

MID SUSSEX

DISTRICT COUNCIL

A Housing Strategy for Mid Sussex 2009-2014

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Foreword

Welcome to our new Housing Strategy for the next 5 years.

The impact of housing on the overall wellbeing of the community is hard to overestimate. Good quality homes in attractive and sustainable neighbourhoods have a significant impact on the health, educational attainment and welfare of the people who live in them and the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the communities in which they are situated. Suitable housing underpins people's ability to meet their full potential, to live independently and to integrate with the community. We are conscious of the difficulties presented by the present economic downturn and have sought to provide a balanced approach in responding in the short term to the "credit crunch", whilst still addressing the longer term issues in the housing market, particularly the shortage of affordable housing.

The Strategy should not be read in isolation. It reflects the priorities of the Council and its partners in respect of the Sustainable Communities Strategy, as well as a wide range of other local and national strategies and targets.

I am grateful to the many organisations and individuals who have contributed to the development of the strategy by providing information about current services and how they can be improved.

I hope you find this document interesting and useful.

If you would like to know more about the services covered in this strategy or would like to discuss any of the issues raised, please contact:

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**Councillor Christopher Snowling
Cabinet Member for Health & Community
September 2009**

1. Executive Summary

This summary sets out in brief our vision for housing in Mid Sussex, the main issues facing the District and our key priorities and plans for addressing them. Further information can be found in the remainder of this document, and in the action plan in section 6.

The Local Strategic Partnership has set out its vision and priorities for the District in the Sustainable Communities Strategy. The vision set out by the partnership is of a thriving and attractive District, a desirable place to live work and visit. The aim is to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the District and the quality of life for everyone, now and in the future. Four priority themes underpin the vision, which will enable the sustainable development of the communities of Mid Sussex. These are:

- Protecting and enhancing the environment
- Cohesive and safe communities
- Economic vitality
- Healthy lifestyles

Mid Sussex District

One of the things residents most value about Mid Sussex is the quality of its environment. 58% of the District is within Areas of Outstanding Beauty. The level of housing proposed through the South East Plan poses particular challenges both in terms of delivery and in maintaining a high quality environment. The original draft South East Plan proposed 15,100 new homes in Mid Sussex by 2026. This has now been increased to 17,100 homes or 930 per year in the published South East Plan. The Council is considering its response to this Government target.

We are working to ensure the quality of future development both through policy initiatives, such as the emerging Supplementary Planning Document on space standards for both private and affordable housing, and through liaison with developers and the work of the Architects Panel.

Although the District is very attractive, our three main town centres are now dated and tired and need inward investment if they are to compete and thrive. We are working with Thornfield Properties on plans to revitalise each of our town centres with a mix of office, retail, leisure and residential development, including affordable housing. We expect these proposals to generate £500m of inward investment, and to contribute substantially to meeting our housing targets.

The District is in the main affluent, with high levels of employment. However, there are pockets of deprivation, and worklessness is higher amongst social housing tenants than in the population as a whole. We will continue to focus our resources and attention on these areas, including working with Downland Housing Association on the provision of a new community facility in Haywards Heath, and with a range of Registered Social Landlords on tackling worklessness.

Types of housing needed

Despite the impact of the current recession, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment confirms that Mid Sussex, as part of the Gatwick Diamond, has a strong economic future, and a strong housing market (current economic circumstances notwithstanding). GVA Grimley, who undertook the Assessment, recommend that we seek a better balance between flats and larger family housing than has been the case in the past few years, when much housing was developed as flats on small infill sites. The identification of larger sites through the Local Development Framework should allow that mix to be achieved. However, GVA Grimley also identify the need for a better “urban offer” of good quality homes, and see the proposed town centre revitalisation proposals as contributing to meeting that need.

Affordable housing

The Assessment identifies an ongoing shortage of affordable homes: between 357 and 477 affordable homes a year are needed to meet the backlog of need over a 10-year period, as well as meeting newly arising need. It advises that 70% of that provision should be for affordable rent, with the remaining 30% being intermediate tenure, either shared ownership or intermediate rent. These recommendations will be reflected in our emerging affordable housing policies, which we expect to take effect from 2011. One of our key aims is to meet the Local Area Agreement target to deliver 324 affordable homes in the period 2008-11. We recognise that in current market conditions flexibility has to be applied to ensure schemes remain viable, and are liaising with local developers to try to identify ways to enable them to continue to develop in these difficult times.

Our review of housing need also looks at the size of affordable housing needed. Whilst our housing register includes a large number of single people and couples, turnover in family homes is much slower, so that families often have to wait longer to be housed. Families with children are also typically in higher housing need than most single people and couples. We will therefore seek to achieve a good mix of sizes and types of affordable housing, including 4+ bedroom homes, in general reflecting the mix of open market housing on the site, and this will be incorporated into our planning policies.

In terms of location, affordable housing is needed across the District. It can be difficult to secure in rural areas with limited land available. We have identified a number of rural sites for housing, and are also working in partnership with parish councils to identify local housing need and sites that may be suitable as rural exception sites. Our target is to deliver at least 20 affordable homes a year in rural settlements.

Meeting specific needs

Mid Sussex currently has a fairly balanced age profile but, like most areas, is projecting significant increases in those over 65 and over 85. We are working with our Registered Social Landlord partners to review the current sheltered housing stock to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, where appropriate remodelling or even redeveloping schemes to meet older people's changing needs and aspirations. We will also require that most new affordable housing meets Lifetime Homes standards. Demand for Disabled Facilities Grants continues to grow. We are increasing our investment in this area and are working with our partners across the county to make the process as cost-effective as possible.

Work is underway to assess the need for specialist and supported housing. Again, with increased longevity of those with disabilities and the recognition that most people will wish to live as independently as possible, this will impact on the numbers, design and support arrangements.

We will be working closely with West Sussex County Council and other partners in assessing and making plans to meet both accommodation and housing-related support needs for vulnerable people, including those who are homeless and gypsies and travellers, where current provision falls short of what is required. Our housing mix policies will encourage a range of provision. Through the Local Development Framework, we will facilitate the provision of additional sites for gypsies and travellers.

Housing options and homelessness

We have had a lot of success in combating homelessness through our housing options approach and will be building on this work, in particular focusing on continuing to develop our relationship with private landlords, and ensuring that vulnerable people are supported to obtain

and sustain accommodation through protocols agreed with our Registered Social Landlord partners for the use of starter tenancies and the emerging Vulnerable Persons' Protocol. We recognise the challenges posed by the current market downturn, but aim to significantly increase the number of households for whom we prevent homelessness from 112 in 2007/08 to 350, and to keep annual homeless acceptances below 60. Our aim is to meet the Government's target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation to eliminate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for 16/17 year olds.

Housing Conditions and energy efficiency

The housing stock in Mid Sussex is generally in good condition, with lower than average proportions of homes that fail to meet either the fitness or Decent Homes standards. Those that do fail the Decent Homes standard often do so as a result of inadequate heating and insulation. This is particularly a problem in rural areas that depend on oil-fired heating. Fuel poverty is becoming an increasing problem, given the rising cost of energy. We are working with neighbouring authorities to attract funding to remedy this problem, and are developing an Affordable Warmth Strategy in liaison with the Energy Saving Trust. Our key aims are to meet the Government's targets that 70% of private homes occupied by vulnerable people, and 100% of affordable homes, should meet the Decent Homes standards by 2010.

Customer service and choice

Our whole housing options approach is about choice, but perhaps the biggest step-change in choice is the adoption by 2010 of the Sussex Homemove Choice-Based Lettings Scheme. This will enable applicants to choose particular vacancies as they are advertised and will also, through appropriate labelling, help those with disabilities to identify properties that may best suit their needs.

Delivering the strategy

A wide range of individuals, organisations and partnerships have contributed to developing this strategy, and will continue to be involved in its delivery. It is a 5-year strategy, but will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it reflects changing circumstances and continues to support the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

2. Purpose of the housing strategy and how it was developed.

Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to set out the Council's approach to delivering housing services and meeting housing need in the Mid Sussex District. It is the key policy document setting out how housing services should be delivered across the district over the next five years. The Housing Strategy forms part of a wider set of strategies produced by the Council setting out how the Council and its partners will promote economic, environmental and social well-being in the District, thereby promoting sustainable communities. The overall approach to all of these issues is the Sustainable Communities Strategy for Mid Sussex, which has been developed with our partners on the Mid Sussex Partnership. Good quality homes in attractive and sustainable neighbourhoods will play a significant role in ensuring a vibrant, long term future for Mid Sussex.

How the strategy was developed

The previous Housing Strategy for Mid Sussex covered the period 2005-2009 and had the following 5 objectives:

Objective 1: Increase the supply of affordable housing

Objective 2: Reduce homelessness

Objective 3 :Promote community safety

Objective 4: Help people live independently by providing appropriate housing and support

Objective 5: Repair and improve the home

Progress to the Strategy has been reviewed on an annual basis. The new document also includes an assessment of achievements against the previous strategy. The new Housing Strategy is an umbrella document bringing together a number of other specific strategies covering:

- Homelessness
- Older Persons Housing
- Empty Homes
- Private Sector Renewal Assistance Policy
- Rural Affordable Housing

The new strategy has been informed by extensive consultation, which is set out below:

1. Housing Strategy Consultation Day

The purpose of the day was to gain the views of our partners on the development of the new Housing Strategy and to enable the formulation of a strategy that reflects a range of perspectives. The event was attended by a wide range of stakeholders including representatives from tenants/residents associations, social housing providers, developers, Social Services, Action in Rural Sussex and Sussex Police. As well as consulting on the proposed new objectives for the Housing Strategy, participation was enabled through workshops around four themes;

1. Shaping the Housing Market
2. Saving the Planet
3. Creating Sustainable Communities
4. Meeting a range of needs

The main points coming out of the workshop are included in appendix 3, with an indication of how the points raised have been reflected in the Strategy.

2. Consulting with the Council's Better Lives Advisory Group

Development of the strategy has been informed by input from Councillors through one of our Advisory Groups. These are designed to provide advice to Cabinet and the Council on the development of policy.

3. Consulting with the Mid Sussex Registered Social Landlord Forum

The Council meets regularly with its Housing Association partners through the RSL Forum, which has been used to consult on the proposed Housing Strategy Objectives. The Forum has also provided input to the Action Plan and targets that refer to social housing.

4. Consultation on Homelessness and Housing Need in the District

Our new Homelessness Strategy was adopted by Council on 18 June 2008 and followed a review of homelessness in Mid Sussex. The new Housing Strategy includes reducing homelessness as one of its objectives. The review included a comprehensive consultation and information gathering exercise carried out between September and November 2007 with our key partner agencies, housing providers and service users. These included individual homelessness applicants, housing associations, private landlords/letting agents, community project managers and other agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureaux, Shelter, Age Concern, providers of mental health residential services, probation service, youth groups and Signpost.

5. Consultation on the Older Persons Housing Strategy

An Older Persons Housing Strategy was adopted in September 2007 and its actions play an important part in delivering against the Housing Strategy objective to promote independence and inclusion. The Strategy was informed by extensive consultation with older people and relevant groups, such as the Older People's Council, Age Concern and developers of older persons housing.

The draft strategy was also sent to a wide range of stakeholders for comment and made available on the Council's website. The main issues arising from these comments and the responses are included in appendix 3 of the strategy.

3. Strategic links

In developing this Housing Strategy, the Council has reflected the policy framework at national, regional, sub regional and local level. Our response to this policy framework is summarised in the table on pages 9-10.

The Council is a key partner in delivering the housing agenda at a regional and national level. We work closely with the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), the South East Regional Housing Board, West Sussex County Council, other West Sussex local authorities, the Homes and Communities Agency and housing associations.

The key local strategic links for the Housing Strategy are the Mid Sussex Sustainable Communities Strategy and the West Sussex Local Area Agreement. These have both been developed in partnership with other organisations. The Council's own Corporate Plan has also been a key influence on the development of the Housing Strategy.

Mid Sussex Sustainable Communities Strategy

The Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008-18 is the plan for improving the district of Mid Sussex, agreed with our partners on the Mid Sussex Partnership. It has 4 priority themes:

- Protecting and Enhancing the Environment
- Cohesive and Safe Communities
- Economic Vitality
- Healthy Lifestyles

The objectives of the Housing Strategy are closely aligned to the Sustainable Communities Strategy. Most relevant to the Housing Strategy are:

Under "protecting and enhancing the environment", recognising the contribution of housing to managing the causes and impacts of climate change.

Under "cohesive and safe communities", providing support to vulnerable people to encourage independent living.

Under Economic Vitality, "the provision of housing and infrastructure requirements to meet the range of local needs."

West Sussex Local Area Agreement

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) were introduced in 2004. The Local Area Agreement is a three year agreement between the Central Government and the local area, negotiated with West Sussex County Council and its partners. The new West Sussex Local Area Agreement (LAA) was completed in June 2008. The LAA has the following main themes:-

1. To level up the life outcomes and experiences for those in rural and deprived communities in housing, crime, health and employment.
2. To increase the sustainable accessibility of jobs, education and essential services to all, particularly in rural areas and for those in deprived communities.
3. To improve the health, educational attainment and access to activities of children and younger people in all communities.

There are a number of the targets in the LAA which are relevant to the Housing Strategy. These include targets for the number of additional homes provided, affordable housing, reductions in CO₂ emissions, care leavers in suitable accommodation and the number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living.

Mid Sussex District Council Corporate Plan 2009/10

The Council's Corporate Plan has three themes: Better Environment, Better Lives and Better Services. The priorities under Better Lives are most relevant to the Housing Strategy, especially

Opportunities and Quality of Life for All. A 4 year Service Development Plan has been developed for the period. There are 10 key cross-cutting projects identified over the next 4 years. The most relevant to the Housing Strategy is “Delivery of the required housing numbers across the District and the supporting infrastructure for them in a sustainable way.” Success criteria have been established for all of the Council’s business units under 4 themes-

- Best in Class Services
- Excellent customer service and satisfaction
- Sustainable finances
- Excellent Reputation.

This corporate framework has been a strong driver for the priorities in the new Housing Strategy.

How we are responding to national, regional and local priorities

The table below shows the national, regional and local priorities and how these are addressed in the strategy.

	Issue	Strategic Link	How we are responding	For more information
1.	Increasing the supply of housing in the south east.	South East Plan Local Area Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying sites through the Local Development Framework • Working with developers to try to unlock sites • Increasing density of housing 	Pages 22-23 Action Plan target 1
2.	Increasing the supply of affordable housing.	Regional Housing Strategy Sustainable Communities Strategy Local Area Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New affordable housing policies in Core Strategy with greater % required and reduced thresholds • LAA targets of 324 new affordable homes 2008-11 	Pages 22-24 Action Plan target 2
3.	Delivering more rural affordable housing.	Rural Affordable Homes Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target minimum 20 rural affordable homes per annum. • Use of rural exception sites • Parish Housing Needs surveys • Rural housing sites identified in Local Development Framework. 	Pages 25 Action Plan targets 2
4.	Tackling empty homes and underoccupation.	Empty Homes Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underoccupation schemes • Review of allocation schemes 	Pages 25-26 Action Plan target 4
5.	Preventing homelessness.	Homelessness Strategy Settled Homes, Changing Lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Options approach • Rent in advance/deposit guarantee 	Pages 27-29 Action Plan targets 5-7

	Issue	Strategic Link	How we are responding	For more information
6.	Reducing the use of temporary accommodation.	Homelessness Strategy Government targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting government targets to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 and eliminate use of B&B accommodation for 16/17 year olds. 	Page 30 Action Plan target 8
7.	Improving the condition of the housing stock.	Housing Act 2004 Housing Renewal Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of Home Renovations Loans and Minor Works loans. Meeting government targets by 2010 that 70% of private homes occupied by vulnerable people and 100% of affordable homes should meet decent homes standard. 	Pages 31-32 Action Plan targets 9-10
8.	Improving the energy efficiency of housing.	Fuel Poverty Strategy Code for Sustainable Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New affordable housing meeting the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 Warm Front Grants and Affordable Warmth Strategy 	Pages 32-33 Action Plan targets 11-12
9.	Supporting people and encouraging independent living.	Local Area Agreement Supporting People Older Persons Housing Strategy Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of supported housing schemes Support for those in temporary accommodation. Review of sheltered housing Disabled adaptations through Disabled Grants Scheme. 	Pages 35-39 Action Plan targets 15-18
10.	Improved social cohesion and inclusion.	Mid Sussex Community Safety Strategy Hills Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of community projects e.g. Denham Road and Wilmington Way Tackling worklessness Provision for gypsies and travellers Equalities Schemes 	Pages 39-40 Action Plan targets 19-20
11.	Greater choice and resident involvement.	Housing and Regeneration Act Corporate Plan Customer Services Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing Choice Based Lettings Monitoring of RSL tenant satisfaction Seeking residents views on new housing 	Pages 41 and 43 Action Plan targets 22 and 23

Cross Boundary Working

To achieve our aim we work not only with partners in Mid Sussex, but also increasingly with partners and stakeholders across West Sussex and into Surrey. An outline of some of this cross boundary working is described below:

West Sussex Planning and Affordable Housing Group

This group comprises senior housing and planning officers, together with representatives from the housing association sector, the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), Homes and Communities Agency, Action in Rural Sussex and the National Housing Federation. Its purpose is to work to maximise affordable housing across the county. It is responsible for delivering the Local Area Agreement target to deliver more affordable housing. The Group is chaired by the Head of Housing at Mid Sussex. A recent example of joint working has been to commission the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The Group is currently working to align a number of policies and practices to improve consistency, including the development of a consistent approach across sub-regional housing markets.

