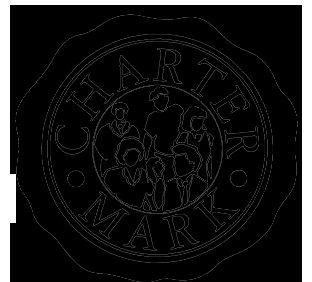
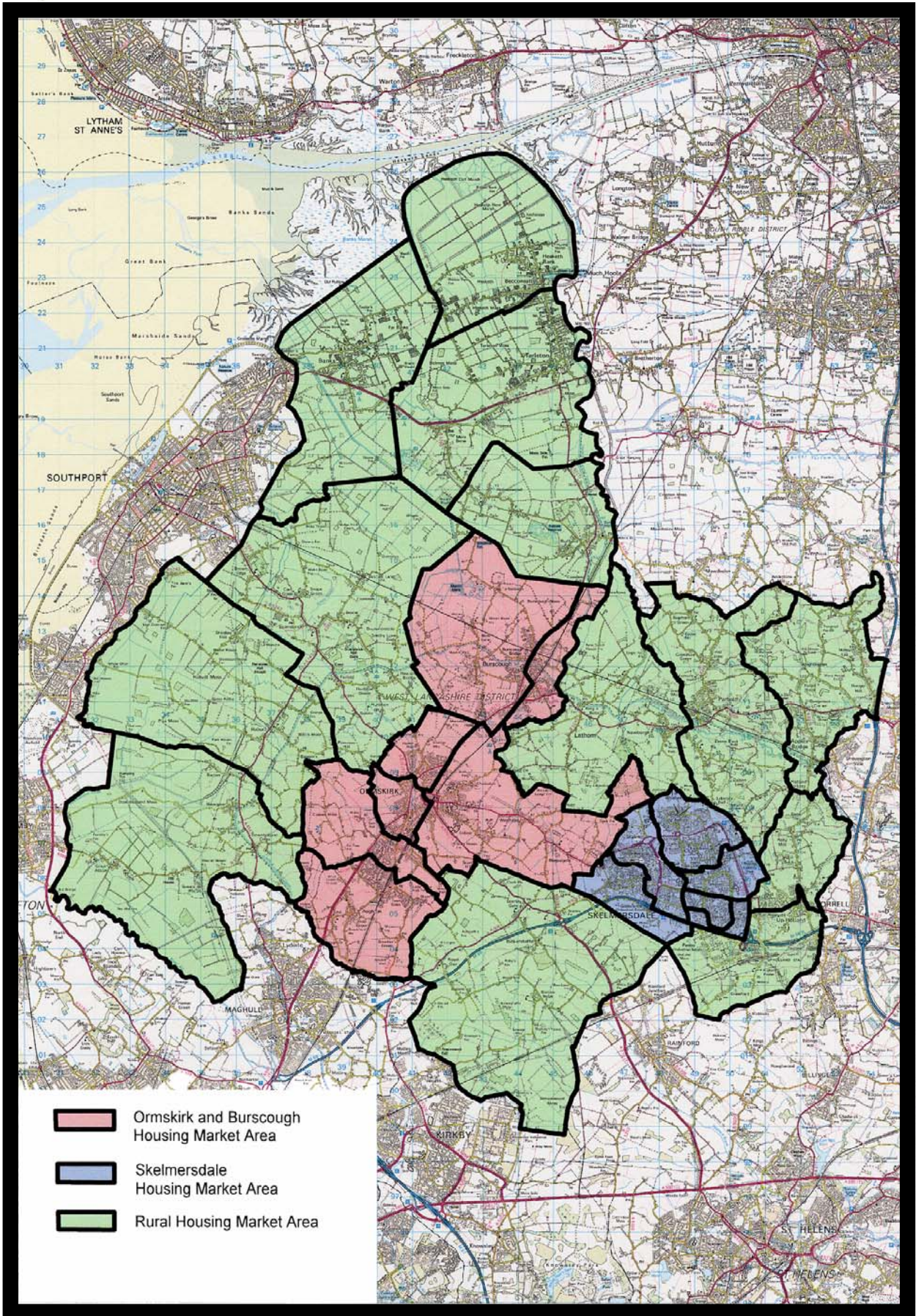




Housing Strategy Statement for West Lancashire 2004 - 2009





Our Housing Market Areas

**Housing Strategy
2004 – 2009**

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Preface

This strategy is a completely new document that sets the direction for our strategic housing services during the period 2004 – 2009. It identifies our key areas of challenge across all housing sectors within West Lancashire.

To meet these challenges, the document maps out the work required to deliver improvement across all forms of tenure and also for the remodelling of Skelmersdale New Town. It also reflects our desire to maximise the level and range of affordable housing across the District.

The indicative resources required to meet these needs will be subject to further consideration in relation to Housing Stock Options and in the context of our broader corporate priorities.

The delivery of this strategy will require improved monitoring arrangements and closer interlinking with the Community Strategy and other key partner strategies.

The Local Strategic Partnership, along with the Council, will monitor progress on the Action Plan, included as part of the strategy. This will become a document that we will continually update and refer to as part of our policy development. It will be the basis for our decisions and is an essential cornerstone in how we meet the housing needs of our District.

The strategy has been assessed by Government Office North West as meeting the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's '**Fit-for-Purpose**' criteria and represents a significant improvement on previous strategy documents.

I should like to thank all our officers and partners for their valuable contributions in compiling this vital document. It will make a major contribution to achieving the Council's objective of making all parts of the District areas in which people will be happy to live.



Councillor Robert Hodge
Portfolio Holder for Housing



Bob Livermore
Executive Manager Housing Services

Housing Strategy for West Lancashire – An Executive Summary

West Lancashire District Councils' Housing Strategy sets out the key housing issues in the area, which we aim to address over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009. Housing market conditions and housing needs will change over time, but it is important to establish direction and to set out strategies and targets for improving housing circumstances in the short to medium term.

We have based our strategy and action plan on analysis of our housing market and housing needs. Equally importantly, we have consulted widely with people in housing need and other stakeholders. This consultation process has influenced the priorities we have established, and the options for addressing these priorities.

Analysis of Needs – Housing Sector Issues

The profile of West Lancashire as a whole is one of a District with high demand for housing in the private and public sector, with house prices more than 30% higher than Lancashire's average, but this picture hides two opposite markets operating in three distinct areas.

- Skelmersdale, a New Town, to the south east of the District;
- The market and college town of Ormskirk in central south;
- Rural areas mainly concentrated to the north and north west of the District, with some pockets surrounding Skelmersdale.

These housing markets present us with a challenge, particularly because housing issues within each area range from extreme low to high demand for accommodation (CURS¹ 2003).

The North West "Balancing Housing Markets" study recorded that some areas in West Lancashire...

'form the main concentrations of high house prices and affordability problems in Lancashire... the rural villages in this district and the market town of Ormskirk have a shortfall of affordable homes to purchase or rent.' The report also concluded that *'there are also serious problems of deprivation and low demand in the former new town of Skelmersdale'*.

We are also aware that the proportion of older people in West Lancashire's population is increasing, with younger age groups decreasing. These younger age groups traditionally create new households. Despite the increase in the local ageing population the authority has seen a decline in the demand for its traditional sheltered schemes.

Added to these factors is the fact that our recent Housing Needs Update 2003 indicates an annual affordable housing shortfall of 496 units (homes) a year. This level of demand exceeds the number of units likely to be able to be delivered, resulting in growing levels of unmet need each year

Our Key Challenges and Priorities.

Within the context of the above and through consultation we have identified the key challenges we face in seeking to improve the housing circumstances in West Lancashire. The following text provides a summary of these challenges. It is important to note that **all** the challenges identified will receive attention over the five-year period; but it is equally important to identify which are seen as the **most** important. In addition the deliverability of our priorities has to be considered and this task involves the critical exploration of resource requirements and the identification of any funding gaps, which are likely to have a negative impact in being able to successfully deliver solutions to the challenges that lay ahead.

¹ Centre of Urban & Regional Studies, University of Birmingham

Summary of Priorities
Balancing West Lancashire's Housing Market, particularly the remodelling of Skelmersdale
Improving the supply and access to affordable housing across the district.
Achieving Decent Home Standard by 2010
Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people
Improving the standard of the private sector housing

Along with our partners, we have identified two issues as being the most important to address – balancing our housing market, in particular the remodelling of Skelmersdale; and improving the supply and access to affordable housing across the district.

Priority Challenge - *Balancing our housing market, in particular the remodelling of Skelmersdale*

The new town of Skelmersdale was built in the 1960's, and was the first new town in the North West. Skelmersdale faces a number of challenges in terms of its housing market, physical design and environment, and community cohesion:

- Some areas of low demand, in both social housing and owner occupied stock, associated with poor design and/or neighbourhood reputation
- High housing densities and poor estate layout, leading to feelings of insecurity
- Relatively low house prices, and a lack of variety in housing types, leading to more affluent households moving out of the area
- Some evidence of properties being bought up by absentee private landlords, with unstable private tenancies undermining the sustainability of some neighbourhoods.
- Relatively high concentrations of deprivation

Priority Challenge - *Increasing the supply of affordable housing*

The latest Housing Market Review analysis of access to the housing market indicates that most areas in the district apart from Skelmersdale have high housing prices for the region; and that increasing numbers of households face difficulties in securing housing in the market. This is particularly the case for those living in villages and working in the agricultural or other rural economic sectors. We are revising our planning policies to ensure that an increasing proportion of new development is affordable; and that the social rental element of this affordable housing is increased. We will work in partnership with housing associations to secure funding from the Housing Corporation for additional social housing, recognizing that most of the district is a high demand area.

Further Challenges

Two further issues have been assigned the next level of priority in the Housing Strategy – Achieving the decent home standard for stock owned and managed by West Lancashire DC and assisting vulnerable households.

The Government has established a target for all social housing to achieve a defined decency standard by 2010. There are 7629 (including 39 leased properties) council owned properties in West Lancashire. In consultation with tenants, the Council has set a target for meeting a higher standard for the condition of its housing stock, and the environment. The Council has been considering options for the future of its housing stock since mid-2002, given the assessment that there are insufficient resources available to meet the higher standards agreed with tenants; maintain current levels of service; and undertake the considerable remodelling required in Skelmersdale. At this stage, two options are being considered which would bring in additional resources; transfer to a housing association and establishing an Arms Length Management Organisation. Within the five years of this strategy, the preferred option will be chosen, and a clear investment and stock remodelling approach will be adopted, towards achieving the desired stock condition and environment standards by 2010.

This Strategy links with the Homelessness Strategy published in July 2003, and with the development of the Lancashire Supporting People Strategy, to be published in early 2004. It is recognized that more work is needed to identify gaps in

the provision of housing linked to support for vulnerable households – this will be undertaken with our partners and with the Lancashire Supporting People Team. We are aware that West Lancashire has low levels of provision for a number of groups needing supported housing, and we will be working with partners and neighbouring authorities to meet these needs. We are also undertaking a review of services for older people, which will result in a reduction in the levels of outdated forms of sheltered housing, and a broader range of housing options for older people. This work will contribute to the formulation of an Older Persons Strategy during 2004.

Our final priority area involves private sector housing. In July 2003, we adopted a private sector housing strategy, which constitutes part of this overall Housing Strategy. The aim is to not only ensure that grant resources are targeted at the most vulnerable, but that all households living in the private sector receive appropriate assistance to achieve the decent homes standard. We will also be working intensively to improve conditions in the private rented sector, and to encourage landlords to let to high standards and contribute to community cohesion through their housing management practices. Additionally we will monitor the achievement of the Decent Home Standard for the Housing Association stock in the District

Resources

The above challenges require a significant amount of inward investment and there are likely to be competing financial “stresses” in trying to achieve them. It is clear that the authority is not in a position to finance all its challenges from existing resources, although, the authority is mindful that any capital receipt from any future stock transfer could help ‘kick-start’ the renewal process in Skelmersdale. This is only one potential funding source that could contribute to meeting all our challenges.

To that end we are strongly committed to working in partnership to pursue all funding opportunities, which will allow this authority to deliver real and sustainable solutions, which meet its housing challenges.

Recent Performance – Progress made in 2002/2003

Some of the key areas of progress made over the last year are set out below:

- ✓ A Best Value Review of our repair service has been conducted and progress is being made on delivering the Improvement Action Plan, which has already seen improvements made in a number of areas.
- ✓ Progress has been made on the centralisation of housing management services, which have been forced on us by reduced income to the Housing Revenue Account. The closure of the Tanhouse Office has been achieved this year.
- ✓ We have supported the County Council's Supporting People Shadow Strategy, which has been approved by the Government Office, and an Action Plan is in place to make further improvements.
- ✓ A review of homelessness in the District has been completed working with external partners in a newly established Homelessness and Housing Advice Forum. The review has been highlighted as good practice by Shelter.
- ✓ The Council Housing Allocation Scheme was completely revised to give applicants who seek Council accommodation greater choice and to provide increased opportunity for people to be housed in their local communities within the District.
- ✓ The Private Sector Housing Strategy and Housing Renewal Assistance Policy have been completely revised in line with Government guidance and legislative changes and was introduced in July 2003.
- ✓ We have launched the review of our Sheltered Housing Schemes which will rationalise the number of schemes provided for the elderly and will extend the options for care that are received in such facilities.
- ✓ An agreement has been entered into with London authorities (LAWN) to work with them to arrange for residents from London to be re-housed locally in the area. Following a marketing exercise with LAWN, a number of families have so far agreed to relocate to the area.

Finally, the Council recognises that the creation of a ‘fit for purpose’ strategy is a key objective in producing a strategy that is meaningful and achievable.

To support the achievement of this objective the Council has provided resources to utilise a firm of external consultants (Housing Quality Network) to ensure that this strategy is ‘fit for purpose’.

Housing Strategy for West Lancashire 2004 – 2009

Introduction

West Lancashire is the southern most District of the County of Lancashire bordering the conurbations of Greater Manchester and Merseyside. The population of the District in 1991 was 107,978. This rose slightly to 108,377 by 2001. Approximately one third of the population lives in Skelmersdale (2001 population 34,550) but the District also contains the towns of Ormskirk/Aughton (2001 population 26,785) and Burscough (2001 population 8,668) as well as many villages each with distinctive characters. The District covers an area of 34,688 hectares containing a large proportion of the best and most versatile agricultural land. It is bordered by the Ribble Estuary to the north and the Borough of Sefton to the west. The Metropolitan Boroughs of Knowsley and St. Helens lie to the south with Wigan, Chorley and South Ribble to the east.

Key Statistics – Census 2001 Office of National Statistics

- West Lancashire has one of the lowest proportions of cohabiting couple households in the country (of 376 local authorities in England & Wales, it is ranked 355th).
- The District is ranked 54th in respect of lone parent households with non-dependent children only, whilst for those with dependent children, it is ranked 79th.
- West Lancashire has a fairly high ranking of 53rd in terms of the proportion of residents born in the UK.
- The District has one of the highest proportions (83.8%- ranked 16th) of people stating their religion as Christian whereas the opposite is the case in respect of those indicating they have no religion (ranked 363rd).
- West Lancashire has an higher than average proportion of its residents who are unpaid carers and is ranked 39th in this respect, and is also placed 60th out of all authorities in terms of people providing unpaid care of 50 or more hours a week.
- West Lancashire has a very high proportion (71.0% compared with 61.5% nationally) and ranking (63rd) of people aged 16-74 who travel to work by car. Conversely, the District has a relatively low proportion of working residents who use public transport to get to work (5.1% compared with 14.5% nationally).
- The average household size in the District (2.45) is much higher than the average for England & Wales (2.36) and is ranked the 41st highest in this respect.

