council should increase rents by 6.24%.

Supported Borrowing Approvals

These are not included, due to the Council's debt free status.

Major Repairs Allowance

The 2009/10 MRA of £724.72 has been used in these projections and will increase by RPI only.

Supervision and Management Costs

The costs identified in the Plan for general and special management costs reflect those in the 2008/9 projections and 2009/10 budgets. However, to reflect savings through the loss of freehold properties due to the right to buy, a variable cost reduction of £41 per unit has been applied.

Costs are projected to increase by RPI + 0.25%, to reflect probable pay awards and other service cost increases above the standard rate of inflation. This is higher than provided for in increases to subsidy allowances. This is at a future cost to the Council, but offers a form of contingency, especially as related income through service charges increases by RPI only.

Rent Rebates

There are no current or future costs projected.

Responsive Repair Costs

The Council currently operates a Housing Repairs Fund, which is funded by fixed contributions from the HRA and accounts for all revenue repairs expenditure. A summary of the position can be seen in the table below:

Year	Repairs Op Balance	HRA Contribution	Actual Repairs Day to Day	Actual Repairs Cyclical	Closing Balance	General Ave Stock	HRA Contb Per Unit	Actual Per Unit
2008.09	3,708,000	6,000,000	3,541,000	2,339,000	3,828,000	6,527	919	901
2009.10	3,828,000	5,600,000	3,572,000	2,375,000	3,481,000	6,517	859	913
2010.11	3,481,000	5,600,000	3,657,000	2,469,000	2,955,000	6,507	861	941
2011.12	2,955,000	5,600,000	3,765,000	2,542,000	2,248,000	6,497	862	971
2012.13	2,248,000	5,600,000	3,878,000	2,616,000	1,354,000	6,487	863	1,001
2013.14	1,354,000	5,600,000	3,994,000	2,694,000	266,000	6,477	865	1,033
2014.15	266,000	6,589,200	4,093,850	2,761,350	-	6,467	1,019	1,060
2015.16	-	7,026,580	4,196,196	2,830,384	0	6,457	1,088	1,088

In 2015/16, the actual repairs forecast of £1,088 per property has been used, inflated by RPI in future years.

Catch and Major Works and Improvements

The Council's Stock Condition Survey was undertaken in June 2002, by market leaders Savills, based on 7,132 properties.

In addition, the costs submitted to the Cabinet for Years 1 to 5 for the Council's Capital Programme have been used, which will cover more than the cost of achieving the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

From Year 6 onwards, 72.5% of the Stock Condition Survey has been used, as an assumed level of expenditure to meet the Decent Homes Standard, having uplifted the June 2002 costs by 39%, as the basis of projecting forward from 2013/14.

Where appropriate, these figures have been amended for stock sensitivities. Fees of 3% have been added from Year 6 to reflect current levels of procurement.

Major Repair costs have assumed to increase by RPI only, matching projected MRA increases.

11.6 Sensitivities

The following chart shows how the projected outcomes change, while applying sensitivities which are considered to be appropriate:

Sensitivity	HRA Balanced to:	Decent Homes Funded to:
Base	Yr 21	Yr 20
Rents and Subsidy Converge by 2023/24	Yr 23	Yr 22
Average Rent increase of 6.24% in 2009.10	Yr 25	Yr 24
Revenue Repairs Reduced by £100 per Property From Year 8	Yr 26	Yr 25
RPI of 2% From Year 3	Yr 22	Yr 21
RPI of 3.5% From Year 3	Yr 18	Yr 17
Management Costs and Service Charges Increase by RPI Only	Yr 26	Yr 25
Capital Repairs Real Inflation 0.5% Year 6 Onwards	Yr 18	Yr 17
Capital Repairs Real Inflation 1% Year 6 Onwards	Yr 19	Yr 19

12. Reviewing the Business Plan

12.1 Introduction

The HRA Business Plan is a dynamic, working document. Consequently, it is essential that it is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

In addition, it is very important that progress on the Action Plan and the achievement of performance targets are reviewed throughout the year.

12.2 Financial Monitoring

The Financial Plans for 2009/10 will be monitored throughout the year by officers, the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Cabinet as appropriate.

12.3 Monitoring the Business Plan's Action Plan

Chapter 13 of this Business Plan sets out a detailed Action Plan. It is important that progress with the Action Plan is monitored. This is done at two levels.

At officer level, the actions are incorporated within the Housing Directorate's Special Project Plan referred to in Section 5.8 above. At member level, the Housing Scrutiny Panel receives and considers a six-month progress report on the Action Plan, around October each year.

12.4 The HRA Business Plan Review process

The review process will commence in January 2010, which will result in the production of a draft HRA Business Plan and Repairs & Maintenance Business Plan 2010/11, on which the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation and Housing Scrutiny Panel will be consulted, prior to the final version being approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder around the end of March 2010.

13. Action Plan

13.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 sets out the Council's Corporate and Specific Housing Objectives. The table on the following pages sets out the Council's Action Plan for meeting those objectives over the next few years. The Action Plan is "SMART" (specific – measurable – agreed – realistic – timebound).

HRA Business Plan 2009/10
ACTION PLAN

Action	Corporate Housing Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Target Date	Expected Outcome
Housing General				
Analyse the information obtained from the census of Council tenants	HO 2	Principal Housing Officer (Information/Strategy)	Sept 2009	Up to date information on tenants and other occupants of Council properties
Complete the Customer Perspective Programme for the whole of the Housing Directorate, examining the all interfaces between Housing and customers	HO 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	Director of Housing	Sept 2010	Improved services to housing customers (primarily tenants, leaseholders and applicants) potentially leading to even greater levels of tenant satisfaction
Investigate the implications of the proposed withdrawal of support for the OHMS integrated housing system, but the new supplier, Northgate	HO 1 / 2 / 3 /	Asst. Director of Housing (Private Sector & Resources)	Dec 2009	A decision on whether to purchase the new Northgate OHMS system or to procure a new system.
Housing Management				
Continue the Home Ownership Grants Scheme in 2009/10, enabling tenants to purchase their own home and vacate their Council property for occupation by a housing applicant	HO 1	Housing Resources Manager	April 2009	Provision of a further 5 home ownership grants in 2009/10.
Agree a policy for the approach to be taken on the enforcement of unauthorised parking estates, taking account of the difficulties encountered.	HO 2	Asst. Director (Operations)	April 2009	A clear and transparent policy that officers can implement
Introduce a facility for tenants to apply for the Housing Register on-line	HO 2	Housing Options Manager	Sept 2009	Additional and more convenient way for housing applicants to register for housing

Tenant Participation				
Facilitate the formation of two additional recognised tenants associations within the District	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2009	The formation of two tenants associations that meet the Council's recognition criteria and become members of the Tenants and Leaseholder Federation.
Undertake a more detailed and focussed survey on the information provided to tenants and their future needs	HO 4	Principal Housing Officer (Information / Strategy)	Sept 2009	A better understanding of tenants' views on the way the Council provides information on housing services.
Investigate the publication of a calendar for tenants, promoting the activities of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation	HO 4	Tenant Participation Officer	Dec 2009	Publication and dispatch of the calendar to all the Council's tenants, at minimum cost to the Council.
Introduce "Tenant Talkback Panels", providing fora to provide qualitative feedback on housing services	HO 2 / 3 / 4	Tenant Participation Officer	April 2010	Establishment of at least three Tenant Talkback Panels.
Supporting People and Supported Housing				
Implement the findings of the Review of the Council's Careline Service undertaken in 2008	HO 1 / 2	Asst Director of Housing (Operations)	Sept 2009	Increase the use and viability of Careline, including the introduction of routine repair reporting out-of-hours and the monitoring of CCTV cameras around the District.
Seek accreditation of the Council's Careline Service from the Association of Social Alarm Providers (ASAP)	HO 2	Housing Manager (Older People's Services)	Sept 2009	Accreditation of ASAP.
Consider the future of Jessopp Court, the Council's scheme for frail elderly people in Waltham Abbey	HO 1 / 2	Housing Manager (Older People's Services)	April 2010	A decision made on the best use of Jessopp Court in the future
Housing Repairs and Maintenance				
HO 3	See Action Plan within the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan at Appendix 1			

Key to Corporate Housing Objectives

- HO 1 - Value for Money
- HO 2 - Housing Management
- HO 3 - Repairs and Maintenance
- HO 4 - Tenant Participation
- HO 5 - Housing Finance

15. Appendices

Appendix 1	Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan
Appendix 2	Glossary of Terms
Appendix 3	Key Contact List
Appendix 4	Senior Staff Structure – Housing Directorate
Appendix 5	National and Local Indicator Targets 2009/10 – Related to HRA landlord services
Appendix 6	30 Year Financial Plan (Whole HRA - Operating Account and Cash Flow)
Appendix 7	30 Year Financial Plan (Asset Groups)

Appendices

**Repairs & Maintenance Business Plan
(Circulated separately at present)**

Affordable housing	Subsidised housing for rent or shared ownership, for people who cannot afford to purchase a property on the open market.
Arms length management organisations	Companies (or other legal bodies) set up and owned by the Council - but operating separately from it and governed by its own board or committee - to manage services on behalf of the Council.
Asset Management Plan	A plan the Council produces every year, explaining how it manages its non residential land and buildings.
Benchmarking	The process of comparing an organisation's costs and performance with other similar organisations.
Best Value	The process of ensuring the continuous improvement of public services, through service reviews, <i>benchmarking</i> , consultation and inspection.
Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups	Groups of people within local communities whose race is either black, or another race, that is in the minority within the UK.
Cabinet	An important Council committee, comprising ten senior councillors, each responsible for a <i>portfolio</i> , that makes corporate Council decisions.
Capital expenditure	Money spent to buy or improve assets (e.g. land or buildings)
Capital receipt	Money received for the sale of a capital asset (eg land or buildings)
Catch-up repairs	Repairs that should have been undertaken earlier, and now need to be undertaken within the next 5 years.
Choice-based lettings	A scheme whereby people in need of <i>affordable housing</i> can ask to be considered for specific vacant Council or <i>RSL</i> accommodation. This is instead of such accommodation being allocated to applicants on waiting lists on the basis of housing need, with only a very limited choice being given.
CIPFA	The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants. The body that sets the guidelines for Council financial accounts.
Comprehensive Spending Review	A review by the Government on how much money should be spent on all the different types of public services (e.g. housing) over a set period (usually three years).
Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership	Representatives of local statutory and voluntary organisations with an interest in, or responsibility for, reducing crime within the District, including the Council, Essex Police, Probation Service, Epping Forest CVS, Social Services.
Direct Service Organisation (DSO)	A Council department that provides the same service as a private contractor, and operates in the same way as a private contractor.
East of England Region	The region of England in which the Epping Forest District is situated, covering the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.
Egan principles	The principles of improved working practices, advocated by Sir John Egan in his report " <i>Rethinking Construction</i> ".
Floating support	Practical support provided to those in need by a support worker for a temporary period, until such time as the support is no longer required, when the support is discontinued and provided to others who have a need.

Fuel poverty	When a household needs to spend more than 10% of their household income to achieve a satisfactory standard of heating.
General Fund	The Council's financial account that deals with income and expenditure relating to all the Council's services, part of which is the ring fenced <i>HRA</i> .
Halifax House Price Index	A source of information, operated by the HBOS Bank, that provides details of average house prices and house price trends in local areas, based on information providing by mortgage applicants.
Housing association	See <i>Registered Social Landlord</i> .
Housing Corporation	The Government agency that regulates and funds <i>registered social landlords (RSLs)</i> .
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	The Council's financial account, within the <i>General Fund</i> that deals with income and expenditure relating to the management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock.
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan	An annual plan produced by the Council that analyses issues relating to the Council's own housing stock and sets out the objectives, targets, plans, income and expenditure for the management and maintenance of its housing stock over the next 5-30 years.
HRA subsidy	An annual revenue subsidy provided to local authorities by the Government to assist with the management and maintenance of their housing stock.
ISO 9001:2000	An internationally recognised system of ensuring the provision of quality services, that is checked by external assessors.
Major repairs allowance (MRA)	An annual Government subsidy given to local authorities to assist with the maintenance of their housing stock, calculated by a formula based on the type and age of the housing stock.
Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	The Government department that replaced the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and has responsibility for formulating and implementing the Government's housing policy at a national level and allocates resources for different national housing programmes.
Out of charge properties	Properties for which the Council cannot use for a long time, and for which no rent is being received.
Partnering	An <i>Egan principle</i> whereby a client and contractor have a closer relationship, sharing the risk, often avoiding the time and cost of tendering.
Portfolio Holder	A senior councillor, who is a member of the <i>Cabinet</i> , responsible for specific areas of Council work (eg housing, finance etc). The Council has a number of portfolio holders, with the number reviewed each year.
Private Finance Initiative (PFI)	A way of enabling private companies to provide large amounts of money to construct or purchase public buildings, and then manage them over a long period, in return for a management fee paid by the public organisation responsible for providing the service.
Prudential borrowing	A new system being proposed by the Government, that would not restrict how much councils could borrow to fund capital expenditure. However, councils would only be able borrow money that they know they could pay back over the years of the loan, from their day-to-day income.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL)	A non-profit making organisation (usually a housing association) that is registered with, and regulated by, the <i>Housing Corporation</i> . They are run by a voluntary Board of Management, and employ professional housing officers to manage the organisation.
Rent restructuring and rent convergence	A Government requirement that all councils and <i>RSLs</i> must re-calculate their rent levels, by reference to individual property values, regional and national earnings, national average rent levels and numbers of bedrooms. Nationally, council and <i>RSLs</i> must also ensure that their rent levels are brought in line with each other by 2010.
Resource accounting	A way of accounting for income and expenditure, that takes into account the value of the assets (e.g. properties) and their depreciation.
“Rethinking Construction”	A report by Sir John Egan on ways to reduce construction costs and improve the quality of construction projects, through different working practices, including <i>partnering</i> .
Revenue contributions to capital outlay (RCCO)	Rental or other income used to pay for capital expenditure.
Right to Buy	A Government scheme that allows Council tenants, who have held tenancies for more than two years, to buy their own home from the Council. Discounts are currently given of up to £34,000, depending on how many years they have held tenancies.
Securitisation	A private sector financing technique which involves the sale of the future rental income in return for finance.
Sheltered housing	Independent accommodation provided to elderly people, with support from a Scheme Manager and an emergency call facility, usually having a communal lounge facility.
Single Capital Pot	An allocation given by Government Offices to local authorities specifying how much the Council can borrow to spend on capital expenditure. Discretion is given to local authorities on what capital schemes the allocation is used for.
Social exclusion	The situation where individuals, or groups of individuals, within the community do not have the means, material or otherwise to participate in social, economic, political or cultural life.
Social Housing – Existing Use Value	A way of valuing Council or housing association properties, taking into account the fact that the rents charged are much lower than for private properties.
Social Housing Grant (SHG)	Capital funding provided to <i>RSLs</i> by the <i>Housing Corporation</i> to enable them to build or acquire <i>affordable housing</i> .
Social inclusion	The process whereby people do not experience <i>social exclusion</i> .
Social landlords	Generally, <i>RSLs</i> and local authorities.
Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)	A measure of how energy efficient a property is, between a score of 0 –120 (previously 0 –100). A score of 120 is the most energy efficient.
Stock condition survey	A survey of the inside and the outside of some of a council’s properties, that gives an indication of the condition of all the properties
Stock Options Appraisal	A process to determine the most appropriate future ownership and management of the Council’s housing stock.
Supported housing	Housing where the tenants need help – e.g. sheltered housing for the elderly or housing for people with physically disabled people.

Supporting People	A Government initiative introduced in April 2003, which brings together sources of funding for supported housing into county-wide “pots” for distribution to supported housing providers within the County, based on locally determined priorities, through agreed contracts. County-wide “commissioning bodies” produce Supporting People Strategies explaining how the funding will be distributed.
Supporting People Commissioning Team	The team of County Council officers responsible for managing and administering <i>Supporting People</i> at the county level.
Target rent	The individual rents for properties that councils and housing associations should aim to charge by 2012, based on a Government formula.
Tenant management organisation (TMO)	Organisations formed and run by groups of tenants to manage and/or maintain their own homes. Budgets are delegated by their landlord and staff can be employed.
Tenants participation compact / agreement (TPA)	Written agreements between <i>social landlords</i> and groups of tenants, at both district and estate level, setting out the agreed approach to tenant participation.
“Very sheltered” housing (Part 2.5 housing)	Sheltered housing for more frail elderly tenants, with additional care and support provided, usually including 24 hour cover.
Void properties	Empty (vacant) properties.

Contact List

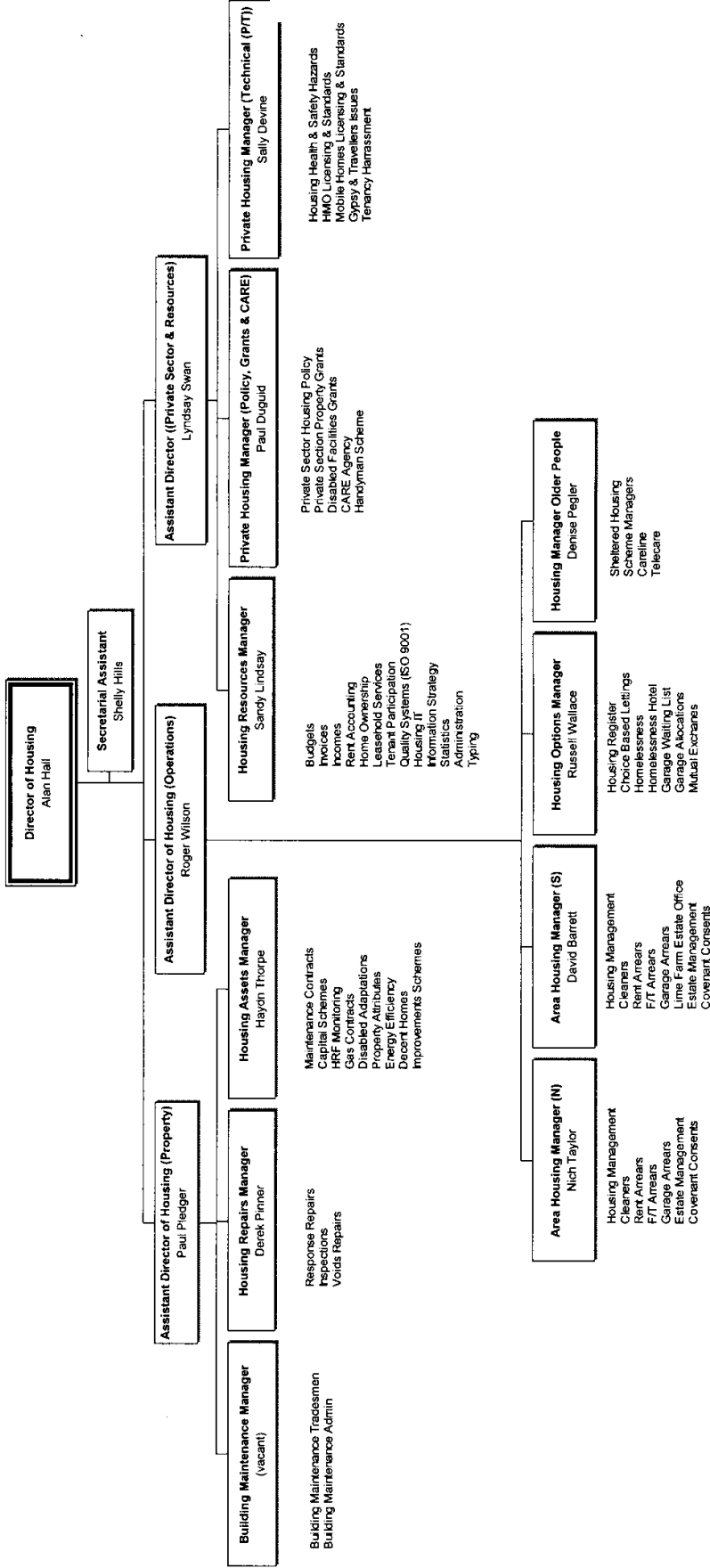
Appendix 3

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CONTACTS Civic Offices, Epping, Essex CM16 4BZ				
Subject	Name	Designation	Telephone	e-mail
Area Housing Office (North)	Nich Taylor	Area Housing Manager	01992 564005	ntaylor@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Area Housing Office (South)	David Barrett	Area Housing Manager	01992 565183	dbarrett@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Careline Service	Denise Pegler	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	020 8508 8596	dpegler@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Chief Executive	Peter Haywood	Chief Executive	01992 564080	phaywood@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Council Plan	Steve Tautz	Senior Performance Management Officer	01992 564180	stautz@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Director of Housing	Alan Hall	Director of Housing	01992 564004	ahall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Energy Efficiency (Council Properties)	Haydn Thorpe	Housing Assets Manager	01992 564162	hthorpe@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
HRA Business Plan	Alan Hall	Director of Housing	01992 564004	ahall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Homelessness	Russell Wallace	Housing Options Manager	01992 564490	rwallace@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Housing Finance	Brian Molden	Principal Accountant	01992 564455	bmolden@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Housing Maintenance	Haydn Thorpe	Housing Assets Manager	01992 564162	hthorpe@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Housing Management	Roger Wilson	Asst Director of Housing (Operations)	01992 564419	rwilson@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Housing Portfolio Holder	Cllr David Stallan	Housing Portfolio Holder	01992 564004	ahall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Housing Repairs	Derek Pinner	Housing Repairs Manager	01992 564161	dpinner@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
House Sales	Marie Thorpe	Principal Housing Officer (Home Ownership)	01992 564015	mthorpe@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Housing Strategy	Alan Hall	Director of Housing	01992 564004	ahall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Leasehold Services	Marie Thorpe	Principal Housing Officer (Home Ownership)	01992 564015	mthorpe@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Rents Administration & Strategy	Sandy Lindsay	Housing Resources Manager	01992 564035	slindsay@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Sheltered Housing	Denise Pegler	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	020 8508 8596	dpegler@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Supporting People	Roger Wilson	Asst Director of Housing (Operations)	01992 564419	rwilson@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Tenant Participation	Richard Jones	Tenant Participation Officer	01992 565184	rjones@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

OTHER PARTNERS CONTACTS

Organisation	Contact	Tel. No	e-mail
Citizens Advice Bureau	Rachel Poulter	01992 574989	bureau@eppingcab.cabnet.org.uk
Voluntary Action Epping Forest	Jaqui Foile	01992 564178	jfoile@vaef.org.uk
Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation	Molly Carter	01992 564292	csobey@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Essex County Council Supporting People Team	Simon Harniess	01245 240020	simon.harniess@essexcc.gov.uk
GO-East	Solma Ahmed	01223 372500	solma.ahmed@goeast.gsi.gov.uk

Senior Management



senior management created 2.12.08

Appendix 5

National and Local Performance Indicators for HRA Landlord Services

Performance (2008/9 - Quarter 3) and Targets (2009/10)

National Indicators				
PI. No	Definition	Target (2009/10)	Actual (2008/9 – Q3)	Target (2008/9)
NI 156	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	100	65	100
NI 158	Percentage of non-decent Council homes	0 %	3.6 %	3.6 %
NI 160	Local Authority tenant satisfaction with landlord services	83 %	83 %	85 %
Local Indicators				
LPI 04	Rent collected as a proportion of rents owed on housing revenue account dwellings	98.8 %	98.12 %	98.81 %
LPI 05	Average number of days to re-let Council dwellings	45 days	47 days	49 days
LPI 06	Current rent arrears as proportion of rent roll	LPI deleted for 2009/10	2.14 %	1.60 %
LPI 07	Emergency repairs undertaken within target time (24 hours)	99 %	99 %	99 %
LPI 08	Urgent repairs undertaken within target time (within 5 working days)	95 %	87 %	95 %
LPI 09	Routine repairs undertaken within target time (6 weeks)	90 %	New LPI for 2009/10	New LPI for 2009/10
LPI 09	Routine repairs undertaken within target time (8 weeks)	LPI deleted for 2009/10	85 %	95 %
LPI 10	Satisfaction with repairs undertaken	98 %	98 %	98 %

Epping Forest District Council
Business Plan Assumptions

Total Cashflows
(expressed in money terms)

Year	Income										Expenses										Total Spend	Operating Surplus (Deficit) £,000					
	Remal Income	Tenanted Service Charge	Household Service Charge	Voids & Net Rental Bad Debts	Other Rental Income	RTB Sales Receipts	Misc Income	Borrowing	Other Capital Resources	HRA Subsidy	Total Overall Income	Housing Costs	Service Charge	Other Revenue Spend	Responsive Repairs & Maint	Cyclical Repairs & Maint	Catch up Repairs & Maint	Planned Maint	Improve Type A	Improve Type B			Other Capital Spend	Misc expenses	HRA Cost of Rent Rebates	Capital Financing Charges	Other Fixed Asset Movements
1 2008/09	24,722	0	0	0	24,182	4,181	0	0	0	54	(10,844)	18,990	(4,145)	(3,586)	(371)	(6,000)	0	0	(8,153)	0	0	(54)	(54)	1,290	0	(21,172)	(3,082)
2 2009/10	25,673	0	0	0	25,272	4,279	0	0	0	50	(11,293)	18,834	(4,251)	(3,741)	(373)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,790)	0	0	(50)	(50)	751	0	(20,215)	(1,421)
3 2010/11	27,016	0	0	0	26,638	4,507	0	0	0	50	(12,749)	18,679	(4,883)	(3,844)	(387)	(5,600)	0	0	(5,371)	0	0	(50)	(50)	756	0	(19,065)	(1,85)
4 2011/12	28,398	0	0	0	27,988	4,508	0	0	0	50	(14,245)	18,634	(4,883)	(3,969)	(397)	(5,600)	0	0	(5,371)	0	0	(50)	(50)	755	0	(19,306)	(672)
5 2012/13	29,730	0	0	0	29,314	4,596	0	0	0	51	(15,213)	19,123	(4,611)	(4,058)	(407)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,260)	0	0	(50)	(50)	754	0	(19,554)	(229)
6 2013/14	30,999	0	0	0	30,581	4,684	0	0	0	52	(16,201)	20,022	(4,737)	(4,109)	(417)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,407)	0	0	(51)	(51)	752	0	(20,699)	93
7 2014/15	32,198	0	0	0	31,746	4,761	0	0	0	53	(16,901)	21,004	(4,737)	(4,284)	(428)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,407)	0	0	(51)	(51)	751	0	(22,098)	(1,094)
8 2015/16	33,342	0	0	0	32,875	4,849	0	0	0	54	(16,901)	22,337	(5,190)	(4,284)	(438)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,407)	0	0	(51)	(51)	750	0	(23,131)	(1,395)
9 2016/17	34,462	0	0	0	33,979	4,940	0	0	0	55	(16,904)	23,432	(5,280)	(4,523)	(449)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,710)	0	0	(51)	(51)	748	0	(23,741)	(1,299)
10 2017/18	35,574	0	0	0	35,075	5,031	0	0	0	57	(17,430)	24,888	(5,280)	(4,744)	(472)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,710)	0	0	(51)	(51)	747	0	(24,435)	(547)
11 2018/19	36,696	0	0	0	36,182	5,265	0	0	0	58	(18,500)	25,794	(5,280)	(4,905)	(484)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,710)	0	0	(51)	(51)	744	0	(25,127)	(548)
12 2019/20	37,811	0	0	0	37,301	5,464	0	0	0	58	(19,204)	26,743	(5,280)	(5,178)	(496)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,710)	0	0	(51)	(51)	742	0	(25,820)	(604)
13 2020/21	38,984	0	0	0	38,438	5,669	0	0	0	58	(19,838)	27,594	(5,280)	(5,320)	(508)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,710)	0	0	(51)	(51)	739	0	(26,513)	(660)
14 2021/22	40,161	0	0	0	39,598	5,869	0	0	0	59	(20,492)	28,443	(6,046)	(5,466)	(514)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(64)	(64)	737	0	(27,206)	(716)
15 2022/23	41,357	0	0	0	40,778	6,072	0	0	0	59	(21,168)	29,294	(6,382)	(5,617)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	736	0	(27,900)	(772)
16 2023/24	42,586	0	0	0	41,989	6,281	0	0	0	59	(21,843)	30,144	(6,538)	(5,771)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	734	0	(28,594)	(828)
17 2024/25	43,822	0	0	0	43,208	6,510	0	0	0	59	(22,522)	30,994	(6,738)	(5,930)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	732	0	(29,288)	(884)
18 2025/26	45,095	0	0	0	44,463	6,754	0	0	0	59	(23,243)	31,844	(6,923)	(6,092)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	730	0	(30,000)	(940)
19 2026/27	46,404	0	0	0	45,754	7,004	0	0	0	59	(24,118)	32,694	(7,113)	(6,260)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	728	0	(30,712)	(996)
20 2027/28	47,751	0	0	0	47,082	7,249	0	0	0	61	(24,919)	33,544	(7,309)	(6,432)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	726	0	(31,424)	(1,052)
21 2028/29	49,145	0	0	0	48,457	7,499	0	0	0	61	(25,745)	34,394	(7,510)	(6,609)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	724	0	(32,136)	(1,108)
22 2029/30	50,588	0	0	0	49,879	7,750	0	0	0	61	(26,607)	35,244	(7,716)	(6,790)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	722	0	(32,848)	(1,164)
23 2030/31	52,073	0	0	0	51,343	8,004	0	0	0	61	(27,496)	36,094	(7,928)	(6,971)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	720	0	(33,560)	(1,220)
24 2031/32	53,601	0	0	0	52,800	8,260	0	0	0	62	(28,415)	36,944	(8,146)	(7,169)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	718	0	(34,272)	(1,276)
25 2032/33	55,175	0	0	0	54,400	8,518	0	0	0	62	(29,364)	37,794	(8,370)	(7,366)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	716	0	(35,000)	(1,332)
26 2033/34	56,800	0	0	0	56,007	8,780	0	0	0	62	(30,345)	38,644	(8,600)	(7,568)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	714	0	(35,732)	(1,388)
27 2034/35	58,480	0	0	0	57,669	9,044	0	0	0	62	(31,367)	39,494	(8,837)	(7,776)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	712	0	(36,464)	(1,444)
28 2035/36	60,224	0	0	0	59,339	9,311	0	0	0	62	(32,422)	40,344	(9,079)	(7,990)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	709	0	(37,196)	(1,500)
29 2036/37	62,012	0	0	0	61,017	9,582	0	0	0	62	(33,513)	41,194	(9,329)	(8,214)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	707	0	(37,928)	(1,556)
30 2037/38	63,852	0	0	0	62,857	9,856	0	0	0	62	(34,644)	42,044	(9,579)	(8,439)	(517)	(5,600)	0	0	(7,003)	0	0	(67)	(67)	705	0	(38,660)	(1,612)