West Sussex Chief Housing Officers Group

Membership comprises Heads of Housing from each District and Borough across West Sussex. The Group discusses policy issues and identifies areas for joint working. It is hosting a workshop on dealing with worklessness amongst social housing tenants

West Sussex Supporting People Partnership

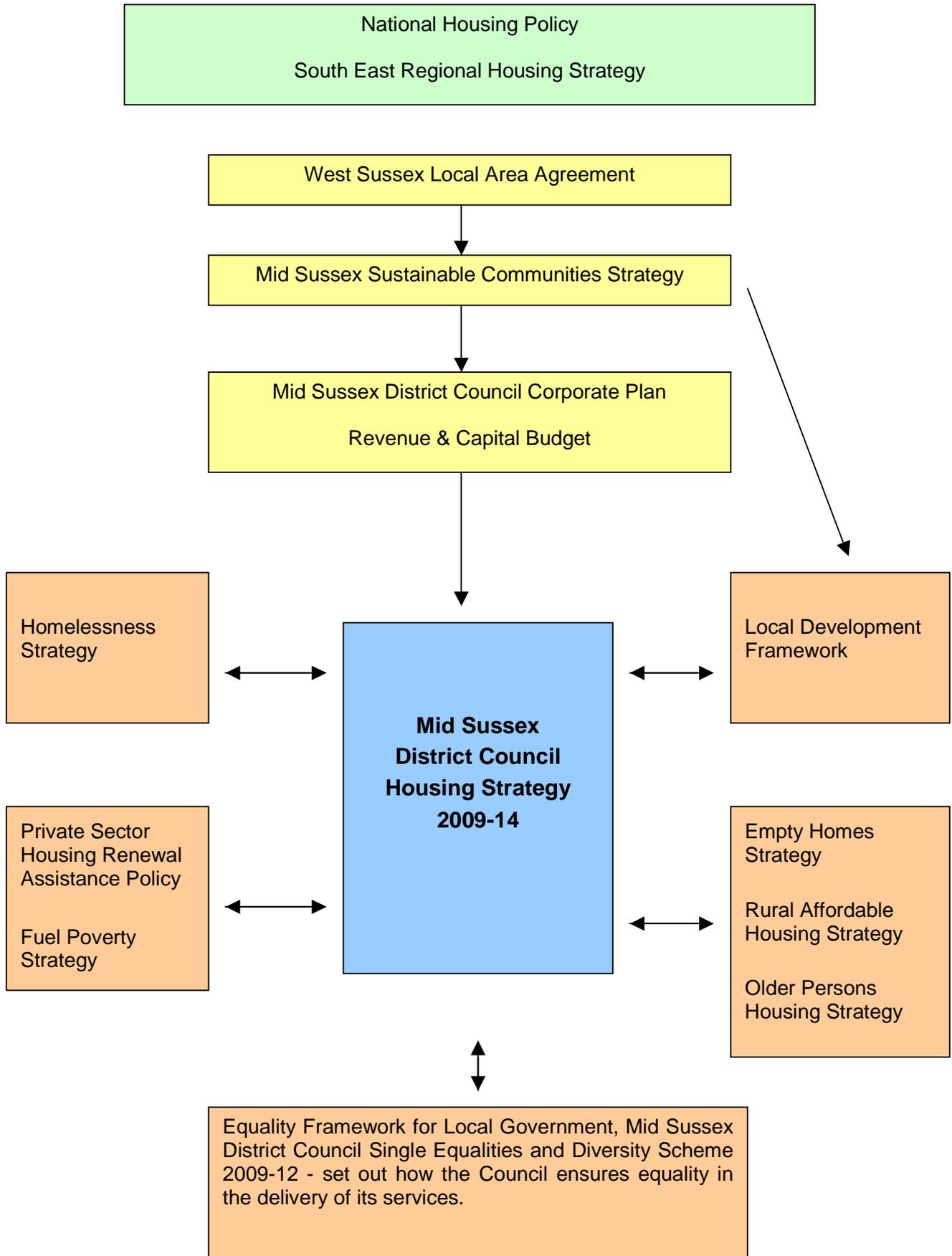
A wide group of stakeholders across West Sussex, from statutory agencies, service providers and service users, have contributed to the development of the Supporting People Strategy. We have been, and remain, very pro-active in this work, both at officer and member level, and lead or contribute to a wide range of strategic and operational Supporting People groups.

West Sussex Housing Needs Managers Group

Housing Needs Managers from all 7 districts and boroughs meet quarterly to share best practice, discuss emerging issues and drive forward joint working between authorities. The group has recently implemented a countywide scheme in conjunction with Probation Services to secure suitable accommodation in the private sector for ex-offenders.

West Sussex Chief Environmental Health Officers' Group

Meet to share best practice and progress joint initiatives. These have included the successful bid to the South East Housing Board to secure funding for energy efficiency measures for vulnerable households.



4. Housing in context: A review of housing need and housing markets in Mid Sussex

Our Housing Strategy uses a robust evidence base through the analysis of housing need and stock condition data. This includes:

- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- House Condition Survey
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Survey
- Local housing data including homelessness, lettings and supported housing need.

As well as empirical data, the strategy has also been informed by extensive consultation with users of housing services and key stakeholders referred to in chapter 2.

The Mid Sussex District

Mid Sussex today is a place where people choose to live. The district is characterised by its attractive villages and the fact that 58% of the District is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Communication links are good and Gatwick Airport is a few miles from the boundary. The three main towns in the District are Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill and East Grinstead.

Population Profile

The District has a total population of 129,100 in 53,000 households. Single person households make up 26.9% of the total and the average size of households in the District is decreasing. This is the result of a combination of factors including increased longevity, later marriage/co-habiting and childbearing, and higher divorce rates. This means that more housing is necessary to house the same population. Most of the District's population lives in the three main towns, with 74.8% in urban areas, 16% in the rural areas, and 9.2% in the urban fringe.

The district's age profile at present largely reflects national trends. The projections to 2016 however forecast a changing age structure, with particular increases in those of age 15-24 (36% increase) and those over 65 (25.5%). Longer term projections to 2026 are for a 50% increase in the over 65's and 31% increase in those over 85. Of particular note with regard to the Housing Strategy are the implications of the ageing population for housing related care and support. Increasingly the national policy emphasis has been on enabling people to stay in their own homes, which means that lower-level housing-related support needs are likely to increase on a similar scale. This also means promoting the building of new housing, which is capable of meeting the changing needs of households throughout their lifetimes. In addition, there is an increasing number of people surviving into adulthood and old age with learning/and or physical disabilities.

The Black and Minority Ethnic community in Mid Sussex, those of non-white British descent, is relatively small at 4.7%, compared to 7% in the South East and 5.2% in West Sussex.

Employment and Levels of Prosperity

The District has high levels of employment with 2.9% unemployment compared to a national average of 5.2% (Nomis labour market figures for 2007/08). The district is a key part of the Gatwick Diamond- an area of business excellence that benefits from its close proximity to

Gatwick Airport. The main sources of employment are the service sector (banking and finance, distribution, public administration, education and health) and manufacturing. Overall, Mid Sussex is a relatively prosperous district. Figures for the index of multiple deprivation 2007, show Mid Sussex ranked as 346 out of 354 local authority areas in England and Wales, with 354 representing the wealthiest. Despite the overall levels of prosperity, there are areas of relative deprivation in each of the three towns.

Housing Market -Affordability of Housing in Mid Sussex

The national picture has been one of increases in house prices far exceeding increases in average incomes. In Mid Sussex over the last ten years house prices have increased on average by 19% per year. An indication of increases in property prices is shown below:

Increase in house prices between 1997 and 2007				
	House Type	Q4 1997	Q4 2002	Q4 2007
Mid Sussex	All	£92,106	£210,949	£301,641
Mid Sussex	Flat/maisonette	£51,143	£128,442	£183,860
South East	All	£94,348	£187,830	£265,876
South East	Flat/maisonette	£54,101	£119,176	£175,159

Source: Land Registry

This means that entry level home ownership is inaccessible to most newly forming households. The lower quartile house price in Mid Sussex was 13.2 times the average income level in Mid Sussex in 2007, with a gross annual income needed for a mortgage of £78,677. A notable downturn in the housing market has taken place, with sales in quarter 1 2008 down by 37% over the previous year. The slowdown is affecting all elements of the market, but particularly the lower end, associated with a retrenchment in first time buyers and buy to let investors, particularly due to changes in lending criteria with difficulties in getting a mortgage and increases in the levels of deposit required. Even though the housing market is currently experiencing a slowdown and house prices have been falling, the underlying issues of differentials between house prices and incomes are still there.

The Private Rented Sector

The private rental market forms a critical element of the housing offer, traditionally housing those households unable or unwilling to purchase housing. There is a limited private rented sector in Mid Sussex: the house condition survey estimated this to be 7% of properties, which is below the national average of 8.7%. Based on an analysis of rental and mortgage costs in 2006, for Mid Sussex rents were 56.6% of mortgage costs, indicating that private renting offers a realistic option for many households who cannot afford to purchase suitable property. The average levels of private sector rents in Mid Sussex range from £629-£1,350 per month, depending upon the size of the property. Comparable levels of rent from a Housing Association are £312-£463.

Social Rented Housing Stock

The Council transferred its housing stock to Downland Housing Association (now part of the Affinity Sutton Group) in 1990. The social rented housing stock in the district is 5,931 properties, which is 11% of the total housing stock, compared to the national average of 19.3%. Of the total social rented properties, there are a roughly similar number of one, two and three bed properties (34%, 28% and 28% of the total stock respectively), with bedsits accounting for a further 9% of the stock. Just 1.4% of the stock comprises larger homes with four or more bedrooms.

In the period 2004-2009, we have developed 554 affordable housing units.

Affordable housing delivery in Mid Sussex over the last 5 years

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Total number of affordable homes delivered	86	121	89	101	157

Shared ownership is becoming the only affordable choice for home ownership for a large proportion of the Mid Sussex population. In October 2008, there were 501 applicants on the Common Housing Register who had expressed an interest in shared ownership and had levels of income sufficient to be eligible. In July 2008, Moat Housing Association, the West Sussex Zone Agent for shared ownership, had 477 eligible applicants. At this time, most of these applicants were privately renting (42.4%) or living with family and friends (33.6%).

Affordable Housing Need

The Council operates a Common Housing Register with most of the Housing Associations that operate in the District. The number of people on the Common Housing Register is increasing, 2,313 at April 2008 (excluding transfers), compared to about 500 lettings a year. In the period 2004-2008 the housing list has increased by 14%. The increase in the affordable housing stock in the same period was 8.6% (from 5,890 in 2004 to 6,397 in 2008).

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment estimates that the per annum net affordable housing need for Mid Sussex over the next ten years is 357 (low estimate) to 477 (high estimate). The SHMA looks at the numbers on the Common Housing Register as an indication of housing need, against the total affordable housing stock available and that already programmed for development. The high estimate uses the total number on the Common Housing Register and the low estimate uses the numbers in reasonable preference groups (those in the highest housing need). It also takes into account the total newly arising need and the current annual supply of affordable housing through relets. The SHMA assumes that the net need will be addressed over a 10 year period, so that 10% of net housing need will be met each year.

Type of Affordable Housing Required

The table below sets out the recommended housing size mix for affordable housing from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. This is based upon an appraisal of current waiting list pressures and turnover, against bed size in Mid Sussex.

1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
25%	30%	35%	10%

Of all those on the Common Housing Register, families with children are often in the greatest housing need, resulting in pressure on family accommodation. Those in need of larger properties often have to wait much longer for a home, reflecting the limited current supply of larger properties and lower turnover rates.

Rural Housing Needs

A number of studies on the rural economy show that affordable housing is a particular concern in rural areas, where house prices are especially high and few flats or other cheaper properties are available. The Council has been working in partnership with Parish Councils and Action in Rural Sussex to conduct housing needs surveys. These have been completed for Ardingly, Cuckfield Rural, Ashurst Wood and Horsted Keynes. All of these surveys identified a need for affordable housing in the parish, both for rented and shared ownership homes.

Levels of Overcrowding and Underoccupation

A lack of affordable housing can be addressed by the provision of new units and by making the best use of existing stock. The figures below are based upon the number of people occupying properties against the number of bedrooms.

	Mid Sussex	West Sussex
Overcrowding		
Social rented	14.4%	13.8%
Private rented	10.3%	14.3%
Owner occupied	1.8%	2.6%
Overall	3.9%	5.3%
Under-occupation		
Social rented	38.9%	44.6%
Private rented	63.1%	56.8%
Owner occupied	89.2%	86.7%
Overall	81.6%	78.1%

Source: Census 2001

They show that there is some overcrowding that needs to be addressed by more affordable family homes. The figures also show high levels of under-occupation in Mid Sussex, particularly in the owner occupied sector. Housing size is often more strongly related to age and wealth than the size of the household. Whilst most people will choose to remain in their existing homes, there is some potential for releasing some larger houses by supporting older households to downsize and providing the type of housing that meets their needs and aspirations.

Empty Homes

The number of homes vacant for over 6 months in the District at 1 April 2008 was 641. There are a small number of homes in the district that have been empty for a considerable period of time and are problematic in causing nuisance to neighbours and encouraging anti-social behaviour.

Housing Advice and Homelessness

There has been a steady reduction in the number of formal homelessness applications to the Council since 2003. This is due primarily to increased focus in preventing homelessness through a more pro-active housing options approach, rather than a reduction in households in housing need. Whilst the number of requests for housing advice had been reducing since 2002/03, the trend was reversed in 2007/08 and 2008/09 reflecting the downturn in the economy and the onset of recession. Whilst the number of enquiries from people experiencing difficulties with their mortgage started to increase from the 3rd quarter of 2008 onwards, the numbers are still very low amounting to on average only one case per week, although it is unlikely to continue at such a low level. Overall, we have seen a 78% reduction in homelessness acceptances by the Council in the last 5 years from 120 in 2003/04 to only 26 in 2008/09.

Number of Housing Advice and Homelessness cases seen over recent years

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
Housing Advice enquiries to the Council	1196	1098	1066	990	1061	1178
(of which led to homeless applications)	336	206	145	131	126	111
(of which led to homeless acceptance)	120	89	58	65	40	26

Reasons for homelessness applications

The highest number of applicants have become homeless as a result of having to leave the homes of their parents, relative or friends. Overcrowding, relationship problems and lack of alternative housing are all factors in triggering this homelessness. This category primarily involves young people. The breakdown of relationships (non-violent and violent) is the second most common cause of homelessness, although the numbers have reduced substantially over recent years. Loss of privately rented and tied accommodation not related to rent arrears is the third most common cause of homelessness applications.

Reasons for homelessness where full housing duty accepted

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
• Unable to remain with parent relative or friend	51	40	25	21	12	6
• Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	6	9	3	6	4	5
• Violent breakdown of relationship with partner	15	7	8	9	6	4
• Mortgage arrears	2	4	4	0	0	1
• Rent arrears	0	2	0	0	1	1
• Other reasons for loss of rented/ tied housing	32	20	10	17	10	7
• Discharged from institution	4	2	3	5	2	1
• Other reasons	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>
Total number of households 'accepted'	120	89	58	65	40	26

Whilst homelessness arising from mortgage repossessions has remained insignificant in 2008/09, it is evident that in the private rented sector the market is shifting in favour of the tenant as buy-to-let landlords come under pressure from over supply. It is difficult to predict how this may impact on levels of homelessness, given the importance of the private rented sector as a supply of housing to those on low incomes.

The level of homelessness remains unpredictable and is affected by a number of factors both regionally and nationally. This is particularly the case with the possible implications of the recession and the danger of more repossessions.

Vulnerable Groups and Supported Housing Need in Mid Sussex

The Council is an active participant in the West Sussex Supporting People partnership in identifying and meeting the housing related needs of vulnerable people. The partnership covers housing, adult and children's services, health and probation services. Since the adoption of the initial West Sussex Supporting People programme in 2003, delivery of services has changed with a greater emphasis upon flexibility to allow more people to be supported in their own homes, more responsive services and greater empowerment for people to make their own decisions. There were 1,458 residents in Mid Sussex in 2007/08 assisted through supporting people, which includes both floating support and those in designated supported accommodation. The groups receiving housing support include:

- Single homeless people
- Young people with support needs
- Older people with support needs
- People with mental health needs
- People with an acquired brain injury
- People with a physical disability
- People with a learning difficulty
- People with substance misuse problems
- Women and children fleeing domestic violence
- Ex-offenders.

The main providers of supported accommodation in Mid Sussex are our Housing Association partners and West Sussex County Council. Nearly 20% of the social housing stock in the District is specifically for vulnerable groups, comprising 975 units of sheltered and older people accommodation, 155 extra care and 132 supported units. At 1 April 2008, there were 373 applicants on the Common Housing Register requiring sheltered/older persons accommodation. We are working with our Housing Association partners to review the accommodation provided for vulnerable groups. A particular area of focus is ensuring that the sheltered accommodation provided is fit for purpose by working with housing providers to remodel their less popular schemes, especially those with bed sit flats. Also under review are the quality and type of supported accommodation provided for people with learning difficulties and mental health issues, particularly with regard to shared accommodation, which is not as popular as independent flats.

The West Sussex Supporting People team is currently undertaking a strategic review which aims to further improve the quality and provision of housing support services and increase the housing and support options available to people. Services have been grouped under three categories disability, homelessness and older people. A new commissioning plan will be drawn up. Following the reviews services will be tendered for with service providers in place by January 2010 for Disability, January 2011 for. Currently the strategic review is undergoing a "healthcheck" and a timetable for the new contracts is expected by September.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING CONDITIONS

The Council commissioned an assessment of the District's private sector housing stock, which was carried out in 2006. Primarily the survey was intended to establish levels of unfit, disrepair, energy efficiency and houses in multiple-occupation. It also established some key information about the profile of the District's housing stock-

- Stock tenure- 80% of households in Mid Sussex are owner-occupiers, 11% are in Housing Association rented accommodation (compared to 19% nationally) and 7% rent privately.
- Stock profile- 32% of households live in detached houses, 29% are in semi-detached accommodation and 15% live in flats / maisonettes. 14% live in terraced accommodation and 10% live in bungalows.
- Stock age- the survey estimated that the stock is comparatively young, with only 27.7% being built before 1945 (compared with a national figure of 44.1%).

Category One Hazards, Unfitness and Decent Homes

The House Condition Survey assessed the District's private sector housing stock compliance with Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), fitness assessment and the Decent Homes Standard. In 2006 the Government introduced a revised Decent Homes Standard and replaced fitness with the HHSRS system. A property is considered decent if it has no Category 1 Hazards: is in a reasonable state of repair: it has reasonably modern facilities and services and it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. The survey found using the fitness assessment that 19.9% of dwellings in Mid Sussex did not comply with the standard (the national average for the private sector was 28.7%). However, using the HHSRS the level of non-decent homes increased to 31.3%. The main reason for failure was thermal comfort (72.3%) The estimated cost of making every home decent in Mid Sussex is £24.5million.