National and Regional Housing Strategy Context

National Housing Context

West Lancashire's Housing Strategy has developed against a backdrop of national, regional and local policy development.

This chapter records those policies and strategies that have influenced West Lancashire's strategy and objectives.

The Government's national action plan '**Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future**' sets out the future direction at the national level to build "successful, thriving and inclusive communities in all regions". These are shown below. West Lancashire's Housing Strategy shares the values of this plan and will achieve the objectives, aiming for decent affordable homes, protecting and improving the living environment and supporting the communities of the District.

This Strategy has been developed in accordance with recent national housing policy guidance, legislative reform and other crosscutting policy initiatives. How these link to our strategy and contribute to achieving our objectives are shown in detail on page 16.

The National Sustainable Communities Plan Priorities

Decent homes decent places	Low demand abandonment
A step-change in housing supply	Land, countryside and rural communities
Sustainable growth	Reforming for delivery

The Regional Housing Context

The North West Region is made up of a number of local authorities that are responsible for, in consultation with other partners, managing and balancing the changing housing market. The Region is comprised of diverse communities and cultures with specific housing and support needs.

The diverse challenges to the Region are met through partnerships that share expertise, knowledge, resources and innovative solutions.

Through partnering arrangements the Council has made links with a number of regional and sub-regional strategies. For example,

- ✓ The Lancashire West Housing Group established a Cross-boundary Homelessness Officer Group to share good practice and develop cross-boundary initiatives.
- ✓ The West Lancashire Strategy for Health Services identifies continuing work on the National Service Framework for Older People's Services. The Council has agreed to develop its' Older Person's Strategy through this multi-disciplinary group, with a link to a newly created Commission for Older People established by the Council.
- ✓ A Lancashire wide approach was adopted in developing the Shadow Supporting People Strategy 2003. This identified needs within our district that created a requirement to establish the Commission (identified above) and to endorse schemes that are included within the Homelessness Strategy 2003 –2006.
- ✓ At the sub-regional level, the Council has contributed to the development of the South Lancashire Tackling Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and has identified key targets for delivering improvement through the Lancashire Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board, South Lancashire Delivery Plan 2003 – 2004.

The North West Regional Housing Strategy

The ODPM² '**Sustainable Communities in the North West: Building for the Future**' paper identified three key challenges to be addressed regionally:

- a mismatch between supply and demand with some areas suffering from low demand and housing market failure
- areas where demand is pricing housing out of the reach of local people
- housing stock suffering from poor condition and obsolescence

These key challenges have been incorporated within the four regional priorities within the North West Regional Housing Strategy, these are:

Regional Priority

- 1: Urban renaissance and dealing with changing demand
- 2: Providing affordable homes to maintain balanced communities
- 3: Delivering decent homes in thriving neighbourhoods
- 4: Meeting the region's needs for specialist and supported housing

² Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

This Council's strategic objectives have embraced these key regional priorities in determining the future housing priorities for 2004 – 2009. The linkage between these housing objectives are shown on page 16

Regional Planning Guidance

The Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13) aims to promote sustainable patterns of development and physical change.

The RPG focuses new development and urban renewal in the North West Metropolitan Area stretching from Merseyside to Greater Manchester, including Skelmersdale but excluding the rest of West Lancashire.

One of the key objectives is to sustain and revive the Region's rural communities and the rural economy although green belt policies will continue to apply. The Draft Joint Lancashire Structure Plan takes the RPG strategy on board and severely limits the amount of future house building in West Lancashire but recognises the special circumstances of Skelmersdale by allowing development on Greenfield sites.

Regional Economic Strategy (2003)

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) focuses upon five strategic objectives:

- Business development
- Regeneration
- Skills & Employment
- Infrastructure
- Image

The objective that is critical for this strategy is to link 'Regeneration', which specifically identifies North West Regional Development Agency (NWRDA) support in relation to West Lancashire. This will be achieved through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in relation to the work on town centre regeneration of Skelmersdale. The work currently being undertaken to balance the housing stock within Skelmersdale will further complement this work.

Additionally, the RES identifies improvements within the rural areas. In achieving sustainable and balanced rural communities this strategy has identified a need for the creation of additional affordable housing within the rural areas.

The Local Housing Context

West Lancashire's Community Strategy (2003 – 2006)

The Community Strategy (published in March 2003) was produced by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which comprises of more than 60 representatives from public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The Council was a key partner in the production of this strategy. The LSP is structured around eight key themes. The theme of 'Community Regeneration and Housing' is one of these themes.

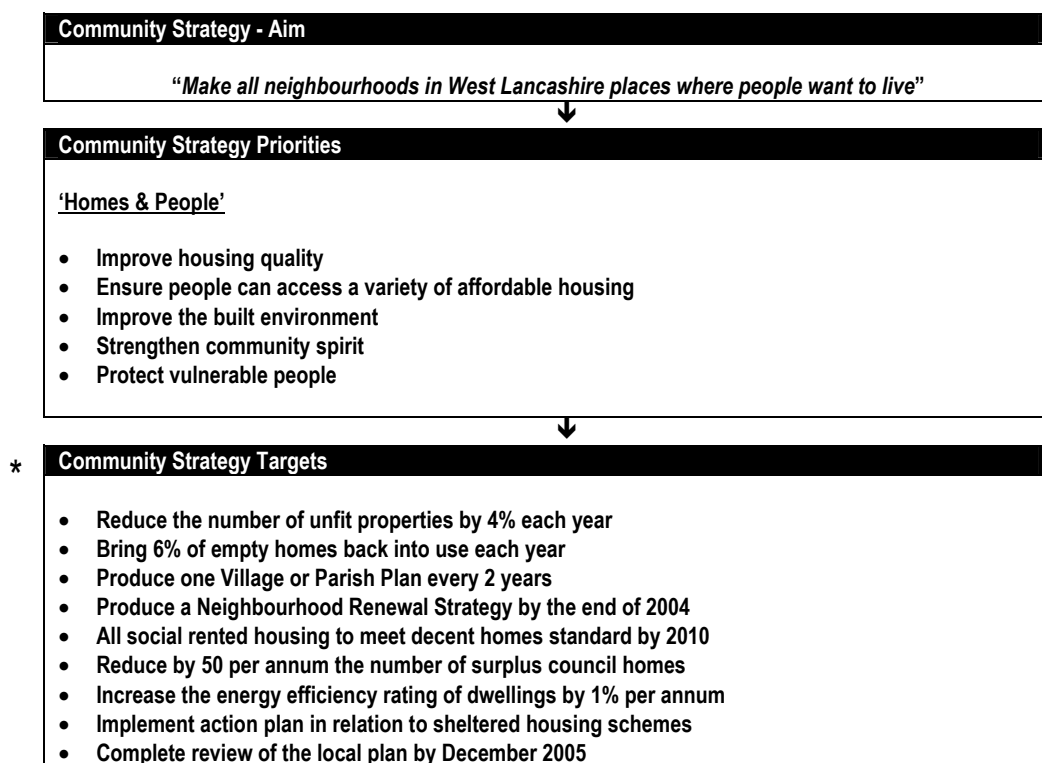
A thematic group was established to identify the broad range of needs across the district and co-ordinate input into the various strategies and documents in relation to housing and regeneration.

To reflect the importance of these issues the group is chaired by the Council's Deputy Chief Executive. Each chair reports to an LSP executive group who are responsible for implementing the Community Strategy. There is a strong input from a housing perspective, into both the Community Strategy and the development of this Housing Strategy, as the Executive Manager for Housing Services attends the thematic group.

Another key thematic group is the Health and Social Care Board, which is responsible for the Council's contribution to the Health Improvement & Modernisation Plan (HIMP). The Council's Strategic Housing Manager is a member of this group and co-ordinates and supports activity to meet a broad range of health related targets.

The Community Strategy is not simply a document. It cannot be delivered in isolation and therefore requires the joint working of both the public and private sector in an effort to share funding resources and share implementation solutions. It is driven by a shared vision of how we want West Lancashire to develop in the future. It is clearly linked to the Council's principle corporate objectives which under-pin all services, including both the strategic and landlord housing functions.

The Strategy is already beginning to deliver improvements in the quality of life locally. Early successes include the production of a shared Mental Health Strategy for the District and the establishment of a Multi Agency Problem Solving (MAPS) Strategic Team to co-ordinate solutions to anti-social behaviour, which is housed in a state-of-the-art room at Ormskirk Police Station. The diagram below outlines the Community Strategy's ambitions in relation to housing.



*These targets are due to be revised 2003 –2004. Proposed changes to two of the targets recorded above are:- reduce the number of unfit properties by 3.5% each year and bring 2.5% of empty homes back into use each year

The Council's Corporate Context

In November 2002 the Council approved a new corporate priority framework for 2003 - 2004. This recent review of Corporate Priorities has resulted in the following vision and priorities shown below. The Council's Corporate Vision is

"Putting Customer Services First – Building a Community Second to None"

The Council has decided to focus on the seven corporate objectives listed below, over the next three years, with priority being given to the first four listed priorities:

- Combating crime and the fear of crime
- Protecting and Improving the environment
- Working to create good quality jobs for local people
- Improving access to and satisfaction with our services

- Providing opportunities for leisure and culture
- Improving housing and ensuring that there is affordable housing available for local people
- Improving the health of local communities

In relation to improving our housing stock, the following are some brief examples of how we are moving this issue forward:

- ✓ We have consulted widely with tenants, Councillors and staff in relation to capital and revenue improvement programmes. These improvement works consist of substantial tenant aspirational work.
- ✓ We have adopted a Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy to focus improvements in our private sector stock.
- ✓ Commissioned an independent appraisal, undertaken by Newbury King to consider the options available for the future of Council Housing in the District

Cross-Cutting Corporate Themes

We have identified below some of the key corporate strategies that are important to the construction of our housing strategy

Key Corporate Documents informing the strategy³

- Corporate Priority Action Plan 2003/4
- Community Safety Strategy 2002-5
- Community Strategy 2003-6
- Supporting People Shadow Strategy 2003
- Community Engagement Strategy 2001
- Racial Equality Scheme 2003 – 2006
- Managing Diversity Strategy 2003
- Best Value Performance Plan 2003-2004
- Capital Strategy (Asset Management Plan)
- Capital Investment Plan 2003-2012

³ Some of these documents can be accessed via the Council's website, others direct from the Council

West Lancashire Racial Equality Scheme

This Council has recently adopted a corporate Racial Equality Scheme to further its racial equality policy objectives in both employment and service delivery. The Scheme aims to ensure the Council has an effective and properly applied and monitored Equal Opportunities Policy. Staff awareness and training are key elements within the Scheme. The Council recognises that all services procured or provided by the Council should be done so in a way that is fair and equitable and does not discriminate. The Racial Equality Scheme Action Plan has a time frame of three years until 2006.

The Council has also recently adopted a framework "BME Housing Policy" to incorporate the corporate requirements and to focus on housing specific issues, such as introducing computerised ethnicity data collection and analysis and improved accessibility services including translation. Further information is available from Clive Walsh, Human Resource Manager, 01695 58 5019.

Managing Diversity Strategy

The Council has adopted a Diversity Strategy 2003 to meet the Equality Standard at level 1. To achieve this, an Action Plan has been agreed and has identified a range of work to achieve this standard. Further information is available from Clive Walsh, Human Resource Manager, 01695 58 5019.

Crime & Disorder Strategy

Although West Lancashire is generally regarded as an affluent District, it must be recognised that there are neighbourhood areas suffering from social exclusion and deprivation. In several wards there is a considerable disparity between the quality of life for local people, with genuinely prosperous neighbourhoods next to ones with real economic deprivation.

As the principal partner for the West Lancashire Crime and Disorder Partnership, we are committed to developing our Multi-Agency Problem Solving (MAPS) approach with all Community Safety Partners and particularly the local Drug and Alcohol Action Team to reduce crime, the fear of crime and tackle drug and substance misuse across the District. Further information is available from Brian Lussey, Strategy & Project Development Manager 01695 58 5003.

Anti-Social Behaviour Unit

Findings from the Community Safety Audit reveal an increasing trend of anti-social behaviour and the communities increasing lack of tolerance towards sub-criminal activities. Tackling anti-social behaviour and its impact on the community's quality of life is a key priority for the Partnership and our success to date forms the basis for our continued efforts in meeting the community's aspirations. The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit established in October 2000 plays a crucial role in raising the quality of life and minimising the fear of crime for many of our residents and visitors. The team recently relocated to the Police Station in April 2003. as part of the Multi-Agency Problems Solving Team (MAPS).

Further information about the work, future targets and successes to date can be obtained from the Anti Social Behaviour Unit Co-ordinator. Telephone 01695 - 566356

Capital Strategy (Asset Management Plan)

The Council's Capital Strategy identifies how capital funding is to be allocated across all Council activities. It includes the Asset Management Plan. In relation to housing it outlines the level of funding support for private sector housing services. The strategy assumes that, in relation to Council Housing Stock, funding for improvement and to meet the Decent Home Standard will be met from the full utilisation of the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA).

The resources section further demonstrates the complete picture in terms of forecast funding availability. However, it is important to note that the funding requirements for the primary and secondary strategic priorities can only be met by a reconsideration of the current application of funding streams or the potential capital availability arising from the Stock Options Appraisal exercise or from other capital funding streams that could become available over the life of this strategy. Further information is available from Marc Taylor, Chief Accountant, 01695 58 5092.