Financial Plan 2009-10 to 46

Cashflow - Total

10/03/2009 11:14

**Epping Forest District Council
Business Plan Assumptions
Cashflows for General**
(expressed in money terms)

Year	Year	Income				Expenses										Total Spend £,000	Operating Surplus (Deficit) £,000	
		Rental Income £,000	Tenanted Service Charge Income £,000	leashold Service Charge Income £,000	Service Charge Income £,000	Total Overall Income £,000	Housing Managt Costs £,000	Service Costs £,000	Other Revenue spend £,000	Responsive Repairs & Maint £,000	Cyclical Repairs & Maint £,000	Catch up Repairs & Maint £,000	Planned Maint £,000	Improve. Type A £,000	Improve. Type B £,000			Other Capital Spend £,000
1	2008.09	24,657	0	0	0	26,712	(4,107)	(3,553)	(225)	(6,000)	0	0	(8,153)	0	0	(54)	(22,091)	4,621
2	2009.10	25,604	0	0	0	27,674	(4,212)	(3,706)	(239)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,790)	0	0	(50)	(20,597)	7,077
3	2010.11	26,943	0	0	0	29,034	(4,327)	(3,808)	(245)	(5,600)	0	0	(5,371)	0	0	(50)	(19,401)	9,633
4	2011.12	28,321	0	0	0	30,444	(4,446)	(3,913)	(251)	(5,600)	0	0	(5,371)	0	0	(50)	(19,631)	10,813
5	2012.13	29,649	0	0	0	31,805	(4,568)	(4,020)	(257)	(5,600)	0	0	(5,371)	0	0	(50)	(19,867)	11,939
6	2013.14	30,915	0	0	0	33,692	(4,694)	(4,130)	(264)	(5,600)	0	0	(6,260)	0	0	(51)	(20,999)	12,693
7	2014.15	32,110	0	0	0	34,338	(4,822)	(4,244)	(270)	(6,589)	0	0	(6,407)	0	0	(53)	(22,385)	11,953
8	2015.16	33,251	0	0	0	35,518	(4,955)	(4,360)	(277)	(7,202)	0	0	(6,557)	0	0	(54)	(23,405)	12,113
9	2016.17	34,367	0	0	0	36,675	(5,091)	(4,480)	(284)	(7,371)	0	0	(6,710)	0	0	(55)	(23,992)	12,684
10	2017.18	35,476	0	0	0	37,826	(5,231)	(4,603)	(291)	(7,543)	0	0	(6,263)	0	0	(57)	(23,988)	13,838
11	2018.19	36,595	0	0	0	38,929	(5,374)	(4,730)	(298)	(7,721)	0	0	(6,486)	0	0	(58)	(24,667)	14,262
12	2019.20	37,727	0	0	0	40,099	(5,522)	(4,859)	(306)	(7,904)	0	0	(6,640)	0	0	(59)	(25,291)	14,808
13	2020.21	38,876	0	0	0	41,287	(5,674)	(4,993)	(314)	(8,092)	0	0	(6,797)	0	0	(61)	(25,930)	15,356
14	2021.22	40,050	0	0	0	42,499	(5,829)	(5,130)	(321)	(8,284)	0	0	(7,124)	0	0	(62)	(26,586)	15,913
15	2022.23	41,242	0	0	0	43,731	(5,990)	(5,271)	(329)	(8,480)	0	0	(7,284)	0	0	(64)	(27,258)	16,473
16	2023.24	42,467	0	0	0	44,991	(6,154)	(5,416)	(338)	(8,683)	0	0	(7,695)	0	0	(66)	(28,351)	16,440
17	2024.25	43,700	0	0	0	46,058	(6,323)	(5,565)	(346)	(8,892)	0	0	(7,879)	0	0	(67)	(29,072)	16,986
18	2025.26	44,969	0	0	0	47,362	(6,497)	(5,717)	(355)	(9,105)	0	0	(8,069)	0	0	(69)	(29,812)	17,550
19	2026.27	46,275	0	0	0	48,703	(6,675)	(5,875)	(364)	(9,324)	0	0	(8,263)	0	0	(71)	(30,571)	18,132
20	2027.28	47,618	0	0	0	50,082	(6,859)	(6,036)	(373)	(9,548)	0	0	(8,461)	0	0	(72)	(31,350)	18,733
21	2028.29	49,008	0	0	0	51,270	(7,047)	(6,202)	(382)	(9,779)	0	0	(8,945)	0	0	(74)	(32,430)	18,840
22	2029.30	50,446	0	0	0	52,737	(7,241)	(6,372)	(392)	(10,017)	0	0	(9,163)	0	0	(76)	(33,261)	19,476
23	2030.31	51,927	0	0	0	54,247	(7,440)	(6,547)	(401)	(10,261)	0	0	(9,386)	0	0	(78)	(34,114)	20,133
24	2031.32	53,451	0	0	0	55,800	(7,644)	(6,727)	(411)	(10,511)	0	0	(9,615)	0	0	(80)	(34,989)	20,811
25	2032.33	55,020	0	0	0	57,399	(7,855)	(6,912)	(422)	(10,767)	0	0	(9,849)	0	0	(82)	(35,886)	21,512
26	2033.34	56,644	0	0	0	58,778	(8,070)	(7,102)	(432)	(11,031)	0	0	(10,090)	0	0	(84)	(36,810)	21,968
27	2034.35	58,325	0	0	0	60,480	(8,292)	(7,297)	(443)	(11,303)	0	0	(10,339)	0	0	(86)	(37,762)	22,719
28	2035.36	60,056	0	0	0	62,232	(8,520)	(7,498)	(454)	(11,582)	0	0	(10,594)	0	0	(88)	(38,738)	23,495
29	2036.37	61,838	0	0	0	64,035	(8,755)	(7,704)	(466)	(11,868)	0	0	(10,856)	0	0	(90)	(39,739)	24,297
30	2037.38	63,673	0	0	0	65,892	(8,995)	(7,916)	(477)	(12,161)	0	0	(11,124)	0	0	(93)	(40,766)	25,126

**Epping Forest District Council
Business Plan Assumptions
Cashflows for Norway**
(expressed in money terms)

Year	Income										Expenses										Operating Surplus (Deficit) £,000
	Rental Income	Tenanted Service Charge Income	Leasehold Service Charge Income	Voids & Bad Debts	Net Rental Income	Other Income	RTB Sales Receipts	Total Overall Income	Housing Mgmt Costs	Service Charge Costs	Other Revenue spend	Responsive Repairs & Maint	Cyclical Repairs & Maint	Catch up Repairs & Maint	Planned Maint	Improve Type A	Improve Type B	Other Capital Spend	Total Spend		
1 2008.09	65	0	0	0	65	814	0	879	(25)	(21)	(52)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(98)		
2 2009.10	70	0	0	0	70	855	0	925	(25)	(22)	(41)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(89)		
3 2010.11	73	0	0	0	73	876	0	950	(26)	(23)	(42)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(91)		
4 2011.12	77	0	0	0	77	898	0	975	(27)	(24)	(43)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(94)		
5 2012.13	81	0	0	0	81	921	0	1,002	(28)	(24)	(44)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(96)		
6 2013.14	85	0	0	0	85	944	0	1,029	(28)	(25)	(45)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(99)		
7 2014.15	88	0	0	0	88	967	0	1,055	(29)	(26)	(46)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(101)		
8 2015.16	91	0	0	0	91	992	0	1,083	(30)	(26)	(48)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(104)		
9 2016.17	94	0	0	0	94	1,016	0	1,111	(31)	(27)	(49)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(107)		
10 2017.18	98	0	0	0	98	1,042	0	1,139	(32)	(28)	(50)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(109)		
11 2018.19	101	0	0	0	101	1,068	0	1,169	(32)	(29)	(51)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(112)		
12 2019.20	104	0	0	0	104	1,094	0	1,199	(33)	(29)	(52)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(115)		
13 2020.21	108	0	0	0	108	1,122	0	1,229	(34)	(30)	(54)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(118)		
14 2021.22	111	0	0	0	111	1,150	0	1,261	(35)	(31)	(55)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(121)		
15 2022.23	115	0	0	0	115	1,179	0	1,294	(36)	(32)	(57)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(125)		
16 2023.24	118	0	0	0	118	1,208	0	1,326	(37)	(33)	(58)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(128)		
17 2024.25	122	0	0	0	122	1,238	0	1,360	(38)	(34)	(59)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(131)		
18 2025.26	126	0	0	0	126	1,269	0	1,395	(39)	(35)	(61)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(135)		
19 2026.27	129	0	0	0	129	1,301	0	1,430	(40)	(35)	(62)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(138)		
20 2027.28	133	0	0	0	133	1,334	0	1,467	(41)	(36)	(64)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(142)		
21 2028.29	137	0	0	0	137	1,367	0	1,504	(43)	(37)	(66)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(146)		
22 2029.30	141	0	0	0	141	1,401	0	1,542	(44)	(38)	(67)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(149)		
23 2030.31	146	0	0	0	146	1,436	0	1,582	(45)	(40)	(69)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(153)		
24 2031.32	150	0	0	0	150	1,472	0	1,622	(46)	(41)	(71)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(157)		
25 2032.33	154	0	0	0	154	1,509	0	1,663	(47)	(42)	(72)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(162)		
26 2033.34	159	0	0	0	159	1,546	0	1,706	(49)	(43)	(74)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(166)		
27 2034.35	164	0	0	0	164	1,585	0	1,749	(50)	(44)	(76)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(170)		
28 2035.36	169	0	0	0	169	1,625	0	1,793	(51)	(45)	(78)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(175)		
29 2036.37	174	0	0	0	174	1,665	0	1,839	(53)	(47)	(80)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(179)		
30 2037.38	179	0	0	0	179	1,707	0	1,886	(54)	(48)	(82)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(184)		



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Epping Forest District Council

Director of Housing
Alan Hall FCIH MCM



Housing Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan

2009 - 2010

April 2009



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Purpose of the Plan

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan has been prepared under the guidelines of the HRA Resource Accounting regime, whose main objective is to promote more efficient use of housing assets. This covers all housing services in detail. Given that repairs and maintenance is the biggest single area of expenditure, and in line with a District Audit recommendation, this separate Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan has been produced to detail the Council's strategic approach to this work.

Both Plans have been produced annually since 2000. The Council already has set standards for most of its service provision, which can be found in various documents such as the Tenant's Handbook, Housing Strategy and Contract Conditions etc. However, it was felt that these documents should be brought together into a single Business Plan, which would assist the Council in planning and monitoring the delivery of the repairs and maintenance service. This Plan is therefore comprehensive in its coverage.

The plan includes a detailed analysis of the Authority's response to the Government's decent homes initiative, which is then updated annually. The latest position is included in this version, with the Council on target to meet the Decent Homes target by 2010.

An updated Housing Services Risk Register, which identifies the strategic and operations risks, including a section which discusses the risks and how these are managed through risk management is also included in this years plan.

This version of the Plan also covers the way in which the Governments targets for efficiency gains are being addressed following Sir Peter Gershon's review of public sector efficiency, which identified the need to achieve value for money savings through better procurement in order to release resources to support the key policy objectives of the Government.

Over the last 12 months, significant changes to the Housing Directorate have occurred as a result of the recent top management restructure. These including incorporating Private Sector Housing, the Council's Architectural Services and the Building Maintenance Division (formally the DSO Works Unit).

In pursuit of excellence, the Housing Directorate is currently reviewing all of its front line services, including looking the the service we provide from a customer perspective and using the Audit Commission Key Lines Of Enquiries (KLOEs), which prompts us to differentiate between what is a "fair" service and what is an "excellent" service, to produce a "Housing Excellence Plan". The Housing Excellence Plan will set out a number of actions, which will focus attention and activity on areas where there is room for improvement.

In preparing this Plan the Council's Tenants and Leaseholders Federation have been consulted in the same way as with the main HRA Business Plan and they have approved both Plans ***[Add any comments from the Federation here]***.

The Plan is updated each year taking into account the latest Government Guidance, revised Council policies, updated financial information, the latest stock condition information and the views of tenants and leaseholders. The Action Plan will be monitored on a bi-monthly basis to ensure appropriate progression of the initiatives included.

2. Introduction to the Repairs & Maintenance Business Plan

Epping Forest District Council is a major provider of housing. As at 1st April 2008, the Council owned and managed 6,525 properties, 2,839 garages, 1 homeless hostel and leased 940 properties. A number of these properties were transferred to the Council from the former Greater London Council (GLC) in 1980. There has been a general rate of decline in the number of properties owned by the Council over the years due to tenants purchasing their homes under the Right to Buy scheme. Since 1977, 6,140 properties have been sold. The rate at which properties have been sold has varied over the years. However, over the last five years, an average of 54 properties per annum have been sold, which equates to approximately 0.83% of the stock.

2.1 The Housing Directorate within the context of other strategic Plans

Housing has a major impact on the quality of the people's lives, influencing health, educational achievement, employment opportunities and social cohesion.

The main responsibility for managing and maintaining the Council's housing stock is undertaken by the Council's Housing Directorate.

The Housing Directorate strives to provide the highest quality advice, assistance and equality of opportunity to its customers in housing matters. It aims to be a responsible landlord, managing and maintaining the housing stock effectively, whilst continuing to charge reasonable rents.

The Housing Directorate also works within a number of specific strategies. The main strategies influencing the direction of the Repairs and Maintenance Service include:

Tenant Participation Agreement – An agreement with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation on consultation, provision of information and support for tenant organisations. The agreement has led to improved tenant consultation on repairs and maintenance programmes.

Home Energy Conservation Act and Fuel Poverty Strategies – Strategies designed to conserve energy use particularly for those on low incomes. This has for some time been targeting energy saving measures to those on low incomes through the Warm Front Scheme (previously known as the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES)).

Crime Reduction – The Council has a local Crime Reduction Partnership comprising representatives from Police, Social Services Probation Service, which has produced a Crime Reduction Strategy which have influenced programmes for the installation of CCTV and door entry security systems. The Partnership has a number of sub groups, which have influenced programmes for the installation of secure double-glazing, CCTV, door entry systems and has recently introduced a sanctuary scheme for those fleeing domestic violence. This strategy complies with Home Office guidelines.

HRA Business Plan - the HRA Business Plan is a broad document, which covers the whole of the Housing Directorate. Given that repairs and maintenance is the biggest single area of expenditure, this Business Plan has been developed to provide more detail on the strategic approach to the repairs and maintenance.

Housing Directorate Risk Strategy – A Risk Register, which identifies the strategic and operations risks affecting the Housing Directorate.

2.2 Housing Directorate

The Housing Directorate as a whole, since the Senior Management Restructure, is divided into three main headings; Private Sector Housing, Property and Operations, each with its own Assistant Director. The Housing Directorate is responsible for all housing matters. Since the Building Maintenance Works Unit joined the Housing Directorate in May 2008, this additional service falls under the responsibility of the Assistant Director (Property) The current responsibilities of each Assistant Director are listed out below.

(a) *Private Sector Housing*

The Private Sector Division is responsible for issues relating to housing in the private sector, including decent homes, empty properties, house condition surveys, HMO's, Disabled Facilities Grants, Home Improvement Grants, Home Improvement Agency as well as the Resources functions with Housing, including Budget Monitoring, Rent Accounting, Leasehold Services, House Sales, Information and Administration

(b) Property

The Property Division of the Housing Directorate is responsible for the responsive repairs and planned maintenance functions to council housing as well as the Building Maintenance Division, who undertake the majority of all responsive repairs and work to void properties.

(c) Operations

The Operations Division of Housing Services is responsible for issues such as Housing Needs, Special Needs, Supporting People and Housing Management.

3. Repairs & Maintenance – Lines of Responsibility

There is a significant amount of maintenance work needed to keep the average home in good condition. Some occurs at short notice, some can be planned in advance, some is the responsibility of the Council and other work is the responsibility of the tenant. In order to clarify who is responsible for various maintenance items, the Council has produced within its 'Tenants Handbook' a leaflet entitled "Repairs And Improvements To Your Home".

The Tenants Handbook also includes information on programmed maintenance, day to day repairs, emergency repairs and gas leaks, adaptations for the disabled, making improvements to the home, asbestos in the home, the right to repair, home improvements compensation scheme and mutual exchange repairs.

The main sections of the Council's Housing Directorate with responsibility for repairs and maintenance are:

Housing Repairs Section
Building Maintenance Division (Formally referred to as the Works Unit, or Building Maintenance DSO)
Housing Assets Section

3.1 Housing Repairs

The Housing Repairs Section is managed by the Housing Repairs Manager and is responsible for the day to day management of the repairs service, including:

- The supervision of the responsive repairs service.
- Testing customer satisfaction within the repairs service.
- Monitoring contractor compliance with published response times.
- Managing and monitoring the void property process and ensuring satisfactory turnaround times.

3.1.1 *The work of the Housing Repairs Section*

Housing Repairs can be broken down into two main areas of work:

- Responsive Repairs, and
- Voids (Empty properties)

(a) *Responsive repairs*

Responsive repairs are received in a number of different ways, these are:

- By telephone from tenants
- By letter or fax from tenants
- In person at any one of the Council's offices or surgeries
- By electronic mail from tenants
- From observations made by Housing Services staff during visits.
- From Members on behalf of tenants
- Through the Council's web site

The Housing Directorate has a web site, which allows tenants to report repairs directly to the Council on-line 24 hours a day. The facility includes graphical information to assist tenants make specific repairs requests, which in turn helps officers to diagnose the problems reported. The Repairs Call Centre receives calls from all over the District. Whilst most repair requests are received during normal working hours, the Council operates an Out Of Hours Emergency Service. For out of hour's emergencies, a Duty Officer is on call, who authorises repairs for the Building Maintenance Division to deal with. Tenants who report a repair that is of a non-emergency nature are generally offered an appointment for the works contractor to visit and complete the repair. Similarly, appointments are made for inspectors to visit to assess the work required for more complex repairs.

The Council issues around 19,000 works orders relating to responsive repairs (and voids) every year. The vast majority of these works orders are undertaken by the Building Maintenance Division. Both responsive repairs and void maintenance work is largely undertaken by the Council's Building Maintenance Division. This is discussed in more detail in relation to the Works Unit.

(b) Void Property Maintenance

When a tenant moves out of a property the keys are returned for re-letting, the property undergoes a basic safety and cleaning process before being re-let. In November 2007, the Council introduced a new mechanism by which tenants bid for vacant properties rather than them be selected and offered a property. This new initiative is known as "Choice Based Lettings" and is regarded as a much more transparent process using the existing bandings system to priorities new tenancies based on bids received by those on the Council's waiting list. The benefits are expected to be significant, particularly with difficult to let properties.

Between 450-600 dwellings go through the void process every year.

In November 2007, a Voids Working Group was set up, led by the Assistant Director of Operations, with the view of improving the performance of the whole void process, taking into account the newly introduced Choice Based Lettings initiative.

While the working group are looking at the whole process, changes that were introduced in late November 2007 included the re-introduction of the pre-vacation inspection, where a Repairs Officer (previously a Housing Management Officer) visits the outgoing tenant prior to them moving out to advise them on the condition the Council expects the property to be handed back. The intension being to improve the condition that properties are handed back so that they can be re-let more quickly and at a lower cost.

New tenants continue to be offered decoration vouchers for materials at local DIY stores to enable them to redecorate to their own taste once they move in to their new property.

In October 2008, the Government introduced Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) to help improve the energy efficiency of buildings. This means that by law, all properties built, sold or rented out requires an EPC, which rates each property from A (most energy efficient) to G (least energy efficient). The EPC certificate is accompanied with an associated report which suggests improvements to make the building more energy efficient. This means that all void properties now have to be surveyed and issued with a certificate and report prior to being let.

3.1.2 Mobile Working

The option to introduce mobile working has been set aside for the time being, despite numerous advantages to its introduction. This is due to the recent sale of the Anite OHMS IT system to an alternative IT provider Northgate, who have announced they are no longer supporting the mobile working platform. This means that until an alternative system can be investigated, this function will not be developed.

3.1.3 Generic Officers

Again, as part of the Housing Service Best Value Review in 2004, the Council explored the benefits of bringing together the roles of both repairs and voids inspectors, and creating generic posts and allocating each post to a specific area of the district to deal with both repairs and voids. The main benefit of generic working is that one officer deals with all aspects of responsive repairs and void properties within a smaller area. The officer becomes familiar with the property types and tenants and internal staff has one point of contact on all repairs and voids issues. This is due to be reviewed as part of the on-going Repairs and Building Maintenance Works Unit review.

3.2 Building Maintenance

Historically, Building Maintenance Works Unit (BMWU) undertakes the majority of day-to-day ad hoc repairs to the Councils housing stock, including those to void properties, issued by the Housing Directorate. The Building Maintenance DSO, as it was formally known, was originally within the previous Housing Service, but was separated on 1st January 1999 to form part of the Council's Works Unit. As part of the current Top Management Restructure in 2007, the Council's Works Unit once again joined the Housing Directorate in May 2008.

The BMWU is currently located at its own depot site in Epping, employs between 44 and 54 craft employees at any one time and a fleet of 31 vehicles, covering a wide variety of building trade activities including plumbing, carpentry, brickwork, plastering, paving, electrical, decorating and miscellaneous works and has its own small joinery workshop. The Unit is supported by 8 FTE management, supervisory and administrative staff. The service is supported by a range of specialist sub-contractors to ensure the work is completed within target completion periods. The annual turnover for the Works Unit relating to housing functions in respect of 2008/09 is expected to be in the region of £3M.

Since the BMWU undertakes electrical work on Council dwellings, it is a member of the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC)

For many years, the BMWU have struggled to recruit skilled craft workers, despite adopting various recruitment strategies, including reintroducing trainee grade positions. This has meant that Housing Repairs and the BMWU have had to rely on the support of various sub-contractors to undertake works that cannot be undertaken by the in-house BMWU. This, in itself, presents a resource issue, from procuring the work to post inspection and invoicing. Currently, around 48% of all responsive repairs are undertaken by the BMWU with the remainder undertaken by a number of different sub-contractors.

Perhaps as a result of recruitment difficulties, the BMWU have also struggled to reach the performance targets set within BVPI's and LPI's associated with the completion of a range of responsive repairs and voids works. Set out below is the current performance data, which is captured locally:

Indicator	EFDC Target	Previous Performance		Current Performance		
				Period	Quarter	Cumulative
Average time to complete urgent repairs	5 wd	05/06	7	June	9	9
		06/07	6	Sept	6	7
		07/08	7	Dec	5	6
Average time to complete non-urgent repairs	56 wd	03/04	43	June	34	34
		04/05	38	Sept	32	33
		05/06	32	Dec	25	31
		06/07	28			
		07/08	33			
% of urgent repairs completed within target time (5 working days)	95%	03/04	79%	June	84%	84%
		04/05	85%	Sept	88%	86%
		05/06	81%	Dec	92%	88%
		06/07	89%			
		07/08	89%			
% of non-urgent repairs completed within target time (8 weeks)	95%	03/04	78%	June	82%	82%
		04/05	82%	Sept	86%	84%
		05/06	86%	Dec	89%	86%
		06/07	90%			
		07/08	84%			

The above statistics show that whilst the average time to complete urgent is within target, the number of jobs completed outside of the target time is far too high. In addition, the target that the Council sets for non-urgent jobs to be completed is too long, far longer in fact than other Housing organisations.

The National Housing Federation undertook an independent tenant satisfaction survey on behalf of the Council in November 2008, 86% of tenants said that they were satisfied with the Council's repairs and maintenance service (up 2% compared to 2006), which was significantly higher than any other landlord in the peer group. In fact,

- 86% rated the time taken for work to start was good (up 3% compared to 2006);
- 92% said the speed with which the work was completed was good (no change since 2006);
- 93% rated the attitude of the workers was good (down 2% compared to 2006);
- 91% were pleased with the way dirt and mess were kept to a minimum (down 1% compared to 2006),
- 88% said the overall quality of the work was good (no change since 2006).

At its meeting in March 2008, the Cabinet agreed to two major changes to the way the repairs function is undertaken. The first is that the Repairs team and the BMWU combine and operate from the same site and

the second is the appointment of an external management contractor to oversee the day to day management functions of the combined Repairs and BMWU Service. An officer working party has been set up to explore the issues that come from these changes.

3.3 Housing Assets

Whilst the Council continues to provide housing, its stock has to be managed and maintained. The purpose of the Housing Assets Section is to continue to keep the Council's Housing Stock in good condition by planning its maintenance based on condition, need, efficiency and value.

There are significant value for money opportunities that have both direct financial and management implications that ultimately lead to a more efficient use of resources. The framework of strategies laid out in this document, defines the way in which Housing Services will plan the future repairs and maintenance of the stock.

The introduction in April 1999 of the fully integrated housing computer system (referred to as OHMS) has already gone a long way towards a more effective management of repairs and maintenance works. For example, the Housing Repairs Section is automatically provided with earlier warning of planned contracts at the time of issuing works orders. This enables more control of repair work.

3.3.1 Legislative requirements and working practices

Although the provision of housing is not a statutory service, the Council has a statutory duty to maintain the stock it provides.