The survey found that vulnerable households (persons in receipt of a means tested benefit) are also slightly more likely to live in non-decent homes and that there were 1,564 vulnerable households living in non-decent housing in the private sector in Mid Sussex. The Government has set a target that 70% of vulnerable households in the private sector should have decent homes by 2010. The survey suggests that using the HHSRS, the current figure is 68.7%.

Using HHSRS all category 1 hazards require mandatory action by the local authority. This could take the form of advice, grants or loans. The system looks at the health impact of the hazard on the occupants. The survey concluded that 17.7% of private sector dwellings have a category 1 hazard in Mid Sussex (compared to the national average of 28.7%) amounting to 8,778 dwellings. The main hazards relate to excessive cold, falls on the stairs and the level. However using the former Fitness assessment, which only looks at the condition of the property, 1.9% of properties would be considered unfit (952 properties). This compares to the national average of 4.2%.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

The survey found that there were an estimated 517 HMO dwellings in Mid Sussex. 61% of HMOs are pre-1919 dwellings compared with only 17.7% of all properties in the private rented sector, which suggests that this type of property is likely to have a low rating for energy efficiency. Approximately 80% of households living in HMO's do not have children. Under the HHSRS it is estimated that 30% have at least 1 Category 1 hazard and 33% fail the decent homes standard.

In April 2006 the Housing Act 2004 introduced mandatory licensing of HMOs which are three stories or above, occupied by five or more people who do not form a single household, with some sharing of facilities. The survey found that about 60 HMO dwellings in the District are likely to require a licence.

Energy Efficiency

The House Condition Survey showed that the average SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) rating for private sector housing in Mid Sussex is 57. This compares to the then average national rating of 50. SAP scores are based upon an energy rating scale of 1 to 100, with a high score meaning that a dwelling is more energy efficient. The majority of dwellings have a SAP rating between 50 and 69 (60.9%). An estimated 5.4% of dwellings in Mid Sussex have a SAP of below 30. The survey found that the three main ways in which the energy efficiency of dwellings in the District could be improved are as follows:

1. Add/increase insulation to hot water cylinders, lofts and cavity walls.
2. Upgrade or install heating systems to gas powered programmable central heating.
3. Upgrade all windows to double glazing.

Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty is defined as the inability to adequately heat the home. More specifically, the government defines fuel poverty as occurring when people need to spend more than 10% of their income on fuel to achieve adequate levels of warmth in the home. Contributory factors to fuel poverty include low household income, high fuel costs, poor levels of energy efficiency in the home and underoccupation. Fuel poverty is difficult to measure. Data from 2003 suggested that there were 2,746 properties in Mid Sussex experiencing fuel poverty, 5.3% of households. Energy prices have increased greatly over the last 5 years. In March 2008 prices were about 50% above their 2003 levels in real terms.

Relating energy efficiency and fuel poverty, a SAP rating of 65 is considered to be necessary to enable the occupants to achieve affordable warmth and a rating under 35 can be considered a proxy for failure under HHSRS for excessive cold. Around 7.2% of properties in Mid Sussex fall into this category. It is clear that action to deliver improvements to the energy efficiency of properties in the District will also bring benefits in meeting Decent Homes standards and tackling Fuel Poverty.

5. Our Strategy: priorities, aims, objectives and targets

Strategic Objectives

The review of the Mid Sussex housing market and of housing need in the District, together with close consideration of the Government's priorities and the Council's broader vision has identified five strategic objectives to be addressed over the next 5 years.

1. Increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Addressing the shortage of affordable housing in the district is a primary aim of the strategy. The review of the Mid Sussex Housing Market provided earlier in this strategy, demonstrated a clear shortage of affordable housing. For many people accessing open market housing in Mid Sussex is out of the question, given the average level of income against house prices. Despite recent falls in house prices, we still have to address the longer term issues in the housing market, particularly the shortage of affordable housing. This includes both new build and making best use of the existing stock.

2. Prevent Homelessness

The Council adopted a new Homelessness Strategy in June 2008 with the main aim of preventing homelessness. The main points are also included in this Housing Strategy in recognition of the close links between tackling affordability, meeting housing needs and preventing homelessness. There is a further emphasis on dealing with the potential consequences of the financial downturn, for example in promoting debt advice, court advocacy and mortgage rescue schemes for those facing repossession.

3. Improve the quality and sustainability of housing

Improvements to the quality of the District's housing stock can have a beneficial effect on a household's health and well being. Housing accounts for over 30% of energy consumption in the United Kingdom and the recent increases in energy prices have increased the numbers at risk of suffering fuel poverty. Improvements to the sustainability of housing through energy efficiency measures can assist in making progress to the Decent Homes Standard, tackling Fuel Poverty and reducing CO₂ emissions. In terms of new housing, it is important that all housing is developed to high sustainability, design and accessibility standards.

4. Promote independence and inclusion

Suitable housing underpins people's ability to meet their full potential, to live independently and to integrate with the community. This objective acknowledges the trend in housing related support for vulnerable groups of allowing more people to be supported in their own homes and greater empowerment for people to make their own decisions. It is also about having safe and attractive neighbourhoods in which to live by building inclusive communities. This means working to tackle such issues as community safety, worklessness and financial inclusion.

5. Provide efficient and customer focused housing services

Improved customer services, enhanced community engagement and improvements to efficiency are all key corporate priorities, which need to be reflected in the further development of housing services.

The next section provides more details about these 5 objectives and how we intend to set about tackling them. We have also produced an action plan to show how these will be delivered.

Objective 1 – Increase the supply of affordable housing

Achievements since the last strategy: we have

- Made more land available for housing through the Small Scale Housing Allocations Document (part of the Local Development Framework).
- Worked with housing associations and developers to achieve our existing Local Area Agreement target for 2005-2008, with 311 new affordable homes delivered.
- Delivered against the first year of the new LAA target with 157 new affordable homes achieved in 2008/09 against the target of 324 to 2011.
- 62 affordable rural homes have been delivered in the period 2005-2008
- Responded to the current market by working with developers to help them re-phase schemes, to bring forward affordable housing. We have hosted a housing summit to identify and try to address blockages to development. We have also worked with RSLs who want to buy land/open market homes for affordable housing.
- Amended the Housing Allocation Scheme to give priority to tenants under-occupying their homes and who wish to move to smaller accommodation.
- Revised the Housing Allocation Scheme to give priority to local people for the first letting of new developments in order to increase sustainability of local communities and increase local buy in to development.

It is critical that we as a local authority have a strategic approach to increasing housing supply to meet the housing needs of all our residents. The Council needs to ensure that they are of the right type and size, built in the right place. The review of the Mid Sussex Housing Market provided earlier in this strategy, demonstrated a clear shortage of affordable housing - between 357 and 477 affordable homes a year are needed to meet the backlog of need over a 10-year period, as well as meeting newly arising need. One of our key aims is to meet the Local Area Agreement target to deliver 324 affordable homes in the period 2008-11. For many people, buying or renting a home in the private market in Mid Sussex is out of the question, given the average level of income against house prices. We have to still plan for housing growth on the basis that the current economic conditions will be short term.

The main solutions for dealing with the problems of affordable housing supply are as follows:-

- building more homes overall
- providing more social housing, both affordable rented and intermediate (e.g. shared ownership or intermediate rent)
- making best use of the existing stock
- making best use of the private rented sector as an alternative to affordable housing, utilising Housing Benefits where applicable (this is covered under Objective 2 Prevent homelessness).

Building More Homes Overall

The South East Plan to 2026 was prepared by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA). It sets out housing figures to be met for each sub-region and each planning authority. The authors of the Plan consider that Mid Sussex should accommodate an additional 17,100 new homes to 2026 (or 930 per year, given that 1,300 homes were delivered between 2006-08).

This compares to an average of approximately 500 dwellings completed annually in the District over the last five years.

Review of Planning Policies

The Council is formulating the Local Development Framework, which sets out the supply of land for housing and the main planning policies in the Core Strategy, for example relating to affordable housing and to housing mix and density. The majority of new affordable housing is now developed as part of general housing schemes. We can use our planning policies to encourage the greater availability of affordable housing. The Council's current planning policy is to require 30% affordable housing on all new developments, with a minimum threshold of 15 dwellings.

Enabling Affordable Housing

The Housing Enabling Team works closely with the Council's Planning Policy Team who are developing the new Local Development Framework, which will set out the sites for and levels of new housing. There is regular contact between housing and planning officers, both at strategic level in preparing the Local Development Framework and Housing Strategy, and also at an operational level in ensuring that planning permissions for residential development makes a contribution to meet the need for affordable housing where appropriate. The goal is to provide homes of the right size, type and tenure, which meet housing need and are built to a high standard. The SHMA makes suggestions for the proportions of affordable housing by number of bedrooms and we will be taking this into account in our involvement with new schemes. In broad terms, the appropriate mix for the size of affordable housing will need to be consistent with the mix of open market housing, on a site specific basis.

Given the current difficulties with selling open market housing, we are working with developers to help them re-phase schemes in order to bring forward affordable housing. We are also working with RSLs who want to buy land/open market homes for affordable housing. Much affordable housing is dependent upon the delivery of open market housing. We recently hosted with Crawley and Horsham councils a housing summit with developers to identify and try to address blockages to housing development and will be considering how to take forward the ideas generated at that meeting.

Working with our Partners

In developing new affordable housing, the Council acts as an enabler by bringing together key partners to generate new opportunities. These partners include Registered Social Landlords, private developers, landowners and the Homes and Communities Agency. We have 3 preferred partner housing associations with whom we work to deliver new development schemes to provide affordable homes for rent and shared ownership and other intermediate options. These are

- Affinity Sutton (which includes Downland Housing Association)
- Hyde-Martlet
- Moat Housing

In addition, we work with two specialist Housing Association providers of rural affordable housing, Hastoe and English Rural Housing Association who are exemplars of best practise on affordable housing development in rural areas. We also work with other RSLs where appropriate.

We have chosen our preferred partners on the basis of their proven track record as providers of affordable housing in the District. They have shown commitment to contributing to our wider strategic agenda. They have effective working relationships with us, which includes delivering good quality new developments, effective local management arrangements, joint work on

tackling homelessness and minimising social exclusion. They also have good performance on agreed nomination arrangements, as well as a commitment to promoting sustainable neighbourhoods in Mid Sussex. In addition, our partners are all committed to resident participation.

We have a long established Strategic Development Group, which meets quarterly and is attended by our preferred partners as well as housing, legal and planning officers, to manage the delivery of new affordable housing. Through the group and our partnership arrangements we maximise the delivery of more affordable housing units to meet our LAA targets. We support bids to the Homes and Communities Agency, where close working was encouraged to get the tenure mix, type, size and standard of unit that will meet the known needs of the district.

Tenure Balance in Affordable Housing

The analysis of the housing market and issues of affordability in Mid Sussex provided earlier in this strategy, pointed to the importance of shared ownership and intermediate rent in meeting the housing needs and aspirations of those who can afford more than an affordable rent, but who cannot afford to buy on the open market. There are a variety of shared ownership and other intermediate schemes available, which are subsidised by the Homes and Communities Agency. The provision of more homes for affordable rent is the priority. We normally seek for 25% of the affordable housing that is provided on new developments to be shared ownership. The SHMA recommends a 80% social rented to 20% intermediate split for affordable housing, rising in the longer term to 30% in line with the Regional Housing Strategy.

We work in close partnership with the Zone Agent, Moat Housing Association, as well as the provider RSLs to ensure that the options are well publicised, accessible and affordable. We will continue to monitor the delivery, take up and affordability of these schemes in order to inform future development. We are undertaking a consultation exercise jointly with Horsham District Council, asking the occupiers of these properties for their feedback on how well this option works for them and to test mobility for such households if they subsequently need to move.

The Better Mid Sussex Project

Working with Thornfield Properties PLC through the Better Mid Sussex project, the Council is aiming to revitalise the three main town centres of Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead, making best use of the land available for both commercial and residential development. This includes making best use of the Council's own land and property portfolio. Increasing the supply of affordable housing is one of the aims of the project and we are working with Thornfield and our primary RSL partners to plan provision within the town centres.

Resourcing of Affordable Housing Schemes

Our aim is to maximise the resources that are available for affordable housing in Mid Sussex. We do this in a variety of ways:

- By working with RSLs to develop high quality, good value schemes that can attract grant and support bids for funding to the Homes and Communities Agency.
- By applying our own capital resources in the form of commuted sums to deliver additional affordable housing units, which would not otherwise be delivered.
- By working through the Local Area Agreement, we will continue to attract additional funding to support affordable housing delivery, such as funding for the SHMA.
- Providing evidence to support our policies and the need for additional affordable housing schemes in the District, e.g. through the funding of financial viability studies and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- Requiring free serviced land to be provided for affordable housing.

Affordable Rural Housing

The lack of affordable rural housing is particularly acute in rural areas where prices are high and few flats or other cheaper properties are available. This makes it difficult to achieve balanced and sustainable communities in rural areas, particularly when young people cannot afford to live in the area where they grew up. The Rural Affordable Housing Strategy issued in 2007 sets out our approach and should be read in conjunction with this Housing Strategy. The Strategy was informed by the peer review of our affordable housing services with East Hampshire, who are a Beacon authority for the delivery of affordable housing.

We are providing rural affordable housing through the use of allocated and windfall sites in rural areas and by promoting the use of rural exception sites, working with parish councils. Rural sites have been allocated in the Small Scale Housing Development Plan Document, which will deliver up to 155 rural affordable units. The current target is to aim to deliver at least 20 rural affordable homes per annum. The Planning Policy team has produced a Rural Issues Background Paper to inform the policies in the Core Strategy (the over-arching document in the Local Development Framework). The Rural Issues Background Paper includes a settlement hierarchy to guide housing development to the most sustainable locations, taking account of local need.

In developing the Rural Affordable Housing Strategy, we consulted on how best to prioritise the development of affordable housing in rural parishes. The options considered were prioritisation according to sustainability with respect to the availability of public transport or other facilities, or prioritisation according to housing need and site availability. The overwhelming response was that development should be led by housing need and the availability of suitable sites and that the creation of affordable housing in itself helps to support the sustainability of rural communities. In accordance with this approach, we will continue to work with Action in Rural Sussex to support parish councils in undertaking housing needs surveys. We will be working with three parishes over the next 12 months to undertake housing needs surveys and with a further three parish councils on possible rural exception sites. In addition we will continue to work with the Sussex Rural Affordable Housing Partnership to share best practice, and promote initiatives with parishes and rural communities. This includes consideration of the development of Community Land Trusts.

Making Best Use of Existing Stock

It is vital that we make best use of the housing stock that we have in the district as we cannot meet the housing need that exists through the delivery of new housing development alone. A high proportion of the applications on the Common Housing Register are occupying housing that is either too large or too small to meet the housing needs of their household. In addition there are many other social housing tenants not on the register who are underoccupying their property, who may be prepared to move to smaller accommodation and free up their property for those who need family sized accommodation. There are also existing tenants for whom the option of intermediate, shared ownership/Homebuy alternatives may be attractive and affordable. Key to encouraging tenants to move in these circumstances to free up stock, is an attractive alternative option, which is accessible and affordable, that the appropriate support is made available, with tailored information and advice. We will be using the results of Downland Housing Association's recent tenant profiling to target those underoccupying their homes. We hope to work with the Mid Sussex Partnership for Older People Service (POPSS) to establish a cross tenure support service to help older people evaluate their options to stay put, or to move and to assist them with the practicalities of moving home.

The Housing Allocation Scheme has been revised to help facilitate under-occupying tenants move to smaller homes if they wish to, thus freeing up family homes to others who need them.

We also intend to use our quarterly meetings of the Mid Sussex Housing Association Forum to monitor the performance of social housing providers on lengths of vacancies between tenancies and the levels of evictions. This will encourage the sharing of best practice amongst housing providers in the District.

Empty Homes Strategy

Empty homes are a waste of a valuable resource in an area where there is an acute shortage of affordable housing. In January 2007 we adopted a new Empty Homes Strategy, which seeks to bring such properties back into use through a range of actions comprising advice and assistance to owners, as well as enforcement action where appropriate. Most empty homes are brought back into use without intervention. We have targeted for proactive action those properties that are most problematic because they are a cause of nuisance to their neighbours and an encouragement to anti-social behaviour. We work in partnership across East and West Sussex through the Sussex Empty Homes Forum. This group has a broad based agenda to provide a co-ordinated and structured approach to bringing empty homes back into use. To this end, from April 2009 we jointly monitor the number of empty properties brought back into use via grants, help and advice, rents and deposits, demolition and enforcement action.

Strategy Main Actions

In 2009-14 we will:

- Deliver more homes overall by making land available for housing through the Local Development Framework.
- Deliver more new affordable housing.
- Achieve affordable housing of the right size and tenure.
- Make best use of the existing housing stock by tackling empty homes, under occupation and relet times for RSL stock.

Objective 2 – Prevent homelessness

Achievements since the last strategy: we have

- Achieved a 78% reduction in the number of homelessness acceptances in the 5 years since 2004, through increased activity in preventing homelessness, rather than a reduction in households in housing need.
- Delivered a 59% reduction in the number of households staying in temporary accommodation since 2004. There were 22 households at the end of March 2009, compared to 54 in 2004. Use of bed & breakfast accommodation with shared facilities for families with children has been eliminated.
- Commissioned an enhanced court desk service at the County Court to provide free advocacy in court for people facing repossession of their home.
- Introduced regular Shelter and Signpost surgeries at the Council's offices.
- Been chosen as South East Regional Homelessness Champion in 2006/07 by the Government and shared our best practice with other authorities.

We want fewer people in Mid Sussex to experience the trauma of homelessness and ensure that those who do can find a settled home as quickly as possible. We are particularly conscious of the need to plan to counter the impact of the weakening housing market and its potential implications for the levels of homelessness. The Council adopted a new Homelessness Strategy in June 2008, which can be viewed on our website. The main points are also included in this Housing Strategy in recognition of the close links between tackling affordability, meeting housing needs and preventing homelessness.

Tackling homelessness involves strong partnerships with other local authorities, housing associations and other agencies in both the voluntary and statutory sectors. The Homelessness Strategy is a multi-agency document being delivered in partnership with Housing Associations, West Sussex County Council and other organisations such as Shelter and the Citizens Advice Bureaux. The Strategy was developed following an extensive review of homelessness in the District. The main actions involve the further development of our homelessness prevention activities, strengthening the support provided to vulnerable groups and improving the standards of the temporary accommodation that we use.