E-government

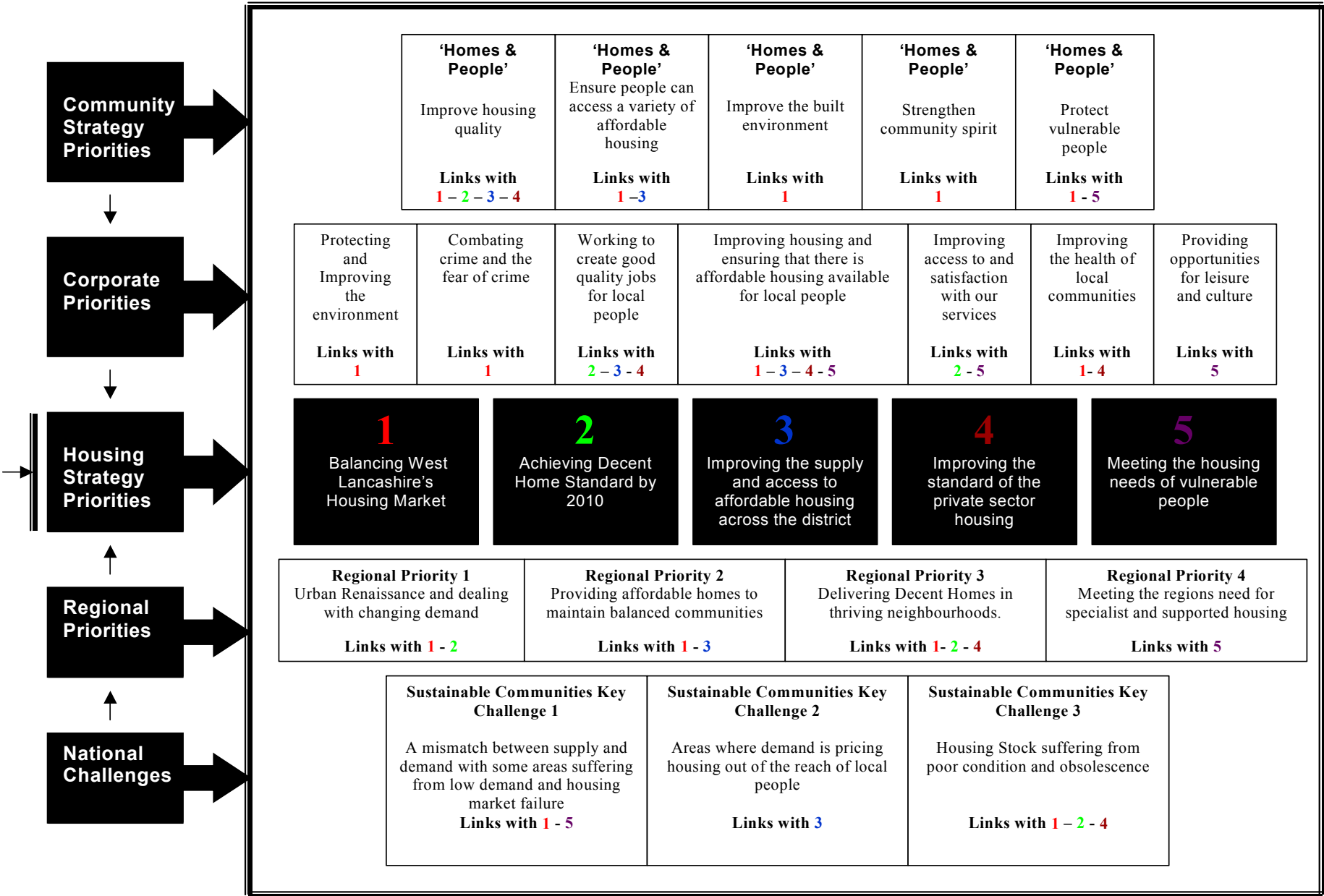
The Council fully embraces the Government's 'National Strategy for E-government'. The Housing Division is currently reviewing its website pages and the information held on corporate "information points" to ensure district-wide access to housing services, information and policies.

As part of our drive to maximise our use of IT resources we now have direct linkages to our Councils repairs contractors that include invoicing arrangements. Further information on our E-Government agenda can be obtained from Chris Isherwood, 01695 585083

Council Member Involvement

The Council regularly reviews its structures to make sure they are fit for purpose. An example of this is the recent introduction of a revised system of Overview Scrutiny committees in recognition of the need to strengthen Member involvement in review and policy development. This has involved a series of Policy and Service Development Commissions and Best Value Review Member Teams, which focus on in-depth examination of issues related to the Council's priorities. Further information is available from Member Services Manager, 01695 58 5062.

Strategic Links



Housing Strategy Priorities 2004 – 2009

This strategy has been developed and will be delivered during periods of continuing change and challenge. It has therefore been designed to be sustainable over the next five years and to ensure that the key actions are delivered.

The Strategy has taken into account the resource constraints and capacity to deliver these priorities along with the aspirations of partners.

Vision

“ Make all neighbourhoods in West Lancashire places where people want to live“

Strategic Housing Priorities

In the context of the regional objectives, based upon evidenced needs analysis of the district (Housing Market Review, HQN, 2003⁴) and through consultation with key partners and agencies, the following specific, strategic priorities have been agreed:

- Balancing West Lancashire's Housing Market, in particular the remodelling of Skelmersdale
- Improving the supply and access to affordable housing across the district
- Achieving Decent Home Standards by 2010
- Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people
- Improving the standard of private sector housing

Housing Service Objectives

To achieve the above strategic priorities, the Housing Services Division have approved the following Service Objectives, in consultation with partners and service users.

- To bring the stock up to a good condition
- Working in partnership
- To ensure that the stock meets the changing needs for affordable homes
- To secure good and improving standards of service
- To continue the provision of rented housing
- To meet specific operational targets including a balanced Housing Revenue Account

Our methods of consultation and partnership arrangements are discussed overleaf.

⁴ Copy available from Housing Needs & Strategy Section or www.westlancsdc.gov.uk

Consultation & Partnerships

Developing the Housing Strategy – The Consultation Process

West Lancashire continues to develop and refine its process of engaging with partners and stakeholders. Involvement from others is seen as a continuous process that can inform quality decision-making and shape the delivery that will achieve our priorities.

The strategic housing priorities of the Council have been selected with consideration to our consultation responses received from our stakeholders. See appendix 2 for list of organisations invited to comment.

A varied number of approaches to consultation are employed, including;

Feedback

Responses from the 2002 Housing Strategy contributed to a number of this years objectives.

- ✓ It is our intention to investigate the future of accommodation for older people in partnership with West Lancashire Primary Care Trust and Lancashire County Council Social Services, as identified by Housing 21. See appendix 3 for further examples.

Focus Groups

A corporate approach to community engagement, through the **West Lancashire Peoples' Panel**, has provided a valuable vehicle for consultation and involvement in developing this Housing Strategy. Representative of the wider community, this Panel contributed their thoughts and views on future housing priorities in 2003.

- ✓ Feedback from the Peoples' Panel established that the Council should assign a level of priority to developing housing advice services. The results of this consultation are available from our website⁵.

Stakeholders

The Council invited 120 partners from the private, public and voluntary sector to attend a **Strategy Consultation Event in June 2003**. Focussing on issues that recent housing needs analysis had identified, attendees contributed to:

- ✓ The development of actions to tackle Rural Housing & Affordability, Housing Remodelling in Skelmersdale, the Future of Council Housing and Private Sector Housing services. A report summarising the consultation findings can be found in appendix 4

Customer Aspirations

Consultation with tenants has influenced our modernisation programme.

- ✓ Through consultation it was apparent that existing tenants' aspirations for decent homes exceeded the Governments minimum decent home standard. Their aspirations have shaped new stock condition standards that now form part of the Council's modernisation works programme. Summary contained in appendix 5

Strategic Housing 'Health Check'

The development of a "fit for purpose" Housing Strategy is a key objective for the Council and it commissioned an external review of the Council's strategic housing functions conducted by Housing Quality Network. This review identified a number of improvements which have been incorporated within this document and future work programmes. A copy of this review is attached as an appendix 11

⁵ www.westlancsdc.gov.uk

Housing Strategy Priorities Questionnaire

A Housing Strategy Priorities Questionnaire was distributed to partners in June 2003 including tenants, voluntary sector organisations and public and private sector bodies. This questionnaire asked the respondent to rank six key housing priorities in order of importance and to suggest the three most important housing issues for their organisation. A summary of the results is included below. The full results from this questionnaire are contained in a report in appendix 4. This result reflects the views of only those individuals present for this event and is not necessarily fully in line with the broader range of consultation that have informed the overall strategic priorities although there is agreed consensus about our top priorities in relation the remodelling of Skelmersdale and Affordable Housing.

Housing Priority	Ranking
Housing remodelling in Skelmersdale	1
Supporting Vulnerable People	2
Affordable Housing	3
Housing Advice & Support	4
Private Sector Housing	5

Joint working across the Council, including Council members, ensures that housing priorities and delivery mechanisms are developed which also consider the Council's other objectives and maximise opportunities to achieve objectives with the most effective use of resources. Members of our **Housing Strategy Group** consist of representatives from Housing Strategy, Private Sector Housing, Group Accountant, Planning Policy, Regeneration and Property, Corporate Policy, Housing Property Services and the Housing Services Divisional Management Team that meet on a regular basis.

Partnerships

Our strategic partners come together in a range of ways through regional, sub-regional and local fora, as shown in different partnership examples throughout this document. A full list of the Council's current housing partnerships is shown in appendix 1. Recent examples of joint working including cross authority working are:

- ✓ Rural Enabler Project with South Ribble BC and Chorley BC
- ✓ Home Improvement Agency Proposal with South Ribble BC and Chorley BC
- ✓ Supporting People Strategy development with all Lancashire Local Authorities
- ✓ Domestic Violence Co-ordinator Project with West Lancashire Domestic Violence Forum and the West Lancashire Women's Refuge
- ✓ Teenage Parent Unit Project with the South Lancashire Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, the Primary Care Trust and Muir Housing Association
- ✓ House Movers Surveys in collaboration with South Ribble BC

The Council endorses fully the concept of partnership working. Housing has a key input in to a range of partnership groups such as the Local Strategic Partnership and various Health and Social Services led partnership arrangements. Additionally, our desire to encourage greater cross boundary working as shown above will maximise our ability to deliver on schemes, which are more viable from a need perspective based on a sub regional boundary. We have continued to contribute fully to developing the Lancashire wide Supporting People Strategy and are intent to deliver a Home Improvement Agency through cross boundary partnership working. Further information is available from Jonathan Mitchell, Housing Needs & Strategy Manager, 01695 58 5244.

Balancing West Lancashire's Diverse Housing Market

Understanding Our Housing Market Needs

The Council has commissioned, undertaken and collated a large amount of housing market information in recent years to further understand the housing market and housing need.

Although District wide housing need surveys (1999 and 2003) provide a picture of the need for affordable accommodation and to some extent the aspirations of our residents, we have reviewed this information in the context of the Census 2001, other demographic data, more localised housing need surveys and information on the health and social care needs of our residents. We have also undertaken stock condition surveys in the private and public sector and recognise that the type and condition of accommodation plays a large part in determining how our housing market operates

Our Housing Market Review (2003) brings all this information together (appendix 6). This section should, ideally, be read in conjunction with that review document and our recently completed Housing Needs Update 2003 (appendix 7), which indicated an annual affordable housing shortfall of 496 units (homes) a year. This level of demand exceeds the number of units likely to be able to be delivered, resulting in growing levels of unmet need each year.

Regular ongoing analysis of our Housing Market will continue to inform our planning, delivery mechanisms and future strategy development.

The West Lancashire Housing Market

West Lancashire is the most southern Local Authority in Lancashire; the Merseyside Authorities of Sefton, St. Helen's and Knowsley bound the District. Authorities to the north and east of the District (Lancashire) currently play a smaller part in the District's housing market in terms of inward migration patterns. (CURS, 2003). The CURS survey also identified various migration patterns from the Merseyside conurbation, which influence, in part, our local Housing Market.

The profile of West Lancashire as a whole is one of a District with high demand for housing in the private and public sector, with house prices more than 30% higher than Lancashire's average, but this picture hides two opposite markets operating in three distinct areas...

- Skelmersdale, a New Town, to the south east of the District;
- The market and college town of Ormskirk in central south;
- Rural areas mainly concentrated to the north and north west of the District, with some pockets surrounding Skelmersdale.

Three housing markets present us with a challenge, particularly because housing issues within each area range from extreme low to high demand for accommodation (CURS⁶ 2003).

The North West "Balancing Housing Markets" study recorded that some areas in West Lancashire...

'form the main concentrations of high house prices and affordability problems in Lancashire... the rural villages in this district and the market town of Ormskirk have a shortfall of affordable homes to purchase or rent.' The report also concluded that *'there are also serious problems of deprivation and low demand in the former new town of Skelmersdale'*.

Average house prices in Skelmersdale are more than fifty percent less than elsewhere in the District (DCA⁷ 2003). The table below shows the District variation.

Housing Market area	Access Rent Range ⁸ £	Average House Prices £	Minimum salary to purchase average house £	Proportion of West Lancashire residents within this salary bracket
Skelmersdale (New Town)	275-375	57,288	12,700	61.2%
Market Towns (Ormskirk & Burscough)	325-425	127,234	26,000	28.8%
Rural areas	375-500	135,417	34,400	10%

⁶ Centre of Urban & Regional Studies, University of Birmingham

⁷ David Couttie Associate Housing Needs Survey Update 2003

⁸ 1 Bed Flat to 3 Bed Semi-detached house

Unemployment in the district has been falling, the rate dropping by 2% over the last 5 years to 3.5%⁹. However, unemployment is still higher than Lancashire, regional and national averages. Unemployment and long-term unemployment in Skelmersdale is higher than any other urban area in Lancashire. Average earnings per week are £461.10, compared to UK average of £464.75.¹⁰ Four of West Lancashire's 26 Wards are within the top 10% most deprived wards in the UK. 3 of these Wards are in the top 5% and 1 Ward is within the top 2% of the most deprived Wards in the UK. All four Wards are located in Skelmersdale.

The proportion of older people in West Lancashire's population is increasing, with younger age groups decreasing. These younger age groups traditionally create new households. Despite the increase in its ageing population the authority has seen a decline in the demand for its traditional design sheltered schemes. This is being addressed through a Sheltered Housing Review.

In general, health is good compared to the North West as a whole, but again the situation in Skelmersdale is less satisfactory, with a much higher proportion of people affected by illness or health problems than elsewhere in the district. Car ownership in Skelmersdale is significantly lower than elsewhere, with only 47% having a car, compared to 86% overall.

The District is situated adjacent to the M58 and M6, with direct links to Greater Manchester, Merseyside and beyond. It offers the first rural area immediately outside the metropolitan areas of Sefton and Knowsley. The 2001 Census records that 63.1% of people in employment travel to work by car or van, compared to 58.4% in the North West and 55.2% in England and Wales. Some 9.7% of people work mainly at or from home, compared to 8.4% and 9.2% in the North West and England and Wales respectively.

It is clear that the transport links and internal infrastructure within West Lancashire have an important part to play in the economy and housing market. Future Home Movers surveys and analysis from the Census 2001, will help further inform our understanding of these factors.

The remaining part of this chapter has been split into three sections that will provide a picture of the housing market in each area. A copy of the authorities CPA Self Assessment on "Balancing Housing Markets" and "Decent Home Standard" is available on our website¹¹. A map showing the geographical boundaries of these is shown in the inner flyleaf.

The Market Town Area

The market town area of Ormskirk and Burscough is a popular and high demand housing area with a good range of accommodation. Home to over 12,000 households (Census, 2001), there is a range of employment opportunities including two of the largest employers, Edge Hill University College and Ormskirk Hospital. The area provides a pleasant environment to live, in close proximity to Merseyside with good transport links.

The owner-occupied and private rented market in the area are in high demand and house prices exceed those afforded by two thirds of Ormskirk and Burscough. The Council's recent Housing Needs Update (2003) identified the average house price in the market town area to be £127,234. A two-bedroom terraced house suitable for first-time homeowners costs on average £111,279. Access private rent levels are within the range of £325 - £425 per month. The average household income required to purchase is £26,000. Only 28.8% of all residents of West Lancashire have a household income greater than £26,000 per year (DCA, 2003).

The presence of a university campus in Ormskirk places the housing market under some stress. The campus has limited on-campus accommodation and most students live in the private rented sector.

⁹ Source West Lancashire's Community Strategy 2003-6

¹⁰ Source ONS new earning survey 2002 (gross weekly figure)

¹¹ www.westlancsdc.gov.uk

Managing the housing market in Ormskirk and Burscough

There has been some affordable housing development in Ormskirk and Burscough in recent years.