(a) Legislation

The work of the Housing Assets Section is guided by a complex set of legislation. To this end, housing assets working practices have to be both flexible, to accommodate multiple legislative requirements and any on-going changes to these requirements, and precise in following specific codes of practice, legal and contractual requirements. This includes procurement rules, including EU Regulations, consultation with Leaseholders and Contract Standing Orders.

(b) Housing Policies

In addition to legislative and contractual requirements, the Council has developed a number of housing policies that are set out in the Housing Policy Manual maintained by Housing Services.

(c) Working Practices

As a local authority, the Council is required to undertake its duties and conduct itself in a manner that is both fair and proper. Accountability in working practices is therefore important. In order to ensure this, Officers must also work in accordance with Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and CIPFA Guidelines.

To manage this complex set of legislation, working practices and housing policies, the Housing Directorate has developed in-depth procedures. The procedures and works instructions cover all aspects of the work of the Housing Directorate including Housing Needs, Housing Management, Housing Repairs and Assets as well as customer care issues. The procedures are stored on the Council's Intranet, and are accessible to all Housing staff.

In addition, a Contractor's Code of Conduct has been developed to allow proper conduct and safe working by all contractors working for the Council.

Since 2002, Housing Services has been accredited the ISO 9001/2000 Quality Award for all services. Housing Assets was one of the first two sections to be awarded ISO 9001/2000 status in May 2002. An intensive re-assessment was carried out by an external auditor in June 2008, which resulted in the ISO 9001/2000 status being renewed for a further 3 years. A further re-assessment is due to take place in 2011.

3.3.2 Specific work of the Housing Maintenance Section

i) Reinstatement of Pre-cast Reinforced Concrete (PRC) properties.

Works under the Council's PRC Reinstatement Programme, to properties designated as defective under the Housing Act 1985, commenced in April 1992 and was completed in 2003. During this time, the Council at a cost of around £10m reinstated a total of 255 properties.

ii) Refurbishment of houses and flats

In addition to the reinstatement of PRC properties, the Council also undertakes other major refurbishment works to Council properties. These can range from large improvement contracts such as the £4 million Springfields Improvement Scheme, which started on site in November 2007, to other works such as bathroom and kitchen refurbishments under the Decent Homes programme.

iii) External Repairs and Maintenance Contracts

In order to prolong the useful life of the external building components, the Council carries out regular inspections to identify and then carry out both repairs and preventative maintenance on sub-components. Every Council property is surveyed externally, and included on a planned cyclical maintenance contract for external repairs and redecoration, every 6-7 years.

The external repairs and redecoration contracts are prepared in conjunction with window and door replacement, energy efficiency, asbestos removal and re-roofing contracts in order to prevent different contractors returning to the same properties to erect scaffolding etc. This increases the value for money of such contracts.

In an attempt to achieve efficiency savings and added value through the use of alternative procurement methods, the Council introduced a partnership framework agreement based on a schedule of rates contract linked to a performance specification and guaranteed maximum cost. Through performance monitoring, figures show significant improvements in tenant satisfaction and in the quality of the finished product.

Added benefits of long-term partnering agreements and tendering on a schedule of rates basis, based on preliminaries, overheads and profits only include:

- Fewer visits to properties by the contractors and Council Officers, therefore efficiency savings can be made, with less duplication in the work undertaken by each party.
- Less disruption to tenants.
- Increases in performance monitoring of the contractors.
- Early warning of poor contractor performance.
- Increased budget control, through the use of measured works and quantities against a tendered schedule of rates.
- Accurate records of decorating quantities, which will assist in any future Business Planning process.

In 2007/08, around 1,051 properties were included in the External Repairs and Maintenance programme.

iv) Replacement of Double Glazed Windows and Front Entrance Doors

The target set within previous editions of the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan has been to install PVCu double-glazing in all council homes by 2008/09. However, by increasing the budget provision for replacement PVCu double-glazed windows between 2004-2006, this target was achieved early. As a result, every council dwelling that is capable of having replacement PVCu windows has had replacement double glazed windows installed. However, there are a very small number of properties where either the tenant refused to be included in previous programmes or for value for money reasons, some properties will need to be identified and completed in future years.

The PVCu double-glazing programme has been included in the Capital Works programme since the mid eighties. Whilst these frames are PVCu, and regarded as low-maintenance, the raw materials and components were not to the same quality as newer modern materials and are proving to be difficult to repair and maintain. These windows will form the next priority group for replacement.

There are also properties that have double-glazing, but in timber frames, such those installed in the

sheltered housing schemes when they were extended and refurbished. As they are relatively new installations, they can be maintained at a reasonable cost, and will therefore be retained until these frames are no longer economical to maintain.

In 2007/08 a programme to upgrade and replace existing timber front entrance doors with 'Homesafe Composite' doors, which meet "Secure By Design" standards set by the Home Office, to properties occupied by venerable and elderly tenants commenced. The advantages of installing this type of door are that they are low maintenance self coloured doors and frames, they have a wheelchair accessible low threshold, they can have suited ironmongery with a master key for emergency access and extended lever handles for easy operation. The priority by which properties were selected for replacement front entrance doors is based on the following criteria.

- Sheltered accommodation
- Groups of dwellings 'designated' for occupation by the elderly
- Blocks of flats with exposed balconies
- Ad-hoc properties recommended by Repairs Officers.

Around 262 properties had 'Homesafe' Composite doors installed in 2007/08. However, during 2008/09, it is anticipated that 350 front entrance doors will be replaced of which 145 are as a result of a Repairs Officer recommendation.

v) *Energy efficiency measures*

There are a number of objectives included within the Housing Strategy and the Council Plan, which relate to improving the energy efficiency of our stock. This aspect is also included as a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI). Improving energy efficiency is not limited to a single programme, but a range of measures, which include:

- Cavity wall insulation
- Overcladding
- Loft, pipework and tank insulation
- PVCu double glazing
- Boiler replacement works
- New heating installation and heating upgrades
- Ventilation extract fans with heat recovery units
- Draught proofing

On an annual basis, an Energy Audit is undertaken to establish the change in Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP). The Council has performed well against targets, which has seen the average SAP rating increase from 38.5 in 2004 to 66 in 2006/07. The target is to achieve an average SAP rating of 68 by 2010.

There are currently 38 properties that fail the Decent Homes Standard under the Thermal Comfort criteria and 74 properties that fail under the heating criteria. Left unchecked, this will rise to 476 failures by 2010, therefore through direct capital investment and grant funding from British Gas and other partnership working on a range of energy efficiency measures, it is anticipated that all properties will meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2011.

Since the withdrawal of funding for energy efficiency measures under the "Here To Help Programme" (HELP), the Council has sourced and secured funding for the next three-years under the new Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) scheme. An Agreement has been drawn up between the Council and British Gas Trading Ltd under the new CERT scheme, which reduces the Council's costs in carrying out energy efficiency measures until 2010.

The level of grant funding available from British Gas under the CERT scheme is considerable, with up to a maximum of 50% off the cost of energy efficiency measures met by British Gas. This means that during 2009/10 if the Council spends £100,000, on energy efficiency measures British Gas could contribute up to an additional £100,000.

The funding Agreement allows the Council to manage the energy efficiency measures carried out under the CERT scheme. Therefore in addition to the funding commitment, on properties, which have energy efficiency measures carried out the Council, will receive a management fee from British Gas Trading Ltd of £10.00 per

property. Also on properties where energy efficiency measures have been carried out, British Gas Trading Ltd will contribute the sum of £5.00 per property for inclusion in a community projects fund.

Baring Insulation Ltd is carrying out the Energy Efficiency Programme of work, until the end of the CERT funding Agreement in 2011. The range of energy efficiency measures available under the scheme include cavity wall insulation, loft insulation up to 250mm thickness, pipe and tank insulation, low energy light bulbs, hot water cylinder jackets, thermostatic radiator valves and draught proofing.

During 2007/08, 536 properties had cavity wall insulation installed and 339 properties benefited from having loft insulation up to 250mm thickness.

Two staff within Housing Assets have completed NHER training and are qualified to collect energy efficiency data that once it is entered into the NHER software it enables the Council to produce SAP Profile Reports on the housing stock.

There is a separate Housing Services Strategy on Energy Efficiency, which has recently been updated and published. This strategy sets out the Council's aims and objectives in relation to the Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000, examines the Council stock profile, and identifies potential energy efficiency measures, particularly to those older rural properties that have no mains gas or have solid brick walls without cavities. The key targets from the Strategy on Energy Efficiency are included in the action plan in section 10 of this Business Plan.

vi) Central heating installation

There has been an ongoing programme to install central heating in all Council-owned properties since the 1980's. As of March 2001, central heating was installed within all the Council's remaining properties, which have access to a gas supply. The current position is that 5,911 homes (89.2%) now have gas central heating installed. All other properties have some form of central heating, mainly via electric storage radiators, although through advances in technology new efficient electric boilers are being installed on a trial basis, to replace old electric storage heaters, which operate in the same way as traditional gas boiler and radiators.

In addition to new installations, the Housing Assets Section programmes and undertakes the following other types of heating contracts:

- Replacing old defective and obsolete warm air heating systems, (due to be completed by 2009/10)
- Replacing old defective and obsolete Open Flue boilers including back boilers units,
- Replacing boilers that are no longer economical to repair
- Upgrading older/partial central heating systems.

All of the central heating systems replaced or upgraded are carried out using energy efficient, room sealed, gas boilers and traditional radiators. This increases the thermal efficiency of the property, reducing fuel costs and reducing the risks associated with open flue appliances.

Due to the specialist nature, new installation contracts are let in the form of design and build, based on a comprehensive performance design specification. These contracts were programmed and managed by external consultants through the Partnered Consultants initiative, however during 2008/09 the Housing Assets Section has programmed and managed the new installation contracts. This has resulted in better value for money and significant cost savings, as more heating installations are being completed with the budget available.

Since 2004, the Heating Programme has concentrated on the replacement of old defective and obsolete warm air heating systems with traditional radiator systems. During 2007/08 around 374 old defective and obsolete warm air heating systems were replaced with traditional radiator systems and 170 old boilers were replaced that were no longer economical to repair. It is anticipated that the programme for replacing old defective and obsolete warm air heating systems with traditional radiator systems will be completed by 2009/10, unless the tenant refuses to have the work carried out.

The budget for replacement heating and boilers in 2008/09 is around £720,000. Within the 5-year capital programme, this level of funding is maintained at between £700,000 - £750,000 per annum until 2012/13. This is to ensure the Decent Homes targets are met.

vii) Welfare heating installation

Welfare heating is a programme for installing heating in Council properties based on applications from tenants on medical grounds. In the past this has provided new heating where no heating previously existed, as well as changing warm air heating to traditional radiator systems, and upgrading partial heating systems to full systems.

Until 1999/00, the annual budget for Welfare Heating was £150,000. However, once the Council achieved its target to install full central heating into all of the Council's properties, and upgrade all partial heating systems to full central heating, the Welfare Heating programme has now been reduced to £50,000 per annum and is now limited to mainly replacement of warm air heating with traditional radiator systems where medical conditions dictate.

During the 2007/08, 6 new heating systems were installed and 4 heating system upgrades were carried out.

viii) Adaptations for the disabled

The Council has a duty to endeavor to adapt its properties to meet the need of disabled users, which is reflected by Council policy. The Council does not employ Occupational Therapists (OT's) itself to assess the needs of tenants and make recommendations accordingly. This service is provided by Essex County Council Social Services OT's.

Adaptations include both minor and major works and include the following types of work:

- Extensions to properties
- Through floor lifts
- Level access showers
- Over-bath showers
- Ramps
- Kitchens
- Stairlifts
- Hardstandings
- Minor adaptations inc. hand rails, half steps, grab rails etc.

Depending on the type of adaptation, target times have been introduced for processing applications. These target times vary depending on the work involved and current performance is within the target figures set. However, due to increases in the demand for disabled adaptations and the implementation of a waiting list for adaptations the overall waiting time from application to completion is expected to rise.

Where adaptations are estimated to cost in excess of £5,000 these cases are referred to a Disabled Needs Panel. This consists of both Council Officers and Social Services Occupational Therapists. The Panel discusses the individual needs of the tenants to establish if there are more cost effective options available, such as re-housing into more suitable accommodation.

The Council's approach to disabled adaptations was reviewed in 2004/05 under the Best Value Service Review. The main outcomes were to increase the annual budget to £300,000 and apply a ceiling for any one application equivalent to the maximum disabled facilities grant (currently £30,000). The Council has had concerns over its ability to fund all necessary adaptations and as a result Members again reviewed the annual budget for major adaptations at the Cabinet meeting in April 2006, where an additional 5% per annum was agreed. This means the budget for adaptations in 2009/10 is now £380,000.

In 2007/08 the Council received 356 recommendations for adaptations from Social Services in addition to 99 recommendations held over from the previous year. Of those, the Council was able to undertake and complete works to 381 properties. This meant 74 adaptations were held on the waiting list and carried forward for 2008/09.

The number of adaptation recommendations received each year has steadily increased from 87 minor adaptations and 27 major adaptations in 1998/99 rising to an estimated 240 minor adaptations and 120 major adaptations in 2008/09.

ix) Servicing and repair of gas appliances

The Council has a statutory duty under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1996 to service and maintain all Council-owned gas appliances, and to inspect all non-Council owned gas appliances within Council properties on an annual basis. The service and maintenance of non Council-owned appliances

remains the responsibility of the tenant.

Gas safety is one of, if not the most important issue in Housing Assets, and as such a Gas Safety Strategy was produced in April 2004, and is due to be updated in 2008/09.

The performance of the Gas Servicing contractor is subject to close monitoring and supervision by Council Officers. If the Contractors performance does not meet with the Councils expectations, then action is taken against that contractor, as was the case in 2003/4 when the Council determined the contract due to breaches in the Contractors contractual and legal obligations.

Following the determination of the gas contract in 2004 the Council split the district into two areas north and south, and appointed two contractors through a new 10-year Gas Servicing and Maintenance Term Partnering Agreement in July 2005. The tender was awarded on the basis of both quality and price.

The Council has been closely monitoring and benchmarking the performance of the two gas contractors in a number of key performance areas. Both contractors have recorded excellent performance and tenant satisfaction figures. More importantly the Council monitor the percentage of properties that have a current CP12 certificate and during 2007/08 the contractors achieved a 97.6% access success rate, this is an increase of 0.57% from the 2006/07 figures.

There are currently around 5,911 Council properties included on the gas service contract. Some properties have more than one gas appliance, and as such there are around 7,625 gas appliances in total. During 2007/08 the gas contractors responded to 431 emergency call outs and 6,341 breakdowns.

x) Communal Cold-water Storage Tank Replacement.

In October 2003 the Council commissioned a condition survey of the communal and individual cold-water storage tanks installed in 300 various blocks of flats and individual properties throughout the district. The condition survey prioritised the replacement of the cold-water storage tanks based on which year they would need to be replaced.

As a result, an ongoing renewal programme has been included in the Capital Programme since 2004/05. This has resulted in 343 communal storage tanks being replaced and upgraded in 105 blocks, including the 100 communal and individual cold-water storage tanks fitted during 2007/08.

The communal and individual cold-water storage tank replacement programme identifies 376 tanks are in need of replacement in 195 blocks. Of which 80 communal and individual cold-water storage tanks installed in 14 blocks of flats are planned for renewal in 2008/09.

During 2008/09 the Council introduced a 5-year framework agreement based on a schedule of rates for the installation of individual cold-water storage tanks, linked to contractor performance and a guaranteed maximum cost. The installation programme will be based around the new heating works programme and any adhoc installations identified as an urgent repair. Performance monitoring during the works will measure and record the quality of the finished product and if Tenant Satisfaction targets are being met.

xi) Re-roofing contracts

Re-roofing has, in the past, comprised a combination of the replacement of old flat or pitched roof coverings with new coverings, and the elimination of flat roofs in favour of more traditional pitched roofs.

Between 1993 and 2000/01, re-roofing was limited to just responsive repairs to flat roofs as a result of leaks or replacement as part of more major improvement schemes such as the PRC programme.

In 2000/01 the re-roofing programme was re-introduced, with financial resources allocated in the Capital Programme. Priorities are derived from the ongoing annual stock condition surveys. Based on the stock condition survey data collected in 2007/08, 146 roofs were identified as being in need of renewal before 2010 under the decent homes definition.

As a result of the 2007/08 re-roofing programme, a mix of flat and pitched roofs were renewed or refurbished on a number of blocks of flats containing 122 individual properties at a cost of £193,000, with additional roofs undergoing less expensive repairs. This meant that the number of roofs in need of renewal before 2010 has

been reduced, leaving 188 properties in need of renewal before 2010 under the decent homes definition.

During 2008/09 the Council introduced two 5-year framework agreements based on a schedule of rates, one for the renewal of flat roof coverings and the other for the renewal of tiled roof coverings, both linked to contractor performance and a guaranteed maximum cost.

The 2008/09 roofing programme is based around the ongoing stock condition surveys and the Decent Homes data, plus any adhoc replacements or urgent repairs identified by Housing Officers. Performance monitoring during the works will measure and record the quality of the finished product and ensure Tenant Satisfaction targets are being met. It is estimated that during 2008/09, 133 properties will have the flat roof covering renewed and 25 properties will have the tiled roof covering renewed, along with any emergency or routine repairs.

xii) Rewiring contracts

Electrical installations deteriorate with usage and age, and as such it is important that the Council ensures that the installations continue to be safe and in a serviceable condition. There are currently no statutory requirements for electrical testing or the inspecting of electrical installations in tenanted properties. However, this may change in the future.

Currently, when properties become void or works are carried out to the existing electrical installations the current electrical installation is tested and inspected for safety in accordance with the relevant British Standards and Regulations. The electrical test report identifies what works are necessary to bring the electrical installation up to the current electrical standards, and when the installation will next need to be inspected.

During 2006/07 the Council introduced a programme of planned electrical testing with contractors on long-term contracts who are able to carry out and certify this type of work.

Tenants have not in the past welcomed re-wiring works in their homes due to the high level of disruption it causes. In response to this, it was decided to link this unpopular, but essential, programme of work with other works, such as new heating installations, or kitchen and bathroom renewals, which are more acceptable to tenants. These linked works programmes and the length of time since the property was last inspected identifies prioritises which properties are included on the planned electrical testing programme.

Since 2004 around 2,428-properties have had electrical installation testing carried out. Any work identified is categorised as being, a full rewire, or urgent remedial work or corrective action to certain identified items. Some of the properties tested did not require any remedial works.

During 2007/08 around 430-properties have received electrical installation tests during the kitchen and bathroom, heating and rewiring and electrical testing programs resulting in full re-wires or electrical upgrading works being completed.

At the start of 2008/09, the stock condition survey identified around 476-properties were in need of rewiring or electrical upgrades. It is estimated that during 2008/09, around 300 electrical tests will be completed with around 50-properties requiring full rewires and 250-properties being upgraded at an estimated cost of £130,000. However, the majority of the properties completed are as a result of the linked programmes of work. Around 400-properties have been identified as in need of an electrical test during 2009/10 to ensure the Council meets its Decent Homes Targets by 2010, with a further 2,221-properties prioritised as in need of an electrical test.

All new electrical installations have to be carried out to the current IEE Regulations as appropriate at the time, and in accordance with Part P of the Building Regulations.

The Requirements for Electrical Installations BS 7671:2008 include the periodic inspection and testing of every electrical installation shall be carried out therefore in August 2007 the Council commenced an electrical testing programme of the landlord electrical supplies installed in Council owned blocks of flats.

Historically, the electrical testing of these areas has been on an adhoc basis however, linking the testing of the landlords supply with other works, such as door entry installations or the communal water-tank replacement programme all of the Councils 434-blocks of flats can be included on a planned programme of landlords supply electrical testing.

During 2007/08 the Council commenced the testing of the landlords supply and an estimated 77-blocks of flats have had electrical tests carried out. As a result of the testing 5-blocks have had remedial electrical upgrade works completed during the door entry and water tank installations. The remaining 72-blocks tested are planned for electrical upgrades during 2009/10 at a cost of around £25,000.

It is planned to continue the electrical testing programme on the remaining 357-blocks annually with an estimated 75-blocks identified for testing during 2009/10.

xiii) Door entry system installation

In order to protect both Council property and afford tenants with the confidence of security, the Council has introduced a policy to install door entry security systems, where appropriate, in blocks of flats and to replace older door entry systems where it is no longer economically viable to repair them. Where blocks contain leaseholders the Council will consider the blocks for inclusion in programmes of work subject to leaseholders paying a proportion of the costs.

The order in which door entry security is installed in blocks is determined by reference to the current priority criteria, as agreed by the Council, which is as follows:

- The number of reported incidents of crime
- The number of reported nuisance complaints
- The level of damage / vandalism to Council and residents' property, and
- Appropriate housing management considerations.

Following an extensive consultation process with the Police and Management Officers, the Housing Portfolio Holder agreed an updated 7-year programme in April 2005. As a result, new door entry systems were fitted to a further 7 blocks containing 121 individual dwellings during 2007/08 at a cost of £110,000.

Expenditure of around £80,000 is planned for 2008/09, which will provide improved security to a further 4 blocks.

There are still around 40 blocks throughout the district without the benefit of a door entry security system. With the current level of funding, it is anticipated that the installation programme of new security door entry systems will be completed in 2011/12. After 2012 a modernisation and improvement programme will need to be implemented to tackle those installations that are no longer economical to maintain.

In terms of repairs to existing door entry systems, a specialist maintenance contract has to be prepared to ensure the existing systems are repaired in the most cost effective manner.

xiv) Internal redecorations for elderly and disabled tenants

Generally, internal redecorations are the tenant's responsibility, as listed in the Conditions of Tenancy and the Tenants Handbook. However, a limited budget of around £75,000 is allocated each year to offer a redecoration service to certain qualifying tenants (mainly elderly). This permits one room of the tenant's choice to be decorated no more than every five years, where properties are either designated for use by the elderly or one bedroomed accommodation occupied by an elderly person. The rationale behind this is to target the services for those elderly people living in properties deemed especially suitable for them. The Council wants to encourage older tenants who are under occupying larger properties to transfer to properties, which better meet their housing needs.

Following the Council's decision to only undertake the decoration service to elderly residents living in sheltered accommodation or 1-bed flats, during 2007/08, the Council received 89 requests for help under the redecoration service. The Council regrettably has declined 21 applications however, a total of 68 internal redecoration requests were completed at a cost of £32,227.

During 2008/09, the level of applications for the decoration service has declined to around 70 applications, despite several promotions advertising the service.

xv) Structural repairs

The Council does not insure against damage to property caused by subsidence, heave or landslip following a risk assessment that established the cost of premiums would be higher than the likely cost of works. Most properties in the district are built on clay, which is the underlying stratum in this area. In addition to this, the Epping Forest District is a very green area with a large number of trees. Exceptions occur where

leaseholders exist in the block, then subsidence cover is included in the policy.

Most of the Council's stock was built at a time when foundation depths did not take account of tree roots or even clay heave and shrinkage. This does, from time to time, result in structural movement to properties, which must be monitored and remedied.

The monitoring process lasts for at least twelve-months, to take account of ground movement in all four seasons. Any properties that show signs of movement or distress will require the appointment of specialist structural engineer. The structural engineer will identify the cause of the structural movement, specify a repairs scheme, and in some cases supervise the works and monitor the recovery.

During 2008/09 the Council introduced a 5-year framework agreement based on a schedule of rates for structural repairs and maintenance, linked to contractor performance and a guaranteed maximum cost. The structural works programme will be based around the work identified from the structural register and urgent repairs reported by Housing Officers throughout the year. Performance monitoring during the works will measure and record the quality of the finished product and ensure Tenant Satisfaction targets are being met.

At the start of 2008/09, Housing Assets had 39 properties included on the structural register, which were being monitored. During the year it is estimated that 75 structural repairs will have been carried out, mainly through the structural repairs framework agreement with expenditure estimated at £95,500.

The structural register for 2009/10 includes, 4 properties being identified for further structural investigations and 8 properties being monitored.

xvi) Any other maintenance works in excess of £5,000

All major repairs, which cost in excess of £5,000, should be dealt with by the Housing Assets Section rather than the Repairs Section. This could cover any type of building maintenance work in a Council property. However, in a number of cases, the Housing Repairs Section will undertake works in excess of £5,000 on behalf of the Housing Assets Section.

xvii) Asbestos Removal

The Council treats the issue of asbestos extremely seriously. An Asbestos Control Project Team has been established to develop the Council's strategy and this has overseen the introduction of an asbestos survey, database and Asbestos Protocol. The database was established during 2002/03 and is useful in informing the Council and residents of asbestos hazards in properties. The information also helps the Council determine priorities in the removal of asbestos and an annual asbestos removal budget of £115,000 has been created for this purpose.

One outcome of the Asbestos Project Team was to produce a comprehensive Asbestos booklet, which gives advice to tenants on what to do if they suspect there may be asbestos in their home, and what measures to take when carrying out DIY in their homes. The leaflet was issued to all tenants in April 2006, and is designed to be inserted into their tenants handbook. In addition, during 2007/08, a detailed asbestos record is to be produced and held at each property, giving detailed information relating to known or suspected asbestos in each dwelling. This, in conjunction with the asbestos booklet, will help residents when undertaking DIY, or warn contractors of where asbestos is or suspected to be located.

Until 2003/04, any suspected asbestos containing materials were removed and analysed by specialist contractors. The annual budget for asbestos sampling was around £60,000. However, in March 2004, a number of Repairs and Assets Officers received training on how to remove samples for analysis. Since April 2004, all samples have been taken by Officers and then sent away for analysis. This has resulted in savings of around £50,000 per annum.

xviii) Estate Enhancements

The Estate Enhancement programme was introduced in 2005/06 specifically to carry out remedial works to around 100 prioritised schemes to footpaths, garage forecourts, drives, communal and recreation areas of housing owned land.

A list of estate enhancements based on recommendations from a number of sources is maintained, with works identified on the list in priority order based on risk taking account of the urgency of the repair, the potential hazard and condition of the existing area. A new schedule of rates contract for the estate

environmental repair works was tendered and let in 2007 for a maximum 5-year contact, on an annual renewal basis. The Housing Assets team manages this work.

During 2006/07 a total of 51 priority 1 schemes were completed along with 9 priority 2 schemes and 6 priority 3 schemes, leaving 34 schemes carried over into 2007/08.

During 2007/08, the 34 carried over schemes and a further 36 new schemes were identified by Housing Officers and added to the priority list. A total of 21 priority 1 schemes were completed along with 15 priority 2 schemes and 2 priority 3 schemes, leaving 26 schemes to be carried over into 2008/09.

During 2008/09, the 26 carried over schemes and a further 59 new schemes have been identified by Housing Officers and added to the priority list. It is estimated that during 2008/09 a total of 24 priority 1 schemes will be completed along with 49 priority 2 schemes no priority 3 schemes have been identified, leaving around 12 schemes to be carried over into 2009/10.

In 2009/10 the budget for estate environment works is £150,000, with £50,000 funded from the Housing Repairs Fund and £100,000 from the Housing Capital Programme depending on the type of work that is identified and carried out.

xix) Off Street Parking

With the Highways Agency returning to Essex County Council in April 2005, it has been necessary to set out some new procedures for logging, assessing, prioritising and recommending all future off street parking provision on Council estates where there are particular parking difficulties. As a result, Housing Assets have completed a priority list for off street parking schemes, which has identified sites throughout the District.

Feasibility studies have been completed on 10 of the highest scoring off street parking schemes identified on the priority list. The feasibility studies considered the suitability of each sites and prepared up to 3-design options for consideration and budget estimates. Housing Assts have completed a consultation exercise with residents affected by new off street parking schemes with results of the consultation exercise reported to Cabinet in September 2008.

The annual budget for off street parking has been increased to around £629,000, which is funded in part from the Housing Revenue Account £341,000 and General Fund contributions of £288,000 per annum for the next 3-years.

It is anticipated that a tendering exercise will be undertaken and a report submitted to the Cabinet in June 2009, with recommendations on the appointment of Consultants to undertake the detailed design process, preparing contract documents, contract administration and implementation of the works.