Preventing Homelessness

We have been very successful in preventing homelessness through a more pro-active housing options approach, which we are continuing to develop. This seeks to move from processing homelessness to prevention of it happening at all, so that all customers contacting the Council for assistance participate in an options interview to assess their particular circumstances and to receive timely housing advice. The homelessness prevention approach relies on good levels of customer service from our Housing Needs Team. Further information concerning initiatives in this area, are included under Objective 5 'Efficient and customer focused housing services'.

Maximising access to private sector rented accommodation

We aim to work with the private sector to encourage private landlords to provide good quality housing which both meets statutory requirements and our residents' needs and aspirations. The housing options approach that we have adopted as part of our homelessness prevention work enhances the role of the private rented sector and our engagement with it. This includes the use of our deposit guarantee and rent in advance scheme. The Council's Housing Needs and Housing Benefits Teams are working closely together to ensure that people dependent upon benefit who are threatened with homelessness are identified at an early stage and that

best use is made of Discretionary Housing Payments. We are also working closely with private landlords to encourage them to take on tenants who are in housing need and/or dependant, or part dependent, on benefits.

The private rented sector's inherent flexibility also allows people who are not necessarily in acute housing need but nevertheless require alternative accommodation to obtain somewhere to live. It provides options for people who wish to move across boundaries and enables sharing and lodging arrangements. We envisage that in the longer term we may be able to incorporate the private rented sector within our choice based lettings scheme (see objective 5), which has been successfully achieved in other areas. Vulnerable tenants can be provided with the support they need to manage their tenancies through supporting people funded floating support services such as Signpost. Such services can encourage private landlords to take on a wider range of tenants than they might otherwise consider. In the current economic climate, landlords appear to be prepared to consider more tenants who are reliant on benefits.

Our work with this tenure is co-ordinated through the Private Sector Working Group, which comprises staff from Housing, Planning Enforcement, Housing Benefits and Housing Standards. In partnership with the Gatwick Area Landlord Forum and the National Federation of Residential Landlords we have produced a Guide for Landlords. In addition we hold a landlords forum at least annually to disseminate best practice amongst private landlords and compliance with the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HSSRS) and the Decent Home requirements. We have evaluated the option of establishing a Landlord Accreditation Scheme within the district and have decided that, given limited resources available at present and the relatively good condition of the stock, this is not a priority. The Government intends to issue a Housing Reform Green Paper in the autumn, which may include proposals for a national register of private landlords.

Free representation in Court

The financial downturn has emphasised the need for assistance to those who are in danger of having their homes repossessed. We have therefore invested £10,000 of government grant in a new Help Desk based at Haywards Heath County Court which complements the existing court desk run by the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Brighton Housing Trust are running the new service and will represent in Court anyone who arrives at their possession hearing without a solicitor. We aim to promote this service to all those receiving a summons to encourage defendants to attend their hearing.

Preventing Homelessness amongst Vulnerable Groups

There are a number of initiatives that we are implementing to prevent homelessness amongst vulnerable groups. These include working with Registered Social Landlords to develop probationary starter tenancies together with a Vulnerable Persons Protocol. Starter Tenancies introduce a probationary period as an assured shorthold tenancy, which will be converted to an assured tenancy on satisfactory completion of the probationary period. They are designed to encourage tenants to behave responsibly, refrain from anti-social behaviour and abide by the terms of their tenancy agreement. They also encourage Registered Social Landlords to grant tenancies to vulnerable tenants in the knowledge that if things go wrong, the tenancy can be ended. This improves access to social housing for such people and goes some way to preventing homelessness. Vulnerable tenants need to be provided with proper support and protection to complete the probationary period, so we are developing a Vulnerable Persons Protocol (VPP) amongst local affordable housing providers and relevant agencies to ensure that new and existing vulnerable tenants are provided with multi-agency support during the life of their tenancy. This will also include a pre-eviction protocol to ensure that everything possible is done to prevent homelessness arising. Hyde Martlet have already introduced starter tenancies,

Downland Housing Association will do so shortly and we are working with other interested RSLs to extend their use.

Young People

We recognise that young people are at increased risk of homelessness compared to other vulnerable groups and that they can become homeless for a wide range of often complex reasons. The Council participates in a Youth Homelessness Action Group of representatives from a number of local agencies with an interest in combating homelessness amongst young people in the district. The Group provides a forum to highlight the plight of young people who become homeless as well as look at what can be done to support and reduce the numbers who do.

Initiatives set out in our Homelessness Strategy in relation to young people include:

- Developing an effective education programme with schools and colleges on the issues to be considered when planning to leave home so as to avoid homelessness.
- Developing an effective mediation scheme to assist both parents and young people in their relationships.
- Working with voluntary agencies to develop a supported lodgings scheme to provide short term 'cooling-off' accommodation for young people whilst mediation is tried.
- Ensuring that young people are provided with support in their first tenancy until they are able to manage independently so that there is an automatic referral to Signpost on commencement of tenancy of all young people.
- Working with RSLs to develop the practice of granting tenancies in trust to minors to enable under 18 year olds to access affordable housing and reduce the time they spend in temporary accommodation.

Women Suffering Domestic Violence

Homelessness as a result of violent relationship breakdown is a key cause of homelessness. Assisting women suffering domestic violence is a priority in our Homelessness Strategy. Our work in this area also contributes to the Local Area Agreement target for NI 32 to reduce repeat incidents of domestic violence. We have jointly funded and local women have access to suitable refuge accommodation in Horsham, together with the drop in centres in Haywards Heath and East Grinstead. For many women, remaining safely in their own home is the preferred option. The Council is working with Downland Housing Association and other housing providers to develop our 'Safe at Home Scheme'. This scheme, in conjunction with the Police, aims to provide additional security features to a home to make it a safer place to live. We will encourage more RSLs to be involved and look to extend it to those living in the private rented sector and to those owning their own home. The scheme will be more widely publicised through the publication and distribution of a guide. We continue to be closely involved with the new countywide Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), which consider how individual domestic violence cases can best be managed. We will also work with WORTH Services (Ways of Responding Through Health) who have recently started working at the Princess Royal Hospital, to identify and assist domestic violence victims, particularly those attending Accident and Emergency.

Ex-Offenders

For some ex-offenders, experience of an institution such as prison may reduce their coping skills, employability and support networks, which means that on release they may be at risk of homelessness. We are working closely with the Probation Service to meet the accommodation needs of ex-offenders and also attend Prolific and other Priority Offenders (PPO) meetings. We are working with other West Sussex authorities and Probation Services to develop a countywide scheme to assist with access to private rented accommodation for difficult to place ex-offenders.

Improving Standards in the Provision of Temporary Accommodation

We have already mentioned the Council's approach to preventing homelessness through the provision of timely housing advice via the housing options approach. This has not only reduced the number of acceptances, it has also reduced the use of temporary accommodation in line with the Government target of halving numbers in temporary accommodation by 2010 from a baseline set at December 2004.

There will inevitably be some cases where a period in temporary accommodation is unavoidable. The Council utilises temporary accommodation under two circumstances:

- Whilst enquiries are carried out to ascertain our duty to households under the homelessness legislation. In this situation, households are accommodated under an 'interim duty'.
- Once the 'full housing duty' has been accepted and until the household obtains longer term accommodation.

Although much of the temporary accommodation we use is of reasonable quality and self-contained, the experience of living in temporary accommodation can disrupt lives, contribute to a sense of insecurity and make it difficult to access services. All households in temporary accommodation are referred to and visited by the West Sussex Signpost Service, to ensure that they receive the necessary support to re-establish themselves. This may include advice and assistance to manage their tenancies and make new links with health providers, education and employment. Temporary accommodation can also be expensive for the Council to provide. Where possible, the aim is to free up existing temporary accommodation by moving people on to permanent housing quickly. We have recently completed a review of temporary accommodation and are making less use of block booked guesthouse accommodation in favour of temporary accommodation supplied by Downland Housing Association for those families with children who are waiting for a decision on their case. We will be looking to extend the use of Downland temporary accommodation to others who are waiting a decision on their case if this is successful. This approach is consistent with our aim that people should not be accommodated in temporary accommodation a long way from their support, schooling or employment. It will also contribute to achieving the Government target to eliminate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation with shared facilities for 16/17 year olds by 2010.

Strategy Main Actions

In 2009-14 we will:

- Maintain reductions in the number of households accepted as homeless.
- Maximise access to private sector rented accommodation.
- Reduce homelessness amongst vulnerable groups, especially young people, women suffering domestic violence and ex offenders.
- Improve standards in the provision of temporary accommodation.

Objective 3 – Improving the quality and sustainability of housing

Achievements since the last strategy: we have

- Attracted nearly £1 million to combat fuel poverty in West Sussex, through cross boundary work.
- Used the Warm Front Scheme to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Mid Sussex. 46 households had a replacement boiler and 63 had cavity wall insulation installed under Warm Front in the District in 2007/08. 228 households have been assisted through the Warm Front scheme.
- Commissioned a House Condition Survey for Mid Sussex to identify the fitness of dwellings in the District, levels of energy efficiency and numbers of houses in multiple occupation.
- Adopted a Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document to encourage and support sustainable new build in relation to energy and water efficiency.
- Employed an Urban Designer and used the Council's Architects Panel to promote high quality design through the planning system.
- Entered into a partnership with Thornfield Properties PLC to revitalise the three town centres. They are using world class architects to develop proposed schemes.
- Agreed a scheme with Downland Housing Association to redevelop Wilmington Way, Haywards Heath, following consultation with residents and stakeholder groups. This will be a high energy efficiency scheme proposed to be at level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- Delivered 66 grants in the period 2004-2007, totalling £115,000 to improve housing conditions.

Poor quality housing is known to have a detrimental effect on a household's health and emotional well-being. The housing stock in Mid Sussex is generally in good condition. Homes that do fail the decent homes standard often do so as a result of inadequate heating and insulation. This together with the rising cost of energy means that fuel poverty is an increasing problem. Our aim is to ensure that more residents are able to live in high quality homes that are able to meet their changing needs. To achieve this we are working to improve the housing stock in Mid Sussex and to ensure that new homes are developed to high sustainability, design and accessibility standards.

Decent Homes and improving the condition of the Housing Stock

Local authorities have a statutory duty to consider housing conditions within the District and to identify any actions that may need to be taken under the Housing Act. The House Condition Survey pointed to the 17.7% of private sector dwellings in the District that have a category 1 hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. We adopted a revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Assistance Policy in January 2008. One of the aims of the policy is to reduce the number of non-decent homes through a combination of advice, encouragement, assistance and enforcement. Assistance is targeted at elderly, disabled, and other potentially vulnerable residents to adapt, improve and maintain their homes. The types of financial assistance available are:-

- Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (more details are included under objective 4 promote independence and inclusion)
- Mid Sussex Minor Works Loans including Emergency Minor Works Loans.
- Mid Sussex Home Renovation Loans

We will continue to improve the condition of private sector stock through the implementation of our Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy and work to reach the national target that 70% of vulnerable households are living in decent homes by 2010 (from the current 68.7%). We are also monitoring the performance of our RSL partners in working towards the Government target that all social housing must reach the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

It is important that we have up to date information on the quality of the housing stock in Mid Sussex. House Condition Surveys have been the usual technique for assessing the Council's housing stock. We are looking at other ways of carrying out assessments including the use of modelling which provides more reliable data and is more cost effective.

Improving Energy Efficiency and Tackling Fuel Poverty

Energy efficiency is at the forefront of growing environmental concerns associated with climate change and increases in the cost of energy. It is estimated that housing accounts for over 30% of energy consumption in the United Kingdom and that the average dwelling in Mid Sussex produces 7.1 tonnes of CO₂ per year. Keeping warm at home can be a major problem for households living on low incomes, especially given the recent increases in energy prices. Investing in energy efficiency measures provides benefits in addressing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing fuel costs, tackling fuel poverty and making progress to the Decent Homes Standards.

In March 2008 we became the first local authority in the South East to join the Energy Saving Trust's (EST)'s One to One support programme which advises the Council on energy savings and carbon emission reduction. The Council has adopted a Climate Change Action Plan, which was informed by the Trust's report. This develops a strategic approach to sustainable energy that cuts across all aspects of estate management, service delivery and community leadership. It will contribute to the West Sussex Local Area Agreement target to achieve a 9.5% reduction in CO₂ emissions over the next three years. The Council has recently implemented a scheme with the Trust, which involved writing to every household in the District offering a free home energy report. Each report indicates how energy efficient the home is and offers advice on options for improvement.

Fuel poverty - where a household cannot afford to keep warm - damages the health of those living in cold homes and affects their quality of life. Older people, children, and those who are disabled or have a long-term illness are especially vulnerable. Tackling fuel poverty is a national priority, covered by a national performance indicator NI187. Measurement through this indicator shows that 8% of people receiving income based benefits in Mid Sussex are living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating (SAP rating below 35), compared to 31.5% with a high rating (SAP rating above 65). This indicator is to be included in the Local Area Agreement, with a target to reduce those with a low energy efficiency rating by 0.6% and to improve those with a high rating by 1.6% from these baseline figures.

The Council will be adopting a new Affordable Warmth Strategy in early 2010, setting out our contribution to achieving the Fuel Poverty targets. The first objective of the strategy will be to identify and reach vulnerable households who are suffering Fuel Poverty. This will help to target the promotion of assistance that is available to improve energy efficiency, such as Warm Front Grants which are available up to the value of £3,500 for loft insulation, draught-proofing, cavity wall insulation and new boilers. We have been successful with our joint bid with five other West Sussex authorities to the South East Regional Housing Board in obtaining total funding of £920,000 to help residents across the county tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency in their homes over the next three years. This has enabled the provision of "top up" Warm Front

grants, above the £3,500 limit. We will be promoting this scheme to residents and recording the impact of the improvements against increasing levels of fuel poverty while addressing decent homes standards. Our own loan and grants schemes under the Private Sector Housing Renewal Assistance Policy will also contribute to improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty.

Improving the condition and energy efficiency of the social housing stock

There is a national target for all social housing to meet the decent homes standard by 2010 and we are working through the RSL Forum to monitor progress. A particular focus will be working with housing associations to reduce the carbon footprint generated by both new and existing housing by sharing best practice. Hyde Martlet Housing Association's Sustainability Manager has already shared with the RSL Forum their best practice on the development of their energy efficiency measures, including retro fit and sustainable living projects. The Council's Sustainability Officer has spoken to the Forum about our Climate Change Action Plan and will be involving them further with the development of the Affordable Warmth Strategy, including additional Fuel Poverty training for Housing Association and other frontline staff.

Improving standards in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

HMOs provide a small but valuable source of housing for some Mid Sussex tenants and play an important part in meeting local housing demand. The Council recognises that this form of accommodation is more likely to be occupied by vulnerable people and that properties are at greater risk of dangers like fire hazards. Mandatory licensing has been introduced for certain larger, higher risk HMOs to ensure that they are safe and properly managed. Anyone who owns or manages a licensable HMO must apply to the council for a licence. We are continuing to publicise this requirement, through initiatives such as the publication of a guide for landlords and meetings of the Private Sector Landlords Forum. The House Condition Survey estimated that there were about 60 properties in Mid Sussex likely to require a licence. This number may be reduced if landlords decide to change the way that their properties are used and let. The number of HMOs to be licensed is therefore not static. So far 12 HMOs have been licensed in the District. We are aiming to identify and licence an additional 5 high risk HMOs in 2009/10, with a view to delivering similar numbers thereafter, depending on progress in year one.

Ensuring that new housing is developed to high standards

Housing Services works closely with the Council's Planning Services teams, the Homes and Communities Agency and our three RSL development partners to ensure that new affordable housing meets high standards of design and layout. Bids for grant funding are only supported where a scheme meets or exceeds the appropriate design and quality standards. All affordable homes must achieve Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes, with level 4 required from 2012, and the Core Strategy proposes a policy that will require all new homes to comply with Code Level 3 from 2011. Progress against the code will also assist with compliance to Lifetime Homes standards, which will be a requirement for all social housing by 2011. The Government is encouraging compliance and may regulate for all new homes to comply by 2013. We monitor the achievement of these standards via the Strategic Development Group.

The Council has an urban designer and works to space standards in considering the design of new developments containing affordable housing. New homes are required to reflect the character and local distinctiveness of an area. We also aim to ensure that new affordable housing is not distinct from the market housing on the site in terms of build quality, materials, detail, levels of amenity space and privacy. We recently conducted a cross tenure survey of residents of all new developments in the district. Overall satisfaction with the home was generally very high, with 75.7% of respondents stating that overall their home was either 'very good' or 'good'. The integration of the different tenures did not give rise to significant comment

in the responses from those surveyed, which suggests successful integration has been achieved. Areas of less satisfaction included the provision of storage space, parking provision and community facilities. We are working to address these issues through progressing our Local Development Framework and working with relevant partner organisations. A Dwellings Space Standards Supplementary Planning Document was adopted in March 2009 which applies to all new housing developments, not just affordable housing.

A major redevelopment project is underway at Wilmington Way in Haywards Heath, to provide high quality replacement new housing in an area of social deprivation. Downland Housing Association is to redevelop the estate, a poorly designed 1960's systems built development which is incapable of being brought up to Decent Homes Standard. The new development has been designed and planned through extensive consultation with the residents and other stakeholders. It will achieve at least level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. It is due to be completed in three phases with a mix of tenures and includes a community facility and enhanced play facilities. The new development will regenerate this part of Haywards Heath and enhance the sustainability of the wider community.