We have achieved the following:

- ✓ Planning permission has been granted for 111 affordable dwellings since 1996. This includes 29 RSL to rent, 74 low cost market and 8 shared ownership
- ✓ 25 affordable homes were granted planning permission in 2002/2003 in Ormskirk.
- ✓ Commission for Older people has been established to co-ordinate the overall change and development of services for older people across the District, in the context of the increase in aging population and the National Service Framework for Older people and Supporting People programme

Summary of Action Plan tasks

- To conduct a district wide Housing Needs Survey by 2005 – *this will help inform future strategy development.*
- To continue our programme of House Movers surveys - *we recognise that Ormskirk and Burscough are attractive to households who move into West Lancashire. To manage the impact this has on our communities and services, Home Movers surveys will enable us to plan more effectively and we have found it effective in the past in determining migration and aspiration patterns.*
- To provide at least 30-50% affordable housing on all future market town private development sites as recommended in the Housing Needs Survey Update (2003) - *Clearly affordable housing provision is a priority for the area.*
- Develop an Affordable Housing Protocol to be agreed and implemented in 2003/04 – *this will compliment the above priority by providing potential developers with clear guidance on the affordable housing needs and development requirements of the District Council.*
- To maximise development opportunities by working with RSL's and the North West Regional Housing Board.

The New Town

Skelmersdale was designated in 1961 and was the first new town in the North West. Skelmersdale is now the main town in the District of West Lancashire. It has a good central location, near main transport routes such as the M58 and M6 and has excellent links with the wider region. The new town area has a population of 34,550 and 13,907 households (Census 2001).

The Council's recent Housing Needs Update (2003) identified the average house price in Skelmersdale to be £57,288. Access private rent levels are within the range of £275 - £375 per month. The average household income required to purchase a two-bedroom terraced house in Skelmersdale New Town is £12,700 per year. The last decade has seen the building of new private housing estates on the outskirts of the town. These estates have proved popular and some of the houses are in the top income-purchasing band.

However, the low demand for some housing in Skelmersdale has led to a period of decline. The **DTLR Report (2002)** '**The New Towns: Their Problems & Future**' highlights some of the problems faced by new towns, including Skelmersdale. As mentioned previously, Skelmersdale New Town has four wards [Tanhouse, Digmaor, Birch Green and Moorside] which are amongst the top 20 deprived in Britain as defined in the Rank of Indices of Deprivation 2000. [See appendix 9]

Skelmersdale also has a higher number of people affected by a long-term illness, or a physical health problem, than anywhere else in the District¹². This means there is a continuing and long-term demand for specialist and adapted accommodation.

¹² ONS Census 2001

Census (2001) population figures show that, in comparison with the rest of West Lancashire, the wards of Skelmersdale have a young population with fewer elderly people. These young people are the future emergent households of Skelmersdale.

Managing the housing market in Skelmersdale

The management of the housing market within Skelmersdale is the most difficult and resource intensive. The need to focus on a community lead approach to the creation of a comprehensive regeneration plan is critical. It is constrained by the significant capital resources that will be required to address the known problem areas, such as:

- Some areas of low demand, in both social housing and owner occupied stock, associated with poor design and/or neighbourhood reputation
- High housing densities and poor estate layout, leading to feelings of insecurity
- Relatively low house prices, and a lack of variety in housing types, leading to more affluent households moving out of the area
- Some evidence of properties being bought up by absentee private landlords, with unstable private tenancies undermining the sustainability of some neighbourhoods.
- Relatively high concentrations of deprivation

The current work in relation to Stock Options is one option being considered in detail as a potential method to facilitate the creation of resources to meet this challenge. Other options will, by necessity, lead to more long- term delivery solutions.

Some recent achievements include:

- ✓ Produced a 'Housing Estate Vision Statement for Skelmersdale' (2003) for general consultation
- ✓ 87 new affordable homes developed (1999-03) including 40 low-cost market units in the last 4 years
- ✓ 241 new private homes developed (1999-03), excluding low cost market homes, in the last 4 years
- ✓ Obtained English Partnerships funding for various projects including Housing Needs Study for Skelmersdale.
- ✓ Secured Cabinet approval to undertake an appraisal exercise to establish the costs involved in remodelling the housing and environment of Skelmersdale

Housing Renewal in Skelmersdale

Given the scale of these problems, a long-term strategy is needed to change the housing market in Skelmersdale, alongside economic and community-based regeneration activity. Any such strategy will need to contribute to revitalising the neighbourhood and achieving the broad aims of the Community Strategy.

The housing component over the next three years will involve:

- piloting a neighbourhood improvement approach, in close collaboration with residents, to reduce housing density, build in more personal space and improve the housing stock
- working with private owners in the area (given that there is a mix of privately owned and Council owned properties in all the estates) to canvass option for their involvement in the renewal process
- working with public and private sector partners to pursue opportunities for redevelopment, to introduce a wider variety of housing types in the area.

The housing challenges we face in Skelmersdale will require significant resources – and funding partnerships between the Council, English Partnerships, the Regional Housing Board and the private sector. An appraisal has been commissioned to establish indicative costs involved in remodelling the housing and environment of Skelmersdale to achieve sustainability. In particular, the availability of additional funding will be strongly influenced by the option selected for the future management of, and investment in, the Council stock.

Summary of Action Plan tasks

- To conduct a new town housing demand survey by 2005
- To complete an appraisal exercise to establish the indicative costs involved in remodelling the housing and environment of Skelmersdale by 2005
- To produce a Housing Estates Remodelling Strategy with pilot work commencing in Digmoor in 2004
- 75% of all new private housing development to be built within the Skelmersdale area – post 2006 (Local Plan target)
- to prevent any further population decline in Skelmersdale and move towards population growth

Resourcing Options for Housing Renewal in Skelmersdale

The resources section identifies significant funding necessary to remodel and regenerate Skelmersdale. At this indicative stage, the estimated cost may be in excess of £40 million. The Council is not recognised to be a Housing Market Renewal area and therefore does not qualify to attract major external funding to the extent required. These are issues recently addressed by the Commission on New Towns that reported in 2001¹³.

We have identified, as part of the Action Plan, an initial exercise to pilot a consultation exercise on Digmoor to identify, with more clarity, the aspirations of the community in terms of their perceptions of housing need. It is vital that we make progress on this activity, as it is the top housing strategic priority for the Council.

It is important to ensure local communities have ownership of any renewal activities and that the differences between communities on estates are reflected in their differing needs. This will require us to develop a range of solutions and not just adopt a unified response.

Given the capital funding required, the options for the renewal and regeneration of Skelmersdale are limited.

Clearly the capital receipt gained from any potential stock transfer would allow the scale of work identified to be tackled within an acceptable timeframe.

The reconsideration of existing capital funding streams could produce some funding, but it would be at the expense of existing commitments, would only meet very limited aspirations for remodelling and would be developed over a much longer timescale.

The Rural Villages

The rural village population of West Lancashire is 47,926, comprising of 19,317 households within 13 rural parishes. The Council's recent Housing Needs Update (2003) identified the average house price in the rural villages to be £135,417. Only 10% of the population in West Lancashire have an average income greater than £34,400 per year, required to purchase a home in the rural parishes.

Recent achievements include:

- ✓ Submitting a financial bid for support to the Housing Corporation made jointly to fund a Rural Housing Enabler for South Lancashire through the South Lancashire Rural Housing Enabler Working Group.
- ✓ New Housing Allocations Policy (July 2003) giving 'housing priority' to 'local people' within the rural villages
- ✓ 87% of rural parish housing needs surveys completed since 1998
- ✓ 114 new affordable homes built in rural parishes in the last 4 years

During the last six months the Council has developed and agreed in consultation with tenants and partners a new Housing Allocations Policy to meet the government's new legislative requirements and to provide more housing choice for all.

¹³ HMSO, *Government's Response to the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee Report: 'The New Towns: Their Problems and Future'*

The Council has moved away from a 'points based' allocation system and introduced a 'banding' allocation system. The new policy has been developed to:

- ensure people who are in housing need have access to appropriate, good quality housing
- provide a fair, equitable and consistent scheme
- promote sustainable communities
- provide people with greater choice of where they want to live especially in the rural villages

A new Housing Allocation Policy was approved with effect from the 1st July 2003 and is in response to our changing market conditions in both the Market Towns and Rural areas.

Summary of Action Plan tasks

- To continue the rolling programme of house movers surveys subject to review of Parish Housing Needs Survey
- To provide 100% affordable housing on all rural village development sites
- To reduce the numbers of large private houses built in the rural villages

Housing Market Key Partnerships

There are a number of key partnerships, which will help the authority achieve its five strategic priorities, which span our three housing markets. Over the next five years, this will be further strengthened in some key areas:

- Working corporately across the Council, and through the West Lancashire Local Strategic Partnership, to ensure that housing and broader regeneration initiatives are aligned
- Developing the role of the housing thematic group of the Local Strategic Partnership as the key planning and delivery mechanism for the Housing Strategy
- Building on the partnership with Planning, housing associations and developers to deliver a range of new housing types, and affordable housing
- Working with voluntary groups, and neighbouring authorities to improve access to supported housing options for vulnerable residents

Why have we chosen our Housing Market Priorities?

As mentioned previously we understand there are three distinct housing markets operating in the district. The authority is aware of competing forces which contribute to issues of low demand, high demand and in essence, an individuals/ households ability to gain access to quality housing in a settled location. The Council could choose not to do anything and allow all three housing markets to develop without intervention. This would, however create long term housing problems for the residents of West Lancashire. Ignoring the "signs" is not an option.

The Council is aware that there are always options in how priorities can be addressed, and it is committed to considering all these options and selecting the most appropriate in terms of cost efficiency, customer satisfaction, and viability. For the more complex or larger projects this will include a test to determine the robustness of the option SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) and PEST (Political, Economic, Social and Technological) analysis. Options will be subject to a variety of the following; objective achievement tests, feasibility tests, financial tests, dependency tests, the 'what if' test, and testing against scenarios.

A crucial part of the process is tenant and other key stakeholder consultation. This methodology should ensure that the Council achieves the best results possible within the options that are available. In addition the Council also expects that options will be considered against the criteria set out in its Capital Strategy, where all schemes are expected to meet corporate or service objectives and are tested against the following core criteria summarised below:

- Sustainability - whether the scheme costs are realistic and the level of future support required
- Additional Funding - Potential to draw down external funds and enhance Council investment
- Strategic Importance - Links with Council, regional and national objectives.

To that end the chosen priorities throughout this document have been identified through consultation while also taking into account the need to consider options analysis and risk assessment and the councils ability to deliver. An example of this process is shown in appendix 10 as part of "Stock Options" Appraisal.

The table below provides a summary of the key influences, which have informed our decisions.

Housing Strategy Strategic Priorities				
Priority	Decision Informed By		Links to Council Corporate Priorities (CP)	National (N), Regional (R), Sub-regional (SR), Priority
Balancing West Lancashire's Housing Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Needs Survey Update 2003 Housing Market Review 2003 Local Plan Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheltered Housing Review Regeneration proposals for Skelmersdale (New Town) Housing Strategy Consultation 	✓	(N), (R) (SR).
Achieving Decent Home Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRA Business Plan Housing Options Appraisal Sheltered Housing Review Tenant Consultation Private Sector Renewal Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Strategy Consultation Stock Condition Survey / in-house database Capital Investment Plan Maintenance & Improvement Strategy 	✓	(N), (R) (SR).
Improve the supply and access to affordable housing across the district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Market Review 2003 Housing Needs Survey Update 2003 Homelessness Review 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Movers Survey Housing Strategy Consultation 	✓	(N), (R) (SR).
Improving the standard of the private sector housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Needs Survey Update 2003 Private Sector Housing Review 2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shadow Supporting People Strategy 2003 (The need for a Home Improvement Agency) Housing Strategy Consultation 	✓	(N), (R) (SR).
Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shadow Supporting People Strategy 2003 Homelessness Review 2002 Housing Market Review 2003 National Service Framework Local Implementation Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheltered Housing Review Housing Needs Survey Update 2003 Private Sector Housing Review 2003 Housing Strategy Consultation Cabinet Briefing Paper Home Improvement Agency 2002 	✓	(N), (R) (SR).

Further information is available from Jonathan Mitchell, Housing Needs & Strategy Manager, 01695 58 5244 or Peter Bradford, Planning Policy Manager, 01695 58 5166.

Strategy Development and Delivery

Strategic Enabling Role

The Council has a declining stock, due primarily to the Government's 'Right to Buy' policy. It is therefore increasingly important to have effective partnerships with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to continue to build or renovate housing to meet local housing needs.

The Council currently

- works closely with RSLs and the Housing Corporation to agree priorities and evaluate and prioritise schemes for Approved Development Programme (ADP) funding
- meets and coordinates a Housing Association Forum to consult, inform and exchange ideas with RSLs
- promotes Council owned sites availability to RSL's and other partners
- continues to monitor the progress of individual RSL housing schemes and monitors lease agreements

Additionally the Council approved a restructuring of the Housing Services Division that separated the housing landlord and strategy functions. The strategic housing role is managed by a designated Strategic Housing Manager to enable greater integration into the Council's broader strategic planning process. Further information is available from Jonathan Mitchell, Housing Needs & Strategy Manager, 01695 58 5244

Joint Commissioning of RSL Partners

At present 21 Registered Social Landlords provide affordable housing stock in West Lancashire. The introduction of joint commissioning arrangements is being actively explored. Joint Commissioning would make better use of resources, reduce competition between RSLs and improve delivery of the Approved Development Programme (ADP).

We would expect chosen RSL's to contribute to the regeneration and sustainability of the communities in which they work, promoting the 'Lifetime Homes Standards' and Egan compliance. Clearly any partnering arrangement will need to reflect our agreed strategic objectives and the potential arising from the choice of a preferred partner from the stock options appraisal work currently being undertaken.

Affordable Housing & Planning Policy

The Housing Strategy Team meets regularly with the Planning Policy Team through the Affordable Housing Working Group to ensure that the Councils' planning and housing strategies work collectively to maximise affordable housing provision.

Currently, there is a predicted annual deficit, up to 2005, of 496 affordable housing units per year¹⁴. Previously, the Council has endeavoured to develop different types of affordable housing for sale, rent and shared ownership schemes to increase the available supply.

Regional Planning Policy Guidance encourages Councils to make use of their own local planning policies to secure affordable housing provision and a mix of tenure on all sites to develop sustainable communities.

Replacement Local Plan

The Council's Replacement Local Plan (RLP) is formulated within the context of the Lancashire Structure Plan 1991-2006. The Structure Plan provides strategic guidance until 2006 and restrains development in most parts of West Lancashire, apart from the main settlements where varying levels of development were allowed.

The RLP is being prepared to comply with the **ODPM Guide 'Making Plans'** so that it will be easy to comply with the **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill** when it is enacted in 2004. The RLP is to be used to plan, monitor and manage the release of land for housing to comply with the Regional Planning Guidance 13 (RPG13). RPG13 restricts the amount of land available in West Lancashire to assist in delivering the vision of Urban Renaissance in the adjacent metropolitan areas. This however will reduce the number of sites where we can require developers to provide affordable

¹⁴ David Coultie Associate Housing Needs Survey Update 2003.

housing. However, RPG13 allows the Council to increase the amount of suitable 'brownfield' development, assist in regenerating the priority area of Skelmersdale; and develop Ormskirk and Burscough as service centres for the rural parts of the District.

