

Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2009-2010

Six-Month Progress Report

No	Category	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Current Position
1	Housing Market	Disseminate the findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment undertaken with the 5 partner LAs through the Council's website and local media	Principal Housing Officer (Information / Strategy)	Dec 2009	Delayed – The SHMA is being produced by a research company on behalf of the 6 local authority partners. It has taken longer to complete than anticipated. However, it has now been finalised, and arrangements are in progress to publicise the results.
2	Housing Market	Following the completion and analysis of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, consider with partner local authorities the implementation of viability studies to test the deliverability of potential development sites	Asst. Director of Planning & Economic Development	June 2010	In Progress – A consultancy, Levels, has been jointly-appointed by the local authorities in the SHMA Area to undertake the Viability Assessment. It is currently in production, and should be completed by the Target Date.
3	Housing Market	In collaboration with the other 13 local authorities in the London Commuter Belt Housing Sub Region, formulate a revised Sub Regional Housing Strategy and Action Plan	Director of Housing	April 2010	In Progress – The revised Sub-Regional Housing Strategy is being produced by the LCB's Housing Co-ordinator.
4	Affordable Housing	Work with RSLs and developers to provide 396 affordable homes for rent and shared ownership at the following sites with detailed or outline planning permission:	Director of Housing	Dec 2011	On Target – 212 affordable homes have either been built in the current financial year, or are on site and due to be completed by March 2011. A further 254 affordable homes have detailed planning permission, with most expected to start on site in 2010/11. Overall, 466 homes are expected to be completed by December 2011.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Epping Forest College (Phase 2), Loughton (b) St Margarets Hospital, Epping (c) White Lodge/The Limes, Waltham Abbey (d) Ongar Station, Ongar (e) Merlin Way, North Weald (f) Jennikings Nursery, Chigwell (g) St Johns School, Epping (h) Church Hill, Loughton (i) Acres Avenue, Ongar (j) Theatre Resource, Ongar (k) Off site provision from Warren Hill development, Loughton 			
5	Affordable Housing	Provide 5 Home Ownership Grants of £34,000 to existing Council tenants to purchase in the private sector and review the success of the scheme and the take-up to consider whether a scheme should be introduced on a more permanent basis	Housing Resources Manager	April 2010	In Progress – A good response was received to the marketing campaign for the Home Ownership Grants (HOGs), and 5 have been allocated, with the tenants in the process of purchasing their first homes. The Cabinet has made budget provision for a further 6-12 HOGs in 2010/11.
6	Affordable Housing	Investigate the feasibility and viability of the Council building social housing for rent itself, including the possible development of the following 6 Council-owned sites:	Director of Housing	April 2010	In Progress – Detailed investigation by the Housing Scrutiny Panel's Affordable Housing Group identified that, for complex accounting reasons, it is not currently viable. However, the Cabinet has agreed the concept in principle, and agreed that the Leader should write to the Minister for Housing and Planning asking him to amend the accounting regulations to make it viable for the Council.

		<p>(a) Chequers Rd, Loughton (b) Millfield, High Ongar (c) Thatchers Close, Loughton (d) Kirby Close, Loughton (e) Langley Meadow, Loughton (f) Harveyfields, Waltham Abbey</p>			<p>John Healey MP has responded and advises that changes will be made.</p> <p>The required change is awaited.</p>
7	Affordable Housing	Produce a Development and Design Brief for the Broadway, Loughton, following the consultation exercise, providing significant levels of housing, including high levels of affordable housing with a mix of shared ownership and social rented housing	Asst. Director of Planning & Economic Development	April 2010	<p>Achieved – The Brief has been finalised. Senior Housing, Estates and Planning Officers are now considering the most appropriate way forward to develop the Council's landholdings within the Development Brief area.</p>
8	Affordable Housing	In partnership with one of the Council's Preferred RSL Partners, convert the Council-owned Leader Lodge and develop the associated grounds to provide 6 affordable flats	Director of Housing	Dec 2010	<p>Delayed – Following the withdrawal of the tenders submitted by the preferred and reserve housing associations, due to the worsening market conditions, a further tendering exercise was undertaken by the Director of Housing. A preferred housing association was selected.</p> <p>However, this housing association has recently advised that they must withdraw their offer, due to uncertainties around the implications for recently-introduced regulations on rural areas, which includes North Weald.</p> <p>The Director of Housing will be discussing the best way forward on this project.</p>