Strategy Main Actions

In 2009-14 we will:

- Improve the condition of private sector stock through the implementation of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.
- Improve the condition of Housing Association stock in Mid Sussex.
- Improve energy efficiency across tenure of new homes and existing stock.
- Tackle fuel poverty through the Affordable Warmth Strategy.
- Improve standards in houses in multiple-occupation.
- Ensure that new housing is developed to high standards

Objective 4 - Promote independence and inclusion

Achievements from the last strategy: we have

- Reprovided a scheme for young people at Acorn House, Burgess Hill, in partnership with Hyde Martlet, Sussex Oakleaf and the Housing Corporation so that it now provides self contained flats rather than shared housing.
- Through the HOLD scheme in partnership with Southdown Housing Association and the Housing Corporation, we have enabled two people with long term disabilities to purchase a home of their own
- Worked with Housing Associations to review their sheltered housing schemes to ensure all schemes are fit for purpose for the future.
- Used the Signpost scheme to provide floating support to vulnerable people wherever they live including homeless people in temporary accommodation, working cross tenure and boundaries to deliver best value.
- Administered the Disabled Facilities Grants Scheme with 325 disabled adaptations completed in the period 2004/2008 amounting to over £1.8 million.
- Established an Older Persons Housing Strategy.
- Worked with other councils in the County to produce a gypsy and travellers accommodation assessment, which has identified the need for additional pitches. This will be reflected in our Planning Policies to ensure sites are made available.
- Delivered two wheelchair affordable units per annum.

One of the Council's key priorities is achieving Better Lives by creating cohesive communities where no-one is socially excluded. Vulnerable people are especially in danger of becoming isolated and our aim is to ensure that their independence is maximised through housing support. The Council works closely with our Housing Association partners and the County's Supporting People team in identifying and meeting the housing related needs of vulnerable people. This involves a balanced approach. For some, providing opportunities for independent living and for staying in their own homes is the best approach- we can assist with this through such measures as our disabled facility grants scheme and/or floating support. For others, suitable supported housing is the most appropriate solution. Support is provided to people in specially designated or purpose designed accommodation or in general housing (e.g. floating support). Our aim is to ensure that the District has a suitable stock of accommodation for vulnerable people, with the required level of support.

We want people to have safe, attractive and affordable places in which to live, which is not just about bricks and mortar, but also about building inclusive communities. This means working to tackle such issues as anti-social behaviour, worklessness and financial inclusion. The Council is also conscious of the need to ensure that all of its services are accessible and that the barriers to service delivery, especially those faced by vulnerable people, are overcome. We have completed equality impact assessments for the Housing needs and Housing Enabling Services and are implementing the actions arising from these through the service planning process. More details are included under Objective 5, "Efficient and customer focused housing services."

Grants and Loans to Support Independent Living

The Council spends approximately £650,000 per annum on a range of capital grants and loans to residents to help them to continue to live independently. £342,000 of this sum is met by the Government and the remainder is from capital receipts. The vast majority of this spend is on

Mandatory Disabled Facility Grants which enable disabled people and parents with disabled children to adapt their homes to meet their needs. We aim to deliver 90 of these grants per year. Demand for these grants is rising and we are increasing investment in this area to £750,000 per annum from 2010/11.

In delivering its private sector housing renewal programme, the Council will continue to work in close partnership with the Anchor Staying Put Agency, which assists older and vulnerable households with all aspects of adaptation and renewal within their homes. We support the agency with an annual grant and funding is also provided by Crawley Borough Council, West Sussex County Council Supporting People, Mid Sussex and Crawley Social and Caring Services and West Sussex Primary Care Trust. We are working with the agency to develop its role in relation to providing advice on equity release, loans, charitable funding, home safety and other areas of support for vulnerable householders, subject to funding becoming available to deliver these services. The Council also works closely with West Sussex County Adults' Services and Children and Young People's Services in the provision of adaptations to dwellings for disabled occupiers. Additional government Minor Repairs and Adaptation "Handyperson" funding across West Sussex has been awarded, amounting to £150,000 in 2009/10 and £220,000 in 2010/11. Any funding allocated to Mid Sussex will be managed through Anchor Staying Put.

Development of the West Sussex Supporting People Partnership

The context section of this strategy described the way that the Supporting People partnership works and the vulnerable groups to whom housing related support is provided. It also mentioned the staged strategic reviews of the partnership that are underway in relation to disability, social exclusion including homelessness and older people. The provision of housing related support services is, for the most part, determined by the availability of Supporting People funding. The way that Supporting People is funded is changing in terms of the removal of the ring fenced Government finance for the County Council and the piloting of "individual budgets" where the individual requiring care or support is able to commission his or her care/support provider. We will continue to work proactively in the Supporting People partnership to improve the fit between the provision and demand for housing support in Mid Sussex. Overall we are contributing to the Local Area Agreement targets in this area, namely NI 142 % of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living (98% target by 2010/11) and NI 147 % of care leavers in suitable accommodation (90% target by 2010/11). Our specific contribution to NI142 includes the provision of Disabled Facility Grants and ensuring the provision of quality housing related support cross tenure through Signpost. For NI 147 we are working through a cross county project to address the needs of young people who are leaving care.

Meeting the needs of Specific Groups

This section of the strategy provides information about our plans for the provision of housing and support to vulnerable groups. Objective 2 regarding the prevention of homelessness provides further information about some of the initiatives in relation to specific vulnerable groups such as ex-offenders and women suffering domestic violence. We have a particular role in working with our Housing Association partners and the Supporting People Partnership to provide and review the accommodation in the District provided for vulnerable groups. The main aims are to provide accommodation and support that:

- Is fit for purpose
- Promotes viable independent living and social inclusion
- Takes into account the preferences of residents, e.g. moving to self contained units from bedsits and shared bathing facilities.
- Builds future proofing into the design to allow for change of use should the client group or future commissioning requirements alter.

- Addresses underoccupation so that best use is made of existing stock.
- Provides an effective move on process which ensures supported Housing Services are freed up to new users when existing users are ready for independence.

People with learning disabilities

People with learning disabilities or difficulties (PLD) have the same aspirations for a home of their own as anyone else in the wider community. Historically people with such disabilities, particularly those with a higher level of care and support needs have very often spent their lives in institutions or lived with their family as carers. In Mid Sussex there is a range of specific support service for PLD including independent flats for younger people at Roman Court, Burgess Hill (Southdown Housing Association) and at Prescott House Extra Care Scheme (Hyde Martlet), which provides for a range of needs including older people with learning disabilities. In addition PLD receive floating support to live independently (Moat HA) and through timely low level support to prevent problems arising (Southdown's Signpost Services).

We are working in partnership with Downland Housing Association and the County Council to provide additional PLD accommodation in Mid Sussex. This includes:

- a new mixed tenure scheme on the site of a former residential care home in Burgess Hill. This will provide independent flats for five people with learning disabilities including people who are "out of county placements" currently living in expensive residential care establishments at a distance from their families and connections. It will also provide six two bedroom houses for general needs rent, thus delivering additional affordable housing units to meet local needs.
- new independent living type accommodation for a number of individuals with high levels of care and support needs, currently in NHS provision in Haywards Heath. This involves the remodelling of the institutionalised bungalow setting to provide smaller shared units on an independent living model. Downland Housing Association are purchasing two additional properties within the District to provide similar shared independent living with support schemes.

People with Mental Health Needs

People with mental health needs make up the largest number of applicants on the supported housing database. There is a range of provision in Mid Sussex to meet those needs from residential care, independent flats and shared houses with support, as well as specific floating or outreach support for people with these needs. The Signpost service (Southdown Housing Association) provides preventative and timely intervention and support to this group. A number of providers supply the supported accommodation and the floating support services, including Moat Housing Association and Sussex Oakleaf Housing Association. We are working with the latter to take forward a project called "New Futures", which aims to find new independent living and care solutions for people with these needs who are currently living in residential care. We will also continue to facilitate the mental health allocation and assessment panels with Sussex Oakleaf and other providers, which ensure effective access for those in need of this type of accommodation and support.

People with Physical Disabilities

The majority of people with physical disabilities in housing need are frail older people. There is also a percentage of people of all ages who are in need of wheelchair accessible accommodation. When people with physical disabilities are allocated housing from the Common Housing Register, we strive to identify accessible housing to meet their needs. In some instances, new tenants may apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant to adapt their property and make use of the care and repair agency Anchor Staying Put. For new developments, we aim to negotiate the provision of fully adapted wheelchair units on all suitable sites where this is

viable, with a target of providing at least two affordable wheelchair units per year. When new wheelchair units are provided suitable applicants from the register are identified at an early stage, enabling the properties to be built to a bespoke specification to meet the particular needs of a disabled individual or family with disabled children. We include the Occupational Therapy Scheme in this process. We will be undertaking a consultation with the tenants of new build wheelchair/disabled units to identify what works well or not so well about their accommodation and the rehousing process so that we can improve our processes and future accommodation.

Young People

The housing needs of young people are addressed in a number of ways in Mid Sussex. Applicants can go on the Common housing register from the age of 16, but most housing associations will not grant minors a tenancy unless they have a guarantor. The Housing Needs Team and the Signpost services have frequent involvement with young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness due to family breakdown. Young people in housing need may also have mental health needs, substance misuse and on occasion be ex-offenders. There is one specific Supporting People housing service for young people at Acorn House in Burgess Hill, where the support is provided by Sussex Oakleaf Housing Association. In addition there are 3 outreach houses, a floating support service which supports young people in allocated tenancies in general needs accommodation as well as a floating support service, which assists young people who may be in unsuitable housing or "sofa surfing".

Substance Misuse

We work with Downland and Sussex Oakleaf Housing Associations, Horsham District and Crawley Borough Councils to provide housing related support services to people with substance misuse problems. The service allows some people in housing need who have had a sustained period of abstinence to obtain tenancies with partner housing providers in order to maintain stability in their lives. The service also provides support to tenants to prevent them losing their homes when they have relapsed or are in danger of relapsing into substance misuse. The desired outcome is to prevent homelessness and other negative effects of substance misuse such as anti-social and offending behaviours.

Older People

Mid Sussex is predicted to have an increasingly ageing population with a 50% increase in the 65+ age group by 2026. The Council has developed Older Persons' Housing Strategy in partnership with West Sussex County Council Adult Services and with input from the local health sector. The strategy aims to enhance older people's independence by providing meaningful choice over their future housing and support. This is to be achieved through addressing the following 5 issues:-

- Support to maintain people in their existing homes
- Accessing more suitable independent accommodation
- Providing flexible supported accommodation
- Providing appropriate and accessible information
- Enhancing older people's health and minimising stays in hospital.

Currently we have a broad range of sheltered housing for older people across the district. There is at least one sheltered scheme in virtually every parish, which is particularly important in rural areas so that people are able to remain within their community. We have both basic sheltered accommodation with on site or visiting scheme manager providing support and also four extra care schemes where there is on site care delivered to frail older people.

We are working with our sheltered provider partners to review their stock in order to produce an action plan by April 2009 to address those schemes identified as not fit for purpose. In some

instances this may mean remodelling or decommissioning and using the stock for an alternative purpose or new build on the site. We are encouraging our Housing Association partners to provide housing for older people, built to lifetime homes standards and wheelchair accessible. This is likely to include additional extra care housing, which allows people to continue to live independently and avoid the need to go into residential care in most instances. We are also encouraging our Housing Association partners to develop schemes to meet the demand for new affordable shared equity extra care retirement housing in Mid Sussex. Such schemes will assist in addressing underoccupation and provide an affordable alternative to private assisted living provision.

We will continue to assist our RSL partners with promoting the sheltered housing which is available and in encouraging active ageing. We have specific information available to older people advising them of their housing options in the form of leaflets and on our website. There is also the annual event the Council holds for older people, the Life Show, which promotes the services and activities available for older people, including housing options.

Building Inclusive Communities

People want safe, attractive and affordable places to live, well connected for work, opportunity and education. There are a number of initiatives in place in the District aimed at building inclusive communities, enhancing community safety and providing for community development. There are pockets of deprivation in the District and we have focused resources in these areas, through such initiatives as the community projects. Housing Associations play an important part in these schemes, particularly with the Denham Road Community House in Burgess Hill. We will be looking to enable the provision of a similar community house in Haywards Heath as part of the Wilmington Way redevelopment. Housing Associations also play an important part in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership at strategic level, by working through the Joint Action Group convened by the Police and attendance at neighbourhood police team meetings. The Council's Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator works in close partnership with individual RSLs on a case by case basis.

The survey of residents of new developments in Mid Sussex that we undertook in 2008 produced a substantial response from residents of the largest new development in the District at Bolnore Village in Haywards Heath. The particular issues raised by residents included the lack of community facilities and activities. We have initiated work with Hyde Martlet and Action in Rural Sussex with a view to working with the residents to produce a community action plan for Bolnore.

Worklessness and Issues of Financial Exclusion

The Hills Report found that people without work are too heavily represented in social housing, with nationally only 32% of social housing tenants in paid work. Housing associations are carrying out tenant profiling exercises, which will help to establish the extent of worklessness in Mid Sussex social housing. There are a number of initiatives being implemented by housing associations in the District to tackle worklessness, including the promotion of apprenticeship schemes for residents with contractors responsible for maintaining existing stock and new build social housing. We will be sharing best practice through the Mid Sussex RSL Forum. The community projects in some of the District's more deprived areas, continue to make a contribution to tackling worklessness by providing a facility for IT training courses and the establishment of homework clubs.

The Council supports volunteering which can be an effective route into paid employment, through financial assistance to organisation such as the Council for Voluntary Services. We provide support to the Citizens Advice Bureaux who have offices in each of the three towns and

can help with debt, money and other financial problems. We also publicise the availability of the two Credit Unions that operate in the District.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

A Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was jointly commissioned by West Sussex County Council and the District and Borough Council in West Sussex (except Chichester). The assessment found that Mid Sussex had a requirement for additional pitches for gypsies and travellers. SEERA has recently undertaken a partial review of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs and in March 2009 it agreed the contents of its submission to Government on this issue. This included the requirement for Mid Sussex to provide 20 additional pitches for gypsies and travellers and 2 pitches for travelling showpeople by 2016. The proposed Core Strategy policy supports the provision of such sites where they have good access to services and amenities such as schools, shops and medical facilities, and are well related to existing communities to encourage social inclusion. Sites should be located and designed in accordance with best practice to provide acceptable living conditions for residents and to minimise impact on the environment and neighbouring uses. Specific allocations for gypsy and travellers sites will be included in a subsequent 'Allocations Development Plan Document' (estimated adoption date 2013).

The Council is also taking the lead in identifying a partner to develop and manage all new site provision across West Sussex. We are developing a Gypsy and Traveller Strategy to bring together all of the Council's activities in this area.

Meeting the Needs of a Culturally Diverse Population

We are working to ensure that our housing services are accessible and delivered on the basis of equal opportunity. The Council subscribes to a service providing telephone based simultaneous interpreting to those for whom English is not their first language. Our record keeping of the ethnic origin of Housing Advice and Homelessness customers, shows that the profile broadly reflects the profile of the background population of Mid Sussex. Monitoring of the Common Housing Register also shows that the ethnic origin of housing applicants and those rehoused, broadly reflects the background population in Mid Sussex. However there is a shortage of 4 bedroom properties to rent, which affects people from black and minority ethnic communities disproportionately. This is being addressed through our housing development programme.

Strategy Main Actions

- Promote independent living through the Disabled Grants Scheme and working with Anchor Staying Put.
- Increase the number of vulnerable people assisted to live independently in Mid Sussex via the provision of housing related support.
- Develop new accommodation schemes for people with learning difficulties and additional wheelchair units.
- Deliver the Older Persons Strategy and encourage building to Lifetime Homes Standards.
- Make appropriate provision for gypsies and travellers
- Address worklessness and financial inclusion by encouraging RSLs to provide employment, education and training advice.
- Achieve further improvement to community safety and inclusion particularly through working with Housing Associations

Objective 5 – Efficient and customer focused housing services

Achievements from the last strategy: we have

- Undertaken an audit of the Housing Needs team's customer service by Shelter, which received a high rating.
- Received a rating as a good service with promising prospects for improvement in the inspection of the Council's affordable housing service by the Audit Commission.
- Improved our Housing Needs leaflets and Housing Service information available on our website.
- Undertaken a survey of 1,300 households in new housing development with affordable housing across the District, to monitor satisfaction with their homes and the neighbourhoods in which they live.
- Achieved an overall satisfaction rate of 93% in the latest annual satisfaction survey of users of the Common Housing Register.
- Introduced customer satisfaction questionnaires for Housing Standards.

The Audit Commission inspection of affordable housing that reported in August 2006, assessed the Council as providing a good two star service with promising prospects for improvement. The Commission commented that "Mid Sussex is taking a robust approach to ensuring that good quality affordable homes are being provided as part of new housing developments, while at the same time minimising the need for temporary accommodation by reducing levels of homelessness".

They also identified areas for improvement, commenting that mechanisms for seeking customer feedback on all housing services needed to be improved and that the quality of housing services was not systematically checked. The report commented that consultations with service users over housing strategies and policies could be improved. Since the inspection, the Council has made great efforts to improve in these areas. Examples of this include the positive report from Shelter's National Quality Team following their review of the Council's Housing Advice and Homelessness services reported in December 2007. This included a mystery shopping exercise. They stated that:

"We are confident that the (Council's) housing advice and homelessness service provides a level of service that ranks amongst the best that we have encountered in over 60 similar exercises for councils across the country."

We have also undertaken extensive consultation to inform the development of our Homelessness Strategy and conducted a survey of residents of new developments in the District.

Customer Service

Excellent customer service and satisfaction is one of the Council's key success criteria. The Council's corporate approach to improving customer service emphasises the customer first approach and the aim to resolve a high percentage of customer queries at first point of contact. As well as first point of contact, we also aim to provide a timely overall service, such as our targets for the speed of processing homelessness applications. The Audit Commission inspection commented that it was easy for residents to obtain information about housing options both from the Council's offices and on our website. Access to services has been enhanced

through the further development of information on the website and use of improved publications. We have also improved access to housing advice by hosting surgeries for Shelter and Signpost at our offices and supply advice through the Help Points in Burgess Hill and East Grinstead. We are conscious of the implications of the economic downturn and the need to publicise the assistance available to those facing financial difficulties. This is being achieved through the website and information in Mid Sussex Matters.

The further development of customer service is being progressed including through the Council's Equalities Scheme, which involves the undertaking of impact assessments. Making sure that all residents can access our services and information in ways that suit them is fundamental to good customer care. Therefore these assessments are being conducted as customer focus assessments, looking at how our services impact on all of our customers and residents, and making changes accordingly. The assessments identify the barriers to service/differential impact on the basis of race, religion or belief, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, income or skill level and residential location (rural/urban). They also identify current action to address these barriers/differential impacts and the further action required. A good example of the process came from the Housing Needs impact assessment, which identified the reluctance of young people seeking housing advice to access information from Council offices. Part of the solution to this has been the implementation of an education programme with a Sixth Form College, with plans to extend this to other schools. An impact assessment for this Housing Strategy is included at Appendix 1.