In preparing the RLP to cover the period 2001 - 2016 the Council is undertaking comprehensive consultation and has set up dedicated working groups. Detailed consultation also took place with the Housing Strategy & Development Team and the Government Office for the North West.

Future Targets

- Identify land for housing development in all of the main settlements of the District with the majority concentrated in the Skelmersdale area.
- Identify affordable housing targets in the rural villages

Section 106 Planning Agreements

A Section 106 (Town & Country Planning Act 1990) Agreement is one method available to the Council to deliver affordable housing. From 1999, 149 homes have been provided under this arrangement. The Affordable Housing Working Group will be reviewing and strengthening protocols and the definition for the use and application of Section 106 planning agreements. The Council will provide developers (who are subject to Section 106) with Supplementary Planning Guidance in relation to this process.

The Council, to reflect local circumstances, the results of the Housing Needs Update 2003 and local housing market conditions, have agreed the following RLP proposals:

- 100% affordable housing in the rural parishes with identified housing need
- a minimum of 30-50% affordable housing on all private development sites (conforming to guidance in DTLR¹⁵ Circular 6/98) in Ormskirk and Burscough
- 75% of all development to be in Skelmersdale, with 25% affordable housing on appropriate sites

The Council will continue to respond to the need for smaller homes by updating Supplementary Planning Guidance to provide a minimum density of 40 dwellings per hectare and at least 25% of schemes to be small units.

Current policy has increased the percentage of one and two bedroom homes from 12.7% (2001/02) to 20% (2002/03). By April 2003 the Council had granted planning permission for 249 RSL rented, 16 private rented; 26 shared ownership and 217 low cost market homes in the District.

Further information is available from Jonathan Mitchell, Housing Needs & Strategy Manager, 01695 58 5244 or Peter Bradford, Planning Policy Manager, 01695 58 5166.

Future Options for the Provision of Affordable Housing

The Peoples Panel Survey 2002 identified that home ownership is the tenure of choice for the majority of residents in West Lancashire. Improvements in protocols will assist the authority in meeting our resident's aspirations.

There is a need to develop additional affordable housing in rural areas. This is evidenced from our Parish Housing Needs Surveys and the 2003 District Housing Needs Update (DCA, appendix 7). Additionally, it is important to develop sustainable communities that offer a range of tenure for people who wish to move to these areas. However, there needs to be balanced provision due to possible potential reduction in expected demand for these areas, if the housing renewal of Skelmersdale New Town creates alternative and preferred housing options for people.

¹⁵ Department of Transport, Local Government & the Regions

We are actively encouraging RSL partners to review our portfolio of rural development opportunities across the district. Given the known demand we need to examine a range of options for developing affordable housing including, suitable 'brown field' and 'windfall' site development

The range of options that the Council will support is dependent upon the availability of funding. The resources section identifies this activity as a funding gap of approximately £200,000 per annum.

In examining the options they fall into two distinct categories

Equity Ownership

- Improvement For Sale [IFS]
- Buy back
- Lease/Part equity schemes
- Voluntary Purchase Grant [VPG]
- Key workers Starter Home Initiative

Use of Existing Stock

- Lodger schemes
- Release of sheltered accommodation for general letting or equity stake
- Restriction on the Right to Buy in rural areas
- Replacement of existing small units with higher density flat development

This Strategy assumes we will pursue any option that will maximize the number of affordable homes within the rural areas, giving priority to those that we can deliver quickly and also lever in additional funding not immediately available from current funding streams and that reflect sustainable community development.

Private Sector Housing

The Private Sector Housing Service offers a broad range of support to all private sector residents and landlords. Officers undertake a range of activities to support the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy, the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy and the Council's Corporate objectives. The following specific activities contribute to balancing our housing markets and assisting vulnerable households:

- Surveys of housing conditions and development of plans and policies to deal with housing conditions and housing needs on an individual or area basis
- Administration of housing renewal assistance including a range of housing grants
- Provision of a Grant Agency Service to assist vulnerable people making grant applications
- Administration of a Handyperson Scheme in conjunction with Social Services
- Enforcing legislation in respect of unfit and unsatisfactory private housing including demolition orders, clearance areas and compulsory purchase orders.
- Development and implementation of an Empty Homes Strategy
- Dealing with private rented sector issues including tenant complaints and poor housing conditions
- Undertaking inspection programmes for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)
- Managing an accredited Private Rented Property Scheme
- Enforcing caravan park licensing conditions
- Dealing with gypsy and traveller matters including unauthorised encampments
- Development and delivery of the Council's Home Energy Conservation and Fuel Poverty Strategy
- Responding to housing related complaints from the public

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2003 – 2006

The strategy, approved by Council in July 2003, is key to all future Private Sector Housing activity. It also provides focus for the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy.

The strategy was prepared using 'fit for purpose' criteria and set out our vision for Private Sector Housing in West Lancashire, as:

"This Council will assist private residents in West Lancashire so that they can make their own informed choices and find their own solutions to enable them to live within thriving communities, in homes which are safe, secure, warm, and in good repair. In particular the Council will provide direct assistance with the help of our partners to enable vulnerable residents to live in decent homes."

The Strategy was based on evidenced need collated from the following sources:

Stock Condition	Service Monitoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax property database (exempt properties) • Proactive HMO inspection and risk analysis surveys • Caravan site inspection reports • Empty Homes database • Outcome analysis of former priority areas • 'Unfit' Properties database • Recorded 'priority ratings' for empty homes • West Lancashire Accreditation Scheme for Private Rented Property • Stock Condition Survey 1999 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Grants Service customer satisfaction surveys • Renovation grants customer satisfaction surveys • Home Energy Campaign Questionnaires • Private Landlord & Agents Forum • Complaints analysis

Detailed information about stock condition data and service monitoring can be found in the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy (available from www.westlancsdc.gov.uk).

The Strategy identified a number of key priorities which are:

- By 2006 to implement support arrangements to enable all residents to live independent lifestyles in safe, secure and warm homes.
- To identify and take action to halt the decline of communities arising from poor, obsolete or badly designed housing
- By 2010, reduce the number of non-decent homes to less than 3% of the total private sector housing stock.
- To provide advice, information and enforcement services to help all vulnerable residents to live in decent homes by 2010.
- To establish a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) by mid-2005.
- To maximise efforts to lever in additional resources to support the objectives of the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy (2003).

To achieve these priorities, a detailed Action Plan has been produced which is contained within the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

The following are achievements arising from the previous Private Sector Housing Strategy:

- ✓ Declared and completed 2 Priority Housing Areas for Ormskirk and Banks Village
- ✓ Introduced a Handyman Scheme targeted at older residents
- ✓ Changed resource allocations to ensure funding met agreed priorities
- ✓ Implemented an Action Plan to tackle long-term private empty homes in the District.
- ✓ Implemented an enforcement policy for Private Sector Housing.
- ✓ Introduced a Private Sector Landlords Newsletter and continued to operate a successful Landlords Forum.
- ✓ Continued to inspect at least 20% of all known Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) each year
- ✓ Completed Best Value Reviews for the Private Sector Housing Service.

Housing Renewal Assistance Policy (2003)

The Government's Regulatory (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Reform Order 2002 and the ODPM Circular 05/2003 for Housing Renewal, required the Council to review and replace the former Housing Grants Policy with a new Housing Renewal Assistance Policy.

The Policy reflects that it is the prime responsibility of home-owners to maintain their own homes, but that 'vulnerable' residents may require assistance to live successfully in their own homes. This assistance will take the form of advice and information and the offer of a repayable housing grant to eligible applicants.

A key change in the new Policy is to achieve the Decent Home Standard for vulnerable residents as required by Public Sector Agreement 7. This states:

- By 2010 bring all social housing into decent condition and increase the proportion of private sector dwellings in decent condition occupied by vulnerable groups

Empty Homes Strategy

The Council's current Empty Homes Strategy is recognised as being in need of review, although it has been successful in reducing the number of empty private properties (vacant for over 6 months) to under 2% of the total private stock.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy Action Plan identified that a new Empty Homes Strategy is to be produced by April 2004.

We already have a complete and accurate database of all empty properties (vacant over 6 months) within the district. This database is prioritised to allow the Council to take action on those empty properties considered to be in the worst condition against specified risk assessment criteria.

Housing Standards and Enforcement

The emphasis, under previous policies was to make 'unfit' property fit for habitation within the private sector through advice, grant assistance or by enforcement.

The new Renewal Strategy and Housing Renewal Assistance Policy 2003 is designed to focus the Council's efforts in achieving decent home standards in the private sector with a specific emphasis on helping vulnerable residents in this sector.

The Council has an active enforcement programme in the private rented sector involving programmed inspections of houses in multiple occupation, where we aim to achieve a 20% annual inspection rate of our total known HMO stock.

The Council has introduced an "enforcement concordat" to ensure the Government's principles of consistency, transparency, targeting and proportionality are maintained in enforcement procedures.

Delivering Disabled Adaptations

The Council will continue to provide a disabled adaptations service to the private sector principally through the provision of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) delivered using the Council's in-house Grant Agency Service.

The Council recognises the need to strengthen the current adaptations service, particularly in co-ordination between other partner organisations such as Lancashire County Council Social Services and the local Primary Care Trust. We support recent Government guidance on delivering adaptations and we are already in active discussions with our partner organisations on how we can produce a more effective, efficient and unified adaptations service for the benefit of disabled residents in the district.

The Council has recently sought additional funding approval to deliver further Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and we will continue to redirect and maximise available funding to meet the needs of vulnerable groups. With an aging population, the demands will increase and will need to be matched by additional resources.

Home Energy Efficiency Promotion

The Home Energy Conservation & Fuel Poverty Strategy is targeted for review and will be renewed in early 2004 as a specific target in the Housing Renewal Strategy Action Plan. This previous strategy was for the period up to the end of 2003.

Important progress has been made to promote home energy in West Lancashire. This has included the commencement of a Parish-by-Parish home energy conservation campaign, in partnership with the Lancashire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre.

- ✓ New partnerships are being created to help energy efficiency promotion such as our partnership with Scottish Power which has provided £50,000 of funding to subsidise cavity wall insulation schemes for residents in West Lancashire.

The Council's promotion campaign is assisted by a comprehensive, 100% property database of the energy efficiency of all homes in the district. This database enables the Council to target the promotion campaign efforts and enables us to generate reports to advise individual households on their energy efficiency and how best they can make improvements.

The development of a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) for West Lancashire

The Council recognises that it cannot deliver the vision contained in the new Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy by working in isolation. Therefore, new partnerships need to be created with other service providers.

The development of a Home Improvement Agency is now actively being considered with future partners, including South Ribble Borough Council, Chorley Borough Council and the Lancashire County Supporting People Team. This HIA will provide a new service to more vulnerable residents of our district to meet their housing related needs. The proposed

agency will lever in resources including, finance, staffing and expertise not currently available to provide additional housing related services to vulnerable private residents in our district.

Discussions are now ongoing to determine the nature and structure of how the HIA should operate. The ODPM and Government's Supporting People Team are actively promoting the formation of Home Improvement Agencies extending beyond individual Council boundaries.

Further information is available from Dave Hall, Private Sector Housing Manager, 01695 58 5245.

The Council's Role as Landlord

Landlord Role

West Lancashire District Council is committed to providing a first-class housing service to all of its residents and to ensure our activities compliment those of other agencies and Council Departments, in an effort to create places where people want to live. The Housing Services Division is proud to hold the Charter Mark "Award for Excellence".

- ✓ The Charter Mark award for excellence in local housing services was awarded for the third time to West Lancashire District Council Housing Services Division in December 2002.

From a tenant's perspective of Housing Services Management, 76% satisfaction ratings are achieved (Status Survey, 2003) but this section will focus on the contribution that the Council as landlord can make to our strategic objectives.

The landlord function of the Council directly contributes to three of the five Housing Strategic Priorities as well as national and regional priorities as previously shown on page 16. Some of our future action points (😊) and recent achievements (✓) are shown below.

Balancing West Lancashire's Housing Market	
😊	Master plan for remodelling Skelmersdale – <i>73% of Council Stock is in Skelmersdale</i>
✓	Introduction of new allocation policy – <i>Policy provides more choice for people especially those living in rural Villages</i>

Achieving Decent Home Standards by 2010	
😊	Maintenance and Investment strategy – <i>informs business planning process</i>
✓	Stock option appraisal exercise – <i>informs strategic decision making process</i>

Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people	
✓	Completion of sheltered housing review - <i>assists the authority in shaping its council housing provision to the needs of the local community</i>

Of critical importance to delivering on these objectives are three strands of work:

Stock Improvements

West Lancashire District Council now has 7629 properties [included in this total are 39 leased properties] available for rent in the district, with almost 73% of these in Skelmersdale and the remainder in the Ormskirk, Burscough, Up Holland and the rural villages

In 1997, the Council commissioned and completed a full Public Sector Stock Condition Survey, which identified a property repair and improvement backlog of approximately £19.8 million. To date, over 37% of stock has been surveyed on a rolling programme (with a further 5% of properties surveyed each year, providing an accuracy rate of 96%). A database is updated to provide information on condition and key components. On an annual basis the Council keeps this information up to date, with programmed and other works undertaken during the year. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) also validated the Council's approach during the year 2002. This database also provides information in a flexible way that enables maintenance programmes to be put together to demonstrate that the Council can currently meet the Government's Decent Home Standard.

In terms of the detail, the above work on this is included in the HRA Business Plan 2003 which is available from the councils website (www.westlancsdc.gov.uk)

Decent Home Standards

The Decent Home Standard is required to be met by 2010.

The Council has agreed a 10-year Maintenance and Improvement Strategy and Capital Investment plan that will ensure that its homes will meet the Decent Home Standard by 31st December 2010. More information is contained in the HRA Business Plan available from our website¹⁶. Shown below is a summary table identifying our programmed compliance targets.

Compliance with the decent home standard

Year	Number non-decent at year end
2003	2724
2004	2321
2005	2033
2006	2010
2007	1890
2008	407
2009	211
2010 (31/12/10)	0

Further information is available from Haydn Handsford, Property Services Manager, 01695 58 5226.

Stock Option Appraisal

A Commission has been established to examine in detail the options available to the Council to meet the future needs of its' housing stock. The HRA¹⁷ Business Plan 2003 has identified that continued retention of the stock is not a realistic option given current financial forecasts. Therefore, the Commission is examining in detail the implications for establishing an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) or Stock Transfer.

This work continues to be developed and the Council has committed further resources in relation to:

- Independent assessment of ALMO status against current service management arrangements
- Identifying the indicative physical remodelling costs for Skelmersdale
- Agreement and implementation of a Communication & Empowerment Strategy
- Comprehensive consultation exercise to inform stock options debate
- Appointment of Independent Tenant Adviser

Further information is available from Bob Livermore, Executive Manager – Housing Services, 01695 58 5201.

Tenant Participation

The Council's commitment to consult with and involve tenants in the delivery of housing services has been demonstrated for a number of years. This has been through the development of four Estate Management Boards in Skelmersdale, numerous Tenants and Residents Groups around the district and a well established Tenants and Residents Forum that meets regularly to discuss and review the development of the Council's housing policies.