9	Affordable Housing	Work in partnership with one of the Council's Preferred RSL Partners to convert 20 unpopular bedsits for older people at Marden Close, Chigwell Row into 10 self-contained rented flats for families	Director of Housing	Dec 2010	<p>In Progress – Agreement has finally been reached with the charity that owns the freehold (the Council owns the leasehold), regarding the terms of the surrender of the existing lease by the Council and the provision of a new lease to the Council's selected housing association. The charity and the Council's Legal Services are currently drafting the new lease.</p> <p>The Director of Housing will then undertake a tendering exercise amongst the Council's Preferred RSL Partners to undertake the conversion scheme.</p>
10	Homelessness	Operate a scheme providing Rental Loans to potentially homeless people, to enable them to stay in their private rented accommodation	Housing Options Manager	April 2010	<p>Achieved – The Rental Loan Scheme is operating successfully, with additional funding from the CLG and the Council.</p>
11	Homelessness	Continue to actively engage with the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme	Housing Options Manager	April 2010	<p>Ongoing – To date, three mortgage rescues in the District have been facilitated by the Council – more than most other councils in Essex.</p>
12	Homelessness	Investigate the feasibility and viability of the Council establishing a Local Housing Company to purchase properties on the open market and let to homeless and other Housing Register applicants at market rents, in many cases funded by housing benefit	Director of Housing	April 2010	<p>Achieved – The Feasibility Study has been completed. It established that, although the approach was legal, and the Council could potentially receive additional income from loans and services provided to the Local Housing Company (LHC) than from its usual investment deposits, the LHC itself would not be viable, with the anticipated income from rents being insufficient to meet its costs.</p> <p>A report is due to be submitted to the Cabinet in April 2010, recommending that the proposal is not pursued any further.</p>

13	Black & Minority Ethnic Groups	Record the ethnicity of all Council tenants, using data obtained from the latest Tenants Census.	Principal Housing Officer (Information / Strategy)	Dec 2009	Achieved – All the data has been loaded onto the Housing Directorate's OHMS integrated housing IT system.
14	Black & Minority Ethnic Groups	Compare the ethnicity of applicants provided with Council accommodation with the ethnicity of Housing Register applicants	Housing Options Manager	July 2010	On Target – The annual report comparing the ethnicity of applicants provided with Council accommodation with the ethnicity of Housing Register applicants will be submitted to the Housing Scrutiny Panel, as usual, in July 2010.
15	Black & Minority Ethnic Groups	Review all customer satisfaction monitoring conducted by the housing service to ensure the diversity of customers is monitored in relation to satisfaction	Principal Housing Officer (Information / Strategy)	March 2010	In Progress – Although some diversity information is collected, the Housing Directorate is awaiting the introduction of corporate guidance on monitoring equality and diversity.
16	Gypsies & Travellers	Continue to challenge the Government's proposals to require Epping Forest to provide an additional 34 authorised pitches for gypsy and travellers	Asst. Director of Planning & Economic Development	April 2010	In Progress – Further planning permissions have been granted for gypsy and traveller sites, through the normal planning process. The Leader has written to the Department of Communities and Local Government seeking a meeting with the appropriate minister to discuss the Council's concerns.
17	Gypsies & Travellers	Following consultation on the draft proposals, produce and submit for examination a Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan Document addressing the provision of new sites for gypsies and travellers in the District.	Asst. Director of Planning & Economic Development	April 2010	Delayed – The way forward on the production of the Development Plan Document is dependent on the outcome of the Leader's meeting with the Minister.

18	Gypsies & Travellers	Identify the most suitable locations for the additional authorised pitches for gypsy and travellers required by the East of England Plan	Asst. Director of Planning & Economic Development	April 2010	Delayed – The locations will be set out in the Draft Development Plan Document, which is dependent on the outcome of the Leader’s meeting with the Minister
19	Gypsies & Travellers	Produce a Gypsies and Travellers Delivery Strategy, explaining how the required number of pitches for gypsies and travellers will be provided in practice	Asst. Director of Housing (Private Sector & Resources)	April 2010	Drafted – The Housing Directorate has produced a Draft Delivery Strategy. However, further work is required, but is not yet possible until the proposed site locations have been agreed.
20	Gypsies & Travellers	Work in partnership with registered social landlords to provide and manage affordable gypsies and travellers sites in the District	Asst. Director of Housing (Private Sector & Resources)	April 2011	In Progress – Discussions continued to be held with RSLs. Four of the Council’s five Preferred RSL Partners have advised that they currently have no plans to develop and manage gypsy sites. The remaining Preferred RSL Partner is in the process of developing a gypsy site in Norfolk, and does not want to commit to any further sites until the success of its Norfolk site can be evaluated. Discussions will be held with any other interested RSLs. However, very few appear interested.
21	Supported Housing – Older People & Other Vulnerables	Investigate the potential, with Essex Adult Care Services, for Jessopp Court, Waltham Abbey to be designated an Extra-Care Housing Scheme	Asst Director of Housing (Operations)	April 2010	Achieved – Discussions with Essex Adult Care Service (EACS) have established that Jessopp Court would not be suitable for designation as an Extra-Care Scheme. However, discussions with EACS have led to EFDC being a partner of Essex CC in its bid to the Department of Health (DoH) for PFI funding for the development of a new Extra Care Scheme in the District, on EFDC land. The outcome of the bid is expected in April 2010. It is understood that the totality of the bids to the DoH is less than the available budget.