The Common Housing Register

A Common Housing Register leads to good customer service and helps to prevent homelessness, with simple registration on the housing register for those in housing need and an allocations policy that is supportive of the prevention agenda. The Mid Sussex Common Housing Register provides a single route through a single application form to access most of the affordable housing in Mid Sussex owned by the 17 housing associations that have joined in partnership with the Council. The Register is currently administered on behalf of the Council and its partners by the Common Housing Register Team of Downland Housing Association. The latest annual satisfaction survey of users of the Common Housing Register was carried out in December 2008 and showed an overall satisfaction rate of 93%. We will continue to monitor applicant satisfaction with the administration of the register through Downland's annual surveys.

Choice-Based Letting

A key project will be the development of a Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) scheme in Mid Sussex that will be implemented from April 2010, in line with the Government target. This new way of allocating affordable housing will introduce greater transparency and allow personal involvement and choice in where people are housed. It will turn previously passive housing applicants into active home seekers. CBL schemes where implemented elsewhere have proved to be very popular with customers who feel that they have more control over the process and that it is more transparent. They also contributed to making best use of the housing stock, as CBL schemes have been successful in reducing the time taken to let less popular stock. Sussex Homemove is the preferred option as a cross local authority scheme with other councils in Sussex. We assessed various options and chose this scheme because it:

- offers customers a wide range of ways to find out about and bid for vacancies
- offers the best fit in terms of geographical and housing market coverage
- provides value for money compared to a stand alone system
- enables disabled applicants to identify appropriate properties.

The new system will involve a review of the Council's existing Allocation Scheme, which sets out how applicants will be prioritised for social housing. The broad principles that underpin the

housing register and the allocation scheme will remain. The revised allocation scheme will give a continuing priority for those with a local connection.

Consultation, Engagement and Customer Satisfaction

We have undertaken a survey of the residents of new developments in Mid Sussex, asking for their views on their homes and the neighbourhoods in which they live. Its purpose was to gauge residents' views on what is working well, or not so well about the planning, design, layout and other aspects of their neighbourhood. The results are being used to inform the planning of other new developments in Mid Sussex. We will be carrying out further satisfaction surveys, including consultation with people with physical disabilities who have been rehoused to establish how successful for them the process has been and any shortcomings to inform our future work. We will also be surveying residents of shared ownership residents to establish satisfaction with tenure and affordability.

In terms of direct customer satisfaction surveys, the Housing Standards team has introduced customer satisfaction questionnaires for all of its service requests. So far they have achieved 100% customer satisfaction with the service. In 2009/10, the feedback received will be published on the Council's website. We also monitor the satisfaction achieved by partner organisations in service delivery through their customer surveys. Examples include the Common Housing Register survey by Downland already mentioned and the customer feedback achieved by the Anchor Staying Put service, together with their achievement of Chartermark.

Housing associations are required to consult with their tenants to gauge levels of overall satisfaction and with specific aspects of their tenancies, such as speed of repairs. We will continue to monitor housing associations' tenant satisfaction and their plans to deliver further improvements, especially in the context of the creation of the new Tenant Services Authority which aims for greater tenant empowerment. Downland Housing Association recently undertook a tenant satisfaction survey, which shows an increase in tenant satisfaction from 76% 3 years ago to 90.6%. Through the RSL Forum, we will seek to share best practice.

There are a variety of other methods that we use to engage with service users and stakeholders. In addition to working with housing associations through the RSL Forum to deliver improvements to housing services, it is also important that we have a good working relationship with the private rented sector. Our Mid Sussex Landlord Forum events are especially valuable in providing an opportunity for landlords to meet and engage with staff from the Council. We have produced a "Letting your property- a Guide for Landlords" publication in partnership with the Gatwick Area Landlord Forum. It is also important that Councillors are properly engaged in the delivery of this Housing Strategy, especially in the provision of affordable housing. This will be progressed through continuing to engage the Policy Advisory Groups in the development of relevant policies and strategies.

Using partnership working and benchmarking to improve efficiency

Mid Sussex District Council has an excellent track record in delivering improvements in efficiency, ranked third by the Audit Commission across all authorities over the last three years. Making best use of partnership working makes an important contribution to improving efficiency. This includes working with other councils in providing services and maximising the access to external funding through joint bids. Joining the Sussex Homemove Scheme for Choice Based Letting is a good example of joint service delivery, enabled by set up funding achieved through a joint bid to the Government. We also intend to make a further bid in partnership with other West Sussex Councils to the Regional Housing Board for funding for fuel poverty initiatives, including top up Warm Front grants.

It is important that the Council continues to have a good understanding of housing need in the District and at the wider level. The Housing Market Assessment used to inform this Strategy and our Local Development Framework, has been jointly commissioned from GVA Grimley by all seven district and borough councils in West Sussex, together with the County Council following a tender process. We will continue to work through this partnership to ensure that the assessment is kept updated in order to monitor trends and activity in the housing market.

Benchmarking through the Aylesbury Benchmarking Group with other local authorities will be used to further enhance the efficiency of the Council's affordable housing and homelessness services by undertaking a value for money study.

Strategy Main Actions

In 2009-14 we will:

- Introduce Choice-Based Lettings by joining the Sussex Homemove Scheme.
- Improve user and stakeholder involvement in the development of services.
- Assist private landlords with help and advice and help them to find tenants.
- Maintain member engagement in the delivery of affordable housing
- Use benchmarking and partnership working to improve efficiency.

6. Delivering our strategy

Resources

This section outlines the funding provided by the Council and other sources to support housing priorities identified in this strategy. Much of the delivery of this Strategy is dependent upon working in partnership - e.g. multi-agency working with Registered Social Landlords, Social Services, Probation, the West Sussex Signpost Service, Mid Sussex Citizens Advice Bureaux, Shelter and other voluntary service partners. Some is dependent on working with partner authorities especially Horsham and Crawley Councils.

The Council has a 4 year Service Development Plan 2008-12, which sets out what services are to be provided and at what level of performance. The Plan sets out where we want the Council to be in four years time under the four success criteria. This helps to ensure that the service and budget plans reflect the Council's priorities.

Summary of Capital Resources

Programme	Funding source	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000	Planned annual outcomes
New affordable housing	Commuted sums.	500	532	Dependent on spend and future receipts of commuted sums.		Delivery of LAA targets of 324 for 2008-11.
	HCA Grant	HCA grant subject to continuous market engagement.				
Private sector renewal (DFGs and other loans/grants)	CLG funding	348	325	325	325	90 Disabled Facilities Grants per year. 12 loans per annum for elderly/vulnerable households to make their homes decent
	MSDC funding	302	425	425	425	
Top up Warm Front Grants	South East Regional Housing Board	920 (shared with other West Sussex councils) Funding runs to 2011.				Reduction in Fuel Poverty
Choice Based Letting introduction from April 2010.	CLG Grant	13.8	-	-	-	CBL to enable those in housing need to have more influence over how their needs are met
	Downland HA	4.6	-	-	-	
	MSDC	4.6	-	-	-	

Notes to table-

1. Figures in italics are projections based on current resources or practises.

The Council has a Medium Term Financial Plan, which includes provision for affordable housing and Disabled Facilities Grants and other private sector renewal loans and grants. There are significant difficulties for the Council in financing its capital programme over the medium term, due to the economic slowdown, the level of reserves, reductions in interest rates and the forecast lack of capital receipts. At present the Council is not able to finance a capital programme beyond 2010/11.

The Council's capital programme includes an allowance for expenditure of £500,000 per annum for affordable housing, with the funding is sourced from commuted sum payments, which are

paid in lieu of affordable housing being delivered on site in exceptional circumstances. If not used in year, this is carried forward to add to future receipts. At June 2009 uncommitted commuted sums amount to £704,055. This funding is normally used to provide additional affordable housing where there is insufficient HCA grant available. A total of £9,162,276 of Government money was allocated to Housing Associations by the then Housing Corporation in the 2006-08 programme for the provision of affordable housing across Mid Sussex. For the 2008-11 Housing Corporation/Regional Housing Board programme, £5,843,430 of funding so far on the initial bid round has been allocated to Mid Sussex. We expect additional funding through the Homes and Communities Agency new system of continuous market engagement to be provided between January 2009 and March 2011.

The Better Mid Sussex partnership with Thornfield Properties PLC is expected to potentially deliver inward investment of £500 million, as well as providing additional affordable housing.

The other main area of capital expenditure is the funding provided for Private Sector Housing Renewal. Disabled Facilities Grants are mandatory and funded by Central Government and from Council reserves. In addition, there is the Council's own scheme of private sector loans designed to assist vulnerable households to improve their homes. The budget for Minor Works Loans currently amounts to £70,000 out of the overall Grants budget. Overall, funding for private sector housing renewal amounts to £650,000 in 2009/10. It is then planned to increase this to £750,000 reflecting increasing demand from an ageing population. A grant has been received from the South East Regional Housing Board to provide top up funding for warm front grants. This was the result of a joint bid with other West Sussex Districts, with funding running until 2011. It is planned to make a further bid for funding from the Board.

A one off area of capital expenditure this year is for the setting up of Choice-Based Letting. The capital cost of this will be £23,000, with £13,800 met from government grant, £4,600 from Downland Housing Association and £4,600 from the Council. Running costs will also be shared with Downland.

Mid Sussex District Council Net Revenue Expenditure on Housing Services 2009/10

Service Area	Total (£ 000s)
Housing Needs (housing advice, homelessness, temporary accommodation)	555
Housing Enabling (affordable housing and support services, housing strategy)	250
Housing Standards (improving standards in private and social housing)	190
Total	995

The main source of revenue funding for our homelessness and housing advice activities comes from the Council's revenue budget. The budget for 2008/09 built in a reduction of £35k to reflect the current reduction in the use of temporary accommodation and the maximising of income received through Housing Benefit when people are placed in temporary accommodation.

Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) provides a grant direct to the Council to fund homelessness prevention. This was set for the a three year period to 2010/11 at £40k per year. A further grant from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) of £28,140 (2008/09) is allocated to the Council to fund Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). This grant is assessed on an annual basis dependent upon the amount used in previous years and any unused funding must be returned. The Council also received a CLG grant of £10k in 2008/09 for the enhancement of the Court Desk advocacy service in repossession cases, with a similar sum for 2009/10. The Government recently announced that it is providing "Recession

Impact Funding” of £50k to produce a county wide action plan to prevent homelessness due to the recession. Options for the use of these funds are under consideration.

Funding also comes from the West Sussex Supporting People programme, including financing the West Sussex Signpost Service for floating support provided by Southdown Housing Association. The annual contract value in 2008/09 for Southdown's Signpost Service across Horsham and Mid Sussex, is currently £263,176.

One of the aims of the Supporting People programme is to promote independent living. The Council pays an annual grant of £26,390 to Anchor Staying Put to provide core services to enable people to continue to live independently. The agency is also funded by Supporting People. Additional government Minor Repairs and Adaptation “Handyperson” funding across West Sussex has been awarded, amounting to £150,000 in 2009/10 and £220,000 in 2010/11. Any funding allocated to Mid Sussex will be managed through Anchor Staying Put.

Housing related support and advice is also provided through organisations supported through the Council's grants to voluntary organisations, including the Council for Voluntary Services and Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Monitoring and Review of the Strategy

The Housing Strategy is not just a Mid Sussex District Council Strategy. It has been developed by and needs ongoing input from a range of agencies. Delivery of the Strategy will be monitored through the publication of an annual progress report, including an update on progress against the Housing and Homelessness Strategies with key performance information. This will be considered by the Housing Strategy Working Group and our key partners. It will be signed off by the Cabinet Member for Health and Community and made available on the Council's website. Achievement of targets will also be monitored in the context of the achievement of the priorities set out in the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

Housing Strategy Action Plan 2009-14

	Action	Milestones/measures of success	Strategic links	Lead Officer(s)	Other agencies involved	Resource Implications
Objective 1: Increase the supply of Affordable Housing Performance Indicators: NI 154 Net additional homes provided NI 155 Total number of affordable homes delivered MSPI 96 Affordable units developed in rural areas Local PI Number of four+ bed affordable units per year Local PI Number of wheelchair accessible affordable units per year			<i>NB:- For detailed targets for each Performance Indicator, see separate table at end of the list of objectives</i>			
1	Deliver more homes overall by making more land available for housing through the Local Development Framework.	Core Strategy submission by Jan 2010 and adopted by early 2011. Net additional homes built per year (NI154) target	South East Plan. Mid Sussex LDF	Claire Tester	Developers Town and Parish Councils	Existing resources
2	Deliver more new affordable housing.	Delivery of LAA 2008-11 targets of 324 new affordable homes. Adopt new affordable housing policies in the emerging Core Strategy. Include Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Site Policy in Core Strategy- January 2010. Core Strategy adopted by early 2011. Deliver 20 rural affordable homes per year. Complete further parish housing needs surveys. Complete review of our preferred RSL development partner arrangements by March 2010. Annual performance monitoring of development partners through the Strategic Development Group	Local Area Agreement Mid Sussex LDF Mid Sussex Sustainable Communities Strategy Rural Affordable Housing Strategy	Lynne Standing Claire Tester Emma Shuttleworth	RSLs Developers Planning and Affordable Housing Group Homes and Communities Agency	HCA Grant Funding Commuted sums. Existing resources

	Action	Milestones/asures of success	Strategic links	Lead Officer(s)	Other agencies involved	Resource Implications
Objective 2: Prevent Homelessness Performance Indicators: MSPI 121 Number of households accepted as homeless MSPI 139 Number of cases where homelessness prevented NI 156 Number of households living in temporary accommodation at end of year Local PI Number of evictions from social housing Local PI Number of households helped to access the private rented sector.			<i>NB:- For detailed targets for each Performance Indicator, see separate table at end of the list of objectives. A new Homelessness Strategy was adopted in June 2008.</i>			
5	Maintain reductions in the number of households accepted as homeless.	Implementation of homelessness prevention initiatives in the Homelessness Strategy. Acceptances kept below 60 per year. Homelessness prevented in 350 cases per year.	Homelessness Strategy	Julian Till	CAB Shelter Signpost	Existing resources
6	Maximise access to private sector rented accommodation.	Use of the Rent in Advance/Deposit Guarantee scheme and Social Fund crisis loans where possible. Min 70 households per year assisted to access private rented sector.	Homelessness Strategy	Julian Till	Private sector landlords	DHP annual grant

	Action	Milestones/measure of success	Strategic links	Lead Officer(s)	Other agencies involved	Resource Implications
7	Reduce homelessness amongst vulnerable groups, especially young people, women suffering domestic violence and ex offenders.	<p>Work with Hyde Martlet and Downland to extend the use of starter tenancies to other RSLs- presentation to RSL Forum by March 2010.</p> <p>Introduce a Vulnerable Persons Protocol with Downland by March 2010.</p> <p>Develop an effective homelessness education programme with secondary schools by March 2010.</p> <p>Introduce an effective homelessness mediation scheme to assist both young people and parents by March 2010.</p> <p>Extend use of tenancies held in trust to minors to at least 3 more RSLs by March 2010.</p> <p>Extend the Safe at Home scheme for women suffering domestic violence with Downland to other RSLs by March 2010.</p>	<p>Homelessness Strategy</p> <p>Housing Needs Impact Assessment Action Plan</p>	<p>Julian Till</p> <p>Susannah Conway/Julian Till</p>	<p>RSLs</p> <p>Signpost</p> <p>Youth Homelessness Action Group.(YHAG)</p> <p>Social Services.</p> <p>Connexions</p> <p>Brighton and Hove YMCA Youth Service</p> <p>Downland Housing Assoc</p>	<p>Existing resources</p> <p>CDRP funding</p>
8	Improve standards in the provision of temporary accommodation.	<p>Extend use of RSL temporary accommodation.</p> <p>75% of households requiring temporary accommodation to be accommodated within Mid Sussex by March 2010.</p> <p>Reduction in use of B&B for 16/17 year olds to zero by 2010</p> <p>Halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010.</p>	<p>Homelessness Strategy</p> <p>Housing Needs Impact Assessment</p> <p>Government targets</p>	Julian Till	Downland Housing Assoc	Existing Resources

	Action	Milestones/measurements of success	Strategic links	Lead Officer(s)	Other agencies involved	Resource Implications
Objective 3: Improve the quality and sustainability of housing						
Performance Indicators: Energy efficiency target- NI 186 per capita reductions in CO ₂ emissions in the local authority area. Fuel Poverty reductions NI187 Tackling Fuel Poverty- % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low and high energy efficiency rating. Non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households Number of loans per annum for older and vulnerable people to make their homes decent			<i>NB:- For detailed targets for each Performance Indicator, see separate table at end of the list of objectives</i>			
9	Improve the condition of private sector stock through the implementation of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.	70% of vulnerable households to be living in Decent Homes by 2010. Deliver 12 loans per annum for older and vulnerable households to make their homes Decent. Complete annual postal survey of loan recipients Complete further assessment of stock by a house condition survey or use of modelling by 2011. Submit by 2011 an additional bid from SE Regional Housing Board to target improved energy efficiency and decent homes.	Government target Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy Affordable Warmth Policy/Strategy	Yvonne Leddy	SE Regional Housing Board Other West Sussex Councils	Revenue Budget and Government grants.
10	Improve the condition of Housing Association stock in Mid Sussex.	Social housing to achieve 100% Decent Homes Standard by Dec 2010. Bi-annual monitoring and reporting to the RSL Forum.	Government target	Emma Shuttleworth	RSLs	Falls to RSLs