A further report on the results of the tendering exercise for the construction of the off street parking schemes listing the sites to be included in the 2-year programme of works will be submitted to the Cabinet late this year.

xx) Digital TV

For some time now, the Government has set out its intention to withdraw the analogue frequencies used for the distribution of terrestrial television channels in 2012. Over the past 3 years, the Council has been exploring the options available for the digital conversion. The Council maintains approximately 88 communal aerial distribution systems, the largest being on the Roundhills, Parklands, Ninefields and Springfields Housing Estates with the total number of outlets being approximately 2,500.

The cost of converting the television aerials is estimated to be around £150,000. However, television services are not included in the Government's Decent Homes Standard. The Cabinet, at its meeting in April 2005 agreed to the introduction a "Freeview" TV system to the blocks of flats. However, with advances in technology, it is now possible to extend the system to incorporate a full IRS system, giving residents a "Sky" option for no extra cost to the Council (subject to individual subscription).

Tenders were sought during 2008/09, and works to complete Phase 1 of the installation programme estimated at £100,000 has commenced. The following phases of the installation programme, planned for 2009/10 are as follows:

4. Stock Condition Survey

4.1 Stock Condition Survey

An effective plan for the repairs and improvement works to the Council's stock is dependent on the outputs of a stock condition survey. The Council's previous stock condition survey was carried out in 2000/2001, and was based on a 100% external survey and a 20% internal sample. Data collected was then cloned based on types and ages of properties to present a full assessment of the condition of the Council's stock.

In summary:

a) the total level of catch up repairs identified by the survey amounted to £33,334,274.

b) The total cost of maintenance over the next 30 years was calculated at £144,366,887.

The Council has undertaken a stock options appraisal and the information obtained from the survey was used to inform the recommendations resulting from this exercise.

The information has also been used as the baseline for the calculation of the number of non-decent homes and the resulting investment strategy is devised around the findings of the survey.

The stock condition survey has been updated with work undertaken by the Council since the survey was undertaken, with additional surveys being undertaken to reduce the number of cloned surveys to ensure that it is current and accurate. The Council purchased the "Codeman" Asset Management System from Anite, which is the main source of data on stock condition.

The Codeman system is very versatile, and is being utilised to capture a variety of stock information, which is used for the following purposes:

- Decent Homes
- Stock Condition and future asset management
- Asbestos Register
- Energy Efficiency
- Housing Health & Safety Rating Scheme (HHSRS)

Currently officers are capturing enough information to complete the Decent Homes Surveys, including the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme, which replaced the Fitness Standards in April 2006 used by Environmental Health Officers, and information on any asbestos containing material. Any property that fails the Decent Homes Survey is included on the appropriate works programme to bring the property up to the required standard.

The Housing Health & Safety Rating System, which replaced the fitness standard used by Environmental Health Officers to assess the condition of dwellings in April 2006, relates to the condition of the property and the risks associated with the individual occupants living in the dwelling will be collected as part of the on-going stock condition survey. This change had a minimal impact on the Council's ability to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

Using a Partnering form of contract for the External Repairs and Redecorations, efficiency savings in staffing resources have been realised amounting to 1.5 FTE Officers, which is allowing more time to collect stock condition survey information amongst other duties.

To date, the Council has undertaken a full and detailed internal and external stock condition survey of around 3,583 properties, making up over 54% of the housing stock. This ensures accurate and up to date Stock Condition Records are maintained and Capital Works Programmes are directed at those properties in the most need.

4.2 Integrated Housing Database

The introduction of the Anite Open Housing Management System (OHMS) integrated computer database in 1998/9, and its ongoing development, has enabled a comprehensive property database to be compiled, including basic information such as unique property reference number (UPRN), dwelling type, age, size. In addition it provides details on design features, built form characteristics, repairs history and works undertaken.

4.3. Codeman

The Housing Assets team use “Codeman”, which is a specialist module linked to the OHMS database. Codeman is not only a stock condition database, but also an asset management tool that reports on future maintenance investment. The software is currently in the process of being upgraded.

5. Quality Repairs and Maintenance Service

5.1 Tenant Satisfaction

In November 2008, an independent tenant satisfaction survey was undertaken by the National Housing Federation (NHF). The main headlines of the findings are listed below.

A standard questionnaire and survey process called "STATUS" was used, which is endorsed by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Housing Corporation (HC).

Around 1,563 tenants (22% of all Council tenants) were randomly selected by the NHF to be surveyed. An exceptionally high response of 829 surveys were returned (53%).

In conclusion, the tenants were very pleased with the service they received across the whole of the housing directorate, but in particular, they were exceptionally pleased with the Council's repairs and maintenance services, and with the contact they have with the Council's staff.

It was recorded that 86% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service (compared with the national average of 73%), which is up 2% compared to 2006. The Council ranked a strong first in its peer group for all aspects of the repairs and maintenance service measured.

5.2 Customer Perspective Programme

In pursuit of customer excellence, in spring 2007, Housing Services initiated a "Customer Perspective Programme", which looks at how housing services are provided to customers from a customer perspective. This includes the repairs and maintenance service. A group of Officers from each section of the Housing Directorate, along with tenant representatives will analyse all aspects of the "interface" that Housing Services have with customers with a view to finding out how services can be improved further.

A Customer Perspective Action Plan will be compiled as part of the review, with actions relating to repairs and maintenance appearing in future editions of this Business Plan.

5.3 Housing Excellence Plan

The Audit Commission has produced a number of key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) relating to the provision of housing services, which represent a set of questions and statements around either service or judgment of specific issues, which provide a consistent approach to assessing and measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of housing services. Descriptors of fair and excellent services are intended to help organizations to understand how the quality of service is judged against KLOEs.

In pursuit of excellence, the repairs and maintenance service (along with all other aspects of the Housing Directorate) is currently reviewing the KLOE's that relate to repairs and maintenance, and identifying actions that need to be introduced in order to attain the "excellent" level in each category. The Action Plan in Section 11 of this Business Plan includes a number of new initiatives, which lead to an "excellent" service.

6. Expected trends

This section is a summary of the major issues taken into consideration when framing the investment programme for the Council's housing stock.

6.1 Expenditure

Expected expenditure trends over can be summarised as follows:

Decent Homes – The Government's Decent Homes initiative is now the key factor in planning the investment programme for the Council's stock. A separate section of this Business Plan is devoted to how the Council will meet the challenge.

Declining levels of stock by approximately 1.4% per annum – The Council has sold 26 houses and flats during 2007/8. However, this has been much higher in previous years with an average of 54 properties sold each year over the last 5 years. This has the effect of reducing the need for maintenance expenditure (although for leasehold properties the Council retains responsibility for structural issues) and reducing income into the HRA.

Increases in building maintenance costs – Building costs are increasing by approximately 5-6% per annum, which is more than double the GDP inflation rate. However, given the effect of investment through planned maintenance, expenditure has been falling on an annual basis. The current economic down-turn has not resulted in tender price decreases.

Uncertain levels of demand for responsive repairs and voids expenditure – Between 1997/8 and 2003/4 responsive repairs and voids expenditure decreased by around 38%. Generally, adequate investment in planned maintenance should lead to a reduction in responsive repairs and voids expenditure. However, these are always the most difficult areas within the Housing Repairs Fund (HRF) to estimate given they are responsive to demand. The District has experienced relatively mild winters in recent times and a harsh winter would increase expenditure significantly beyond current budgeted levels.

Continued demand for structural repairs – Expenditure on structural repairs has increased significantly in recent years. A number of Council properties were constructed using non-traditional building methods during the 1960's and now require additional levels of maintenance above traditional properties. A number of structural repairs have been completed and there are likely to be other parts of the Council's stock also requiring similar levels of investment.

The Council is not insured for subsidence, heave and landslip as estimates showed that premiums were likely to be higher than expenditure.

Increasing costs for servicing and improvement/replacement of existing central heating – All Council tenants requesting central heating now have heating installed. Likely resultant trends include: increasing servicing and repair costs; increased costs to replace existing systems when beyond repair; the need to upgrade partial central heating systems; reduction in demand for welfare heating; and the ongoing need to replace warm air heating systems with 'wet' central heating systems.

Continued demand for planned maintenance expenditure – An ageing stock will require increased levels of repairs although this can be offset by a planned maintenance programme. Nationally there is a trend for higher standards in social housing (as demonstrated by the decent homes initiative) and the Council must ensure that the requirements of decent homes are balanced against the need for ongoing investment in its stock to protect its value and long-term let-ability.

Need to adapt communal aerial schemes to the requirements of digital television – Existing communal television systems will become redundant unless they can be converted to meet the requirements of digital television. This will affect approximately 5,700 tenants and private residents. Provision has been made within the investment programme to upgrade the aerials in Council blocks to receive digital signals, with works commenced during 2008..

Need to tackle anti-social behavior through the use of CCTV – With an increase in anti-social behavior,

which results in an increase in the amount of expenditure on repairing damage caused through vandalism, consideration needs to be given to combating this growing problem. Work is on-going between the Council and the Police Service, which has resulted in a CCTV Policy being drawn up by the Head of Environmental Services. A small on-going budget for the installation of CCTV surveillance systems has been included within the investment programme.

Recruitment of skilled craft workers – With the Olympics coming to East London in 2012, there is a real possibility that contractors and sub-contractors will be pulling resources to more lucrative development sites in and around London in the years leading up to the London Olympics. This could lead to higher building costs and a shortage of skilled labour.

Economic downturn – Much has been reported about the current economic downturn, with the construction industry being hit hard. Whilst this is mainly affecting new build, general maintenance work is less affected. In order to help local businesses through these difficult financial times, all Council tenders will seek to include at least one local business on the list of tenderers.

6.2 Investment Needs

This section provides a summary of the main areas of investment identified by the stock condition survey. A separate section deals with needs arising from the decent homes initiative. These are broken into the same categories used in Appendices A (summary of expenditure over a 5 year period) and B (summary of expenditure over the next 30 years).

(a) Future Planned Maintenance

There are a number of major works that can be identified from the stock condition survey, other major improvement schemes or development opportunities. These have been prioritised taking into account the decent homes criteria and Appendix A details the investment strategy over the next five years. Appendix B shows this same information over the next 30 years.

(b) Structural Repairs

This heading covers the work undertaken to preserve the structural integrity of buildings such as underpinning. The authority has regularly had to undertake structural work to properties to control problems such as subsidence and around £2.65 million has been set-aside over the next five years for this purpose.

(c) Cyclical Maintenance

In order to prolong the useful life of components, it is necessary to carry out regular inspections, instigate repairs and undertake preventative maintenance on sub-components e.g. replacement boiler parts.

It is likely that further inspections will be required to building components not currently covered by cyclical maintenance. This is most likely to affect the inspection of all electrical systems in Council properties on an annual basis. However, until this happens the Council will continue to inspect the electrical systems as part of the void inspections and the stock condition survey.

Included in the Housing Repairs Fund around £2.18 million is spent per year on cyclical maintenance, which includes: the repair and redecoration of every property and garage every 5 years; the maintenance, service and repair of all Council owned gas appliances and the inspection and service of all Council owned hydro-mechanical lifts on an annual basis.

(d) Responsive Repairs

The current ratio of maintenance to repair expenditure is 69:31 (taking account of HRF and Capital expenditure). However, the Audit Commission's recommended balance is 70:30 (based on HRF expenditure only).

This is maintained by monitoring the expenditure for day-to-day repairs by types of work and then developing maintenance programmes which would obtain better value for money. This process is currently being carried out at 6 monthly intervals, in September and March each year.

The Housing Repairs Fund makes allowance for around £6 million in 2009/10 and then £5.6 million per year

over the next four years, taking into account a 5% increase per annum in Building Cost Indices and a reduction of 0.8% for the rate of decline in stock numbers as a result of the Right to Buy scheme. The Capital programme includes around £1.8 million over the next 5 years for small capital repairs.

(e) Voids Refurbishment

This area of expenditure is also mainly funded from revenue and as such the comments regarding the split between capital and revenue apply. It is expected that the authority will spend approximately £4.16 million over the next five years on void refurbishment.

(f) Cost Reflective Improvements

Until the introduction of the Repairs and Maintenance Business Plan "Cost reflective" improvements had not previously been considered a separate category of works, since the Council's rent structure was not based on a points system which takes account of individual attributes. Cost reflective improvements, such as kitchen and bathroom modernisations, have in the past not previously been considered as essential.

Feedback from tenants has established that they feel the Council should make its properties more attractive and desirable by introducing programmes such as kitchen and bathroom replacements. This has since been supported by the decent homes guidance, which requires authorities to have reasonable modern kitchen and bathroom facilities. In order to meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard, substantial investment is required in this area. The Council is using this opportunity to offer tenants a choice on the type and layout to suit individuals' tastes and needs.

The table in Appendix A makes allowances for approximately £5.579 million over the next 5 years for kitchen and bathroom replacements.

(g) Non-Cost Reflective Improvements

Under this heading, the Council provides an environmental improvement scheme for improving parking provision on its estates by carrying out a jointly funded initiative between the HRA and the General Fund to provide off street parking.

The table in Appendix A makes allowances for £2.833 million over the next 5 years. This has been allocated towards improvements to estate footpaths, communal refuse facilities, off street parking and new and enhanced external lighting.

(h) Disabled Adaptations

The Council endeavors to carry out adaptations to properties to meet the reasonable needs of disabled tenants. This is based on assessments and recommendations from Social Services Occupational Therapists.

The Best Value Review examined the Disabled Adaptations Service and concluded that current levels of investment were inadequate.

The Council's previous commitment was to spend at least £300,000 per annum over the next 5 years on disabled adaptations. However, this was recently reviewed, which led to the budget being increased by 5% annually. Appendix A shows a budget of £400,000 in 2008/9.

(i) Other Maintenance and Repairs

Other types of maintenance and repairs include: decoration allowances for new tenants when they move into a home; internal decorations for elderly and disabled tenants; internal decorations to the common areas within the Council's sheltered housing schemes; and compensation payments to tenants who undertake improvements to their homes themselves and subsequently move out leaving behind the improvements they have carried out.

7. Decent Homes Initiative

7.1 Background

In July 2000, following its spending review the Government announced a significant increase in resources for housing, especially social housing. This was on top of substantial increases announced in 1998. As part of its desire to link increased spending to better outcomes, the Government has established a target to:

“ensure that all social housing meets standards of decency by 2010, by reducing the number of households living in social housing that does not meet these standards by a third between 2001 and 2004 with most of the improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas.”

Under the Government’s Decent homes initiative a decent home meets the following criteria:

a) *Any residential premises should have a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor (Formally the statutory minimum standard for housing)*

b) *It is in a reasonable state of repair*

Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those where either:

- One or more key building components are old and because of their condition need replacing or major repairs: or
- Two or more of the other building components are old and because of their condition need replacing or major repair.

c) *It has reasonable modern facilities and services*

- Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those which lack three or more of the following:
- A reasonably modern kitchen (less than 20 years old)
- A kitchen with adequate space and layout
- A reasonably modern bathroom (30 years old or less)
- An appropriately located bathroom and WC
- Adequate insulation against external noise (where external noise is a problem)
- Adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats.

d) *It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort*

This criterion requires dwellings to have both effective insulation and efficient heating. To deliver against the targets the Council needs to:

- quantify the level of non decent housing both now and arising by 2010, in its stock;
- develop an investment strategy to tackle this; and
- measure progress towards its elimination.

7.2 Quantifying the level of non-decent homes

Since the start of 2002 the Council has been able to begin the process of analysing the data contained within the stock condition survey. The process used to extract the relevant information has been as follows:

- 1) Confirm the validity of the information contained within the stock condition survey using separate consultants to undertake a sample survey of the results.
- 2) Define the characteristics that render a property non-decent using the criteria set out above.

- 3) Develop a suite of programs to interrogate the database to collect information on the number of properties with the identified characteristics.
- 4) Interrogate the database to reveal the number of non-decent homes on an annual basis.
- 5) Calculate the average rate of properties becoming non-decent each year using these two figures.

This exercise was first conducted in 2001, which revealed a total number of 1,627 homes, which were non-decent. This equated to 22% of all the Council's housing stock. If the Council were not to have undertaken any further investment in the stock this number would have increased to 4,127 (67%) by the year 2010. There were therefore 2,500 properties that were potentially non-decent in addition to those non-decent at the time.

Based on this information it was anticipated that there would have been 2,480 non-decent homes in 2004 if the Council did not adopt an investment programme. In fact, as a result of the Council's strategies, the actual number was 590, which represented 8.6% of the housing stock. This meant that between 2001 and 2004, the percentage change in the number of non-decent homes was a reduced by 64%, which was well within the government's target of a one third reduction. The level of non-decent homes as at 1 April 2008 is 3.58% of the Council's housing stock, which amounts to 237 homes.

One area, which requires significant investment to achieve the decent homes standard, relates to kitchens and bathrooms under the 'Reasonably Modern Facilities' category. Since 2002, the Council has already invested £2.9 million to improve the quality and layout of bathrooms and kitchens in properties where facilities are seen as being in the worst condition, and around £5.5 million is planned to be invested over the next 5-years

The main area for investment arising from the decent homes standard concerns the Reasonable State of Repair category. Properties failing under the Reasonable State of Repair criteria will generally be addressed as part of the existing cyclical maintenance programme which already covers most of the repairs identified, such as re-pointing, repairs to chimneystacks, doors and windows etc. However, there is a significant requirement to invest in replacement heating systems and electrical re-wiring, where around £4.4 million has been spent on replacement heating and boiler replacement, and around £3.1 million on electrical rewiring since 2002.

The Council also acknowledges that the thermal comfort of some properties needs to be addressed. Generally, the Council has a good track record in improving heating in properties and 5,911 already have gas central heating installed. There are however, some properties (particularly in the rural areas) which do not have access to mains gas and which require heating and insulation improvements. These have been identified within the non-decent homes figures and will be addressed over the next 3 years. Appendix C of this Business Plan sets out the Council's position regarding the Decent Homes Targets.

7.3 Investment Strategy

The stock condition database can be interrogated in such a way that lists of all the properties that fail or potentially fail the criteria can be produced. Using this information a programme of work has been developed without having to undertake additional survey work.

The key strategy which has been employed to develop programmes of work is to look at where properties are failing and then only undertake work which will ensure that they are not caught by the criteria. For example, where properties fail on three or more categories under the Reasonably Modern Facilities heading just one category of work will be improved so that they no longer become non decent. Under this heading the standard says that properties must fail on three or more of the categories listed to become non-decent. In this way, although additional investment would still be required, the number of non-decent homes can be reduced.

Using this approach, as of 2001 a total of £14 million was required to eliminate non-decent homes by 2010. However, this does not include the resources necessary to prevent properties becoming non-decent, although Appendix C shows the expenditure required taking into account properties likely to fail the standard before 2010. The first column in the table shows all the failures against the standard in 2001. Some properties may fail on several different criteria and as such totals cannot be cross-referenced with the total number of non-decent homes, because properties can only fail the standard once. The final column of Appendix C shows where expenditure will be programmed to meet decent homes target and this expenditure

is contained within Appendix B.

Using this approach, together with current funding forecasts, it is expected that the decent homes targets can be reached through the capital investment already available. (See the next section for details of the Council's short and longer-term investment plans.) The next section also discusses the funding gap between the full level of maintenance work required under the stock condition survey and the Council's ability to fund improvements.

7.4 Measuring progress

The stock condition database is amended to include work already undertaken to the Council's stock. In future this task will be done on the new Codeman4 system, which can be interrogated to provide information on the number of non-decent homes.

The ongoing stock condition survey work will also clarify some of the data on the numbers on non-decent homes and it is possible that the numbers of non-decent homes will change as the quality of data improves.

8. Resources & Expenditure Proposals

8.1 Financial

As highlighted earlier, there are a number of uncertainties over future projections of the financial resources likely to be made available. Repairs and Maintenance expenditure is currently funded through;

- Contributions from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to the Housing Repairs Fund (HRF)
- Transitional Capital Receipts
- Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay (RCCO).
- Major Repairs Reserve (MRR)

The following issues are worthy of note at this stage:

The contribution from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has been set at approximately £6.00 million for 2008/9 and £5.6 million each year after that next 4-years.

Funding is provided from the MRR at £5.265 million for 2009/10, although this varies for the next 5 years as laid out in the table below.

The following table indicates an assessment of the use of capital resources, which are forecast to become available over the next five years. The Capital programme is updated annually in June.

FUNDING SOURCE	2009/10 £000's	2010/11 £000's	2011/12 £000's	2012/13 £000's	2013/14 £000's
MRR	5,265	3,608	3,921	4,373	4,321
RCCO	1,525	1,763	1,450	700	750
Leaseholder Contributions	50	50	50	50	50
Total	6,840	5,421	5,421	5,123	5,121

At the conclusion of the five-year period that the Council is forecast to have balances of approximately £8.8 million on the Major Repairs Reserve, which are not being allocated at this stage.

8.1.1 Overall Investment Strategy – 5 Year

Based on the income projections shown in the above table, a detailed programme of expenditure has been prepared which can be found at Appendix A demonstrating how the Council currently intends to spend the resources available for repairs and maintenance. This is based on two main priorities:

- a) Achievement of government targets to reduce the number of non decent homes; and
- b) The need to invest in the stock to improve its condition as determined by the on-going stock condition survey.

Appendix A adds together all anticipated capital expenditure for a 5-year period up to and including 2012/13.

SUMMARY OF THE HOUSING CAPITAL FIVE YEAR PROGRAMME

Detail	FORECAST SPENDING				
	2009/10 £000's	2010/11 £000's	2011/12 £000's	2012/13 £000's	2013/14 £000's
Future Planned Maintenance	2,473	2,410	2,410	2,410	2,410
Structural Schemes	405	635	635	635	635
Cyclical Maintenance	23	5	5	5	5
Small Capital Repairs (inc voids)	400	350	350	350	350
Cost Reflective Repairs	2,067	878	878	878	878
Non-cost Reflective Repairs	919	628	628	330	328
Disabled Adaptations	430	450	450	450	450
Others, including contingencies	123	65	65	65	65
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	6,840	5,421	5,421	5,123	5,121
TOTAL FUNDING, including M.R.R and Capital Receipts (excluding carry forwards)	6,840	5,421	5,421	5,123	5,121

The table compares the planned expenditure against the anticipated funding position and does not include the total expenditure or investment which is required for the stock, it simply shows how much can be funded. The achievement of decent homes targets, the priorities established by the stock condition survey and existing expenditure already approved and contained within housing budgets would require capital funding of approximately £40 million in total over the next five years. Current estimates show that around £29.5 million is likely to become available over the same time period through capital funding.

Revenue expenditure covering repairs, voids, cyclical maintenance and disabled adaptations is estimated at £5.8 million per annum. HRA contributions to the HRF will be able to support this expenditure.

8.1.2 Overall Investment Strategy – 30 years

Appendix B provides an analysis of capital, or investment expenditure, over a 30-year period. There are a considerable number of doubts over the validity of some of the projected figures over this period of time but nonetheless this table provides the best estimate given the information currently available. Using this information the available funding will not meet all requirements identified in the stock condition survey by approximately £28.2 million over the 30-year period. Five years ago, the Business Plan identified a funding gap of approximately £60m. This has reduced as a result of anticipated increased investment through capital receipts and the MRA. Again the funding gap is discussed more in the HRA Business Plan, which refers to the Stock Options Appraisal exercise.

The current revenue expenditure on repairs and maintenance can be maintained for a further 22 years before the HRA falls into deficit. This is covered within the HRA Business Plan.

8.1.3 Maximising Value

It is essential that the Council adopts a value for money approach so that resources can be used to maximum efficiency. To this end a strategy has been adopted which seeks the replacement of building components just before they break down. This is known as a 'just in time' strategy and is based on industry standard assessments for the lifetime of components. At the same time the lifespan of building components such as heating appliances are extended by the replacement of sub components where possible. The investment strategy outlined in this section is based in part on these strategies.

Another issue is the use of option appraisals for all redevelopment and refurbishment schemes. This approach has already been used for the redevelopment of a sheltered scheme, major refurbishment at Springfields, Waltham Abbey and has been applied to assess the best option for the future of the Council's homeless hostel. This approach is clearly not appropriate for every maintenance project but where significant expenditure is required for a contained number of properties it can be a useful guide to the most

cost effective route.

8.1.4 Gershon Savings

Following Sir Peter Gershon's review of public sector efficiency, which identified the need to achieve value for money savings through better procurement in order to release resources to support the key policy objectives of the Government, an annual efficiency statement is completed by the Council as a whole. As a result all areas of the service are being examined to identify ways in which the way in which repairs and maintenance can become more efficient.

Significant savings have been identified as a result of the use of partnering contracts, undertaking work in-house through training that was previously undertaken by specialist contractors, generating income by using a sole utility provider as part of the void process, negotiating with contractors over price increases below DTI indices wherever possible and investing in alternative technology to reduce long-term costs.

8.2 Staffing

At the beginning of 2007/8, the Housing Assets Section comprised 12 FTE members of staff, including one FTE Trainee Surveyor post. However, the use of consultants will always be necessary because they provide specialist skills, which could not be economically provided by permanent members of staff. The Council has access to a multi-disciplinary firm of consultants appointed through the Essex Procurement Hub, who can be called upon at any time to provide additional support including:

- Mechanical and engineering work
- Drainage work
- Architectural and Structural Engineering
- Structural Engineering
- Building Surveying
- Structural work
- Feasibility studies.

8.3 Partnering – The Egan Approach

One difficulty experienced by the Council was finding reliable consultants to support the work of the Maintenance Section. New methods of appointment were explored and the Council has approved the use of a partnering arrangement following the principles of the Egan Report. Two consultants were selected, which provided greater flexibility in the resourcing of maintenance projects as well as accessing a wider range of skills than could be provided through in-house staff. It would be difficult for the Council to recruit enough members of staff with suitable skills to oversee the diversity of work included in the 5 or 30 year plan.

Full project partnering has also now been applied to embrace contractors and suppliers for the kitchen and bathroom programme, new heating installations, rewiring external repair and redecoration work and Gas Servicing. Framework agreements are also widely used for specialist areas of work where the frequency cannot be predicted with any accuracy. This has resulted in significant efficiency savings, which are included in the Council's annual efficiency statement.

8.4 Value for Money

8.4.1 Essex Hub – Essex wide procurement

In October 2006, the Council joined the "Essex Procurement Hub", which brings new opportunities to deliver greater value for money for the procurement of goods and services. The Hub works in two ways, one by combining the buying power of many Local Authorities across Essex to get lower costs through the economies of scale, and another by utilizing the expert knowledge and skills of the procurement team who prepare contracts, mainly as framework agreements and tender the works on behalf of the Council. This is a corporate initiative, which Housing Services intend to make use of whenever future contracts are to be let.

8.4.2 Benchmarking

In January 2007, a bi-annual benchmarking exercise took place of the Building Maintenance Works Unit to review the current schedule of rates against a range of 20 comparison organizations within the Home Counties and to look at organization overheads in comparison to private repairs contractors.

It was clear that of the 20 Local Authorities that were compared, only 2 undertake the majority of their responsive repairs through a Building Maintenance Works Unit, whereas 5 operate their own Building Maintenance Works Unit alongside external contractors. There were 8 Local Authorities that outsourced their whole contracting element of the repairs service

Based on the Schedule of Rates comparison, it was suggested that on average, the Building Maintenance Works Unit were securing keen material prices. However, on average the Schedule of rates were 1.64% higher than average. It was suggested that this was due to the relatively small scale of the Building Maintenance Works Unit in comparison to the other organisations included in the study.

When comparing wage rates, it was suggested that in general, the salary rates were in line with national averages with the exception of carpenters, which are slightly higher than average.

There were some areas of concern expressed as part of the benchmarking exercise.

The existing schedule of rates are lengthy and cumbersome, with many rarely or never used. It was recommended that the schedule of rates be reviewed and simplified, but more importantly brought in line with actual works that are carried out on a regular basis.