					This has led to the Housing Directorate undertaking a Strategic Review of its Older Peoples Accommodation, to assess how fit for purpose its sheltered housing schemes are, and to determine a strategy for the future. It is envisaged that this may result in a site being identified as suitable for a new Extra-Care Scheme.
22	Supported Housing – Older People & Other Vulnerables	Obtain TSA accreditation for the Council’s Careline Service	Housing Manager (Older People)	April 2010	In Progress, but delayed – Good progress has been made. However, it will not be possible to obtain accreditation until the extension of the Careline Control Centre has been completed and the service returns to its enlarged accommodation, from its current temporary location.
23	Supported Housing – Older People & Other Vulnerables	Investigate with Ability Housing Association the potential to provide an extension to their existing supported housing scheme for wheelchair users at Mason Close, Waltham Abbey	Director of Housing	April 2010	No Progress – In order for the extension to proceed, the landowner (a large developer) has to be prepared to sell adjacent land at a reasonable price, and the developer continue to be reluctant to discuss reasonable terms.
24	Supported Housing – Older People & Other Vulnerables	In partnership with East Thames Housing Group, commence a development at Station Approach, Ongar, in partnership with Brentwood and Uttlesford Councils, to provide 13 self contained flats with adequate support for young parents	Director of Housing	Dec 2010	In Progress – The building is under construction, and the Project Team has been meeting to discuss operational aspects of the scheme. The current completion date is scheduled for December 2010

25	Supported Housing – Older People & Other Vulnerables	In partnership with East Thames Housing Group, commence a development of 9 affordable homes for people with learning disabilities, with associated drama therapy from the Theatre Resource Project, at Gt Stony, Ongar	Director of Housing	April 2010	In Progress – The building is under construction, and due for completion in 2010/11.
26	Supported Housing – Older People & Other Vulnerables	Through the LDF Core Strategy, seek to introduce a requirement that all new housing developments in the District should meet the Lifetime Homes Standard	Director of Planning & Economic Development	Dec 2010	No Progress – Progress with undertaking the LDF Core Strategy has been delayed, mainly due to staff resources having to be diverted to the Gypsies and Travellers Consultation Exercise.
27	Supported Housing – Older People & Other Vulnerables	Contribute towards the production of the Essex Strategy for Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs), setting out the approach to be taken to HIA's in Essex beyond 2010	Private Housing Manager (Grants & C.A.R.E.)	Dec 2009	In Progress – The Housing Directorate, along with other HIAs, continues to engage with the Essex Supporting Team on the proposed new arrangements. However, due to delays by Essex CC, it has been agreed that all the HIAs' existing Supporting People Contracts will be extended until April 2011.
28	Supported Housing – Older People & Other Vulnerables	Liaise with the North Essex Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust to assess the housing need in the District for people with mental health problems and the level of funding available from mental health sources	Principal Housing Officer (Information & Strategy)	April 2010	No Progress – This is a project that will be actioned during 2010.

29	Supported Housing – Older People & Other Vulnerables	Work with other councils to investigate the feasibility of other councils connecting its emergency alarms into the Council's Careline Control Centre	Asst Director of Housing (Operations)	Dec 2009	In Progress – Discussions are ongoing with one local authority in Essex that it is known will be tendering its Careline Service during 2010/11. The Housing Directorate intends to submit a competitive tender. Any other opportunities will be actively pursued.
30	Empty Homes	Write to all owners of properties that have been empty for at least 2 years encouraging them to bring their properties back into use and advising them of the options available	Private Housing Manager (Technical)	April 2010	Achieved – Letters have been sent to all owners of long-term empty properties, with advice on ways of enabling the properties to be occupied,
31	Empty Homes	Develop the Council's web-site to provide further information and advice to the owners of empty properties	Private Housing Manager (Technical)	Dec 2010	No Progress – Due to insufficient staff resources within the Private Sector Housing Section and other commitments, it has not been possible to progress this task. However, the Cabinet has agreed to the appointment of an additional part-time temporary Technical Officer; one of the post's responsibilities will be to progress the Council's Empty Property Strategy.
33	Empty Homes	Bring at least 5 long-term empty properties back into use by Council intervention.	Private Housing Manager (Technical)	April 2010	Not achieved – Although one property has been brought back into use through the Council's PLACE Scheme, it has not been possible to progress this task further. However, the additional part-time temporary Technical Officer referred to above will be responsible for increasing the number of private properties brought back into use.
34	Under-occupation	Write to all under-occupying Council tenants, encouraging them to transfer to smaller accommodation	Housing Options Manager	Dec 2010	No Progress – This will be actioned during 2010.