	Action	Milestones/measure of success	Strategic links	Lead Officer(s)	Other agencies involved	Resource Implications
11	Improve energy efficiency across tenure of new homes and existing stock.	All new housing to meet Code for Sustainable homes level 3 by 2010. Improved SAP ratings of social housing through the RSL forum benchmarking monitoring regime. Complete by October 09 home energy reports to Mid Sussex households, working with the Energy Savings Trust.	MSDC Climate Change Plan Action	Emma Shuttleworth Celia Austin	Energy Savings Trust	£25k bid for energy saving project
12	Tackle fuel poverty through the Affordable Warmth Strategy.	Development of an Affordable Warmth Strategy by Jan 10. Promote take up of Warm Front grants and top ups for vulnerable households- achieve 5% per annum increase in Warm Front installations.	Government and MSDC Affordable Warmth Strategy	Celia Austin Yvonne Leddy	Energy Savings Trust Eaga Partnership	South East Regional Housing Board funding
13	Improve standards in houses in multiple occupation.	Identify and licence an additional 5 high risk HMOs in 2009/10. Promotion of good landlord standards through local media and annual Landlords Forum meeting- next meeting autumn 09.	Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy Housing Act 2004	Yvonne Leddy	Private Sector Landlords	Existing resources
14	Ensure that new housing is developed to high standards.	Ensure that all social housing is built to lifetime homes standards by 2011. Introduce by July 09 a dwellings space standard supplementary planning document setting out minimum space standards for all new dwellings built in the District. Work with Downland to redevelop the Wilmington Way estate- phase 1 complete by Feb 2012.	LDF Core Policy	Emma Shuttleworth Claire Tester Lynne Standing	RSL Development Partners Downland Housing Association HCA	Existing resources HCA and Downland

	Action	Milestones/measures of success	Strategic links	Lead Officer(s)	Other agencies involved	Resource Implications
Objective 4: Promote independence and inclusion						
Performance Indicators: Local PI Number of disabled adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grants NI142 % of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living. NI147 Care leavers in suitable accommodation NI 132 Repeat incidents of domestic violence				<i>NB:- For detailed targets for each Performance Indicator, see separate table at end of the list of objectives</i>		
15	Promote independent living through the Disabled Facilities Grants Scheme and working with Anchor Staying Put.	Deliver at least a further 90 disabled adaptations per year under the Disabled Grants Scheme. Annual review of contract with Anchor Staying Put.	West Sussex Supporting People	Yvonne Leddy	Anchor Staying Put	£650k per annum. £342k from Govt funding, £318k capital receipts. £25k pa grant to Anchor.
16	Increase the number of vulnerable people assisted to live independently in Mid Sussex via the provision of housing related support.	Input to Supporting People strategic reviews from April 08-April 11 for Disability, Homelessness and Social Inclusion and Older People. Contribution to NI 142, % of vulnerable people supported to maintain independent living.	West Sussex Supporting People	Emma Shuttleworth	West Sussex Supporting people Commissioning Body	Supporting People Grant
17	Develop new homes for people with learning disabilities and additional wheelchair units	People with Learning Disabilities scheme in Burgess Hill completed by Jan 2012. Haywards Heath Scheme completed by April 2010 Deliver minimum of 2 wheelchair affordable units per year.	West Sussex Supporting People Impact Assessment Action Plan	Emma Shuttleworth	West Sussex Social Services Downland Housing Association	WSCC and HCA funding

	Action	Milestones/measures of success	Strategic links	Lead Officer(s)	Other agencies involved	Resource Implications
18	Deliver the Older Persons Housing Strategy and encourage building to Lifetime Homes Standards.	Complete review of older persons sheltered accommodation and follow up actions by March 10. Deliver 10% (approx 100 units) of floating support to older people outside social rented sheltered housing by March 2011. Adopt by December 2010 Core Strategy including requirement for new housing to include provision for older people and vulnerable groups where appropriate.	Older Persons Housing Strategy Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society	Emma Shuttleworth	West Sussex Social Services RSLs	Existing resources
19	Make appropriate provision for gypsies and travellers	Adopt by 2013 an Allocations Development Plan Document, including sites for the additional pitches required in Mid Sussex by 2016. Facilitate management arrangements for the new sites. Adopt Gypsy and Traveller Strategy by March 2010.	South East Plan LDF Core Strategy	Lynne Standing/Claire Tester	WSCC and all district and borough councils in West Sussex. RSLs Friends, Families and Travellers.	Existing resources
20	Address worklessness and financial inclusion by encouraging RSLs to provide employment, education and training advice	Monitoring and sharing of best practice at RSL Forum.	Hills Review. Ends and means: the future roles of social housing in England	Emma Shuttleworth	RSLs	Existing resources
21	Achieve further improvement to community safety and inclusion, particularly through working with Housing Associations.	Haywards Heath community house in place by tbc as part of Wilmington Way redevelopment. Presentation on the Safe at Home scheme by the CDRP to RSL Forum in 09/10. Participate in the Harm Reduction Action Group from April 09, which will cover domestic violence, racism, homophobia and disability discrimination.	Community Safety Strategy Equalities legislation	Nicolette Russell	Members of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership RSLs	CDRP funding for existing schemes

	Action	Milestones/measures of success	Strategic links	Lead Officer(s)	Other agencies involved	Resource Implications
Objective 5: Efficient and customer focused housing services						
Performance Indicators: Local PI % of homelessness decisions made in 33 working days			<i>NB:- For detailed targets for each Performance Indicator, see separate table at end of the list of objectives</i>			
22	Introduce Choice-Based lettings by joining the Sussex Homemove Scheme.	Review allocations scheme and publish by Sept 09 Complete reapplications of everyone on the Common Housing Register and banding exercise by March 2010. Commence Choice-Based letting in April 2010.	Sustainable Communities Plan: Homes for All	Julian Till	RSLs Tenants Sussex Homemove	Set up costs 60% CLG grant. Remainder and running costs split equally between MSDC and Downland.
23	Improve user and stakeholder involvement in the development of services.	Consult with shared ownership residents on satisfaction with tenure and affordability. Analysis and report - August 09 Consult with disabled people who have been rehoused to inform design of future developments and Common Housing Register processes- June 09. Work with Downland to ensure minimum 90% satisfaction with Common Housing Register services. Annually monitor and benchmark tenant satisfaction through the RSL Forum.		Emma Shuttleworth/Neal Barton	RSLs Tenant Services Authority	Existing resources
24	Assist private landlords with help and advice and help them to find tenants (also see action 6).	Hold Annual Landlords Forum. 100% landlords who attend the Landlords Forum find it helpful. Help a minimum of 70 households per annum secure private sector homes.	Homelessness Strategy	Emma Shuttleworth/Julian Till	Private sector landlords National Federation of Residential Landlords	Existing resources

	Action	Milestones/measures of success	Strategic links	Lead Officer(s)	Other agencies involved	Resource Implications
25	Maintain member engagement in the delivery of affordable housing.	Annually undertake at least 1 tour of affordable housing developments. Annually take at least 1 paper on affordable housing to Better Lives Advisory Group.	Member Training Plan Committee Work Programme	Emma Shuttleworth	RSL development partners.	Existing resources
26	Use benchmarking and partnership working to improve efficiency.	Undertake a value for money study of housing services through the Aylesbury Vale Benchmarking Group in 2009/10. Complete annual review of Strategic Housing Market Assessment.	Corporate Plan	Lynne Standing/Neal Barton	Benchmarking group partners. West Sussex councils GVA Grimley	Existing resources

Performance Indicator Targets

PI No	Details (*denotes Local Area Agreement target.)	Main Strategy Actions	07/08	08/09	09/10 target	10/11 target	11/12 target	12/13 target	13/14 target
Objective 1: Increase the supply of affordable housing									
NI 154	*Net additional homes provided	1	502	480	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba
NI 155	*Total number of affordable homes delivered ¹	2	101	157	90	77	TBD	TBD	TBD
MSPI 96	Number of affordable units developed in rural areas	2	39	58	20	20	20	20	20
Local PI	To develop a minimum of 2 four+ bed units per year.	2	4	8	4	4	4	4	4
Local PI	Develop a minimum of 2 wheelchair accessible affordable homes per year	17	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Objective 2: Preventing homelessness									
MSPI 121	Number of households accepted as homeless	5-7	40	26	< 60	< 60	< 60	< 60	< 60
MSPI 139	Number of households where homelessness prevented	5-7	112	315	350	350	350	350	350
NI 156	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	8	29	22	27	27	27	27	27
Local PI	Number of evictions from social housing	7	New PI	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Local PI	Number of households helped to access private rented sector.	6	48	70	84	84	84	84	84
Objective 3: Improve the quality and sustainability of housing									
NI 186	*Per capita reductions in CO ₂ emissions in the local authority area from baseline of 7.1 tonnes.	11-12	New PI	8%	8.5%	9.5%	TBD	TBD	TBD
NI 187	Tackling Fuel Poverty ² - % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a: i) low energy efficiency rating. ii) high energy efficiency rating.	12	New PI New PI	8% 31.5%	7.4% 33.1%	6.8% 34.7%	TBD	TBD	TBD
Local PI	% of non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households that are made decent.	9-10	68.7%	68.7%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
Local PI	Number of loans per annum for older and vulnerable households to make their homes decent.	9	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Objective 4: Promote independence and inclusion									
NI 32	*Repeat incidents of domestic violence (baseline to be set in year 1)	7	N/A	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
NI 142	*% of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living	15-18	98%	98%	98%	98%	TBD	TBD	TBD
NI 147	*Care leavers in suitable accommodation	7, 17	85%	85%	85%	90%	TBD	TBD	TBD
Local PI	Number of Disabled Facilities Grants per year	15	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Objective 5 Provide efficient and customer focused housing services									
Local PI	% of homelessness decisions made within 33 days.		59.1%	76%	70%	75%	75%	75%	75%

1. The LAA target for NI155 affordable housing for 2008-11 is 324 over the three years.

2. This indicator is included in the LAA with improvement targets of 0.6% for 187i) and 1.6% for 187ii).

Mid Sussex District Council

Customer Impact and Needs Assessment

Title of Policy/Service: Housing Strategy

Division: Housing Services, Environmental Health and Building Control.

Lead Officer: Neal Barton

Date Assessment completed: June 2009

1. SCOPING

1.1 What are the aims of the policy/service?

The strategy sets out the Council's housing objectives for the period 2009-14. These objectives are:

1. Increase the supply of affordable housing
2. Prevent homelessness
3. Improve the quality and sustainability of housing
4. Promote independence and inclusion
5. Provide efficient and customer focused housing services

Related Council strategies include the Homelessness Strategy, Rural Housing Strategy, Older Persons Housing Strategy and the Empty Homes Strategy. It also links into a range of other local policies and strategies including the Sustainable Communities Strategy, Local Development Framework and Local Area Agreement.

1.2 Who does the service/policy affect? Who are the main customers (internal or external)?

General public, those unable to access the housing market due to high property prices and rents. People presenting themselves as homeless or potentially homeless. Those applying for grants to improve their homes. Key partners involved in the delivery of the strategy include housing associations, developers, landlords and letting agents, Shelter, Signpost, Supporting People, Action in Rural Sussex, CAB's, West Sussex County Council, Town and Parish Councils, County Courts and Anchor Staying Put. Other stakeholders include the Homes and Communities Agency, GOSE, Audit Commission, CLG. Internal customers and partners in the delivery of the Strategy outside of Housing Services include Environmental Health, Planning Policy, Revenues and Benefits, Building Control, Property Services and Development Control.

1.3 If your service uses contractors, how do you ensure that they comply with the Council's equality policies and schemes and relevant legislation?

Some of the services are provided through Supporting People. All of the organisations funded through Supporting People have to meet stringent quality standards that involve equal opportunities policies compliant with national legislation and Council policies. In delivering its private sector housing renewal programme, the Council works in close partnership with the Anchor Staying Put Agency, which assists older and vulnerable households with all aspects of adaptation and renewal within their homes. We contract with Anchor Downland, and have SLAs with both setting out equalities requirements. Administration of the Common Housing Register by Downland Housing Association is covered by a Service Level Agreement. This sets out our equal opportunities expectations and requires the contractor to monitor its work and the outcomes i.e. who gets housed.

2. Assessment of Impact and Needs - Supported with evidence from Data and Consultation

(See Guidance Notes for information on completing this section)

	Barriers to service/differential impact	Evidence base	Current actions taken to address these	Further actions required
Race	People in need of housing related services may have English as a second language. BME families tend to require larger dwellings and there is a shortage of this size of affordable/social housing. There is a shortage of Gypsies and Travellers sites. They suffer from some of the worst levels of health amongst minority groups.	Ethnic monitoring of Housing Register, Homelessness and other applications. Need for more pitches identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.	Use of Signpost and interpreter services. Tackling underoccupation to free up larger social housing. Targets for the development of larger social housing.	None. Further action to address underoccupation. Target in development programme to deliver at least 4 x 4+ bedroom affordable homes a year. Specific allocation for gypsy and traveller sites to be included in LDF Allocations Development Plan. Development of a Gypsy and Traveller Strategy.
Religion or Belief	None identified.	N/A	N/A	None
Gender	Women suffering domestic violence require temporary refuge or secure home accommodation.	Monitoring of homelessness applications and those in refuge accommodation.	Provision for women fleeing domestic violence, through funding for refuge accommodation, together with the drop in centres in Haywards Heath and East Grinstead. Safe at Home Scheme with RSLs. Floating support outreach service from refuge assists with sustaining accommodation.	Extensions of the Safe at Home Scheme to involve further RSLs.

	Barriers to service/differential impact	Evidence base	Current actions taken to address these	Further actions required
Disability	Shortage of accommodation for people requiring disabled units- purpose built or adapted. Not all the supported housing schemes are accessible to those with physical disabilities. Disabled Facilities Grants are only available to those individuals who are registered or capable of being registered as disabled.	Housing Needs surveys. Experience of helping those with disabilities to access the service. Demand for Disabled Facilities Grants. Survey of disabled residents.	Provision of Disabled Facilities Grants- 90 disabled adaptations per year. We work with Anchor Staying Put to help older, disabled and vulnerable people to access the service. Housing Enabling Officer supports disabled applicants and the Housing Enabling Team ensure properties are developed to meet their needs.	Act on feedback from disabled residents to inform future design. Deliver a minimum 2 wheelchair accessible affordable homes per year.
Sexual Orientation	Same-sex couples need to be recognised in tenancy agreements.	Housing Register.	They are offered joint tenancies by RSLs in the Common Housing Register and enjoy the same rights as other couples.	None.
Age	Affordable housing needs to be physically accessible to older people. Consideration needs to be made in affordable housing developments of provision of additional support services to make independent living successful for both old and young. Identified need for extra care shared ownership accommodation, currently not available. Also, the allocation scheme may need to consider the support needs of both young and older people. There are particular issues with young people and homelessness. It can be difficult to allocate tenancies to people under 18. Young people seeking housing advice may not want to access information from Council offices. Young people in need	Analysis of those approaching the Council for housing advice. Common Housing Register and Supported Housing Needs database, together with experience of helping the old and young access the service. Number of young people stuck in temporary accommodation. Feedback from youth groups on the Youth Homelessness Forum.	Older people accessibility issues- see disabilities above. We are currently reviewing the existing housing stock for older people with a view to remodelling to make it fit for purpose. This will include an assessment of the need for more extra care housing for older people. We address the needs of young people through the Youth Homelessness Action Group and the young persons supported housing panel. Young people are provided with housing advice through visits to schools and colleges in the District, commencing with Haywards Heath 6 th Form College. Review of temporary	Work with partner RSLs to deliver affordable homes built to Lifetime Homes standard. Develop action plan based on review of existing sheltered housing. Adopt Core Strategy including requirement for provision for older people. Develop an effective homelessness education programme with secondary schools Introduce an effective homelessness mediation scheme to assist both young people and parents. Extend use of tenancies held in trust to minors to more RSLs. Reduction in use of B&B for 16/17 year olds to zero by 2010

	of temporary accommodation, ideally need to be placed close to their support networks and education.		accommodation under way with Downland Housing Association. All young people in temporary accommodation are visited by Signpost.	
Income or Skill Level	<p>Entry level home ownership is inaccessible to most newly forming households. Housing need is most acute amongst those on low incomes, and particularly those with poor skills. Help may be required with completing application forms etc. Homelessness applications and requests for housing advice most common from people on low incomes. Worklessness tends to be high amongst RSL tenants. People on low incomes are most likely to experience Fuel Poverty. All of the Housing Renewal assistance is means tested as resources are limited and are therefore targeted at those in greatest need.</p>	<p>Information from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Housing Needs Survey and Common Housing Register. Experience of front-line staff. Customer survey undertaken by Downland. Monitoring of homelessness and housing advice applications.</p> <p>Housing Needs Surveys.</p>	<p>Support for shared ownership schemes. Working with development partners to deliver more affordable housing. Use of planning policies for affordable housing. Help offered in applying. Some RSL's offer assistance with support and training for people to return to work, e.g. Hyde plus. Some supported housing providers have additional services to assist their tenants into employment and productive daytime activities, e.g. Southdown, Sussex Oakleaf. Targeting of top up energy efficiency loans.</p>	<p>Amendment of affordable housing policies in the Core Strategy. Maximise use of rent in advance/deposit guarantee schemes and Discretionary Housing Payments to assist people in finding permanent accommodation. Encourage RSLs to provide employment, education and training advice. Development of an Affordable Warmth Strategy. Promotion of take up of warm Front Grants and top ups.</p>
Residential Location (Rural/ Urban)	<p>Concern that local people, particularly in villages, don't get enough priority for rehousing in their own village.</p> <p>Difficulty in accessing services at Oaklands based in Haywards Heath.</p>	<p>Housing needs surveys undertaken with parish councils. Strategic Housing Market Assessment.</p>	<p>Work to deliver more affordable housing in rural areas in partnership with the Sussex Rural Affordable Homes partnership and Action in Rural Sussex. Priority given in allocations scheme to people with a local connection. As well as Oaklands Haywards Heath, service is provided at help points in Burgess Hill and East Grinstead. Use of telephone, letter and e-mail.</p>	<p>Include Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Site policy in Core strategy. Complete further parish housing needs surveys.</p>

3. ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLANNING

Any gaps in information or provision and/or barriers to services identified above need to be translated into SMART targets and recorded here.

These actions then need to be incorporated into service plans so that they can be monitored at service level and also as part of a corporate equalities action plan.