The existing salary system should be more performance based, taking account of output or targets, quality, completion of jobs on time, fix first time and tenant satisfaction. However, this works against the principles of the recent Job Evaluation exercise implemented in 2005/6.

Further benchmarking exercise of the whole of the Housing Service was undertaken using "Housemark", which is a national housing benchmarking organisation in Autumn 2006, and again in November 2008. These benchmarking exercise enabled us to compare our service based on detailed performance and cost data. In the main, the comparison organisations were housing associations rather than Local Authorities. However the results give a good indication of the level of performance and cost by comparison to others. A further benchmark exercise is due to take place in January 2010/11.

The outcome of the benchmark exercise illustrated areas for improvement in relation to all aspects of the repairs and maintenance service, particularly in relation to target completion times and appointments.

9. Risk Management

9.1 Introduction

Risk management can be defined as the consideration of the social, economic, political and other factors involved in risk analysis to determine both the acceptability of damage that could result from an event or exposure and what, if any, action should be taken with regard to the risk of that damage.

9.2 Corporate Risk Register

A Corporate Risk Management & Assurance Group has been established, made up of Officers from each Council Service, to produce and regularly review a Corporate Risk Register, and to collate service based risk assessments. The Asst. Director (Private Sector Housing) is the representative of the Housing Directorate.

9.3 Housing Risk Register

In early 2005, the former Housing Services produced its own Housing Risk Register, which identified the strategic and operations risks affecting Housing Services. Strategic risks are those that have an effect on the Council as a whole, where individuals, sections or even Housing Services has a whole have no total control over the outcome of risk management. Operational risks are those that affect individuals or sections of Housing Services, or the Housing Service as a whole, and will have little or no impact on the Council as a whole. The Risk Register is updated 6-monthly, and an action plan created and monitored for those risks that are above the "critical line". All risks associated with the Building Maintenance Works Unit, Housing Repairs and Housing Assets are included within the Housing Risk Register,

The Housing Risk Register has been developed by applying a risk analysis, whereby each of the identified risks are assessed in terms of likelihood and impact. "Likelihood" ranges from "very high" to "almost impossible" and "Impact" ranges from "catastrophic" to "negligible".

Risk management is applied to each of the identified risks, through exploring the best options to reduce either likelihood or impact or both. Not all risks can be reduced, but they can be managed.

The action plan for "critical" risks relating to Repairs and Maintenance are included in Section 10 of this Business Plan.

9.4 Key Housing Operational Risks – Repairs and Maintenance

The following have been identified as the Key Housing Repairs and Maintenance Operational Risks within the Housing Risk Register:

- Failure to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- The HRA falling into deficit
- Disaster at a sheltered housing scheme or Homeless Persons Hostel
- Disaster at the Civic Offices or The Broadway Area Housing Office
- Major failure of the integrated housing IT system
- Loss or insolvency of, or poor performance by, a major contractor/supplier
- Major incident, involving death or serious injury, due to poor health and safety procedures, or breach of health and safety legislation
- Significant overspend on a major housing maintenance contract
- Fraud, corruption and theft
- Loss of important paper records
- Failure to comply with Government or legislative requirements
- Physical or verbal attacks on staff
- Uninsured losses, especially through subsidence, heave or landslip
- Catastrophic budget overspends

10. Strategies

This section of the document lists the main strategies, which flow from firstly, the objectives, strategies and policies previously agreed by the authority and secondly, the issues discussed in this plan. Where these have clear links with corporate objectives or Best Value/Business Plan Guidance this is identified. There may not be current funding available to achieve all targets, but the effect of these strategies will be to focus available resources.

	Strategy	Link with Corporate Objective/Guidance
A	Maintenance and Repair Programmes	
1	<p>To develop ongoing programmes of maintenance and repairs expenditure for a period, of five and 30 years based on:</p> <p>Projections of the amount of funding likely to be available for repairs and maintenance;</p> <p>The findings of the stock condition survey;</p> <p>The number of non decent homes and reasons for them being non decent;</p> <p>The need to eliminate non decent homes by 2010;</p> <p>Patterns of demand for responsive repairs;</p> <p>Key targets (see below);</p>	<p>ODPM Guidance on Business Plans</p> <p>EFDC Council Plan</p> <p>EFDC Performance Plan</p> <p>EFDC HECA Strategy</p> <p>EFDC Fuel Poverty Strategy</p> <p>Decent Homes Guidance</p> <p>Housing Services Risk Strategy</p> <p>Equalities Impact Assessments</p>
2.	<p>To achieve the following key targets:</p> <p>Upgrade all partial heating systems previously installed under the Welfare Heating Programme to full central heating by 2010</p> <p>Replace all existing warm air heating systems by 2010.</p> <p>Identify hard to heat properties and carry out additional insulation measures to improve the energy efficiency of the property.</p> <p>Average SAP rating of 69 by end of 2010</p> <p>Explore alternative fuel sources for properties in the rural communities where properties are harder to insulate and affordably heat.</p>	<p>EFDC Council Plan</p> <p>EFDC Performance Plan</p> <p>Housing Services Strategy on Energy Efficiency</p> <p>HECA Strategy</p> <p>EFDC Fuel Poverty Strategy</p>
3.	<p>To ensure maximum value for money from maintenance expenditure by:</p> <p>Extending the life cycle of building components as long a possible so that they are replaced 'just in time.'</p> <p>Using criteria for the replacement of sub</p>	<p>ODPM Guidance on Business Plans</p>

	<p>components to extend the lifetime of heating systems, door entry systems, window units and other building components.</p> <p>Employing option appraisals where significant maintenance expenditure is required on a limited number of properties.</p>	
B.	Responsive Repairs and Voids Work	
1.	To continue to reduce expenditure on voids in line with the recommendations of the Voids and Lettings Study by ensuring as much work takes place as possible through planned maintenance contracts.	Voids and Lettings Study
2.	To aim to spend the HRF allocation from the HRA each year whilst acknowledging the fluctuating nature of repairs and maintenance programmes.	EFDC Housing Strategy Housing Services Risk Strategy
C.	Resources	
1.	<p>To maximise funding on maintenance expenditure by:</p> <p>Making use of available capital receipts where possible.</p> <p>Using RCCO where possible.</p> <p>Transferring approximately £6 million from the HRA into the HRF in 2008/9 and £5.6 million each year for a further 4-years.</p>	Housing Services Risk Strategy Capital Strategy
2.	To review the level of staffing resources annually against the planned level of expenditure.	
3.	Monitor repairs and voids expenditure every six months to identify patterns in expenditure, which could be incorporated into a planned maintenance programme through the use of new or existing framework agreements.	
D.	Tenant Consultation and Participation	
1.	To discuss expenditure plans and programmes of work with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation at least annually.	EFDC Tenant Participation Agreement
2.	To involve representatives of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation in discussions on new policies relating to the Repairs and Maintenance Services.	EFDC Tenant Participation Agreement Housing Services Risk Strategy
3.	To consult tenants affected by major improvement schemes over the proposals.	
4.	To consult leaseholders on all planned	

	improvements in line with Leasehold legislation	
5.	To undertake a "Customer Perspective" review of the Repairs Service	Customer Perspective Programme
E.	Contract Strategy	
1.	To roll out the use of either framework agreements in the form of Partnering contracts to new areas of work.	Housing Services Risk Strategy
2.	To utilize the Essex Hub wherever possible to enter into framework agreements with (sub) contractors or suppliers.	

11. Action plan

11.1 List of main actions flowing from the plan

This table lists the main areas of action required within the Building Maintenance Works Unit, Housing Repairs and Assets Sections to achieve the strategies detailed in the previous sections. The Action Plan also contains all actions arising from the Best Value Service Review

Action	Officer responsible	Target date	Progress
1. Implement programme for repairs and maintenance expenditure over 5 and 30 years as per Strategies A) (1) and (2).	HAM ADoH(P)	Ongoing	Included in this plan
2. Implement upgrade to latest version of Codeman software	HAM	July 2009	PID agreed and order placed. Servers in place.
3. To publish clear service standards for planned maintenance, Decent Homes, repairs, Right to Repairs and Leaseholder responsibilities, which are available in printed leaflet form and on the web site. To publish the Voids standards on the Web site and to issue a copy to all tenants in advance of them undertaking an accompanied viewing or a void offer. Undertake a review of the repairs responsibilities to ensure they dovetail with other service strategies ie ASBO, introductory tenancies, demoted tenancies	HAM HRM HRM	July 2010 July 2009 Dec 2009	To follow the outcome of the Customer Perspective programme. (b) To follow the outcome of the Voids Working Group (c) To be undertaken in conjunction with the Repairs / Building Maintenance Review.
4. To relocate Housing Repairs from the Civic Offices to the Epping Depot to operate alongside and in conjunction with the Building Maintenance Works Unit	ADoH(P) HRM BMM	Sept 2009	Communications (IT and telephone) links currently being planned.
5. Timetable at least one meeting each year with the Tenants Federation to discuss the repairs and maintenance expenditure programme.	ADoH(P) HAM	Ongoing	Tenants Federation meet in April each year to consider the repairs and maintenance expenditure.
6. Introduce Asbestos record cards in all properties, and maintain the records for contactors and tenants use.	HRM	Sept 2010	Item deferred due to the HRM leaving in 2007.
7. (a) Undertake periodic reviews of the outcome of difficult to let properties and seek ways of enhancing the services provided to these dwellings. (b) Explore options whereby emphasis is put on "fix first time" for responsive repairs	HRM	Dec 2009	(a) Included in the Voids Working Group. (b) Identified through Repairs / Building Maintenance Review. (c) Identified through Repairs / Building Maintenance Review.

	(c) Seek through the Essex Hub a framework agreement with specialist contractors for asbestos removal, Door entry installations and maintenance, Drainage clearance and renewals, PVCu window installations and maintenance as well as ad-hoc repairs where necessary	HAM	Mar 2010	
8.	Continue feasibility studies into alternative fuel sources for properties in rural communities where mains gas is not available.	HAM	Mar 2010	Trials on replacing old electric storage heating with electric boilers incorporating traditional radiators have been undertaken with positive tenant feedback. Solar heating panels installed in one property to map the benefits. On-going
9.	To review all projects with a contract value in excess of £1m on completion to identify any lessons learnt.	HAM HRM	On-going	On-going
10.	To report on the outcome of future tenant satisfaction surveys for all void properties let.	HRM	Apr 2009	Surveys introduced August 2007, but not included in quarterly monitoring.
11.	Hold training sessions at empty properties to enable officers to gain a common understanding of specification requirements. To be undertaken annually.	HRM	On-going	Undertaken annually
12.	Seek to reduce the target response times for routine non-urgent repairs from 8-weeks to 4-weeks	HWO	Oct 2010	Identified through Repairs / Building Maintenance Review.
13.	To introduce generic repairs and voids officers.	HRM	Dec 2009	Agreed in principle. To be incorporated in Repairs / Building Maintenance Review.
14.	Hold site visits at blocks of flats with Tenant Representatives to monitor repairs to, and condition of, communal areas	HRM	Apr 2010	Agreed in principle. Officer working group set up to agree contract terms.
15.	To appoint an external Management Contractor to oversee the combined Building Maintenance Works Unit and Repairs team as agreed by the Cabinet in March 2008.	ADoH(P)	Oct 2009	To be incorporated in Repairs / Building Maintenance Review.

Appendix A – Five Year Capital Programme

HOUSING (HRA) PORTFOLIO CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/10 to 2013/14 5-YEAR FORECAST EXCLUDING CARRY FORWARDS

	2009/10 Forecast £000	2010/11 Forecast £000	2011/12 Forecast £000	2012/13 Forecast £000	2013/14 Forecast £000	5 Year Total £000
Housing Revenue Account						
<i>Springfields, Waltham Abbey (Works & Fees)</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Norway House Improvements</i>	50	50	50	50	50	250
<i>Communal TV Upgrade/Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Planned Maintenance	50	50	50	50	50	250
<i>Boiler Replacements</i>	300	300	300	300	300	1,500
<i>MVHR / Ventilation Installations</i>	20	40	40	40	40	180
<i>New Heating Upgrades</i>	450	400	400	400	400	2,050
<i>Rewiring - (Kitchens & Bathrooms)</i>	150	150	150	150	150	750
<i>Rewiring - (Heating)</i>	150	150	150	150	150	750
Central Heating/Rewiring Sub Total	1,070	1,040	1,040	1,040	1,040	5,260
<i>PVCu Double Glazing / Door replacement</i>	150	150	150	150	150	750
<i>Roofing</i>	500	600	600	600	600	2,900
<i>Drainage Works</i>	100	100	100	100	100	500
<i>Asbestos Removal</i>	95	115	115	115	115	555
<i>Door Entry</i>	143	80	80	80	80	463
<i>Energy Efficiency Works</i>	200	200	200	200	200	1,000
<i>Communal water tank renewals</i>	165	75	75	75	75	465
Total Other Planned Maintenance	2,423	2,360	2,360	2,360	2,360	11,863
<i>Balcony Resurfacing</i>	25	25	25	25	25	125
<i>Structural Watercourse Improvements</i>	10	10	10	10	10	50
<i>Parsonage Court - Conversion of Warden Accom.</i>	120	0	0	0	0	120
<i>Miscellaneous Structural Works</i>	250	600	600	600	600	2,650
Total Structural Schemes	405	635	635	635	635	2,945
<i>External Lighting Schemes</i>	23	5	5	5	5	43
Total Cyclical Maintenance	23	5	5	5	5	43
Small Capital Repairs	400	350	350	350	350	1,800
<i>Kitchen & Bathroom Replacements</i>	2,067	878	878	878	878	5,579
Total Cost Reflective Repairs	2,067	878	878	878	878	5,579
<i>Fencing</i>	15	15	15	15	15	75
<i>Environmental Improvements - Shops</i>	312	120	120	120	120	792
<i>Off Street Parking</i>	460	341	341	43	43	1,228
<i>Estate Environment</i>	102	102	102	102	100	508
<i>CCTV</i>	30	50	50	50	50	230
Total Non-Cost Reflective Repairs	919	628	628	330	328	2,833
<i>Welfare Heating</i>	50	50	50	50	50	250
<i>Other Disabled</i>	380	400	400	400	400	1,980
Disabled Adaptations	430	450	450	450	450	2,230
<i>Norway House Fire Alarm</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Careline Equipment Upgrade</i>	50	0	0	0	0	50
<i>Other (New Roof Covering Loughton Way)</i>	8	0	0	0	0	8
Other Repairs & Maintenance	58	0	0	0	0	58
Feasibilities	15	15	15	15	15	75
Housing DLO vehicles	50	50	50	50	50	250
TOTAL HRA	6,840	5,421	5,421	5,123	5,121	27,926

Appendix B – 30 Year Capital Programme

HOUSING (HRA) PORTFOLIO 30 YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME						
	Years 1-5 £000	Years 6-10 £000	Years 11-15 £000	Years 16-20 £000	Years 21-25 £000	Years 26-30 £000
1 Future Planned Maintenance	15,401	13,038	12,273	11,286	11,483	11,063
Roofing	2,750	4,151	3,778	2,544	1,012	1,778
Rewiring	1,500	1,498	768	996	1,482	1,888
Window & door replacement	750	900	748	2,293	3,779	2,274
Heating and boiler replacement	3,570	2,141	2,729	1,228	985	1,398
Asbestos removal	575	575	575	575	575	575
Drainage	500	500	500	500	500	500
Energy efficiency	1,000	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,000
General Improvements	3,723	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Door Entry Security	438	148	125	100	100	100
Ventilation	220	250	250	250	250	250
Communal water tank replacement	375	375	300	300	300	300
2 Structural Schemes	2,475	500	500	500	500	500
3 Cyclical Maintenance	35	75	75	75	75	75
4 Small Capital Works	1,850	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750
5 Cost reflective improvements	5,586	1,800	2,250	3,550	2,020	1,650
Kitchen & bathroom renewals	5,586	1,800	2,250	3,550	2,020	1,650
6 Non-cost-reflective repairs	1,693	1,500	1,500	1,250	1,000	1,504
7 Disabled Adaptations	2,190	2,321	2,962	3,780	4,825	6,158
8 Other repairs and maintenance	0	500	500	500	500	500
9 Feasibilities	75	75	75	75	75	75
10 Housing DLO Vehicles	250	290	290	290	290	290
11 Less income						
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	29,555	21,849	22,175	23,056	22,518	23,565

Appendix C – Decent Homes Summary

	Base Year Failures 2001 (Business Plan)		*Current Failures 2008/09		All Current and Potential Failures 2010	
	No.	£	No.	£	No.	£
Fails Decent Homes	1627		237		703	
Stock	7088		6624		6624	
Non-Decent homes as a % of total stock	22.95%		3.58%		10.61%	
Min. Fitness Standard	No. 8	£ 8,000	No. 0	£ -	No. 0	£ -
Key Building Components	688	1,140,100	340	925,700	1042	2,818,600
Walls	6	1,500	37	92,500	85	£212,500
Roof Cover	28	56,000	38	76,000	146	£292,000
Chimneys	1	400	6	2,400	8	£3,200
Heating	210	462,000	74	199,800	327	£882,900
Electrics	443	620,200	185	555,000	476	£1,428,000
Modern Facilities	1180	1,657,100	147	370,000	414	908,000
Kitchens	513	923,400	38	152,000	40	£160,000
Bathrooms	667	733,700	109	218,000	374	£748,000
Thermal Comfort	459	573,750	38	38,000	38	38,000
TOTALS	2,327	3,378,950	525	1,333,700	1,494	3,764,600



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SCRUTINY



Report to Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 23 March 2009

Subject: "Changes to the Revenue and Capital Rules for New Council Housing"- CLG Consultation Document : Council's Response

Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall, Director of Housing (01992 56 4004)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins, Office of the Chief Executive (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Scrutiny Panel considers the draft response from the Housing Portfolio Holder to the Government's Consultation Paper "Changes to the Revenue and Capital Rules for New Council Housing", and provides any comments to the Portfolio Holder.

Report:

Introduction

The Council has received a consultation document from the Government's Communities and Local Government Department entitled "Changes to the Revenue and Capital Rules for New Council Housing". A copy of the Consultation Paper is provided at Appendix 2.

The Housing Portfolio Holder has prepared a draft response to the Consultation Paper, which is provided at Appendix 2. However, before finalising his response, he would first like to consult members of the Housing Scrutiny Panel and members of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation. The Federation will consider the draft response at its meeting to be held on 24th March 2009.

Government's Proposals

In essence, the Consultation Paper proposes the removal of the current disincentives for local authorities to build new social housing themselves.

For the last 20 years, successive governments have discouraged local authorities from building new council housing, and have encouraged them to be "enablers" or "facilitators" of new social housing, provided by housing associations. In order to discourage local authorities, there have been two main financial disincentives:

- (a) Local authorities have not been able to keep all of the rental income received for its housing stock. Instead, they are only allowed to retain the notional running costs associated with the property (i.e. management, maintenance and major repairs) and not the financing of the capital costs to build the property.

As a result, many local authorities (like Epping Forest) are in "negative housing subsidy", which means that they must pay the Government a percentage of their rental income each year.

In the case of EFDC, the amount of negative subsidy expected to be paid to the Government in 2009/10 is around £11.2m, representing 44% of the estimated rental income. This money is then re-distributed by the Government to other local authorities in "positive" housing subsidy and to fund other Government housing initiatives.

(b) When properties are sold under the right to buy, the Council must pay 75% of the net capital receipt to the Government – only 25% is retained by the Council, which can be used to either fund capital projects, or to generate investment income for the General Fund. The Government says that this percentage was set to roughly reflect the historic split between national and local investment in council housing.

Since this capital rule also applies to any new housing built by a Council, the Council could make a loss if such properties are subsequently sold.

The Consultation Document sets out proposals to remove these two major disincentives, by changing the revenue and capital rules and allowing local authorities to:

- Retain all of the rental income received from new properties (built after the introduction of the changes); and
- Retain all of the capital receipts from the sale of properties that were built after the introduction of the changes.

The Government is proposing a scheme whereby specific **new** properties are excluded from both the HRA subsidy system and the capital rules. This would be done through specific agreements between individual local authorities and the Secretary of State. The types of properties that would qualify for exclusions under the proposed scheme are:

- New-build properties
- Properties purchased or otherwise acquired
- Derelict or uninhabitable properties brought back into use as a result of significant council investment

It is proposed that local authorities apply for an exclusion for new developments (or acquisitions) to the new Homes and Communities Agency (which has taken over the former Housing Corporation's funding role), who will advise the Secretary of State on whether the exclusion should be allowed.

Applications should include details about the proposed development, including design and development standards, rents and allocation policies. If agreed, the Secretary of State will issue a short letter of agreement in a standard form.

The Consultation Document emphasises that, although decisions on how a local authority chooses to invest its own resources is essentially a local matter, in granting an exclusion, the Secretary of State would expect to see evidence that "appropriate local decision-making processes have been applied, including a robust options appraisal, and that the chosen option offers value for money". The Consultation Document also states that the Government only expects to exclude properties that conform to all Government policies regarding council housing.

The Document explains that the Government will also have to consider the overall impact on its fiscal policies when considering applications for exclusion.

Clearly, if the proposals are introduced, the Council will need to carefully consider its proposed approach. Key issues will be:

- Whether or not the Council has the capacity and skills to undertake new house building itself (for example, the Council now only has one architect);
- Whether the Council can obtain better value for money through building properties

itself, or by continuing to work in partnership with housing associations, that construct new housing in large volumes; and

- Whether or not the Council has the financial capacity and the will to fund new house building, through the use of capital receipts (that currently provide significant investment income for the General Fund) and/or prudential borrowing.

The consultation period runs for 12 weeks, to the 17 April 2009.

Date: Wednesday, 11 March 2009

Our Ref: HS/AMH/SH

Your Ref:

Mr P Wycherley
Decent Homes and Housing Finance Division
Communities and Local Government
1st Floor, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

DRAFT

Mr Alan Hall (01992) 564004
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Dear Mr Wycherley

Consultation Paper - "Changes to the Revenue and Capital Rules for New Council Housing"

Thank you for inviting comments on the above Consultation Paper. I am replying on behalf of Epping Forest District Council, following consultation with the members of our Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation.

I will first give my general comments on the Consultation Paper, followed by my responses to the specific questions raised in the Consultation Paper.

General Comments:

The Council welcomes the Government's proposals to change the revenue and capital rules for new council housing and believes that the proposals would remove the two major financial disincentives that currently exist, which discourage local authorities from building new affordable housing.

However, the Council is somewhat concerned that the Government has issued this Consultation Paper before publication of its anticipated proposals relating to housing subsidy and the Housing Revenue Account, with regard to the financing of existing housing stock owned by councils. Because of this, we believe that there is a danger of introducing a "two tier" approach to the financing of local government housing which, in the future, may be administratively cumbersome.

One of the concerns with regard to the proposals, which I know is often muted, relates to local authorities' ability to "gear up" once again to undertake new development. However, my Council takes the view that this should not be too difficult, since we believe that many local authorities will look to enter into Development Agreements with large registered social landlords (that already have the resources and expertise to undertake development). As you will appreciate, many such RSLs currently have capacity within their development departments, due to the reduced development activity being undertaken at the present time. However, to enable such a rapid response by local authorities to the proposals when introduced, it is essential that the final proposals confirm that:

- (a) Local authorities are able obtain funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) direct (after meeting the normal funding requirements of the HCA); and/or

- (b) Local authorities are able to secure funding from the HCA through existing strategic RSL Partners of the HCA, who would undertake developments and draw down the grant on behalf of the local authority.

If neither of the above two requirements are introduced, it will place local authorities at a severe disadvantage compared to RSLs, which in the opinion of my Council, will result in local authorities simply continuing to facilitate development by RSLs.

Although it is not explicitly stated within the Consultation Paper, it is assumed that the new housing provided by local authorities under the new proposed rules would be in respect of *social rented* housing. However, it is suggested that, if this assumption is correct, it should be explicitly stated within the final proposals.

A major concern of my Council is that, following the rule changes, this Council and other local authorities undertake new building, having regard to the removal of the two main disincentives, only to find that a future Government changes the rules again and introduces new rules requiring local authorities to contribute some of the income from the rents and/or capital receipts from sales, in the same way as the Government does now. You will appreciate that local authorities have witnessed many changes to legislation and regulations over the years that have placed them in a worse position than when they undertook the original initiative.

To overcome this concern, and to give greater confidence to local authorities to build once again, the Council suggests that formal legal agreements should be entered into between local authorities and either CLG or the HCA, which state clearly that the treatment of revenue income and capital receipts from new properties developed cannot be subsequently changed in respect of those properties.

Having provided the general comments above, I will now respond to the specific questions raised in the Consultation Paper.

Question 1: Given the objectives of the policy, what types of properties should qualify to be excluded from the HRA subsidy system and pooling requirements?

In addition to the three types of properties already suggested within the Consultation Paper, the Council would suggest a further two types:

- ❖ Properties that have proved to be difficult to let (by reference to some agreed criteria), e.g. sheltered bedsits, that are remodelled and/or converted to provided properties that are better fit for purpose. It is suggested that the inclusion of such a category would provide an incentive to local authorities to make better use of their stock and would help meet housing need. We feel that the existing proposal relating to "derelict or uninhabitable properties" does not currently cover such properties.
- ❖ Existing Council properties requiring major repair and improvement costing over a specified amount (e.g. £25,000). Such inclusion would encourage local authorities to invest money in their existing stock, to provide better quality accommodation and better meet housing need.

Question 2: In your view, what types of properties should not qualify to be held outside the HRA subsidy system and pooling requirements?

Whilst it is acknowledged that it would be inappropriate for the new proposals to cover properties being refurbished or remodelled at a modest cost, it is suggested that - for the reasons given above - properties requiring major refurbishment/remodelling should be covered by the new proposals. It is suggested that a minimum unit cost is introduced, say, £25,000 per property.

Question 3: Do you think that the proposed process for applying for a Section 80B exclusion is the right one to adopt? If not, what would be a better alternative?

We welcome the aim to minimise the burden of securing exclusions from the HRA subsidy system. The proposal that councils should apply for an exclusion for schemes, or bundles of schemes, rather than for individual properties, is particularly welcomed.

It would be sensible for applications to be made and assessed by the HCA, since they have already amassed experience of assessing proposed developments by RSLs.

Whilst it is accepted that it is important and good practice to undertake a robust options appraisal - to demonstrate that the option of the Council developing new housing itself offers the best value for money - it is important that the value for money gained by the proposal is viewed from the local authority's perspective and not, necessarily, from an overall public benefit perspective. For example, £2m spent by the Council to build new housing itself, offers better value for money to the Council than providing a grant to an RSL to develop. The former approach is more of an investment, that would produce rental revenue returns, whereas the latter has no financial benefit to the local authority. However, from a different perspective, other than from the Council's, it may be argued that there could be slightly better value for money from the perspective of the overall public purse, if the development is undertaken by an RSL.

It is acknowledged that only properties which conform to all Government policies regarding Council housing should be given an exclusion. Reference is made in the Consultation Paper to such policies including "rents" and "allocation policies". It is assumed that the former relates, primarily, to the Government's rent restructuring regime, and the latter, mainly, to the use of choice based letting schemes. It is suggested that reference to such Government policies are explicitly stated within the final proposals, so that local authorities are clear of the expectations.

I have explained above that it appears sensible for the HCA to assess submissions from local authorities. However, the Council would suggest that it would be much more efficient and streamlined if, rather than the actual consent being provided by the Secretary of State, that the Secretary of State delegates authority to the HCA to approve such submissions as well (in accordance with a clear-defined criteria set out by the Secretary of State).

Question 4: What factors should be taken into account by the Secretary of State in considering whether to enter into an agreement to exclude properties?

Generally, the proposed factors appear sensible, subject to the comments made above in response to Question 3.

However, reference to the proposed requirement that the Government must also consider the overall impact on Government fiscal policies, appears very vague. It is suggested that the criteria against which the Government will consider the impact on fiscal policies should be set out within the final proposals.

Question 5: What terms and conditions do you think should be included in exclusion agreements?