Our commitment to involving tenants and residents in the way Council services are delivered is set out in our Tenant Participation Compact "Getting Involved", which was developed in partnership with Tenant and Resident Representatives. This compact was adopted as good practice by TPAS.¹⁸



¹⁶ www.westlancsdc.gov.uk

¹⁷ Housing Revenue Account

¹⁸ Tenant Participation Advisory Service

A comprehensive structure has been created for tenant consultation and advice purposes. An Executive Committee (comprising of representatives from Tenants' and Residents' Forums and local Councillors), oversee the running of Forum activities. This involves supporting tenant training through seminars and conferences, the funding of individual tenant groups and reviewing housing management services when needed. A budget of £20,000 is made available for the Forum each year to develop tenant participation activities in the District.

The Communication and Empowerment Strategy will go further and ensure that all tenants have the opportunity of having their say in the future of their homes. Further information is available from Kevin Powe, 01695 58 5205

Supporting Vulnerable People

The Council fully supports both the national and regional guidance to improve the provision and range of services for vulnerable people.

The main methods of involvement have been the implementation of the Supporting People Programme, which has involved significant cross authority and inter agency partnership working with both Health and Social Services to support the delivery of the National Service Frameworks (NSF) and Local Public Service Agreements (LPSA's).

Preventing Homelessness

The Council has adopted the following vision for homelessness in West Lancashire:

“To work in successful partnership with homeless agencies to meet the needs and aspirations of homeless people in West Lancashire; with the principle aim to reduce homelessness and ensure, that where homeless services are required, they are of high quality”

Our Homelessness Strategic Objectives are

- To further develop preventative approaches to homelessness
- Continue to develop quality temporary & permanent accommodation to meet the need of all homeless people
- To increase choice and access to permanent housing for all
- Develop quality housing support services to enable successful tenancy sustainment
- To reduce the level of single, young homelessness in the District
- To continue to work with partners to develop a multi-agency approach to homelessness
- Monitor and accurately record levels of homelessness

In 2002 the Council embraced the opportunity to comply with the Homelessness Act 2002 and conducted a full review of homeless services and advice provision in the District, in partnership with relevant stakeholders. Various methods of consultation took place involving Homelessness & Housing Advice Core Working Group & Forum meetings, one-to-one meetings and focus groups with partners, workshop sessions and surveys. The strategic objectives have been agreed in consultation with our partners and compliment Corporate and Community Strategy objectives.

The Homeless Review 2002 helped shape and inform the Districts Homelessness Strategy 2003 - 2006 & associated Implementation Plan. The exercise has also helped to further strengthen partnership arrangements with voluntary and statutory agencies. The Council holds regular meetings of the Homelessness and Housing Advice Core Working Group and the 'Terms of Reference' for this group are being amended accordingly to reflect the new monitoring role for the Homelessness Strategy & Action Plan. In terms of service monitoring the Council has included measures within its Homeless Implementation Plan to obtain feedback from service users about their experience and satisfaction of the homeless process.

As part of the consultation feedback process, the Council was commended by Shelter (Lancashire) for its approach to producing the Homelessness Review 2002

“We commend the use and scope of both Local Authority and partner agencies data so as to create a fuller picture of homelessness in West Lancashire”

The Council places priority on the prevention of homelessness. Through the Homelessness Implementation Plan the Council aims to provide quality and accessible outreach surgeries, home visits, interpretation services and information packs, particularly in rural locations. In the past the Council has been successful in preventing people or delaying homelessness through liaison with Landlords, Courts and Mortgage Lenders. West Lancashire is proud of not using B & B¹⁹ accommodation for homeless people through the use of furnished self-contained temporary accommodation within the Council's own stock.

Key Priorities

- To successfully implement the Homelessness Strategy & Implementation Plan 2003 – 2006
- To continue to submit bids to access ODPM funding under Local Government Act 2000, Section 93 Homelessness Grants Programme

¹⁹ Bed & Breakfast

Housing Advice & Assistance

This service was subject to a Best Value Inspection in December 2001 and we continue to implement the ten recommendations in the review report. Additionally, as part of the Homelessness Strategy (2003 –2006), the Council has approved the production of a Housing Advice Strategy (2004 – 2007) to further strengthen and improve these services. This will be completed in 2004.

Shadow Supporting People Strategy

The Council approved the Shadow Supporting People Strategy 2003, which identified the initial projects for new developments and these are shown in the table below. Additionally, the Council recognised that there was a requirement to commence an early review of its' sheltered accommodation. This review has made some fundamental recommendations for change, which are currently subject to consultation being undertaken, independently, by Age Concern.

The Commission for Older People, established recently by the Council, recognises the strategic significance of aligning supply and demand against evidenced based need to develop future levels of appropriate accommodation and support services. This is particularly so, given the Commissioning responsibilities of the Lancashire Supporting People Team.

We recognise that the Supporting People initiative is a major Government policy and central to the preventative care agenda. In response to this agenda, West Lancashire has engaged whole heartily in progressing preparation works for the programme. The authorities Strategic Housing Manager continues to chair the Lancashire Supporting People Core Strategy Group.

The Lancashire Supporting People Strategy aims to improve the quality of housing services for vulnerable people. It is acknowledged therefore that the Supporting People programme forms an integral part of the District Councils Strategic approach and its' ability to deliver some of its strategic housing objectives.

The Council have carefully considered these capital priorities when planning future support services for vulnerable client groups.

Table below shows Supporting People Development Priorities 2003/4 & Possible Commissioning Priorities thereafter

2003/4	2004/5
1. Floating support for homeless families.	1. Very sheltered housing for older people.
2. HIA.	2. Long term supported accommodation for people with mental health problems.
3. Handyperson service.	3. Short term floating support for people with mental health problems.
4. Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.	4. Supported accommodation and floating support for young people at risk.
	5. Floating support for people with drug/alcohol problems.
	6. Supported accommodation for young single homeless.
	7. Teenage parent unit

The development of the new Supporting People Strategy 2004 – 07 will be based on more up to date evidence of need, which will be reflected in our continual monitoring arrangements. A key element of each area of development will be a sensitivity to BME and Faith needs across the client groups.

Older People

The Council has been actively supporting the National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People. The Council has agreed that this NSF Local Implementation Team (a multi-agency group) will lead the development of an Older Peoples' Strategy for West Lancashire, for formal adoption in 2004/05.

Through the NSF and working with Social Services, we have developed two important initiatives that support improvements to services for older people.

- ✓ Firstly, a re-habilitation flat has been developed adjacent to Ormskirk Hospital to support older people leaving hospital. The Council has installed assistive technology in this flat to broaden the range of available options for maintaining older people in their own homes.
- ✓ We are currently fast tracking, with Social Services, initiatives in relation to Extra Care and Very Sheltered Housing. We have also signed up to the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) Target Two with Lancashire County Council to further improve performance around services for the elderly.
- ✓ The Council is also addressing the current oversupply of sheltered accommodation and has produced a Sheltered Accommodation Review (with support from Age Concern), to meet its' stated HRA²⁰ Business Plan target of reducing current levels of sheltered accommodation from 1650 units to 1000 units. The reduction in current designated units will be balanced by the creation of more focused older persons' accommodation for those suffering from mental health difficulties or greater frailty. Additionally, existing units will be re-modeled to reflect the higher accommodation aspirations of older people.

Because of the importance of these activities and the implications of the Supporting People changes the Council, to support this work, has agreed, as mentioned earlier, to form a Commission to move this modernisation and change agenda forward in an open and informed manner.

There will also be associated changes to our mobile warden service (part of Home Care Link) as we create a more flexible pattern of service delivery and allow service expansion to older home-owners and other client groups through the Supporting People Programme.

Additionally the Council remains committed to developing its' Lifeline Alarm Service and joint working continues with agencies to develop broader assistive technology packages.

Other recent achievements

- ✓ The Council is continuing to improve its' partnership working with the West Lancashire Primary Care Trust. We have recently recruited a Partnership Officer jointly funded by both organisations. This post will drive forward initiatives and better co-ordinate the joint agenda for modernisation and change.
- ✓ Review of Sheltered Accommodation 2003 in conjunction with Age Concern
- ✓ Commitment to meeting LPSA 2

Lone Teenage Parents

The **Social Exclusion Report on Teenage Pregnancy (June 1999)** states that Britain has the worst record of teenage pregnancies in Europe with approximately 90,000 teenagers becoming pregnant every year. Following this report the Social Exclusion Unit set national targets to reduce levels of teenage pregnancy in the UK.

The Teenage Pregnancy Unit issued '**Guidelines for Good Practice in Supported Accommodation**' and set the following target for housing:

"By 2003, all under-18 teenage lone parents who cannot live with their family or partner should be placed in supervised semi-independent tenancies"

²⁰ Housing Revenue Account

The Council has responded to the Social Exclusion Unit's report and will achieve this national target by the end of 2003. Furthermore, this target has been set as a priority within the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Plan 2003 - 2006.

Recent achievements

- ✓ The Council is currently in the process of developing an interim service level agreement with the West Lancashire Crisis & Information centre to provide emergency supported temporary accommodation for all homeless lone teenage parents.
- ✓ Three Teenage Parent Local Implementation Grant bids made to the Lancashire County Co-ordinators Group for 'pump-priming' monies to tackle teenage pregnancy and homelessness
- ✓ Teenage pregnancy targets included in the West Lancashire Homelessness Strategy 2003 - 2006
- ✓ Representation on the South Lancashire Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board
- ✓ Housing targets included in the South Lancashire Teenage Pregnancy Delivery Plan 2003 – 2004
- ✓ The Council contributed to the Supporting People Teenage Parents Housing Needs Assessment 2003.

The Council has identified the following future priorities

- To review annually service level agreement with West Lancashire Crisis & Information Centre
- To develop suitable supported accommodation for all homeless teenage parents by December 2004.
- To achieve supported housing targets set in the Lancashire Teenage Pregnancy Strategy & Action Plan 2000 – 2010.

People with a Learning Disability

The Council actively contributes to the Learning Disability Partnership Board, which is focused and balanced on the commissioning and delivery of local services in West Lancashire. The Executive Manager for Housing Services is a member of the Board. There is a significant level of joint working being undertaken surrounding the Supporting People Strategy and the initial phases of needs mapping for vulnerable client groups. The Supporting People Programme allows for multi-agency joint working and this is proving highly effective even at this preliminary stage. Recent Supporting People needs analysis, reported in September 2003, indicate that West Lancashire has the greatest deficit (in the County) of services for residents with a Learning Disability. The Council will continue with partnership working to increase service provision for this client group. Additionally, the needs of those individuals with Aspergers syndrome are being considered to identify service provision and housing support for this specific client group.

People with Mental Health needs

The Council contributes to the National Service Framework for Mental Health and the recent needs analysis in September 2003, for the Supporting People Strategy 2004 has identified this District as having a high level of need in comparison to the rest of the County. We will continue to work in partnership with the local Primary Care Trust and County Social Services to reconfigure current service provision and improve levels of service particularly around mental health community based services for the elderly.

People with a Physical Disability

In relation to Physical Disability we have contributed to the Lancashire Best Value Programme for this service area. We have also been involved locally with Social Services and the Primary Care Trust in progressing improvements for younger physically disabled people. To support this there have been two local consultation exercises undertaken with service-users, some initial success in accommodating younger disabled people in Council accommodation and seeking to find solutions for individuals placed out of the County with acquired brain injury. Additionally, as part of the Sheltered Review an investment strategy will identify the changes required to our sheltered stock to provide sustainable tenancies for older people with mobility and other physical disability needs

Drug and Alcohol Services

There are existing linkages to the local Drug Action Teams but the recent needs analysis for the Supporting People Strategy has identified this District as having low levels of support provision in comparison to the rest of the County. This is an area that will be developed, in partnership with other service providers, to facilitate both residential support and detoxification services for the South Lancashire area.

Children and Young People

Whilst some needs have been identified around the work required for young people as part of the Homelessness Strategy we will be developing our capacity to support service provision for these client groups as part of the Supporting People Strategy

Asylum Seekers & Refugees

The District of West Lancashire is not currently a designated resettlement area for asylum seekers or refugees. The Council however acknowledges that the housing and support needs of these vulnerable groups do need to be considered, with planned arrangements to be in place to ensure equal access to both permanent and temporary accommodation for all.

The responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of accommodation for asylum seekers has now passed to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) which contracts locally with accommodation providers including local authorities, RSLs, voluntary organisations and private landlords. Local authorities are still responsible for people who claimed asylum before the new arrangements and for a range of other services for asylum seekers and those granted leave to remain.

West Lancashire, as an authority, has not received significant numbers of homeless applications from asylum seekers or refugees. NASS also does not provide any specific accommodation in the District. At present Asylum Seekers and Refugee applications are managed effectively, however the authority will continue to consider this issue in more detail as part of its' BME Housing Policy and ongoing monitoring arrangements. Further information is available from Steve Jones, Strategic Housing Manager, 01695 58 5208.

Equality of Access to Housing

Ethnicity Summary

As is evidenced in the table below, the Council has statistically low-rates of residency from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. In this context we need to explore, through research methodologies, how best to improve the level of ethnic mix across communities that will support and sustain balanced community cohesion.

	West Lancs Value	West Lancs %	England & Wales Average	West Lancs Rank*
Ethnicity				
Ethnic group (all people)				
- white	106773	98.5	91.3	126
- largest minority ethnic group	Indian = 300	0.3	n/a	n/a
Place of birth (all people)				
- born in UK	105578	97.4	91.1	53
- born elsewhere in EU (incl. Rep Ireland)	1135	1.0	2.3	324
- born outside EU	1665	1.5	6.6	325
	108378	100.0	100.0	-

Office of National Statistics (ONS) Census 2001 – Key Statistics

Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Policy

The number of residents of black and minority ethnic background residing in West Lancashire is small. The 1991 Census figures detailed West Lancashire's District Councils BME population to be 0.8%, just under one per cent of the total population of the District. The 2001 Census figures showed a total of 1.5%. Although there is an increase of 0.7% it is not a significant growth for the area.

The BME communities are from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Settlement patterns show a distribution of the BME population throughout the District. Information available from the 2001 Census suggests that the majority of the BME population is of Indian ethnicity.

As a housing service we are committed to meeting the housing needs and aspirations of all in our community. West Lancashire District Councils Housing Services Division have made a strategic commitment to identify the housing needs and requirements of black and minority ethnic households and to develop a strategic approach to tackling these needs through the publication of its BME Housing Policy & Action Plan 2003.

We recognise that West Lancashire is a diverse community and that we have a particular responsibility to ensure our services are equally accessible to all. The BME Housing Policy Action Plan details how the Council intends to achieve its' aims by ensuring that all Housing Services are appropriate and accessible to BME residents.

Managing Diversity Strategy

Following the development of the Councils Race Equality Scheme, it became apparent that the Council needed to develop its Equality agenda, particularly in relation to service delivery. In order to bring a co-ordinated approach to equality within the Council, a Managing Diversity Strategy has been developed in conjunction with Blackburn-with-Darwen Metropolitan Borough Council / Capita. The Strategy demonstrates the Councils commitment to the promotion of Equal Opportunities and the importance of valuing diversity, as well as emphasising its role as a community champion, service provider and employer.