Issue	Action	Lead Officer	Deadline	How will impact be measured?
Race				
Shortage of Gypsies and Travellers sites.	(See Action 19 in Action Plan) - Adopt an Allocation Development Plan Document including sites for additional additional pitches. - Adopt Gypsy and Traveller Strategy	Lynne Standing/Claire Tester	August 2012 March 2010	Monitoring of sites identified against the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.
Gender				
Women suffering domestic violence require temporary refuge or secure home accommodation.	(see Action 7 in Action Plan) - extend the Safe at Home scheme for women suffering domestic violence with Downland to other RSLs by March 2010	Julian Till/Nicollette Russell	March 2010	Number of women who are assisted and RSL take up of the Safe at Home Scheme.
Disability				
Shortage of accommodation for people requiring disabled units-purpose built or adapted and support for independent living	(See Action Plan 15, 16 and 17) - Promote independent living through the Disabled Facilities Grants Scheme and working with Anchor Staying Put - Increase the number of vulnerable people assisted to live independently in Mid Sussex via the provision of housing related support. - Develop new homes for people with learning disabilities and additional wheelchair units	Yvonne Leddy Emma Shuttleworth Emma Shuttleworth	See Strategy milestones	Monitoring of the number of adaptations through the DFG scheme. Monitoring of delivery of homes to lifetime homes standards by RSLs. Customer satisfaction studies. Number of new wheelchair units. Monitoring of LAA targets.
Age				
Prevention of homelessness amongst young people who are especially vulnerable to homelessness and sometimes reluctant to come to the Council's offices.	(see Action 5 in Action Plan) - Develop an effective homelessness education programme with secondary schools. - Introduce an effective homelessness mediation scheme to assist both young people and parents. - Extend use of tenancies held in trust to minors to at least 3 more RSLs.	Julian Till	March 2010 March 2010 March 2010	Monitoring of homelessness applications from young people.

Provision of affordable housing, which is physically accessible to older people and promotes independent living.	(See Action Plan 15, 16 and 18) - Promote independent living through the Disabled Facilities Grants Scheme and working with Anchor Staying Put - Increase the number of vulnerable people assisted to live independently in Mid Sussex via the provision of housing related support. - Deliver the Older Persons Housing Strategy and encourage building to Lifetime Homes Standards	Yvonne Leddy Emma Shuttleworth Emma Shuttleworth	See Strategy milestones	Monitoring of the number of adaptations through the DFG scheme. Monitoring of delivery of homes to lifetime homes standards by RSLs. Customer satisfaction studies.
Income/Skill level				
Entry level home ownership is inaccessible to most newly forming households	(See Action 2 in Action Plan) Deliver more new affordable housing	Emma Shuttleworth	See Strategy milestones	Number of new affordable homes provided. Updated Housing Market Assessment.
Fuel Poverty suffered by those on low incomes	(See Action 12 of the Action Plan) Development of an Affordable Warmth Strategy Promote take up of Warm Front grants and top ups for vulnerable households- achieve 5% per annum increase in Warm Front installations.	Celia Austin Yvonne Leddy	October 09 Annual targets	Monitoring of the number accessing the scheme and those in Fuel Poverty through NI187 performance indicator.
Residential Location				
Need for affordable housing in rural areas.	(See Action 2 in Action Plan) - Include Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Site policy in Core strategy. - Annual target to deliver 20 rural affordable homes. - Complete further parish housing needs surveys (3 this year).	Emma Shuttleworth/ Claire Tester	January 2010 March 2010 March 2010	Information form Housing Needs assessments. Monitoring of number of affordable homes delivered in rural areas.

Appendix 2 - Glossary of terms used

Action in Rural Sussex

A charitable organisation whose role is to identify problems and to respond to the needs of rural communities - providing practical help and helping villages in Sussex remain vibrant living and working places.

Affordable housing

Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should:

- Meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.
- Include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Allocation Scheme

Mid Sussex District Council and Downland Housing Association have a joint housing allocation scheme, which sets out how applicants are selected to be allocated affordable housing.

Better Mid Sussex Project

This is a partnership project between the Council and Thornfield Properties to revitalise the three main town centres in the District, making best use of land for both commercial and residential development. It will create new opportunities to provide affordable housing.

Choice-Based lettings (CBL)

A government initiative which replaces the traditional way of allocating social housing to applicants passively waiting on a list with a scheme whereby people can 'bid for' (express an interest in) specific vacant properties that are widely advertised. The successful 'bidder' is the one who is considered to be in the highest housing need according to the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.

Common Housing Register

This is a partnership between Mid Sussex District Council and most of the housing associations that provide housing in the district. Applicants need to complete only one application form, which enables them to be considered for all housing owned by members of the partnership.

Communities and Local Government (CLG)

This is the main Government office with responsibility for housing and planning. It also contains a Homelessness Directorate and within this, the Bed and Breakfast Unit, both of which provide guidance and funding on tackling homelessness and the use of bed and breakfast.

Commuted Sums

A sum of money paid by a developer in lieu of on-site provision of affordable housing to enable affordable housing to be provided elsewhere in the District.

Core Strategy

See Local Development Framework (LDF)

Decent Homes Standard

A requirement set by the Government which sets out a minimum standard for housing based on 4 criteria:

- The property is fit for habitation.
- The property is free from disrepair.
- The property provides a minimum standard of thermal comfort.
- The property has reasonably modern fixtures and fittings.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)

A mandatory grant which is available for a range of works needed to help a disabled person to live independently in their home.

Floating support

Practical support which is not linked to a specific address or housing scheme, provided to those in need by a support worker who visits the client in their own home.

Homebuy

Open Market Homebuy is an equity loan scheme which assists someone in housing need to buy a property on the open market by providing a loan of between 15% and 50% of the value of the property. When the property is later sold, the same % of the value at the point of sale is returned to the housing association or other provider which made the loan and can be used to assist other households in housing need.

New Build Homebuy are homes in a newly built development where someone in housing need purchases a share of the property and pays an affordable rent on the remaining share owned by a housing association.

Homes and Communities Agency

A Government agency that funds the development of new affordable homes. It replaced the Housing Corporation on 1 December 2008. See also Tenant Services Authority.

Household accepted as homeless

Applicants accepted by the Council as being eligible, in priority need and unintentionally homeless. Under the legislation, where an authority has accepted a person as homeless it has a legal duty to secure temporary accommodation for the applicant and their household (including everyone who might reasonably be expected to live with the applicant) until long term accommodation is found.

Intermediate Affordable Housing

This can include homes available at intermediate rent i.e. above target affordable rents but below open market levels and also various forms of shared ownership.

Local Area Agreement

Agreement between local and central government, which rewards councils with extra funding in return for achieving set objectives.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

The LDF is the collection of development documents, which includes planning policies and land allocation for the District. It includes the current Local Plan, which is gradually being replaced by new local development documents. The Core Strategy is a key part of the LDF, providing the framework and context for all subsequent local development documents and their policies.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL)

A not-for-profit organisation (usually a housing association) that is registered with and regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency and Tenant Services Authority. They are run by a voluntary Board of management and employ professional housing officers to manage their housing stock.

Section 106 (S106) Agreement

Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, allows for legally binding agreements between landowners/developers and local authorities, e.g. for affordable housing or other required infrastructure to be provided through the development of a site.

Shared Ownership

A form of low cost home ownership in which a household buys a portion of the property (usually between 25% and 75%) and pays rent to a housing association on the remainder. Most shared owners have the option to purchase further shares of the property at a later date.

Shelter

A housing and homelessness charity that aims to tackle the root causes of bad housing by campaigning for new laws, policies, and solutions. It also provides specialist advice to the public on housing matters and specialises in policy, research, publications and training.

Supported housing

Specialist forms of housing that can offer help and assistance to the residents - e.g. sheltered housing for the elderly.

Supporting People

A Government sponsored programme for bringing together the funding and rationalising in a strategic way all housing related support services. It is managed on a countywide basis through partnership arrangements between West Sussex County Council and all of the district and borough housing authorities in the county, health services and probation.

Tenant Services Authority

This took over the role of regulating housing associations from the Housing Corporation on 1 December 2008. It also aims to champion tenants' needs and aspirations from housing.

The West Sussex Signpost Service

A new housing support and homelessness prevention service provided by Southdown Housing Association and funded through Supporting People since 2007. The service focuses on working with vulnerable customers, providing practical support to prevent homelessness and offers a simple process for accessing floating support.

Appendix 3 - Consultation on the Housing Strategy

We would like to thank those who assisted in the development of this strategy by responding to our consultation. There were two main parts to the consultation, the consultation day used to inform the development of the draft Strategy and the circulation of the draft to stakeholders for comment. Details of both are included in this appendix.

Report of Mid Sussex District Council Housing Strategy Consultation day held on 14 July 2008

Creating Sustainable Communities in Mid Sussex

This was particularly important in the development of the strategy. The purpose of the day was to gain the views of our partners on the development of a new Housing Strategy and to enable the development of a strategy that reflects a variety of perspectives. It was attended by 50 delegates from a wide range of stakeholders.

The Council's draft set of priorities were presented to the conference as follows:

1. Increase the supply of affordable housing
2. Prevent homelessness
3. Improve the quality and sustainability of housing
4. Promote independence and inclusion
5. Efficient and customer focused housing services.

There was consensus that these priorities covered the right issues for Mid Sussex. Participation was enabled through workshops around four themes, relevant to the development of the new strategy.

1. Shaping the Housing Market
2. Saving the Planet
3. Creating Sustainable Communities
4. Meeting a range of needs

The main points coming out of the workshop are summarised below, together with a comment on each suggestion and an indication of how the issue is being addressed in the Housing Strategy.

Workshop 1 Shaping the Housing Market

Key suggestions / ideas from workshops	Our comments on suggestion and references in the strategy
1. Think long term. Be creative. Look for opportunities to provide good quality long term affordable housing for people, including private sector stock bought by RSLs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our RSL development partners are being offered opportunities to consider purchasing from developers. We are writing to developers of small schemes with planning permissions for them to consider possible social housing take up and where appropriate we are supporting such purchases financially.
2. Preventing homelessness will be important during the credit crunch- need early advice, debt counselling and Court Desk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Court Desk advocacy service already being implemented. See Objective 2 Preventing Homelessness section of the strategy.
3. Shortage of properties exists for larger families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Housing Market Assessment suggests that new affordable housing should be 35% 3 bedroom and 10% 4+ bedroom. This will be taken into account in consideration of new developments.
4. Issues of the number of flats in the District and the meeting of people's needs and aspirations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Strategic Housing Market Assessment points to the need for a reasonable number of at least 2 bedroom flats and the provision of flats through town centre redevelopment schemes. We will generally seek to obtain a mix of affordable housing on S106 sites, which reflects the private mix, as long as this meets the known need.
5. Even small housing developments in rural areas can assist with the sustainability of rural communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy sets a target of 20 rural affordable homes per year. The small scale allocations document should produce up to 155 affordable homes in rural areas. In addition windfall sites may provide additional affordable housing.

Session 2 Saving the Planet

Key suggestions / ideas from workshops	Our comments on suggestion and references in the strategy
1. Everyone needs to work together to deliver sustainable town planning- must include all stakeholders e.g. planners, energy companies, County Council and Environment Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Development Framework includes a Sustainability SPD which has been developed following extensive consultation with stakeholders. The Council has adopted a Climate Change Action Plan, which includes multi-agency working. Providing sustainable transport options is at the heart of planning for new developments. Larger developments are provided with Transport Plans.
2. Need to educate people in existing homes on energy efficiency and retrofitting, publicising the greater efficiency of homes e.g. show homes, costed savings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All properties in the District have been written to and offered an Energy Savings Trust home energy report (see Objective 3 of the Strategy). We are working with RSLs to provide advice to tenants and with retro fitting.
3. Help to people outside of Warm Front needs to be provided and advertised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Warm front top up scheme is in operation and is advertised on the Council's website. An Affordable Warmth Strategy is being developed.
4. Set example with energy efficiency of new affordable homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new affordable housing are being built to comply with level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and this requirement will be raised to level 4 from 2012.

Session 3 Creating sustainable communities

Key suggestions / ideas from workshops	Our comments on suggestion and references in the strategy
1. Flexible integration of affordable housing, taking into account the need to deliver balanced communities and meet RSL management requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is included as a requirement in the development and infrastructure SPD 2006. The Council negotiates the provision of new affordable housing on this basis with developers and our RSL partners.
2. Need for assistance with community development and encouraging residents associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are specific initiatives that we are progressing with Downland Housing Association, including the Community House at Denham Road, Burgess Hill and a new facility at Wilmington Way in Haywards Heath. We are also working with Hyde Martlet on community development at Bolnore Village, Haywards Heath (see page 39).
3. Rural communities losing services rapidly such as post offices and schools. Particular difficulties for young people and in employing carers in rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are providing affordable housing in rural areas for local people. This assists with the sustainability of these amenities and ensures there is housing for people on low incomes, including carers. Supporting People funded floating support is provided through Signpost and Sussex Oakleaf Housing Association, who can assist young people living in rural locations.
4. More involvement of RSLs and the voluntary sector needed in tackling worklessness and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downland Housing Association have undertaken a profiling exercise with their tenants. Apprenticeship initiatives to tackle worklessness, in partnership with RSL.

Session 4 Meeting a range of needs

Key suggestions / ideas from workshops	Our comments on suggestion and references in the strategy
1. Gaps in housing support identified for young people, shortage of accommodation for ex-offenders, additional sheltered housing schemes needed to cater for the higher end of need, issue of wardens being withdrawn from supported housing schemes and replaced by floating support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategic review of all Supporting People funded services across West Sussex will pick up these issues (see objective 4 of the Strategy) We are working with other West Sussex authorities and probation services to develop a scheme to assist with access to private rented accommodation for ex-offenders As part of the review of sheltered housing in the district, we are encouraging providers to remodel and/or new build to provide more extra care for those with high needs.
2. Problem of "bed blocking" for intermediate care and independent living schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are working with WSCC and the intermediate care team at Downland Housing Association to provide an intermediate care flat at Marten House (extra care). If this proves successful, potentially RSLs might provide additional units for this purpose.
3. Insufficient site provision for gypsies and travellers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is being addressed as part of the formulation of the in LDF with sites identified. The Council is also preparing a Gypsy and Traveller Strategy (see page 40).
4. Dangers from independent living of isolation in their own homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day service provision is funded by the commissioners of services for older people, mental health and PLD, which aims to avoid isolation problems.
5. Need to address underoccupation by making it attractive for people to move.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are working with RSLs to develop under-occupation schemes (see pages 25-26).

Responses Received from Consultation on the Draft Strategy

The draft strategy was also sent to a wide range of stakeholders for comment and made available on the Council's website. The main issues arising from these comments and the responses are set out below.

Main issues arising from the consultation	Our response to the comments received
Choice Based Letting- future scoring of applicants for housing need should include a significant emphasis on being currently locally based and having demonstrable local connections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy has been revised to make reference to the review of the allocation scheme. This will continue to give a priority for those with a local connection. The revised scheme will be the subject of extensive consultation, which will include Town and Parish Councils. The revised allocations scheme will be considered by the Better Lives Advisory Group and agreed by Council. The Allocations Scheme already gives priority to first lettings of new developments to applicants with a local connection to the parish or town where the development is located.
There is a need to reduce the requirement for more new housing and infrastructure by making the best use of existing stock through tackling under occupation and empty homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With a view to making the best use of existing stock, we are working on a new initiative called "Does your home fit you?" The objective is to encourage underoccupiers to move to smaller units in order to both free up family sized housing for overcrowded households and house older people in smaller accessible units which are easier and cheaper to occupy. We also have an Empty Homes Strategy and undertake a range of measures to encourage property owners to bring their properties back into use.
Preventing Homelessness- the strategy should take more account of effects of the recession on homelessness, especially measures of private sector tenancy breakdown and mortgage arrears.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strategy has been updated to include the end of year homelessness figures for 2008/09, which show a further decrease in the numbers accepted as homeless. The strategy acknowledges the need to plan to counter the impact of the recession and weakening housing market. It includes a breakdown of the reasons for homelessness, which includes mortgage and rent arrears. It also includes information about our initiatives in this area, including the Court Desk to assist those in danger of having their homes repossessed. We are also linking to recently announced government schemes including Homeowners Mortgage Support, the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and Recession Impact Funding
Standards of housing must be specific and deliver higher levels of sustainability, including targets for water efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Homes and Communities Agency currently requires all new affordable housing to meet level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. We are encouraging our development partners to strive to achieve higher levels on appropriate developments. Core emerging Sustainability Policy 32, recognises the challenge of water supply for the District.
Recommendation that the Council increases its affordable housing requirement from 30% to 40% on sites of 15 and above, and have a requirement of 20% affordable housing on sites of 5-14 homes. Comments included concerns about developers avoiding the thresholds by splitting sites or avoiding providing affordable housing or other infrastructure due to viability issues, and a view that all sites of whatever size should contribute to affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's Better Lives Advisory Group endorsed 20% on smaller sites on the basis of advice from GVA Grimley regarding viability issues. Our Development and Infrastructure adopted SDP says that we will resist proposals for the sub division of sites where there is a clear intention to avoid the threshold. The Council is considering its response to financial viability challenges. In the interim, we are testing any challenges to financial viability using the independent advice of the District Valuer.

Appendix 4 - Mid Sussex District Council Contacts

Council Offices, Oaklands, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1SS

www.midsussex.gov.uk

Subject	Name	Designation	Telephone	e-mail
Homelessness, Housing Advice, Housing Allocation Policy	Julian Till	Housing Needs Manager	01444 477232	JulianT@midsussex.gov.uk
Housing Policy	Neal Barton	Housing Policy & Performance Officer	01444 477588	NealB@midsussex.gov.uk
Affordable Housing Development and Supported Housing	Emma Shuttleworth	Housing Enabling Manager	01444 477431	EmmaS@midsussex.gov.uk
Affordable Housing Development and Empty Homes Campaign	Carol Tomkins	Housing Development Officer	01444 477309	CarolT@midsussex.gov.uk
Sustainable Community Strategy	Jo Harper	Business Unit Leader, Member Support and Partnerships	01444 477360	JoeH@midsussex.gov.uk
Community Safety	Nicolette Russell	Community Safety Officer	01444 4777489	NicoletteR@midsussex.gov.uk
Local Development Framework	Ed Sheath	Planning Manager	01444 477391	planningpolicy@midsussex.gov.uk
Disabled facilities Grants and Housing Standards	Yvonne Leddy	Environmental Health Manager	01444 477300	YvonneL@midsussex.gov.uk
Sustainability and Affordable Warmth	Celia Austin	Sustainability Officer	01444 477370	CeliaA@midsussex.gov.uk