One of my general comments set out above on the proposals refers to a need for the Government to provide a legal commitment to the fact that the exclusion to the rules will apply to the newly developed properties in perpetuity. It is suggested that such a commitment should be included within the terms and conditions.

It is also suggested that the local authorities should be legally bound to meet the commitments that it sets out in its application for an exclusion.

Question 6: Do you agree that properties excluded from the HRA subsidy system under Section 80B should also be exempted from the requirements to pool capital receipts?

It is considered absolutely essential that properties excluded from the HRA subsidy system are also exempted from the requirements to pool capital receipts.

Question 7: Do you agree with the proposed conditions attached to the exemption from pooling, which require receipts to be used for affordable housing and regeneration?

It is suggested that capital receipts obtained from the sale of properties covered by the exclusions should only be used for:

- (a) repayment of debt (perhaps from a loan taken out to build the properties in the first place); or
- (b) affordable housing.

It is suggested that reference to capital receipts also being able to be used for "regeneration" is far too wide, and could result in such capital receipts being used for regeneration schemes that have no element of affordable housing. It is my Council's view that, since the exclusions have been introduced to increase the level of affordable housing provision, the subsequent use of capital receipts resulting from the sale of such properties should also only be used for the provision of additional affordable housing (or to repay debt). This would mean that such capital receipts would have to be recycled to reprovide the affordable housing that would have been lost through the sale of these affordable properties.

I hope that you find the above comments of assistance. My Council looks forward to the final proposals being published as quickly as possible after the closing date for consultation, to enable local authorities to start building council housing once again, as quickly as possible.

I have sent a copy of this letter to the LGA for their information.

If you have any queries concerning any of the comments made in this letter please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the Council's Director of Housing, Alan Hall.

Yours sincerely

Councillor David Stallan
Housing Portfolio Holder



Changes to the revenue and capital rules for
new council housing

**Consultation on excluding new council housing from
Housing Revenue Account Subsidy and Pooling**

January 2009

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Summary

Topic of this consultation	Proposals for removing revenue and capital disincentives to local authority investment in new council housing.
Geographical scope	England.
Impact Assessment	An assessment of the impact of excluding new council properties from the HRA subsidy system was published with the Housing and Regeneration Bill. It is available at: http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/publications/impact-assessments
To	All those with an interest in social housing, particularly local authorities, housing organisations and tenants' organisations.
Body/bodies responsible for the consultation	Communities and Local Government.
Duration	Responses should be submitted by 17 April 2009.
Enquiries	Peter Wycherley, Communities and Local Government, 020 7944 3468
How to respond	Responses should be submitted either electronically via email or by post to the address below. It would be helpful if all responses can be annotated with the relevant question number or section to which the comment relates. Peter Wycherley Decent Homes and Housing Finance Division Communities and Local Government First Floor Eland House Bressenden Place London SW1E 5DU Email: LAnewbuild@communities.gsi.gov.uk
Compliance with the Code of Practice on Consultation	This consultation complies with the Code of Practice.

Purpose of this consultation

We want local authorities to play a bigger role in securing the supply of new affordable housing. This should include new opportunities for councils to develop housing directly where this offers value for money in comparison with other options.

The purpose of this document is to set out our proposals for removing some disincentives to local authority investment in new council housing within the current financial framework. These include changes to both revenue and capital rules.

At present, the council housing finance system redistributes the revenue (through Housing Revenue Account Subsidy (HRAS)) and capital returns (through pooling) from new and existing housing on the same basis. Neither pooling nor the HRAS distinguishes between homes which were built in the past with a large element of central Government financial support and new homes, which represent a largely local investment.

In July 2007, the Housing green paper, *Homes for the future, more affordable, more sustainable*¹, said that “Where councils choose to invest their own money in new [housing] supply, we think they should be able to keep the income and capital returns from those additional homes.”

The changes to the treatment of income from new homes can now be made using powers in section 80B of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which was inserted by section 313 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008². This provides for exclusions of specified properties or descriptions of property, including future properties, from the HRA subsidy system. This would in effect make the properties invisible to the subsidy system whilst leaving them within the Housing Revenue Account.

In taking the provisions through Parliament, we said we intended to use the powers to exclude newly-built or newly acquired dwellings.

The changes to the rules which apply to capital receipts can be made by secondary legislation. This document also seeks views on draft regulations which would achieve this. Our intention is to link the two changes, so that the new capital receipt regulations would apply automatically to properties covered by an exclusion from the HRA subsidy system made under section 80B of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Taken together, these changes would remove two major financial disincentives to local authority investment in new housing. This consultation document sets out how we propose to make these changes and seeks views.

¹ *Homes for the future – more affordable, more sustainable* – Housing Green Paper – <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homesforfuture>

² Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 – http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2008/ukpga_20080017_en_1

We welcome comments on any aspects of these proposals. In particular, we invite respondents to comment on some or all of the seven questions in bold in the boxes below.

Who are we consulting?

We welcome comments from everyone, and in particular from local authorities, housing organisations and tenants' organisations.

The consultation period runs for 12 weeks to 17 April 2009.

This consultation is being run by Communities and Local Government and applies to England only.

About this consultation

This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Code of Practice on Consultation issued by the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent and, where relevant, who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

The Department for Communities and Local Government will process your personal data in accordance with DPA and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties. Individual responses will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.

If you have any observations about how we can improve the process please contact:

The Communities and Local Government Consultation Co-ordinator
Zone 6/H10
Eland House
London SW1E 5 DU

or by e-mail to: consultationcoordinator@communities.gsi.gov.uk

How to respond to the consultation

Consultation responses should be submitted either electronically via email or by post to the address below, by 17 April 2009. It would be helpful if all responses can be annotated with the relevant question number or section to which the comment relates.

Peter Wycherley
Decent Homes and Housing Finance Division
Communities and Local Government
First Floor
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

email: LAnewbuild@communities.gsi.gov.uk

It would be helpful if you could make clear in your response whether you represent an organisation or group, and in what capacity you are responding.

The provisions in section 80B of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

Section 80B of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as inserted by Section 313 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008) provides for agreements between the Secretary of State and a local authority which would have the effect of excluding either a local authority's whole housing stock or specified properties (including future properties) from the operation of the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system.

Agreements under this section would not have any impact on the operation of the Housing Revenue Account itself. The rules requiring councils to maintain a ring-fenced landlord account – the Housing Revenue Account – would continue, and the homes excluded from the subsidy system would remain within the Housing Revenue Account.

The effect of the proposed changes

The HRA subsidy system is a 'notional' system, based on assumptions in national formulae about what each council needs to spend and what income it should raise from rents. Notional surpluses generated in some authorities are used to meet notional shortfalls in others.

The subsidy formulae include allowances to meet the cost of financing prescribed kinds of debt within the Housing Revenue Account. However, no provision is made within these formulae for financing the capital costs of new council housing (other than through PFI).

As a result, if a local authority builds or acquires a new dwelling, the allowances for that council increase only by the running costs associated with the new property – principally the allowances for management, maintenance and major repairs. If, as is likely with newly-built dwellings, the assumed rental income for those properties exceeds the assumed need to spend as prescribed by these allowances, the difference is deemed to be a surplus. Where such surpluses accumulate across an authority's Housing Revenue Account there will be an equivalent reduction in net subsidy, even where the council's subsidy position as a whole is in deficit.

If the provisions were used to exclude new council homes from the HRA subsidy system, this would increase a council's retained rental income by the difference in the subsidy formulae between the allowances and the assumed rents for those properties.

The impact of the provisions would depend on the allowances that a particular property attracts and its guideline rent. In aggregate nationally, management, maintenance and major repairs allowances are equivalent to around 72 per cent of assumed rental income this year. (Most of the remainder is used to meet the costs of servicing HRA debt.) For a dwelling with a similar profile of rent and allowances, the provisions would therefore allow the council to retain the remaining 28 per cent of assumed rent from each new home.

The value to a council of the provisions would be the same, whether or not it sets the actual rent in line with the notional rent used in the HRA subsidy formulae. It would also be the same regardless of whether a council was a net contributor or beneficiary of the HRA subsidy system.

Properties to be covered by the agreements

New build within the HRA is the most likely source of new supply. However, we propose that section 80B agreements should also be offered for some other properties acquired by councils for social rent within the HRA.

We propose that the following types of properties should qualify to be held outside of the HRA subsidy system:

- new build properties
- properties purchased or otherwise acquired
- derelict or uninhabitable properties brought back into use as a result of significant council investment

The intention is to allow a council to retain the return from its own investment in new housing. This is why we propose that the exclusions should cover properties which have required a large local investment to bring back into use. For the same reason we think that the following types of properties should not qualify for exclusion from the subsidy system:

- properties which are temporarily vacated to allow refurbishment or remodelling work to take place
- properties which are vacant whilst awaiting minor works to make them suitable for occupation
- social housing transferred from one social landlord to another.

QUESTION 1: Given the objectives of the policy, what types of properties should qualify to be excluded from the HRA subsidy system and pooling requirements?

QUESTION 2: In your view, what types of properties should not qualify to be held outside the HRA subsidy system and pooling requirements?

The process for securing a section 80B agreement

We aim to minimise the burden of securing an exclusion from the HRA subsidy system as far as possible, commensurate with ensuring the powers are used properly and effectively. We therefore propose that councils should apply for an exclusion for schemes or bundles of schemes, wherever possible, rather than for individual properties. Where authorities acquire properties one by one or a few at a time, we propose that they bundle them together when seeking a section 80B agreement.

As schemes are subject to change up to delivery, we also propose that agreements allow for a reasonable level of variation in delivery, for example in the number and types of properties to be covered and the timing of starts and completions. We would not however expect to enter into agreements based on early speculative outlines of schemes; applications should contain sufficient information about the properties to establish that they will meet the criteria for exclusion.

We propose that a letter from the Secretary of State agreeing to an exclusion is short and as standardised as far as possible, referring to detail in the application as the basis for the terms and extent of the exclusion.

Criteria against which an application would be considered

How a local authority chooses to invest its own resources is essentially a local matter. However, in granting an exclusion from the HRA subsidy system, we would expect to see evidence that appropriate local decision-making processes have been applied, including a robust options appraisal, and that the option chosen offered value for money.

The powers in the Act provide for agreements to contain terms and conditions. We propose that applications should include details about the scheme, including design and quality standards, rents and allocations policies. We would only expect to exclude properties which conform to all Government policies regarding council housing, including rents and allocations policies, and would expect the application to include such commitments.

In considering whether to enter into agreements to exclude council properties from the HRA subsidy system, Government must also consider the overall impact on government's fiscal policies. Local authority spending and borrowing are part of overall public expenditure. Increases in spending and borrowing made possible by exclusions must therefore be affordable within national as well as local spending plans and policies.

We propose to ask the Homes and Communities Agency to review all applications for a section 80B agreement, and to advise the Secretary of State as to whether applications meet the criteria for exclusion. Decisions will be made by the Secretary of State.

QUESTION 3: Do you think that that the proposed process for applying for a section 80B exclusion is the right one to adopt? If not, what would be a better alternative?

QUESTION 4: What factors should be taken into account by the Secretary of State in considering whether to enter into an agreement to exclude properties?

QUESTION 5: What terms and conditions do you think should be included in exclusion agreements?

Rules on capital receipts

The 2007 Housing green paper, *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable*, also proposed that councils should keep the full capital receipt of new build properties subsequently sold under Right to Buy. At present, 75 per cent of those net receipts are paid to Government and pooled centrally. This figure was set roughly to reflect the historic split between national and local investment in council housing.

This is perceived as unfair for new local authority properties which are financed wholly locally. A council currently risks losing most of its own capital investment if a tenant exercises their statutory Right to Buy, but would of course still retain the debt associated with the investment.

We are therefore also seeking views on proposed changes to the *Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003*. These changes would allow councils to retain all of the receipts from a subsequent sale of a property covered by an exclusion from the HRA subsidy system made under section 80B, provided that the receipts were used for affordable housing and regeneration projects. This would effectively extend the existing provision for receipts arising from the sale of vacant housing land and other housing assets that are not dwellings.

A draft of the Regulation is attached at the end of this document.

QUESTION 6: Do you agree that properties excluded from the HRA subsidy system under section 80B should also be exempted from the requirements to pool capital receipts?

QUESTION 7: Do you agree with the proposed conditions attached to the exemption from pooling, which require receipts to be used for affordable housing and regeneration?

Impact assessment

An assessment of the impact of excluding new council properties from the HRA subsidy system was published with the Housing and Regeneration Bill. It is available at the following link (see pages 56 – 66 of the Housing and Regeneration Act Impact Assessment document):

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/publications/impact-assessments>

Reason for decision:

Options considered and rejected:

Consultation undertaken:

Resource implications:

Budget provision:

Personnel:

Land:

Community Plan/BVPP reference:

Relevant statutory powers:

Background papers:

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:

Key Decision reference: (if required)

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Report to Housing Services Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 23 March 2009

**Subject: Housemark Benchmarking Report on EFDC
Housing Services 2007/08**

SCRUTINY



Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall, Director of Housing Services (01992 56 4004)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins, Office of the Chief Executive (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Housemark Benchmarking Report on EFDC Housing Services 2007/08 (circulated separately to all members of the Scrutiny Panel) be considered and that the Panel provides any comments on the results of the benchmarking exercise to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing as appropriate.

Report:

1. The Council's Housing Directorate is a member of Housemark, a national housing benchmarking organisation. Housemark enables housing organisations to submit detailed information on their costs, electronically, and then to compare these with other housing organisations nationally.

2. Housemark enables member organisations to compare themselves with user-defined data sets. For example, the Council can compare itself with all housing organisations nationally; all district councils; all local authorities; or all housing associations. It can also define the locations (by regions) of those organisations to be included within the comparison, and can restrict the comparison to housing organisations of more or less than a defined number of properties.

3. In Autumn 2008, with the assistance of Finance officers, all the required cost data for the Housing Directorate relating to 2007/8 was uploaded to the Housemark website. This data was then verified by Housemark.

4. The Director of Housing has produced a report on the benchmarking exercise, which is being circulated separately to all members of the Scrutiny Panel with the agenda.

Members of the Panel are asked to bring their copy of the report to the meeting.

5. The Benchmarking Report sets out the benchmarking results with all the 40 housing organisations (councils, housing associations and ALMOs) in the Eastern, South Eastern and London Regions who have provided Housemark data returns for 2007/8.

6. Section 1 of the report gives information on the benchmarking process; Section 2 summarises which quartile of organisations EFDC is placed for each benchmarked data set; and Section 3 provides all the detailed tables for each data set, that have been printed out from Housemark's webpages.

7. The table below summarises the Council's quartile placings for all 48 benchmark results:

Quartile	Explanation	No. of EFDC Placements in Quartile
Top	EFDC is within the top 25% of housing organisations for this activity (i.e the costs are low or the performance is high)	21 (44%)
2 nd	EFDC is within the range between the top 25% and the top 50% of housing organisations for this activity	12 (25%)
3 rd	EFDC is within the range between the bottom 50% and bottom 25% of housing organisations for this activity	10 (21%)
Bottom	EFDC is within the bottom 25% of housing organisations for this activity (i.e. the costs are high or the performance is low)	5 (10%)

8. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the Housemark Benchmarking Report and provide any comments on the results to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing as appropriate.

Report to Housing Standing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 23 March 2009

Subject: Housing Service Strategies

**Officer contact for further information: Roger Wilson
Assistant Head Housing Services (Operations) 01992 56 4419**

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins Office of the Chief Executive 01992 56 4607



SCRUTINY

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Housing Scrutiny Panel considers and endorses the Housing Service Strategies on Housing Management Services, Older People's Services and Under-occupation, attached as appendices, and provides any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder for incorporation.

Report:

1. Housing Service Strategies were originally produced around 10 years ago in accordance with an agreed standard framework, and have since been updated. The Housing Service Strategies give more detail than the Council's main Housing Strategy on the various housing services provided. In total, 16 Housing Service Strategies have been produced to date, covering:

House Sales & Leasehold Services	Rent Arrears
Rent Collection and Administration	Homelessness
Under-occupation	Housing Information
Tenant Participation	Private Rented Sector
Housing Management Services	Older Peoples Housing Services
Housing Allocations	Housing Advice
Empty Properties	Energy Efficiency
Anti-Social Behaviour	Harassment

2. The Strategies are produced to a common format that set out how individual housing services will be delivered. They have assisted Housing Services in achieving the Charter Mark award for customer service excellence, ISO 9001:2000 Quality Accreditation, and have been important to meeting the minimum requirement for Supporting People funding under the conditions of the contract.

3. The Housing Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and endorse three updated Housing Service Strategies on Housing Management Services, Older People's Services and Under-occupation which are attached as an appendix to the report and provide any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder for incorporation.

Consultation

4. The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation will be consulted on the Strategies at their meeting on 24 March 2009.

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Housing Service Strategy On Under-Occupation

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Housing Service Strategy relates to the Council's approach to minimising under-occupation within its housing stock.
- 1.2 Given the existing demand for Council accommodation as demonstrated by the numbers on the Housing Register, it is essential that the Council does all that it can to maximise the use of its housing stock.
- 1.3 This Strategy sets out the steps that the Housing Directorate will follow in order to achieve this aim.
- 1.4 This Housing Service Strategy was formulated in consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation and the Housing Scrutiny Panel and was approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder on 31 March 2009.

2 Background to the Service

- 2.1 The Allocations Team within the Housing Options Section of the Housing Directorate ensure that all offers of accommodation are in accordance with the applicant's housing need.
- 2.2 The Housing Options Section, in accordance with the Council's Allocations Scheme, encourages people to move to a smaller property by providing both generous financial incentives and highest Band priority to those who wish to downsize.
- 2.3 Housing Management staff deal with all matters relating to succession and assignment of tenancies. This includes administering the provisions of the Housing Act 1985, and doing as much as the legislation permits to encourage people to move to smaller accommodation when they are under-occupying a property. The approach taken to prevent under-occupation in such circumstances is set out in Section 8.2 (a) of this Housing Service Strategy.
- 2.4 Council properties can become under-occupied during the course of the tenancy as family compositions change. The Housing Directorate, in accordance with this Strategy, will make every effort to discourage under occupation in these circumstances.

3 Coverage

- 3.1 This Housing Service Strategy covers the Council's approach to;
 - a) Identifying under-occupying tenants.
 - b) Reducing under occupation by offering tenants incentives to downsize.
 - c) Encouraging successor tenants (but not spouses nor civil partners) to downsize even when they have a right to remain in accordance with legislation.
 - d) Ensuring that, in accordance with legislation, under occupation of more than one bedroom does not take place as a result of any mutual exchange.
 - e) Promoting the HomeSwapper mutual exchange scheme.

- f) Ensuring that all allocations are either in accordance with the Allocations Scheme or one bedroom below the applicants need.
- g) Placing tenants who request a transfer, and are under occupying, in Band One of the Allocations Scheme.
- h) Working with In Touch Support to provide vulnerable tenants with assistance with moving to smaller accommodation.

4 Relationship to Other Documents

- 4.1 Summary Information on under occupation is contained within the Council's main Housing Strategy.
- 4.2 The Allocations Scheme sets out the size of accommodation offered to applicants, Band One priority for tenants wishing to transfer to smaller accommodation and incentives for downsizing.
- 4.3 The law relating to succession is set out in the Council's Tenancy Agreement.
- 4.4 The legislation and the Council's policy on succession to a secure tenancy is explained within the Tenants Handbook.
- 4.5 The Housing Directorate has individual leaflets available for the public giving advice on mutual exchanges, the Allocations Scheme and succession.
- 4.6 Information is also published periodically in "Housing News" and on the Council's website, www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing.
- 4.7 The Housing Charter sets out the Housing Directorate's commitment to the public.

5 Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The aim of the Council's Housing Service Strategy on Under occupations is:

"To ensure that the under-occupation of the Council's housing stock is kept to a minimum."

- 5.2 This will be met by;

- (a) Ensuring that the Housing Allocations Scheme gives a higher priority to those tenants who under-occupy property and wish to move to a smaller dwelling.
- (b) Ensuring that all allocations make full use of the dwelling.
- (c) Allowing a maximum of only one spare bedroom as a result of any mutual exchange.
- (d) Encouraging any tenants under-occupying a Council property to consider a mutual exchange through the HomeSwapper Scheme.
- (e) Providing financial incentives to encourage tenants of larger Council properties to move to smaller accommodation.
- (f) Applying the legislation and the Council's policy relating to under occupation following successions and assignments.
- (g) Continuing to work with In Touch Support to provide assistance to vulnerable tenants transferring from larger to smaller properties.

6 Statutory Requirements

6.1

- (a) Succession and assignment: Housing Act 1985 Part IV Sections 87 – 89 inclusive.
- (b) Assignments by way of Mutual Exchange: Housing Act 1985 Part IV Section 92.
- (c) Allocations: Housing Act 1996. Section 167 (as amended Homelessness Act 2002).
- (d) Data Protection Act 1998,
- (e) Race Relations Act 1976.

7 Client Consultation, Information and Involvement

- 7.1 Any changes in policy are considered by the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, prior to any decision being taken by the Housing Portfolio Holder or the Cabinet. Furthermore, the Housing Portfolio Holder attends all meetings of the Federation and can therefore take their views into account.
- 7.2 Publicity and general information is provided within the Council's publication "Housing News" which ensures that as many tenants are involved as possible. This is delivered to all Council dwellings and, when appropriate, all housing applicants and is available on the Council's website www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing.
- 7.3 Tenants who are directly involved with issues relating to under-occupation are kept fully advised of their entitlements and are given the maximum possible information to allow them to make choices.

8 General Principles

- 8.1 The Housing Directorate will seek to identify tenants who are under-occupying Council accommodation, through recent data obtained under the Census of all tenants. Those who are under-occupying will be notified in writing of the financial incentives available when downsizing.
- 8.2 As much as possible will be done, within the legislation, to encourage people to move when they are under-occupying property. This is seen as a clear benefit to the Council and to those on its Housing Register.
- 8.3 The Council's policy encourages successor tenants, other than spouses or civil partners, to move to smaller accommodation if they are under occupying. However, where only one bedroom is under occupied, a successor tenant will be allowed to remain if;
 - (a) They have resided in the property for more than 10 years continuously immediately prior to the former tenant's death; or,
 - (b) They are over 60 years of age; or
 - (c) Following an assessment, it is found that significant financial or other support was given by the successor tenant to the previous tenant.
- 8.4 Where the Council's policy does not apply, unless there are exceptional circumstances, officers will insist that occupiers move to smaller accommodation and if necessary take enforcement action.

- 8.5 Under the Allocations Scheme, priority is given to those who are downsizing to smaller accommodation, by placing them in the highest band (Band 1).
- 8.6 Where an Epping Forest District Council tenant moves to any smaller property from a larger property, both owned by the Council, they will be offered £500 to cover removal costs plus £500 for each bedroom “released”, subject to the tenant having a housing need for the downsized property, and a maximum payment of £2,000 being made.
- 8.7 All applicants will be encouraged to arrange a mutual exchange through the HomeSwapper Scheme as an alternative means of resolving their accommodation difficulties. Staff will provide tenants with relevant advice and assistance.

9. Future Developments

- 9.1 The following “SWOT” analysis identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the areas covered by the Service Strategy.

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Established work instructions Incentive scheme HomeSwapper Mutual Exchange Scheme Allocations Scheme Priority Census identifying under occupation HomeOption Scheme</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Limited supply of suitable accommodation to create choice for tenants to move to smaller accommodation</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Writing to all tenants who are under-occupying following the recent Census of all tenants</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Increased demand from homeless applicants for accommodation Increasing numbers of applicants on the Housing Register</p>

10. Action Plan

10.1 The following specific actions are planned by the Council relating to under occupation;

Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resource Implications
To monitor the recent increases in incentives encouraging tenants who are under-occupying to move to smaller Council accommodation to measure its effectiveness.	Housing Options Manager	April 2010	Within existing resources
To write to tenants who are under-occupying accommodation notifying them of the incentives available to tenants who move to smaller accommodation.	Housing Options Manager	April 2009	Within existing resources
Review the success of the Relocation Scheme following its transfer to In Touch Support.	Housing Options Manager	April 2010	Within existing resources

11. Resourcing the Strategy

11.1 The current budget for incentives to encourage tenants move to smaller accommodation is £12,000.

12. Reviewing the Strategy

12.1 This Housing Services Strategy will be reviewed in consultation with representatives of the Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation no later than April 2012.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Housing Service Strategy relates to the Council's approach to the provision of Housing Services for Older People. The Strategy sets out how this element of the service is delivered by the Housing Directorate, including links with other services both internally and externally.
- 1.2 Housing Services for Older People is delivered by the Older Peoples Services Section and is an important front-line service which covers a wide-range of activities. It includes services delivered by Scheme Managers, sheltered housing, the Council's twenty-four hour emergency alarm Careline Service, and the Housing Directorate's involvement with the Epping Forest Day Club Committee.
- 1.3 This Older People's Service Strategy has been formulated in consultation with representatives of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, the Sheltered Forum and includes information contained in the Housing Directorate's policies and procedures. The Strategy was considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder on 31 March 2009.

2. Background to Housing Services for Older People

- 2.1 Housing Services for Older People are managed from the Careline Centre in Loughton, which is not open to the general public. The Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services) who is responsible for the service is based in offices above the Centre. The Assistant Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services) deputises for the Housing Manager in all aspects of the Section.
- 2.2 To ensure communication on policy, procedural and performance matters, quarterly meetings with Scheme Managers take place, chaired by the Housing Manager. In addition, meetings are held for Careline staff. The Assistant Director of Housing (Operations) and the Director of Housing attend periodically.

3. Coverage

- 3.1 This Housing Service Strategy covers the Council's;
- a) Older People's Housing Related Support Services;
 - b) Sheltered housing;
 - c) Designated dwellings for older people on housing estates;
 - d) The Careline Service including;
 - (i) grouped schemes;
 - (ii) dispersed alarms; and
 - (iii) Telecare
 - e) Day Clubs;
 - f) Assessments of sheltered housing applicants;
 - g) Jessopp Court (Part 2½ accommodation for frail older people);
 - h) Supporting People

- i) Care in the Community; and
- j) Ordering and distribution of cleaning supplies.

4. Relationships with Other Documents

- 4.1 Housing Services for Older People forms part of the Council's overall landlord function which is set out in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.
- 4.2 The Council has adopted its Housing Charter which sets out, in simple, clear and precise terms, the Council's general approach to all its Housing Services.
- 4.3 The Housing Directorate has detailed policies and procedures for most of its functions, including Housing Services for Older People that give important guidance to staff.
- 4.4 Housing related support services provided by the Older Peoples Services Section are funded by Supporting People. There is a contract in place between Essex County Council as the Administering Authority and the Council for the provision of these services. The Council continues to meet the standards required to retain funding.
- 4.6 Important statistical performance information is collected and is monitored at quarterly Performance Management meetings chaired by the Director of Housing.
- 4.7 Information on Housing Services for Older People is contained within the Tenants Handbook. Certain Conditions of Tenancy relating solely to tenants in sheltered accommodation are contained within the latest Tenancy Agreement, which came into effect in January 2002.
- 4.8 Leaflets on Services to Older People and sheltered accommodation have been distributed to around 1,100 tenants living in both sheltered accommodation and designated dwellings for the older people on housing estates who receive the Service. These are also available for those who are considering moving to sheltered accommodation. Incorporated within these leaflets is a clear explanation of the Scheme Manager's role. These have been distributed to staff from outside agencies to enable them to understand the responsibilities of the Scheme Manager. All new tenants are given a "Welcome Pack" when they sign up for their new sheltered housing tenancy. In addition, tenants in sheltered accommodation have been given a leaflet on health and safety advice. A separate Tenants Guide is provided to those living at the Part 2 ½ scheme, Jessopp Court, Waltham Abbey which is referred to at Paragraph 8.7 of this Strategy.
- 4.9 Information packs on the Careline Service are sent to all residents within the District, who are considering applying for a dispersed alarm. These are also sent to the Social Care Department, Hospitals, Day Centres etc. in order to further promote the service.

5. Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The aim of the Council's Housing Service Strategy on Older People's Housing Services is:

"To ensure that the well-being of all older tenants living in sheltered accommodation and designated dwellings for older people is carefully monitored, and that all users of the Careline Service receive an efficient and effective response to their calls giving them an increased sense of security and peace of mind".

5.2 The following Section explains how the aim will be met, under four headings:

5.3 Sheltered Accommodation

- a) Scheme Managers in sheltered accommodation will visit, or account for all tenants, on every duty day, completing the visit declaration form;
- b) When Scheme Managers at sheltered accommodation are absent for less than a week the Careline Centre will call, each day, all those tenants previously nominated by the Scheme Manager as being “at risk”;
- c) If any Scheme Manager at sheltered accommodation is absent for one week or more, the Housing Assistant (Older Peoples Services) or a Careline Operator will visit the scheme twice each week and undertake a full round, accounting for all residents;
- d) Scheme Managers will assist residents to live independently, offering housing related support and encouraging communal social activities;
- e) Scheme Managers will liaise with outside agencies on behalf of residents;
- f) Scheme Managers will contact the tenant’s relatives in the event of illness or accident; and
- g) Tenants living in sheltered accommodation will be encouraged to use the Careline alarm service in emergency situations. The equipment will be tested by the Scheme Manager on a regular basis, with all tests being recorded.

5.4 Area Schemes for Older People

- a) Through the call category system (set out in Paragraph 8.2.2) Scheme Managers who cover designated dwellings for older people will ensure that all older tenants are visited in accordance with their need;
- b) Those living on area schemes will be provided with housing related support, assisted to live independently, with their health and general well-being monitored;
- c) Scheme Managers will contact the tenant’s relatives in the event of their illness or accident;
- d) All Tenants will be encouraged to use the Careline alarm service in emergency situations, which will be tested and recorded by Scheme Managers on a regular basis; and
- e) Scheme Managers will encourage all their tenants to support one another, act as a community, and promote social activities.

5.5 Epping Forest Careline

- a) Careline staff will endeavour to ensure that all calls received by the Careline Centre are responded to within target times, and that all dispersed alarms are installed within two-days of the application being received. These targets are monitored under the Housing Directorate’s quarterly Performance Management regime;

b) All calls received over the alarm system, and telephone conversations, will be tape recorded as a safeguard to both service users and the Council.

c) Careline will promote the service and manage the installation of dispersed alarms and Telecare products which are referred to later in this strategy.

5.6 Other Housing Services for Older People

a) The Older Peoples Services Section will visit potential tenants who have applied for sheltered accommodation and have been referred by the Housing Options Section for assessment;

b) The Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services) will attend the Older Persons Panel, which forms part of the Essex County Council's Social Care assessment process, when the Council is concerned that a greater level of care is required for one of its older tenants; and

c) The Epping Forest Day Club Committee will be supported with the provision of premises for Social Clubs at the Council's sheltered housing schemes, subject to consultation with residents. The Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services) will attend their six-monthly meetings.

6. Statutory Requirements

6.1 The relevant key statutory requirements for older people's services are as follows:

- a) Housing Act 1985;
- b) Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- c) Environmental Protection Act 1974;
- d) Human Rights Act 1998;
- e) Crime and Disorder Act 1998;
- f) Noise Act 1996;
- g) Public Health Act 1936;
- h) Disability Discrimination Act 1996 and
- i) Data Protection Act

7. Client Consultation, Information & Involvement (Statutory Requirement)

7.1 The way in which tenants will be consulted, informed and involved with regard to the Council's policy on housing services for older people is as follows:

- a) Consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation;
- b) Consultation with the Sheltered Forum
- c) Consultation with Residents Associations;
- d) Encourage the setting up of Tenants Associations in sheltered housing schemes;
- e) Information to tenants in publications e.g. Housing News, Annual Report;
- f) Posters on the Careline Service displayed throughout the District;
- g) Distribution of leaflets on Older Peoples Services and Careline;
- h) Providing a Welcome Pack to all sheltered housing tenants
- i) Liaison with the Citizens Advice Bureau;
- j) One to one consultation with tenants;
- k) Consultation with tenants at various meetings at the schemes; and
- l) Changes in policy;

8. General Principles

8.1 Section 5 of this Housing Service Strategy sets out the aims and objectives of older people's housing services. This Section details the general approach taken on the delivery of the service under the following headings:

8.2 Services Provided by Scheme Managers

8.2.1 The Council currently employs 10 full time Scheme Managers at sheltered and grouped schemes for older people and 3 Scheme Managers who visit older tenants living in designated dwellings for older people on general needs housing estates (e.g. Ninefields, Waltham Abbey; Oakwood Hill, Loughton etc.).

8.2.2 In March 2004, the Cabinet agreed that due to many difficulties associated with Scheme Managers living on-site, in the future, newly appointed Scheme Managers will be non-resident. In addition, all existing staff have been given the opportunity to move off site into secure Council accommodation. As a result, the Council now has only 4 resident Scheme Managers.

8.2.3 The service assists older tenants to live as independently as possible. Tenants living in sheltered housing are visited by the Scheme Manager on every duty day. When they are absent the Careline Service monitors calls from tenants and calls each day those who are designated by the Scheme Manager as being "at risk". Tenants living in designated properties for older people on estates are monitored by a Scheme Manager who visits in accordance with the documented call category system. In accordance with this procedure the Scheme Manager undertakes a risk assessment of tenants to assess if they are either "high" "medium" or "low" risk. "High" risk tenants are visited approximately twice weekly, "medium" risk tenants visited once each fortnight, with "low" risk tenants being visited once every four weeks. All area scheme properties are linked to the Careline Service.

8.2.4 Records of residents are maintained detailing those who are absent. All Scheme Managers complete a visit declaration form on a monthly basis detailing all visits made to residents during the period. This is submitted to the Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services) who undertakes "spot checks." If anyone is not accounted for, then checks are undertaken to ensure the well being of the tenant. Scheme Managers liaise with relatives, Essex County Council's Adult Social Care, and other agencies on behalf of tenants when appropriate.

8.2.5 Scheme Managers do all that is possible to encourage tenants to support each other, act as a community, and promote social activities.

8.2.6 The Council has 10 sheltered housing schemes which are for people who are over the age of 60 years, capable of living on their own, but feel more secure with support from the Scheme Manager. The level of support depends upon the needs of the residents; advice is offered when needed and communal activities encouraged. All sheltered housing properties are linked to the Careline Service.

8.2.7 One-bedroom flats are the most common type of accommodation, although there are some studio flats. All sheltered housing schemes have door entry systems installed and reception areas are covered by CCTV. Communal facilities generally include a laundry room, guest room for visiting friends or relatives, communal lounge and kitchen for social activities and special events.

8.2.8 Scheme Managers are normally on duty during normal working hours between Monday and Friday. When off duty the scheme is linked into the Careline Centre.

8.3 Designated Dwellings for Older People on Housing Estates

8.3.1 Around 650 properties on general needs estates are designated as suitable for occupation by an older person. Three Scheme Managers are dedicated to visiting 330 of these properties on a full-time basis. Scheme Managers in sheltered accommodation visit the remaining 320 designated properties which are located near to their schemes with the residents often being invited to social activities in the complex.

8.3.2 All properties covered by the Scheme Manager are linked directly into the Careline Service. Area Scheme Managers are provided with mobile 'phones. All staff are provided with personal attack alarms for their own safety and have access to the Council's No Lone Visit list.

8.4 Supporting People Scheme Reviews

8.4.1 "Supporting People" is a major Government initiative, which introduced a new policy, and funding framework for supported housing and ancillary welfare services from April 2003. These services include housing related support delivered by Scheme Managers and the Careline Service.

8.4.2 A "steady state" contract is in place between the Council and Essex County Council for the provision of its support services.

8.4.3 Scheme reviews are undertaken periodically, although the Quality Assessment Framework, which is a detailed service analysis, must be submitted on a regular basis and currently assesses six core objectives as follows:

- Needs and risk assessment and support planning
- Security, Health and Safety
- Protection from abuse
- Fair access diversity and inclusion
- Complaints
- Continuous improvement

8.4.4 The Council's support services continually meet at least the minimum requirements under each core objective to ensure continued funding.

Supporting People – Older People Strategic Review

8.4.5 Essex County Council's Supporting People Team are currently undertaking an Older People Strategic Review which includes sheltered housing. A consultation exercise is being undertaken on the report with service users and key stakeholders. It is being recommended that services are remodelled into a "hub and spoke" model whereby the Scheme Manager service is community based and provided on a needs led and tenure neutral basis. A Project Board and Working Group has been set up to oversee the Review. The Assistant Director of Housing (Operations) is a member of the Older People's Project Board and the Housing Manager (Older People's Services) is a member of the Older People's Working Group.

8.5 Tenants and Leaseholder's Federation and the Sheltered Forum

- 8.5.1 The way in which the Housing Directorate involves, consults and provides information to tenants is set out in the Housing Service Strategy on Information under Client Consultation, Information and Involvement. The District-wide Tenant Participation Agreement explains the Council's commitment to tenant participation and how it will enable its tenants to participate in the delivery of their housing service.
- 8.5.2 The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation comprises two members of each recognised tenants associations in the District, and the Leaseholders Association. Regular meetings are held with the Federation to consult on housing policy matters and to seek their views. The outcomes are reported back to the local associations and Members take them into account when making decisions.
- 8.5.3 The Council is committed to consulting with tenants on housing issues that are important to them. Over recent years attempts were made to set up tenants associations within the sheltered schemes, but there were only a few residents at each scheme who were willing to become involved.
- 8.5.4 It was therefore decided to set up a Sheltered Form comprising of a small number of residents from each scheme who could put forward their views on behalf of all residents on housing services offered to older people. The Forum was established in 2004; meetings take place on a quarterly basis and are well attended.

8.6 Epping Forest Careline

- 8.6.1 The Careline Centre based at Parsonage Court, Loughton was set up in June 1984 and had around 2,400 properties linked into the service as at 1 April 2009. Connections include all the Council's sheltered housing schemes and designated dwellings for older people. Around 1,000 dispersed alarms are also included, which are one-off installations for those living in the private sector for which they pay an annual rental, which is agreed annually by the Council. In addition, a monitoring service is provided to housing associations. Careline also monitor fire alarms in sheltered housing schemes.
- 8.6.2 Careline is a twenty-four hour, 365-day service dealing with around 60,000 calls each year and offers valuable support to Scheme Managers. The Centre is equipped with the PNC 3 "Vision" technology, with the latest "Communicall" two-way speech system installed in the grouped schemes. In addition, there is a Disaster Recovery Plan which covers the Centre should it not be able to function for any reason. In these circumstances all call handling will be undertaken by the alarm system manufacturer at their own control centre in Yorkshire.

8.7 Review of the Careline Service

- 8.7.1 At its meeting on 1 September 2008, the Cabinet undertook a Review of the Careline Service and, following consideration of a number of options, agreed that the Service would continue to be provided locally by the Council. It was further agreed that detailed consideration be given in the future to the following enhancements:
- (a) Exploring the potential to monitor alarms for other authorities and more housing associations;
 - (b) Extending the routine repairs reporting service for tenants from 5pm to 8pm on

each working day;

(c) Periodically monitoring existing Council-owned CCTV systems through website access following the appointment of the new CCTV Co-ordinator and formulation of a Corporate CCTV Policy; and

(d) Monitoring the whereabouts of the Council's lone workers on a 24-hour basis; and

8.7.2 In addition, it was agreed that the Careline premises be extended into the ground floor of the vacant adjacent former Scheme Manager's accommodation and that the first floor be converted into a one-bedroom flat and incorporated into the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Parsonage Court, Loughton.

8.8 Telecare in the Community

8.8.1 The range of equipment available to Careline service users is increasing due to developments in technology. Although those linked to the service are able to summon help in an emergency via a pendant radio-trigger by using a pull cord, services users can now benefit from smoke detectors, bogus caller buttons, fall detectors and inactivity detectors etc. A leaflet is available setting out details of all the additional equipment.

8.8.2 Sensors are installed at the property, which meet with the particular user's need, giving extra protection. Users activate the alarm system in any emergency, placing a call to Careline when help will be summoned.

8.8.3 Careline staff work in partnership with Adult Social Care, Health, Police and Fire services to promote the service. A number of staff are trained assessors who survey each property ensuring users receive the correct equipment.

8.9 Day Clubs

8.9.1 The Council supports three Day Clubs providing accommodation at the following sheltered housing schemes:

- a) Frank Bretton House, Ongar;
- b) Jubilee Court, Waltham Abbey; and
- c) Hyde Mead House, Nazeing;

8.9.2 The Day Clubs are run by volunteer organisers and helpers for housebound local residents. The organisers visit residents who apply for membership to assess their suitability. Day Clubs offer social activities, day trips, and generally enables older people to have an enjoyable day out.

8.9.3 Older People Services staff visit the Day Clubs on a regular basis to offer support.

8.9.4 The Epping Forest Day Club Committee meets on a six-monthly basis and is attended by the Council's Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services).

8.9.5 Unfortunately, due to reduced demand for the Day Clubs and the lack of people volunteering, two Day Clubs have recently closed. However, the Council continues to promote the service and actively seeks volunteers to manage and help run the Clubs.

8.10 Accommodation for Frail Older People (Part 2½)

8.10.1 The Council has one "very sheltered" scheme for frail older people in the District at Jessopp Court, Waltham Abbey which is staffed and managed by Essex County

Council's Adult Social Care.

8.10.2 Although the Council has nomination rights to Jessopp Court, all properties are allocated through the Adult Social Care Purchasing Panel, which meets on a weekly basis to consider funding for older peoples services.

8.10.3 The difference in service provision at Jessopp Court in comparison to sheltered housing is that Essex County Council's Adult Social Care staff are on duty twenty-four hours, and a meal is provided to residents (who have an assessed need) in the dining room by the Meals Service at lunchtime.

8.11 Assessment of Applicants for Sheltered Accommodation

8.11.1 All applicants who apply to live in sheltered accommodation are visited and assessed by the Older Peoples Services Section prior to an offer being made. A copy of the assessment is included in the new tenant's Tenant Support Plan, which is a detailed record of the housing related support provided.

8.12 Care in the Community

8.12.1 The Council works in partnership with other agencies in order to achieve a multi agency approach to Care in the Community. The Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services) attends the Older Peoples Joint Management Team which consists of a representative from all agencies meeting on a monthly basis in order to work with service users, carers, to ensure that services for older people are accessible and meet most people's needs.

8.13 Ordering and Distribution of Cleaning Materials

8.13.1 The Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services) manages the ordering and distribution of cleaning supplies for the Council's sheltered housing schemes. These supplies are stored in a garage at Parsonage Court, Loughton. An audit of the supplies is undertaken annually.

9. Action Plan

9.1 The actions in the table below will be undertaken in the future by the Housing Directorate in order to enhance Older People's Housing Services.

Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resource Implications
Encourage the setting up of Tenants' Associations at sheltered housing schemes in accordance with the Tenant Participation Strategy and District Tenant Participation Agreement to promote and implement Tenant Participation	Tenant Participation Officer	On-going	Existing resources
Continue to support Day Clubs in order to prevent further closures	Housing Manager	On-going	Existing resources

	(Older Peoples Services)		
Update the Race and Diversity Impact Assessment for Older People's Services	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	September 2009	Existing Resources
Achieve Telecare Services Association (TSA) Accreditation	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	November 2009	£10,000 Funding for external Consultant
Complete the extension of the Careline premises into the adjacent house	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	December 2009	Funded from the HRA Capital Programme as agreed by the Cabinet an estimated cost of around £180,000

Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resource Implications
Procurement of the new PNC5 call answering equipment at the Careline Centre	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	December 2009	£50,000 budget agreed by the Cabinet
Introduce repairs reporting service out of hours at the Careline Centre;	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	January 2010	Existing resources
Introduce periodic CCTV monitoring of all older peoples premises from the Careline Centre	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	January 2010	Existing resources
Monitor all of the Council's lone workers through Careline	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	January 2010	Existing resources
Work towards improving Supporting People performance scores;	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	April 2010	Existing resources

Promote the provision of Careline monitoring to other providers	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	On-going	Existing resources
Evaluate the outcomes of the Supporting People Review of the role of the Scheme Manager and implement the changes	Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	April 2010	Existing resources

10. Future Developments

10.1 The following “SWOT” analysis identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the areas covered by the Service Strategy.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable and committed staff • Robust policies and procedures • Integrated housing system • Charter Mark accreditation • ISO 9001:2000 accreditation • Good relationships with tenants • Good tenant consultation framework • Comprehensive performance monitoring • Council-owned Careline Centre • Multi-agency approach • Healthy Housing Revenue Account • Comprehensive disaster recovery plan for the Careline service 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proportion of Careline funding being provided by Supporting People, who may review alarm services County-wide reducing the number of centres, which could lead to Careline's closure • Not yet being TSA accredited
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced sickness as more Scheme Managers become non-resident • Improved repairs reporting service to customers out-of-hours through the Careline Centre • Increased security for older residents through periodic monitoring of CCTV systems by Careline • Additional income from dispersed alarm peripherals • More older people remaining in their own home and therefore privately renting dispersed alarms • Working towards Improving Supporting People Scheme Review Scores • Converting sheltered housing bedsits into flats when appropriate • Greater Corporate use of Careline by monitoring of lone workers • Provision of Careline service to other providers • Possibility of Supporting People reviewing alarm services County-wide thereby reducing the numbers of centres which would create an opportunity to monitor for other providers • Improved business continuity 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of demand for properties set aside for occupation by older people which as a result are being de-designated • More older people being cared for at home and therefore not requiring sheltered accommodation • Costs of Careline exceed income • Possible loss of Supporting People funding

11. Resourcing the Strategy

11.1 Staff delivering this Strategy in 2008/09 was 23.75 FTE. This includes the Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services), Assistant Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services), Supporting People Co-ordinator, 10 sheltered Scheme Managers 3 estate based Scheme Managers 2 FTE Housing Assistants (Older Peoples Services) and 5.5 FTE Careline Operators and a proportion of other Manager's time.

11.2 The projection for the number of staff required to deliver the Strategy for 2009/10 and the following three years is detailed in the following table:

Staff Resource Projections			
Posts	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Older Peoples Services Staff	23.75	23.75	23.75

11.3 The following table details the estimated proportion of staff time within the Housing Directorate spent on Older Peoples Housing Services for 2008/2009:

Posts	FTE
Director of Housing	0.05
Assistant Director of Housing (Operations)	0.2
Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	1.0
Assistant Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)	1.0
Supporting People Co-ordinator	1.0
Scheme Managers (Estate Based)	3.0
Scheme Managers (Sheltered Housing)	10.0
Careline Operators	5.5
Housing Assistant (Older Peoples Services)	2.0
Total	23.75

12. Key Targets & Performance Monitoring

12.1 The Council will monitor performance and compliance with this Strategy through quarterly performance management meetings chaired by the Director of Housing with the Assistant Director of Housing (Operations) and the Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services) ensuring the following target times are met:

Task	Actual 2008/09	Target
% of calls responded to within 30 seconds (including routine calls from Scheme Managers and test calls)	98.6%	97%
Average (seconds) to respond to calls	7 seconds	10 Seconds
Installation of dispersed alarms	1.5 days	Within 2 Working Days
Installation of Telecare Sensors including client assessment	8 days	21 days
Number of dispersed alarms installed	105 per quarter	40 per quarter
Contractors repairs response in accordance with service agreement targets	93.9%	90%

13. Reviewing the Strategy

13.1 The Strategy for Older Peoples Services will be reviewed in consultation with the Tenants' and Leaseholders Federation before April 2012.

Epping Forest District Council

HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGY ON HOUSING MANAGEMENT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Housing Service Strategy relates to the Council's approach to the provision of Housing Management Services. The Strategy sets out how this element of the service is delivered by the Housing Directorate and includes links with other services both internally and externally.
- 1.2 Housing Management is an important front-line service which covers a wide range of activities and is delivered through the Area Housing Offices. It ensures, perhaps more than any other part of the service, that good landlord and tenant relationships exist so that tenants' rights and responsibilities in respect of their Conditions of Tenancy are clearly communicated and understood.
- 1.3 The recovery of rent arrears and dealing with anti-social behaviour is undertaken by the Area Housing Offices. These areas of work are not covered by this Strategy as it is covered in two separate Housing Services Strategies approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder.
- 1.4 This Housing Management Strategy has been formulated in consultation with representatives of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, and includes information contained in the Housing Directorate's Policy & Procedures. The Strategy was considered by the Housing Scrutiny Member Panel and approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder on 31 March 2009.

2. Background to Housing Management

- 2.1 The Housing Management Service is delivered through two Area Housing Offices (north and south), and the Limes Farm Estate Office, which is a sub office of the Area Housing Office (South).
- 2.2 At each of the Area Housing Offices the Area Housing Managers have Section meetings at least every two months to ensure staff communication on policy, procedural, and performance matters etc. The Assistant Director of Housing (Operations) is a member of the Housing Management Team, also comprising the Director of Housing, Assistant Director of Housing (Property) and the Assistant Director of Housing (Private Sector and Resources).

3. Coverage

- 3.1 This Housing Service Strategy covers the Council's approach to;
 - a) Changes in tenancy, including succession, mutual exchanges, and other assignments;
 - b) Breaches of tenancy conditions relating to the Strategy;
 - c) Operation of an Introductory Tenancy Scheme

- d) Unauthorised occupation;
- e) Transfers and estate inspections;
- f) Older and disabled people's garden maintenance scheme;
- g) Boundary disputes;
- h) Compensation for Tenants' Improvement Scheme and alterations and improvement to dwellings by tenants or others;
- i) Estate enhancements/ Grounds maintenance;
- j) Abandoned vehicles;
- k) Cleansing of communal areas;
- l) Right to buy, land sales applications and release of restrictive covenants;
- m) Priority Moves;
- n) Vehicular crossovers; and
- o) The review of the Strategy;

4. Relationships with other Documents

- 4.1 The Housing Management Service forms part of the Council's overall Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.
- 4.2 The Council has adopted its Housing Charter which sets out, in simple, clear and precise terms the Council's general approach to all its housing services.
- 4.3 The Council's Standard Tenancy Agreement forms the contractual agreement between the Council and its tenants and was last reviewed during 2001/2.
- 4.4 The Housing Directorate has detailed policies & procedures for most of its functions and the work of the housing management service is included within the Procedures Manual which gives important guidance to staff.
- 4.5 Literature on rents, benefits, vehicular crossovers, succession, and other leaflets are on display at both Area Housing Offices and the Limes Farm Office, and featured from time to time in relevant publications including the tenants' magazine Housing News. All tenants have received a copy of the Tenants Handbook which explains about all matters relating to their tenancy.
- 4.6 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan gives detailed information on the objectives, plans and financial forecast for the HRA as a whole.
- 4.7 Important statistical performance information is available and monitored at quarterly Performance Management meetings chaired by the Director of Housing.

5. Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The aim of the Council's Housing Service Strategy on Housing Management is:

“To ensure that tenants are advised in all matters relating to their tenancies whilst actively seeking to maximise the use of the Council's housing stock, improve housing estates and deal with breaches in tenancy conditions through good landlord & tenant relationships.”
- 5.2 This aim will be met by:
 - (a) Ensuring that all tenants are advised of their and the Council's responsibilities under the Tenancy Agreement at its commencement and throughout the period of the tenancy;

(b) Keeping close links between tenants and their Housing Management Officer to reduce the likelihood of breaches of the Tenancy Agreement;

(c) Acting in accordance with Part IV of the Housing Act 1985 (Section 87-89) and the Council's discretionary policy on under-occupation and succession.

(d) Consulting with tenants on issues regarding their home or local community which may affect them;

(e) Encouraging tenants to set up their own Residents Association;

(f) Taking appropriate actions to deal with breaches of tenancy conditions;

(g) Ensuring the Council's housing estates are properly maintained; and

(h) Dealing with breaches of covenants by people occupying former Council homes;

6. Statutory Requirements

6.1 The relevant key statutory requirements for housing management are as follows:

a) Housing Act 1985

- Notice of proceedings for possession or termination (Section 83)
- Grounds and orders for possession (Section 84)
- Extended discretion of Court in certain possession proceedings (Section 85)
- Succession (Sections 87, 88, & 89)
- Assignment, lodgers, and subletting (Sections 91, 92, 93, 94, & 95)
- Repairs and improvements (Sections 96 to 101)
- Variation of terms of tenancy (Sections 102 & 103)
- Variation of rent (Section 102b)
- Provision of information and consultation (Section 104)
- Consultation on matters of housing management (Section 105)

b) Housing and Regeneration Act 2008

- Family Intervention Tenancies
- Changes relating to tolerated trespassers

c) Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

d) Environmental Protection Act 1990

e) Wild Animals Act 1976

f) Data Protection Act

7. Client Consultation, Information & Involvement (Statutory Requirement)

7.1 The way in which tenants will be consulted, informed and involved with regard to the Council's policy on housing management is as follows;

- a) Consultation with the Tenants' and Leaseholders Federation;
- b) Consultation with recognised tenants' associations;
- c) Information to tenants in publications e.g. Housing News, Annual Report;
- d) Posters on services displayed throughout the District;
- e) Liaison with the Citizens Advice Bureau;
- f) One-to-one consultation with tenants;
- g) Changes in policy;
- h) Changes under Part IV, Section 102/3 of the Housing Act 1985 to amend the Standard Tenancy Agreement; and
- i) Consultation on matters of housing management under Part IV, Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985.

8. General Principles

8.1 Section 5 of the Housing Services Strategy sets out the aims and objectives of housing management. This Section details the general approach taken on the delivery of the service under the following headings:

8.2 Changes in Tenancy

Changes in tenancy will be managed in accordance with legislation and the Council's discretionary policies. The main types of changes are as follows:

a) Succession

The law of succession is found within the Housing Act 1985 Part IV Sections 87-89. Succession can occur following the death of the secure tenant. One succession to a secure tenancy is allowed under the legislation with the spouse being preferred. Should there be no surviving spouse, then a family member can succeed to the tenancy, who may be required to move to suitable alternative accommodation should they be under-occupying. Where there is more than one surviving family member, as there can be no joint succession, each of the family members will be asked to choose who is to succeed. Where agreement cannot be reached, the Council will choose. Generally in these circumstances, the eldest would succeed. The Council's policy on under occupation is applied, which allows a family member to remain at the property provided they are only under-occupying by one bedroom if; they have been living in the property as their only or principal home for more than ten years continuously immediately prior to the tenants death, if they are over the age of 60, or if following an assessment it is found that significant financial or other support was given by the successor tenant to the previous tenant. In addition, the Council's policy on discretionary succession is applied, which in simple terms allows all succession cases to be treated as if there had not already been one succession.

b) Assignment

Under the Housing Act 1985, tenants have the right to assign their tenancy to anyone who would be eligible to succeed to their tenancy upon their death. When a formal request is received a Deed of Assignment will be signed by both parties concerned.

c) Mutual Exchanges

All secure tenants have the Right to Exchange, with tenants being able to register free of charge with HomeSwapper, which matches property swaps electronically. All mutual exchanges are administered by way of assignment, thereby protecting the rights of the tenant and the Council. The Housing Directorate's staff will visit all Council tenants

seeking an exchange to give advice and assistance, inspect the condition of the properties, ensure there is a clear rent account and note any other relevant information prior to giving permission in accordance with current legislation.

d) Any Other Changes in Tenancy

Any other changes in tenancy such as name or marital status will be administered by Housing Management, with the Housing Options Section being notified. Following an investigation into the validity of the changes the tenant will be formally notified of any changes.

9. Joint Tenancies

- 9.1 When an existing tenant requests the creation of a joint tenancy, an analysis of the tenancy history will be undertaken. A joint tenancy will not be granted if there has been a previous succession to the tenancy, due to the new joint tenancy removing the succession which has already taken place. Generally, requests for joint tenancies with relatives will not be granted. In some circumstances, joint tenancies with carers may be granted, provided the carer has themselves given up accommodation to care for the secure tenant. Housing Management will observe Council policy and Government Circulars when taking decisions.