35	Rural Housing	Investigate the development potential for rural housing schemes in Moreton and other villages, in partnership with the Parish Councils and Hastoe Housing Association, under the Council's planning exceptions policy	Director of Housing	April 2010	<p>In Progress – The Housing Directorate has been working closely with Hastoe HA and parish councils on potential development sites. As a result, one site is due to be developed imminently (see (No. 36) below).</p> <p>Hastoe HA is in contact with other parish councils on other potential sites. However, no site has yet been identified for Moreton</p>
36	Rural Housing	Work with Abbess Berners and Beauchamp Roding Parish Council and Hastoe Housing Association to provide a rural housing development in the Parish, under the Council's planning exceptions policy	Director of Housing	April 2010	<p>In Progress – A site in Abbess Roding has received planning permission as a Planning Exceptions Scheme, has received funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, and is due to start on site by 31st March 2010.</p>
37	Decent Homes – Public Sector	Undertake programmes of work to ensure that all the Council's homes meet the Decent Homes Standard by April 2010	Housing Assets Manager	April 2010	<p>Achieved – All of the Council's properties will meet the Decent Homes Standard by 31st March 2010.</p>
	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Provide, through housing assistance, a year-on-year increase in the proportion of vulnerable private sector households in Decent Homes.	Private Housing Manager (Grants & C.A.R.E.)	April 2010 and ongoing	<p>Achieved for 2009/10– Due to financial housing assistance provided by the Council to vulnerable older people, a number of private sector properties now meet the Decent Homes Standard.</p> <p>A Private Sector House Condition Survey is planned for 2010/11, which will provide information on the most up-to-date estimate of the number of non-decent homes in the private sector.</p>

39	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Implement an Affordable Warmth Scheme as a joint initiative with other LCB authorities	Private Housing Manager (Grants & C.A.R.E.)	April 2010 - March 2011	In Progress – Funding has been provided by the East of England Regional Assembly, and the scheme is currently being undertaken in partnership with other local authorities in the LCB Sub-Region.
40	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Work on a joint project with other LCB authorities for a joint equity-release / loan-based housing product	Private Housing Manager (Grants & C.A.R.E.)	Dec 2010	No Progress - It is considered that an Equity Loan Scheme is unviable in the current housing market.
41	Housing Growth	Work with Harlow Council to agree the number of new homes required in the Epping Forest District, and the most suitable locations, to contribute to Harlow's growth	Director of Planning & Economic Development	Dec 2010	In Progress - Senior members and planning officers have been meeting regularly with Harlow DC, and a number of joint studies have been commissioned.
42	Housing Growth	Produce a Local Development Document on Site Specific Allocations, setting out the locations and numbers of housing growth within the District	Director of Planning & Economic Development	April 2010	In Progress – Although delayed, due to staffing resources having to be diverted to the Gypsy and Travellers Consultation Exercise, progress is being made by planning officers.
43	Energy Efficiency	Complete energy efficiency surveys for all the Council's properties	Housing Assets Manager	April 2010	Achieved – Energy efficiency surveys have been undertaken for all the Council's sheltered housing schemes and Norway House. Surveys are also undertaken in all empty Council properties, with an Energy Certificate issued to the incoming tenant.
44	Energy Efficiency	Seek funding for a small pilot scheme using renewable energy sources to a group of Council properties	Housing Assets Manager	April 2010	No Progress – Appropriate funding has not yet been identified.

45	Energy Efficiency	Set up a Fuel Poverty Referral System in the District.	Environmental Co-ordinator	April 2010	No Progress – Due to the previous Environmental Co-ordinator leaving the Council’s employment, and the post being un-filled for some time, this project has been delayed.
46	Energy Efficiency	Produce a leaflet on domestic energy efficiency.	Environmental Co-ordinator	April 2010	No Progress – Due to the previous Environmental Co-ordinator leaving the Council’s employment, and the post being un-filled for some time, this project has been delayed.
47	Respect & Anti-Social Behaviour	Produce an updated leaflet for the public on the Council’s Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	Apr 2010	In Progress – Due to a number of other commitments of the Principal Housing Officer (Strategy) it has not been possible to progress this task as quickly as it was hoped.
48	Respect & Anti-Social Behaviour	Consider the feasibility of the Council’s Careline Service providing a 24 hour monitoring service for Council CCTV cameras in the District	Asst. Director of Housing (Operations)	Apr 2010	Achieved – It has been agreed that the Careline Control Centre will provide a 24-hour monitoring service for all of the Council’s CCTV cameras that can be accessed from the Control Centre.