Further information is available from Jonathan Mitchell, Housing Needs & Strategy Manager, 01695 58 5244.

How will we resource our Housing Strategy?

Resources Plan 2004 - 2009

Our plan for resourcing the Housing Strategy is based upon the following five principles that underpin all of our financial decisions:

- financial planning based upon realistic and prudent assumptions about the resources available to the Council and its partners
- capital and revenue resources used in such a manner as to extend and enhance finances under our direct control
- priorities aligned to local, regional and national funding streams to maximise capital income
- service users, residents and partners influence and participate in financial decision-making processes
- pro-active approaches to new funding opportunities

In addition to the above principles, the Council assesses its capital requirements using a system to rank proposed capital schemes against a range of criteria that are set out in our capital strategy and asset management plan. These criteria cover a wide range of factors including corporate and service objectives and priorities, external funding levered in, partnership working, revenue implications, and the results of stakeholder consultation. This formalised system of assessment ensures compliance with agreed priorities. A copy of the pro forma used for this process is attached as appendix 13

The diagram on page 46 shows the Council's new planning and budgeting cycle.

Capital Resources available to the Council

In February 2003 the Council agreed its capital budget for the 2003-04 financial year and we are currently actively implementing this programme. The capital programme for later years is still provisional at this stage and is based on the key assumptions shown on page 45.

The resources table on page 44 identifies the current application of capital funding. The forecast levels of funding are shown against existing strategies and commitments, for example the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy. The table also shows total expected resources available to the authority for the timeframe of this strategy.

However, it is clear from the table, that to meet the significant levels of investment required, for this Strategies top two highest priorities, the remodelling of Skelmersdale and Affordable Housing there needs to be:

- either a review of current priorities for capital spending or
- this funding gap could be met from a potential capital receipt that could be available as a result of the Housing Stock Options Appraisal exercise or
- from other funding opportunities that may become available over the life of the strategy.

Our existing capital strategy demonstrates that we will utilise the funding from the Major Repairs Allowance to meet the decent homes standard by 2010 and it is our current intention to meet this obligation.

Additionally, we have a proven track record of providing significant levels of funding for Disabled Facilities Grants, private sector housing renewal and clearance programmes, which we will continue to ensure is a priority.

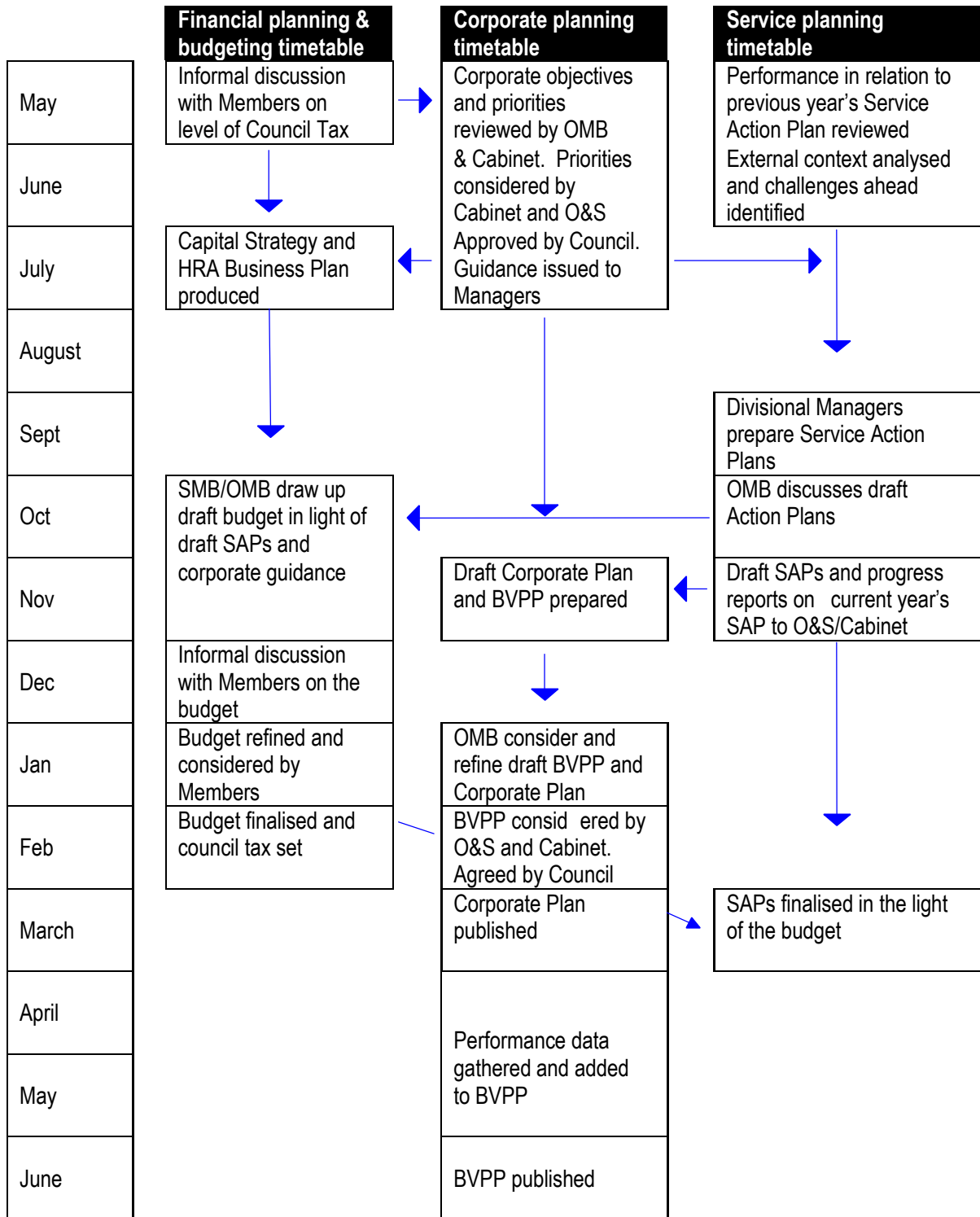
Capital Programme for the lifetime of this strategy

Total Estimated Resources to the Council								
Detail	Outturn 2002/03	Budget 2003/04	Probable Outturn 2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
	£000	£000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Basic Credit Approval (BCA)	712	996	996	-	-	-	-	-
Prudential Code		-	-	996	996	996	996	996
Useable capital Receipts	912	1385	1385	750	750	750	750	750
External Partnership Funding	69	3396	3396	2676	10	0	0	0
Specified Capital Grant (SCG) / Supplementary Credit Approval (SCA)	169	237	237	256	288	302	318	333
Specified CA	217	180	180	151	102	100	100	100
CRA Reserve	90	300	300	0	0	0	0	0
Other Reserves	48	10	10	20	20	0	0	0
Government Grants	767	980	980	750	2000	1000	1000	1000
Major Repairs Allowance (MRA)	4671	4312	4312	4281	4227	4173	4119	4067
European	854	435	435	24	8	10	10	10
Section 106	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	283	100	100	100	0	0	0	0
Total	8792	12331	12331	10004	8401	7331	7293	7256
Producing Estimated Resources for the Housing Programme of								
Major Repairs Allowance (MRA)	4504	4147	4147	4116	4061	4005	3951	3900
MRA – disabled adaptation	166	165	165	165	166	168	168	167
Private Sector Renewal Grant (PSRG)	546	430	430	350	368	386	405	426
Specified Capital Grant (SCG) – Total	286	385	385	416	480	503	530	555
Useable Capital Receipts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private Sector Clearance	0	150	150	100	100	100	100	100
Revenue Contribution	250	100	100	100	0	0	0	0
Total	5752	5377	5377	5247	5175	5162	5154	5148
Which will support								
Decent Home Standard	4604	4147	4147	4281	4227	4173	4119	4067
Meeting the needs of Vulnerable People (inc.Disabled Facility Grant)	602	650	650	516	480	503	530	555
Improving Standard of Private Sector Housing	546	430	430	350	368	386	405	426
Private Sector Clearance	0	150	150	100	100	100	100	100
Total	5752	5377	5377	5247	5175	5162	5154	5148
Funding Gap								
Skelmersdale Housing Renewal (approx. £40m total)		5700	5700	5700	5700	5700	5700	5700
Affordable Housing		200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Repairs Backlog (approx. £19.8m total)		2900	2900	2900	2900	2900	2900	2900
Shortfall SCG / SCA (Additional DFGs)		150	150	150	150	150	150	150
Total Funding Gap		8950	8950	8950	8950	8950	8950	8950

Key Assumptions to Resources Table

1	Prudential Code	The estimated figures within the table have been presented on the basis that the prudential code, which replaces the current capital approvals system i.e. BCA's and SCA's, will be in place by April 2004.
		With regards to SCG/SCA, it is difficult to say, at this time, what arrangements will be in place post April 2004. Therefore, for presentational purposes these have been shown in their current format.
2	Useable Capital Receipts	The estimated useable capital receipts are based on the assumption that the authority will sell on average 200 properties per annum under the Right to Buy.
3	SCG/SCA	This is assumed to increase by 5% per annum from April 2005
4	PSRG	This is assumed to increase by 5% per annum
5	MRA	The amount of MRA available to the authority assumes an average reduction of 200 properties per annum
6	Other Influencing Factors	No provision has been made for items which are currently the subject of consultation e.g. Housing Capital Receipts Pooling.

The Council's new Planning and Budgeting Cycle



Key

OMB = Operational Management Board

SAP = Service Action Plan

BVPP = Best Value Performance Plan

SMB = Strategic Management Board

O&S = Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Private Sector Housing Resources

The Council will seek the highest level of funding to meet the vision and objectives of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy through the government's Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and the Council's Single Capital Pot (SCP).

The Council's current proposals to establish a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) will require additional resources. However it is acknowledged that in the long-term there will be a net gain in leveraging in external resources for private sector housing improvements.

Housing Resources for Development Priorities

The regional funding priorities for the development of new affordable housing are set out in the Housing Corporation's Merseyside Investment Strategy (2003 – 2004). The Housing Corporation has designated a Regional Cash Limit (RCL) of £30.398M for social housing during this period. In line with the ODPM's Sustainable Communities Plan, the Housing Corporation, through its North West and Merseyside Field Offices, is now a partner in the North West Regional Housing. The Board's draft strategy is now accessible on its website (www.nwrhb.org.uk).

The Housing Corporation's recent move away from Housing Needs Indicator (HNI) allocations to a strategic approach to financial allocations requires the Council to develop a robust and strategically focused development programme, closely linked to the Housing Corporation's resource priorities shown below

- Matching the supply of housing with the changing patterns of demand and aspirations
- Eliminating obsolescence, unfitness and disrepair
- Reverse the trend of depopulation of urban areas by imaginative regeneration of existing built-up areas with appropriate development of 'brownfield' land and by minimising 'greenfield' development
- Engaging people in the development and management of their own communities and promoting social inclusion
- Meeting the continuing need for affordable housing
- Meeting the specific needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and individuals
- Meeting the housing needs and aspiration of ethnic minority communities across

The Council will also utilise new allocation mechanisms such as the 'in year bidding' processes and 'forward allocations' to maximise resource allocation, ensure continuity of scheme support and to take a long-term approach to such issues as housing renewal in Skelmersdale.

The Council will also consider new and innovative developments, such as the Housing Corporation's 'New Tools Initiative' and 'Housing Plus' schemes, to maximise all funding opportunities for inward investment.

Approved Development Programme (ADP)

The Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme (ADP) has contributed £2.9m to developing 71 new affordable homes, various miscellaneous housing improvements and other housing development works during 1999-2003.

Scheme	Total Units	Total Value (£)
MFRENT	71	2,570,359
Miscellaneous Works	24	162,515
SCMRENT	9	161,745
Voluntary Purchase Grant VPG	1	9,000
Total	114	2,903,619

Future ADP allocations

In the context of future ADP allocations, we wish to maximise the availability of existing planning approved quotas until 2016 and to review these level in the context of the District-wide Housing Needs Survey to be undertaken in 2004.

Resourcing Housing Renewal in Skelmersdale

It is clear that the authority is not in a position to resolve all of its' housing challenges, in particular the remodelling of Skelmersdale without significant inward investment. The authority is mindful that any capital receipt from any future stock transfer could help 'kick-start' the process of housing renewal. However this is only one potential funding source. The authority needs to continue seeking ways in which to successfully meet its housing challenges and aspirations for balancing the West Lancashire Housing Market. Partnership arrangements with the North West Development Agency and English Partnerships may result in the identification of funding to help meet our Community Strategy priority to make "places where people want to live".

Resourcing the Housing Strategy Role

The Council's new Housing Strategy team was established in September 2002 following a corporate assessment and commitment to the importance of the strategic housing role. Funding for the activities of this team are determined as part of the Service Action Planning and budgetary setting processes.

Further information is available from Steve Jones, Strategic Housing Manager, 01695 58 5208.

Monitoring

We recognise the Government's desire for Local Authorities to strengthen their strategic housing role. In line with this national policy guidance, the Council has separated the landlord function and strategic services function to create a new Housing Needs & Strategy Team. This Team will have the primary responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and review of this strategy document. The following staff teams will also be involved in implementing the strategy.

Landlord Role

- Tenancy Support
- Sheltered Housing
- Property Services
- Home Care Link
- Area Housing Management Teams

Strategic Role

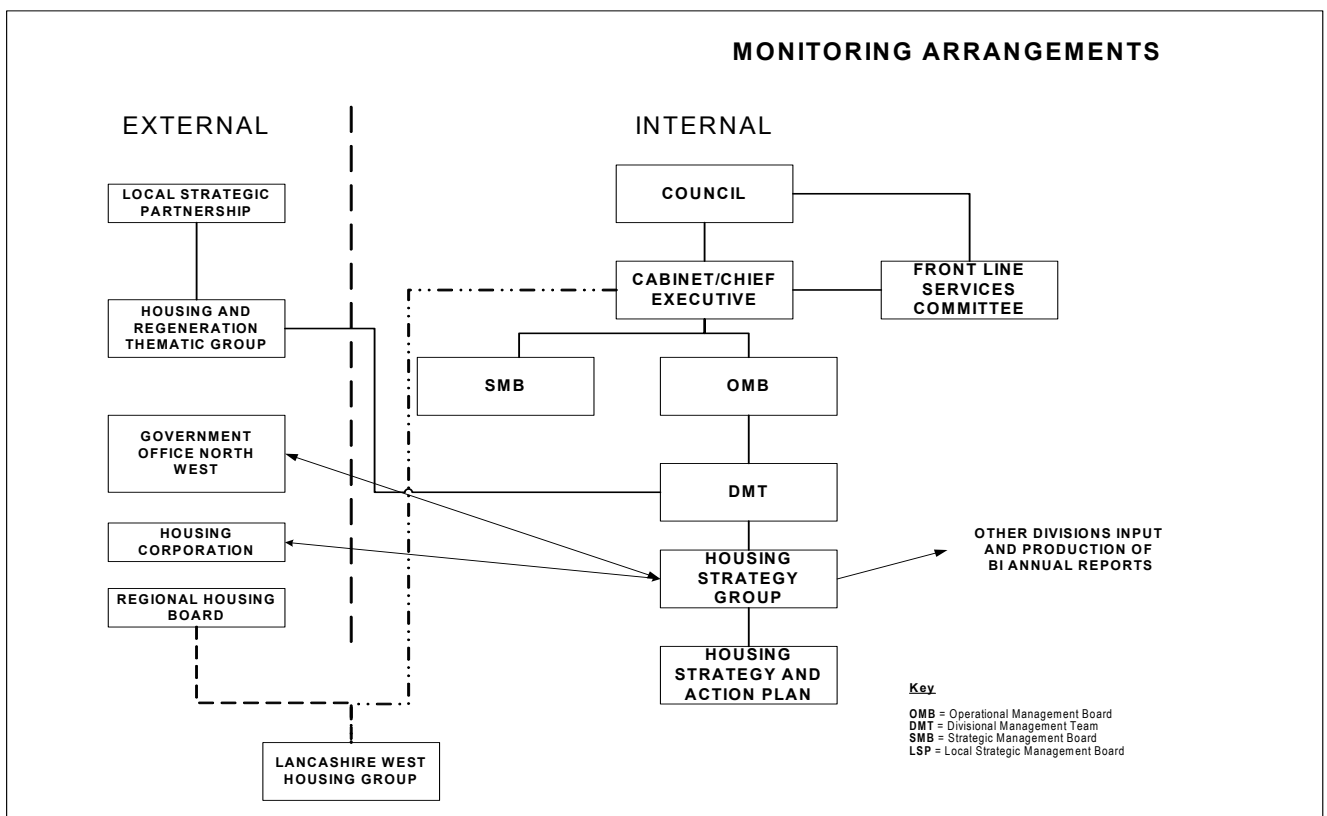
- Strategic Management Board
- Divisional Management Team
- Housing Needs & Strategy
- Private Sector Housing

The Housing Strategy Action has been formulated using 'SMART' principles to ensure that all strategic objectives and key priorities have a 'progress check date' and 'target complete' date. A lead officer has been identified to monitor each individual action for which they are responsible. Individual officer's targets are incorporated in to both staff development plans and team action plans, which are incorporated in the Divisional Service Action Plan.