10. Introductory Tenancies

- 10.1 Under the Housing Act 1996, local authorities are given discretionary powers to operate a scheme of "introductory tenancies", whereby all new tenancies allocated are not secure until after a twelve month "trial" period. At the time of the scheme being permitted under the Act, the Council decided that it would not operate such a scheme. However, as part of the last Best Value Service Review, it was agreed that the use of these discretionary powers be reviewed and "challenged" as this could be a useful tool in tackling anti-social behaviour and other breaches of tenancy conditions. Following consultation with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, the Anti-Social Behaviour Group and the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Council's Cabinet agreed the introduction of a new Introductory Tenancy Scheme, which was brought in on 1 April 2005. The scheme has proved to be very successful and has assisted in reducing both incidents of anti-social behaviour on estates and rent arrears.

11. Family Intervention Tenancies

- 11.1 Family Intervention Tenancies have been recently introduced under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, and are designed to provide non-secure tenancies, in an alternative property, to applicants who have previously been the subject of a Possession Order made on the grounds of nuisance or annoyance and where a lower security of tenure should be provided for the purposes of providing behavioural support. Should any applicants offered a Family Intervention Tenancy re-offend then re-possession of the property through the Courts will be more easily achievable than if they were secure tenants.

12. Demoted Tenancies

Demoted tenancies allow the Council to apply to the County Court for a "Demotion Order" to reduce the security of tenure of an existing tenant on their own home on the grounds of anti social behaviour or unlawful conduct, following the service of the

prescribed notice. A Demotion Order ends a secure tenancy. If the tenant remains in occupation of the property after the date that the secure tenancy is ended, it creates, in the place of the secure tenancy, a less secure “demoted tenancy” for a minimum period of twelve months. Demoted tenants lose many of their rights including; the Right to Buy and any discount accrued for any demoted tenancy period, their right to succession, which does not apply during any demoted tenancy period and security of tenure. Demoted tenants are automatically promoted back to a higher form of security (i.e. secure tenant) after twelve months, unless a Notice of Proceedings for Possession have been served during that period. The Court may then make an Order for possession if the demoted tenant, another resident or visitor has behaved in a way which is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance or if such a person used the premises for illegal purposes, and the Court is satisfied it is reasonable to make the Order. Seeking possession of a Demoted Tenancy is more straightforward, as the Court cannot refuse a landlord’s application for possession unless it thinks that the procedure has not been properly followed. Prior to the serving of any Notice, officers would have undertaken home visits and written letters to the tenant taking every possible action to try and resolve matters.

13. Priority Transfers

- 13.1 If in exceptional circumstances a tenant needs to be transferred to alternative accommodation for housing management reasons e.g.due to personal risk, (which must be confirmed by appropriate sources), the Assistant Director of Housing (Operations) and the Housing Options Manager will authorise Priority Transfers in appropriate cases.

14. Vehicle Crossovers

- 14.1 For all current and former Council properties, Housing Management will assess all applications for vehicular crossovers ensuring that the Council’s existing policy is applied. Residents of neighbouring properties will be consulted with their views being taken into account before permission is granted.

15. Breaches of Tenancy Conditions

15.1 Prevention

Housing Management will work proactively through home visits and estate inspections to ensure against breaches of tenancy conditions. This will attempt to identify neglect of gardens, rubbish dumping, vandalism and the general external condition of properties.

15.2 Action Taken in Response to Breaches of Tenancy Conditions

When an alleged breach is reported, the Housing Management Officer will investigate the case and, in the first instance, undertake a home visit. If an actual breach is identified, the tenant will be notified formally of the breach and given a deadline by which to resolve it. The implications of their action under the terms of their tenancy will also be explained. Should Housing Management serve Notice or proceed to Court, appropriate evidence will be gathered as necessary.

15.3 Boundary Disputes

When Housing Management receives written confirmation of a boundary dispute, a Housing Management Officer will visit. If appropriate, a joint visit will be made with Environmental Services’ Surveyor Assistant. In difficult cases the Assistant Director of

Housing (Operations) may arrange for a Consultant Chartered Surveyor to be employed in order to resolve the matter. All parties will be told of the decision in writing. Should any of the parties dispute the decision, they will be advised that it shall stand unless they provide documentary evidence to the contrary.

15.4 Breaches of Covenants

When Housing Management receive a complaint of a potential breach of a covenant on a former Council dwelling the matter will be investigated. If appropriate the freeholder/leaseholder will be notified of the breach and, if it persists, Legal Services will be asked to take Court action.

15.5 Unauthorised Occupation

a) Tolerated Trespassers

Under the new Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, provisions are being made for the creation of replacement tenancies for those who have become Tolerated Trespassers. The status of a Tolerated Trespasser occurred in the past, when a secure tenant breached a Suspended Possession Order, most commonly for rent arrears. When a tenant missed a rent payment under the Order, their security of tenure ended and they became a Tolerated Trespasser, paying a use and occupation charge. Although further guidance is awaited, the replacement tenancy created by the Act will be a secure tenancy for those tenants who enjoyed secure tenancy status before becoming Tolerated Trespassers. The replacement tenancy will be treated as if the tenancy had not been interrupted.

b) Unauthorised Occupiers

In the case of unauthorised occupation, Legal Services will be asked to apply to the County Court for possession within 5 days. A Notice will be fixed to the door of the property.

15.6 Estate Inspections

Housing Management Officers will inspect the areas they are responsible for on a regular basis and will generally identify problems whilst they are visiting tenants on other matters. More formally, Area Housing Managers will undertake annual inspections of all estates with each of their Housing Management Officers and record requested actions to ensure that estates are kept to a high standard. Representatives from local Residents Associations will be invited to attend the annual estate inspections.

16. Older and Disabled People's Garden Maintenance Scheme

- 16.1 Housing Management will monitor the Older and Disabled People's Garden Maintenance Scheme, which is managed by Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF). Provided applicants have no-one living at the property who is under 70 years of age and have a clear rent account they will be added to the list and dealt with in date order. The Council funds VAEF's part-time Co-ordinator; around fifty vulnerable tenants' gardens are maintained four times each year between April and October.

17. Compensation for Tenants Improvements Scheme

- 17.1 Requests from tenants to undertake improvements will be received by Housing

Management and passed on to the Housing Repairs Section to deal with the technical aspects. Providing the improvements qualify under the Scheme, the Housing Management Officer will ensure the rent account is clear, and, if agreed, write to the tenant giving consent and details of how to claim their compensation on vacation of the property. When the improvement has been completed, the Housing Repairs Officer will visit to ensure the improvement has been carried out satisfactorily. When a claim has been made, the Housing Repairs Officer will visit again to inspect, and if satisfied, the Housing Management Officer will calculate and arrange payment of the compensation.

18. Alterations and Improvements (Not Qualifying for the Tenants Improvement Scheme)

- 18.1 The Tenancy Agreement requires tenants to seek permission before undertaking any improvements to their properties. After checking that the improvement does not qualify for the Compensation Scheme (see 16.1) and is a straightforward improvement e.g. shed, greenhouse, no structural works, permission will be granted. If the request is more complicated then the Housing Repairs Officer will be asked to carry out an inspection. If appropriate, neighbours will be consulted and their views taken into account. The tenant will be notified of the decision in writing.

19. Estate Enhancements & Grounds Maintenance

- 19.1 The Assistant Director of Housing (Operations) and the Area Housing Managers (North and South) attend quarterly meetings with Leisure Services in order to monitor the Grounds Maintenance Contract for the Housing Directorate. Housing Management also become involved in small and large improvement schemes.

20. Abandoned Vehicles

- 20.1 When vehicles appear to be abandoned and are identified on Housing Act land, if they are untaxed the Housing Management Officer will contact Environmental Services who will determine ownership via the DVLA computer link. For those which are clearly abandoned, Environmental Services will be notified to arrange for a Notice to be attached to the vehicle warning the owner of its removal within seven days and, if appropriate, to remove the vehicle. If the vehicle is in such a poor condition that it is likely to cause a danger it will be removed immediately.

21. Caretaking Service & Cleansing of Communal Areas

- 21.1 Housing Management will undertake and monitor the cleaning service, which includes all sheltered housing scheme cleaners, mobile cleaners, and cleaners at some designated blocks across the District. In addition, there are three Caretakers, two at the Limes Farm Estate, Chigwell and one at the Oakwood Hill Estate, Loughton. Notice Boards have been installed in all designated blocks on housing estates to advise residents when cleaning will be undertaken and inviting their comments on the standard of the service.

22. Right to Buy

- 22.1 Housing Management will respond to enquiries from the Home Ownership Team concerning the tenancies of tenants who have applied to buy their home.

23. Land Sales

- 23.1 When a request is received to purchase a piece of Housing land, the Housing

Management Officer will inspect the site and seek the advice and agreement of their Area Housing Manager. If the land is less than 50 square metres, in accordance with delegated authority, the Director of Housing in consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder and local Ward Members will decide if the land can be sold. If all are in agreement, the proposed purchaser will be advised of the valuation and the land will be sold. If the request is refused, then they will have the right to Appeal against the decision. Requests to purchase land in excess of 50 square metres will be referred to the Housing Portfolio Holder for decision.

24. Covenant Approval

- 24.1 Housing Management will deal with requests from the owners of former Council properties who are seeking permission to carry out improvements. In addition to receiving requests, any improvement works to former Council properties that have not been notified will be identified on estate inspections and through checking the list of planning applications. If any request is refused, the owners will have the right to appeal against the decision.

25. In Touch Support

- 25.1 Under the Supporting People Programme, Essex County Council provides housing related support to vulnerable tenants through its appointed contractor, In Touch Support. This additional support is of great assistance to Housing Management Officers when dealing with tenants who are in need of additional housing welfare support. Cases are referred to the Area Housing Manager in the first instance and then to the In Touch Support "Gateway" for assessment. The In Touch Support Worker will visit tenants, offer counselling, advice and support, assist with tenancy set-up, benefit and employment advice or provide any other help they may need to in order to sustain their tenancy. Regular meetings are held with In Touch Support to monitor progress and performance.

26. Action Plan

26.1 The actions in the table below will be undertaken in the future by the Housing Directorate in order to enhance the Housing Management Service.

Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resource Implications
Implement the finally agreed policy on enforcement of unauthorised parking on housing estates	Area Housing Managers	July 2009	Existing Resources
Update the Equalities Impact Assessment for Housing Management	Area Housing Managers	September 2009	Existing Resources
Ensure all the requirements of the new Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 are in place following further Government guidance	Area Housing Managers	September 2009	Existing Resources
Explore greater use of CCTV on estates to combat anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping	Area Housing Managers	April 2010	Existing resources
Complete the annual environmental improvements on estates in liaison with Housing Assets.	Area Housing Managers	April 2010	Existing Resources
Implement a new computer system (including a housing management reporting system) following the withdrawal of IT support from the current Open Housing Management System (OHMs) in 2013.	Assistant Director of Housing (Private Sector and Resources) Housing Resources Manager	January 2013	TBA
Continue to support all Resident Associations and attend meetings when appropriate.	Area Housing Managers	On-going	Existing resources

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27. Future Developments

27.1 The following “SWOT” analysis identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the areas covered by the Service Strategy.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable and committed staff • Improved recovery of former tenant arrears through external debt recovery service • Provision of additional support to assist vulnerable tenants through In Touch Support • Robust policies and documented procedures • Comprehensive use of different tenancy types • Integrated housing computer system • Charter Mark accreditation • ISO 9001:2000 accreditation • Good tenant consultation framework • Comprehensive performance monitoring • Healthy Housing Revenue Account • Housing Appeals Panel • De-centralised housing offices 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor response from tenants when attempting to set up Resident Associations • Low staffing levels compared to other local authorities and housing associations • Low numbers of professionally qualified housing management staff
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal to increase CCTV coverage • Increasing the number of Residents Associations in the District • Additional provisions of the Housing and Regeneration Act including Family Intervention Tenancies • Possible increased housing stock through the Government’s proposals on Council’s building properties • Use of electronic records and document management system 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible withdrawal of IT support for the integrated housing computer system

28. Resourcing the Strategy

- 28.1 For housing management purposes, the District is split into two areas with one Area Housing Office based at The Broadway, Loughton in the south of the District and the other based at the Civic Offices, Epping.
- 28.2 Area Housing Managers are based at each of the Area Housing Offices; each has an Assistant Area Housing Manager, which includes the Limes Farm Satellite Office, Chigwell.
- 28.3 Housing Management staff delivering this Strategy in 2009/2010 is approximately 10.5 FTE which includes the staffing levels detailed in paragraph 28.4, and other officers' time spent on the Housing Management Service. The projection for the number of staff required to deliver the Strategy over these and the following two years is detailed in the following table:

Staff Resource Projections				
Posts	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Housing Management Staff (FTE)	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5

- 28.4 The following table details the estimated proportion of Housing Management, and other officers' time spent on the Housing Management Service for 2009/2010:

Staff Resources Breakdown	
Posts	FTE
Director of Housing	0.1
Assistant Director of Housing (Operations)	0.3
Area Housing Managers x 2	1.4
Assistant Area Housing Managers x 3	1.5
Housing Management Officers x 8 FTE	4.0
Housing Assistants x 3	2.7
Clerical Assistant x 0.5 FTE	0.5
Total	10.5 FTE

29. Key Targets and Performance Monitoring

- 29.1 The Council will monitor performance and compliance with this Strategy through quarterly performance management meetings chaired by the Director of Housing with the Assistant Director of Housing (Operations) and Area Housing Managers, to ensure that a number of targets, which include the following are met:

Key Targets & Performance					
Performance Indicator	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	(Target)	(Target)	(Target)	(Target)	(Target)
Frequency of formal estate inspections between Area Housing Managers and Housing Management Officers	Annually	Annually	Annually	Annually	Annually
Rent collection rate	98.81%	99%	99.1%	99.2%	99.3%
Rent arrears as a percentage of the rent roll	1.8%	1.75%	1.7%	1.65%	1.6%
Former tenant arrears collection rate	£44,000	£44,000	£44,000	£44,000	£44,000
Letter responses	8 days	8 days	8 days	8 days	8 days

30. Reviewing the Strategy

- 30.1 The Strategy for Housing Management will be reviewed in consultation with the Tenants' and Leaseholders Federation before April 2012.

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Report to Housing Services Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 23 March 2009

Subject: Parking Enforcement on Housing Estates

**Officer contact for further information: Roger Wilson,
Assistant Head Housing Services (Operations) (01992-56 4419)**

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins, Office of the Chief Executive (01992-56 4067)



SCRUTINY

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

1. That the Housing Scrutiny Panel considers the approach to parking enforcement on housing estates, and recommends to the Housing Portfolio Holder that:

- (a) In accordance with Option Four in the report, enforcement measures are undertaken on an ad hoc basis where problems are particularly bad, following consultation with local residents and Ward Members; and**
- (b) That the position is reviewed at a future date to be agreed.**

Report:

Vehicular Crossovers & Off-Street Parking Schemes

1. At its last meeting on 3 July 2008, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered a report on options to resolve the increasing problems with parking and increased congestion on housing estates. In order to ease the parking problems, the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Panel agreed that the following recommendations be made to the Cabinet.

- That the maximum amount of grassed verge to be removed in order to construct a vehicular crossover to allow residents to park their vehicle/s in their front garden be increased from 6 metres to 12 metres in length; and
- That the additional £300,000 budget available in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme from 2009/2010 be made available to fund further off-street parking schemes and match funded from the General Fund.

2. At its meeting on 1 September 2008 (Minute 60 refers) the Cabinet agreed both of the above recommendations. However, on the recommendation of the Housing Portfolio Holder, it was further agreed that, for any proposed crossover in excess of 6 metres, a consultation exercise involving local residents and Ward Members be undertaken prior to approval and construction.

Parking enforcement on Housing Estates

3. The Housing Scrutiny Panel also considered at the July 2008 meeting, the increase in complaints from the public about unauthorised parking; these include increased telephone calls, letters and occasionally petitions.

4. The complaints are about two main issues. Firstly, residents are unhappy that more vehicles are being parked on grass verges causing damage to the open green spaces, which are costly to repair and can be dangerous to pedestrians and children playing. When, in response, enforcement action is taken by the Council, in the form of installing bollards, jockey

rails or shrub planting, other residents complain about having nowhere to park, with cars being displaced into already heavily congested side streets.

5. In addition to receiving complaints from the public, officers receive enquiries from Members. Some Members ask that enforcement action be taken to prevent vehicles from parking on the grassed verges, with other Members asking officers not to take action as it will displace vehicles and cause problems in side streets.

6. The Housing Scrutiny Panel therefore asked officers to draft a policy on the approach to be taken on unauthorised parking. The draft policy was considered by the Panel at its meeting on 9 October 2008, and its comments were incorporated. Both the Panel and the Housing Portfolio Holder suggested that the policy, which is attached as an appendix to this report, be reviewed by the Panel one year after its implementation.

7. Subsequently, the (officer) Corporate Executive Forum had concerns that the proposed policy may be difficult to enforce, but as the report had been considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Housing Portfolio Holder it was agreed it should be submitted to the Cabinet on 15 December 2008 for consideration. However, prior to the Cabinet meeting, the Housing Portfolio Holder decided that the report should be deferred and officers be asked to consult with other enforcement officers within the Council to seek their views on the policy.

8. This consultation has been undertaken. Unfortunately, it has not been very helpful as they also see the difficulties with enforcing any policy. Indeed, the two Area Housing Managers responsible for housing management in the north and the south of the District have been consulted on the draft enforcement policy and asked that the Panel consider their concerns which are as follows:

- Any enforcement policy will be difficult to apply, as it is always going to be unclear and difficult to interpret.
- An enforcement policy could be subjective in its application and difficult decisions will need to be made by officers which, as with the current arrangement, some will be in favour and others against.
- When a decision is made, the Council may have difficulty explaining to residents why it is allowed in one area and not another.
- The Council could not allow cars to cause an obstruction, damage grass verges, or cross pavements where kerbs have not been dropped.

9. The Tenants and Leaseholder's Federation was consulted on the policy at its meeting on 23 September 2008; by a majority of 5 in favour and 2 against they concluded that unauthorised parking on housing-owned grass verges should generally not be permitted across the District.

10. The Housing Portfolio Holder requested that other councils be contacted and asked about their policies. A summary of the responses is attached as an appendix to the report.

11. There appear to be the following four options:

Option One – Unauthorised parking is fully enforced

12. If all unauthorised parking on estates was fully enforced, a programme of works could be undertaken on housing-owned grass verges, either installing jockey rails, bollards or the planting of shrubs, which would be costly. Although this would solve the problems of damage being caused to the grassed areas, due to the large numbers of vehicles being parked on grass verges, this would cause further congestion in side streets.

Option Two – Postponement of parking enforcement in identified priority areas

13. Any parking enforcement could be postponed in identified priority areas, where off-street parking schemes have been agreed, until the schemes have been constructed, or residents have had the opportunity to construct a new vehicular crossover (particularly under the new 12 metre rule). However, Members would need to consider the action to be taken in areas which are of a less priority.

Option Three – Continue with the Parking Enforcement Policy

14. The Housing Scrutiny Panel could consider recommending to the Housing Portfolio Holder that, following consultation with the Council's enforcement officers, the policy previously proposed by the Scrutiny Panel attached as an appendix to the report, be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration.

Option Four – Carry out enforcement measures on an ad hoc basis

15. Carrying out enforcement measures on an ad hoc basis is the current practice of housing management. Jockey rails or shrubs are installed at sites where the problem is particularly bad and the most complaints are received following a local consultation exercise. If this option was continued, it is suggested that all Ward Members are also consulted in the future, prior to any enforcement measures being undertaken.

16. It is suggested to the Panel that Option Four would be the most appropriate course of action. Although this is the current policy, it could be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder that in the future, in addition to local residents, Ward Members be consulted on any proposed enforcement action. In addition, it is suggested that the Housing Scrutiny Panel agrees a date to review the position.

APPENDIX

Summary of responses on the approach taken by other Council's on parking enforcement

Authority	Response
Harlow District Council	Do experience problems with parking on estate greens. Ad hoc approach taken some letters sent some vehicles stickered and jockey rails installed at some locations. No formal policy.
Brentwood Borough Council	Same approach as Harlow District Council.
Uttlesford District Council	Same approach as Harlow although no parking signs are installed and off street parking schemes have been constructed. They have a Corporate enforcement team who take action against residents who illegally park. No formal policy.
Welwyn and Hatfield District Council	Bollards and jockey rails are installed at some locations and they have a bye law which prohibits parking on Council land which is difficult to enforce. No formal policy.
Stevenage Borough Council	Have a parking strategy being trialed across half the Borough including a local traffic order prohibiting parking on Council greens which is enforced by parking attendants. Where there are major parking problems parking schemes are being constructed prior to traffic orders being put in place.

UNAUTHORISED PARKING ON HOUSING-OWNED GRASSED VERGES

PARKING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

1. Generally, the Council will not allow any vehicles to be parked on Housing-owned grass verges or green spaces.

2. However, if the Area Housing Manager assesses that generally, residents in the area are unable to park within 5 minutes walk of their home, enforcement action will not be taken.

3. Where circumstances in paragraph 2 apply, enforcement action will only be taken if one of the following circumstances apply:

- Where the grassed area is considered to have particular important amenity value.
- Where non residents park their vehicles on grass verges.
- Where residents/non residents park heavy vehicles whose gross unladen weight is 2 tonnes or more.
- Where residents/non residents park caravans, boats or commercial vehicles.
- Where the Council has already constructed an off-street parking scheme.
- Where residents/non residents are parking vehicles on pedestrian footpaths.
- Where vehicles are overhanging footpaths, pavements or causing an obstruction.
- Where access is gained crossing a lay-by or where there is no dropped kerb.
- Where there is potential to cause damage to trees or shrubs.
- Where it is generally considered to be unsafe.

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SCRUTINY



Report to Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 23 March 2009

Subject: Tenant Participation Progress 2008

**Officer contact for further information: Richard Jones,
Tenant Participation Officer (01992 56 4524)**

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins, Office of the Chief Executive (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That progress made on the development of tenant participation during the period 1 January 2008 – 31 December 2008 be noted.

Report:

1. At the Tenant Participation Progress Meeting held on 23rd October 2007 and following discussion with the Director of Housing, it was agreed to provide a yearly tenant participation update to the Housing Standing Scrutiny Panel.
2. The Housing Services Strategy on Tenant Participation, which was updated in 2007, sets out the Council's approach to tenant participation and how the service will be delivered.
3. Consultation of 1,563 general needs tenants through the 2008 Tenant Satisfaction Survey showed that 62% of respondents were satisfied that their views were being taken into account by their landlord (EFDC) and only 7% were dissatisfied.

Existing Groups

4. There are currently 6 established residents associations and 2 residents panels in the District, namely:
 - Debden Tenants Panel, Loughton;
 - Limes Farm Community Association, Chigwell;
 - Ninefields Residents Panel, Waltham Abbey;
 - Oakwood Hill Estate Residents Association, Loughton;
 - Paternoster North Residents Association, Upshire;
 - Romeland Residents Association, Waltham Abbey
 - Roundhills Residents Association, Waltham Abbey;
 - Shelley Residents Association, Ongar.
5. To become established and remain 'recognised', groups must fulfil the Council's criteria for formal recognition.
6. In addition to the existing groups, there are 3 associations representing specific groups of residents:
 - Epping Forest Leaseholders Association; which has 94 members and meets quarterly.
 - Epping Forest Sheltered Forum; which has 32 members and meets bi-monthly.

- Epping Forest Rural Tenants Forum; which has 13 members and meets quarterly.

There is also an 'Umbrella' group, the Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, that includes representatives of all the residents groups and meets with senior officers of the Housing Directorate and the Housing Portfolio Holder bi-monthly.

7. Each of the residents associations has signed a Local Tenant Participation Agreement with the Council, which sets out the approach each group and the Council will adopt in relation to tenant participation. These agreements are renewed on a yearly basis.
8. The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, Leaseholders Association and Sheltered Forum has each signed its own participation agreement. These agreements are renewed on a three yearly basis.
9. Each of the residents associations is invited to apply for a support grant of up to £250 per annum and a minor estate enhancement grant of up to £500 per annum.

Special Events

10. During 2008, successful community consultation days were held in Waltham Abbey (Ninefields) and North Weald. It is planned to hold similar events in other parts of the district during 2009.

New Initiatives

11. It is planned to introduce Local Area Agreements, particularly in areas where no current residents group exists. This will offer the opportunity for residents in these areas to become involved in the management of their neighbourhood and could also lead to the setting up of residents groups.
12. The Tenant Participation Officer is working with the East of England Resident Involvement Group, which meets quarterly to share good working practice and to compare methods for involvement. Through this involvement a 'Mystery Shopping' exercise is planned for 2009. This is where tenants would "test" the services being provided by the housing organization, by "pretending" to be a customer in need of a service, and reporting on how well the organization deals with the enquiry.
13. In October 2008, all tenants and leaseholders were invited to complete a Tenant Talkback form, detailing areas of interest for future consultation on a variety of subjects, including Repairs and Maintenance, Estate Inspections, Equality and Diversity, and Grounds Maintenance. 98 respondents returned their form and a database of interested tenants has been set up for use in future consultation and the setting up of focus groups to discuss specific subjects.

Diversity

14. In its Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's) the Government has identified a number of 'Hard to Reach' groups: rural communities, younger people, minority groups, families; that landlords are expected to include in the tenant participation process. The Tenant Participation Officer has been working with a number of these groups in a variety of ways, as detailed in points 15 – 18 below.

15. From information received through Tenant Talkback, 16 tenants have been invited to join the Council's Disability Equality Scheme Consultative Group.
16. In addition, 10 tenants have expressed an interest in forming a district-wide Multi-Faith group or joining the existing Multi-Faith Forum.
17. The Epping Forest Sheltered Forum represents EFDC tenants living in Sheltered or Group –dwelling schemes and properties covered by a Scheme Manager. The Forum meets bi-monthly and continues to attract new members.
18. The Epping Forest Rural Tenants Forum was set up in November 2006 and continues to expand. Twelve rural areas of the district are represented on the Forum.

Administration and Management of Tenant Participation

19. The Tenant Participation Officer holds monthly progress meetings with the Housing Resources Manager and Principal Housing Officer (Information and Strategy) and quarterly progress meetings with the Assistant Director of Housing (Operations).
20. The Tenant Participation Officer maintains an Action Plan which monitors progress of all aspects of tenant participation. Progress of the Action Plan is discussed at both the monthly and quarterly meetings.

Targets

21. A list of targets for 2009/10 is attached as appendix 1.

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Tenant Participation
Targets
2009/09

Appendix 1

Task	Target Date
Investigate the publication of a calendar for tenants, promoting the activities of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, Tenant Participation and other aspects of the Housing service	July 2009
Investigate, administer and arrange a 'Mystery Shopping' exercise for the Housing Directorate as recommended by the Charter Mark assessor	Dec 2009
Using information formulated from the Tenant Talkback exercise, set up Focus Groups to look at certain aspects of the Housing Service. i.e., Repairs and Maintenance, Grounds Maintenance, Equality and Diversity.	March 2010
Introduce Local Area Agreements, initially in areas without a recognised residents group. Areas identified include Hornbeam Road, Buckhurst Hill; Harveyfields, Waltham Abbey, Birch View, Epping; Rowley Mead, Thornwood	March 2010
Introduce a Multi-Faith tenants group to represent the views of the diverse population of the district	March 2010

Tenant Participation
Targets
2009/09

<p>Continue to expand the Rural Tenants Forum by holding meetings at more convenient times and at different locations throughout the district and by holding a district-wide event in a rural location to encourage participation.</p>	<p>September 2009</p>
<p>Set up 2 more residents groups through the introduction of Local Area Agreements or other means, i.e. Community Consultation Events.</p>	<p>March 2010</p>