Monitoring the delivery of this strategy is a key activity. It is our intention to achieve the targets we have identified in the Action Plan. We recognised that previous monitoring methods needed to be strengthened and improved. Additionally, in the context of the principles of overview and scrutiny we have also adopted a range of external monitoring to achieve improved accountability and maximise the support of external partners in delivering this strategy. This is particularly so given that our top two priorities will require careful consideration during the next twelve months to ensure progress is achieved.

The Housing Strategy Team will prepare annual update reports to the Local Strategic Partnership Housing & Regeneration thematic group. Additionally, bi-annual monitoring reports on the progress of the Action Plan will be submitted to this group and to Council. The LSP Regeneration and Housing Thematic group will form part of the monitoring and review process for this and future housing strategy. Further information about our monitoring process is available from Steve Jones, Strategic Housing Manager, 01695 58 5208.

Housing Strategy Monitoring Flowchart



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Want to know more? Need an extra copy?

These papers are very important. If you have difficulty reading or understanding English, please contact someone who can help you immediately.

這些是十分重要的文件。如果你有困難
看懂英文，請馬上向別人求助。

Chinese

هذه الأوراق مهمة جدا. اذا وجدت اي صعوبة في قراءة او فهم
اللغة الانكليزية. يرجى الاتصال باي شخص يمكنه مساعدتك حالا.

Arabic

NHỮNG GIẤY TỜ NÀY RẤT QUAN TRỌNG. NẾU QUÝ VỊ CÓ KHÓ
KHĂN ĐỂ ĐỌC HOẶC HIỂU TIẾNG ANH, XIN NHỚ MỘT NGƯỜI
NÀO ĐÓ GIÚP QUÝ VỊ NGAY LẬP TỨC

Vietnamese

यह कागज़ बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है। यदि आप को अंग्रेज़ी पढ़ने या
समझने में कठिनाई आती हो तो कृपया किसी ऐसे व्यक्ति से सम्पर्क
करें जो आप की जीप ही सहायता कर सके।

Hindi

پہ پائے اہم کاغذات ہیں یا
اگر آپ کو انگریزی پڑھنے یا سمجھنے میں دشواری پیش ہو تو براہ کرم کسی ایسے شخص سے رجوع کریں جو آپ کی مدد کر
سکے۔

Urdu

ਇਹ ਕਾਗਜ਼ ਬਹੁਤ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹਨ। ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਜਾਂ ਸਮਝਣ
ਵਿਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਅੱਜੇ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਨਾਲ
ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ ਜਿਹੜਾ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਜਲਦੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਕਰ ਸਕੇ।

Punjabi

આ કાગળો બહુ મહત્વના છે. જો તમને અંગ્રેજી વાંચવા અથવા
સમજવામાં મુશ્કેલી પડે તો, કૃપા કરી તમને તાત્કાલિક
સહાય કરી શકે એવી કોઈ વ્યક્તિનો સંપર્ક સાધો.

Gujarati

এই কাগজ-পত্রগুলো খুবই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। ইংরেজী পড়তে বা বুঝতে
আপনার সমস্যা হলে অনুগ্রহ করে কাউকে এমন কারো সাথে
সংযোগ করুন যিনি আপনাকে সাহায্য করতে পারবেন।

Bengali

Want to know more? Need an extra copy?

Please contact the Housing Needs & Strategy Team if you would like to receive copies of any of the documents mentioned within this Housing Strategy or if you would like to make any comments about any aspect of this document.

This document can be made available in a number of formats, large print, Braille, another language or CD-ROM. Copies can be obtained from:-

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[Glossary of Terms](#)

This Glossary is a tool to help non-housing staff in the council and our partners to make the most of the Housing Strategy. It is not intended to provide a precise or legal definition of the terms used. The end of the glossary also provides general information about Central Government aims and objectives in relation to the Communities Plan, Planning, Local Strategic Partnerships and Housing.

Approved Development Programme (ADP)

The Housing Corporation's cash limit for capital expenditure on different types of project for each financial year.

Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)

Additional finance for local authorities that have retained their housing stock and established arms length management arrangements.

Basic Credit Approval (BCA)

The amount of money the Government allows the Council to borrow for projects, which will be of lasting benefit. This borrowing is part of the Housing Investment Programme.

BME

Black and Minority Ethnic.

Capital Strategy

The Capital Strategy provides the policy framework for the operational work of asset management planning and should show how the deployment of capital resources will contribute to service outcomes, ensure efficient and effective use of assets and ensure that issues relating to property and other assets are fully reflected in the Council's financial planning process.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is about helping local councils improve local services for their communities. As well as looking at how well the council delivers their services, it also considers how the council is run as this will impact on how well they deliver their services in the future.

Consolidated Revenue Account (CRA)

The Consolidated Revenue Account reports the net costs for the year of the Authority's activities and demonstrates how that cost has been financed from central government grants and income from local tax-payers.

Crime & Disorder Strategy

The Crime and Disorder Act places a statutory duty on chief police officers and local authorities to work together to develop and implement a strategy for reducing crime and disorder.

'Fit for Purpose'

New Government guidance state that housing strategies must meet a 10 point 'fit for purpose' criteria, including how local priorities meet national and regional priorities and housing's contribution to wider corporate priorities, such as sustainability and social inclusion.

HIA – Home Improvement Agency

An agency, which enables vulnerable people to maintain their independence in their chosen home for the foreseeable future. May include older people, people on low incomes, disabled people etc. The homes would usually be in the private rented, leasehold or owner-occupied sector.

Housing Corporation

A government agency responsible for funding the provision of new affordable housing and for regulating registered social landlords.

Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy is a document produced every three years but updated annually, which sets out actions and targets that are measurable to ensure the housing service is provided effectively, efficiently and timely. The Strategy is used by the Government's Regional Office to assess the Authority's performance. This influences the level of Government housing resources allocated through the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme (ADP).

LSP – Local Strategic Partnership

LSPs are multi-agency, multi-sectoral, strategic partnerships. They co-ordinate local services, agencies and bodies to ensure coherence and effective working at the local level.

MRA – Major Repairs Allowance

The council is allocated a sum of money from the Government each year, for every property it owns, to enable them to carry out essential repair and improvement work. This is called Major Repairs Allowance.

North West Development Agency

The Northwest Development Agency is responsible for the sustainable economic development and regeneration of England's Northwest through the promotion of business competitiveness, efficiency, investment, employment and skills development.

NSF – National Service Framework for Older People

Developed by the National Housing Federation to set national standards for supported housing. It describes, evaluates and continuously develops services.

PSA – Public Service Agreement

A package of performance targets to help councils deliver measurable improvements in local services.

Private Sector Renewal Grant (PSRG)

Housing Renewal Grants help to improve poor housing conditions, adapt the homes of disabled persons and improve the security and safety of older or disabled persons in their homes.

RSL – Registered Social Landlord

Independent non-profit making housing associations aiming to provide affordable homes for people in housing need. (Also known as Housing Associations.)

Section 106

A section of the town and Country Planning Act 1990 which enables agreements, sometimes complex, to be reached between landowners/developers and local authorities, usually enabling the provision of social facilities or affordable housing.

Sheltered Housing

Aimed at older and/or disabled people. Includes grouped housing with resident or visiting warden, and bungalows and flats that are dispersed.

SMART Objectives

A management science term used to denote objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timetabled.

Social Housing

A general term for rented and shared ownership housing not provided for profit, e.g. Local Authorities, Housing Associations, Almshouses etc.

Specified Capital Grant (SCG)

Specified Capital Grant for disabled facilities grants is a grant contribution equal to 60% of the cost of any works eligible for assistance. For every £ of SCG paid towards disabled facilities grant expenditure an authority must extinguish an equal amount of credit approvals. Credit approvals up to the guideline allocation are provided for this purpose.

Stock Option Appraisal

Option appraisal on the future ownership and management of the Council's housing stock.

Supplementary Credit Approval (SCA)

Additional borrowing granted by the Government to the Council above the Basic Credit Approval for a specific scheme.

Supporting People Programme

A new system (from 2003) of planning, monitoring and funding for housing related support services with the aim of offering vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by enabling them to live more independent lives in the community and receive quality support services.

Glossary of Terms *continued*

This part of the glossary provides general information about Central Government aims and objectives in relation to the Communities Plan, Planning, Local Strategic Partnerships and Housing.

The Communities Plan

On 5th February 2003 the Deputy Prime Minister published *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future* which sets out his approach to achieve a step change in the way we deliver sustainable communities. The Communities Plan sets out the policies, resources and partnerships needed to tackle the different housing problems faced by some communities and is backed with substantial resources of £22 billion. The action plan includes major reforms of housing and planning and will tackle issues of housing shortage, low demand and decent housing, all within the context of creating sustainable communities. The plan also takes into account the need to protect the countryside and increase green spaces and improve liveability within urban areas.

This agenda cuts across the whole of Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and other departments, and much of what follows is part of this agenda. ODPM will be working with other Departments to ensure that the right framework is put in place to achieve the outcomes, notably through:

- Active engagement with key players in growth areas, low demand pathfinder areas, and with all key agencies with a role in delivery;
- Modifying the legal and wider regulatory framework (especially planning reforms);
- Ensuring new and revitalised communities have the right transport infrastructure, planned in from the start;
- Ensuring that key public services (especially health, education, policing), essential to sustainable communities, are provided at the right time;
- Taking action to ensure the right skills base to take forward the new agenda.
- The Communities Plan addresses national, regional and sub-regional problems, notably imbalances in housing markets. But the solutions will be delivered at a local level. It brings into sharper focus the need for:
- Partnership working: Local authorities are engaged in partnerships, to progress the Thames Gateway and in the low demand pathfinders;
- Raising performance: this applies especially to planning. Government is backing the drive with significant resources;
- Integrating policy making: there is a need for better integration of housing, planning and economic strategies and plans at all levels of Government. But thinking must continue to be brought together locally, building on the work to develop housing strategies covering the whole of local housing markets.

At regional level, regional housing boards will be responsible for production of the Regional Housing Strategy and for ensuring consistency with planning and economic strategies and work plans.

Planning

Government policy for reform of the land use planning system is set out in the policy paper *Sustainable Communities - Delivering through Planning* (July 2002), the follow up to the Green Paper *Planning - Delivering a Fundamental Change* (December 2001). This set out a two-tier approach to plan making: strategic planning at the regional level and local planning at the district/unitary level.

Legislation has been introduced to put in place regional spatial strategies (RSS), including sub regional issues. The local tier of plan making will be known as Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). Preparation of these, and most development control decision making, will be at the local (district) level. County structure plans will be abolished. Counties will retain responsibility for minerals, waste and local transport plans and will be enabled to have a role in supporting the development of the RSS, and, with the agreement of relevant districts, the LDF.

So, rather than perpetuate a separate tier of sub-regional planning outside the metropolitan areas, the Government considers that sub-regional issues should be fully integrated into the regional strategy making process. The counties will act as agents of

the regional planning bodies in providing technical expertise on issues and/or leading on sub regional parts of the strategy (distribution of housing etc) for example.

The new system will provide the flexibility for districts to work together to produce joint LDFs where these reflect "sensible" planning areas.

LSP - Local Strategic Partnerships

A LSP is a single body that brings together at local level the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to help identify the needs of communities and to work with local people to address them. LSPs are non-statutory, non-executive organisations, but they have a number of specific functions. These include supporting local authorities in the development of community strategies; helping to develop and deliver the local neighbourhood renewal strategies; rationalising and simplifying other local partnerships and plans; and working with local authorities in the development of local public service agreements to devise and then meet suitable targets.

Most LSPs have been established by local authorities at district level, although some county-wide LSPs also exist. Following their establishment, LSPs are encouraged to develop their leadership from within. In many areas partnership working is well established. LSPs, however, are relatively new bodies (the Government guidance was published in March 2001) and are therefore at varying stages of development. However they are now in place in most areas.

Government is increasingly looking to successful LSPs to lead at the local level in implementing new initiatives that depend on local partnerships for their successful delivery.

Housing

Local government's key responsibilities in housing are to:

- secure accommodation, as required under the law, for those homeless in priority need; and to ensure any social housing that they own and manage is run properly, and in particular is brought up to set standards of decency by 2010. This may be by means of transferring stock to housing associations, although other options (such as the creation of arms length management organisations) exist.
- These reflect the traditional role of local authorities. Government is now asking local government to look beyond their social housing role to take a strategic view of the housing needs of their area, covering all tenures. Local authorities' responsibilities have, in any case, been extending beyond housing management in recent years and cover:
 - seeking to increase the number of vulnerable households in decent homes in the private sector;
 - private sector renewal - local authorities manage programmes of assistance to improve private sector properties;
 - enforcement against unacceptable housing conditions through environmental health departments;
 - funding of additional social housing, to complement that provided through the Housing Corporation; and
 - ensuring complementary housing related support services to ensure sustainable tenancies for the most vulnerable households, including elderly people in need of support to remain in their own homes (including through Home Improvement Agencies).
- The Communities Plan will stress the need for much greater integration, at regional, and local level, of economic, spatial and housing strategies to ensure a better balance in housing markets and achieve other housing objectives. The DPM has announced strong regional bodies and regional housing pots to facilitate this more strategic overview. The Communities Plan details how these will operate.

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